WITTGENSTEIN AND NEOPYRRHONISM: METAPHILOSOPHY, ARGUMENTS AND PERSUASION

WITTGENSTEIN Y EL NEOPIRRONISMO: METAFILOSOFÍA, ARGUMENTOS Y PERSUASIÓN

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Abstract: Wittgenstein's latest work, *On Certainty*, has not only been read as the dissolution of Cartesian skepticism but as a proposal of a new skepticism. This "new" skepticism has been understood by R. Fogelin (1976 [2002], 1981, 1994) as close to Sextus Empiricus's Pyrrhonism. Therefore, he called it Neopyrrhonism. To Fogelin, both authors share the epistemological strategy that assumes that basic beliefs of common sense do not require any type of justification but cannot be doubted either. My proposal is to review this epistemological interpretation of the notion of Neopyrrhonism in light of the metaphilosophical aspects developed by both authors. These aspects highlight the non-theoretical and therapeutic way of understanding philosophy, as well as the persuasive-argumentative abilities they share. Thus, I suggest conceiving of Neopyrrhonism as *metaphilosophy* rather than as one kind of philosophy focused on the problem of knowledge or justification.

Keywords: argumentation; disagreements; metaphilosophy; neopyrrhonism; persuasion; skepticism; Wittgenstein.

Resumen: El último texto de Wittgenstein, *Sobre la certeza*, no sólo se ha leído como la disolución del escepticismo cartesiano, sino como una propuesta de un nuevo escepticismo. Este "nuevo" escepticismo ha sido entendido por R. Fogelin (1976 [2002], 1981, 1994) como cercano al pirronismo de Sexto Empírico. Por ello, lo llamó neopirronismo. Para Fogelin, ambos autores comparten la estrategia epistemológica que supone que las creencias básicas del sentido común no requieren ningún tipo de justificación pero tampoco se puede dudar de ellas. Mi propuesta es revisar

esta interpretación epistemológica de la noción de neopirronismo a la luz de los aspectos metafilosóficos desarrollados por ambos autores. Estos aspectos ponen de manifiesto la forma no teórica y terapéutica de entender la filosofía, así como la capacidad persuasiva-argumentativa que comparten. Así, sugiero concebir el neopirronismo como metafilosofía y no como una clase de filosofía centrada en el problema del conocimiento o la justificación.

Palabras Clave: argumentación; desacuerdos; escepticismo; metafilosofía; neopirronismo; persuasión; Wittgenstein.

1. NEOPYRRHONISM: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH*

Although R. Watson (1969) was the first one to establish the link between Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus[1], it was R. Fogelin (1976, 1981, 1994) who spoke of "Neopyrrhonism" to establish the relationship between them. Its interpretation is based on the distinction between "philosophical skepticism" and "skepticism *about* philosophy" to present the differences between Descartes's version and Sextus Empiricus's version. To Fogelin, Pyrrhonian skepticism -in Sextus Empiricus's version- uses "self-refuting philosophical arguments, taking philosophy as its target" (Fogelin 1994: 3) and presents the central role of the *epoché* (suspension of judgment) as a core element to describe this kind of skepticism. Focusing on the problem of suspension of judgment, Burnyeat and Frede (1997) presented two potential interpretations of Pyrrhonism: as *rustic* - the suspension of judgment extends to all our beliefs; or, as *urban* - the suspension of judgment only reaches philosophical dogmas. Fogelin understood Sextus's proposal as *urban* Pyrrhonism because "it combines philosophical skepticism with skepticism *about* philosophy, that is, to have doubts about philosophy on the basis of philosophical arguments" (Fogelin 1994: 3). Therefore, given the *urban* interpretation of suspension, a contemporary Neopyrrhonism does not imply casting doubts on our common-sense beliefs, but only questions the philosophical theses. To Fogelin, this interpretation allowed him to understand that the strategies deployed in the philosophy of the last Wittgenstein, especially the reflections on how our concepts of knowledge and certainty operate are similar to the strategies outlined by Sextus Empiricus. This is so despite the fact that they dissolve the Cartesian skeptical challenge.

1   Watson proposed that both authors shared the strategy against metaphysics in favor of the common sense; and that both assume philosophy as a critical method. Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus "showed how to destroy any metaphysical system which claims knowledge of entities outside the public world common to the experience of all men" (Watson 1969, p. 229). In the case of Sextus this destruction or elimination of metaphysics is exhibited especially in his critique of *representationalism*. In the case of Wittgenstein, it is exhibited in his critique of *phenomenalism*.

For this interpretation, Fogelin focused on the Agrippa's tropes - especially in three of his modes: return to infinity, circularity, and hypothetical mode- that arise from the philosophical reflection about our ordinary epistemic practices. Fogelin's conclusion was that the contemporary theories of justification that he considered -coherentism and contextualism- cannot resolve the trilemma; therefore, they must suspend judgment. Thus, a contemporary Neopyrrhonism is postulated which, given this suspension, does not imply questioning our commonsense beliefs. Instead, it implies questioning only philosophical theses or theories of justification that are proposed.

Given this framework of interpretation, Fogelin (1994) understood that Wittgenstein wrote many paragraphs in *On Certainty* difficult to reconcile with a pyrrhonic reading. In particular, the paragraphs of the last writing dedicated to exploring the idea of "grounding" or "foundation" (Cf. Stroll, 1994; Moyal-Sharrock 2004, 2005; Coliva 2015, 2016)[2] of language games and objective certainty are non-pyrrhonic. Thus, the philosophy of the last Wittgenstein, especially in *Philosophical Investigations* (1958) and *On Certainty* (1969), actually presents an oscillating position between a neo-pyrrhonism and a clearly non-pyrrhonic position. To Fogelin, both aspects played a cardinal role in the philosophy of the late Wittgenstein, delineating a style of thought that he describes as "a battle" between both aspects. Especially those from which an alternative theory of justification to the foundationalist one defended by Descartes could be derived: a kind of coherentism or contextualism.

On the other hand, some scholars have raised discrepancies with the way in which Fogelin presents his so-called "neo-pyrrhonism" as an inheritance of ancient skepticism. Gisela Striker (2014) assessed that the notion of neo-pyrrhonism Fogelin developed and then applied to the second Wittgenstein does not have its source in the Sextus Empiricus's pyrrhonism, but in a modern version -in particular, by Modernity's interpretation of Agrippa's modes (Cf. Striker 2004: 14). Fogelin also reflected a modern vision -possibly of Humean inspiration- in the way in which he understood that the Pyrrhonic adhere to the practices of ordinary life, and in the way he interpreted it is similar to that of Wittgenstein (Cf. Striker 2004: p. 14). Striker characterizes Fogelin's position as an *epistemological* Pyrrhonism, since it is unrelated to one of the central topics in Sextus Empiricus's version: the primary ethical concern, *ataraxia*. All in all, she suggests that, while Fogelin is not a "Pyrrhonist", as he is not a faithful supporter of the ancient sect,

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2   D. Moyal-Sharrock (2003, 2005, 2016) and A. Coliva (2015, 1016) consider that these reflections Wittgenstein made on the status of these propositions allow them to develop an epistemological project that they have called "hinge epistemology". In this framework, Coliva has proposed the idea of extended rationality. Thus understood, Wittgenstein's proposal contributes to the development of an epistemological project that would make it possible to avoid Agrippa's trilemma. For an excellent critical discussion of this reading, see Gómez–Alonso, M. and Pérez Chico, D. (2019).

he can nevertheless be described as a "Pyrrhonian". Even though he was inspired by classical texts, he offered a modified version of the views of its predecessors (Cf. Strike, 2004: p. 13). Accordingly, Williams (1999) points out that, by focusing on Agrippa's problem, Fogelin presented a "stripped-down" version of ancient Pyrrhonism. From this reading, Fogelin would belong to the neo-Humean pessimism for seeing "a permanent tension between our ordinary epistemic practices and the inevitable [skeptical] results of philosophical reflection on them" (Williams, 1999: 142). From Gómez-Alonso's reading (2012), Fogelin has not revived Pyrrhonism but transformed it. This would be seen in how Fogelin's Neopyrrhonism would finally situate the distinction between epistemological scrutiny and everyday practices, in ordinary language itself. This would produce a new radicalism that ends up undermining our most basic certainties (Cf. Gómez-Alonso 2012).

Although I agree with the neopyrrhonic notion of showing the link between Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus[3], I consider Neopyrrhonism should be based on the metaphilosophical aspects central to the philosophical proposals both authors made. Neopyrrhonism is vitally an open-ended inquiry that implies the ability of using different philosophical argumentative strategies in a non-quietist sense, but in a *performative* one. From this proposal, the argumentative skills explored by both authors do not cancel or destroy philosophy. This allows us to recognize an enriched aspect of the way of understanding argumentative practices. In order to develop these ideas, I have examined Fogelin's epistemological Neopyrrhonism (1). In the next section (2), I propose a metaphilosophical approach to Neopyrrhonism that emphasizes the *performative* aspects of doing philosophy by questioning the philosophy that Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein share. In (3), I discuss "quietist" readings which, by emphasizing non-theoretical commitments, can lead to the cancellation of philosophy in both proposals. In (4), I review the way of understanding philosophical arguments and its relation with persuasion in both authors. Finally, in (5), I present my conclusions.

2. METAPHILOSOPHY

It seems clear that both in Sextus Empiricus and in Wittgenstein the reflection on the limits, the scope and the methods that philosophy can develop are present. Their proposals focus on differentiating their philosophical orientations from dogmatic philosophy. Hence, the question of philosophy guides their

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3   Also P. Junqueira Smith (1993, 2019), based on a Pyrrhonian reading of sensitive perception and the knowledge of the world derived from it, suggests that many contemporary authors could adhere to a Wittgensteinian-inspired Neopyrrhonism in current epistemological debates. Pritchard (2016), on the other hand, referred to "Wittgensteinian Pyrrhonism" based on the exploration of the structure of our reasons. Thus, according to Pritchard, the opinions in *On Certainty* are very close to those in *Outlines of Scepticism*.

philosophical proposals. From my reading, I understand that this questioning about philosophy is part of the philosophical exercise. It does not seek to destroy philosophy; rather, it is an anti-theoretical philosophical way of exercising philosophy. Therefore, I assume that both proposals can be understood as metaphilosophical.

Lazerowitz coined the term metaphilosophy in 1940 to refer to "a special kind of investigation which Wittgenstein had described as one of the 'heirs' of philosophy. The method of investigation consisted in translating philosophical statements back into the verbal idiom", (Reese, 1990: p. 28). Lazerowitz used this term to refer to "the investigation of the nature of philosophy, with the central aim of arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the absence of uncontested philosophical claims and arguments" (Lazerowitz, 1970). In this way, it is emphasized that metaphilosophy is mainly concerned with philosophical "language". Its function is to analyze, clarify, or dissolve what are considered linguistic deviations that philosophers make when they want to build a theory. In Reese's reconstruction of Lazerowitz's position, the prefix "meta" means "beyond": "metaphilosopher goes beyond philosophy, dissolving philosophical statements back into those of ordinary language" (*Ibid*). His proposal is "in" philosophy, in the sense that it operates on material which he calls philosophical; it is "beyond" philosophy in the sense that it dissolves that material from the outside; and it is "about" philosophy because it makes a judgment about the entire philosophical enterprise, (Cf. *Ibid*.: 29). Lazerowitz based his position on Wittgenstein's paragraph from PI §116: "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use". This literal interpretation either has risks and could reduce philosophy to ordinary language or considers common sense has the answers to philosophical questions (as G. E. Moore thought).

On the other hand, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein explicitly stated: "one might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy' there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without then being second-order", (PI §121). Thus, I do not understand metaphilosophy as a second-order reflection or language but as a way of offering philosophical *remarks* (*Bemerkungen*) in order to rethink philosophy as part of the philosophical activity. This seems to be in tune with the way he describes philosophy as an activity and not as a theory or doctrine (TLP 4.112; PI §109); as a set of methods and therapies and not as a unique method: "there is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies", (PI §131). Taking into account these *performative* aspects, and from my suggestion, metaphilosophy cannot be only reduced to an initial propaedeutic instance. Rather, it should be seen as a philosophical orientation that regards the examination of philosophy itself as cardinal. Therefore, this examination of philosophy is also philosophical. From this use of term "metaphilosophy", *familiar resemblances* could be found

between Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks *about* philosophy and those of Sextus Empiricus.

Pyrrhonism is generally understood as the ability to oppose philosophical arguments of equal weight. As in scales, having the same weight -to be believed or accepted- arguments and counter-arguments cannot be in favor of either of the two. Given this equality in the philosophical reasons and not having a criterion to choose between the positions in dispute suspends judgment. In its origins, Pyrrhonism was thought of as a cure or therapy that seeks to combat the precipitation typical of dogmatism, which postulates conditions for knowledge that cannot be satisfied (PH I. I. 20, I. 27-30, I. 205; III. 280-81)[4]. Skeptics execute the battle, in the argumentative-dialectical field that dogmatists have built, to show the latter that, in their own terms, it is not possible to achieve the conditions they demand to assert they know what is true by nature. From my perspective, this therapeutic work should not be interpreted as a purely critical or destructive attitude. Sextus Empiricus presented his philosophical orientation from the close link between suspension of judgement and the "curing" of dogmatists' rashness. Philosophical uses of argumentations and persuasions, which "differ in potency", have the therapeutic purpose "of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness" [PH III. 280]. In so doing, metaphilosophy is a way of offering arguments to rethink about philosophy as a part of doing philosophy. This approach highlights the non-theoretical aspects of philosophy, and emphasizes the view that assumes it as an ability of clarification by offering persuasive arguments. Nevertheless, avoiding substantive philosophical theorizing can be read as a quietist proposal. Specifically, it seeks to avoid the postulation of positive theses or dogmas and to develop constructive arguments. In the next section, I will discuss this reading.

3. QUIETISM

In the context of contemporary philosophy, quietism is directly related to a certain interpretation of Wittgenstein's work that emphasizes the therapeutic purpose of his proposal. In this interpretation -also called *resolute reading*-, philosophy is conceived of as an activity without substantive theses (Crary 2000; McDowell 2009; Wright 1989, 1992, 2001). Philosophy does not provoke any

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4   References to Sextus are made by placing PH [*Pyrrōneioi Hypotypōseis*] for *Outlines of Scepticism* and AM for *Adversus Mathematicos*, followed by the book number, stop and the line number after the citations. Annas and Barnes, *Outlines of Scepticism* (2000) will be used. There is a previous translation, the bilingual edition (Greek-English) of the works of Sextus made by R. G. Bury (1933-1939). Bury divides the translation into four volumes: volume I (1933) *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (PH I, II, III); volume II (1935) *Against the Logicians* (AM VII, VIII); volume III (1936) *Against Physicists* (AM IX, X) and *Against the Ethics* (AM XI); volume IV *Against the Professors* (AM I, II, III, IV, V, VI). In case Bury's edition is used, it will be properly indicated.

progress or modifications, as Wittgenstein stated: "[Philosophy] leaves everything as it is", (PI §124). Then, this way of understanding philosophy seems to assume that philosophical problems or disagreements are irresolvable. Taking these elements into account may lead to arguing that the earliest defense of philosophical quietism, in the history of Western thought, is found in the Pyrrhonian skeptics from the Hellenistic period. The Pyrrhonists pursued quietude or imperturbability (*ataraxia*) through suspension of judgment (*epoché*) and abstinence from assenting to any philosophical thesis (*dogmas*).

Neopyrrhonism as quietism can be understood as a proposal in which an argumentative-constructive philosophical theory is not postulated and in which philosophical problems or disagreements are irresolvable. Through the medical metaphors of purgatives used by Sextus, Pyrrhonian quietism provides the first combination of a therapeutic approach to philosophizing with an anti-theoretical stance. This way of understanding the proposal stresses the critical –purgative- aspect of the use of arguments and tropes. This form of quietism must face the accusation of self-refuting -for using arguments to its non-theorizing proposal. In Sextus, this problematic seems to be related to using tropes to provoke a complete suspension of judgement that cancels philosophy since no philosophical disagreement can be resolved.

Recently, D. Pritchard (*forthcoming*) has adhered to Wittgensteinian quietism and has argued that "helps support the interpretation of Pyrrhonism as a perpetual inquiry" (p.1). Pritchard reviews a quietist reading of Wittgenstein focusing on two aspects: 1- philosophy as an activity rather than as a body of doctrine; 2- the general immunity from philosophical/sceptical criticism that our everyday practices exhibit. He is especially interested in how Wittgenstein's treatment of *hinge* commitments (*On Certainty*) can refine ideas about why certain commitments are immune to Pyrrhonian skeptical tropes. From my reading, focusing on the *hinge* ones tends to favor an epistemological reading of Neopyrrhonism and to promote substantive opinions. I consider that Sextus and Wittgenstein were not especially interested in epistemic issues as an aim; rather, they were interested in them as part of questioning dogmatic modes of doing philosophy. In what follows, I examine the challenges of quietism in each of the authors separately.

3.1. WITTGENSTEIN'S CHALLENGE: RESOLUTE READING

Supporters of a 'resolute' -also called 'therapeutic'- reading of Wittgenstein begin with the interpretation proposed by Cora Diamond (1988) in "Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the Tractatus". From this text, she and Conant (2004) propose that TLP should be read in an ironic key, that is, a correct reading of its statements should lead to the recognition that these same statements say nothing, they are simply nonsense; but they are not a special kind of nonsense, they are simply absurd propositions. This reading also proposes a therapeutic

continuity between TLP and the later Wittgenstein, especially the *Philosophical Investigations*:

> Wittgenstein gives voice to an aspiration that is central to his later philosophy, well before he becomes later Wittgenstein, when he writes in §4.112 of the *Tractatus* that philosophy is not a matter of putting forward a doctrine or a theory, but consists rather in the practice of an activity –an activity he goes on to characterize as one of elucidation or clarification– an activity which he says does not result in '*philosophische Sätze*', in propositions of philosophy, but rather in '*das Klarwerden von Sätzen*', in our attaining clarity in our relation to the sentences of our language that we call upon to express our thoughts, (Conant and Diamond, 2004: 47).

Although I consider that the non-theoretical proposal of philosophy is present throughout Wittgenstein's work, there are differences in how to understand the kind of elucidations that philosophy can offer. In the first period, it is associated with philosophy understood as a clarifying activity of the logical structure of language, which makes it possible to distinguish sharply the propositions that make sense from those that do not. In the second period, including the so-called *transition period* (1929-1935), there are variations but, in general, philosophy is still understood as an activity. In this period, especially in *On Certainty*, the descriptions or observations that philosophy offers help to distinguish: the *functions* that propositions can fulfill in different language games, and the relations that propositions can have with basic non-propositional phenomena. This description is not equivalent to understanding the status of philosophical remarks as similar to those found in the literature. Thereby, argumentative practices - without being reduced to the model of formal logic - play a decisive role in grammatical analysis within the framework of the clarifying activity exercised by philosophy.

It is hard to deny that Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical approach to philosophy is an ever-present theme throughout the different periods of his work. In relation to this approach, the distinction between philosophical clarifications or remarks and scientific explanations is crucial. This distinction, related to his reflection on philosophy, is present in different ways throughout his production. In TLP, he made a distinction between explanations that can be offered by natural sciences and the clarifications offered by philosophy (4.111; 4.112). In the transition period, the distinction between reasons and causes, 'aesthetic' explanation and 'causal' explanation, descriptions and explanations is constantly present. In many paragraphs of *Philosophical Investigations*, he explored the idea of philosophical *describing* associated with the idea of his grammatical method (PI §109; 124; 126; 180; 219; 240, 496 among others). In *On Certainty*, he blurred the sharp distinction between empirical and logical propositions (§35; 83; 96-8; 136-7; 167; 213; 273; 308-9; 319-21; 401-2; 494; 569; 651), and emphasized the descriptive method in philosophy (§82; 167; 189; 321; 628).

In what follows, I am interested in highlighting what relation is established between this way of understanding philosophical remarks and argumentation in *On Certainty*. In Wittgenstein's exploration of the differences between philosophical remarks and scientific explanations, which he understood basically as empirical hypotheses, he established that argumentation works within already established language games. This is connected with the idea that arguments cannot be offered in favor of language games (OC §103-105, 138). For instance, Moore-type cases are a special class of propositions that appear empirical but whose function in our system of beliefs is logical (OC §136-37). Wittgenstein pointed out that we cannot offer arguments in favor of them since they are not the product of any investigation (*Untersuchung*), (OC §315; 383; 577; 599). Given this limit established for argumentation, it seems to be understood -as Fogelin (1985) did- that Wittgenstein, as well as Pyrrhonics defends a self-destructive orientation of philosophical argumentation. This conclusion seems to be accentuated by Wittgenstein's mention of the use of slogans (OC §610) in combat (OC §609, 610, 612) between different belief systems or cultures. In this confrontation, we cannot offer arguments, we can expect a *conversion* (OC §92) using persuasive techniques (OC §262, 612, 669) - which seems to be the opposite of offering arguments or reasons.

We have already seen Wittgenstein distinguished explanations (the search for definitions or essences) from descriptions (clarifications) in philosophy. Thus, for him, and against the search for essence in philosophy, the task of reflecting (*Besinnen*) on the non-causal connections is imposed. These connections can be seen in what he called *perspicuous or synoptic representation* (*übersichtlichen Darstellung*), which allows us to have a clear vision. The idea of connection, in his second philosophy, is related to the function that certain concepts fulfill in our network of linguistic uses. In criticizing this notion of explanation, Wittgenstein appeals to the notion of perspicuous or synoptic representation which is established as a mode in which we see things. This way of seeing shows the possible connections that can be established between the phenomena we are interested in understanding. I believe that these explorations are intended to make the distinction between the status of philosophical observations and scientific explanations present throughout his work clear. However, this categorical distinction does not imply a rejection of giving arguments in philosophy as quietist readings seem to stress. As we shall see in section 4, both Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus did not abandon argumentative practices; instead, they must be understood outside the reductive model of traditional deductive logic. Skeptical arguments do not seek to refute or win a debate but to show the dogmatist that what she thinks she has proved cannot be proved. They also generate a way of seeing phenomena under a new network of connections. In this way, there is a *performatic* change in how we understand what philosophically intrigues and unsettles us.

3.2. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS'S CHALLENGE: *APRAXIA* AND *AFASIA*

In his *Outlines* and *Adversus*, Sextus Empiricus took the challenge of *apraxia* seriously, not only in terms of cancellation of life but also in its connection with the exercise of philosophy. From my reading, when he proposed the distinction between two criteria - the criterion of truth and the criterion of action (PH I. 21-24)-, he did not suggest differentiating two autonomous spheres: philosophy on the one hand; common life on the other. By distinguishing between these two criteria, Sextus presented two ways of exercising philosophy and understanding its relation to common life. In the opening of the first book *Against the Logicians* (AM VII. 1), Sextus warned that what makes a difference between skeptical philosophy and other philosophical systems and doctrines is what is understood as orientation (*agogué*) and as ability (*dynamis*). These terms were already presented in PH (I. 8), but it is also necessary to apply them to the parts into which dogmatic philosophy is divided (Logic, Physics and Ethics) in order to "be less prone to rashness either in our own sceptical investigations of things or in our contradictions of the Dogmatists" (AM VII. 1). For Sextus (AM VII. 27), the problem of criterion of truth is present "everywhere", not only because "man is by nature a truth-loving animal" but also because this criterion is a problem for the most generic systems of Philosophy. If we do not have a criterion about the true existence of things, the *boasts* of the dogmatists will be abolished. On the contrary, if we come up with a criterion of apprehension of truth, "the Sceptics will be convicted of rashness and of defiant disregard for the general belief" (AM VII. 27).

Sextus Empiricus applied his usual practice of distinguishing in which sense we use terms. The term criterion has two senses: "the one sense it is used of that in view of which we *do* these things and not those; in the other, it means the thing in view of which we *assert* that these things exist and those do not exist and that these are true, those false" (my italic, AM VII. 29). The former sense is related to the skeptical orientation proposed in PH and to the challenge of not being inactive o inert. In order to share daily life activities, skeptics need to "possess some criterion both of choice and of aversion: the appearance (*phenomenon*)" (Cf. AM VII. 30). The latter seems to be used with three meanings: the general -every measure or standard of apprehension-, the special -every *technical* measure of apprehension-, and the most special -every measure of apprehension of a *non-evident* object (Cf. AM VII. 33, PH II. 14-21, 80-96).The last one represent the logical standards which dogmatic philosophers introduce to discover truth. In order to criticize this criterion, Sextus performed a diagnosis about the diversity of contradictory opinions that dogmatic philosophers have on the matter. This diagnosis implies a double strategy: on the one hand, the skeptic accepts the dialectical scenario in which the dogmatist presents these diverse opinions; on the other hand, it is in this scenario that the skeptical ability to counter-argue each of the disputed opinions is deployed to show the dogmatist, under her own criteria, that she cannot affirm what she affirms. Therefore, judgment is suspended.

I am interested in highlighting some aspects of the practical or action criterion because not only does this criterion imply the skeptic defense against the accusation of inactivity in daily life but it also implies a way of understanding philosophical practice. The point on which I will focus is the fourth one listed by Sextus: instruction in the arts (*téchnai*) (PH I. 23-24). Sextus dealt with an aspect of the arts by discussing the dogmatic notion of the "art of living" (*bios techné*) developed in the discussion about ethics (PH III. 188, 239-252; AM XI 168-215). He also reviewed this notion in relation with the processes of learning and teaching this art (PH III. 253-279; AM XI 216-256). On the other hand, at the end of Book I, Sextus seemed to make a connection between the accusation of *apraxia* and the accusation of self-refutation. He set out the ways in which skeptical expressions can be used without dogmatic implications in their uses. To do this, he used the image of purging: skeptical expressions are like purgative drugs, they disappear once their use is over (PH I. 206-207; II 188; AM VIII. 480-481). This important connection is taken up again in the discussion about grammar, when Sextus expounded an "apology" – a defense- of daily speech to express what skeptics feel without dogmatic commitments (AM I. 229-240). Sextus rejected the art of grammarians based on universal criteria for distinguishing the correct uses of Greek and chose to accept the public criteria derived from the ordinary uses of Greek (AM I. 153). Some arts, such as medicine, have been developed to avoid hurtful things; others, such as navigation, to discover beneficial things. The art of grammar, especially reading and writing is also among the most useful arts that contribute to the conduct of life (Cf. AM I. 50-55).

Hence, the uses of skeptical expressions are not assertive in a dogmatic sense. Then, Sextus distinguished the skeptical proposal from other philosophies and raised the comparison with the various schools of the art of medicine (PH I. 236-241). The medical school closest to skepticism is the Methodist school, since it practices medicine without looking for causes of diseases but paying attention to symptoms –"to avoid rash treatment of things non-evident by arbitrary assertions" (PH I. 237). In this way, skeptics are closer to methodists in the non-assertive use of medical expressions or reports (PH I. 240) that only seeks to record the patients' symptoms. This comparison with the medical practice of the methodists sheds light on how Sextus began to raise the possibility of an alternative philosophical practice over the dogmatic one -that has already been suspended. Similar to skeptics, this school of medicine is guided by appearances (*phenomena*) understood under the fourfold description of practical criteria. Here Sextus established a brief but important link between the idea of undogmatic linguistic uses -"reporting descriptively" (PH.I 15, 197, 203) as *istorikos* does (PH.I 4). On the one hand, these reports have the performative and pragmatic character of daily speech (their non-ontological commitments, their non-assertive way); on the other hand, they represent the possibility of communicating the skeptical orientation. Thus, not only do skeptics show their interest in avoiding the charge of self-contradiction and

apraxia but they also show their ability to produce skeptical reports. Therefore, the absence of doctrine does not imply the absence of an intelligible skeptical practice of argumentation.

4. SKEPTICAL ARGUMENTS

For Fogelin's Neopyrrhonism, skeptical arguments have a double *refutative* role: they serve to refute the dogmatist and, at the same time, they are self-refuting because they vanish once used. On the one hand, skeptical arguments are designed to counter-argue; on the other, they must be self-counter-argumentative. Pyrrhonian arguments are not simply dispensable, since, as part of philosophizing, they also need to be eliminated. Sextus Empiricus's metaphors of the purgative (PH I. 206-7) and the ladder (AD VIII. 481) emphasize this aspect. Now for Fogelin, the double scope of the skeptical refutation did not imply accepting the rustic interpretation (Barnes and Burnyeat 1997). The corrosive power of skeptical arguments does not reach all our beliefs; instead, they acquire their power within the framework of dogmatic dialectics. Fogelin took up Frede to defend this point: "Since the skeptic wants to see whether his opponent at least by his own standards or canons has the knowledge, he in his own arguments adheres to these standards. But this does not mean that he himself is committed to them" (Frede's quotation in Fogelin, 1994: 7). Here Fogelin seemed to connect the use of argumentation only for dogmatists to suspend judgment. Thus, Fogelin seemed to emphasize the character of refutation or cancellation without leaving room for a non-corrosive, non-self-refuting use of skeptical argumentation.

On the other hand, and focusing on *Philosophical Investigations* and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Fogelin (1996) emphasized how difficult Wittgenstein's philosophical proposal is. To summarize the Wittgensteinian proposal: "philosophers are thrown into confusion because they are predisposed to see the different uses of language in a way that is inappropriate for them" (Foeglin 1996: 34). Since it is not a matter of starting from wrong theses or factual mistakes, but from the *bewitchments* of language, the task of philosophy is to induce us to *abandon* these linguistic seductions. This abandonment is not easy to achieve because philosophical confusions are deeply rooted. The critical-grammatical work on these linguistic deviations is difficult and "only a complete global reorientation can break the spell of *a picture that holds us captive*" (Cf. PI §115). This would explain the meandering and sometimes twisted but always challenging character of Wittgenstein's own writing. Fogelin wrote:

> the deep entrenchment of philosophical orientations -their resistance to direct refutation- helps explain the complexity of Wittgenstein's own writings. His attacks often lack the structure of direct arguments because their targets are often resistant to direct

arguments. His writing is complex and shifting because its target is complex and shifting (1996: 35).

Fogelin seemed to consider that there would be a more direct use of refutation and certain epistemological commitments in *On Certainty* -especially, and as mentioned above, when Wittgenstein explored the foundations of language games. Nevertheless, in 1985 Fogelin published a short article "The Logic of Deep Disagreements", in which he set out the concern for the place of argumentation when profound disagreements that have no apparent resolution arise. Inspired by a series of paragraphs from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (§ 609-612), he first established the conditions for "the language of argumentation" understood as the exchange of *compelling grounds*[5] (*zwingende Gründe,* OC §243). Fogelin concluded that this exchange can only occur when there is a common background of widely shared beliefs, preferences, and agreement on procedures for resolving disagreements. Unlike normal argumentative contexts, *deep* disagreements are those in which argumentative exchange becomes impossible. Argumentation is not possible due to the fact that participants do not have a shared background. For this reason, Fogelin described *deep* disagreements as not having rational resolution.

Once again, he turned to Wittgenstein (OC §612) to conclude that the only way to combat deep disagreements is persuasion, understood as a set of non-argumentative and non-rational techniques. Here I will not explore the problem of disagreement, a central theme both in Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus. What I am interested in rescuing is the distinction between argumentation (rational strategies) and persuasion (irrational strategies) attributed –wrongly, from my reading- to Wittgenstein. I consider the idea of persuasion as part of the argumentative (i.e. rational) strategies both developed is central to their philosophical proposals. Hence, a neopyrrhonic proposal understood as metaphilosophy can rescue the *performative* persuasive aspects of the argumentative practices that philosophy can cultivate.

4.1. PYRRHONIAN DIALECTIC: ARGUMENTS AND PERSUASION

In a general sense, an argument can be defined as a reasoning from which an attempt to prove or refute a thesis is made. Refutation is given through the demonstration of the truth or falsity of a thesis. One way of evaluating arguments, which was developed in ancient philosophy, is to ponder them valid or invalid.

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5   "Arguing is the process of producing these compelling grounds. But to be compelling grounds must be true or at least thought to be true and, together with other accepted propositions, lend adequate support to the claim to be established. Thus arguing, i.e., engaging in an argumentative exchange, presupposes a background of shared commitments", (Fogelin, 1985, p. 6).

These are the bases for the development of formal logic. Aristotle distinguished strictly logical arguments from probable arguments. The former are strict and their function is to refute the adversary by showing the truth of the thesis defended by the arguer. The latter are not strict and their function is merely to convince or persuade the opponent. This distinction seems to have been fundamental - especially for Plato- to distinguish the argumentative-refuting exercise of philosophy against the mere persuasion of the sophists. In response to these concerns, the philosophical tradition thought of persuasion in non-epistemic or non-rational terms. Thus, it would be an illegitimate form of argumentation or a non-argumentative (not open to refutation) way of producing effects on the other.

Fogelin (1985) began his text by pointing out that formal deductive logic and the notion of validity are too strict. This strictness in the pondering of arguments makes most of them invalid. He proposed to rescue the broader understanding of arguments as contextual argumentative practices proposed by Toulmin (1958) -which inaugurated the development of the informal logic movement (see especially Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1952, 1958). However, Fogelin seemed to rescue the traditional distinction that differentiates argumentation from persuasion categorically. This could explain why Fogelin interpreted that Neopyrrhonism only achieves a self-destructive argumentative task. Instead, if we understand the persuasive argumentative practice proposed and exercised by Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus in an enriched way, we will rescue the *performative* elements of their proposals. Hence, Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy assumes a non-restrictive vision of understanding the argumentative practice of philosophy. Its main goal is not to refute but to make the opponents see persuasively that under their own parameters they cannot affirm what they affirm. Therefore, the aim is to provoke a new way of seeing the phenomenon they are trying to understand.

It is trivial to say that argumentation is a central part of Sextus Empiricus's proposal. The compilation of tropes and their uses applied to dogmatic philosophies and the so-called liberal arts can be understood as a great treatise on argumentation. However, from a metaphilosophical approach such as the one presented here, the point is to understand that skeptical argumentation cannot be reduced to the function of *refutation*. In other words, Sextus Empiricus's argumentation is not to be understood in the framework of the dogmatic validity of formal logic or in the framework of sophistry and relativism. On the contrary, skeptical arguments seek suspension of judgment and not to refute or gain a debate definitely. Suspension of judgment concerns neither dogmatists nor sophists. Pajón Leyra (2013) interprets that skeptical argumentation is not conceived of as a way of access to truth -as the dogmatists argued. The use of arguments is related to persuasive purposes but, unlike sophists, it does not seek to win a debate. The value of argumentation for the Pyrrhonian consists in its persuasive power to show that assertion may be due to dogmatic rashness, but

pyrrhonic arguments do not seek to refute the interlocutor. Sextus Empiricus closed *Outlines of Scepticism* by indicating that

> Skeptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument, as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists. Just as doctors for bodily afflictions have remedies which differ in potency, and apply severe remedies to patients who are severely afflicted and milder remedies to those mildly afflicted, so Sceptics propound arguments which differ in strength - they employ weighty arguments, capable of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness, and they employ milder arguments against those who are afflicted by a conceit which is superficial and easily cured and which can be rebutted by a milder degree of plausibility. This is why those with a Sceptical impulse do not hesitate sometimes to propound arguments which are sometimes weighty in their plausibility, and sometimes apparently rather weak. They do this deliberately, since often a weaker argument is sufficient for them to achieve their purpose [PH III. 280-81].

From Pajón Leyra's interpretation, what distinguishes pyrrhonists is the kind of dialectical exercise they put into practice when arguing. Skeptical dialectic is not designed for an audience, as is the case of sophists' work, but for an interlocutor whom it is intended to persuade not to remain in her state of conviction (Cf. Pajón Leyra, 2013, pp. 185-87). Thus, depending on the interlocutor pyrrhonists interact with, they can make use of a variety of arguments that are more or less formal, more or less brilliant, and more or less accurate. The purpose of the pyrrhonian dialectic is practical or *performative*: to get her interlocutor out of the confusion in which she finds herself as a result of rashness. This does not mean that pyrrhonians consider their interlocutor to be committing an epistemic mistake that must be refuted with a valid argument. On the contrary, this way of interpreting the pyrrhonian dialectic is very close to Socrates's Maieutic (Cf. Pajón Leyra, 2013, p. 192). Socratic Maieutic does not pretend to win by imposing counter-arguments. Rather, it attempts to get the interlocutor to arrive at a position for herself by analyzing her own arguments, evaluating the reasons offered to support them, distinguishing the persuasive power they possess, etc.

Bouveresse (2006) interpreted Wittgenstein as conceiving philosophical work only as a Socratic enterprise of elucidating what is already there before everyone's eyes: the philosopher has, strictly speaking, nothing original and new to say, (my translation. Bouveresse, 2006, p. 175). Wittgenstein's philosophy is assumed to be an investigation or ability to perceive the real on a background of possibilities far greater than that of the usual conception (Cf. *Ibid*). In *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein wrote: "Nothing is more important though than the construction of *fictional* concepts, that which will teach us at last to understand our own" (MS 137 78b: 24.10.1948). This idea of the fictional seems to accentuate the limits of argumentation in philosophy. As in *On Certainty*, the categorical distinction between argument and persuasion seems to follow. This is reinforced by the same

distinction previously made by Wittgenstein in his *Lecture on Aesthetics* (1938). This distinction is associated with the idea that *seeing differently* is an attitudinal change that often requires non-argumentative strategies. The reason for this is that a different seeing is understood to be more connected to, in Wittgenstein's terms, a difficulty of the will, than of the intellect (Cf. Wittgenstein 2005, p.300e). Fogelin assumed that because these persuasive strategies are not argumentative; they are not rational either.

Unlike Fogelin, I interpret the distinction between persuasion and argumentation should be understood in the broader framework of concerns for the kind of remarks or descriptions that philosophy can offer. The distinction between argumentation and persuasion is in tune with Wittgenstein's concern to reduce philosophy to the model of scientist explanation. Neither does this concern lead him to hold an irrational model nor to hold that we cannot make a distinction between well-held opinions, weak opinions, superstitions, etc. Inventing fiction, examples, refreshing analogies, is not a literary exercise of fiction; it is an argumentative exercise -but it is not reduced to the principles of formal logic. It is an exercise that demands argumentative, creative and conceptual analysis abilities. From my reading, by not distinguishing argumentation (rational strategies) from persuasion (irrational strategies) as Fogelin does, neither Sextus Empiricus nor Wittgenstein accepts the notion of deep disagreement. The idea that it is possible to determine that there are irresolvable disagreements by definition is dogmatic. Sextus Empiricus speaks of *undecidable* disagreements, i.e., disagreements that so far cannot be resolved because there is no defining criterion to indicate what the compelling reasons are. However, this does not mean that pyrrhonics abandon the search for reasons to make use of persuasion as a manipulation -or as an irrational strategy.

In Agrippa's Five Modes -a synthesis of the modes (or *tropes*) of suspension of judgment- Sextus Empiricus establishes disagreement as the first: the mode deriving from dispute [or the mode of disagreement] (…) "we find that *undecided* dissension [*anepikriton stasin*][6] about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgment" (PH I. 166). With these indications of disagreement, pyrrhonians understand that, in our dialectical practices of arguing, it is not easy to find a criterion that settles the dispute. The question of not finding criteria is to be connected to the particular contexts in which disagreement arises.

6   Bury (1933) translates *anepikriton stasin* as "interminable conflict"; Annas and Barnes (2000) as "undecidable dissension". We follow Nathan Power (2010), who chooses the term "*undecided* dissension" to highlight that those involved in the dispute cannot be party and judge at the same time.

5. NEOPYRRHONISM: A METAPHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

From a revitalization of ancient skepticism, Neopyrrhonism understands that argumentative practices can fulfill a propaedeutic and performative function by not being reduced to a model that understands them only in terms of refutation. This is related to not reducing pyrrhonism to a kind of philosophy focused on the problem of knowledge, that is, to offering arguments or reasons that only serve to justify. Rescuing this performative function of pyrrhonian dialectic is only possible if we do not reduce these practices to a combative clash in the context of justification and if our argumentative practices are understood in an enriched way. Interpreting disagreements as *undecided* –and not as deep or irresolvable- allows us to continue arguing in different ways. Moreover, not building philosophical theories does not mean denying that argumentative practice helps to understand what disagreements are based on, to face new dogmatism that may appear, to restrain a certain rashness in the ways of reasoning, to recognize the misunderstandings and illusions that arise from the way philosophical problems are formulated, and so on.

Thereby, Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy is a philosophical orientation that advocates the creative use of persuasive argumentative practice. I find this is the most interesting way to integrate a complementary reading of the works of Sextus Empiricus and *On Certainty*. Therefore, I suggest conceiving of Neopyrrhonism as *metaphilosophy* rather than philosophy focused on the problem of knowledge or justification, as Fogelin did. These aspects highlight the non-theoretical and therapeutic way of understanding philosophy, as well as the persuasive-argumentative abilities Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein share.

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