

THE ANCIENT SCEPTIC ATTITUDE AND DISAGREEMENT*

A ATITUDE CÉTICA ANTIGA E DISCORDÂNCIA

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ABSTRACT *It is argued that a philosophical “sceptic attitude”, found originally in the Socratic approach and arguably in the Pyrrhonist’s treatment of disagreement, should be taken to be an epistemically positive attitude in the sense that it fosters a serious philosophical examination of what is taken to be true, without entailing the radical scepticism often associated with it. We argue that if the two sides of a disagreement are equivalent (at that moment, given the evidence available), it doesn’t require one to consider the disagreement as undecidable without qualification and so to suspend judgment indefinitely. If this is so, we claim, the Pyrrhonian disagreement-based position will be*

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significantly restricted as a form of scepticism and should instead be seen as promoting an epistemically propitious sceptic attitude.

Keywords: *Socrates. Expert. Dissent. Suspension of Judgement. Pyrrhonism. Scepticism.*

RESUMO *Argumenta-se que uma “atitude filosófica cética”, encontrada originalmente na abordagem socrática e, discutivelmente, no tratamento da discordância pirrônica, deveria ser considerada uma atitude epistemicamente positiva no sentido de que promove um exame filosófico sério do que é considerado verdade, sem que isso implique no ceticismo radical frequentemente associado a ela. Argumentamos que se os dois lados de uma discordância são equivalentes (naquele momento, dadas as evidências disponíveis), não é necessário considerar a discordância como indecível sem qualificação e, portanto, suspender o julgamento indefinidamente. Se isto for assim, afirmamos, a posição baseada na discordância pirrônica será significativamente restringida como uma forma de ceticismo e deve ser vista como promovendo uma atitude cética epistemicamente propícia.*

Palavras-chave: *Sócrates. Perito. Divergência. Suspensão de Julgamento. Pirronismo. Ceticismo.*

1. Introduction

This paper, which emerges from the conviction that Ancient thought can be brought into discussion with contemporary views,¹ argues that an Ancient philosophical “sceptic attitude”, found in the Socratic approach and the Pyrrhonist’s treatment of disagreement, should be taken to be an epistemically positive attitude, in the sense that it fosters a serious philosophical examination of what is taken to be true, and not as promoting radical scepticism.² If “sceptic”

1 As is obvious in this paper, we do not intend to engage in a detailed interpretation of Plato and the Ancient Sceptics, but to make use of their views and arguments, stressing this way the philosophical relevance of their approaches nowadays. Of course, when doing this, we discuss the Platonic and Ancient Sceptic texts following the standard patterns of scholarship, but our focus is mainly on the systematic aspects of those philosophers rather than on the historical ones. To put it clearer, in our treatment of scepticism sometimes we do not agree with Sextus Empiricus, but exploit some of his suggestions insofar as they look appealing for our purpose in this paper.

2 That is, scepticism in the sense of the “orthodox Pyrrhonist scepticism” which recommends to suspend judgement *in all the cases*, implicitly suggesting that a positive knowledge cannot be attained. On “Pyrrhonism” and Pyrrho’s scepticism see Diogenes Laertius (DL) 9 (the main passages are translated and commented

is taken to mean “investigative” (which is the meaning Sextus Empiricus seems to favour; *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes*—hereafter *PH*— 1.7), any serious philosophical attitude focused both on unmasking false experts and examining what is taken for granted without scrutiny is sceptic in that sense.

Following what the Academic sceptics used to say, we hold that Socrates was a forerunner of scepticism. According to Socrates,³ if after the dialogical conversation one of the speakers (who claimed to be an expert) is shown to be not a genuine expert on the subject matter of her alleged expertise, the investigation must continue since one cannot then defer to such a person on the basis of her being an expert.⁴ The view that the investigation should go on was an inspiring idea for Sextus Empiricus, who asserted that, unlike Dogmatists and “other Academics”, “the Sceptics are still investigating” (*PH* 1.2).

According to Sextus, among the divergent accounts on the same topic there is an equilibrium or equipollence (ἰσοσθένεια) inasmuch as none of them excel another as being more convincing. This being so, we shouldn’t accept one account and reject the other, and what the responsible epistemic agent ought to do is suspend judgment since there is an *undecidable* dissension (*PH* 1.10, 165, 170. 2.19, 32. 3.6, 70, 108). But the fact that the two sides of a disagreement *are* equivalent (*at that moment, given the evidence available*—i.e., given the present circumstances) doesn’t require one to consider the disagreement as undecidable *without qualification* and so to suspend judgment indefinitely. In our opinion, it is clear that the Pyrrhonian view that the sceptic opposes arguments (or “explanations”) in order to suspend judgement and attain tranquillity (which is his end) does not make the search for truth (which is presented as a kind of exploration of disagreement) unviable. In fact, “our” sceptical philosopher is already motivated to search for truth and continue searching for it. Strictly speaking, in the continuous search for truth, when one arrives at equipollence, such equipollence is not (and need not necessarily be) paralysing. When one arrives at equipollence E, say, one stops *hic et nunc*, but circumstances may change so that other discordant explanations may present themselves, leading to another equipollence E¹. Eventually, the earlier halting may have helped

on by Annas and Barnes, 1994, pp. 20, 29-30, 101-106). We are here following Sextus’ characterization of Pyrrhonism; his works are the most complete and accurate testimony we have of the Pyrrhonian scepticism (see Mates, 1996, pp. 4-6; Bett, 2000, pp. 2-4). Of course, we aren’t assuming that Sextus’ Pyrrhonism stands for Pyrrho’s philosophy; we just take for granted that the most detailed version of Pyrrhonism (as interpreted by Sextus himself) is contained in Sextus’ works.

3 We shall refer to “Socrates” (i.e., the character of Plato’s dialogues), and avoid engaging in the discussion concerning the historical Socrates, which is irrelevant for our purposes in this paper. For discussion see Kahn, 1996, pp. 71-95.

4 We develop this point in the following section of this paper.

the sceptic to visualise new explanations, which, in turn, may oppose other explanations resulting in a new state of equipollence. But that process need not go on *ad infinitum*; each equipollence is undecidable with the epistemic resources available to the philosopher at that moment and circumstance. It is in this sense that we argue that disagreement is not “absolutely” undecidable. Our purpose is not to claim that from the fact that the sceptic is not thinking about “absolute undecidability”, it follows that one can attribute to him an *intention* to search for truth. However, if one accepts that the Pyrrhonic philosopher’s undecidability cannot be absolute, it seems evident that the sceptic’s “further inquiry” aims to search for truth. If this were not the case, the further inquiry would not make sense.

A more orthodox view regarding this point states that what the sceptic suspension of judgement (ἐποχή) posits is that one should *remain* (likely indefinitely) in the philosophical investigation, which means “the abstention from any thetic pronouncement on the world and on the discourses that dogmatism develops philosophically in an attempt to explain it” (Bolzani Filho, 2013, p. 28). This “more orthodox” approach of what the sceptic ἐποχή is, arguably is the one that best fits with Sextus’ text. But at this point our challenge is that, even though the two sides of a disagreement *could* be undecidable, given the evidence available at a specific moment, that does not compel one to consider the disagreement as undecidable *without qualification* and so to suspend judgment *indefinitely*. Our point is supported by Sextus himself while observing that, when the sceptic says that “everything is inapprehensible” he is not *asserting* that what the Dogmatics investigate are of such a nature as to be inapprehensible, but *reporting* his own feeling in virtue of which *up to now* one has not apprehended any of these things due to the equipollence of the opposite accounts (see Sextus, *PH* 1.200, also cited by Bolzani Filho, 2013, p. 30). More importantly, if the Pyrrhonist thought that disagreements are *in principle* undecidable, the characterization of the (Pyrrhonian) Sceptics as those who are still investigating in search of the truth wouldn’t make much sense.⁵ If

5 We are aware that this suggestion must face the fact that the Pyrrhonist (represented here by Sextus Empiricus) seeks suspension of judgment just as a way to attain a practical goal, tranquility (ἀταραξία; as emphasized by scholars, Pyrrhonism must be taken to be a “philosophy of life”; see Mates, 1996, p. 5; Annas and Barnes, 1994, pp. 17-18). So, when perturbations (produced by dogmatism) have been removed, the sceptic should do away with his argument. In fact, “the Sceptic’s arguments are like a ladder which he overturns after climbing up” (Burnyeat, 2012a, p. 10, quoting Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* —AM— 8.481. on this point see also Fogelin, 1994, pp. 3-4). In our view, “continuing to investigate” must be taken to be “continuing to search for the truth” (see §2). Of course, this search for the truth needn’t presuppose that there is in fact some truth to be found on the matter, but merely the possibility that there is some (and such possibility is enough to promote further investigation). In other words, factualism with regard to the given subject matter needn’t be assumed by the Pyrrhonian (for more on this, see Machuca 2013).

this is correct, we claim, the Pyrrhonian disagreement-based position will be significantly restricted as a form of scepticism and should instead be seen as promoting a sceptic attitude that anyway has as a product a form of tranquillity.

The paper proceeds as it follows: in §2, we discuss the connections between Socrates and Ancient scepticism and explain why we think such connections are relevant. In §3, we consider a way of understanding the disagreement-based Pyrrhonian position in terms of the intra- and inter-personal uniqueness theses. In §4, we argue that this Pyrrhonian-like position, even if not accepting some uniqueness theses, gives us only a moderate sort of scepticism. Finally, in §5, we provide some brief concluding remarks.

2. Socrates, Scepticism, and Putative Experts

Socrates was a powerful inspiration for Ancient Sceptic philosophers. The fact that in several Platonic dialogues the discussion doesn't reach a positive answer to what was asked at the beginning of conversation⁶ probably made the Academic sceptic Arcesilaus of Pitane think that Socrates was a forerunner of sceptic philosophy.⁷ This sceptical effort is especially focused on highlighting that, given that every assertion (λόγος) is equally persuasive (πίθανος), and (eventually) potentially refutable, and that the doctrines (both among different schools and among the members of the same school) are significantly divergent, it is impossible to arrive at a positive thesis. That, if correct, would be a good reason to avoid endorsing a "positive dogmatist" view.

Given that at least part of the Ancient Sceptics regarded Socrates as an inspiration for developing their philosophy, we should briefly explain the sense in which we will be employing the figure of Socrates. We agree with the Academic Scepticism that Socrates somehow must be taken to be a forerunner of scepticism since he deploys, we hold, a *sceptic attitude*, "sceptic" clearly meaning *investigative*. We argue that this constitutes a powerful epistemic attitude, since it is the attitude tending to cast reasonable doubts both on what other ones believe and on what one believes.⁸ It is almost a common place in Plato's dialogues the view that the important point in philosophical

6 For example, "what is temperance?" (*Charmides*), "what is virtue?" (*Meno*), "what is braveness" (*Laches*), "what is justice?" (*Republic I*), "what is knowledge?" (*Theaetetus*).

7 If Cicero is to be trusted, Arcesilaus found inspiration in Plato's Socrates (cf. Cicero, *On Ends* 2.2; *Academics* 1.46). If Thorsrud (2010, pp. 59-62) is right, it is likely that Arcesilaus discovered "a dialectical method" in the Socratic way of doing philosophy (as reported by Plato in his dialogues).

8 This is a typical "Socratic" procedure that is well witnessed in Plato's dialogues (cf. *Apology* 23c, 28e, 38a; *Charmides* 160e, 172b; *Theaetetus* 145b, 154d-155a).

discussion is that the speakers get what is “truest” as allies; in fact, Plato takes the collaboration requirement in dialogue to be indispensable for getting what is truest (*Philebus* 14b5-7).⁹ Such a cooperative dialogue should always start from certain agreements, but Socrates, we claim,¹⁰ implicitly suggests that complete agreement between speakers can mean the death of dialogue;¹¹ disagreement fosters conversation, prevents from taking everything for granted, and thereby stimulates philosophical inquiry.¹² If we are right, some Platonic passages (where the portrait of Socrates and his philosophical insights are introduced) show the strength of disagreement as a constructive and powerful tool in the permanent task of unmasking false experts.

Now why link Socrates and his investigative attitude to scepticism? Socrates is permanently questioning other people to see whether they have the knowledge or expertise they declare to possess in a specific field. Roughly, the Socratic “method of inquiring” proceeds by asking a putative expert about her expertise. Socrates develops his test making use of arguments that start from premises previously endorsed both by the questioned person and the questioner. The dialogue allows the speakers to arrive at a conclusion that contradicts what the questioned person responded at the beginning of the conversation, that is, a conclusion that contradicts the maintained view on the topic in which the putative expert claimed to have knowledge. This shows that at least either the initial or the final answer given by the putative expert is false. After his examination, Socrates concludes that the inquiry should be continued¹³ and the putative expert loses credibility as an expert.

9 Plato frequently distinguishes the difference between dialogical argument (where both speakers are involved in attaining what is true) and rivalry, a debate performed just for the sake of victory (*Gorgias* 515b, *Laches* 194a, *Parmenides* 128d-e, *Timaeus* 88a).

10 Following Nikulin, 2010, pp. 81, 99.

11 On the relevance of agreement at the beginning of the discussion, see Plato, *Philebus* 11d2; 37c; 40d; 60b. The agreements between the two speakers involved in the debate can be understood both as the departing points of the conversation and as the consistency of one’s speech (see *Gorgias* 461b, 468e, 482d, 487e). However, insofar as Socrates and the people he questions usually are in disagreement, it appears that disagreement plays a crucial role in Socrates as well.

12 As usual in Plato’s dialogues, Socrates denies to be in possession of the knowledge initially claimed by the putative experts he meets.

13 The “ideal Platonic speakers” are those who are willing to continue the debate. One might think that Plato is suggesting that, if the investigation of a specific philosophical topic could be “exhausted”, it would become a doctrinal (and thereby a dogmatist) object of inquiry, which is the same thing as saying that it doesn’t require further inquiry. But that sounds strongly anti-Platonic, for Plato points out that philosophical beliefs can be modified by argument and that a philosophical conversation is a never-ending project. It is true that, as one of our reviewers points us out, it is mainly in the “Socratic dialogues” (which are “refutative” in character) where one finds the idea that the investigation must continue and where the lack of knowledge of the interlocutor of Socrates is shown. It is also true that in other dialogues (that are supposed not to be “refutative”, such as *Phaedo* and *Republic*) there are also “shared inquiries”: Besides, in those dialogues, certain “shared truths” are arrived at. This being admitted, for the sake of our argument, it suffices to cite the Platonic passages in which Plato explicitly stresses that philosophical investigation is a “cooperative task”, a remark that goes through

As noted above, this Socratic insight is shared by Sextus: unlike Dogmatists (who think they have discovered the truth) and the “other Academics” (who state that things cannot be grasped), the Sceptics are still investigating. Now if when Sextus refers to “opposed accounts” (i.e., accounts opposed to each other: this opposition being *contradictory* statements) he doesn’t mean affirmation and negation, but “conflicting accounts” (*PH* 1.10: λόγους ... μαχομένους), what he means is that among the divergent and opposed accounts there is a certain “equilibrium”, that is, equality regarding being convincing or unconvincing. Thus, of the accounts that are opposed to each other, none of them excel another as being *more* convincing (πιστότερον). This is the reason why we shouldn’t accept one account and reject the other one. Furthermore, amongst the sceptic philosophers, disagreement or dissension (διαφωνία; στάσις) became one of the modes leading to suspension of judgment, “the mode deriving from disagreement” (Sextus *PH* 1.165, *DL* 9.88-89), which states that judgment should be suspended since there is an “undecidable dissension” (ἀνεπίκριτος στάσις) about the matters in question. This being so, we aren’t able to accept or reject anything, and we end up suspending judgment (*PH* 1.166).

This is just an overview of Sextus sceptical argument. But we would like to suggest that the fact that the two sides of a disagreement *could* be equivalent *at that moment, given the evidence available* (i.e., given the present circumstances)¹⁴ doesn’t compel one to regard the disagreement as undecidable *without qualification* and so to suspend judgment indefinitely.¹⁵ Our claim is that the *disagreement*-based sceptical position should be restricted. If we really think that disagreements are *in principle* undecidable, the tenet that the Pyrrhonist is the one who, unlike Dogmatists and the “other Academics”, is still investigating (in search for the truth), wouldn’t make sense. Of course, this might be seen as an objection to Sextus himself but here we are instead trying to construct upon his work: in our view, it isn’t clear how it is possible to continue investigating, a feature that characteristically distinguishes the Pyrrhonist from the other philosophers (including the Academic Sceptics), if disagreement is undecidable *in principle*.

from the Socratic to the late Platonic dialogues (see *Laches* 194c, 196b, 200e; *Charmides* 169c-d; *Protagoras* 324d-e; *Meno* 79e-80a; 80c-d, but cf. also *Philebus* 14b1-7, a late dialogue that, however, depicts Socratic treats, and *Theaetetus* 151e and *Sophist* 218b, another two late dialogues where the same idea appears).

14 And not *in principle* undecidable; for more on this topic, see Barnes, 1994, pp. 17-20.

15 For the “undecidable” quality of dissension, see again Sextus *PH* 1.88, 165; 2.56, 222, 259; 3.6, 56, *AM* 8.177. Sextus suggests that even appearances *can* be undecidable (*PH* 1.117). It should be noted that “undecidable” qualifies “dissension”, and so there is the possibility that dissension isn’t undecidable (indeed, Sextus feels the need to make clear that dissension is undecidable every time). So, although “everything” can be subject to dissension and such dissension can be undecidable, it needn’t be. And, as we argue, such undecidability is relative to the particular epistemic circumstances of the party (or parties) at a given time.

Sextus, when talking about continuing to investigate, seems to be talking about continuing *to search for the truth*, given the context in which he introduces the former idea: that is, the difference between the positive and the negative Dogmatist (the Dogmatists and the Academics, respectively), who think they have reached the truth and that it cannot be reached, respectively. That Sextus is talking about continuing to investigate to attain the truth (or to elucidate what is true) isn't explicitly said or clearly suggested in other parts of the text. But if scepticism (even Sextus' scepticism) can be taken to be a view about our inability to know what the truth is, this can mean that the sceptic doesn't think that there is no truth but that we don't have the proper means to find it.¹⁶

A Pyrrhonist always might argue that *all* the circumstances demand ἐποχή; in other words, for the Pyrrhonist there are no circumstances in which suspension of the judgment can be avoided because there is no case in which one of the opposing theses (or "accounts": λόγοι) can be persuasive (that is what we call "undecidable in principle"). But if it is true, as the sceptic states, that thanks to the sceptic practice, anxieties and perturbations can be removed, and thus the sceptic can do away with his argument (*AM* 8.481), Sextus might be usefully read, given that the sceptic continues to investigate, as acknowledging that there is a point in which disagreement is mitigated and in which suspension of judgement might be cancelled. Given this, suspension of judgment is helpful as a powerful tool to achieve tranquillity but we argue it needn't be the only one. Indeed, (i) if we remove the sceptic argument and continue to suspend judgement, in which sense are we still investigating the truth? (ii) If we remove the argument because we attain tranquillity (which is supposed to be the end in matters of belief; *PH* 1.25), why do we continue to investigate the truth? (iii) Since we continue to investigate (which is what distinguishes the Pyrrhonist both from the Dogmatist and the Academic sceptics), this might be understood in the sense that the argument is removed because the evidence indicates the truth. Thus, it seems that we also can remove perturbations and thereby to attain tranquillity, while avoiding both the Dogmatist's error of rashness and the indefinite suspension of judgement.

¹⁶ Moreover, if Sextus is evoking or re-elaborating Pyrrho's account that things are equally indifferent, unmeasurable, and undecidable and that, because of that, neither one's perceptions nor opinions tell the truth (see Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 14.18, 3, 2-5), one might suspect that what Sextus means isn't that there is no truth, but that the means we have to attain it aren't reliable.

3. Pyrrhonian Disagreement and the Intra- and Inter-Personal Uniqueness Theses

We in fact normally want and need truths that others, due to some spatial, temporal or other advantage, possess (see Craig, 1990 and Williams, 2002). Fortunately, we are a social species whose members tend to cooperate (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Tuomela, 2007). So, we normally get those truths via the testimony of others. Indeed, in our modern, very specialized, world, we often (must) seek the guidance of experts. A (cognitive) expert, comparatively understood, is here taken to be a subject who possesses substantially more knowledge (and so truths¹⁷) than most people (in one's community) on the domain of expertise.¹⁸ But that comparative component doesn't seem sufficient. A dispositional one also seems necessary. It seems that a cognitive expert also has a capacity to reach the right answers to new questions that may be posed within her field of expertise. That is, the expert has the know-how to exploit her knowledge in the given domain to acquire new knowledge (or true beliefs) within such domain (for more on this, see Goldman, 2001; Coady, 2012).

Now, it is clear that in our modern societies, we are to a great extent epistemically dependent on experts. Moreover, this dependence isn't at all undesirable, both practically and epistemically. After all, they do have the knowledge (and so truths) we seek and probably couldn't acquire by some other means (and even if we could, it would very likely involve extra costs). Of course, one might think it is undesirable if one cannot distinguish between those who *are* experts on some subject matter and those who merely *seem* to be. An expert, as understood above, isn't merely someone who has a reputation for being an expert (and so *seems* to be an expert to others). But, given that our world also has a fair share of quacks and charlatans, one might now wonder how one, as a layperson (someone lacking the relevant expertise), can distinguish between those who are genuine experts and those who merely have the reputation for being one. Thus, one might think that it is of the outmost importance for us to be able to identify genuine experts if our deference to the experts is to be epistemically legitimate.

Socrates seems concerned in several of Plato's dialogues (e.g., *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, and *Gorgias*, among others) with showing us that many of

17 As most of the contemporary epistemological literature does, we also assume that knowledge entails truth.

18 We aren't committed to some non-comparative threshold of knowledge that must be achieved to qualify as an expert: that is, some minimum amount of knowledge that someone needs to possess in order to qualify as expert in some field, regardless of what others know or don't know (cf. Goldman, 2001). Moreover, we aren't here concerned with *skill* expertise. When we talk of experts below, we mean *cognitive* experts (but see the following note).

the putative experts that we find in our societies are no genuine experts at all (so it isn't merely a far-fetched possibility that putative experts aren't genuine experts). The dialogues are also concerned with showing us the way in which we can discriminate between merely putative and genuine experts (see *Gorgias* 448e-450e). This is what Socrates does in the *Apology* (and other dialogues) where he is focused on unmasking putative experts who, after dialogical conversation, cannot account for their assumed knowledge. And, of course, once someone has shown that the putative expert is no genuine expert, her reputation as such will be damaged and people won't rely on her testimony (*qua* expert). This being so, the Platonic dialogues also seem to play this advertising role.

So, we can understand these Platonic dialogues as trying to help us answer the question “*whom* should we believe?”¹⁹ Assuming that we are to defer to genuine experts only, Socrates' various *reductiones* provide us with a method for suggesting someone might merely be a putative expert. That is, these *reductiones* show that a given subject *S* holds proposition *p* and holds proposition *q*, where *q* is or entails the negation of *p*.²⁰ This shows that, assuming the law of non-contradiction, either the answer given by the putative expert at the beginning (*p*) or the conclusion (*q*) is false. Of course, it might be the case that some other premise of the argument (other than *p*) was the false one, hence allowing the false contradictory conclusion (*q*). But could anyway in that case the putative expert still qualify as knowing what originally responded (*p*)? The answer seems to be “no”. After all, the putative expert now seems to possess an undefeated defeater regarding her initial claim (*p*). In other (more Platonic) words, there would be an absence of “tethering” even if the proposition (*p*) were true.²¹ This being so, the putative expert doesn't seem to be a genuine expert regarding *p*-related matters, and given this, Socrates concludes that the inquiry should be continued.

But even if one were merely looking for reasonable or rational beliefs (and not necessarily looking for true beliefs), it isn't clear at all that such putative expert could help either. After all, when concerned with the question as to

19 As reminded by Goldman (2001), the problem of assessing experts is non-traditional but it isn't a new problem either. It goes back to Plato, who asks whether a person (lacking knowledge) is able to distinguish the one who *pretends* to be a doctor (a doctor being someone possessing an expertise (a τέχνη), and thereby a professional knowledge) from the person who really is one (see Plato, *Charmides* 170d-e; 171c). We are aware that the *skill/cognitive* expert contemporary distinction cannot be applied to Plato, inasmuch as a Platonic *technē* involves a kind of cognition.

20 Notice that the subject doesn't necessarily have in these cases a belief that *p* and not-*p*, and one would not expect her to have it. However, the subject has in these cases two beliefs: the belief that *p* and the belief that not-*p* (i.e., disbelief that *p*).

21 See Plato, *Meno* 97d-98a and Fricker, 2009.

whom we should believe, it seems that we certainly shouldn't believe someone who, given her total evidence, adopts different doxastic attitudes (say, belief and disbelief) towards a given proposition. Again, these *reductiones* show that a given subject *S* holds proposition *p* and holds proposition *q*, where *q* is or entails the negation of *p*, and given that believing that not-*p* is equivalent to disbelieving that *p*, *S* would then believe that *p* and disbelieve that *p*. The assumption behind this discredit is the *Intrapersonal Uniqueness Thesis* (henceforth, IntraUT): given one's total evidence, there is only one rational doxastic attitude that one can take to any proposition (on this, see White, 2005, p. 445).

IntraUT seems a very plausible thesis: as stated above, one might believe (via inference) that returning the weapons to the deranged person is just and disbelieve (via intuition) that returning the weapons to that same person is just (for this example, see Plato, *Republic* 331c), but at most only one of those two attitudes can be rational. Given IntraUT, once faced with distinct doxastic attitudes towards *p*, one ought rationally to revise at least one of them. For example, if the epistemic credentials of the disbelief (belief) are more compelling than the credentials of the belief (disbelief), then it seems that one ought to disbelieve (believe) that *p*. If the epistemic credentials of both attitudes are equally compelling, then it seems that one ought to revise both attitudes. In that case, given IntraUT, it seems that one ought to withhold judgement as to whether *p*. Either way, the putative expert would be shown to have held at least one irrational attitude towards *p*, without being able to identify it (or them). Thus, the putative expert cannot be a source of (non-factive) rational belief neither.

However, it should be clear that the above exploitation of *reductiones* doesn't make Plato's Socrates a sceptic, contrary to what some Academic sceptics might have thought. Indeed, the fact that in several Platonic dialogues the discussion doesn't reach a positive answer to what was asked seems to make the Academic sceptics think that Socrates was a forerunner of sceptic philosophy.

But Plato just has Socrates unmask some putative experts. Again, there is an important difference between Socrates and, for example, Arcesilaus: after the dialogical examination Socrates takes the answer given by the questioned person to be false, so it isn't the case that he is willing to grant that the proposed definition is «undecidable». Also, and more importantly still, Plato let us know through Socrates that he thinks that sometimes there are genuine experts. For example, it is the physician the one we need to defer to when concerned about matters of health (*Charmides* 170e). In fact, Plato thinks that even political/

moral expertise is possible, and so he would have the philosophers rule the state (*Republic* 473c-d; 501e-502c; *Letter* 7 326a2-b4).

Thus, it is clear that Plato's Socrates is no sceptic. Having said that, as seen, sceptics seemed to have seen in Plato's Socrates the seeds for their scepticism (see, n.8 above). One way in which the Pyrrhonian might be understood as seeing in Plato's Socrates the seeds for their scepticism (although nowhere this is explicitly acknowledged) is by extrapolating the personal case of holding contradictory beliefs to the interpersonal level to develop their agnostic, as opposed to dogmatist, (non-modal) scepticism (we return to this point later). More particularly, given their mode of disagreement, Pyrrhonians can be seen as exploiting both IntraUT and an interpersonal version of it. That is, one might think that they also (implicitly) accepted something in the following lines: given total evidence E , there is some doxastic attitude D that is the only rational doxastic attitude for anyone to take towards proposition p (on this point see Kelly, 2014). We will call this thesis *Interpersonal Uniqueness Thesis* (hereafter, InterUT). Let us explain how the Pyrrhonian might be exploiting some such principle *if* she were to exploit it.²²

The mode of disagreement (which states that whatever question is advanced is the matter of the greatest contention, and that there is an undecidable dissension; Sextus *PH* 1.165; *DL* 9.88-89) is concerned with opposing points of view that don't allow one to assent to either.²³ Imagine that you, as an expert on, say, Aristotle's *On the Soul*, believe that hylomorphism doesn't solve the soul-body dualism (view₁), but learn that another expert on Aristotelian psychology rejects the view that Aristotle endorses a dualistic tenet, since he takes the living being to be a unified whole (opposing view₂). Having learnt the arguments and evidence that support that opposing view and finding them as compelling as yours, it seems that you are now in no position to rationally carry on holding your initial view on the matter, given IntraUT, and suspension of judgement follows.

22 Some would certainly complain to this. For example, Machuca (2013) claims that the connection between Pyrrhonism and some Uniqueness Thesis is controversial, since the Pyrrhonian would suspend judgement with regard to some such thesis. This is entirely plausible and in fact, as seen below (§4), we don't think that commitment to InterUT is required for the *moderate* Pyrrhonian position here developed. Here we are merely suggesting a way in which someone might understand a Pyrrhonian as continuing the work of Socrates. It is important, at this point, to keep in mind that our aim in this paper isn't to provide an exegetical account of the work of Sextus and make it pass as *the* Pyrrhonian position (see n.2 above). Instead, we want to exploit ideas from the Ancients and present-day debates in the epistemology of disagreement in order to develop a moderate sceptical approach that can be healthy and helpful in order to strengthen rational discourse.

23 Given that Socrates' typical procedure, as seen above, is to derive contradictions in his interlocutor, as opposed to consider opposing views held by different people, as we shall soon see, we aim to show below how, with the help of a version of the Uniqueness Thesis, the treatment of the intrapersonal Socratic case can be extrapolated to the interpersonal one.

But the Pyrrhonian position is also meant to apply to laypeople (not only to experts), so now imagine that you are no expert on the matter (indeed, you have no opinion about it) but overhear a conversation among experts on the topic. You hear an expert endorsing view₂ and so you form the corresponding belief given that you are aware that it is permissible to form beliefs on the basis of what experts say. But moments after, you hear another expert on Aristotle's psychology claiming an opposite view (view₁). Arguments and evidence go back and forth but to you, as a non-expert, they don't make much sense (say, you don't understand Ancient Greek, the basic premises of Aristotelian hylomorphism aren't clear to you, you can't understand how it is possible that an immaterial item, such as an Aristotelian form, has causal powers, and so on). All you have to go for is the epistemic credentials of the experts, which, assume, are equally compelling, and so it seems arbitrary to stick to the first point of view just as it would seem to adopt the second one. If that is so, then suspension of judgement seems to follow and InterUT can help us make sense of that. Given InterUT and disagreement about p between two experts (say, one believes that p and the other disbelieves that p), it seems that at least one of their attitudes towards p isn't rational.²⁴ Of course, if one of the experts seems to have better epistemic credentials than the other, then one should defer to the superior expert. But if the experts' epistemic credentials seem to be equally good, then one should give equal weight to their opinions and so withhold judgement about p given that at least one of the positions isn't rational and one cannot tell which one it is.

4. Dissension, Undecidability and Tranquillity

Both the Pyrrhonian and the Academic sceptic exploit those cases where both sides of the disagreement seem to be equally good; hence their agnostic scepticism (they neither hold that p nor deny it, instead suspend judgement about p). So, if we, as laity, are to defer to the experts, the experts disagree as to whether p and we cannot tell which expert's opinion is the rational one, then it seems that we ought to suspend judgement as to whether p . The sceptic (both

24 What if the disagreement is between someone who believes p and someone else who withholds belief that p (say, a Theist and an Agnostic disagreeing about the existence of God)? To deal with such cases, we would need to translate the "categorical" approach to epistemology in which we talk only of belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment into the "degrees of belief" (or subjective probability) approach in which beliefs are given values between 0 and 1, where 1 represents complete subjective certainty that the proposition in question is true and 0 represents complete certainty that it is false. This move also suggests that not all disagreements will have sceptical consequences but one can expect the Pyrrhonian to be working with the categorical approach.

in its Pyrrhonian and Academic version) seems to believe that for every account there can be a contradictory account that is equally plausible and so that there can be an equipollence between both sides of the disagreement.²⁵ Given this, there is no way to decide, at least *at the time*, what the best account is and so we end up with suspension of judgement (*PH* 1.165).²⁶

One might at this point wonder the scope of some such Pyrrhonian position. Firstly, one might think that we don't actually disagree about every single proposition *p*. Secondly, one might think that not all actual disagreements are such that the above equipollence is found. This Pyrrhonist could reply that although actual disagreements are limited in those two ways, we can easily imagine that not being the case.²⁷ First, we can imagine some possible world W^1 where every single proposition is controversial (i.e., people disagree about). Second, we can also imagine some possible world W^2 where, for each controversial proposition, exists some such equivalence. Given that a possible world could be like W^1 and W^2 (let's call that world: *W*), the Pyrrhonian argument needn't be restricted. Indeed, Sextus seems to suggest that the Pyrrhonist suspends judgement about *everything* (see, e.g., *PH* 1.31, 232; cf. also *AM* 11.144, 150, 160, 168). Of course, one might want to question the relevance of possible, as opposed to actual, disagreements and one might be just right to do so, both given the implausibility of the claim and Sextus' characterisation of the Pyrrhonist. Let's take these points in turn.

It is clear that far-fetched possibilities of disagreement, just like other far-fetched possibilities of error, don't seem to be relevant. It is plausible that

- 25 Given the above, there are at least two different ways of understanding this equipollence. On the one hand, we can think of it in terms of (1) the epistemic credentials of the different experts on one side and the other of the disagreement. On the other hand, we can think of it in terms of (2) the epistemic credentials of the arguments we can find on one side and the other of the disagreement. It seems that (1) gives the non-expert the best chance to determine the equipollence. For some reasons to believe that the layperson isn't likely to evaluate the expert's arguments, see Goldman, 2001.
- 26 What Sextus usually argues is that *all* the accounts provided by the philosophers about different matters are so divergent that it appears that it is impossible to be sure about them and eventually to assume that one of the accounts should be endorsed and the other rejected. He doesn't say that the several accounts regarding a specific topic are false without qualification; what he suggests is that every account can be contrasted with another one and what one finally realizes is that there is "equipollence" among all the accounts.
- 27 This Pyrrhonian, of course, needn't stand for some actual Pyrrhonic figure. So, we are not here suggesting that, say, Sextus is committed to require suspension of judgement in the absence of an actual equipollence, but only considering what some Pyrrhonist might suggest. However, as indicated by one of our reviewers, there is an intriguing passage (*PH* 1.33-34) where Sextus apparently suggests that even acknowledging that hitting the truth is a real possibility for the Pyrrhonist, he does not seem willing to give significant importance to it. Sextus indeed acknowledges that someone can bring up an argument that the sceptic cannot refute, but that does not mean that the argument is irrefutable without qualification. Sextus stresses that it is possible that the opposite of the argument someone is advancing is sound, even though it does not appear so to the sceptic. That is a good reason the sceptic has for not assenting to this argument that now seems so strong. Immediately below we respond to cases of possible, as opposed to actual, equipollence.

neither knowledge nor justification nor rationality require us to eliminate all possibility of errors in order for a belief to be knowledge, justified or rational. Doing so would give us a dogmatist scepticism (or “negative dogmatism”, the kind of view Sextus implicitly ascribes to the so-called “Academic scepticism” in *PH* 1.3-4) that doesn’t seem to be very interesting. So, as fallibilists (who aren’t required to eliminate every single possibility of error), if possible disagreements are to introduce relevant error-possibilities, they will have to be *close* possibilities. Given that, one might want to question whether *W* (above) is a close possible world. And it doesn’t seem so,²⁸ hence it isn’t clear that we have a sceptical argument with a wide scope. Still, the argument might be good enough to promote suspension of judgement with regard to those *actually* controversial opinions even if there is no actual equivalence. That is, assuming that *W2* is a close possibility, we might think that all actual disagreements can be regarded as involving a *potential* equipollence.

But, again, this doesn’t seem right. After all, what evidence about disagreement is meant to show is that at least one of the parties of the disagreement made an *actual* mistake in holding the attitude it holds towards *p* (given InterUT). Now, given the equipollence, we cannot tell which party made it. But if there is no equipollence, then it seems, as mentioned above, that we should defer to the side with the better epistemic credentials. How relevant is it, in the case of no equipollence, that we can imagine that both sides of the dispute could be equivalent? Not much, it seems. Consider the following case: suppose that you have two thermometers, A and B, in a room and evidence that A is much more reliable than B. Now imagine that A shows that the temperature in the room is 20 degrees Celsius and B shows it is 23 degrees Celsius. Given the evidence you possess, it seems that you should believe that the temperature is 20.²⁹ Importantly, even if you can imagine that you could have easily used thermometer C, instead of B, which you take to be as reliable as A and which would still have shown the temperature to be 23 degrees Celsius (that is, imagine a disagreement with equipollence), it doesn’t seem relevant to the matter at hand.³⁰ The fact is that, given the actual disagreement and the evidence you actually possess about the epistemic credentials of A and

28 Closeness is here understood in terms of similarity, so close possible worlds are possible worlds that are similar to the actual one. Intuitively, world *W* (the conjunction of *W*¹ and *W*²) isn’t similar to the actual world.

29 Of course, you cannot believe it with certainty (degree of belief 1); after all, assuming you don’t take A to be perfectly reliable, B could be the one showing the right temperature.

30 Indeed, you can also imagine another situation where you use C, as well as A and B, and it shows 20 degrees Celsius: is that meant to show that, given these possibilities, you should have a higher degree of belief about that temperature? We take it not. Indeed, given the indefinitely many cases one can imagine, making one’s mind up on the matter would be rather unfeasible if we had to take them into account.

B, the appropriate doxastic response seems to be the belief that the temperature is 20 degrees Celsius. You might have been unlucky in this occasion: we can assume that normally A and B show the same temperature. And you certainly could have been even unluckier if you had used C instead of B and there was an equipollent disagreement. Then it seems that you would have needed to suspend judgement as to what the temperature is in the room. But the fact that you could have been this unlucky doesn't make it the case that you shouldn't now believe that the temperature is 20 degrees Celsius.³¹

Analogously, the fact that two sides of a disagreement *could* be equivalent (although they aren't actually) doesn't require one to consider the disagreement as undecidable (at *that moment, given the evidence available*— i.e., given the present circumstances) and so to suspend judgement. If this is correct, the Pyrrhonian disagreement-based position here considered will be importantly restricted. Indeed, and dealing with the second aforementioned point, it seems clear that the Pyrrhonist (as Sextus characterises her) doesn't think that disagreements are *in principle undecidable*. After all, as seen in §2, if that were the case, the characterisation of the Pyrrhonist as the one who is still investigating in search of the truth, which differentiates her from the positive and negative dogmatists, wouldn't make much sense (*PH* 1.1-3). This of course might seem to be in tension with an often-assumed use of the Agrippan modes (cf. Sextus *PH* 1.15) to show that, in principle, for any proposition *p* we ought to suspend judgement. Now, it isn't clear that the Pyrrhonist is committed to some such exploitation of the modes (as tools that necessarily induce suspension of judgement). Of course, the modes are universally applicable (that is, for any *p*, the modes can be applied). That, however, doesn't entail that every application of the modes for some *p* will be successful. One could, for some *p*, find some reason *r* that justifies *p* without *r* being some arbitrary assumption. Indeed, the Pyrrhonist, according to Sextus, assents to some things related to appearances (*PH* 1.13), and so there are some things about which the Pyrrhonist doesn't suspend judgement. So, once we distinguish between the universal applicability of the modes and their successful application, we can understand the Pyrrhonist as not regarding the modes as showing that, in principle, for every *p* we need to suspend judgement. Only if the Pyrrhonist would claim that the universal applicability of the modes guarantees their successfulness, she could go down

31 Consider also cases of evidential luck (when it is lucky that the agent acquires the evidence that she has in favour of her belief: i.e., that certain evidence becomes available as a matter of luck) that aren't incompatible with knowledge (e.g., your just happening to find in the street an up-to-date bank statement from some random person doesn't rule out your knowing how much such person has on that bank account). For more on this, see Pritchard, 2005, pp. 133-134.

that road. But we doubt that the Pyrrhonist wants to or can claim that. Would she offer some inductive argument in its favour? Such as: for all p up to now examined, the modes were successfully applied, hence for all p the modes will be successfully applied. But inductive arguments don't guarantee their conclusions (and some, as seen above, might not anyway allow the Pyrrhonist to hold the view). And if the Pyrrhonist cannot in some other way claim the above, then it seems coherent to suggest that she is still investigating in search for the truth.³²

Of course, we can imagine possible equipollent disagreements (between experts) for any p for which no further evidence to settle the issue one way or another will be available. That would then suggest that suspension of judgement about p would follow, for the laity and experts, even if no actual equipollent disagreement holds with regard to p . However, that would render the main characterisation of the Pyrrhonist as the one who is still investigating senseless. If we are right about that and his characterisation isn't senseless, the scope of her sceptical position will be relatively limited. Having said that, disagreement is ubiquitous in some domains and many of our most cherished opinions (e.g., on religion, morality, aesthetics and politics, among others) seem to be controversial. Moreover, it might actually be the case that equipollence (for the experts and/or the laity) exists in some of these cases (it might actually be the case that these are domains in which there are experts, to which us, non-experts, should defer, and who disagree and have equal credentials, and in which the arguments are equally compelling for the experts). If so, it seems that a *restricted, agnostic, non-modal scepticism* about such controversial opinions would follow.³³ Still, the non-sceptic could complain that the Pyrrhonian extrapolation of IntraUT is illegitimate. After all, while IntraUT seems a plausible thesis, InterUT might seem not.³⁴ Indeed, given that one can adopt one rather than another attitude to evidence and the existence of competing epistemic goals, it seems that given the very same evidence E two subjects could rationally weight it differently. So,

32 As noted by Lammenranta (2013, p. 48), some scholars (Barnes, 1994, pp. 113-16) tend to point out that the mode of disagreement (along with the mode of relativity) is taken to be unnecessary and insufficient for scepticism, a view that is at odds with the textual evidence (*PH* 1.165; 2.259; 3.234-235). We don't engage here in the discussion whether disagreement should be taken to be unnecessary for scepticism; and although we follow Lammenranta when he argues that "irresolvable disagreement" by itself leads to suspension of judgment (2013, pp. 48-49), we don't endorse his view that irresolvable disagreement must by undecidable in principle (2013, pp. 50-51, 57).

33 The scepticism is *non-modal* given that it is *not impossible* for the Pyrrhonist, as understood above, to reach the truth of the matter.

34 Indeed, InterUT is even less plausible if we adopt a "degrees of belief" approach, rather than the "categorical" approach (see above n.23). Can, at least, one of our beliefs, mine with degree .76 and yours .75, be really considered irrational as InterUT seems to suggest? And if we take a rationally permitted range of degrees, how are we to non-arbitrarily determine them?

the two subjects could rationally hold distinct doxastic attitudes, which entails the denial of InterUT. In fact, the epistemic goals of truth-seeking and error-avoidance can be in conflict³⁵ because some belief-forming strategies lead us to form more beliefs than others.³⁶ Strategies that emphasize the avoidance of false beliefs will inevitably lead to fewer beliefs (indeed, the best way to avoid error is not to believe anything) than strategies that emphasize the acquisition of true beliefs (indeed, the best way to acquire truths is to believe as many things as possible).³⁷

However, even if the Pyrrhonist is actually motivated to extend her position to the laity by means of the extrapolation of IntraUT, isn't clear that such extrapolation is required in order to hold such position. After all, if neither InterUT nor some form of extreme permissivism (which claims that any attitude is rational) are plausible, then some sort of restriction on the attitudes rationally permitted will be in place (that is, some sort of moderate permissivism).³⁸ And if some such restriction is in place, then there is a significant chance that a doxastic attitude taken towards p in a disagreement isn't rational. But given that one, due to the equipollence, has no reason to favour one side of the disagreement or the other, then it seems that one is once again required to suspend judgement about p .

If the above is correct, then doubts about InterUT needn't translate into doubts about the "moderate" Pyrrhonian position developed above.³⁹ This is a scepticism that applies to both ordinary and non-ordinary subject matters alike (*PH* 1.164-165). What matters is that there is some disagreement with respect to some p and that there exists an equipollence that makes the disagreement undecidable (given the circumstances at the time). Moreover, this scepticism

35 William James (1897, Part VII) already recognizes this point.

36 We aren't suggesting these are the only two (conflicting) epistemic goals, but we are exploiting these two to exemplify the above. Another two (conflicting) epistemic goals that we seem to have, are the goals of being epistemically autonomous and of being epistemically reliant on others. Of course, our epistemic lives will vary depending on how we follow the epistemic goals.

37 In our ordinary lives, we probably try to strike a conservative balance between the two goals. We certainly don't want to constantly go around questioning every one of our beliefs in order to avoid error, since we wouldn't get anything done this way. At the same time, we don't want to retain beliefs that seem wrong when new considerations come along. We want to continuously revise and modify, and even abandon, if need be, our beliefs. So, we might typically adopt the following principle: if there are no decisive grounds for questioning the justification of the belief, then conserve the belief with just as much confidence in its justification. Now, of course, the fact that this is what we might typically do doesn't mean that it is the only way (or even the right way) we can combine those goals. This is simply given as an example of a possible combination of the two conflicting goals.

38 It seems that extreme permissivism is indeed implausible. It is very plausible to think that a body of evidence *E* puts some rational constraints on the doxastic attitudes that someone can take and so that some doxastic attitudes are irrational given some body of evidence.

39 It is moderate, as pointed out above, in two senses: first, its scope is very much restricted and, second, it is non-modal.

can (temporally, and not necessarily indefinitely) render agnostic both experts and non-experts.

In the case of experts, who disagree and know that the epistemic credentials of the arguments on one side and the other of the disagreement are equivalent, they seem required to suspend judgement about the matter at hand.⁴⁰ In the case of non-experts, who should defer to the experts on the matter and know that the epistemic credentials of the experts on one side and the other of the disagreement are equivalent, they also seem required to suspend judgement about the matter at hand.⁴¹ These cases of equipollence are probably not that common, especially if, as it seems plausible, one isn't required to proportion one's belief to all the evidence available to everyone even if one is to try to search for some further evidence than the one already possessed (see Feldman, 2000) and given the caveats and so the resulting scepticism isn't very threatening.

Having said that, the Pyrrhonist's scepticism is understood by Sextus as an ability to set out oppositions among things: an ability by which, because of the equipollence of the opposed accounts, we come first to suspension of judgement and afterwards to tranquillity (*PH* 1.8). The Pyrrhonian position then is perhaps better regarded as a *sceptic attitude*, rather than a form of scepticism, embodied in this ability to find oppositions if what we said above about its moderation is correct. This would be an attitude that would help us avoid epistemic vices (such as ignoring conflicting evidence) and so render us better epistemic agents.

Moreover, the Pyrrhonian position is meant to have practical consequences insofar as the Pyrrhonian final goal is tranquillity and it can be achieved by means of the withholding of judgement and avoiding the self-conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists (*PH* 1.25; 3.280-281). However, from a positive dogmatist standpoint, this scenario surely is highly frustrating: unless there is the possibility to give assent to a set of propositions (assumably true), it seems that the Pyrrhonian way condemns us to inactivity. This is a point explicitly considered by Sextus, who records the dogmatist objection according to which, since life is bound up with choices and avoidances, if one neither chooses nor avoids anything, one renounces life and “stays fixed (ἐπεῖχεν) like some a vegetable” (*AM* 11.163-164: transl. R. Bett). But Sextus explicitly rejects that Pyrrhonism leads one to inactivity, because one, by attending to

40 Of course, such equipollence ought to rule out all epistemic asymmetry between the disagreeing parties in order to require the suspension of judgement. For example, a difference with regard to (personal) information (Lackey, 2010) or access to it (Bogardus, 2009) can defeat this requirement to suspend judgement.

41 We are assuming that the non-expert, due to her ignorance about the matter at hand and lack of capacity to evaluate the experts' arguments (Goldman, 2001), cannot make an epistemic difference herself to avoid the suspension of judgement.

what is apparent (i.e., what appears to him), can live following the everyday observances (*PH* 1.23),⁴² for he isn't able to be utterly inactive. One would expect this answer from Sextus if he believes that dissensions are as a matter of fact (but *not in principle*) undecidable (given the circumstances). But still there exist the possibility of believing truly without rashness and so the possibility of acting on the basis of belief.

5. Concluding Remarks

We have argued that the sceptical focus on disagreement provides the Sceptics with a powerful tool to show that disagreement can give people a good reason to be suspicious of their own beliefs. Although we favour the sceptic view that the relevance of disagreement as a helpful device to undermine the natural dogmatist attitude towards the world must be stressed, we do not support the rather "radical" position (shared by the Academic and the Pyrronian Sceptics), according to which what one has to do is to proceed to suspension of judgment in all the cases *indefinitely*.⁴³ Thus the sceptic way of life permits one to be cautious when selecting and assessing one's beliefs and so promoting an epistemically propitious attitude. This being so, disagreeing cannot be a paralyzing attitude while seeking what is true but, on the contrary, as a crucial tool that fosters a serious philosophical examination of what is taken to be true and so we can understand the ancient sceptic attitude as an epistemically positive attitude.

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42 For discussion of this and related matters see Burnyeat, 2012b, pp. 208-211.

43 The positive outcome of the sceptic way of doing philosophy allows one to avoid arrogance in considering beliefs. This is explicitly noted by Sextus when he argues that the Sceptic is "philanthropic", and is concerned with curing by argument, *so far as he can*, the belief (or "conceit", as Annas & Barnes, 1994 *ad locum* and Mates, 1996, *ad locum* understand the Greek οἰσῖς) and rashness (or "precipitation": προπέτεια) of the Dogmatists (*PH* 3.280-281). Perhaps "conceit" (or "présomption"; see Pellegrin, 1997, *ad locum*) is the best rendering of the Greek οἰσῖς. The basic meaning of this term is "belief", "opinion", but Sextus' point is that the beliefs of Dogmatists reveal conceit since they wrongly assume that their views do not need to be investigated or that the procedures available to us are sufficient to remove any doubts we may have about the truth-value of such beliefs.

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