

**NEOPYRRHONISM AS METAPHILOSOPHY:  
A NON-QUIETIST PROPOSAL**

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*“Our entire philosophy is correction of the use of language, and therefore the correction of a philosophy – of the most general philosophy”*

*(Lichtenberg, in Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, 90)*

*“People who have no need for transparency in their argumentation are lost to philosophy”*

*(Wittgenstein, Big Typescript, 89)*

**Abstract**

*R. Fogelin (2002 [1976]; 1992 [1981]; 1994) was the first one to speak about “Neopyrrhonism” to link Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus. To him, Pyrrhonism “combines philosophical scepticism with scepticism about philosophy, that is, to have doubts about philosophy on the basis of philosophical arguments” (1994, p. 3). Following this interpretation, Neopyrrhonism can be understood as a kind of scepticism that cancels philosophy using self-destructive arguments (peritrope). Both Sextus -with his proposal of suspension of judgment- and Wittgenstein -with his idea of the dissolution of philosophical problems- are representatives of quietism. Neopyrrhonism as quietism can be conceived of as a therapeutic proposal*

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*mainly based on not postulating an argumentative-constructive philosophical theory. Against this perspective, I propose interpreting Neopyrrhonism as Metaphilosophy, from which a performative proposal emerges. In this approach, Neopyrrhonism is an open-ended inquiry that implies the ability of using different philosophical argumentative strategies in a performative sense to encourage a new way of exercising philosophy.*

**Keywords:** *Neopyrrhonism; Metaphilosophy; Quietism; Philosophical Arguments; Disagreements.*

## Neopirronismo como metafilosofía: una propuesta no quietista

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### Resumen

*R. Fogelin (2002 [1976]; 1992 [1981]; 1994) fue el primero en hablar de “Neopirronismo” para relacionar a Wittgenstein con Sexto Empírico. Para él, el pirronismo “combina el escepticismo filosófico con el escepticismo sobre la filosofía, es decir, tener dudas sobre la filosofía a partir de argumentos filosóficos” (1994, p. 3). Siguiendo esta interpretación, el neopirronismo puede entenderse como un tipo de escepticismo que anula la filosofía utilizando argumentos autodestructivos (peritrope). Tanto Sexto -con la suspensión del juicio- como Wittgenstein -con la disolución de los problemas filosóficos- son representantes del quietismo. El neopirronismo como quietismo puede concebirse como una propuesta terapéutica basada principalmente en no postular una teoría filosófica argumentativa-constructiva. Frente a esta perspectiva, propongo interpretar el neopirronismo como metafilosofía, de la que emerge una propuesta performativa. En este enfoque, el Neopirronismo es una indagación abierta que implica la capacidad de utilizar diferentes estrategias argumentativas filosóficas en un sentido performativo para fomentar una nueva manera de ejercer la filosofía.*

**Palabras clave:** *neopirronismo; metafilosofía; quietismo; argumentos filosóficos; desacuerdos.*

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# NEOPYRRHONISM AS METAPHILOSOPHY: A NON-QUIETIST PROPOSAL

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## I. Neopyrrhonism as Quietism

14 R. Fogelin (2002 [1976]; 1992 [1981]; 1994) was the first to speak of “Neopyrrhonism” to establish the link between Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus<sup>2</sup>. Its interpretation is based on the distinction between “philosophical scepticism” and “scepticism *about* philosophy” to present the differences between the Cartesian version and the version of the Sextus Empiricus. To Fogelin, Pyrrhonian scepticism, in Sextus Empiricus’s version, uses “self-refuting philosophical arguments, taking philosophy as its target” (Fogelin, 1994, p.3). Pyrrhonism “combines philosophical scepticism with scepticism *about* philosophy, that is, to have doubts about philosophy on the basis of philosophical arguments” (Fogelin, 1994, p. 3). Although Fogelin admits there are differences between the two authors<sup>3</sup>, he thinks it

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<sup>2</sup> Although R. Watson had already proposed in 1969 the related strategy of Wittgenstein and Sextus Empiricus against metaphysics in favor of the public common world, (Cf. Watson, 1969). There are other ways of understanding Neopyrrhonism without connecting it to Wittgenstein. Especially in Latin American philosophers, it is assumed as a revitalization of pyrrhonian orientation to rethink current philosophical issues (see Smith & Bueno, 2016). On the other hand, there are non-sceptical readings of Wittgenstein (Crary, 2000; Cavell, 1976, 1979; Moyal-Sharrock & Brenner, 2005), and even anti-sceptical readings (see Coliva, 2010; Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a; Pritchard, 2005; Stroll, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Fogelin noted that in many of the passages of the second Wittgenstein exhibit a “pyrrhonian tone”, there are others paragraphs that are difficult to reconcile. Thus, the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein, especially in the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*, presents an oscillating position between a Neopyrrhonism and a distinctly non-pyrrhonian position. Particularly in the paragraphs of the latter writing devoted to exploring the idea of the “grounding” of language games and objective certainty. For Fogelin both aspects play a cardinal role in the philosophy of the second Wittgenstein delineating a style of thought that he describes as “a battle” between these two aspects (Cf. Fogelin, 1994, “Appendix B: Two Wittgensteins”). Another feature of this battle or oscillation is embodied in the “resistance to direct refutation”. Thus he describes Wittgenstein’s writing as complex

is possible to establish a parallelism between them: “the ancient sceptics thought that a rational inquiry into reasoning would be self-destructive, whereas Wittgenstein held that a correct theory of meaning must, in the end, be seen to be meaningless” (Fogelin, 1992 [1981], p. 222). Thus, they both “recommended that we must go beyond their explicit statements and, in surmounting them, finally see the world aright” (Fogelin, 1992 [1981], p. 222).

In this way, the two proposals agree that “philosophy is not possible as a theoretical, discursive, or rational discipline”, (Fogelin, 1992 [1981], p. 222). Fogelin brings Wittgenstein and the pyrrhonists closer since they share the same object and purpose. The object is dogmatic philosophy as it was traditionally practiced; their purpose, to eliminate it. While he distinguishes that the classical sceptics held that philosophical problems are, in principle, unsolvable, Wittgenstein claimed that they lacked meaning or significance. Beyond these differences, both would agree that philosophy does not bring progress –in theoretical terms- although it can bring peace or quietude (*ataraxia*) against dogmatic illnesses: rashness [PH I. 20, 177, 186; II. 21; III. 2, 280-1]<sup>4</sup>; craving for generality [*Blue Book*; PI §116]; grammatical illusion [PI §110]. By interpreting traditional or dogmatic philosophy as diseases to be cured, philosophy becomes a therapeutic method<sup>5</sup>.

One possible interpretation that follows from this way of understanding Neopyrrhonism is that this kind of scepticism cancels philosophy using self-destructive arguments (*peritrope*). This self-refuting character (*peritrope*) is vital to the pyrrhonian use of arguments or tropes, for like purgative drugs not only do they remove the humors from the body, but also expel themselves along with the humors, (Cf. PH I. 206-7). It is as a “philosophy

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and changing since, for Fogelin, the very aim of Wittgenstein’s thought is complex and changing (Cf. Fogelin, 2006). For other methodological differences, see Reinoso, 2018.

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

<sup>5</sup>For Fogelin: “Wittgenstein’s methods represent an important advance over the techniques of the ancient sceptics, for their criticisms tended to be stereotyped, wooden, and external. Wittgenstein’s techniques proceed from a profound understanding of the internal character of philosophical reasoning. To use one of his favorite metaphors, to untie a philosophical knot one must repeat all the original motions —but in reverse order”, (Fogelin, 1992 [1981], p. 230).

to intend to abolish philosophy” (Fogelin, 1994, p. viii). Both Sextus -with his proposal of suspension of judgment- and Wittgenstein -with his idea of the dissolution of philosophical problems- are representatives of *quietism*.

In philosophy, quietism can be assumed as the view that involves avoiding substantive philosophical theorizing. In particular, it seeks to avoid postulating positive theses or dogmas and to develop constructive arguments. In the context of contemporary philosophy, quietism is directly related to a certain interpretation of Wittgenstein’s work that emphasizes the therapeutic purpose of his proposal. In this interpretation, philosophy conceived of as an activity without substantive theses (Crary, 2000; McDowell, 2009; Wright, 1989; 1992; 2001<sup>6</sup>). Philosophy does not provoke any progress or modifications, as Wittgenstein states: “[Philosophy] leaves everything as it is”, (PI §124). Then, this way of understanding philosophy seems to assume that philosophical problems or disagreements are irresolvable.

Taking these elements into account allows arguing that the earliest defense of philosophical quietism in the history of Western thought is found in the Pyrrhonian sceptics from the Hellenistic period’s approach<sup>7</sup>. The pyrrhonists pursued quietude or imperturbability (*ataraxia*) through suspension of judgment (*epoché*) and abstinence from assenting to any

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<sup>6</sup> McDowell warns that quietism has sometimes been understood only as a critical moment in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. There would be another moment in which he elaborates substantial views against the theory of meaning, against certain theses in philosophy of mind, and so on. He settles: “It has acquired currency in readings in which Wittgenstein is complimented (a bit backhandedly) for uncovering a requirement, in connection with such topics as acting on an understanding, for substantive philosophy, which, however, in deference to a supposed antecedent commitment to quietism, he does not himself give. In a variant version of this tendency, Crispin Wright credits Wittgenstein with an ‘official’ quietism—leaving room for the suggestion that, inconsistently with his ‘official’ stance, Wittgenstein actually at least adumbrates the supposedly needed substantive philosophy”, (McDowell, 2009, p. 370). The proposal of this paper, against any variant of quietism, seeks to highlight the *performative* aspects present in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. These non-quietist aspects do not imply a commitment to substantive thesis.

<sup>7</sup> Gutschmidt (2020) cautions: “Pyrrhonian scepticism is usually understood as a form of quietism, since it is supposed to bring us back to where we were in our everyday lives before we got disturbed by philosophical questions. Similarly, the ‘therapeutic’ and ‘resolute’ readings of Wittgenstein claim that Wittgenstein’s ‘philosophical practice’ results in the dissolution of the corresponding philosophical problems and brings us back to our everyday life”. Against this reading, he proposes to use Laurie Paul’s notion of “epistemically transformative experience” to emphasize the idea that this practice can evoke transformative experiences. For that, both philosophies are thereby “able to yield a non-propositional insight into the finitude of the human condition” (p. 105). While I agree with going *beyond quietist* readings and I sympathize with the idea of “transformative experience”, I will not focus on discussing the relationship between philosophy and ordinary life or common sense in this paper.

philosophical thesis (*dogmas*). Recently, D. Pritchard (2020) has adhered to a wittgensteinian quietism and has argued that “help support the interpretation of Pyrrhonism as a perpetual inquiry” (p.1). Pritchard reviews a quietist reading of Wittgenstein focusing on two aspects: 1- philosophy as an activity rather than as a body of doctrine; 2- the general immunity from philosophical/sceptical criticism that our everyday practices exhibit. He is especially interested in how Wittgenstein’s treatment of *hinge* commitments (*On Certainty*, 1969) can refine ideas about why certain commitments are immune to pyrrhonian sceptical tropes. From my reading, focusing on the *hinge* ones tends to favor an epistemological reading of Neopyrrhonism and to promote substantive opinions. In contrast to Pritchard’s, I consider that Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein were not especially interested in epistemic issues as an aim; rather, they were interested in them as part of the questioning of the *foundationalist* pretensions exhibited by dogmatic philosophy. On the other hand, it is important to point out that this shared questioning does not imply understanding it as an equivalent between suspension of judgment and the dissolution of philosophical problems. This equivalence implies an anachronism, since in ancient pyrrhonism philosophical problems are not understood as linguistic problems. Thus Sextus Empiricus’s purgative therapy is not direct to how philosophical problems are formulated, whereas Wittgenstein’s linguistic therapy is directed primarily to the way in which philosophical problems are formulated<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, Neopyrrhonism as quietism can be understood as a proposal in which an argumentative-constructive philosophical theory is not postulated and philosophical problems or disagreements are irresolvable. Through the medical metaphors of purgatives used by Sextus, pyrrhonian quietism provides the first combination of a therapeutic approach to philosophizing with an anti-theoretical stance. This way of understanding the proposal stresses the critical –purgative- aspect of the use of arguments and tropes. This form of quietism must face the accusation of self-refuting -for using arguments to its non-theorizing proposal. In Sextus, this problematic seems to be related to the use of tropes to provoke a complete suspension of judgment that cancels philosophy since no philosophical disagreement can be resolved. On the other hand, the problem of disagreement is crucial in Wittgenstein’s philosophical approach. In fact, he seems to understand that philosophical disagreements are based on linguistic misunderstandings, on illusions, on nonsense. In several passages he shows the limits of argumentation to offer reasons or answers to these problems. In contrast, to face certain

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these differences, see Reinoso, 2018.

extreme disagreements, he seems to opt for persuasive strategies rather than argumentative ones in order to *convert* the other person. Setting the limits of argumentation, it is plausible that Wittgenstein considers philosophical disagreements as irresolvable, too.

This challenge appears in various forms in the work of the two authors. In Sextus, philosophy seems to be canceling because suspension of judgment is global and philosophical disagreements are irresolvable. In Wittgenstein, philosophy seems to assume only a role of detecting philosophical nonsense, after which there is no possibility of resolving philosophical disagreements. As a result, philosophy does not represent any kind of progress. Under this description, a quietist reading may be favored. Against this reading is that I offer an alternative metaphilosophical approach.

I consider my metaphilosophical proposal is closer to the idea of an open inquiry that assumes philosophy is an argumentative activity –in an enriched sense- that asks about philosophy itself; its methods; its limits; its relation to life, to basic social commitments, to ordinary linguistic uses, etc. To support my metaphilosophical reading, I will offer, in what follows, an alternative interpretation of disagreements and argumentative practices.

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## II. Philosophical Disagreements: Persuasive Argumentative Practices

In 1985 Robert Fogelin published a short article “The Logic of Deep Disagreements”, in which he sets out the concern for the place of argumentation when profound disagreements that have no apparent resolution arise. Inspired by a series of paragraphs from Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*, he first establishes the conditions for “the language of argumentation” understood as the exchange of *compelling grounds*<sup>9</sup> (*zwingende Gründe*, OC §243) or proper reasons. Fogelin concluded that this exchange can only occur when there is a common background of widely shared beliefs, preferences and agreement on procedures for resolving disagreements. Unlike normal contexts of argumentative exchange, abnormal contexts are those in which argumentative exchange becomes impossible. Argumentation is not possible due to the fact that the abnormal context does not have this prior and shared background. Fogelin called these cases “deep disagreements” and describes them as disagreements that have no possibility of rational resolution. Once again he turned to Wittgenstein to conclude that the only way to combat

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<sup>9</sup>“Arguing is the process of producing these compelling grounds. But to be compelling grounds must be true or at least thought to be true and, together with other accepted propositions, lend adequate support to the claim to be established. Thus arguing, i.e., engaging in an argumentative exchange, presupposes a background of shared commitments” (Fogelin, 2005 [1985], p. 6).

deep disagreements is persuasion, understood as a set of non-argumentative and non-rational techniques.

Curiously, Fogelin does not seem to connect this Wittgenstein-inspired perspective on disagreement with his readings on pyrrhonism. It is well-known that the problem of disagreement is a vital matter in Sextus's philosophical proposal; in fact, in the *Outlines of Scepticism*, he signals: "scepticism is an ability to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come to suspension of judgment" (PH I. 8). Straightaway, he points out: "by 'opposed accounts' we do not necessarily have in mind affirmation and negation, but take the phrase simply in the sense of 'conflicting accounts'. By 'equipollence we mean equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing" (PH I. 10). In Agrippa's Five Modes -a synthesis of the modes (or *tropes*) of suspension of judgment- establish disagreement is the first one: the mode deriving from dispute [or the mode of disagreement] (...) "we find that *undecided* dissension [*anepikriton stasin*]"<sup>10</sup> about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgment" (PH I. 166). With these indications of disagreement, pyrrhonians understand that, in our dialectical practices of arguing, it is not easy to find a criterion that settles the dispute. The question of not finding criteria is to be connected to the particular contexts in which disagreement arises.

Some interpreters have used the term "sceptic's net" (PH I. 170-7; Cf. Barnes, 1990) to refer to the modes (especially referring to Agrippa's synthesis) as a closed and definitive system that inevitably leads to suspension of judgment. This implies any possibility of resolving disagreements; thus, of canceling any further inquiry. Then, Pyrrhonism would be a variant of dogmatic (negative) scepticism (Cf. Bett, 2019; Bueno, 2013; Powers, 2010). Powers challenges this dogmatic reading of disagreement. To Powers, Sextus presents his tropes or modes "as a loose system within which each sort of mode has a specific function to fulfill in advancing the aims of pyrrhonian scepticism" (Powers, 2010, p. 157). According to Bett, Powers's proposal is an attractive way of understanding Agrippa's first mode: an *anepikritos*

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<sup>10</sup>Bury (1933) translates *anepikriton stasin* as "interminable conflict"; Annas and Barnes (2000) as "undecidable dissension". We follow Nathan Powers (2010), who chooses the term "*undecided* dissension" to highlight that those involved in the dispute cannot be party and judge at the same time.

dispute is one with no arbitrator (*epikritês*), as everyone is a party to the dispute, (Cf. Bett, 2019, p. 119). Moreover, this way of looking at the trope “based on discrepancy” or “deriving from dispute” (PH I. 164) suggested by Powers articulates better with Sextus’s idea of pyrrhonism as an open-ended inquiry: “Scepticism is an ongoing activity; suspension of judgment is generated again and again, on one topic after another, by an ever-renewed exercise of the sceptical ability” (Bett, 2019, p. 124; Cf. Bueno, 2013). This interpretation seems to be in harmony with textual evidence that Sextus himself offers when he establishes suspension of judgment -on past and present matters- in an open-ended manner (PH I. 193, 197, 202-3). In an *undecided* disagreement, neither participant in the dispute has any reason to convince the other for the time being. Therefore, neither is justified in keeping the disputed beliefs. That is why disagreements should not be dogmatically assumed as irresolvable but as undecidable. From my reading, Wittgenstein complements this approach to *undecided* disagreements by providing tools to establish, firstly, what kind of disagreement we are facing.

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The question of disagreement is present in the different stages of Wittgenstein’s philosophy; especially, in his second philosophy. Its approach is to try to clarify what kind of disagreements we face and what place reasons and arguments have in addressing them. Just to mention a few different kinds of *undecided* disagreement, we can distinguish the following: disagreements about rituals (in *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*, 1931/1936), disagreements between believers (in *Lectures on Religious Belief*, 1938), disagreements about philosophical debates (in *A Lecture on Freedom of the Will*, 1939), disagreements between cultures or forms of life (in *On Certainty*, 1951). Wittgenstein’s treatment of each different kind of *undecided* disagreement shows that each can have distinct functions: change of beliefs, change of attitudes, knowledge of other belief systems, improvements of one’s own position, etc. This shows, in turn, that Wittgenstein’s linguistic therapy does not assume nonsense as the source of all kinds of disagreements. This new way of “seeing” disagreements that emerges from this philosophical treatment is one of the performative aspects that I am interested in pointing out with my metaphilosophical proposal.

From my reading, Fogelin takes only disagreements between cultures or forms of life (*On Certainty*) as a model of “deep” –irresolvable–disagreement in which there seems to be no room for argumentation. The limit in argumentation gives rise to persuasive “conversion” (OC §612) that would not be based on an argumentative exchange. Apparently, this is in harmony with the distinction Wittgenstein made early in *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1938) between argumentation and persuasion. This distinction

is usually associated with the idea that *seeing differently* as a changing of attitude often requires non-argumentative strategies. The reason for this is that a different seeing is understood to be more linked, in Wittgenstein's terms, a difficulty of the will, than of the intellect (Cf. Wittgenstein, 2005, p. 300e). Fogelin assumed that, because they are not argumentative, these persuasive strategies are not rational either. From my metaphilosophical and performative reading of Neopyrrhonism, neither Sextus nor Wittgenstein assume a rejection of all kinds of philosophical argumentation or adopt irrational strategies. Rather, they question the power of resolution that argumentation, which is structured under the logical principles of dogmatic philosophy, has. Understanding disagreements in terms of undecidable, and not in unsolvable or irresolvable terms (Cf. Machuca, 2013), emphasizes the importance of training argumentative practices, therefore not abandoning them. It is also related to the fact that disagreements are not dogmatically assumed as irresolvable, but as undecidable. This interpretation of disagreements allows us to continue arguing in different ways. Moreover, not building philosophical theories does not mean denying that argumentative practice helps to understand what disagreements are based on, to face new dogmatism that may appear, to restrain a certain rashness in the ways of reasoning, to recognize the misunderstandings and illusions that arise from the way philosophical problems are formulated, and so on.

From my reading, both authors give rise to what Nussbaum (1986) called *therapeutic arguments*. Assuming argumentation in this broader and more enriched way allows us to understand that the therapeutic aspect is not linked to the cancellation of philosophy but to the idea that sceptical philosophy, unlike dogmatic philosophy, is an open-ended inquiry. This on-going inquiry allows for a change in one's own point of view from a persuasive argumentation. This is one of the performative aspects I am interested in emphasizing.

### **III. Philosophy as an On-going Inquiry: Performative Practices**

If we go back to the ancient sceptical sources, we can discover that the use of tropes does not exclude the use of persuasion; rather, it combines the use of strictly logical arguments with arguments that do not follow that rigidity. Sextus Empiricus closes *Outlines of Scepticism* by indicating that

Sceptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument, as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists. Just as doctors for bodily afflictions have remedies which differ in potency, and apply severe remedies to patients who are severely afflicted and milder remedies to those mildly

afflicted, so Sceptics propound arguments which differ in strength - they employ weighty arguments, capable of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness, and they employ milder arguments against those who are afflicted by a conceit which is superficial and easily cured and which can be rebutted by a milder degree of plausibility. This is why those with a Sceptical impulse do not hesitate sometimes to propound arguments which are sometimes weighty in their plausibility, and sometimes apparently rather weak. They do this deliberately, since often a weaker argument is sufficient for them to achieve their purpose [PH III. 280-81].

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From a revitalization of ancient scepticism, Neopyrrhonism understands that undecidable disagreements can fulfill a propaedeutic and performative function as they are not reduced to a model that understands them only in terms of refutation. From Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy, undecidable disagreements and the argumentative exchange they provoke can be assumed as an opportunity to understand our own position better, to clarify our own and others' weaknesses and prejudices, to get to know other belief systems or cultures, among others. By contrast, disagreements admit the partial revision of initial points of view. Rescuing this performative function of disagreements is only possible if we do not reduce them to a combative clash and if our argumentative practices are understood in an enriched way. Thus, Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy is a philosophical orientation that advocates the creative use of persuasive argumentative practice. Consequently, it does not understand that the only goal in facing disagreements is to definitively refute the opponent but to generate a performative change in how participants think of disagreements and in the challenges that are generated.

These dynamic and performative elements allow another interpretation of Neopyrrhonism, different from quietism. Neopyrrhonism could be understood as a metaphilosophical proposal. In this sense, "scepticism *about* philosophy" implies a philosophical and *performative* reflection *on* philosophy using different argumentative strategies. The preposition "about" does not involve the assumption of two different levels or orders of reflection; instead, it only indicates the aim or purpose of philosophical reflection in both authors. In fact, Sextus and Wittgenstein examine the limits, scopes and methods of philosophy by doing philosophy. This practice operates performatively in the person who exercises it. Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy is an open-ended inquiry that implies the ability of using different philosophical argumentative strategies in a performative sense to

encourage a new way of exercising philosophy. This way of interpreting the Pyrrhonian and Wittgensteinian legacy is not only more faithful to the interests of the authors but also allows for the development of a contemporary Neopyrrhonic philosophy.

In order to develop this proposal, I should clarify what I mean by metaphilosophy and how I can use this contemporary term to talk about an antique philosophy as Sextus's. As a technical term, metaphilosophy was coined by Lazerowitz in 1940 to refer to "a special kind of investigation which Wittgenstein had described as one of the 'heirs' of philosophy. The method of investigation consisted in translating philosophical statements back into the verbal idiom", (Reese, 1990, p. 28). In Reese's reconstruction of Lazerowitz's position, the prefix "meta" means "beyond": "metaphilosopher goes beyond philosophy, dissolving philosophical statements back into those of ordinary language" (Reese, 1990, p. 28). His proposal is "in" philosophy in the sense that it operates on material which he calls philosophical; it is "beyond" philosophy in the sense that it dissolves that material from the outside; and it is "about" philosophy because it makes a judgment about the entire philosophical enterprise, (Cf. Reese, 1990, p. 29). Lazerowitz takes based his position in Wittgenstein's paragraph from PI §116: "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use". This literal interpretation has risks and could reduce philosophy to ordinary language, or considers common sense has the answers to philosophical questions (as G. E. Moore thought). However, in PI §121, Wittgenstein explicitly declares: "One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy' there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without then being second-order". In PI §122, he presents the idea of a *perspicuous representation* (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) that "produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections' (...) Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*". This last point -about offering new cases, refreshing analogies, creating examples- emphasizes performative aspects. Related to this, Wittgenstein tells us that they can involve "a new way of looking at things (...) As if you had invented a new way of painting; or, again, a new metre, or a new kind of song", (PI §401). Not only does the persuasive use of argumentation involve winning a debate or dispute but it also makes the own reasons offered to support one's own ideas that are being debated transparent (seeing clear).

From my view, this "new way of looking –or seeing" implies a modification, a revision, a change in the way of understanding the problem,

the question, etc. This performative aspect is related to the reflection Wittgenstein does in *Big Typescript* about philosophy: “difficulty of Philosophy is not the intellectual difficulty of the sciences, but the difficulty of a change of attitude and will: work on philosophy is actually closer to working on oneself; on one’s own understanding. On the way one sees things”, (Wittgenstein, 2005, p. 300e). He later points out: “one keeps hearing the remark that philosophy really doesn’t make any progress, that the same philosophical problems that occupied the Greeks keep occupying us. But those who say that don’t understand the reason it must be so”, (Wittgenstein, 2005, p. 312e). In a *family resemblance*, Sextus presents his philosophical orientation from the close link between suspension of judgment and the “curing” of dogmatists’ rashness. Philosophical uses of argumentations and persuasions, which “differ in potency”, have the therapeutic purpose “of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness” [PH III. 280].

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In so doing, metaphilosophy is a way of offering arguments to rethink about philosophy as a part of doing philosophy. This approach highlights the non-theoretical aspects of philosophy, and emphasizes the view that assumes it as an ability, as an activity. As Cavell says: “philosophy is one of philosophical own normal topics” (1976). However, stressing aspects such as rashness and dogmatic anxiety, the limits of argumentation, the use of persuasion so that a certain kind of conversion can take place may offer a misconception of metaphilosophy. From my proposal, Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy does not aim to show that philosophy ultimately operates on a basis of emotional or temperamental preferences that cannot be justified argumentatively.

#### **IV. Metaphilosophy and Subjective Attitudes: A Non-Psychologist Approach**

In R. Double’s (1996) reflection about the free will problem as a problem in Metaphilosophy, “by a *metaphilosophy* I mean a view of what philosophy is what philosophy can do, and, especially, what philosophy is *for*” (p. 3). This allows him to offer a description of the limits of argumentation in this philosophical debate:

no matter how impressive an argument for a philosophical position may be, that argument can always be stalemated. For this reason, anyone who argues for any philosophical position needs to ask why philosophical problems remain so completely intractable despite the efforts of many of the ablest thinkers in the history of philosophy (...) Because our free will theo-

ries depend on *these non-objective, psychologically driven views*, it turns out that no free will theory can be shown to be more reasonable than its competitors (...) Thus, no solution to the free will problem could be shown to be correct (...) because the selection of a viewpoint from which to appreciate the strength of a free will theory depends on our *non-truth-valued desires*, (my italic, Double, 1996, pp. 3-4).

Wittgenstein discussed some aspects of the free will philosophical debate in *A Lecture on Freedom of the Will* (1939, published in 1989). In this text, Wittgenstein reviewed the ways of considering human actions and decisions: free or not free. Wittgenstein's methodological strategies consisted of situating concepts in their contexts of use in order to dispel the confusions that are generated by confusing or mixing contexts (for example, logical necessity with causal necessity). On the other hand, these clarifications make it possible to understand that the uses of concepts are not fixed; they depend on contexts that we should identify. However, understanding that these concepts do not have a univocal sense, definition or ultimate justification makes it possible to analyze them, modify them, understand them better, refine their uses, dissolve confusions, etc. In other words, there are different clarifications that imply modifications in the way of seeing philosophical concepts and problems. These modifications are the performative aspects I refer to.

A part of Wittgenstein's methodological recommendations consists in analyzing the deep grammar of the everyday and effective uses of our concepts. Understanding how we group together (analogies) elements that should be separated, or separate what should be together through these uses allows us to detect certain linguistic confusions which explain the fascination for certain philosophical nonsenses. Describing how this deep grammar of our daily uses works also allows us to identify the origin of these confusions. In the context of the free will debate, Wittgenstein suggested: "It seems as if, if you're very strongly impressed by responsibility which a human being has for his actions you are *inclined* to say that these actions and choices can't follow natural laws. Conversely, if you are very strongly *inclined* to say that they do follow natural laws, then I can't be made responsible for my choice. This, I should say, is a fact of *psychology*", (my italic, Wittgenstein, 1989, p. 90). Some interpreters think that this opinion is close to James's viewpoint about the role that temperament plays in our philosophical choices. In the first part of *Pragmatism*, James claims: "The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments". To him: "temperament is no conventionally recognized

reason (...) [the philosopher's] temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises", (James, 1908, pp. 7-8). Choosing determinism or indeterminism does not depend on metaphysical or scientific discoveries; it depends on our different temperaments or psychological profile, as Double signals above.

In this line of interpretation, which emphasizes psychological inclinations, Lazerowitz points out that: "the tenacity with which he holds his view [determinism] leads one to suppose that the linguistic innovation associated with it is psychologically important to him" (Lazerowitz & Mabrose, 1984, p. 15). Besides, he adds, in a psychoanalytical tone: "it may, at the unconscious level of the determinist's mind, represent the need to avoid inner censure for an unacceptable wish" (Lazerowitz & Mabrose, 1984, p. 15). Wittgenstein is not part of the metaphysical debate because he assumed what philosophy can do in this type of debates in a diverse way. This explains why he wrote: "all these arguments might look as if I wanted to argue for the freedom of the will or against it. But I don't want to", (Wittgenstein, 1989, p. 93). However, this does not imply a psychological approach either. From my reading, Wittgenstein's strategy is not reduced to a question of temperaments; rather, he seeks clarity about how we speak about this topic. By establishing distinctions between cases, different uses are identified; for example, cases of drug effect, cases of some incidence by the education received, or cases of acting under threat. In all these cases, distinctions between saying 'The man is free' and 'The man is not free', 'The man is responsible' and 'The man is not responsible', can be made (Wittgenstein, 1989, p. 93).

To Wittgenstein, the choice between these options depends on the power of *conversion* that these different cases may have: "an argument is all right if it converts you", (cf. Wittgenstein, 1989, p. 93). By using the term "conversion", I assume he refers to the persuasive power of analogies rather than to the logical validity of arguments or to the evidence for or against them. When he emphasizes this persuasive aspect, he seems to emphasize the interpretation that reduces the choice for determinism or indeterminism to a matter of temperament. In contrast, by highlighting this aspect, Wittgenstein shows that the debate does not have access to a metaphysical or scientific criterion to be resolved –as seen in the previous section. In fact, this debate is not about the structure of the world or our temperament; it is a debate about our linguistically articulated social practices and the performative dimension of our uses of language. The revision of, in a metaphilosophical sense, our most basic concepts through the analysis of the analogies we use helps to clarify the philosophical debate.

Sextus did not debate the topic in terms of “free will” (a technical notion that was coined by St. Augustine) but his tropes could be applied to the different positions of the contemporary debate: libertarians, compatibilists, incompatibilists. The application of tropes is not a mechanical or automatic application. One must study each of the positions and train oneself in the ability to give arguments and counter-arguments, which demands creative skills, to show the theorist that in his own terms it is not possible to defend the position he pretends to establish. This also allows us to better understand what we disagree on, on what points there is partial agreement, on the persuasive force of different arguments. In this procedure, our own beliefs, prejudices and biases, about the subject may be modified. Defending the performative aspect of Neopyrrhonism as metaphilosophy does not imply denying the importance of argumentative ability in philosophy. On the contrary, it does not seek to broaden the understanding of argumentation without reducing it to the model of formal logic, or to merely subjective psychological aspects. Thus, although we do not propose a theoretical construction, we do not deny the exercise in argumentative practices.

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#### **V. Neopyrrhonism as Metaphilosophy: A Performative Proposal**

In the first place, I have tried to propose a new reading of Neopyrrhonism based on the link between Sextus and Wittgenstein. This reading does not imply denying differences between the two authors but, by focusing primarily on the primary role given to philosophical reflection on philosophy, it allows us to avoid certain anachronisms. I believe that a metaphilosophical proposal such as the one outlined in this text is more in line with the legacy of both authors without it being reduced to a proposal for exegetical correction.

In the second place, I have tried to show that, from this approach, it is possible to develop a current Neopyrrhonic philosophical practice focused on questioning the scope, methods, and links with other disciplines and with the ordinary life that philosophy possesses in a philosophical way. By providing a variety of tools (different types of arguments -logical and persuasive-, the development of examples, analogies, etc.), this metaphilosophical approach allows to evaluate philosophical debates and disagreements better, without reducing them to an epistemic deficiency. Assuming that philosophical disagreements are undecidable helps to distinguish the different performative functions -propaedeutic and therapeutic- that they can have and to stimulate the critical and clarifying abilities that they can promote.

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