

# ΠΑΗΟΡΑΜΑ

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## NEO-PYRRHONISM: A CONTEMPORARY VERSION OF SKEPTICISM

### 1. From anti-dogmatism to anti-skepticism and back again

When one engages in philosophizing, one usually has a critical attitude towards accepted ideas. Philosophy is, among other things, a way to scrutinize widespread prejudices; it is an investigation of the reasons one has both for and against certain general, basic, and important beliefs; it is a critical attitude towards dogmas of all kinds: religious, political, ethical, among many others that permeate human life. Rationality and critical spirit go hand in hand. This critical attitude is directed not only to other people's dogmas, but also those in our own thinking. Many are hidden, and it takes a lot of effort to identify and eradicate them. One should not have certain beliefs one has not assessed in the first place. This rational, critical investigation is, perhaps, philosophy most important contribution to human life, an attitude that is indeed necessary for our time. Anti-dogmatism is what animates most people that look for philosophy to improve their own way of thinking and living their everyday lives.

As soon as one starts philosophizing, however, this critical spirit is often lost. Instead of questioning those dogmas that permeate everyday life, the new born philosopher immediately takes skepticism as his target. The "true philosophy" is now conceived as that which overcomes the skeptical challenge. If a philosophy does not stand this challenge or, worse, if it leads to skepticism, then it is rejected or even considered refuted. It seems that the critical spirit is at least partially extinguished by the very activity that should promote it most. Anti-dogmatism is converted into anti-skepticism [Aikin 2010: 172-176].

How did this happen? Historically speaking, Descartes' first Meditation (and his answer to his methodical doubt) and Hume's excessive skepticism (and his mitigated skepticism as a solution to his doubts) turned skepticism into a main worry in doing philosophy. For both of them, the first philosophical task is to answer those skeptical doubts, and tradition followed them. In contemporary analytical philosophy, G. E. Moore [1959], with his defense of common sense and his proof of an external world, set the same agenda: philosophy has not only to resist the skeptical attack, but to refute skepticism.

Those who seek philosophy quickly learn that they should try to prove that the world exists, that there are other minds (or, rather, people), that the future will resemble the past, that the past exists and so on and so forth. These are the problems that they have to solve, they take the problems for granted, and think their task is to answer them. Since no one has

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been able to effectively refute skepticism, for every new refutation of skepticism is denounced by other philosophers as unsuccessful and, in its place, new attempts to refute it are proposed, which in their turn also prove themselves unsuccessful, at least by what other philosophers say, the specter of skepticism has been always around. Skepticism became a professional obsession [Rorty 1980], always as the challenge to be overcome, never as a philosophy on its own. Skepticism, however, is not the philosophy that real skeptics proposed, but a fiction invented by dogmatists to be superseded.

Happily, things have started to change in the last decades. First, a huge interest in skepticism was aroused by Popkin's [2003] classical book on the history of early modern skepticism, originally published in 1960, with two enlarged editions in 1979 and 2003. It sparked a more sympathetic approach to skepticism. Since then, our understanding of early modern skepticism never stopped increasing. In the 1980's, scholarship on ancient skepticism received a great impulse from the debate between Michael Frede [1998] and Myles Burnyeat [1998]. In particular, Frede presented not only an insightful interpretation of ancient Pyrrhonism, but it was also meant, at least to some extent, as its defense. If his interpretation is right, Pyrrhonism is a coherent philosophy, one that can be lived. Our image of skepticism was becoming more accurate historically, and more complex and more attractive philosophically.

Skepticism is no longer the strawman invented to be refuted, but, as in the good old days, an alternative that one may accept. Many philosophers, like Thompson Clarke, Barry Stroud, Stanley Cavell, Michael Williams, Hilary Kornblith, Peter Klein and, more recently, Scott Aikin, kept their anti-dogmatic spirit when doing philosophy. Some go as far as to openly declare themselves skeptics. In America, philosophers like Peter Unger, Robert Fogelin, Brian Ribeiro, and Baron Reed. In Latin America, the first one was Oswaldo Porchat and, after him, many others like Otávio Bueno, Vitor Hirschbruch Schwartz, Eduardo Barrio, Samuel Cabanchik, and Guadalupe Reinoso. While Reed [2019] calls himself a neo-Academic, Porchat, Fogelin, Ribeiro, and all others called themselves neo-Pyrrhonists.

Dogmatists should stop worrying about their own fictions of what skepticism is, or who the skeptic is, and should pay attention to what real skeptics say. For it is a far more consistent and interesting view. As Sextus Empiricus (PH 1.4) remarked, "About the other [kinds of philosophy] it will be appropriate for others to speak; about the skeptical orientation we will inquire now in outline".

I have been a skeptic for a very long time. At first, under Hume's influence, I just considered myself a skeptic. My skepticism evolved through time, and, more recently, I came to identify it with neo-Pyrrhonism. In this paper, I present my own version of neo-Pyrrhonism. There is no such thing as neo-Pyrrhonism as a single, unified doctrine. In fact, as I see it, there are many versions, and mine is just my way of developing that anti-dogmatical spirit into a form of skepticism, based on my interpretation of Sextus, but also of Montaigne, Bayle, and Hume, and on contemporary analytical philosophy (see [Ribeiro 2021] for a similar perspective).

I think that Wittgenstein is the main philosopher at the root of neo-Pyrrhonism. Though one might argue that he held some theses about the nature of language ('meaning is use') and about the nature of philosophical problems (they are all 'pseudo-problems'), so that he would not be a skeptic, I don't think so. In my view, Wittgenstein does not hold any thesis whatsoever, and his conception of philosophy is very similar to the Pyrrhonian one [Smith 2022: 30-38], so that we can even call him a neo-Pyrrhonist [Fogelin 1994: 12, 205-222]. Moreover, neo-Pyrrhonists, like Robert J. Fogelin, Oswaldo Porchat and Barry Stroud

clearly use basic elements of Wittgensteinian therapy, even if they allow themselves to disagree with Wittgenstein.

In section 2, I outline a very broad view of neo-Pyrrhonism, dividing it into three parts. The first, negative one is presented in section 3. It is mainly an examination of philosophical arguments on problems addressed by philosophers, whose result is suspension of judgment about those issues investigated by them. Section 4 treat the positive, practical part: how the neo-Pyrrhonist lives his life. The last section is bold and controversial, for it argues for the possibility of a skeptical view of the world.

## **2. The negative and positive sides of neo-Pyrrhonism: a new image of skepticism**

Neo-Pyrrhonian skepticism is not a philosophical theory, but a philosophical practice. It is a way of doing philosophy and living a philosophical life. This practice has both a negative and a positive side. Philosophers usually think that skepticism, in any of its forms, has only a negative one. But neo-Pyrrhonism is just like any philosophy: it has its own characteristics, and it has to tell us what it is, which are its principles, its reasonings, how he acts, which is his goal. Since it is distinct from other philosophies, the neo-Pyrrhonist has to explain why he does not accept any form of dogmatism.

When the neo-Pyrrhonist relates to us his own form of skepticism, she is offering something positive, in her own voice, and not merely dialectically in the sense of assuming what others think and, based on such premises, rejecting their theses (I will refer to the neo-Pyrrhonist as she; to the dogmatist as he). To explain the main characteristics of neo-Pyrrhonism is to elaborate a philosophical discourse; so, there is a neo-Pyrrhonian philosophical discourse which does not depend on the dogmatic framework but is built on skeptical terms.

When the neo-Pyrrhonist is arguing against dogmatism, she is telling us why she does not accept any philosophical doctrine she has pondered about. The aim, here, is to destroy dogmatism (in his personal case, not to dogmatize), a negative goal. But some qualifications are in order. This argumentative part is usually taken to be merely dialectical, i.e., it can only use dogmatic premises in order to deny dogmatic conclusions. However, it is not clear that skeptical arguments must be dialectical. It is possible that the neo-Pyrrhonist can put forward some arguments that he can accept their premises and conclusion [Porchat 1991: 164-171; Bailey 2002: 126-135; Smith 2017: 223-252; Sienkiewicz 2019]. In fact, I think some arguments are empirical, not dialectical; and, being empirical, neo-Pyrrhonists can endorse them.

Thus, one can say that the discourse explaining the main characteristics of neo-Pyrrhonism is positive, while the discourse in which the neo-Pyrrhonist presents her arguments against dogmatism is, given those qualifications, negative.

Whereas a dogmatist is different from other dogmatists because each one of them holds a particular doctrine, and so their difference boils down to differences in the dogmas they adhere to, the neo-Pyrrhonist withhold assent and, thereby, neo-Pyrrhonism is different from all forms of dogmatisms. In order to suspend judgment, she opposes arguments to each other so as to balance them; since they match in terms of persuasive force, they mutually cancel out each other, so that the neo-Pyrrhonist is not persuaded by any of them. Of course, dogmatists also have the ability to oppose arguments to each other, but when they do that their purpose is to show the superiority of one side (the one they adhere to) over the others (those they reject). So, the ability to suspend judgement about all things is what characterizes the neo-Pyrrhonian stance. The dogmatic way of thinking, by being rash and partial, leads the philosopher to this or that doctrine, but the skeptical way of thinking leads the neo-Pyrrhonist to suspension of judgment about everything he investigates philosophically.

By suspending judgement on all philosophical investigated issues, the neo-Pyrrhonist is led to a good life. So, the negative side comes first, bringing about the positive one: after investigating philosophically the truth about things, she comes to suspend judgement about everything, and then she lives his life without any opinions about what is a matter of controversy, something non-evident. She lives mostly, but not entirely, like everybody else. She has beliefs about the world she lives in and experiences, but she has no opinions about what is non-evident. That the philosophical investigation has not found the truth about the object investigated and thereby not produced any doctrine is a negative result, but a skeptical way of life is something positive.

One might say that the negative side is ‘theoretical’, for it concerns philosophical doctrines, and only the positive one is practical, for it concerns only a way of life. But this is not quite right. On the one hand, what is supposedly a ‘theoretical’ part is, in fact, a practical one. For the ‘theoretical’ part of neo-Pyrrhonism has no philosophical doctrine whatsoever, and it is merely practical, since it is nothing but the *activity* of investigation. Thus, the philosophical part of neo-Pyrrhonism is just a certain way of *doing* philosophy.

On the other hand, this skeptical life in its neo-Pyrrhonian form, which results from suspension of judgement about everything investigated so far, has a ‘theoretical’ aspect. The neo-Pyrrhonist follows many practices, including the practice of speaking English (or Portuguese or, if there is a Ukrainian neo-Pyrrhonist, Ukrainian). So, she can relate how she perceives the world and also how she thinks about the world. Accordingly, she may come to describe in a general way, if she wants to, how she conceives the world, i.e., she may relate her own experience about the world, both what she perceives and what she thinks about it. But even this ‘theoretical’ part of neo-Pyrrhonism is to be understood as something *practical*. As philosophy is part of her life, she may come to write papers or give talks about philosophical topics, in which she may say how she conceives them without being dogmatic. The neo-Pyrrhonist can elaborate what she calls a skeptical view of the world.

This more ‘theoretical’ part of the practical part of neo-Pyrrhonism has gone unnoticed, partly because the ancient Pyrrhonian skeptics themselves have not given much attention to it nor elaborated it carefully, though they certainly hinted at it. It was left to Hume, perhaps the greatest skeptic ever, to give prominence to this positive (and empirical) side of skepticism, though most scholars think his skepticism is merely destructive. They don’t see that what they call Hume’s naturalistic side and empirical science is nothing but what Hume calls his skepticism. Also Montaigne, though in a less scientific way, explored this positive philosophical side of skepticism. While Hume was more focused on the ‘theoretical’ part of skepticism, Montaigne described in detail his everyday life. Contemporary neo-Pyrrhonists talk about an “empiricism without dogmas” [Porchat 2005: 319] and, going even further, talk about a skeptical view of the world.

What holds together all these parts is the particular skeptical *way of thinking*. This way of thinking leads, in philosophy, to suspension of judgment and, in everyday life and in the sciences, to live according to what experience tells us. So, the connection between, or transition from, the negative side of neo-Pyrrhonism (its investigative activity and the ensuing suspension of judgment) and, or to, the positive side (its life without opinions and empirically exploring the world) is made by this way of thinking.

Now, this way of thinking emerges from, or is discovered by, the skeptical philosophical experience. In a sense, it was all along directing her thinking, for it is not a way of thinking different from the ways we think in everyday life. The neo-Pyrrhonist finds herself immersed in everyday life and, though she suspends judgement about many everyday opinions, she

does not withhold most everyday beliefs. In her way of thinking, she accepts what experience tells her.

In sum, (1) the person who becomes a neo-Pyrrhonist begins by investigating many philosophical issues and he ends up by not finding the truth in any issue investigated by him; (2) she goes on living her life, just like before she engaged in this philosophical investigation, except perhaps that now she no longer adheres to some of her previous opinions or dogmas (say, she no longer has a religious faith, thereby no longer rejecting abortion on religious reasons, or she no longer adheres to a political party based on dogmas, like superiority of race); and (3) she goes on doing philosophy, not only continuously suspending judgement, but also elaborating her own skeptical view of the world.

I will try to explain briefly each one of these three parts of neo-Pyrrhonism, as I see them.

### **3. The negative side: philosophical investigation and suspension of judgement**

The neo-Pyrrhonist, like any other philosopher, searches for the truth. We go to libraries to read books and papers; we travel and attend to conferences, and discuss with our fellow philosophers. In doing this, we do not discover what is true about any issue investigated so far. We did not, like many of them, come to hold any philosophical doctrine. Why?

The first main reason to become a neo-Pyrrhonist is widespread, persistent philosophical *disagreement* about all issues. So, among those that search for the truth in philosophy, some, as soon as they read or listen a persuasive argument or a powerful doctrine, give in to this argument and adhere to this doctrine. And when they read or listen to another argument or doctrine, they have already made up their minds, and so their reaction is to reject the second argument and doctrine. The order in which one comes to know particular philosophical doctrines is very important for his own philosophical opinions. However, if one is patient enough to read carefully many conflicting philosophies and to listen to them without choosing one, she realizes that they are all powerful doctrines based on very persuasive arguments. If she has this philosophical experience, then she cannot assent to any of these doctrines. For, feeling an equal inclination towards all sides, she hesitates, and this very hesitation is suspension of judgement.

Porchat, the founder of Brazilian neo-Pyrrhonism, thinks that disagreement is so widespread and powerful that one has to suspend judgement about everything *both* in philosophy *and* in everyday life (for an introduction to Porchat's philosophy, see [Smith 2015]). In his view, the everyday person is frequently dogmatic. On the one hand, he sticks stubbornly to his opinions and is not open to think twice about it. On the other hand, he asserts his opinions as absolutely true. But, according to Porchat [1991: 121], the same procedure, namely, the argument from disagreement, that undermines philosophical doctrines also undermine the everyday opinions. Therefore, the neo-Pyrrhonist will not affirm anything *at all*, he has *no belief* whatsoever. In current terminology, Porchat's neo-Pyrrhonism was rustic, and he sided, at first at least, with Myles Burnyeat [1998].

In my view, however, this is a wrong description of what happens. In everyday life, disagreement, though widespread, does not seem as widespread as in philosophy. In philosophy, every single topic, from the most important ones down to the smallest ones, is full of disagreement. In everyday life we may disagree about many things, but we don't disagree, say, about whether an object is a table or a chair, a tree or a bird. Moreover, even when we disagree in everyday life, disagreements are not usually persistent. We may disagree about how to split the check in a restaurant, but soon we come to an agreement; we may disagree about the best way to the restaurant, but Waze will tell us the fastest way. And so on. Of course,

there are still plenty of persistent disagreement in everyday life, like moral, political and religious disagreement and, in these cases, but only in them, one ought to suspend judgment. If so, in everyday life the neo-Pyrrhonist does not suspend judgment about everything; her suspension of judgment is limited.

Something similar can be said about sciences. There is a lot of disagreement in sciences, but it is not as widespread as in philosophy, except perhaps in what Kuhn [1970: 15-17] called the pre-scientific period. When a first paradigm imposes itself on the scientific community, some disagreements are over, and scientists can proceed on the basis of some basic agreements. Even later, when the paradigm faces some difficulties and more disagreement comes into play, and even in revolutionary periods (assuming, for the sake of the argument, that there are these periods), disagreement is not universal. Once science has left the pre-scientific period behind, disagreement is never total as before. Moreover, one can say, with Hilary Kornblith [2010; 2013], that the dynamics of belief in science is different from the dynamics of belief in philosophy: whereas the scientists have a way to produce agreements, even if partial and temporary, the way philosophers do their investigation only promotes more disagreement. Disagreements in science are not always persistent, and even when they last long, many times the scientists come to agree. Thus, the neo-Pyrrhonist suspends judgments about every philosophical issue based on the argument from disagreement, but her suspension of judgment in science is only localized.

So, contemporary neo-Pyrrhonists may also be, in our jargon, urbane, i.e., they may have beliefs. Robert J. Fogelin [1994: 5-9] explicitly said so. He followed the lead of Michael Frede [1998] and argued against Jonathan Barnes' [1998] version of the rustic interpretation. According to the urbane interpretation, Sextus suspended judgment only in philosophical issues, while at the same time allowed everyday beliefs, and maybe even some scientific beliefs. I am, on this point, on Fogelin's side, not on Porchat's. But I will come back on the controversy between the rustic and the urbane interpretations, and I shall suggest that neo-Pyrrhonism is neither rustic, nor urbane, and that this debate rests on a false presupposition.

This difference of range in suspension of judgment may encourage the dogmatist. If suspension of judgement is not universal in everyday life, nor in science, but it is only a localized, temporary disagreement, why not so in philosophy? He will say that the neo-Pyrrhonist was rash, not him. For the neo-Pyrrhonist did not investigate hard enough to get to the bottom of the issue; had she done so, she would not suspend judgement but find out what she looked for from the beginning. In his view, persistent philosophical disagreement can be overcome.

But how, the neo-Pyrrhonist retort, can it be overcome? The harder she investigates, the more disagreement she finds. Disagreement ramifies: one initial basic disagreement turns out in a number of smaller disagreements. The neo-Pyrrhonist is not rash (nor lazy), but her experience is that further investigation only leads to further disagreement. Each dogmatist will propose his own solution to an issue, thereby deepening disagreement. He will offer more arguments, but his arguments conflict to other arguments advanced by other dogmatists. He will connect the controverted issue to other issues to solve it, but these other issues are also full of disagreement, and so they cannot help him. Each new move investigated by the neo-Pyrrhonist only discloses more disagreement, never a solution to it.

A possible move to solve persistent disagreement in philosophy is to step back from each philosophical issue and appeal to a criterion. Accordingly, dogmatists propose a criterion of truth as a way out of disagreement. The neo-Pyrrhonist, following the footsteps of the dogmatists, investigates by what criterion she could solve philosophical disagreements, and she

finds none. For about the criterion there is as much disagreement as about any other philosophical topic. So, she needs a criterion to decide among the proposed criteria; but this leads to an infinite regress. Or she needs an argument to prove that this particular criterion is the right one. But this is circular, for she needs a criterion to identify the correct argument, and now she needs an argument to identify the criterion. And if a philosopher simply assumes one criterion as the true criterion, the neo-Pyrrhonist will retort that other dogmatists also assume other criteria without backing them up, and how are we to choose among them? They are all equally arbitrarily assumed, i.e., without reason.

Besides disagreement, the neo-Pyrrhonist appeal to some other ways of arguing, the so-called Agrippa's Trilemma. When one has to justify a philosophical doctrine, one has no escape from being guilty of infinite regress, vicious circularity, or arbitrary assumption. This Trilemma is so powerful that most philosophers think they extinguish any hope of justifying an opinion and thereby destroy any kind of knowledge. But we, neo-Pyrrhonists, do not think they are that powerful. They do not destroy justification. Each one of them, isolated, only leads to suspension of judgement about the object investigated (PH 1.164-169). And, taken collectively, what we claim is that they apply to all objects (PH 1.169-177). It has never been our intention to establish that there is no justification (or knowledge). For there are also powerful dogmatic arguments in favor of justification, so that, given that arguments pro and con are equally persuasive, one ends up by suspending judgement.

Neo-Pyrrhonists may also use other arguments to bring about suspension of judgement. For instance, the Mode of Relativity. One may point out that everything is relative, that we cannot transcend our historical situation, our own language, etc. One may hold that our ontology is relative to our conceptual scheme, or that our best empirical knowledge of the world is relative to our scientific theories. We, human beings, are historically situated and cannot transcend our perspective.

These Pyrrhonian arguments are very different from traditional skeptical arguments against knowledge (whether Academic or Cartesian). Usually, these arguments are associated with a dogmatic conception of the self (a mentalistic one, in which the mind is separable from the body), implicitly assuming solipsism or idealism. If, as is commonly argued, these Academic and Cartesian arguments presuppose a kind of mentalism, they are not, properly speaking, neo-Pyrrhonian arguments. But, of course, if these arguments puzzle the dogmatist's mind, we do not hesitate to use it [Fogelin 2003: 99-109]. A neo-Pyrrhonist may employ the madness argument, and even give it a neo-Pyrrhonian twist [Porchat 2003]. The dream argument is an example of the Fourth Mode of Aenesidemus (PH 1.104). But here, the structure of the argument has no subjectivist connotation: we cannot prefer what is perceived when we are awake to what is dreamed of. It is not suggested that our entire lives can be nothing but a dream, that we cannot distinguish between a perception and a dream. What we cannot assert is that what we perceive when awake is real while what we dream is not real, for when we are awake we take what we perceive as real and when we are asleep we take what we dream as real and we cannot judge except in one of these circumstances, because there is no neutral or non-partial way to judge. We do distinguish them, but we have no criterion to decide which is true and which is false.

In this activity of patiently investigating truth in philosophy, the neo-Pyrrhonist came to develop a method of investigation. Whenever she finds that one side of an issue is more persuasive than another side of the same issue, instead of rashly giving in to this side, she investigates what can be said in favor of the other side and against the first one. After her experience of persistent disagreement, she acquired the ability to strengthen the weaker side,

thereby making it as strong as the first one; moreover, she came to know what most philosophers said on many philosophical issues, and now she has at her disposal all these arguments, so that she will remember what one dogmatist said against the other.

So, the negative part is not negative in the usual, contemporary sense of denying that we have knowledge or justification, or that everything is open to doubt or nothing is certain. Neo-Pyrrhonists do not deny knowledge and justification; we suspend judgment about them. More specifically, we do not deny everyday and scientific knowledge, we only suspend judgment when the disagreement seems insuperable or has not yet been overcome. In this, we are very different from Cartesian skeptics; some neo-Pyrrhonists think that Academic skepticism is very different from our skepticism, but I don't think so: a proper understanding of Academic philosophy reveals more affinities than might be expected [Bolzani 2013]. Anyway, one might say that neo-Pyrrhonian skepticism is not negative, but suspensive.

Porchat [2013: 321] held, at the end of his life, a very wide definition of skepticism. For him, skepticism was the rejection of the Absolute. According to him, not only imperturbability (*ataraxia*) was merely a Hellenistic notion, inessential to Pyrrhonism, and even of small importance, but also suspension of judgement was unnecessary to define the skeptical stance [ibid.: n. 31]. At first, I thought that this idea was too extreme. But later I think I came to understand it. Think about Wittgenstein who does not hold any philosophical doctrine, but, at the same time, he does not talk about suspension of judgement. So, ancient Pyrrhonists suspended their judgment about all philosophical issues; but it does not follow that contemporary neo-Pyrrhonists should also suspend judgment; it is enough, in my view, that they do not hold any philosophical doctrine. Describing neo-Pyrrhonism as a suspensive kind of skepticism may be too restrictive, especially given that Wittgenstein is at the origins, or is the main source of, neo-Pyrrhonism. Moreover, calling neo-Pyrrhonism a 'suspensive skepticism' is to ignore its whole positive side.

Before turning to this positive side, I would like to make a last remark concerning the philosophical activity of the skeptic. Usually, analytical philosophers attribute their own questions to the skeptics. But that is not so. Philosophical investigation was invented by dogmatists. As Berkeley (PHK, Int., 3) said, they raise the dust, and then complain they cannot see. In fact, as Barry Stroud [2018: 20] has put it, referring to Wittgenstein, "treating a question is not the same as answering it. Answering it might be the worst thing to do with it". Contemporary skeptics do not take for granted philosophical questions and answer them in the negative, as is commonly held. They inquire into the very significance of a philosophical question, and so he asks what philosophers are trying to do. Stroud [1984: viii], in particular, hopes

to bring into question our very understanding of what a philosophical theory is supposed to be. That is something that I believe is not well understood as the apparently endless proliferation of more and more such 'theories' might lead one to suppose. It is time to stop and ask what *any* philosophical theory of knowledge is supposed to do.

His point is that "the study of the very nature of a philosophical problem can be an illuminating activity quite independently of whether it ever leads to a better answer". This seems in line with neo-Pyrrhonism [Smith 2016]. In a similar vein, Porchat [1996] also subjected the notion of a philosophical problem to a critical scrutiny. If taken in a dogmatic sense, we will suspend judgement, or not find an answer, but, if taken in an empirical sense, we may

find an answer or, at least, we may hope to find agreement. I will come back to this positive result emerging from philosophical activity in section 5.

#### 4. The positive side I: living a good everyday life

We have seen in the previous section that neo-Pyrrhonism has two answers as to the range of suspension of judgment. Porchat's neo-Pyrrhonism suspends judgement about everything, so that it has no belief whatsoever, either in philosophy or in everyday life. My own neo-Pyrrhonism suspends judgement on all philosophical issues, but sticks to many beliefs in everyday life and even in the sciences. So, for Porchat the objection that it is impossible to live seems to be a serious one, whereas it is but a very weak objection to my kind of neo-Pyrrhonism, since I have many everyday (and scientific) beliefs.

Now, Porchat [1991: 122] does not think that the so-called *apraxia* objection is a strong one, for it involves a misunderstanding about what neo-Pyrrhonism is. It is true that the rustic interpretation is also a criticism of skepticism: the skeptic cannot live his life according to skeptical principles, i.e., without beliefs [Burnyeat 1998]. Frede answered that the Pyrrhonist suspends his judgement whether it is possible or not to live without beliefs [1998: 7], but he went on to offer an explanation of how a skeptic can have everyday beliefs in order to live [ibid.: 8ff.]. But Porchat opted for a different solution: he thinks the neo-Pyrrhonist can live without beliefs. The solution lies in the skeptical notion of phenomenon. This notion, then, is the most important notion in Porchat's neo-Pyrrhonism.

Porchat was well aware of the difficulties to understand this term. According to him, Sextus himself was not clear about it, and he seems to have implied that the *phainomenon* (what appears) is nothing but a *phantasia* (an appearance), something subjective (PH 1.13, 1.19, 1.22), somewhat anticipating Descartes' subjectivism; in this, Sextus was following the Stoics and the Academics, who also conceive *phantasia* as a modification of the mind [Porchat 1986b; 1991: 128-130]. But he came to see, thanks to the criticisms of two of his students (Luiz Antonio Alves Eva and Carlos Inada) that this identification was wrong, that the *phainomenon* was not merely a *phantasia* (or a *pathos*). First, for a philosophical reason: if ancient Pyrrhonism had identified *phainomenon* and *phantasia*, it would be guilty of dogmatism, namely, a kind of mentalism akin to that of Descartes. And, historically, Sextus (M 8.370-439) did criticize the dogmatic notion of *phantasia*, thereby suspending judgment about it [Porchat 1991: 130-132].

It is true that as a criterion of action, a *phainomenon* must be a *phantasia*, i.e., one may act only if something that appears is in fact perceived by the person. If a truck is coming our way, we move away quickly only if we perceive it. But *phainomena* are usually ordinary things: tables, chairs, trees, apples, fishes, people... These are the examples given by Sextus. So, *phainomenon* is the skeptical term for what the Stoics call *hupokeimenon*.

Still, I think that Porchat should not have used a dogmatic term, even if reworked by him, in order to articulate his neo-Pyrrhonism. For some reasons. First, it is difficult for most people to think of *what* appears (a thing or object) not as an *appearance* (something subjective in the mind). If objects are appearances, it may seem that their appearance is *essential* to them. But it is not. Moreover, as Porchat [1995: 208-212] himself acknowledged, the *phainomenon* is something relative to the person to whom it appears, so there is a sense in which, for him, reality is relative to a subject. He even calls his neo-Pyrrhonism a form of (sophisticated) relativism. Accordingly, he says that, though neo-Pyrrhonism has no solip-

sistic tendency, objectivity boils down to intersubjectivity, and skeptical realism is phenomenic realism. Porchat defines truth realistically, as correspondence with what appears, but later he steps back by saying that truth is defined inside the phenomenic realm.

In my view, these ideas (that reality somehow is relative and dependent on us, that objectivity is intersubjectivity, that truth is intra-phenomenic) are dangerously close to a kind of idealistic dogmatism, despite the explicit intention, even insistence, on the contrary. All these problems arise because Porchat retained the old term *phainomenon* as basic to his neo-Pyrrhonism. But if it causes difficulties, why stick to it? Why not simply drop out this dangerous notion? That is my suggestion. Accordingly, in my neo-Pyrrhonism, I don't talk about "things that appear", but just about things. I avoid substituting a skeptical technical term (*phainomenon*) for a dogmatic term (*hupokeimenon*). It is better to stick to everyday language and talk about tables and chairs, and about our experience of them. Besides, Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism does not try to rescue the old notion of *phainomenon*; it is an outdated notion. Neo-Pyrrhonism does not need it, and it may bring in some problems. Finally, there is no need to appeal to any skeptical technical notion to explain how it is possible to live without beliefs, if the neo-Pyrrhonist has beliefs about tables and chairs, about trucks coming in our way, about falling into precipices, about food nourishing etc.

At the first moment of his neo-Pyrronism, Porchat thought (following Quine 1969, 1980) that the difference between sensible *phainomena* and intelligible *phainomena* is a matter of degree. Porchat explained, or defined, *to phainomenon* as "the immediate content of my everyday experience" [1991: 124]. This immediate content is linguistically structured, so that the content that characterizes a *phainomenon* can be given a linguistic expression. So, if a *phainomenon* has the content *p*, the sentence "*p*" expresses its content. Some experiences have a lot of sense content ("this is a red ball"), others have a lot of intellectual content (e.g., "the dark side of the moon has mountains", " $E=mc^2$ "). But all *phainomena* have at least some perceptual and some intellectual content. Now, this somewhat Kantian doctrine has an unfortunate consequence. Since intelligible *phainomena* are linguistically structured, so are sensible *phainomena*. Even *phainomena* like "this is a red ball" are linguistically structured, i.e., structured by our concepts. But if the difference is only a matter of degree, this seems to entail that sensible objects, like a table or a tree or a stone, are dependent on our language. Therefore, Porchat was committed to the idea that all phenomena were to some extent relative to our language, since, for him, language was an ingredient of all *phainomena*, including things that appear. This is a kind of linguistic idealism, something that Porchat never wanted.

Later (but only much later), Porchat [2013: 302, n. 13] realized that this doctrine of the continuity of sensible and intelligible *phainomena* was a mistake. (Here, he was influenced by another of his students, Vitor Hirschbruch Schwartz.) One thing is what appears, an independent object out there in the world, which appears to our senses; another thing is the intelligible object in our minds. I think that, when he drew this distinction (as one should, of course), he perceived (or should have perceived) that the appearance of an object (its *phantasia* in our mind), or the experience or sense-perception we have, may be linguistically impregnated, but that does not mean that the sensible *thing* which appears to us is linguistically impregnated. Once the neo-Pyrrhonist draws a clear distinction between the *thing* that appears to us and its *appearance* to us (i.e., its sense-perception or the experience we feel), then he can hold that only the content of sense-perception is linguistically impregnated, but the thing that appears is not, thereby preserving a sound objectivity, without being guilty of dogmatic idealism. Porchat used Quine again, but in a new way: he no longer applied Quine's doctrine of the continuity between observation and theory to

*phainomena*, but he appealed to Quine's idea that we associate by experience certain sentences to certain experiences. There is no need for the content of the experience to match the content of the object in the world; there is no, so to speak, 'internal relation' between the *phainomenon* and its expression (the same 'content'); their relation is 'external', i.e., established by experience (conditioning). He moved from a kind of Kantian doctrine about *phainomena* to a Quinean one.

At least, this is how I conceive my neo-Pyrrhonism: appearances (*phantasiai*) are linguistically impregnated, or theory-laden, but this does not entail any dependence of reality on us. It does not follow from the fact that what we perceive is in some measure dependent on our language any form of idealism, not even the transcendental one. Now, when the neo-Pyrrhonist draws this distinction and retains a sound notion of independent reality, then objectivity is not reduced to intersubjectivity, and there is no need to call objects pertaining to this independent reality *phainomena*. They are simply the objects we perceive. Nor does it follow any dogmatic realism, for the neo-Pyrrhonist distinguishes between everyday independent reality and the 'absolute' reality imagined by dogmatists.

In sum, I think that the neo-Pyrrhonist should not use the old notion of *phainomenon*. I am criticizing a certain subjectivist tendency in Porchat's neo-Pyrrhonism given his attachment to the notion of *phainomenon*. But note also that he himself moves away from a more relativistic, intersubjectivist or idealistic stance to a more objective one. He proposes a neo-Pyrrhonian doctrine of truth, according to which truth is correspondence to what appears. When he defines truth as correspondence, by divorcing correspondence and dogmatic realism, he starts to talk about a *skeptical realism*. I think he was in the right direction. Instead of talking about what appears (or, even worse, appearances), let's talk about *experience*.

One common objection to Pyrrhonism is that it cannot explain modern and contemporary science. Ancient Pyrrhonists thought that commemorative signs might explain our empirical knowledge of the world (PH 2.100-102; see M 5.2). Now, since commemorative signs are everyday objects (*phainomena*, in skeptical terminology) that are perceived together with other everyday objects, empirical science rests at the level of what is observed together with something else. But modern empirical science goes well beyond what appears to us. One might say that contemporary science concerns what is non-evident and, therefore, a neo-Pyrrhonist could never accept scientific hypotheses concerning the non-evident. It is not a matter of empirical correlation (or even causation) between things that appear; and modern science is not inductivist, its laws are not mere generalizations from particular instances.

How could a neo-Pyrrhonist answer this objection? First, I argued that it is not important to keep the old notion of *phainomenon*. It can be dropped out of the picture. One consequence is that there is no need for an empirical science to remain at the observational level. But it is even more important to realize that, even if one sticks to this vocabulary, what appears and what is non-evident do not depend on "not being inferred" and "being inferred". Objects in the world might not appear to the senses, and still not be "naturally non-evident". Pyrrhonists do not think things are 'naturally non-evident'. What matters is whether there is agreement or not.

So, if I am right, both in saying that there is important agreement in the sciences and that the apparent/non-evident distinction is based on agreement/disagreement, then the neo-Pyrrhonist can accept scientific hypotheses as long as there is agreement among scientists about them: they 'appear' to our intellects, they impose themselves, through experiments, as the best hypotheses so far. For example, a skeptic should suspend judgment about the bosom of Higgs, for there was a persistent disagreement about it. When some experiments were done

and empirical corroboration favored this hypothesis, there was agreement among scientists that there is such an entity. Accordingly, the neo-Pyrrhonist accepts this theoretical hypothesis: it is no longer something obscure, but something that ‘appears’ to his intellect, i.e., it is a strong hypothesis.

Besides, a neo-Pyrrhonist can incorporate the skeptical distinction between *phainomenon/adelon* (what appears/the non-evident), if properly understood. One might be inclined to think this distinction in Stoic terms, as a distinction between what is immediate and manifests itself (*enargeia/prodelon*) and what is inferred (*adelon*) (PH 2.100-102). But the skeptical distinction is very different from the dogmatic distinction, because it is based not on inference, but on agreement [Smith 2022: 270-273]. Disagreement is a sign of being non-evident or obscure; were something apparent, there would be no disagreement (Sextus PH 2.8, 2.182). What characterizes what appears is not immediacy, but agreement. For example, if I infer fire from smoke, fire still counts as something that appears (though it does not appear at the moment), and not, as the Stoics would have it, as something non-evident (even if temporarily). Nothing is by ‘nature’ non-evident (as the Stoics have it), but things may be called apparent or non-evident if there is agreement about them or not.

So, the properly skeptic distinction is between experience and what seems beyond experience, at least so far. Since the distinction is not ‘by nature’, things that at one moment or circumstances are considered beyond the reach of experience may count as within its reach at another moment or circumstance. Theories change, instruments get better, methods improve, and so we start to have experience of what before was not available to experience. There is no fixed boundary between experience and what is not capable of experience. A dogmatist may try to draw this boundary once and for all (like the Stoics, or Kant’s distinction between phenomena and things in themselves), but this boundary may change, as in fact it did in the past. Accordingly, the neo-Pyrrhonist has also no fixed demarcation line between science and non-science. It would be dogmatic to have one. This does not mean that there is no difference between them, nor that one cannot have a provisional, relative criterion of demarcation.

Surprisingly, Porchat was, at first, a scientific realist. How could a skeptic be a scientific realist? Porchat [1991: 143] distinguished scientific realism from metaphysical realism. Concerning the latter, he suspended judgement, but not concerning the former. “If such a dissociation is achieved, ‘scientific realism’ becomes totally acceptable to a Berkeleyan or Kantian, for example, because it does not prejudice the epistemological or ontological interpretation of scientific theories. For this very reason, and to the same extent, it is entirely reconcilable with the skeptical *epokhē*”. Scientific realism is still an option for the Porchat, because, following Quine [1969; 1980], this is just a matter of degree, and there is no essential difference between positing a table and positing an electron. Believing that there are tables made from wood is similar to believing that water is composed by H<sub>2</sub>O. Science does not discover or describes the essence of things. Empirical science is not concerned with the ‘naturally non-evident’, though it goes beyond ‘what appears’ to the senses. There is no need for the neo-Pyrrhonist “to take a conventionalist, operationalist or even pragmatic perspective, in the technical and more precise sense of the term” [1991: 142].

Later, however, Porchat [2005: 317] changed his mind. He came to see that philosophical realism was, perhaps, a dogmatic theory about science. First, he [ibid.: 203] claimed that the association between words and things are ‘conventional’: “Acceptance of the conventionalist doctrine associated with that of commemorative signs implies that a correspondence between words and things has been socially instituted”. I have already pointed out that this move was a very important one, for Porchat no longer held a somewhat Kantian position,

according to which the content of our perceptions are identical to the *phainomena*, as if the world that appears were also determined by our language. Porchat seems to have applied this change to his conception of science. Also in science, we have no more than correlation of *phainomena* to *phainomena*: “As far as the phenomenal sphere is concerned, the systematic observations of the *tekhnai* allow the skeptic to take a conventionalist stance in practice” [ibid.: 317]. At the end of the day, Porchat adopted conventionalism as the neo-Pyrrhonian philosophy of science.

Should the neo-Pyrrhonist be a realist or a non-realist about scientific *theories*? Otávio Bueno [2015], another important Brazilian neo-Pyrrhonist, thinks that the skeptical position is compatible both with realism and anti-realism, if they are conceived as stances, not propositions, for, as stances, they do not clash. However, for him, as much as for Porchat later, scientific realism has a dogmatic view of the aim of science and of the relation between scientific theory and the world. He [2021: 7-9] argues that there are common features between neo-Pyrrhonism and Van Fraassen’s constructive empiricism, such as use of underdetermination arguments, not having beliefs about unobservable entities, thinking that truth is not the aim of scientific inquiry, and rejection of metaphysics.

The fact is that, if one takes modern and contemporary science more as a *practice* or an activity (than a theory), it seems entirely compatible with neo-Pyrrhonism [Porchat 1991: 141]. The neo-Pyrrhonist can accept the results of science (I will come back to this point), for they do not describe the ‘nature’ of things. If I am right about the correct interpretation of Sextus’ distinction between *phainomenon* and *adelon*, as a distinction that does not depend on immediacy and inference, but on agreement and disagreement, whose boundaries may change, not according to the nature of things, but according to our opinions about them, then perhaps one can stick to the idea that science is talking about the same world as we do in everyday life, i.e., it appears to us *both* that there is water *and* that there are molecules made of atoms. This may not amount to a ‘scientific realism’, but it still preserves the idea that science is talking about the world we live in. It is an activity that includes hypotheses and theories that help us to cope with the world (though not always...).

I have gone too far in discussing Porchat’s neo-Pyrrhonian notion of *phainomenon* (what appears) and some of its consequences. I hope this has been useful to understand some of the discussions around neo-Pyrrhonism in Brazil. Let me go back to our main topic: a skeptical life.

There is a second objection to neo-Pyrrhonism. Some critics say that a skeptical life is boring, it deprives life from what gives it its glamour, the skeptic merely observes what goes on in everyday life and even within himself, he is very passive and, when one needs to take a decision, his skeptical stance will not let him react as she should.

Is a skeptical life better than the life of an everyday person or than a dogmatic life? Porchat and Fogelin didn’t discuss, as far as I know, this objection. Porchat mentions sometimes this aspect of neo-Pyrrhonism (imperturbability), but only in passing and without any interesting remark; he only repeats what Sextus said. Fogelin, not even that. But, in my view, this is indeed a serious objection. If the main positive side of neo-Pyrrhonism is to live a skeptical life, then this life must be attractive. And it is up to the neo-Pyrrhonist to show that suspension of judgment has some beneficial impact on a skeptical life.

Though someone might say that the skeptical proposal should be useful to everybody, since Pyrrhonism is meant to cure dogmatists and everyday people from their dogmatism and rash opinions, I think that a neo-Pyrrhonian life may not suit every kind of people. Perhaps some people will live better without any philosophy or, if they become philosophers,

they will live better if they are dogmatists. So strange and varied is the human being! But for some people a skeptical life will suit better. It is a contingent fact that suspension of judgement is followed by tranquility (*ataraxia*). It may depend both on psychological and on historical circumstances. Christians take it as very important to have faith; so it is harder for them to arrive at tranquility if they ever suspend judgement about God's existence.

But the practice of suspending of judgement turns one into a more careful thinker. After so many years devoted to philosophical investigation, examining with equal care both sides of a question, one acquires the habit of not judging before hearing the other side. More than that, she improves her capacity to understand other points of view, to understand different perspectives, to widen her views. She is now able to control her will, and not to assent rashly; she will take time to ponder opposing arguments before coming to a decision, if she ever comes. I think this is a very important capacity in human relations: the capacity to understand another point of view. (If we do well our duty as historians of philosophy, we also learn to understand another point of view, for what is to interpret a philosopher, if not to understand what he says?).

And in everyday life the neo-Pyrrhonist knows she must make up her mind. For instance, if she gets pregnant (or if the neo-Pyrrhonist is a man and his partner gets pregnant), it is not enough to think about arguments pro and against abortion, and suspend judgement. That's ludicrous! Only someone not engaged in everyday life could think that. Suspending judgement and doing nothing is already taking a decision, or merely pretending one is not taking it. But the neo-Pyrrhonist, whether a man or a woman, will not precipitate, if time allows (as Carneades said). He or she is engaged in everyday life, and he or she knows that a decision must be taken. But he or she knows that this is a matter of personal decision (if the law allows abortion), for no philosophical theory has an answer to issues like this one. And he or she will take responsibility for his or her acts.

In my view, the philosophical experience through which one becomes a neo-Pyrrhonist has an impact on the person. It may not bring about new opinions (whether philosophical or otherwise), but it produces in her certain dispositions and capacities, even some moral traits. If so, neo-Pyrrhonism contributes to a more responsible and better life.

## 5. The positive side II: a skeptical view of the world

The neo-Pyrrhonist is a philosopher, albeit not a dogmatic (or Academic) one. As such, she investigates what is true. But her investigation is not confined about those philosophical issues investigated by dogmatists; it also concerns the very world we experience. So, she still holds beliefs about the world we live in. These beliefs are articulated, and she can express her view of the world. How are they articulated?

This skeptical world view has two aspects (personal and common) and three dimensions (everyday, scientific, philosophical). These two aspects and three dimensions are intimately connected to each other: each aspect is present in the three dimensions, and each dimension has both a personal and a common aspect.

There is no such thing as *the* skeptical view of the world, for every skeptical view is personal, at least to some extent. It depends on the personal history of the skeptic, for her beliefs depend on her personal experience. It is better, therefore, to speak only of *a* skeptical view of the world. But, obviously, any skeptical view of the world has also a common aspect, for, as human beings, we share our experience of the world. We live in the same world, we speak the same language (within our country, at least in Brazil), we learn similar things at school, we watch the same football matches.

As we grow up, we are progressively integrated into a common worldview. Our personal experience is, at bottom, indissociable from common experience. Still, a skeptical view of the world has both a personal and a common aspect. Of course, there is no need to say that what is common is universal among human beings. There are degrees: some things are personal, some belong to a small group, others to a large society; perhaps some very basic beliefs are shared by most adult human beings. A skeptic born in one society, say in Rome I BCE, will certainly have a somewhat different worldview from a skeptic born in Brazil in the XX Century: the first has no belief whatsoever about vaccine, for there were no vaccines at that time. The belief that there are trees and fishes, perhaps, is held by the vast majority across all times and nations.

One can also distinguish three dimensions in a skeptical view of the world. The first one is the everyday dimension. This is the basic dimension. There is no skeptical worldview if one does not live an everyday life. If the neo-Pyrrhonist goes to a drugstore to buy a medicine, and the attendant says this medicine is lacking, for it is no longer produced, she acquires a new belief. Our everyday life shapes the basic outlines of a skeptical view of the world.

We learn about the world from our experience, not only in a random way, but also in more careful procedures. Since experience is the main source of our beliefs, scientific investigation, as a systematic, empirical investigation of the world we live in, also contributes to this skeptical world view. The neo-Pyrrhonist can correct and improve his view of the world according to scientific lights.

Finally, philosophical reflection may also have an impact on a skeptical view of the world, for the neo-Pyrrhonist may detect, in her philosophical investigation, some hidden dogmas she held and now she no longer holds it. So, skeptical investigation may lead the neo-Pyrrhonist to get rid of some dogmatic beliefs. But it may also shape some of her beliefs as well. She is able to relate to other people how she sees the world. There is nothing dogmatic in doing that. In particular, the neo-Pyrrhonist may have a view on some philosophical issues, provided she merely expresses her own thinking without asserting her beliefs as a definitive or absolute truth about the issue.

The neo-Pyrrhonist may have some beliefs even about philosophical issues. I have said that experience is the main source of our knowledge about the world, that science is a systematic empirical investigation of the world we live in. So, the neo-Pyrrhonist is an empiricist in philosophy of science. For her, experience is the source of our ideas, and experience is also the way we judge our beliefs. Porchat, referring to Quine [1980: 42], said that neo-Pyrrhonism is an “empiricism without dogmas”. Bueno [2021], as we saw, says that she will adhere to Bas Van Fraassen’s constructive empiricism with some modifications.

The neo-Pyrrhonist may relate his beliefs in many other philosophical issues, and they did so. Fogelin [1994: 28], for one, has a definition of knowledge. He is not committed to claim that this or that belief is knowledge, for he merely defines it. But this definition is itself a main issue in philosophical investigation, since at least Plato’s *Theaetetus*. If so, it is not true that the neo-Pyrrhonist (or the skeptic) can work only with what dogmatists say, without having her own view of the matter; it is not true that she can argue only dialectically, turning what dogmatists say against themselves. It is true that she often argues dialectically, basing her arguments on dogmatic premises, but it by no means exhausts what she says or can say.

Another important example is Porchat’s neo-Pyrrhonian definition of truth as correspondence, which we saw above. I will summarize it. Porchat [1995] claimed that all recent objections to the correspondential theory of truth were anticipated by ancient skeptics, so

that one might think that an updated Pyrrhonist would join new theories of truth. However, Porchat argued, these arguments are directed to dogmatic realism, not to the conception of truth itself. According to Porchat, Kant taught us to distinguish between the definition of truth and metaphysical (dogmatic) realism. One can stick to the definition of truth as correspondence, while rejecting or, better, suspending judgment about dogmatic realism.

I myself, following their lead, tried to clarify what perception is [Smith 2020: 217-248]. At least, I tried to describe our everyday concept of perception, as a concept that the neo-Pyrrhonist holds in his everyday life. I defended a relational, causal concept of perception. This is, in my view, the first step towards a skeptical view of perception. The neo-Pyrrhonist still needs to reflect on what empirical science has to say about perception, something I didn't do. I also held that the neo-Pyrrhonism has a conception of what exists (and does not exist), i.e., an ontology: stones, rivers, trees, animals, dogs, human beings exist; unicorns, flying horses like Pegasus do not. (As I said, this does not constitute a 'phenomenic' world or a 'phenomenic' realism.)

More recently, I argued that our ordinary view of colors is that objects are colored; color is not usually considered a merely subjective quality or, at most, a mere disposition in bodies to cause in us sensations of color [Smith 2023]. This is in line, in my view, to what historical skeptics, like Sextus and Hume, thought, and with what Stroud [2000] held: one does not give a verdict about the dogmatic issue whether color is an inherent property of an object or not, but we still think, in everyday life, that objects are colored, and dogmatic philosophy has not given us any conclusive to think otherwise.

But since every skeptical view of the world is but *a* skeptical worldview, there may be disagreement among neo-Pyrrhonists themselves. For instance, Kornblith [2002: 90, n. 35] disagrees with Fogelin's definition of knowledge. For him, knowledge is reliable true belief, and justification is merely a sophisticated way in which beliefs are more reliable. It is not correct to say that, in order to have knowledge, two conditions have to be met: both responsiveness to the environment and epistemic responsibility.

Another example is Eduardo Barrio disagreement with Porchat's definition of truth. According to Barrio [2000], all correspondentist theory of truth is dogmatic, including Porchat's. A neo-Pyrrhonist should be a deflationist. I argued that, at bottom, what they say, properly understood, comes down to a very similar stance [Smith 2012]. Both a correspondence explanation of truth and a deflationist explanation of truth can be dogmatic, if taken to apprehend the 'nature' of truth, and, as such, they clash; but taken as an explanation of what we mean by this word 'truth', they are not dogmatic, rival theories, but seem to say the same thing in different words.

The obvious objection is: is not neo-Pyrrhonism falling back into dogmatism? What is the difference between this skeptical view of the world and a dogmatic theory? Isn't the very disagreement among neo-Pyrrhonist evidence of this dogmatic character of their worldview? These questions have to be met, for they inevitably emerge. It is impossible to answer them in detail here. But some hints can be given. First, one must insist that not all views of the world are dogmatic; not all assertion is dogmatic assertion. If the everyday person can affirm things without being dogmatic, why couldn't the neo-Pyrrhonist do the same? The dogmatist does not control the meaning of the verb "to be". Next, the difference between a skeptical view of the world and a dogmatic one should be clear: the first is not asserted as absolutely true, but expresses the point of view of the neo-Pyrrhonist. Moreover, the everyday dimension of her worldview can be corrected by empirical, scientific results; these results, by their

turn, may be object of philosophical reflection. The skeptical world view is always precarious, provisional, in constant correction under the light of further experiences and reflection; while a dogmatic view of the world is (supposed to be) definitive. Finally, one may distinguish between kinds of disagreements, like those among dogmatists, that are persistent and seem insoluble, and disagreements that can perhaps be solved, for instance by more experience. As far as I can see, disagreement among neo-Pyrrhonists belong to the latter kind of disagreement.

Perhaps one will say that this is obvious, and that we no longer philosophize as we did in the old days, for philosophers no longer seek definitive philosophical systems, nor absolute truths; neo-Pyrrhonism is too mild [Fogelin 1994: 192]. My answer is the same answer as the one given by Porchat and Fogelin this is because the skeptical message has been incorporated in current philosophical thought; but, unfortunately, philosophers do not acknowledge, probably because they do not know, that this is due to the historical triumph of the skeptical tradition. Skepticism, though criticized by most hands, is what explains the modest, empirical approach to philosophical issues in the contemporary scene. According to Porchat [2001: 268], “something that seems to stand out to me, then, is the eminently skeptical nature of a considerable part of 20th century philosophical thought”. And Fogelin [2004: 171] says: “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: the neo-Pyrrhonian skepticism”.

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### **Neo-Pyrrhonism: a contemporary version of skepticism**

У цій статті представлено й обґрунтовано сучасну версію скептицизму: неопірронізм. Інтерес до історії скептицизму породив нову, складнішу і привабливішу концепцію скептицизму. Тож багато філософів зараз стверджують, що вони скептики. Відповідно до того, що вони кажуть, я теж розвиваю неопірронізм, як його бачу. Він містить негативну частину, в якій критикуються догми, і позитивну: по-перше, неопірроніст у своєму житті йде за своїми скептичними принципами і повсякденністю; по-друге, він здатен філософськи описати свій скептичний погляд на світ, пропонуючи тим самим можливі розв'язки емпірично осягнутих філософських проблем.

***Плініо Жункейра Сміт***

**Неопірронізм: сучасна версія скептицизму**

This paper presents and argues for a contemporary version of skepticism: neo-Pyrrhonism. Interest in the history of skepticism engendered a new, more complex and attractive conception of skepticism. Accordingly, many philosophers now claim they are skeptics. In line with what they say, I develop neo-Pyrrhonism as I see it. It has a negative part, in which dogmas are criticized, and a positive one: first, the neo-Pyrrhonist lives his life according to his skeptical principles and following everyday life, and, second, he is able to describe philosophically his skeptical view of the world, thereby offering possible solutions to philosophical problems empirically conceived.

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