Non-assertoric Discourse: Plato, Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein

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June 2012

Contents

Preface

All Greek words in the text are transliterated, even in direct quotations from modern authors where the original quoted words in Greek script. The translations of Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* quoted in the text are drawn from Benson Mates, *The Skeptic Way* (New York and Oxford, 1995). I have also consulted Annas and Barnes, *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge and New York, 2000). I use 'Pyrrhonist' and 'sceptic' interchangeably. When I refer to Sextus's writings in the text, I use *PH* as an abbreviation for the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *M* as an abbreviation for *Against the Mathematicians*, followed by book and section number. When I quote from Wittgenstein in the text I use *T* as an abbreviation for the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* followed by section number and *PI* as an abbreviation for the *Philosophical Investigations* followed by section number.

The length of this thesis is 80975 words

Acknowledgements

To My Mother

And

In Memory of My Father

INTORDUCTION

DOING PHILOSPHY IN WORDS

This thesis addresses fundamental issues about the very nature of philosophy by exploring the philosophical writings and methods of Plato, Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein under the framework of a special mode of doing philosophy that does not result in theory or doctrine. Philosophy is a self-reflective discipline and philosophical writings naturally fall within the scope of its field of study since the antique. We should recall the famous statement that 'there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry' in Plato's *Republic* (607b5-6) and the various discussions of rhetoric and poetry in the *Ion*, *Republic*, *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. In the modern time, the philosophical importance of the dialogue form, orality, authorial anonymity and silence, dramatic techniques, irony and humour, the fables, myths and stories used in Plato's writing has gained increasing attention in Platonic scholarship.[1] Moreover contemporary philosophers also begin to take film seriously as a new subject for philosophical investigation (films as philosophy) and also a new form of philosophical medium (the philosophy of film).[2] These ongoing and

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[1] See for instance Arieti 1991, Clay 2000, Farness 1991, Fendt and Rozema 1998, Hart and Tejera 1997, Klagge and Smith 1992, and also Press 1993 and 2000. The discussion on Plato in this thesis should join force with this growing trend.

[2] See for instance Cavell 1979a and 1995, Falzon 2002, Frampton 2006, Freeland and Wartenberg 1995, Livingston 2009, Read and Goodenough 2005.

spreading interests in philosophical writing, methods, and new media reflect the critical and self-examining dimension of philosophy.

This thesis investigates the philosophical and interpretive challenges posed by the distinctive language-uses, as well as the unique styles and methods of Plato, Sextus and Wittgenstein. The novelty of this thesis lies in its attempt to apply the idea of non-assertoric discourse in a close examination of a wide and disparate philosophical writings by three major philosophers from different schools of thought and traditions.

In general, language can be put to different kinds of use and the same sentence-type can perform different speech acts. The *force* of my utterance may not be given in the *form* of my utterance and the relationship between the words being used and their illocutionary points is often oblique. All these can have crucial implications on how we should approach a philosophical text if we want to achieve a more sophisticated and sensitive reading. For instance, because of the subtleties in language-use we cannot understand a philosophical statement without understanding its status first. In a philosophical writing the form of its statements can be misleading and hence the reader has to go beyond the form to discern the *force* and the *status* of its statements. Secondly we cannot grasp the meaning and status of a philosophical statement without understanding the philosopher's real purposes or his illocutionary intentions. For instance, the philosopher may employ language as if he is committed to the views advocated in his work but in fact he may just want to prompt debate, initiate philosophical reflection, or simply identify questions and problems instead of making theoretical assertions. Therefore the reader has to decide the philosopher's real purposes or the illocutionary intentions of the author. The

intentions may be arguing or asserting one's own view as the correct view. But there can be other non-assertoric intentions like maieutic, therapy, or elucidation.

For, as I shall argue in the examples of Sextus and Wittgenstein, the philosopher may employ sentences that look like assertions in his work and yet the sentences are actually not intended as straightforward assertions of his own theoretical beliefs. The philosopher may do it on purpose and this purpose may have nothing to do with theoretical assertion or system-building. As I shall argue, in the rest of the thesis, Plato takes great care to *formally* distance himself from the fictive assertions of his *dramatis personae* and it is apt to construe his work as *maieutic*. Plato is more concerned to put ideas on test and help the reader to think through the problems rather than to assert his own metaphysical convictions. Therefore to read Plato's writing as if it is a means of ascent to a set of Platonic doctrines is misguided. Moreover, other than making theoretical assertion, the purpose can be *therapeutic*: the philosopher may want to bring about a positive change in the reader. In the case of Sextus, he wants to put an end to dogmatizing and help people to achieve *ataraxia* by suspension of dogmatic belief. In addition, the purpose can be *elucidatory*. In the case of Wittgenstein, his early work wants to elucidate that any attempt to use language to get outside language can only lead to nonsensicality whilst his later work wants to show that we are held captive by some problematic pictures of language and meaning, like a fly is held captive by a fly-bottle (*PI* §309). Insofar as Wittgenstein's works are intended to release the reader from the perceived malaise his works are also therapeutic.

Indeed, to stress once more, this thesis addresses fundamental issues about the very nature of philosophy itself. Now, it is useful to think of the nature of philosophy (the answer to the 'what is philosophy?' question) as containing two key

aspects: what it is about and what it does. For instance, it is said that G. E. Moore's response to the question, 'what is philosophy', 'was to gesture towards his bookshelves', saying 'it is what all those are about.'[3] This is an answer of the first kind. It mentions what philosophical discourse is about (however uninformative it is on what exactly that is). Despite its brevity, the response contains a germ of truth. In a sense philosophy is the corpus of philosophical writing. Seen in this light, it can be suggested that philosophy is the main subject of (for instance) Plato's various dialogues; Aristotle's *Organon* and *Nicomachean Ethics*; Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641); Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651); Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677); Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Nature* (1690); Leibniz's *Monadology* (1714); Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*; Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748); Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and many other classic writings of past and contemporary philosophers.

The other answer to the question, 'what is philosophy', responds by saying what it does: philosophy is what philosophers do. Now, one part of the proper business of practising philosophers consists in discussing and evaluating the views of their predecessors and their contemporaries, and also the arguments that have been advanced in support of various views. So, the writings of past and present philosophers become a shared intellectual heritage or a common framework for every re-investigation of perennial philosophical perplexities. New investigation can take off by revisiting and reassessing one or several historical stances and the supporting arguments offered. This kind of activity reflects the critical dimension of philosophy as a unique discipline which comes to concern itself with itself and falls within the scope of its own field of study.

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[3] Flew 1980, 3.

But clearly this is not all that philosophers do; they also think, speak and write about their own views. They do philosophy by generating discourse in words. In particular, philosophical writing and spoken discourse play a central role in the on-going practice of philosophy and in the communication of the results of philosophical enquiry. As mentioned earlier, this aspect of philosophy is the focus of the current study. In this thesis I shall take a closer look at the special status of philosophical writing in its own right. It must be said that in most cases philosophical writing is not the primary object of philosophical enquiry. But by adopting this particular focus, I hope to reveal a distinctive mode of writing and doing philosophy that does not result in theory or doctrine. In particular, I hope to remove the misunderstandings caused by dogmatic reading of Plato, Sextus and Wittgenstein.

CHAPTER ONE

DOING PHILOSOPHY:

THE ASSERTORIC WAY

AND THE NON-ASSERTORIC WAY

Philosophical writing comes in a wide variety of species and expository forms, each of which has its own characteristic structure and serves a different purpose. A visionary philosophical perspective may call for a creative mode of exposition. For example, Plato's dialogues represent an innovative type of philosophical rhetoric which I discuss in Chapter Two. An original philosophical outlook may introduce a new methodological conception that expands the available forms of philosophical writing. For example, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* are two prime examples of this kind which I discuss in Chapter Four. Indeed the influential writings of the great philosophers display various forms of exposition. They range in expository form from the ground-breaking *Meditations* of Descartes to the tight geometrical demonstration of Spinoza's *Ethics*, from the grandiose architectonic structure of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to the rigid systemic organization of numbered paragraphs assembled in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In fact, even when the great philosophers engage in the same expository form, they can still enrich it with new twists. For instance, a

seemingly common expository form, the dialogue form, is adapted for use differently by Plato and Wittgenstein.[4]

The examples that I shall explore in this thesis are also the results of creative philosophical authorship. While the most common mode of writing in philosophy involves making assertion, the examples that I shall consider opt for a radically different approach: they avoid assertoric presentation of the writer's own views. For example, Sextus's writing, my second case study in Chapter Two, resembles the report of a non-committal chronicler which can never justify assertions about anything on the basis of what appears to him to be the case. Clearly in order to judge whether a given piece of philosophical writing is assertoric or non-assertoric, we need some criteria. Since non-assertoric discourse is defined in relation to assertoric discourse, it is best if we first look more closely at the defining characteristics of assertoric discourse.

1. ASSERTORIC DISCOURSE: A FAMILIAR MODEL ACROSS SEVERAL TRADITIONS

Philosophy, particularly in the analytic tradition, often seems to model itself on the scientific or historical paradigm, whose distinctive features include the presentation of factual evidence, the discussion of alternative views, the exposition of the writer's views supported by the development and presentation of a set of reasoned defences for those views. This might be explained by virtue of the fact that

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[4] Here I am referring to the 'later' Wittgenstein and his *Philosophical Investigations*. I discuss the dialogical structure of the *Philosophical Investigations* in Chapter Four.

many philosophers, particularly those in the analytic tradition, see themselves as doing something akin to scientists or historians: they seek the objective truth about the nature of things, they operate with strict methodological criteria, and when in possession of results that meet the relevant criteria they themselves assent to the findings and assert them in published works as a shared positive contribution to human knowledge.

In order to illustrate this point, I want to look at three examples of assertoric discourse, two from twentieth century philosophers (one from the analytic and the other from the continental tradition) and one from a Chinese philosopher working in a quite different tradition. By taking a brief look at these examples we shall see why we might readily assume that philosophers typically engage in the practice of making assertions, or developing arguments that are designed to support their own views—views that they personally endorse and believe.

1.1. Three Examples of Assertoric Mode of Discourse

Russell's 'On Denoting', a classic work from the analytic tradition published in 1905, is concerned with the meaning and reference of proper names. Russell begins his assertoric presentation by defining his vocabulary of concepts.[5] But, he says, the form can be misleading and he sets out three very different cases of denoting phrases

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[5] Russell 1905, 479: 'By a "denoting phrase" I mean a phrase such as any one of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the centre of mass of the Solar System at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the earth around the sun, the revolution of the sun around the earth. Thus a phrase is denoting solely in virtue of its form.'

to show that the interpretation of denoting phrases 'is a matter of considerable difficulty' and that ' it is very hard to frame any theory not susceptible of formal refutation'.[6] Then Russell claims that he has a proposal that will resolve the problems and he gives a clear layout of the course of his argument for his proposed Theory of Descriptions.[7]

> I shall begin by stating the theory I intend to advocate; I shall then discuss the theories of Frege and Meinong, showing why neither of them satisfies me; then I shall give the grounds in favour of my theory; and finally I shall briefly indicate the philosophical consequences of my theory.

Russell launches his assertoric presentation with an initial summary of his Theory of Descriptions.[8] In his discussion Russell rejects Meinong's theory on the ground that it violates the law of contradiction. Frege's theory is rejected on a different ground; it could not settle the cases in which the denotation appears to be absent. After shooting down these alternative theories, Russell then proceeds to argue for his own theory, according to which 'a denoting phrase is essentially part of a sentence, and does not, like most single words, have any significance on its own account'.[9] Finally he draws out what he took to be an interesting result after his Theory of Descriptions was grounded.[10]

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[6] Russell 1905, 479. The three problematic cases are as follows.

(1) A phrase may be denoting, and yet not denote anything; e.g., "the present King of France". (2) A phrase may denote one definite object; e.g., "the present King of England" denotes a certain man. (3) A phrase may denote ambiguously; e.g., "a man" denotes not many men, but an ambiguous man.

[7] Russell 1905, 480:

[8] Russell 1905, 480: 'This is the principle of the theory of denoting I wish to advocate: that denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning.'

[9] Russell 1905, 488.

The structure of Russell's sample writing provides a paradigm example of assertoric mode of writing in philosophical discourse. The flow is clear; the development is logical and the writing is packed with arguments that serve to refute alternative theories and support Russell's own proposal as the correct theory on the meaning and reference of proper names. Indeed, the references to 'my theory' in his discussion and the personal satisfaction that he reveals in the course of his arguments mean that there is little doubt that Russell is asserting his own views on the topic, his own genuinely held beliefs as the correct theory on the meaning and reference of proper names.

The nature of truth (*das Wesen der Wahrheit*) is a pervasive issue in Heidegger's work and he presents it under the notion of unconcealment or *aletheia* (the Greek word for truth) in his essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. Heidegger believes that since the nature of truth is always best understood in terms of unconcealment and therefore he needs to probe into unconcealment to discern the nature of truth. Heidegger begins his essay by taking on the notion of origin and gradually moves on to elaborate on the dynamic between the artist and his artwork.[11]

Heidegger considered two initial questions, namely (a) Where and how does art exist? and (b) But what and how is a work of art?[12] Heidegger contends that his enquiry must go in a hermeneutic circle in that 'What art is we should be able to gather from the work, and What the work is we can only find out from the nature of

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[10] Russell 1905, 492-493.

[11] Heidegger 2002, 1: 'Origin means here that from where and through which a thing is what it is and how it is. That which something is, as it is, we call its nature [*Wesen*]. The origin of something is the source of its nature. The question of the origin of the artwork asks about the source of its nature. According to the usual view, the work arises out of and through the activity of the artist. But through and from what is the artist that which he is?'

[12] Heidegger 2002, 1-2.

art'. Then he moves on to bring the 'thingliness' in the artwork into view. He discusses what a thing is and dismisses the three predominate interpretations of the thingness of the thing in the history of Western thought, that is, 'Things as bearer of characteristics', 'The thing as nothing but the unity of a sensory manifold', and 'The thing as formed matter'. Under Heidegger's discussion, each of these interpretations turns out to be an assault on the thing and together they generate a mode of thinking that 'shackles reflection on the being of particular beings'.[13]

Therefore, Heidegger proposes to distinguish 'the thingness of the thing', 'the equipmentality of equipment', and 'the workly character of the work'. He discusses van Gogh's portrayal of a pair of peasant shoes and finally announces that 'Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, in truth, *is*. This being steps forward into the unconcealment of its being. The unconcealment of being is what the Greeks called *aletheia*. We say 'truth' and think little enough in using the word. In the work, when there is a disclosure of the being as what and how it is, there is a happening of truth at work.'[14]

Heidegger believes that what is at work in the artwork is 'the opening up of beings in their being, the happening of truth' (p.18) and this opening up is the unconcealment of the truth of beings. Though Heidegger was working in a different tradition and in a different philosophical style, his essay is just as assertive as Russell's sample writing and exhibits once more fundamental characteristics of assertoric discourse. It contains fewer arguments, but there is little difference in the extent to which the author stands firmly behind his claims and statements. Both writers are clearly overtly committed to the views expressed in their writings.

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[13] Heidegger 2002 4-12.

[14] Heidegger 2002, 16.

My third example of philosophy is not from the Western tradition, but from Chinese philosophy. The *Daodejing* is a classic writing in Chinese daoist philosophy. Laozi is believed to be the author of this concise but profound text. The *Daodejing* has been widely respected across many traditions and Heidegger himself attempted to translate portions of the text in 1946. The *Daodejing* is composed of only around five thousand words organized in eighty-one chapters or sections. The shorter chapters last not more than thirty words and the longer chapters run for slightly more than one hundred words. With its very limited words, the *Daodejing* is able to articulate and provide discerning ideas in broad areas like ethics, politics, ontology and cosmogony. The writing is predominately poetic and minimally argumentative. And yet, once again, like Russell's 'On Denoting' and Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art', the *Daodejing* is written in an assertoric tone; once again, the whole writing amounts to an assertive pronouncement of the writer's own views. A small sample will help to give an idea of this work. Some prominent examples of the assertive pronouncements made in the *Daodejing* are as follows.

Chapter 8
Highest good is like water.
Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without
Contending with them and settles where none would like to be,
It comes close to the Way.

In a home it is the site that matters;
In quality of mind it is depth that matters;
In an ally it is benevolence that matters;
In speech it is good faith that matters;
In government it is order that matters;
In affairs it is ability that matters;
In action it is timeliness that matters.
It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault. (Translated by D. C. Lau)

Chapter 12

Colours blind the eye.

Music deafens the ear.

Flavours numb the taste.

Desires wither the heart.

Rare goods cause delinquency

The Sage seeks for no more than subsistence (My translation)

As I have said, the *Daodejing* is predominately poetic and minimally argumentative while its tone is utterly assertoric. The *Daodejing* presents its assertoric aphorisms and makes no direct attempt to give supporting arguments. But the aphoristic pronouncement somehow establishes itself by appealing to the intuition.

1.2. Conclusion

Now I want to sum up the characteristics of these three examples of assertoric mode of discourse so that the contrast with non-assertoric discourse can be made explicit later on. The three examples make assertoric presentations of the writer's own views in different ways.

The structure and procedure of Russell's sample writing is modelled on the scientific or historical paradigm and he makes it very clear that his presentation aims to advance his own Theory of Descriptions as conveying objective truth on the meaning and reference of proper names.[15] Secondly Russell's sample writing

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[15] Russell makes it clear that he wants to advocate his own Theory of Descriptions as the correct theory of denotation. See Russell 1905, 480.

features an assertoric mode of presentation as he gives the impression that he speaks in the direct first-person with an assertoric tone in the presentation. Russell's *presence* and his *commitment* are invariably felt throughout his entire presentation as he frequently uses the first-person singular pronoun 'I' to signal his positions and also his commitment to the claims that he made. Moreover, his assertive tone and language also make his confidence and commitment more evident at various turns of his presentation. For instance, when he introduces his theory:

> The difficulties concerning denoting are, I believe, all the result of a wrong analysis of propositions whose verbal expressions contain denoting phrases. The proper analysis, if I am not mistaken, may be further set forth as follows. (p.480)

At the surface, the expression 'if I am not mistaken' seems to convey Russell's lack of confidence with his arguments. But the surface grammar is not the deep meaning. The expression is simply a characteristic way of engaging with the reader in assertoric discourse. Russell seems to ask the reader to check whether he has made a mistake. But the implied message is that he has not made a mistake in his arguments. Another instance is when he concludes his classic writing with an urge to conviction if the reader fails to come up with another theory of such elegant simplicity.[16] The overall effect strikes the reader as if she has just experienced something close to a lively direct first-person verbal presentation of a *definitive*

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[16] Russell 1905, 493: 'Of the many other consequences of the views I have been advocating, I will say nothing. I will only beg the reader not to make up his mind against the view – as he might be tempted to do, on account of its apparently excessive complication – until he has attempted to construct a theory of his own on the subject of denotation. This attempt, I believe, will convince him that, whatever, the true theory may be, it cannot have such a simplicity as one might have expected beforehand.'

account on the meaning and reference of proper names conducted by Russell himself.[17]

Unlike Russell's sample writing the sample writings of Heidegger and Laozi represent different styles. They do not use the first-person assertoric mode of presentation. The structure and procedure of Heidegger's sample writing are similar to Russell's sample writing. Heidegger begins his writing by elaborating on some key notions and the questions that he sets out to investigate. Then he rejects alternative interpretations and presents his own view as more desirable. On a closer look, Heidegger proceeds to present his view as if it is a joint investigation witnessed (or participated) by the reader and led by Heidegger himself. So for instance, through Heidegger's leading, the reader gradually comes to see how the three predominant interpretations of the thingness of the thing in the history of Western thought are actually assaults on the thing and how they hinder reflection on the being of particular beings. But Heidegger does not directly lead in the first-person; his *presence* is not comparable to Russell's presence in his sample writing. Secondly unlike Russell's use of long and rigorous arguments to support his repudiation of alternative views as well as proving his own views, there are few arguments in Heidegger's sample writing. Instead of presenting long and rigorous arguments, Heidegger leads by gradually disclosing his own views as more desirable.

Unlike the other two sample writings, the *Daodejing* is loosely structured as it takes a different expository form. Laozi does not use the first-person assertoric mode

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[17] For instance, Russell's presence is rendered even more vivid when he suggests that the Hegelians, driven by their love for synthesis, will probably conclude that since the present King of France cannot be found among the things that are bald and the things that are not bald, he wears a wig (Russell 1905, 485).

of presentation and his *presence* can hardly be traced in the *Daodejing*. Instead Laozi uses poetic language and various metaphors and images to convey his ideas but his tone is essentially assertoric. So for instance in Chapter Eight, water is depicted as close to Dao and like the highest good, and then with virtually no transition the author abruptly dictates various practical wisdoms for desirable codes of conduct. Chapter Twelve mentions how our different senses can be negatively affected and then it suddenly asserts the restrained life style of the Sage. With its various assertions the *Daodejing* presents itself as a source of insightful aphoristic pronouncement on the ultimate truth.

By contrast with these examples, I shall present, in the rest of the thesis, some case studies of quite different ways of using language, and ways of employing sentences that look superficially like assertions, but are not straightforward expressions of the author's own opinions. If we take the assertoric mode for granted or miss the signs that another mode of discourse is being utilised we can easily risk misreading philosophical works that engage in a different mode of discourse. For, in fact, a philosopher can do philosophy without ever expressing his or her own commitment to the views described or offered for consideration. In this respect (as we shall see) the philosopher's work might be compared to that of poets, dramatists and novelists, rather than scientists and historians.

2. WHAT IS IT TO MAKE AN ASSERTION?

In the three examples of assertoric mode of discourse, making assertions is the primary purpose of doing philosophy in writing and consequently their sentences put forth the authors' beliefs as truth claims on how things really are or how things

should be. But obviously, there are all sorts of other things we can do with words in utterances or written presentations. As I have said, language can be put to different kinds of use and the same sentence-type can perform different speech acts. If I ask 'What is the time,' it may be a direct request for information about time, or a hint that I want to end a conversation and get back to my work. If I say to my wife 'The shop has a sale on,' I may be making a statement of fact about the shop, or it may be a hint that I want to go shopping after a day's work. In the latter case, the *force* of my utterance is not given in the *form* of my utterance; a seemingly assertoric utterance is not intended to express a fact about the shop, namely that it has a sale.[18] All these subtleties in language-use can have crucial implications on how we should approach a philosophical text. In particular we cannot assume that the philosopher's illocutionary intention must always be making assertions. In the rest of the thesis, I will discuss three other illocutionary intentions: maieutic, therapeutic, and elucidatory in the works of Plato, Sextus, and Wittgenstein.

But before we move on to the non-assertoric examples that are the subject of the main part of this thesis and look at other ways of doing philosophy that do not build on the assertoric model, we should consider what it is to make an assertion in the language of speech acts theory. We should also look at the exegetical assumptions that philosophical writings are modelled on the assertoric mode of discourse like

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[18] As we shall see in Chapter Three, this is one of the crucial distinctions that mark off the Pyrrhonian speech from assertoric use of language.

In a different context, Russell complains in his sample writing that the form of a denoting phrase can be misleading. On his view, 'The author of *Waverley* was a man', if fully expressed, should take the form as 'One and only one entity wrote *Waverley*, and that one was a man'. See Russell 1905, 488: 'If I say "Scott was a man," that is a statement of the form "*x* was a man," and it has "Scott" for its subject. But if I say "the author of *Waverley* was a man," that is not a statement of the form "*x* was a man," and does not have "the author of *Waverley*" for its subject.'

science or history, and to engage in the practice of making assertions is the only norm for philosophers in producing philosophical discourse.

When language is used to describe some state of affairs or to state some fact, the statement (or the description) is truth functional, that is, it must be either true or false. It is true if it corresponds to the real state of affairs that is being mentioned; it is false if things turn out to be otherwise. But the philosophers in the case studies that I shall be discussing are never constrained by this representational function of language. Instead of this assertoric employment of language to state what is the case, they exhibit quite different modes of using language in their philosophical discourse and the prominent feature is the doing away with the assertoric function of language.[19]

What is it to make an assertion? Why would some philosophers take great care and employ various measures to avoid making assertions? What is the relationship between assertion and belief? In John Searle's taxonomy of speech acts, assertives is one of the five basic categories of illocutionary acts. The other categories include directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.[20] According to Searle:

> The point or purpose of the members of the assertive class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed propositions.

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[19] For instance, as we shall wee in Chapter Four, Conant 2002 argues that the *Tractatus* features elucidatory and ethical employments of language.

[20] See Searle 1979, 1-29. Searle's taxonomy is an alternative to Austin's taxonomy which includes verdictives, exercitives, commissives, expositives, and behabitives. Searle argued that Austin's categories 'form an excellent basis for discussion' and yet Austin's taxonomy 'needs to be seriously revised because it contains several weaknesses' (Searle 1979, 8).

All of the members of the assertive class are assessable on the dimension of assessment which includes *true* and *false*. [21]

So in the language of speech acts theory to make an assertion is to perform a speech act in which something is claimed to hold in reality. If I assert that 'London is more populous than Norwich,' then I claim it is a fact that London is more populous than Norwich. What I claim to hold, namely 'London is more populous than Norwich', is a truth functional proposition. The proposition of my assertion is true if in reality London is more populous than Norwich; it is false if in reality London is not more populous than Norwich. The concept of assertion is closely tied to the notion of truth. If assertion aims at truth then the purposes of the three examples of assertoric mode of discourse by Russell, Heidegger and Laozi would be that of fact-stating; they all aim at saying what they hold to be true and their writing expresses their beliefs.

To make an assertion is also to perform a propositional act. When I make the assertion about London and Norwich, I relate myself to the proposition about London and Norwich; I represent myself as believing London is more populous than Norwich and I am dedicated to my belief. If the falsity of my belief makes itself evident, I will be very surprised or puzzled. This is because I previously believed that my belief was true. An assertion is the expression of belief; it is the evidence that the speaker has a certain belief. There are other propositional attitudes. I could say that I know, or alternatively, doubt the propositional content of my assertion.

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[21] Searle 1979, 12: 'Using Frege's assertion sign to mark the illocutionary point common to all the members of this class, and the symbols introduced above, we may symbolize this class as follows:

$\vdash\downarrow B(p)$

The direction of fit is words to the world; the psychological state expressed is Belief (that p).'

But If I confidently assert that 'London is more populous than Norwich,' I should be held committed to my assertion. In fact asserting could often be taken as a claim to know. If making assertion implies commitment in this way, then Russell, Heidegger and Laozi would be rightly held committed to the assertions made in their works.

A proposition usually takes the form of a declarative sentence. But as I have noted, the *force* of my utterance may not be given in the *form* of my utterance. Therefore if a philosopher who does not intend to make assertoric pronouncement of her own views but somehow employs sentences that look like assertions in her work, she runs the risk of being grossly misunderstood. The reader may be misled by the seemingly assertoric form of her sentences and approach her work as just an assertoric presentation of her own views. The reader may wrongly believe that the philosopher aims at saying what she holds to be true. The reader may mistakenly hold the philosopher committed to the statements and utterances expressed in her work. All this can happen easily because the reader may be informed by the exegetical assumptions that philosophical writings must be modelled on the assertoric mode of discourse like science or history, and that to engage in the practice of making assertions is the philosopher's routine in producing philosophical discourse. Things could be even worse if the reader further assumes that philosophical discourse is meant to produce conviction in the reader. In this way, a creative philosophical work that engages in a different mode of discourse unfortunately falls prey to the unprepared soul.

Surely not all utterances of the declarative form are assertions. [22] For instance, poems and novels can give the appearance of assertions and yet they are actually

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[22] I discuss Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance as a crucial deviation of the declarative mode of speech in Chapter Three section 2.2 and 2.3.

descriptive of imaginary scenarios with fictional characters and events.[23] These genres of non-assertoric writing take in literary description of the fictive or the unreal for artistic reasons. But there is much more than this. Metaphor and fiction raise important issues in discourse and I shall now look into the case of metaphor and fictional discourse in order to enrich my discussion of doing philosophy in non-assertoric discourse. In my view, the way metaphor works its wonder is comparable in many respects to the non-assertoric discourse.[24]

2.1. Metaphor and Truth

My discussion of metaphor will consider Donald Davidson's theory and show how it makes metaphorical truth inexplicable if not totally inscrutable. Then my discussion will draw on the account of Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen to see how metaphorical utterances can be regarded as a practice governed by convention and how the context-specific aims of metaphor can be invoked to explain truth-telling can be a deliberate communicative intention on the part of the speaker in some contexts.

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[23] Plato's writings are fictional dialogues. In Chapter Two I discuss how fictive assertions and utterances present the reader with significant philosophical and interpretive challenges in reading off Plato's doctrines from the fictive assertions and utterance in his writings.

[24] I am not suggesting here that all the case-studies of non-assertoric discourse that I shall discuss in the main part of this thesis work their wonders exactly like that of metaphor. As I have already mentioned the case-studies are different instances, their methods and purposes are not all the same. But in any case, I do see close resemblance between metaphor and the cases-studies of non-assertoric discourse which I will discuss soon.

For fictional discourse and truth, I shall get support from the works of John Searle and Mark, R. Rowe. Fictional discourse resembles non-assertoric discourse in that while the authors are not committed to the truth of their utterances, their works can somehow state some truths or even enact and symbolize them. Secondly the authors of fiction and non-assertoric discourse may appear to be making assertions which are defined by the constitutive rule of asserting, and yet it turns out that they only pretend to perform the illocutionary acts. Does it mean that the authors and non-assertoric discourse are not 'serious' or simply 'insincere' to the reader? A discussion of how the pretending is possible and what kinds of speech acts the author of a fiction performs can help make the case for non-assertoric discourse.

If someone says, 'Life is a box of chocolates,' then we are invited to see human life in a certain light. But which light? Each one of us may have different ideas as to what the speaker really wants to say. It might be one of the following. Perhaps 'Life is a gift,' (because a box of chocolates is often given as a gift). Perhaps 'Life is sweet,' (because chocolates are usually sweet). Perhaps 'Life is bitter,' (because dark chocolates are bitter). Perhaps 'Life is full of uncertainty or surprise,' (because you never know what you get until you open your gift). Or perhaps, 'Life is an assortment of different favours; some sweet, some bitter.' However, the speaker may actually have none of these in mind because what she really wants to say is something else. (Suppose her point might be that 'Life is a box of chocolate and you have to enjoy it because it is yours.') In this case, we have to work out the exact point of the metaphorical utterance when, like most cases of metaphorical utterances, the range of possible likenesses or comparisons seems to be indefinite. Therefore

Donald Davidson remarks, 'understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavour as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules.'[25]

As a semantic phenomenon, metaphor raises a lot of important issues. For instance, how is a metaphor or figurative utterance related to what it makes us see? How can a metaphor manage to produce the effects of understanding when the speaker means something different from what the sentence means literally? Does the speaker *assert* what he says in a metaphor? If someone utters a sentence *p* metaphorically, is he asserting *p* or only 'making-as-if-to-say' that *p*? Is there room for truth as a mode of appraisal for metaphorical utterance? Is what we are caused by a metaphor to notice propositional in character? These questions are much relevant to non-assertoric discourse. A throughout discussion of metaphorical utterance and these questions can shed useful light on non-assertoric discourse.

The semantic interaction theory regards metaphor as a semantic phenomenon and therefore proposes a semantic treatment of metaphor. It suggests that there are two semantic components in a metaphor and while one component is intended literally, the other is intended *nonliterally*, and that the two components interact with each other to provoke the effects of understanding. So instead of saying it straight out, the speaker in my earlier example invites a certain view of human life by speaking in metaphor and the meaning will be given in the interaction of the two ideas, that is, human life and a box of chocolates. The speaker may want to draw our attention to certain similarities between the two ideas which we might not otherwise have thought of. Therefore, the metaphor is an invitation to explore likenesses and comparisons and by attending to the likeness suggested by the metaphor our understanding of life is supposed to increase. Metaphor can make us attend to some

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[25] Davidson 2001, 435.

likeness and thereby yields some insight. In its own special ways metaphor can do what ordinary communication cannot do. Metaphor is not only a useful tool of communication in literature and daily conversations; it is also employed by the most distinguished philosophers. For instance, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates refers to the human soul as a chariot.

> First the charioteer of the human soul drives a pair, and secondly one of the horses is noble and of noble breed, but the other quite the opposite in breed and character. Therefore in our case the driving is necessarily difficult and troublesome. (*Phaedrus* 246b)[26]

John Locke proposes to see the human mind as a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate); there are no innate ideas and sensory experience is the proper source of human knowledge. To the list, we can add the examples of 'language game', 'ghost in the machine' and many others.

Davidson attests to the power and status of metaphor in different discourses and he argues that 'what metaphor adds to the ordinary is an achievement that uses no

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[26] Does it follow that Plato is using the chariot to *assert* metaphorically something about the soul? But strictly speaking Plato is, at least, at one remove from this metaphor because it is issued by a fictional character in a fictional dialogue. Unlike Russell's first person assertoric mode of presentation, Plato almost never lets himself say anything in the first person in his writings. Plato's usual practice is to let his *dramatis personae* (Socrates and other interlocutors) to discuss things with each other. Consequently the reader must decide for himself the meanings of the memorable metaphors and vivid imagery in his writings and also Plato's purposes in using them. However, continuous scholarly disputes on the bearing of Plato's metaphors and imagery have attested to the philosophical and interpretive challenges posed by metaphors and imagery. I discuss the famous Sun, Line and Cave (*Republic* 507a-521b) in Chapter Two.

semantic resources beyond the resources on which the ordinary depends.'[27] Accordingly 'metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.' Davidson denies the assumption of semantic interaction theory which suggests that the author of metaphor conveys a cognitive content in disguise pending the interpreter's decoding. On Davidson's view, it is very difficult to decide, even in the case of the simplest metaphors, exactly what the content is supposed to be. [28] Davidson does not deny that what the metaphor makes us notice *can* be propositional in nature. But he believes that in most cases what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not recognition of some truth of fact as what we notice or see is not generally propositional in character.[29]

So when someone says, 'Life is a box of chocolates,' she does not assert that human life is a box of chocolates. Taken as a bare assertion the utterance would immediately become a plain falsehood; human life cannot *be* a box of chocolates; they are different categories of things for very obvious reasons. Therefore the

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[27] Davidson 2001, 436: 'Metaphor is a legitimate device not only in literature but in science, philosophy, and the law: it is effective in praise and abuse, prayer and promotion, description and prescription.' See Davidson 2001, 435.

[28] Davidson 2001, 444-445: 'If what the metaphor makes us notice were finite in scope and propositional in nature, this would not in itself make trouble; we would simply project the content the metaphor brought to mind onto the metaphor. But in fact there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character. When we try to say what a metaphor means, we soon realize there is no end to what we want to mention.

How many facts or propositions are conveyed by a photograph? None, an infinity, or one great unstatable fact? Bad question. A picture is not worth a thousand words, or any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture.'

[29] Davidson 2001, 445.

metaphor is better taken as expressing an invitation or suggestion that a certain comparison between human life and a box of chocolates be followed up.[30]

For Davidson's theory, truth assessment would miss the point of metaphor. Indeed for most cases, it is the falsehood at literal level and even plain absurdity that trigger a proper mode of interpretation for metaphorical utterances.[31] Finally Davidson's theory of metaphor has some odd implications for metaphorical truth. If his theory is correct,

> A consequence is that the sentences in which metaphors occur are true or false in a normal, literal way, for if the words in them don't have special meanings, sentences don't have special truth. This is not to deny that there is such a thing as metaphorical truth, only to deny it of sentences. Metaphor does lead us to notice what might not otherwise be noticed, and there is no reason, I suppose, not to say these visions, thoughts, and feelings inspired by the metaphor, are true or false. [32]

My major disagreement with Davidson's theory is that it makes metaphorical truth inexplicable because it denies metaphorical truth of the sentences that express the metaphor. According to his theory, metaphor can only 'mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more'. Many metaphors will then appear to be plain falsehood or absurdity at the literal level, and the sentence containing the metaphor cannot be the truth bearer. Davidson's theory does not reject metaphorical truth altogether but it leaves metaphorical account inexplicable.

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[30] In Chapter Two I argue that presumably the Sun, Line and Cave serve the same purpose. They do not express Plato's metaphysical doctrines. Instead they suggest that a certain comparison be followed up.

[31] Davidson 2001, 442. Patent falsity or plain absurdity is the usual case with metaphor, but on occasion patent truth will do as well.

[32] Davidson 2001, 441.

For this reason, I propose to turn to Lamarque and Olsen for a more satisfactory account of metaphorical truth.

For Lamarque and Olsen, Davidson's theory of metaphor is the most 'austere' because it recognizes no content other than that of literal meaning.[33] They criticize Davidson's assumption that the prime mechanism of the metaphorical process is causal and the speaker of a metaphor intends to produce just perlocutionary effects.[34] Contrary to Davidson's theory, Lamarque and Olsen believe that the very possibility of metaphorical speech is 'bound by convention' and hence they suggest invoking the idea of 'a practice' to explain the conventionality of metaphorical speech.[35] Lamarque and Olsen's account of metaphor distinguishes two separate communication-intentions. The first is the constitutive aim which initiates the metaphorical process and the second is the context-specific aims of metaphor.[36]

The constitutive aim is definitive of metaphorical utterance and it initiates the metaphorical process by inviting or encouraging a hearer 'to think of, conceive of, reflect on, or imagine one thing (state of affairs, idea, etc.) in terms associated with some other thing (state of affairs, etc.) often of a quite different logical type.' Lamarque and Olsen do not assume that the speaker of metaphor must always intend to convey some specific propositional content in his metaphorical utterance. For

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[33] Lamarque and Olsen 1994,351

[34] Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 358: 'By accounting for metaphor as just a stimulus to thought, Davidson fails to give due weight either to the purposive and communicative function of speaking metaphorically or to the rule-governed nature of the interpretation of metaphor.
In the language of speech acts, the user of a metaphor intends to produce not just perlocutionary effects, as Davidson's theory implies, but illocutionary effects as well; i.e. the mechanism for bringing about the required response is rational and rule-governed, not simply causal.'

[35] Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 359

[36] Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 360

their idea of a metaphorical process or task actually 'moves away from the paradigm of understanding associated with grasp of content or truth-conditions.'

The context-specific aims of metaphor are found in all instances of metaphorical utterance. The speaker of metaphor usually issue a metaphor in the context of some deliberate communicative purpose and one such aim, in general, is that of conveying a particular belief or thought. [37] Lamarque and Olsen suggest that similar context-specific aims can occur in philosophical metaphors and they believe that understanding philosophical metaphors does not, or not only, amount to the identification of a specific intended content; it is the exploration of analogies that counts.[38]

I think what is true of metaphorical utterance in Lamarque and Olsen's account is also true of non-assertoric discourse. Like metaphorical utterances, non-assertoric discourse can yield insights as well as truths. For instance, as I shall argue in Chapter Three, since the Pyrrhonian speech is consistently non-assertoric, it is apt to construe Sextus's writing as non-assertoric discourse. His report of Pyrrhonism resembles a chronicler's report as it does not register belief claims on Sextus's part. But that does not mean we cannot gather any trustworthy information about Pyrrhonism in this non-assertoric account. In addition, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is able to give us some insights into language as we have learnt from the Tractarian

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[37] Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 362: 'Some metaphors are purely decorative or 'rhetorical', merely embellishing a speech act, not contributing to its purpose or content. Others have a summarizing effect, distilling into epigrammatic form something already stated or established. Sometimes a speaker will invite the metaphorical process of exploring analogies and similarities for the sake of getting a better understanding of the terms, rather than intending to formulate a specific content.'

[38] Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 363-364.

elucidation that a certain way of thinking and talking about the world and language is nonsensical.

2.2. Fictional Discourse and Truth

John Searle suggests that while metaphorical uses of expressions are 'nonliteral', fictional utterances are 'nonserious'.[39] Of course, Searle does not mean that fiction and poetry are not serious. What he has in mind is that 'if the author of a novel tells us that it is raining outside he isn't seriously committed to the view that it is at the time of writing actually raining outside.' So a fiction is nonserious in that its author is not committed to the truth of her fictional utterances. The author has no commitment to provide evidence for its truth though there may or may not be evidence for the truth of her fictive propositions. The author may appear to be making assertions which are defined by the constitutive rules of asserting. And yet the utterance of the author is not a commitment to the truth of her fictive propositions. So what kind of speech acts does the author of a fiction perform? Searle rejects the attempt to explain fictional utterances as belonging to the illocutionary act of writing a novel because, according to Searle, there is no such

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[39] Searle 1979, 60. For the problem of metaphor, Searle gives a pragmatic treatment of metaphor (See Searle 1979, 76-116). Contrary to Davidson's view that metaphors mean what the words mean and nothing more, Searle's pragmatic approach sees the phenomenon of metaphor as a result of the falling apart of the speaker's utterance meaning and the word or sentence meaning. By proposing some principles for the formulation and interpretation of metaphorical utterances, Searle's theory of metaphor explains how it is possible for the speaker to say metaphorically '*S* is *P*' and mean '*S* is *R*', when *P* plainly does not mean *R*. Lamarque and Olsen argue that Searle's theory of metaphor is too determinate in bounding the metaphorical process with the grasp of content or truth-conditions. (See Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 360-361)

illocutionary act of writing a novel. And to suppose we have the illocutionary act of writing a novel would lead to the consequence that every sentence in our language would have both a fictional and a nonfictional meaning.[40]

On Searle's view, what happens in the work of fiction is that 'the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the assertive type'.[41] In her fictional use of words, the author engages in a 'nondeceptive pseudoperformance' and she pretends to recount to the reader a series of events. The author may act as if she is making assertions in her work of fiction. She may imitate the making of assertions by pretending to perform the illocutionary acts like stating, asserting, describing, explaining, etc. But what is the criterion for identifying a work of fiction if the author is only pretending to perform the assertive kind of illocutionary acts? Searle believes that there is no textual property that can help the reader to identify a text as a work of fiction. The identifying criterion lies in the illocutionary intentions of the author.[42]

According to Searle, what makes fiction possible is 'a set of extralinguistic, nonsemantic conventions' that breaks the connection between the words and the world. [43] These conventions do not alter or change the meanings of the words in a fiction. Instead they 'enable the author to use words with their literal meanings without undertaking the commitments that are normally required by those meanings'.

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[40] Searle 1979, 64.

[41] Searle 1979, 65.

[42] In Chapter Four, I argue for my non-assertoric reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* on the ground that unless we can take his declared aim of elucidation and his persistent intention of doing away with theories or doctrines more seriously we will be misled into reading his seemingly theoretical or doctrinal remarks as theoretical assertions or some stated doctrines on the essence of language.

[43] Searle 1979, 67.

In addition, the author can pretend to perform illocutionary acts because the illocutionary act is *pretended* but the utterance act is *real*. It is a general feature of the concept of pretending that one can pretend to perform a higher order or complex action by *actually* performing lower order or less complex actions which are constitutive parts of the higher order of complex action.

Thus, for example, one can pretend to hit someone by actually making the arm and fist movements that are characteristic of hitting someone. The hitting is pretended, but the movement of the arm and fist is real.[44] Therefore, in similar vein, the author of non-assertoric discourse can pretend to perform the illocutionary act of asserting and she succeeds in doing it not by changing the meaning of the words in her writing. As a result, the form of her utterances is not informative of her illocutionary intentions. [45]

Most fictions contain nonfictional elements. So for instance, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the story of Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom is a fictional story about fictional characters but the Dublin of *Ulysses* is the real Dublin. So what role does truth play in a work of fiction or literature?

According to Mark W. Rowe reading a work of fiction does not mean giving up an interest in truth altogether as literary interest is focused not on categorical truths (what *is* and *was*) but on a special kind of modal truths that link with human beings or other rational creatures (what human beings *might think, feel,* and *act*). [46] Therefore literature can state, enact and symbolize its truths. Lamarque and Olsen contend that the truth conveyed by metaphorical utterances is likely to be low-key

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[44] Searle, 1979, 67-68.

[45] Again grammatical form can be misleading. This applies aptly to Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance.

[46] Rowe 2009, 381-382.

truth which involves the imparting of fact or information. However Rowe notes two cases in which the artistic quality of a work of literature can be compromised by factual errors and false generations.[47] The first case is concerned with factual errors in a fiction. Factual errors can lower our opinion of a work of fiction even if the reader is not intended to acquire facts in his reading. The second case is concerned with generalization about human nature made in a fiction. The reader would expect that such generalization to be true or at least close to the truth.

Rowe argues that a broad conception of the aesthetic attitude and knowledge can show that the two are actually not in tension and in fact, the formal similarities between them even encourage us to see both as proper elements of the aesthetic attitude. Fictional discourse can communicate non-propositional knowledge about human beings and this ability is an important part of a work's aesthetic quality. On the other hand, a work's aesthetic quality is affected by factual errors and false generations. The author of fiction cannot eschew responsibility for the factual errors and false generations he made. In addition, the author is sometimes held responsible even for the views expressed through his fictional characters.[48]

Reading literature can deliver aesthetic pleasure as well as non-propositional knowledge about human beings. But in the case of non-assertoric discourse, conveying trustworthy information, yielding insights or even imparting knowledge, can be an important part of its intrinsic value. But this it is not the *only* value that it possesses. With so much useful results, I shall now turn to the less familiar model, that is, the non-assertoric discourse.

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[47] Rowe 2009, 382.

[48] For instance, the British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie was held responsible by the Muslims for mocking their faith in his novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988). I thanked Dr Mark W. Rowe for drawing my attention to this.

3. DOING PHILOSOPHY IN NON-ASSERTOIRC DISCOURSE: A LESS FAMILIAR MODEL

Now we are better equipped to launch into the cases of non-assertoric discourse produced by Plato, Sextus and Wittgenstein. In so far as the case studies that I shall explore in this thesis avoid making assertoric presentation of the writer's own views, they can be viewed as a group. But their methods are not all the same, any more than my three examples of assertoric discourse were the same. My interest here is to explore several different ways of writing in non-assertoric mode, across a range of different traditions of philosophy.

Each of my chosen thinkers, and each school of thought, is confronted with different philosophical problems; they work in different times and within different philosophical traditions. Given these differences, it is striking to see how comparing their approaches to writing can enable us to identify one common feature in their methods and writing styles, in so far as their philosophical writings count as non-assertoric discourse. But this is only one connection. At the same time as we observe this major link between the thinkers, we shall also seek to highlight the ways in which the different kinds of non-assertoric philosophy differ from each other, and to notice how different methods can be employed to distance the writer from the claims that appear in the text (or in the utterances, if the material is spoken live).

So in the main chapters I shall choose three case studies for close scrutiny and explain how their writings, while showing some common features in methods and styles, actually represent different modes of non-assertoric discourse. And I shall explore in more detail what is going on when a philosopher writes in a mode of

discourse that is not assertoric and what kinds of value are imbedded in a non-assertoric discourse.

CHAPTER TWO

PUZZLES IN THE SUN, LINE AND CAVE: A CASE STUDY IN READING PLATO'S IMAGERY

In this Chapter I review some major problems and difficulties that scholars have encountered in making sense of the famous allegories of the Sun, Line and Cave in Plato's *Republic*, when they approach the imagery with an expectation that it is making assertions about what Plato actually believes.[49] There are two models of interpretation: (a) taking the imagery as illustrating the doctrines (as a kind of visual aid); and (b) taking the imagery as an implicit argument for the positions that Plato is trying to recommend. Some scholars, for instance Lesher, take it to be doing both kinds of work at once.[50] As we shall see, my thesis is that the material should not be read in either of these two ways. I shall start with a brief review of the literature so as to familiarise us with some of the key interpretations of the dialogues, showing in each case that they are taking Plato to be either (a) illustrating or (b) arguing for the doctrines he is recommending, without going into detail on what those doctrines are. Secondly, again without commenting on the doctrines as such, I shall summarise the

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[49] Although my review cannot consider all of the vast amount of scholarly work, it deals with the most disputed problems and the most enduring difficulties that scholars have encountered in their reading of the imagery as assertions of Plato's philosophical positions.

[50] Lesher 2010, 183-184.

problems and puzzles that such readings have encountered in trying to make sense of the images and the relation between them.

1. TWO ASSERTORIC WAYS OF READING THE MATERIAL

1.1. Scholars who take it to be illustration

Cross and Woozley take the images as illustration, from which—after appropriate analysis—they can gather Plato's philosophical position as represented in his theory of Forms; although they also admit that what Plato intends to convey by the images is rather unclear and that the images have caused a great deal of difficulty.[51] They believe the philosophical implications of the Line and Cave have to do with the repeated contrast between mathematical thinking and philosophy (or dialectic), a contrast that can reveal to us what Plato conceives to be the task of the philosopher and how it differs from that of the mathematician. According to this distinction, both mathematics and philosophy deal with intelligible objects—that is, the Forms; but

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[51] Cross and Woozley 1966. See for instance 202-3, where one finds the following claims that illustrate well this sort of reading: 'The Sun then, Plato says (508b), is the offspring of the Good, occupying in the visible world a position analogous to that of the form of the Good in the world of Forms. The Sun simile then is an analogy, illustrating, by the role of the Sun in the visible world relatively to sight and the objects seen, the role of the Good in the intelligible world relatively to knowledge and the objects known (i.e. the Forms).'
'Plato then, using an analogy with the Sun in the visible world, is seeking to illustrate the special position which he believes the Form of Good to occupy in the intelligible world relatively to the other Forms. Without the Good the other Forms would not be known; and indeed, more than that, their very being or existence is in some way derivative form the Good.'

philosophy deals with the Forms in a coherent system dependent on the supreme Form, the Form of the Good while mathematics deals with the Forms in isolation.[52] In addition, mathematical thinking makes assumptions which it does not explain (510c), it proceeds from hypotheses (like the odd and the even, the kinds of angles, the Square itself and the Diagonal itself) to the conclusion through a series of consistent steps; and it uses the visible figures as aids and talks about them, although it is not thinking about these visible figures but rather their originals (510d).[53] On the other hand, philosophy is concerned entirely with the intelligible world and philosophical thinking does not involve anything in the sensible world; it uses only Forms, it 'moves solely through Forms to Forms and finishes with Forms' (511c). Cross and Woozley believe that Plato makes the various branches of mathematics the initial training for the philosopher in Book VII of the *Republic* because mathematics can serve as a bridge-study, leading the trainee philosopher kings from the changing unstable world of sense experience to a world of stable, unchanging objects grasped by the intelligence.[54]

Finally Cross and Woozley appear to be sober enough to restrict what they can gather from the images to Plato's general philosophical position regarding the task

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[52] Cross and Woozley 1966, 233-238. They reject assigning mathematical intermediates to mathematical thinking. Their reason is that other than 'a passing reference at 74c of the *Phaedo* to "the equals themselves", which could be understood of mathematical equals, there is no reference in the dialogues earlier than the *Republic* to the doctrine of mathematical intermediates' (236).They believe that if Plato does intend to bring in the doctrine of mathematical intermediates in the *Republic*, he should introduce it as something new, explain it and express it in a clear language, instead of smuggling it in through the back door of imagery.

[53] I shall return to this as one of the six key problems with the Line in section 2.6.

[54] Cross and Woozley 1966, 238-241.

of the philosopher.[55] But actually what they take to be Plato's general philosophical position regarding the task of the philosopher and how it differs from that of the mathematician is already heavily loaded with metaphysical assumptions. For instance, despite their proviso that it is rash to make too much of the imagery in connection with Plato's metaphysical views concerning the theory of Forms, Cross and Woozley believe that Plato uses one single line to represent the sensible world and the intelligible world in order to avoid implying a two-world view. Using one line to represent the sensible world and the intelligible world suggests a continuity between the sensible and the intelligible.[56] Moreover, they also believe that the Sun, Line and Cave clearly add one new element—namely the Form of the Good to the theory of Forms and that Plato clearly indicates that mathematical principles are to be derived from the Form of the Good.

In a way, Denyer also follows the assertoric way of reading the imagery as illustration of Plato's views, because he takes the imagery to illustrate the role of the Good in teleological explanation.[57] According to Denyer, the Good is to become 'the unhypothetical starting point of mathematics' which can explain the existence and character of mathematical Forms teleologically 'in something like the way we explained teleologically the shape of the ideal wheel and position of its axle'.[58]

Penner is another example of assertoric reading. In his attempt to explain what the Forms are, he approaches the images as illustration of Plato's own views.[59]

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[55] Cross and Woozley 1966. They call for care in inferring from the images. They point out that 'it must nevertheless be recognized that this part of the *Republic* does not provide any sound enough ground for any sweeping inferences about Plato's general metaphysical views'" (258).

[56] Cross and Woozley 1966, 257-261.

[57] Denyer 2007.

[58] See Denyer 2007, 306-7.

[59] Penner 2006.

According to Penner the Forms are better treated as universals or attributes, much like the 'real natures' or the objects of the sciences or expertises.[60] Moreover, the Form of the Good is the moral good we all desire, Penner argues.[61] Though he rejects what he calls the self-predicationist interpretation of the imagery[62] he does not differ from the self-predicationist interpretation in that he continues to treat the imagery as illustration of some doctrines or positions that Plato recommends. The difference between Penner and his opponent, the self-predicationist, lies only in what they see as the real "messages" disclosed in the imagery. Penner perceives the self-predicationist interpretation as misreading the imagery into suggesting that there are four kinds of cognition paired with four different kinds of objects, ranked in accordance with their degree of reality and truth, with the Forms being the highest objects and the only objects of knowledge. In other words, the Line and Cave illustrate the Degrees of Reality theory. Penner proposes an anti-reductionist interpretation of the imagery as he believes that Plato uses the imagery to illustrate a

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[60] Penner 2006, 237. Penner is opposed to the account of Forms associated with Aristotle, according to which the Forms were a bit of both universals or attributes, and ideal objects, paradigms, and models. This account regarded the Forms the product of 'a metaphysical confusion wherein Plato construed universals or attributes (*such*-es) as if they were objects – substances, things (*this*-es)' (p.235, 237). Penner also rejects Universal Literal Self-Predication (which stipulates that 'For any Form, *F*-ness, that Form is itself the one perfect instance of *F*-ness (except possibly for some other Forms), while all perceptible instances of *F*-ness are at best imperfectly *F* things.') to which some interpreters took it that Plato was committed.

[61] Penner 2006, 249 – 251.

[62] Note, for instance, on page 250: 'The Sun allegorizes the Form of the Good (517b – c, 532a, 532c), as the other heavenly bodies probably allegorize the real natures (Forms) embodied in each of the kinds of animals'.

completely different view, namely 'different degrees of *truth* in different *conceptions* of one object'.[63]

1.2. Scholars who take it to be argument

Rosen is among those who believe that the imagery is to be read as argument.[64] On the one hand, Rosen proposes to approach the imagery with caution. But on the other hand, he believes that we are 'certainly entitled' to the implications of the imagery on genuine being and complete nonbeing: 'it would be dangerous to put too much pressure on the poetical language that Socrates is using in this passage, but we are certainly entitled, and even required, to notice the implications of that language. One such implication is that genuine being is entirely illuminated, whereas complete nonbeing is darkness without light. Thus the domain of genesis is a mixture of light and darkness'.[65]

Pappas also believes that the imagery should be read as argument. He considers the Line to be an argument from analogy making "an emphatic assertion" on the relationships between objects of cognition and kinds of cognitions.[66] He states: 'on

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[63] Penner 2006, 251 – 257. According to Penner, 'Plato is claiming that: The square cannot be reduced to any shadows, to any physical objects or drawn squares, or even any entities of the sort a geometer might postulate as implicitly defined by the axioms of geometry. There are four different degrees of *truth* about what the square is, only one of which, when apprehended, gives us the actual truth (*aletheia*) about the square. There are, if you will, four different degrees of grasp of what the square is (*einai, on*). There are not four different degrees of reality. And there are no "mathematicals" in the Divided Line' (257).

[64] Rosen 2006, especially 255 - 275.

[65] Rosen 2006, 260

[66] Pappas 2003, especially 145-154.

this last point – regarding the relationship between objects of cognition and kinds of cognition – the Divided Line passage is sometimes elusive. But it closes with an emphatic assertion of (12): (12) As the segments [of the line] to which [the affections of the soul] correspond participate in truth, so they participate in clarity. (511e)'.[67] Yet Pappas is uneasy about the success of Plato's strategy. He explains the complexity of the Line as resulting from Plato's desire to argue for two points. First, Plato uses the Line to show how the objects of opinion are related to objects of knowledge in a reflection relationship. Secondly in the Line Plato assigns a special place to mathematics above all other skills, as a propaedeutic to philosophy. However, Pappas thinks that Plato cannot make the Line work in all these ways and the complexity of the Line leads to puzzles that call for much more complex solution.

Annas also follows the assertoric way of reading the imagery. She considers it as an indirect argument explicating the place of the Good in the just person's knowledge, and the form that knowledge takes.[68] She speculates that Plato puts his thoughts in schematic imagery because either he has no idea how to argue for them or he thinks that the thoughts are not the kind of truth that can be argued for, but must be accepted in the light of other considerations and arguments taken as a whole. With this in mind she suggests that the Line has two functions: the first is to distinguish the visible and the intelligible realms and compare them with the image/original relationship; the second is to provide a classification of cognitive states and their objects so that our cognitive understanding can be graded according

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[67] Pappas, 2003, 145-146.

[68] Annas 1987, 242-271. She suggests that 'as with Forms generally, Plato offers no direct argument. Presumably we are to become convinced of the truth of his claim more indirectly, by the whole long passage which follows' (245).

to their distance from full knowledge with understanding. Her suggestion is that the Line teaches three important points about knowledge: first, for Plato to know a thing is to know it directly; second, mathematics has an important role to play in the quest for knowledge as it forces us to think out problems rather than being satisfied with the appearances; third, and yet, mathematics is inadequate because it relies on the visible and its hypotheses are ungrounded.[69]

Seeing the Line in this light, Annas examines the imagery with her customary philosophical seriousness. In particular, she identifies and discusses some oddities and problems with the Line's classification of cognitive states and their objects.[70] I shall mention three major problems here. The first concerns the purpose of the lowest stage of *eikasia*; the second the place of the Good in the Line; and the last the criterion for the classification of cognitive states.

To begin with, Annas suspects that the lowest stage of *eikasia* is added to the Line only for the sake of the analogy to be made between visible and intelligible realms. Her evidence is that the lowest stage of *eikasia* does not correspond to anything significant in our lives as our everyday beliefs mostly fall under the stage of *pistis* (trust) and the stage in which one is forced to think things through and realize that there are Forms and particulars is the stage of *dianoia* (thought).

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[69] Note in particular the following comment: 'we learn from the Line various important points about knowledge. One is that the prominence of the image/original relation shows that Plato puts a premium on knowing a thing directly, rather than indirectly via reflections or images. Another is that in the crucial stage of moving from objects adequately apprehended by experience to Forms, an important role is played by mathematics. Another is that mathematics is nevertheless inadequate, for two reasons: it relies on visible illustrations, and it depends on hypotheses, whereas the true 'intellect' of the philosopher is free from these defects and operates only with reference to Forms (511b-c)' (Annas 1987, 250).

[70] Annas 1987, 248-252

The second problem is about the Good. Curiously it is not mentioned at all in the Line. This is odd because the Good is so supreme in the Sun and the Line is introduced explicitly as a continuation of the Sun (509c). Are we to suppose that the Good, which is so supreme in the Sun, is identical with the 'unhypothetical first principle' grasped by the person with *noēsis* in the Line? But according to Annas the Good cannot be just one of the contents of *noēsis* and it does not fit into the scheme of the Line very happily.

The last problem is even more devastating. How are the cognitive states classified, by their objects or by their methods? Annas thinks that no answer seems quite right because Plato overloads his analogy with two different kinds of contrast. Suppose the classification is by the objects of cognition. This would mean each of the four cognitive states will pair with its own objects. *Eikasia* will pair with shadows and images whereas *pistis* will pair with the originals of the shadows and images. It would require different objects for *noēsis* and *dianoia*. *Noēsis* will pair with Forms. But what does the subsegment of *dianoia* contain?[71] Annas rejects 'intermediate' objects on the ground that the *Republic* says nothing about these things and such a claim conflicts directly with 510d, which clearly says that the mathematicians talk about the square itself and the diagonal itself (surely Forms) in mathematical reasoning.[72]

Therefore the alternative is to suppose that the top part, *noēsis* and *dianoia*, share the same object (i.e., Forms) while *pistis* and *eikasia* contain different objects. But then the contrast between *noēsis* and *dianoia* would become a difference of

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[71] This is one of the six key problems with the Line. I shall take a closer look at it as a key problem in section 2.4.

[72] Annas is not taking a position on this issue. Her discussion does not *maintain* that *dianoia* contains Forms. She is only considering it as an alternative.

method as regards the same object (i.e., Forms).[73] This contrast is not the same as that between *pistis* and *eikasia* (which is image/original contrast). In that case the scheme of the Line would break down: the structure of the bottom part (i.e., the visible) has no real analogy in the top part (i.e., the intelligible). Moreover, Plato's classification of cognitive states and their objects at 511c would turn out to be misleading since contrary to the passage, there are altogether four cognitive states paired with only three objects.

After considering the alternatives, Annas has to give up. The alternatives are 'unsatisfactory'. They create 'expectedly annoying difficulties'. Plato's analogy is 'inept' and no answer seems quite right. Finally she concludes that the 'insolubility of this problem is a good illustration of the difficulties that Plato runs into by using images to make a philosophical point'.[74]

My thesis suggests that we should embrace Plato's imagery much more positively. It is not a problem at all if his imagery provokes us into asking questions that cannot be answered within the terms of the imagery. For Plato's imagery is not meant to be giving the final answer to our questions, or to be guiding our thinking as

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[73] Annas believes that this difference is not foreign to the *Republic*. Her evidence is that 'such a difference is not hard to find, especially in the light of Book 7: "thinking" studies Forms in isolation, for the purpose of special subjects like mathematics, whereas "intellect" studies them for their own sake, and in systematic connection, as being dependent on the Form of the Good for their nature and intelligibility' (251).

It is also worth nothing here that Benson believes that there are two different kinds of contrast at work in the Line. The initial division of the Line and the subdivision of the visible part suggest an ontological focus but then the subdivision of the intelligible part follows a contract in methodologies. Benson believes that the philosophical method uses Forms and mathematical method uses the objects of *pistis*. (See Benson 2010, 188-208. I shall take up Benson's discussion when I deal with the use of hypothesis as one of the six key problems with the Line in section 2.6.)

[74] Annas 1987, 252.

it proceeds from imagery to Plato's philosophical position as the final conclusion. This is absolutely crucial. The imagery has already achieved its aim if our intellect is provoked and begins to consider problems about the Good, the visible and the intelligible realms, the task of the philosopher and the nature of his enterprise. Dealing with these problems in our own thinking is more formative than discerning what Plato really thinks about these problems. I shall further develop these ideas when I explain why the material should not be read as if it makes assertions about what Plato actually believes.

1.3. Scholars who offer a more sophisticated view

In discussing a puzzling feature of the Line, the fact that the two middle subsegments are equal in length, Smith advances the view that the Line is meant to be an imperfect image because according to Plato's philosophy, images can never be perfect. Therefore Plato knowingly produces the Line with a subtle flaw. An imperfect image can save Plato from committing the sin of perfection.[75]

Denyer also offers a more sophisticated view in this regard, although he also follows the assertoric way of reading the imagery as illustrating the role of the Good

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[75] Smith 1998, 304-307. Rounding off his discussion of the problems posed by the two middle subsections of the Line that are equal in length, Smith says that 'Given the incredible richness and substance of this very complex image, I am tempted to think that Plato might have purposefully woven this subtle flaw into the intricate fabric of his own image, because he wished to avoid the sin of perfection. According to his own philosophy, images can never be perfect, and Plato's divided line is, after all, only an image. Plato's line is certainly good enough to be a model of the excellence we can expect in the products of a philosophical craftsman. Perhaps it is also just bad enough to remind us, by contrast, of a perfection no image can equal.' (Smith 1998, 307) I shall return to this when I discuss the proportions of the Line as one of the six key problems with the Line in section 2.3.

in teleological explanation. Denyer suggests some reasons why Plato might have purposely made the two middle subsegments equal in length. First, such design can help in a curious way to expound Plato's idea that thought is superior to trust.[76] Secondly, it is central to Plato's philosophy that an image is meant to be an imperfect copy of the original. Since the Line is an image, it has to be defective in some way.[77] Also, the feature that the subsegments for trust and thought are equal in length can convey the message that thought is not superior to trust if we make the transition from trust to thought but then do not improve ourselves cognitively by moving from thought to knowledge.[78] Finally Denyer supposes that the Line is meant to be puzzlingly contradictory because Plato wants to push us to start thinking. The Line is open to incompatible interpretations. We are thus provoked to think through the problems.[79] As we shall see, my view differs from Denyer's as he eventually proposes a doctrinal reading of the Line.

Finally, Grube also offers a more sophisticated view of the Line. He suggests that we should not press the imagery too far since it was never intended to bear serious weight and so difficulties quickly arise: 'it is better not to press his imagery further

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[76] Denyer 2007. He reasons that 'if the divided line does have the immediate purpose of expounding the superiority of thought over trust, then its very defectiveness for that immediate purpose would fit it to serve Plato's purpose in the longer term' (296).

[77] See Denyer 2007, 296.

[78] Denyer 2007. Thirdly, 'perhaps the divided line is meant to hint that, in itself, thought is not after all superior to trust, that if we make the transition from trust to thought, but then go no further, we have not in fact improved ourselves cognitively, and that thought is superior to trust only in that thought is adjacent to, whereas trust is one step further removed from, the finest of all cognitive states, intellect. In this case, the fact that the divided line inevitably has equal subsegments to represent both trust and thought would be no defect at all' (296).

[79] See Denyer 2007, 296.

than he does. It is not his way to schematize his philosophy and it is not very wise to try to do it for him. Some of the difficulties will recur'.[80]

2. SIX KEY PROBLEMS WITH THE LINE AND ITS PROBLEMATIC INTEGRATION WITH THE OTHER IMAGES

Despite a general sense of optimism and expectation amongst scholars making assertoric readings of three great allegories, many have found that there are insolvable problems and difficulties.[81] These, I shall show, result from the way that they are assuming they should be read, namely as support for Plato's doctrines regarding metaphysics, ethics, epistemology and ontology. I will focus my account of these difficulties around The Line (509d6 -511e5), which has seen the most attention.

2.1. Should the Line be drawn vertical or horizontal?

The first major problem is how the line should be drawn. To be sure, the layout of the Line raises some specific difficulties. For instance, should the Line be drawn

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[80] Grube 1980, 28.

[81] The classic issues are summarised by Grube (1980), 27: 'as so often, Plato does not work out the scheme of the line in detail and scholars have differed as to what exactly each section of the line should include. Are works of art to be condemned to the lowest section? What, besides the objects of mathematics, should we place in CE (i.e., the lower subsection of the intelligible world)? Are the natural sciences and such arts as strategy merely matters of belief? These and many similar questions Plato leaves unanswered'.

vertical or horizontal? To introduce the Line Socrates begins by recalling the distinction between the visible and the intelligible realms mentioned in the Sun (509d). Then he instructs Glaucon to divide a line into two unequal parts, one part representing the visible realm and the other the intelligible. These parts are further divided according to the same ratio. So assuming a vertical layout, the Line would appear as below such that AC:CE = AB:BC = CD:DE.[82]

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─┬─ A



─┼─ B

─┼─ C

─┼─ D
─┴─
   E
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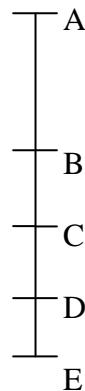
So far in Socrates's instruction, only one feature of the Line is rather obvious, namely that the largest subsection must be at one end or the other.[83] But we don't yet know if the line should be drawn vertical or horizontal, or indeed diagonal.[84] Smith argues that Plato's language at 511 appears to rule out both horizontal and

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[82] For the sake of smooth reading, the layout of the Line produced here is the same as that of the representation in Smith 1998. However, the proportion shown in the diagram is not accurate.

[83] The fact that the two middle sections have to be equal in length because of the ratio is less obvious. I will discuss this in section 2.3.

[84] Smith considers this option in order to reject it in his discussion, but he does not seem to know of anyone who seriously suggests it. Smith 1998, 293.

diagonal representations.[85] I accept Smith's argument and so from now on I shall suppose a vertical line as most of the key interpretations assume a vertical line.

2.2. Should the larger segment be made at the top or the bottom?

Now, if the Line should be drawn vertical, there is another problem with its construction: should the larger segment be placed at the top or at the bottom of the line? Some put the larger subsection at the top, some place it at the bottom;[86] in addition, some are indecisive on this issue.[87] Smith himself argues that the text (especially 511e) clearly suggests that the Line 'must be represented with the larger

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[85] See Smith 1998, 293. Smith's reasoning is as follows: 'if Plato had a horizontal orientation in mind, we should expect some signal that one or more subsections were to the right or to the left of some other subsection; if a vertical orientation is in order, we should expect some sign that one or more subsections are above or below some other or others. For a diagonal orientation, some subsections would have to be both above and to the side of others. [Smith does not name anyone who suggest a diagonal line] In fact, Plato only makes it clear that some sections are above others: at 511a6–7, we learn that the objects pertinent to one section of the line are below (ὑπο-511a6) those belonging at another subsection; and at 511d6-8, we find that one of the four states of the soul (νόησις) is to be represented by the highest (ἀνωτάτω-511d8) subsection (AB). There is no hint, in this passage, that Plato conceives of one subsection as being to the side of any other subsection. The language Plato uses to orient the line, therefore, would appear to rule out both horizontal and diagonal representations'.

[86] Smith 1998, 293: 'G. M. A. Grube [1974, 164] drew the line with the shortest segment on top, but never offered any explanation of why this seemed to him to be the right way to do things. Bedu-Addo 1979, 108; Brumbaugh 1989, 42-43; and Des Jardins 1976, 491-492 also picture the line with the shortest segment on top, and offer various arguments for their decisions. Others have generally represented the line with the largest segment on top'.

[87] Smith 1998, note 7. Smith gives the examples of Fogelin 1971, 375; Fine 1990, 98 n.26; and LaFrance 1977.

(clearer and truer) segment at the top, and the smaller (less clear and less true) segment at the bottom'.[88]

The construction of the Line is actually more complicated. Denyer reports two different ancient interpretations of the Line, one by Plutarch and the other by Proclus.[89] Both take the Line to be vertical, with intellect, thought, trust and fancy in that order from top to bottom. The difference is that in Proclus's version, intellect has the longer segment and fancy takes the shorter, whereas in Plutarch's version it is the reverse. Denyer suggests that Proclus's reasoning is not hard to follow, because greater length correlates with greater clarity.[90] In Plutarch's reconstruction, intellect takes the shorter segment and fancy takes the longer, because, according to Plutarch a greater length represents a greater obscurity.[91]

However, not everyone takes Plato's vagueness on this matter to undermine the value of the Line. Denyer himself argues that the wrangle between Proclus and Plutarch serves only to confirm the arbitrariness of the choice to be made on the Line. Although Denyer does not take it to indicate that the Line is to be read non-assertorically, as I do, nevertheless he thinks that this particular issue is not a real problem and it does not need to be decided. Denyer suggests that Plato exploits

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[88] Smith 1998, 294.

[89] Denyer 2007, 292-94.

[90] Denyer '2007, 293: 'Proclus (*Commentaries on the* Republic *of Plato* I.289.6-I8 Kroll) says that a greater length represents a greater clarity, on the grounds that the intelligible is superior to and encompasses the visible and what encompasses something is always greater than what it encompasses'.

[91] Denyer 2007, 293: 'Plutarch (*Platonic Questions* I00Id-e) says that a greater length represents a greater obscurity, on the ground that the divisibility, indefiniteness, and multiplicity of what is visible should be represented by a greater length.' I suggest another reason for Plutarach's version in my discussion on the meaning of *eikasia* and the philosophical significance of the lowest segment in section 2.5.

the manner in which we deal with images to expound to us the intelligible realm. The purpose of having us choose arbitrarily between making the opinion subsection longer than the knowledge subsection and making it shorter instead is to give us some practice in the kind of abstract thought which is needed to take us from the visible to the intelligible realm.[92] So Denyer takes the purpose of the image to be at least partly practical, delivering training to the reader of the kind that Plato thinks is needed for the trainee philosopher kings.

2.3. Is the equality of the two middle subsegments for thought (*dianoia*) and trust (*pistis*) a matter of importance or an irrelevant consequence originated in the proportions of the Line?

The third problem: what should we make of the fact that the two middle subsegments for thought and for trust are equal in length? The equality is an inevitable result of the instructions given by Plato on how the Line should be constructed. Is Plato aware of this equality and its implications? This equality seems to be at odds with the idea that there is a continuous progression in degrees of clarity and reality of the four segments (i.e., of longer length and hence of greater clarity and reality, and supposedly thought should be better than trust because it is closer to knowledge).

Morrison argues that Plato does not intend to convey the idea that the four segments of the Line are meant to stand for an increasing degree of clarity and truth

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[92] See Denyer 2007, 294.

for this very reason that the two middle subsegments are equal in length.[93] Morrison believes that Plato intends this equality, rejecting the idea the equality is unintentional or that Plato was unaware of it, because he believes that Plato was too good at geometry to have made such an obvious mistake.[94]

Cross and Woozley take a different view on the equality. They suggest Plato's silence seems to suggest that he did not want us to take it as something significant.[95] They even go so far as to suggest that leaving the equality aside is the right thing to do in interpreting the Line.

On the other hand, Denyer gives some reasons why we might regard the equality of the two middle segments as a 'surprising feature' of the Line.[96] As he points out, each segment of the line seems to be supposed to correlate with the value of the mental state it represents, in descending order of merit from the top downwards.[97] Denyer thinks that several passages come close to implying that the two middle segments are unequal, and have the same proportions as the two lower segments have to each other.[98]

On the other hand, there are other reasons to think that the equality is not accidental.[99] At 534a, for example, in the recapitulation of the Line, Socrates runs through a different set of proportions, between intellect and trust, and between thought and fancy, which are less obvious except to a geometer. This suggests that

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[93] Morrison 1977, 221-222.

[94] Morrison 1977, 212-213.

[95] Cross and Woozley 1966, 204.

[96] Denyer 2007, 294.

[97] See Denyer 2007, 294.

[98] Especially 510b, 510d-e, 511a, where Socrates says that geometry uses the things in the next section down as images for geometrical objects.

[99] Denyer 2007, 295.

Plato is well aware of the consequences, and can make his characters draw the less obvious as well as the more obvious ones.[100] So surely Plato knew well enough that the two middle segments come out equal.

Again, Denyer does not think that this insoluble puzzle is damaging to the *Republic*. He suggests instead that Plato might have chosen to make the two middle segments equal because it allows incompatible interpretations. Denyer offers two reasons why this might fit with Plato's purposes. First it helps us to learn that images always fall short of the original, because the Line is itself an image. So its defects are part of the point. And secondly, it may be intended to make a serious point, hinting that thought is not after all superior to trust.[101] So Denyer believes that the image deliberately makes space for incompatible interpretations.[102] He compares this passage to the discussion of fingers and size in 523b-524d. For while the senses always report fingers as fingers, and hence do not provoke the mind to think about what a finger is, they do provoke the mind to wonder what big and small are because they tell the mind that the fingers are sometimes big, sometimes small.

So although Denyer suggests that the images are deliberately designed to provoke thought, he also takes them to be offered in service of a doctrinal view. There is, he thinks, an answer to whether thought is better or equal to trust. The image is not good at delivering the information, but it is supposed to help us to get there, to Plato's own view (which was, apparently, clear). The image is at fault, because it

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[100] See Denyer 2007, 295-96.

[101] Denyer 2007, 296.

[102] Thus: 'for if images were not puzzlingly contradictory, then we would be liable to rest content with images, rather than be provoked to go beyond them to the reality from which they derive' (Denyer 2007, 296).

cannot adequately convey the truth that Plato wanted to get across. Its only merit is in alerting us to the inadequacy of images.

Smith thinks that the issue of equality is seriously damaging and if we attend to it we are led to problems in our understanding of the relative merits of the two subsegments.[103] Smith holds on to the idea that the lengths of the segments are supposed to represent varying degrees of clarity (509d9 and 511e3) as well as varying degrees of truth (510a8-9, 511e2-3). The measure of truth is said to follow the same proportions as the measure of clarity (511e2-4). Smith argues that the feature of equality of the middle subsegments is incompatible with the passages in which Plato obviously says that the lengths of the segments signify varying degrees of clarity and truth. Plato never considered thought to be no clearer than trust because this is rejected at 533d5, which explicitly said that thought is clearer than opinion, which includes both trust and fancy. In any case, since thought is clearer than the entire realm of belief, it must be clearer than trust which is only a subsegment of belief.

To be sure, Smith admits that Plato's Line is a complex image and there is no tidy solution to this issue.[104] In fact, he concludes, the problem of the equality of the middle subsegments cannot be made to go away. But Plato may intend this to be so because according to his philosophy images can never be perfect and the Line is only an image. Therefore the problem of equality is intended to remind us of the doctrine that no image can be perfect. Insofar as the Line is taken to convey Plato's doctrine, albeit inadequately, Smith's interpretation counts as an assertoric reading of the imagery.

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[103] Smith 1998, 307.

[104] See Smith 1998, 306.

2.4. What kind of things should we find in the subsegment for thought (*dianoia*)?

The fourth problem is concerned with the objects at each subsegment and in particular what objects should fill in the subsegment for thought. This is the most worked out problem and my earlier discussion has already shown how this problem poses an incredibly challenging difficulty. Smith thinks this problem is 'a source of extreme difficulty for scholars' and he complains that 'scholars have created a chaos of possibilities'.[105] Lesher refers to it as one of 'the most enduring' puzzling features of the Line.[106] Annas simply gives up finding answer to this problem and concludes that it is insoluble.[107]

Now I shall probe into this key problem. Socrates makes it clear to Glaucon that images, shadows, reflections in water and other polished surfaces, and all that sort of stuff should fill in the subsegment for fancy while 'the objects which are the originals of images – the animals around us, and every kind of plant and artefact' should fill in the subsegment for trust (510a). The visible segment and its two subsegments are divided in respect of truth (*aletheia*) and untruth and that the relation of image to original is the same as that of the visible realm to that of the intelligible (510a).

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[105] Smith '1998, 294, 297. As we shall see shortly Smith himself proposes an answer to this problem. He believes that "sufficient attention to the lower segment and its two subsections will provide excellent guidance in the thicket of difficulties the upper segment presents". (p.294)

[106] Lesher 2010, 171. Lesher has nothing to say on this problem.

[107] Annas 1987, 250-252.

The intelligible segment of the Line is divided differently; it is divided by the different methods of enquiry the mind uses in each of them (510b).[108] Nevertheless, it is revealed that the subsegment for knowledge represents Forms (510b, 511b).[109] What the subsegment for thought is supposed to represent is never explicitly stated in the analogy of the Line. To fill in the subsegment for thought, scholars have suggested mental images of Forms, 'mathematical objects', 'mathematical realities, sciences', Forms, mathematical intermediates, propositional axioms of geometry, 'figures', visible originals (repeated from the subsegment for trust).[110]

Smith's position is to argue for the images of Forms—that is, we should find intelligible images of intelligible originals in the subsegment for thought.[111] But what are the images of Forms? Smith believes that the images of Forms are the visible originals in the subsegment for trust employed as images in mathematical reasoning in the subsegment for thought.[112] 'In recognizing the originals of the

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[108] I shall return to this when I discuss the sixth problem with the Line, namely how one is to use hypotheses in the subsegments of thought and knowledge in section 2.6.

[109] This is disclosed only indirectly when Socrates suggests that in the subsegment for knowledge the mind 'moves from assumption to a first principle which involves no assumption, without the images used in the other subsegment, but pursuing its enquiry solely by and through forms' (510b). And 'The whole procedure involves nothing in the sensible world, but moves solely through forms to forms, and finishes with forms' (511b).

[110] See Smith 1998, 297-298.

[111] Smith 1998, 294-302. Smith believes that the proportions at 510a is the key to this problem and a natural understanding of the proportions would give 'two classes of opinables: visible images of visible things and also the visible originals of these visible images', plus 'two classes of knowables or intelligibles, and one class will consist in images of the other class' (295).

[112] Smith 1998, 299. His evidence is that on seven occasions (510b4-5, 510b7-9, 510d5-6, 510e1-511a1 511a6-7, 511c1, 511c7-8) of the analogy of the Line, Plato repeatedly tells 'his reader that one significant point of contrast is that the mathematician employ visibles as images in his reasoning'. Smith believes that Plato intends his readers to find the images that are supposed to fill the subsegment for thought.

visible realm (CD) as the images in the intelligible realm (BC), we see one of the most famous features of Plato's philosophy: sensible participants are really only images of Forms.'[113]

Smith rejects intermediate objects like mathematical intermediates, 'general notions' or propositional images of the Forms. Smith thinks that they all suffer from a very obvious problem: they are not mentioned at all in the Line passage or in the *Republic* as a whole.[114] Smith finds the omission strange. In addition, the suggestion of intermediates raises another problem. The image/original contrast in the *Republic* is always explicitly a feature of the participation of particulars in Forms. The intermediates would participate in the Forms and they would image the Forms, but the problem is how can the intermediates participate in the Forms as particulars when they are intermediates? The scholars who posit intermediates need to explain what the imaging relationship is supposed to consist in.[115]

Smith's proposal is to insist that the image/original contrast prevails throughout the Line. But this violates the rationale for the initial division of the Line into the intelligible and the visible realms. It follows from the initial division that the subsegment for *dianoia* should represent something intelligible. If the subsegment for *dianoia* is to represent images, the images should be intelligible images. The visible originals cannot be employed as intelligible images in mathematical reasoning, as Smith's proposal has it.

In response, Smith thinks that his proposal is compatible with the initial division of the line into two different realms because the separation of the two realms does

[113] Smith's version of the Line is provided in the discussion in section 2.1.

[114] Smith 1998, 300.

[115] See Smith 1998, 300.

not require wholly different objects to appear on each side of the division.[116] Smith's evidence is that in Plato's discussion of the mathematical education of the trainee philosopher kings, visible things like fingers (523c4-524c13), visible shapes and diagrams (529d8-530a1), cubes and other solid objects (528a9-b3) are used as if they are appropriate images of the intelligible originals. These visible things are the originals of the sensible realm but they are seen as images of the intelligible originals when they are used by the mathematician in mathematical thinking. They are not the proper objects of mathematical study but they are required as images (510d6-7). In addition, Smith suggests that it is only an assumption that Plato could not recognize any overlap between the visible and intelligible realms.[117] On the contrary, Smith argues, it is an essential feature of Plato's metaphysical, epistemological and also his political projects that the visible can in some way or to some degree be made intelligible.

As Smith himself notes, other scholars are deeply troubled by the notion that images of any kind could be included among the knowables.[118] They believe that while the knowables can only be found in the highest subsegment of the intelligible realm the opinables can only be found in the subsegment for *pistis*. As Book V suggests, the objects of knowledge are originals and the objects of opinion are images of the objects of knowledge. There is no further subdivision of each class into images and originals.

I should mention some further problems for Smith's proposal. Although a sensible diagram is used in mathematical thinking as an image of the intelligible

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[116] Smith 1998, 304.

[117] Smith 1998, 302.

[118] Smith 1998, 296.

original, it is never made the mathematician's object of cognition. It is only used as an aid to apprehend the original; the thinking is never about the sensible diagram but the original (510d). The mathematician wants to know about the original, not the sensible diagram. Secondly, the contrast within the intelligible realm is most disputed: other scholars hold the view that it is a difference in methodologies, not the image/original contrast that Smith supposes.[119]

2.5. What should be the meaning of *eikasia*?

This is the fifth key problem with the Line. It is of great importance because what we see in the meaning of *eikasia* will turn out to have close bearing on the philosophical significance we assign to the lowest section of the Line.[120] Annas doubts if the lowest section has any real philosophical significance other than making the analogy between the visible and intelligible realms. However, Cross and Woozley suggest that a fair case can be put up for taking the lowest section as of great philosophical significance in relation to Greek society as Plato knew it.[121] Contrary to what Annas thinks, the lowest section is not merely illustrative; it

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[119] For example, Annas suspects that the contrast within the intelligible realm is a difference in method as regards the same object. Benson believes that it is a contrast in methodologies and as regards of different objects.

[120] It turns out that this problem could also affect our decision on which state, intellect or *eikasia* should take the longer segment of the Line.

[121] Cross and Woozley 1966, 217-227.

represents an actual stage in the mind's progression from the lowest degree of clarity to maximum clarity and it also fits in with the Cave.[122]

Scholars use a variety of translations for *eikasia*. Denyer prefers 'fancy'.[123] Lesher renders the word as 'perception of images'.[124] Grube and also Pappas use 'imagination'[125] Penner uses 'conjecture'[126] Smith suggests 'imaging or illusion'.[127] Annas decides to leave *eikasia* untranslated in her discussion because scholars disagree about the correct rendering.[128] Morrison also employs the word in Greek.[129]

Cross and Woozley suggest that the translation 'conjecture' produces an ambiguity for it can mean guessing at originals through their likeness, or guessing at the relations of the shadows to one another.[130] In the second sense, the conjectures are confined to the shadow world. The first sense is linguistically unobjectionable but it does not fit in with the state of mind of the prisoners in the Cave.[131] Plato clearly emphasises at 514a that the prisoners cannot turn their heads and hence they should have no inkling that beyond the shadows there are originals casting the shadows. In another passage, Plato represents the prisoners as making conjectures in the sense of making guesses about which shadows will follow which (516c-d).

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[122] I shall return to this when I discuss the problematic relation between the Line and Cave in section 2.7.

[123] Denyer 2007, 284-309.

[124] Lesher 2010, 172.

[125] Grube 1980. Pappas 2003.

[126] Penner 2006, 234–262.

[127] Smith 1998, 292-315.

[128] Annas 1987, 247-248.

[129] Morrison 1977.

[130] Cross and Woozley 1966, 218.

[131] Cross and Woozley support the view that the Line and Cave are parallel.

Therefore Cross and Woozley believe that for the sake of close correspondence between the Line and the Cave, we must not understand *eikasia* as 'conjecturing about originals through their reflections'.[132]

Since parallelism between the Line and Cave is most disputed, Cross and Woozley provide some independent ground for their understanding of *eikasia*. The contrast at 476c describes the non-philosopher as leading a dreaming life while the philosopher is not. The non-philosopher is dreaming in the sense of 'thinking what is like something not to be like it but to be the thing itself, which it is like'. Unlike the philosopher who knows Beauty itself, the non-philosopher takes a likeness for the original. There is another passage on dreaming. At 533b the mathematician is said to be 'dreaming about being' in the sense that he takes a likeness for the original without realizing that it is a likeness. The mathematician is in the section of *dianoia* which is related to the *eikasia* section. Therefore the person who is in the state of *eikasia* does the same as the mathematician: they both take likeness for the original. The state of mind represented by the lowest section of the Line is not one of guessing at originals through their likenesses, but rather one of guessing at the relations of the likenesses to one another and thereby taking likenesses for originals and not realising that they are only likenesses.[133]

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[132] Cross and Woozley think they 'have seen reasonable grounds' for parallelism between the Line and Cave. But they also note that exact parallelism in the sense that the lowest section of the Line corresponds to the state of mind of the prisoners in the Cave is 'a more disputed matter'. I shall discuss parallelism after the six key problems with the Line.

[133] The suggestion that the mathematician takes a likeness for the original is at acute tension with 510d which clearly says that the geometrician is not thinking about the sensible diagram but the square itself or diagonal itself in his thinking. If the suggestion is correct, it is not clear how mathematics can serve as a bridge-study from the world of sense experience to the world of Forms, especially when the best a mathematician can do is mistaking a likeness for the original. This

For the philosophical significance of the lowest section, Cross and Woozley think that the reflections and shadows of the lowest section of the Line (and the shadows on the wall of the Cave) symbolize the imitations of justice, goodness and so on created by the rhetoricians, sophists and politicians in Greek society.[134] And the state of mind that accepts these misrepresentations without realizing they were mere imitations of the real thing is *eikasia*. The section of *pistis* stands for first-hand opinions i.e., the person who is in this state reaches his own conclusions about what is just or good. It is better than the uncritical acceptance of the imitations of justice or goodness as second-hand opinions. The two sections of the lower Line make up the whole world of belief but *eikasia* is at one further remove from real knowledge and it has the lowest degree of clarity.[135] Cross and Woozley believe that they are not reading into what Plato says in the passages because throughout his dialogues Plato regards the sophists, rhetoricians and politicians as a substantial threat to the good life, a serious menace to a good society.[136] But on the other hand, they also note that there is a great deal of divergence of opinion among scholars and commentators on *eikasia* and they are not optimistic that any final and definite interpretation is likely to be reached.[137]

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problem is related to the hypothetical method which I shall discuss as the sixth key problem with the Line.

[134] Cross and Woozley 1966, 220–224.

[135] Presumably this could add new force to Plutarch's version of the Line in which intellect takes the shorter segment and *eikasia* takes the longer. A greater length represents a greater amount of people. Most people mistake semblances for the truth, few people advance beyond the stage of unquestioned acceptance and even fewer have a hold on the truth.

[136] Cross and Woozley 1966, 221. They refer to 492-493 of the *Republic*, 464-465 of the *Gorgias*, 177 at the *Theaetetus*, and especially the whole of the dialogue the *Sophists* for supporting examples.

[137] Cross and Woozley 1966, 224.

2.6. How does the philosophical method proceed to an unhypothetical first principle (*archē*) and then finish with knowledge?

Scholars and commentators generally agree that the inferiority of the mathematical method to the philosophical method should be explained in terms of two distinguishing marks stipulated in Socrates's explanation that while dialectic uses only Forms in proceeding from hypotheses to an unhypothetical first principle (510b6-9), mathematical method uses sensible objects as images in proceeding from hypotheses to a conclusion (510b4-6). Unlike philosophical method, mathematical method makes assumptions (like the odd and the even, the kinds of angles, the Square itself and the Diagonal itself) which it does not explain (510c). The marks of inferiority are the use of sensible objects versus the use of Forms, and the different attitudes to hypothesis that put it to different uses.

Benson believes that the philosophical method and the mathematical method are distinguished less by their formal features than by the manner in which these two methods are carried out.[138] Since both employ the formal features of the method of hypothesis introduced in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, the difference in outcomes reflects different applications of the method of hypothesis; correct application can achieve knowledge while incorrect application can achieve only *dianoia*. The key to correct application of the method of hypothesis is to provide complete *logoi*, that is, complete confirmation for the hypotheses used.

The dianoetic method's application of the method of hypothesis is incomplete and thus incorrect because it treats its hypotheses as already known and confirmed.

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[138] Benson 2010, 188-208. Since mathematical method achieves *dianoia*, Benson wants to call it dianoetic method.

Hence it fails to employ the confirmation process to the extent that it should.[139] As a result, the dianoetic method falls short of the standard Plato requires of knowledge, namely that knowledge cannot be acquired by an argument whose premises are unconfirmed or unsecured.[140] On the other hand, dialectic can achieve knowledge because it treats its hypotheses really as hypothetical assumptions, like stepping stones to the unhypothetical first principle, and then it tests the consequences of this higher hypothesis for consistency and against contrary evidence.[141] Benson believes that for Plato, the goal of philosophical enquiry is to provide hypotheses which are derivable from the unhypothetical first principle and no one can rightly claim knowledge until the confirmation from the unhypothetical first principle is completed.[142]

The use of sensible objects is the second mark of inferiority. Benson believes that Plato is not objecting to the mere use of sensible objects because the *Phaedo* appears

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[139] See Benson 2010, 194. Benson notes that the majority geometricians and mathematicians (those of the proto-Euclidean sort around the Academy at the time) do propose to confirm their initial hypotheses by deriving from higher hypotheses. Therefore he thinks Plato's point is that .insofar as they are practicing dianoetic, at some point in their reasoning they will take as known, as not needing confirmation, as an *archē* what is in fact still a hypothesis in need of confirmation and to this extent their inquiry will remain incomplete'.

[140] See Benson 2010, 193-194.

Benson thinks that the standard Plato requires of knowledge is clearly stated. 'Dialecticians recognize, as Plato puts it later, that no "mechanism could possibly turn any agreement (*homologian*) into knowledge when it begins (*archē*) with something unknown and puts together the conclusion (*teleutē*) and the steps in between from what is unknown" (Republic VII 533c3-5)'.

[141] Scholars dispute about how the philosophical method proceeds to the unhypothetical first principle. I shall return to this issue shortly.

[142] Benson believes that the procedure employed in the discussions in the *Meno* (whether virtue is teachable), *Phaedo* (whether the soul is immortal) and *Republic* Book V and IV (whether Kallipolis is possible) is indistinguishable from the dianoetic method. It is only Socrates's explicit recognition that more work is needed makes these enquiries dialectical.

to recognize a useful role for ordinary sensible objects, as a kind of necessary catalyst and the *Republic* distinguishes between the features of sensible objects that do not turn the soul toward truth and knowledge and those that do.[143] Benson believes that Plato uses the second mark of inferiority to emphasize the indirect nature of dianoetic as it seeks to know about the Forms by using the things that are images of Forms.[144] However, Plato never explains why this indirection is defective.[145] Benson supposes that Plato's idea is that the dianoetic method's use of visible objects as images exposes itself to mistaking what are only contingent consequences of its hypotheses as genuine consequences. The dianoetic method cannot give knowledge because it takes contingent features of the images as genuine features of the Form and then it proceeds to make its *logoi* about the instances instead of about the Form itself. Dialectic can avoid this problem because it uses only Forms in proceeding from hypotheses to the unhypothetical first principle.[146]

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[143] See Benson 2010, 195-196.

[144] See Benson 2010,197.

Benson refers to Annas 1987, 280-282, where a similar point is made.

[145] Annas 1987, 282 attempts to explain the defect of mathematical thinking as a failure to give complete and unmediated understanding of the subject-matter in its own light: 'what is wrong with mathematics is that it lacks the ground for complete understanding; its objects are not transparently intelligible, because they are approached through empirical techniques that do not provide us with full understanding, and may even mislead, by suggesting that there is such understanding where there is not'.

[146] Benson's detailed description of what it is according to Plato to fail to view or grasp the unhypothetical *archē* directly' is as follows:

'We should recall that the Divided Line image was explicitly introduced to further explain the similarity between the Sun and the Form of the Good. But if the Form of the Good is to be found anywhere in the image of the Divided Line it appears to be identified with the unhypothetical *archē*. Consequently, Plato here indicates that the unhypothetical *archē*, the form of the good, is subject to an account (*toi logoi*), that it must be subjected to refutation (*elegchon*) and tested (*elechein*), not according to opinion (*kata doxan*) but according to being (*kat ousian*), and that one who fails to treat

Cross and Woozley identify an obvious difficulty in proceeding to the unhypothetical first principle. Plato seems to suggest that the unhypothetical first principle is directly known as a result of some "final flash of intuition". In other words, the philosopher grasps the unhypothetical first principle by some sort of immediate awareness.[147] The philosophical method seems to appeal to some sort of psychological certainty or incorrigibility. But Cross and Woozley believe that although this is a problem but it should not undermine the importance of what Plato has to say about the hypothetical method in the *Republic* because it contains many ideas that have been fruitful in later thought. For instance, the notion of axiomatisation has become fundamental in later mathematics.

On the other hand, Annas believes that the appeal to incorrigible or certain intuition is a misunderstanding.[148] The philosophical method is not such "a foolproof method" and Plato is not suggesting that knowledge is produced by a faculty that guarantees its own infallibility.[149] For Plato, direct knowing is associated with the kind of understanding that makes it wholly clear what the thing in question is, and only Forms can be directly known because only Forms are in principle completely intelligible.

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the unhypothetical *archē* this way views it partially or indirectly (grasping an image of it) as though in a dream' (199).

[147] Cross and Woozley 1966, 252-253. They also believe that the method Plato envisaged in the *Republic* is the hypothetical method of the *Phaedo*.

[148] Annas 1987, 280-284. Annas summarizes the misinterpretation as follows: 'on this view, dialectic culminates in a direct vision of the Good, and of everything else in the light of the Good, a vision that guarantees the certain truth of what is revealed, because the knowledge it gives is direct and leaves no room for any mediating process where error could enter' (281).

[149] Annas 1987, 281-282. Annas believes that Plato is not interested in the kind of directness (hence certainty) that precludes doubt about the truth of particular calms.

2.7. How do the stages on the Line integrate with the stages in the Cave?

Assuming a full correspondence between the four subsections of the Line (two in the visible and two in the intelligible) and the four stages of the Cave (two within the cave and two outside), Morrison identifies a minor discrepancy.[150] Whereas in the subsection of thought, the originals of the visible realm are used as likenesses, the prisoner looks at shadows and reflections after exiting from the cave. The shadows and reflections are not the same as the puppets, the originals of the shadows in the cave. Morrison thinks this discrepancy can be explained away because these two groups of objects are the same category of thing as far as truth and clarity are concerned, though they are not the same groups of objects in the cave.

Cross and Woozley refer to the problematic relationship between the Line and Cave as a 'vexed question' as there is a great deal of discussion and a variety of divergent interpretations.[151] They believe that Socrates's instruction (517a-c) is to compare or liken "the region revealed through sight" in the Line with the Cave (i.e., the whole lower Line is parallel with the Cave); and the upward ascent from the Cave (as the ascent to the intelligible world) plainly refers back to the Line.[152] The

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[150] See Morrison 1977, 228-229.

[151] Cross and Woozley 1966, 207.

[152] Cross and Woozley 1966, 214-216. They render the key passage as follows: 'now, my dear Glaucon, I said, you must apply this simile in its entirety to what we were saying before, comparing the region revealed through sight to the prison-dwelling, and the light of the fire in it to the power of the sun; and if you take the upward ascent and the sight of things in the upper world as the ascent of the soul to the intelligible region, you will be in possession of my surmise, since that is what you wish to hear'. (214).

shadow-original relationship is further evidence for parallelism.[153] But on the other hand, Cross and Woozley mention some considerable difficulties in making the initial state of the prisoners in the Cave parallel with the lowest segment of the Line.[154] The prisoners of the Cave look at shadows on the wall in the initial state. In the Line, the lowest segment stands for shadows and reflections (510a). Therefore, assuming parallelism, the prisoners should find themselves in the state of *eikasia*. But the problem is that Socrates refers to the prison-dwelling state as the normal condition of mankind (515a) which should (we might suppose) be *pistis* instead of *eikasia*. Another problem is that Plato has no need to distinguish *pistis* from *eikasia* in the Cave. The Cave is an allegorical introduction to Book VII which is concerned with two stages of higher education, that is, the mathematical study (which gives *dianoi*a) and the philosophical study (which gives *noesis*). All that Plato is interested in at this stage of Book VII is the transition from the sensible to the intelligible world, which is the journey from a low degree of intelligence to the highest. The route is from *pistis* via *dianoia* to *noesis*; *eikasia* has no role to play in this progressive route.

Annas refers to the problematic correspondence between the Line and Cave as "a subject of great dispute".[155] The first problem is that the Cave does not divide neatly into four stages. Secondly, the Line stresses the progress from the world of sense to that of thought and the image/original relation also stresses the continuity in what happens within those worlds. A move from image to original represents a move to more clarity. But then the Cave stresses the sharp division between inside and

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[153] Cross and Woozley report Murphy's view that even if Plato had not intended parallelism the Line may be said to apply itself to the Cave.

[154] Cross and Woozley1966, 227-228.

[155] Annas 1987, 254-256.

outside the cave as if they are two worlds. The conversion to enlightenment is inexplicable in the Cave; the release of the prisoner is never explained.

Like Cross and Woozley, Annas also discusses the problems posed by *eikasia*, namely that it has a different range in Line and Cave. The root problem is that the Cave, being an image, is actually an extended metaphor for the universal human need for enlightenment. Within the metaphor there is another layer of metaphor: the puppets are literally puppets but they also image moral qualities like justice (517d-e). The shadows on the wall are literally shadows but metaphorically they are the prisoners' unreflective opinions or "second-hand" beliefs about things like justice. Plato wants us to think of the prisoners' state not just as part of the whole image but on a further level of metaphor. This extended metaphor can make Plato's point graphically but only at the cost of wrecking correspondence with the Line, and the imagery has no consistent overall interpretation.[156]

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[156] Annas 1987, 256. Annas blames Plato for overloading his imagery and not being alive to the dangers in the philosophical use of images as he himself warns against.

'Plato has got so carried away by his desire to stress the utterly contemptible nature of the state unenlightened by philosophical thought that the imagery, memorable though it is, has no consistent overall interpretation.'

'Sun, Line, and Cave are philosophically frustrating; they point us in too many directions at once. Their power has always lain in their appeal to the imagination, and the harsh forceful contrast they draw between the life content with appearance and superficiality, and the richly rewarding life dedicated to finding out the truth. Their appeal is so strong that interpreters are perennially tempted to try to harmonize them in a consistent philosophical interpretation, despite Plato's own warnings on the limits of the kind of thinking that is guided by images and illustrations.'

3. MUST WE ADOPT THESE ASSERTORIC WAYS OF READING THE MATERIAL?

Coming to the end of my extended discussion of the key problems with the Line and its problematic integration with the Cave, we can conclude that the assertoric ways of reading the imagery as either illustration or argument for Platonic doctrines in metaphysics, ontology and epistemology have constantly given rise to unresolved disputes. No definite interpretation has emerged, for reasons that seem to have to do with the very nature of imagery. The history of scholarship on this aspect of Plato seems to suggest that there is little prospect of a definite interpretation that accords with the assertoric reading's expectation of reading off Plato's view directly from the imagery.

For this reason I would claim that all the assertoric readings have been unsatisfactory. However, most scholars and commentators seem never to have questioned their assertoric reading of the material and their expectation that one can read off Plato's view directly from the imagery. When her assertoric reading gives no satisfactory result, Annas blames Plato and his use of imagery. She does not pause to review her own exegetical assumptions to see if they are responsible for the problems and difficulties that she has encountered. So Annas's own practice of assertoric reading strikingly resembles the dianoetic method's application of the method of hypothesis. Like the geometers in that section, Annas treats her exegetical hypotheses as confirmed and already known. Indeed the assumption that Plato uses imagery to communicate his views typically goes unchallenged. It is a fundamental, but undiscussed, tenet of all assertoric readings.

The charges that Annas brings against Plato include his 'eagerness to use analogy and images to illustrate a point" and his "intellectual unclarity'. The problems she identifies with Plato's imagery include resisting philosophical interpretation, giving rise to persistent disagreements, being 'philosophically frustrating', and letting the readers down because of lack of philosophical rigour.[157]

Obviously these charges against Plato rely on the crucial assumption that Plato's purpose is to illustrate his views with the imagery. The alleged problems of the imagery originate in this very assumption, which is what induces the readers to approach the imagery as if it somehow delivers or communicates Plato's views. I suggest that we should give up this exegetical assumption because such assertoric readings have systematically failed to deliver a satisfactory account of Plato's views; moreover, we can adopt instead a different and more fruitful approach to the material.

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[157] A summary of her complaints is as follows:

'as often happens with Plato, his eagerness to use analogy and images to illustrate a point leads him into intellectual unclarity' (249).

'the insolubility of this problem (which is equivalent to the forth problem in my discussion) is a good illustration of the difficulties that Plato runs into by using images to make a philosophical point' (252).

'The Cave is Plato's most famous image, dominating many people's interpretation of what Plato's most important ideas are. This is a pity, because, as with the Line, severe problems arise over interpreting the imagery philosophically, and there are persistent disagreements' (252).

'Sun, Line and Cave are philosophically frustrating; they point us in too many directions at once. Their power has always lain in their appeal to the imagination...'

'Their appeal is so strong that interpreters are perennially tempted to try to harmonize them in a consistent philosophical interpretation, despite Plato's own warning on the limits of the kind of thinking that is guided by images and illustrations' (256).

'As, for example, Sun, Line and Cave are suggestive about the nature of the Good, but let us down if we seek in the imagery for philosophical rigour suitable only to direct investigation of the Good itself' (281).

3.1 Giving Up the Assertoric Ways of Reading

Sextus Empiricus reports a famous story about Apelles the painter:

> For it is said that once upon a time, when he was painting a horse and wished to depicted the horse's froth, he failed so completely that he gave up and threw the sponge at the picture – the sponge on which he used to wipe the paints form his brush – and that in striking the picture the sponge produced the desired effect.   (*PH* 1 28)

Like Apelles, I suggest, we should throw our sponge at assertoric reading of Plato's images in the *Republic*. We should give up the attempt to read off Plato's views directly from the images. Once we give up this exegetical assumption, we open up ourselves to a new way of engaging with the images. Our mind can break away from the images and move beyond, as an inquisitive intellect exploring philosophical problems in a freer spirit. Annas is right when she claims that the images are suggestive about the nature of the Good and a revisionary account of knowledge. In her interpretative framework, Plato uses imagery to communicate his views and yet the imagery is at fault because it cannot adequately convey the truth that Plato wants to get across. To be sure, she is partially right; but the way in which the images are suggestive about these issues is not the way she supposes.

According to the non-assertoric reading that I am proposing in this Chapter, Plato's images are suggestive of the baffling questions that we encounter when we probe into the nature of the Good or the requirement of knowledge. Therefore we should not be put off by the interpretative problems with the Line. They are not unproductive difficulties or distracting. They point, rather, to different ways of thinking about the problems, and they draw our attention to more intricate problems

that may have escaped our notice previously. Going through such problems is a necessary exercise in the course of our thinking about the Good or about the requirement of knowledge. The puzzles make us do some philosophy ourselves.

On my interpretation, Plato's imagery is propaedeutic. It is to be treated as the initial steps or thought experiments that can start us on the journey to the highly abstract thinking required in the philosophical investigation of the Good and knowledge. The non-assertoric reading that I propose here considers Plato's imagery as an invitation to do philosophy. The imagery may tend to prompt us into asking questions that cannot be answered within the terms of the imagery. But this is good because it is what it should be doing: pointing out different possible directions for more thinking. The imagery invites incompatible interpretations, the incompatible interpretations are not vicious but rather beneficial because they can be thought-provoking and they await our responses.

By discussing these problems with interpreting the Line I have been trying to illustrate how futile is the attempt made by defenders of the assertoric reading to discern what Plato actually believes, on the basis of the imagery. By adopting a non-assertoric reading, we abandon the expectation that the imagery is an ascent to Platonic doctrines. Once rid of the urge to doctrinal understanding, we become immune to the temptation to harmonize the images into one consistent philosophical interpretation. The scholars and commentators who are drawn to assertoric readings have fallen under the spell of that temptation. But the non-assertoric reading is the antidote to this temptation.

The assertoric reading of the imagery is deep-rooted. Exponents of the assertoric reading may disagree with my proposed non-assertoric reading. They may argue that seemingly insoluble disagreements are found everywhere in philosophy. For

instance, people dispute the validity of various arguments on the existence of God, but the dispute itself does not show that no one was trying to deliver a proof.

Therefore it is one thing to observe the fact that scholars and commentators disagree on the interpretation of Plato's imagery. But it is quite another thing to conclude that Plato did not mean to convey any doctrinal views in his use of imagery. Moreover, some exponents may think that they have a firm grasp on the imagery and people who disagree with them are just simply wrong.

I do not want to deny that what happens with the imagery could be similar to the dispute on the existence of God. But the unresolved problems with the Line and its problematic integration with the Cave provide some good reasons for not taking it to be the right one. My proposal that Plato's imagery is meant to be frustrating and to defy doctrinal interpretation does not compete with the assertoric readings at the same level. It does not deal with the imagery as if it is a metaphysical theory in disguise conveying some truths about the Good. It does not claim to unveil a different metaphysical doctrine. By not taking side in the search for Plato's hidden doctrine, we can dissolve or eliminate the puzzles about what exactly Plato was trying to say. My proposal also solves the puzzle about why Plato did not assert his doctrines directly.

We can move up one level by calling for a change of exegetical assumptions in dealing with Plato's use of imagery. Taking the imagery as non-assertoric means accepting the fact that it is designed to frustrate the reader's attempt to find a doctrine. In this way the imagery drives the reader to do philosophy – it is its success in this regard that should be judged by critics.

There are already some compelling reasons to adopt my non-assertoric reading of the images. But in addition my reading fits neatly with two relevant features of

Plato's work that further problematize the alternative approach of assertoric reading. The first feature is the fact that Plato's dialogues are works of fiction characterised by authorial silence, and the second has to do with the *elenctic* style of many of the dialogues.

3.2. Fiction and Authorial Silence

Does a speech by Hamlet give us Shakespeare's opinions? A work of fiction is an invented narrative. It would be absurd to say 'Shakespeare says this and that' when the person speaking, i.e., Hamlet was a character in a play. This is also true for the personae Socrates or the Athenian Stranger in Plato's dialogues. The personae are not the voice of the author. This can be true even for a monologue: it would be just as true if Plato had written not a dialogue but a monologue in the voice of Socrates. Scholars often write about the dialogue form as though that was what made the difference between a treatise and a work in which Plato's voice is not heard. But the issue is not whether there is more than one voice heard, but whether any voice is the voice of the author. My view is that Plato's dialogues feature authorial silence despite the multiple voices heard. I am now going to explain that in Plato's dialogues the ideas and arguments put forward by Socrates are not necessarily ideas that belonged to the real Socrates; nor are they certainly Plato's own. My view is that certain features of Plato's dialogues constitute authorial silence, so that the arguments can neither be attributed to the persona Socrates nor to Plato the author. Hence, Plato's fictional dialogues become another prominent instance of non-assertoric discourse.

Plato's dialogues seem to be a kind of fiction. The dialogue form itself is suggestive of the non-assertoric mood of his writing. Of course my point is not that anything written in the dialogue form in philosophy must be non-assertoric. This need not be the case, and indeed assertoric dialogues are easy to find. For instance, George Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* is overtly assertoric, with Philonous speaking Berkeley's metaphysical views and Hylas representing his adversary. My point here is simply that the dialogue form can be ideal for non-assertoric discourse because it can put the author at one remove from the views expressed in the writing. The important points, however, for my purposes, are authorial silence (Plato himself does not speak as a character in the work) and he is not explicitly identified with any character. Apart from the *Laws*, Socrates makes at least a brief appearance in all Plato's dialogues. Plato's presentation of Socrates varies somewhat, however. Often Socrates is the principal speaker, who directs the course of discussion by subjecting the interlocutors to Socratic elenchus or cross-examination. But in some dialogues such as the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, his role is less prominent and other interlocutors take up the role of principal speaker. Moreover, Platonic silence prevails in the narrative of all dialogues. Plato's usual practice is to let his personae do the narrative of the dialogues. But for those direct or dramatic dialogues such as the *Euthyphro* there is simply no narrative at all; the discussion just takes off from ground with minimal stage setting. On the other hand, for those narrated or reported dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus* the narrative is done in the name of some personae but not in Plato's own name. It is usually someone recalling and relating a discussion held earlier between Socrates and his interlocutors under some fictional setting. The discussion is featured as an indirect discourse with a pervasive sense of indirectness. It is not offered as Plato's

first-hand verbatim recapitulation or personal testimony of any real conversation between Socrates and his interlocutors. The result of these is a phenomenon of multiple voices in the dialogues but none represents the voice of the author.

Because the settings and conversations appear to be imaginary, and made up by Plato, there are two thoughts we might have. One is to think that nothing of it is Plato's own view, because it is imaginary and he need not believe any of it (as fantasy novelist might not believe any of the claims made by his fantasy characters). This comes closest to my own view. On the other hand one might think that some of the views are Plato's own (since he is not constrained to report historical conversations, but can write his own views into the conversations). That would lead us to assume that Plato does stand behind the words of some of his characters, or that some of them speak for him as a mouthpiece.[158] Other scholars have supposed that the characters in the dialogue do not represent the authorial voice because Plato speaks in a hidden voice and the reader can get at the subtle answer by working hard at the dialogues. [159]

The important point for our purposes is that Plato never casts himself as an active participant in the dialogues. There is only one place where the text indicates that the real Plato was present on the occasion that is recorded or imagined, namely at the trial of Socrates, but even on that occasion he remains silent. Plato's name is first mentioned by Socrates as among the young who are present during the trial and are willing to aid Socrates to rebut the charge of corrupting the young with their own personal experience with Socrates (34a). His name is mentioned again by Socrates,

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[158] For instance Rowe 2006, 24. I will soon review Rowe's 'Two Voices Reading' in section 3.2.1.

[159] For instance Kahn 1996. I will soon review Kahn's reading of the dialogue form as an ingressive mode of exposition in section 3.2.2.

in the later phase of the trial, as one of those who are willing to stand bail for 30 minas if the jury should so decide (38b). But notice how Plato's rare presence at the proceedings is characterized by complete silence.

The *Phaedo* provides another excellent example. At the beginning of the narrative Plato is said to be ill and therefore absent from the death scene of Socrates (59b). Of course the *Phaedo* is only a dramatized dialogue and should not be treated as a faithful account recording the historical facts concerning the death of Socrates. But Plato's alleged absence should be reckoned as what Plato the author wants the reader to see with regard to how he relates to the account given in the *Phaedo*. He wants to distance himself from the account. He also wants to distance his account from historicity.

Plato begins the dialogue with Echecrates putting a request to Phaedo for a first-hand account of the death of Socrates (57a). Echecrates expresses his wish to have a definite account with details (57b) and he repeatedly asks Phaedo to tell everything as accurately as he can (58d). Phaedo responds to the request and begins to relate the tragic and heroic scene of Socrates's last hours to Echecrates and the reader. No doubt the reader, like Echecrates, should naturally expect from Plato a personal testimony of the death scene of Socrates. Presumably Plato should anticipate this expectation. But contrary to expectation, Plato distances himself with his proclaimed absence. This absence serves Platonic anonymity by putting Plato at one remove materially from the account given in the *Phaedo*.

The lack of authorial voice is also apparent in cases where there is a discrepancy between the positions attributed to Socrates in different dialogues. A classic example of this is discussed by Osborne in her article on 'Socrates in the Platonic

Dialogues'.[160] She draws the conclusion that Socrates is not delivering Plato's own views, but is a tool created for each discussion and each issue to be addressed. But there is more to be said. It is not just that Socrates is not Plato's voice. We need to see that Plato's voice is completely silent. This Platonic silence creates grave difficulties for anyone who is trying to look for doctrines in the dialogues.

I have been articulating a sketchy account of Plato's persistent practice of detaching himself from the dialogues. This account may seem coarse but is useful enough for my purpose here. The overall impression is that Plato constantly hints to his reader the fictional nature of his dialogues which are essentially dramatic representations of dialectics instead of faithful testimony of any historical event or conversation. The prevailing authorial silence in both the narrative and the discussion produces an overwhelming sense of indirectness and ambivalence. As a result, the reader's general feeling is that Plato is almost completely detached from his writing. No doubt Plato may have views and positions on the issues discussed in the dialogues; but he does not make them explicit in the dialogues. In short, the dialogues represent lively and yet fictional arguments between personae. They do not speak aloud Plato's own views.

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[160] A convincing view on this discrepancy can be found in Osborne 2006. According to her Tailor-made Socrates Reading, the Socrates in each dialogue is designed specifically for the dramatic setting that is to be depicted and for the philosophical inquiry to be developed in the dialogue. The Socrates of the *Protagoras* represents one Socratic personality and the Socrates of the *Gorgias* represents another. Plato creates them for different settings and philosophical inquiries. Therefore the Socratic character should not be committed exclusively to either of these conflicting positions on pleasure.

3.2.1. The voice of Socrates as the authorial voice: Rowe's "Two Voices Reading"

Rowe proposes to take the voice of Socrates in the *Republic* as the authorial voice communicating some substantive theses that Plato wants the readers to take away from his writing.[161] Rowe rejects the possibility that Plato intended to offer his writing as an open text on the ground that such a reading does not square at all with Socrates's absolutely serious tone and the passion with which he expresses himself in the dialogue as a whole.[162] Rowe thinks that Plato may set out to challenge and provoke us but his purpose is not merely to shake us out of our assumptions and to get us think for ourselves. Underlying Plato's writing is 'a substantive, and connected, set of ideas, which needs to be carefully excavated and reconstructed', and therefore the reader should determine exactly what these ideas are. [163]

Rowe thinks that to excavate and reconstruct Plato's substantive ideas from the *Republic* the reader must be constantly aware of the need to distinguish between

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[161] Rowe 2006, 7-24.

[162] Rowe 2006, 8-9. The idea of an open text is that it allows the reader to place his or her own interpretation as the reader sees fit.

[163] Rowe 2006, 9. But to excavate and reconstruct Plato's view form the voice of Socrates faces two problems. The first problem is posed by the fact that the Socrates in the *Republic* says things that are different from what the Socrates says elsewhere in other dialogues. One response to this problem is to try to reconcile the discrepancies as changes of mind on Plato's part as he gradually breaks free from his master Socrates and becomes more mature in his philosophical thoughts. Another response is to subsume the discrepancies under the view that underlying the play of each and every dialogue is a kind of subterranean flow of thought that is more or less constant. This response comes closest to Rowe's own view.

The second problem is concerned with the degree of firmness and seriousness with which the Socrates in the *Republic* says things. This problem also involves the uses of different tones and registers in the voice of Socrates.

what Socrates says when speaking to the assumptions and perspectives of others and what he says when speaking with his own voice.[164] Because of this suggestion that the Socrates in the *Republic* speaks in two different voices, I refer to Rowe's reading as the 'Two Voices Reading'. According to Rowe, one voice resembles the voices of orators and rhetoricians—Socrates speaks in this voice when he is addressing the assumptions and perspectives of the interlocutors. The second voice is his own voice—Socrates speaks in his own voice when he is speaking of his own premises.[165] Rowe thinks the first voice represents the rhetorical aspect of Plato's writing, signifying what Plato merely borrows or appropriates, while the second voice represents Plato's authorial voice, announcing what he is prepared to own. Rowe thinks it is 'a fair guess' that Plato's view is, by and large, represented by the voice of Socrates in the *Republic* because 'Socrates' as a persona is always under the author's control.

3.2.2 Hidden Voice Readings: Kahn's Ingressive Interpretation and Cornford's Reading

Kahn once acknowledges the difficulty created by authorial silence: 'Since we never hear Plato's own voice, how can we know where, and to what extent, what

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[164] Rowe 2006, 19.

[165] Rowe gives the following examples of Socratic premises in the *Republic*: 'that a friend is someone useful (334e-335a: actually a premise volunteered by Polemarchus); that harming someone means making them worse (335b-c); that it does not belong to a just person to harm anyone (335e); that justice is a kind of cleverness or wisdom (350a-c); and that the unjust are at odds even with themselves (351e-352a)' (14).

Socrates says represents what Plato thinks?'[166] Kahn also mentions the exegetical difficulties posed by the dialogue form for the interpretation of Plato's thought.

> The anonymity of the dialogue form, together with Plato's problematic irony in the presentation of Socrates, makes it impossible for us to see through these dramatic works in such a way as to read the mind of their author.[167]

Given the 'anonymity of the dialogue form', Kahn believes that to approach Plato's dialogues as a direct statement of his own views would commit what he calls 'the fallacy of transparency', or the failure to take account of the doctrinal opacity of the dialogues. But on the other hand, Kahn believes that some thematic connections as unifying links between the dialogues, and Plato's hints of conclusions are actually 'more deliberate, more subtle, and more ubiquitous' than is generally recognized.[168] Kahn believes that his hypothesis of ingressive exposition can capture 'the artistic

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[166] Kahn 1996, 36. Kahn continues: 'the problem is made more acute both by the formal independence of the dialogues from one another, and by the discrepancy between the positions attributed to Socrates in different contexts' (36-37). Kahn's book argues and develops a unitarian reading of Plato's dialogues. Roughly speaking, the unitarian view contends that Plato's various dialogues contain one single philosophy and that this philosophy has remained unchanged throughout the entire Platonic corpus. This single unifying philosophy connects the various dialogues with one another at a very deep level while they explore the same problem from different directions. On the other hand, the developmental view believes that Plato changed his mind and such development in his thinking is reflected in different periods of the dialogues. I am not taking side with any of these views. My position simply argues that Plato's dialogue features authorial silence and thus Plato stands at least one remove from his work.

[167] Kahn 1996, 41. By 'the anonymity of the dialogue form', Kahn refers mainly to the features of Platonic silence and authorial anonymity in both the narratives and discussions of the dialogues. Kahn notes that the anonymity of the dialogue form presents scholars with a problem that is unparalleled for any other philosopher.

[168] Kahn 1996, 38. Kahn notes that scholars do not dispute thematic connections between the dialogues; they only differ in what they see as the philosophical intention behind these connections.

intention' with which Plato composes the dialogues.[169] He also believes that Plato's authorial design and authorial intent are inscribed in the text of the dialogues though none of them are explicitly spelled out in the text.

> It is, I suggest, because we all implicitly recognize such a design and such an intent that we know that it is Plato speaking, and not merely the dialogue persona of Socrates, in the central books of the *Republic*. Plato for us is the author of the dialogues. And it is the pattern of unity created by the network of thematic lines connecting the dialogues and meeting one another in the *Republic* that permits us to say: this is the author's intention. He has designed these dialogues in such a way that, despite the anonymity of the dialogue form, we can securely recognize here the point of what he has written, the philosophic message he means to convey.[170]

Cornford also proposes a hidden voice reading of Plato. The search for a definition of knowledge ends in *aporia* in the *Theaetetus*. Given that the discussions in many other dialogues also end in *aporia*, then a majority of the dialogues would appear to be confessions of ignorance or even confusion on Plato's part, if the personae directly speak for Plato's views. Cornford thinks that the real lesson from the failure in the *Theaetetus* lies rather on the negative side.[171] On that view, Theaetetus's unsuccessful attempt to formulate a satisfactory account of knowledge

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[169] Kahn 1996, 42. Roughly speaking, Kahn's ingressive exposition is a proposal to deal with the problem of what Plato means to convey in a particular text in the light of the larger world of Plato's philosophy articulated in the middle dialogues. Kahn's ingressive exposition emphasizes doctrinal continuity and construes the dialogues as the multi-faceted expression of a single philosophical view. On Kahn's observations, some key notions like dialectic, the knowledge of good and bad, the Form of the Good, receive a treatment of progressive disclosure in the dialogues. Kahn cites these as evidence in support of his ingressive exposition. (See Kahn 1996, 59-62, also Chapters Six to Elven for more support of his hypothesis.)

[170] Kahn 1996, 65.

[171] Cornford 1935. Cornford believes that the real lesson of the failure in the *Theaetetus* is that we cannot get knowledge by adding a *logos* in any of the sense considered in the discussion (162).

contributes to a better understanding of knowledge by eliminating the unlikely accounts and thus clearing the ground for the correct answer. The real purpose of the failure in the *Theaetetus* is to prepare the reader to apprehend Plato's profound metaphysical insight that only the Forms and truths about them can be the object of true knowledge. But to grasp this insight, the reader has to bring relevant dialogues together and work on them.

3.2.3. Whether any voice is the voice of the author

My view stresses two salient facts about the dialogues: the author is concealed (if not totally absent) from the discussions in the dialogues, and the author remains silent behind the personae's narrative voices and above all, the dialogues per se. Some scholars (like Rowe) assume that Plato has delegated the illocutionary act of asserting to Socrates and that Plato is interested in imparting knowledge into the minds of his readers. They fail to acknowledge and respond to the fictional nature of Plato's mode of writing. We should not assume that Plato is presenting his own views or trying to get us to adopt some doctrines of his own through the voice of Socrates or any hidden voice.

Rowe notes that the persona Socrates appears to speak in an absolutely serious tone and with passion in the *Republic*. He supposes it is a fair guess that Plato's authorial voice is represented by the voice of Socrates in the *Republic*. But actually this assumption is not doing justice to the fictional nature of the work. In a work of fiction, a character may make weighty assertions about a lot of things. But the author stands at one remove from the assertions. The fact that the persona Socrates is under

the author's control does not give the conclusion that the persona Socrates must represent the authorial voice.[172]

Another problem with Rowe's reading is that he seems to conflate the two different voices that he distinguishes in Socrates (i.e., the voice of orators and rhetoricians, and the authorial voice) into one single voice that speaks with an essentially doctrinal overtone. Rowe suggests there is a genuinely Platonic argument and position even when the Socrates in the *Republic* speaks of assumptions that he merely borrows or appropriates.[173] But as Kahn once asked, because of authorial silence how can we know where and to what extent what Socrates says really represents what Plato thinks?

Rowe thinks the dialogue form is intended to serve an important function in mediating between different positions as Plato's aim is to draw his readers over from where they are to where he stands.[174] The idea that the dialogue form can mediate between different positions comes closest to my view. But unlike Rowe's reading, my view is that we do not have to suppose that Plato wants us to abandon our own thoughts and take up the substantive thoughts conveyed by Socrates in the dialogues.

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[172] Therefore my view is opposed to Kraut when he suggests 'our best chance of understanding Plato is therefore to begin with the assumption that in each dialogue he uses his principal interlocutor to support or oppose certain conclusions by means of certain arguments because he, Plato, supports or opposes those conclusions for those reasons' (Kraut 1992).

To give due consideration to the legitimate question of why Plato wrote dialogues seems to Kraut amounting to making irrelevant and hazardous assumptions about why Plato writes, and why he writes in dialogue form.

[173] Rowe 2006, 10 'In every context, I propose, even when he is beginning from assumptions that are not his own, there is a genuinely Platonic argument, and a genuinely Platonic position, in the offing.'

[174] Rowe 2006, 10. Rowe thinks the real, and deepest, explanation of Plato's use of the dialogue form is that it 'reflects his recognition of the distance that separates his own assumptions from those of any likely reader, and of the consequent requirement, if any effective communication is to take place at all, to find methods of mediating between apparently different starting points.'

I think a more plausible explanation of Plato's use of the dialogue form may lie in its pedagogical advantages: the dialogue form can facilitate the development and scrutiny of particular arguments.

Finally Rowe notes that the form in which the *Republic* is written makes the interpretation of almost any aspects of the work more or less controversial.[175]   But I think the real challenge comes from authorial silence or the question whether any voice is the voice of Plato.

I do not contest Kahn's idea that the intention of the author can be inscribed in the text in some sense. But we should not immediately assume that the dialogues are designed to assert Plato's doctrines in some subtle or concealed way, as Kahn or Cornford assume. We should not jump to the conclusion that Plato's dialogues are actually philosophical treatises in disguise.

Kahn's reading has something in common with my view. But his ingressive interpretation aims at hidden doctrines while my view is anti-doctrinal. On Kahn's reading, Plato conceals a subtle message for the reader, which is not simply conveyed in Socrates's own speeches.[176] Kahn provides two explanations for Plato's choice of gradual disclosure. The first has to do with the pedagogical advantages of *aporia*: intellectual perplexity can be an effective stimulus on inquiring minds. The second has to do with Plato's acute sense of the psychological distance that separates his visionary world view from that of his reader. Plato's metaphysical vision is 'grotesquely out of place' in Greek society of the fifth and

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[175] Rowe 2006, 8-10.

[176] Kahn 1996, 66. Kahn believes that Plato's 'lifetime loyalty to the dialogue form suggests a temperamental aversion to direct statement, reinforced by much reflection on the obstacles to successful communication for philosophical insight.'

fourth centuries BC but *aporia*, the stripping away of received wisdom and accepted cultural norms, can prepare the reader for Plato's vision of knowledge and reality.

Kahn talks of the pedagogical advantages of *aporia* as some stimulus on inquiring minds. But then he suggests that *aporia* can prepare the readers for Plato's hidden vision of knowledge and reality. Unlike Kahn's (and also Cornford's) suggestion, my view is that *aporia* is meant to lead the reader to further work, not to any hidden doctrines in the dialogues.

Although Kahn once mentions the exegetical difficulties posed by the anonymity of the dialogue form for the interpretation of Plato's thought he soon relapses into a search for the hidden message. Kahn thinks that the first problem with which any interpretation of Plato must begin is the distance between the text and the message that the author intends to transmit.[177] Kahn's ingressive interpretation approaches Plato's work with the unwarranted assumption that the work is meant to transmit to the reader Plato's doctrinal messages. But this just begs the question.

According to Kahn the gradual disclosure of Plato's hidden message begins in the threshold dialogues (from the *Laches* to the *Symposium*) and leads to the otherworldly vision in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. Kahn believes this is Plato's intended authorial design, and the problem of interpreting Plato's dialogues is therefore the problem of deciding how the philosophical contents of the different dialogues are to be connected with one another while the dialogues present themselves each as an autonomous unit occupying its own literary space.[178] Again this way of reading the dialogues just begs the question. Kahn's ingressive

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[177] Kahn 1996, 59.

[178] Kahn 1996, 37.

interpretation ascribes to Plato an authorial design that is not explicitly spelled out in the text.

Kahn warns of 'the fallacy of transparency', that is, the mistake of reading the voice of Socrates as the authorial voice. This part of his interpretation is similar to my view. However, Kahn's ingressive interpretation then takes a doctrinal turn. He quickly loses sight of the real issue, namely, whether any voice is the authorial voice. His reading begins to search for the hidden message. He believes that he is dealing with the dialogue form but actually the issue has to do with authorial silence which he has confused with the dialogue form.

Some scholars have suggested that Plato's use of a persona to create the effect of authorial anonymity in his writing is motivated by political considerations.[179] On that view Plato's absence in the dialogues might be intended to protect himself. Socrates did not write philosophy. He was tried and put to death because of his active pursuit of philosophy. Plato might have been alarmed by this tragic fate of his teacher. For his own protection, Plato might have come up with the idea of writing depersonalized and dramatized dialogues, perhaps using Socrates as his mouthpiece, or perhaps avoiding expressing his secret views directly at all.[180]

At any rate these interpretations are all based on an assumption about Plato's intention to deliver some definite doctrines. I shall now raise two more objections to this assumption. The first has to do with the use of imagery. The imagery in the *Republic* does not function as some smokescreen to stage Plato's concealed illocutionary act of asserting his metaphysical insights. The way Plato carefully sets

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[179] Leo Strauss is a famous proponent for this view.

[180] My reservation about the idea of political considerations is that it can only remain an open conjecture. If it ever tells of any partial truth, it does not tell the whole truth and it leaves the philosophical reasons for Plato's detachment unanswered.

the stage for the imagery and his use of figurative language is more akin to delicate disclaimer of knowledge or doctrinal insights. For example, Socrates is pushed to offer the simile of the Sun as an indirect response to Glaucon's repeated demand that he should state his own views on the Good. Having dismissed the equation of the Good with either pleasure or knowledge, Glaucon requests that Socrates should state his own views on the Good (506b – c). Socrates repeatedly denies any knowledge of the Good in the course of the discussion. He refuses to state his own views because he thinks it is not right 'for someone to talk as if he knew what he doesn't know'. This sense of refraining from making knowledge claims on the Good is noteworthy. It is consistent with Socrates's constant disavowal of knowledge.

Glaucon insists that Socrates should at least say what he thinks about the Good, 'not as if he knew, but as if he'd formed opinions – he should be prepared to say what he thinks'. But Socrates continues to excuse himself again (506c – d). It is only when Glaucon reassures Socrates that he and their friends would be happy with whatever Socrates would say of the Good that Socrates finally suggests that they should 'forget about trying to define goodness itself for the time being' and instead, he is 'prepared to talk about something which seems to [him] to be the child of goodness and to bear a very strong resemblance to it' (507e). Socrates finally agrees to articulate the Simile of the Sun. But before introducing the simile, he reiterates that he does not intend to cheat Glaucon by giving 'a counterfeit description of the child'. Socrates tries so hard to hold himself back from accepting Glaucon's request and only after so many precautions and caveats does Socrates eventually offer the Simile of the Sun. At the end of the Sun, Socrates issues another disclaimer by saying that he will 'have to leave a lot out' though he will 'try to make it as complete as [he] can at the moment' (509c).

The exponents of the hidden voice reading simply misunderstand Socrates's effort to qualify his imagery as 'defective, blind and deformed' and that it is 'not based on knowledge'. They take this holding back as a mere gesture. They assume Plato's intention is to use imagery and figurative language to prompt his reader to recognize the truth about the Good in an inconspicuous way. But the fact is Plato does not make clear what his purpose is with the imagery. How can we get from Socrates, a fictional character, to what Plato thinks? The gap seems huge, if not unbridgeable. Also, my earlier discussion of various scholarly interpretation of the imagery has shown that the assertoric ways of reading the imagery as either illustration or argument for Platonic doctrines only succeed in generating unresolved disputes. To conclude, Plato's style in the use of imagery does not encourage assertoric reading; he does not pretend to be making knowledge claims about the Good with the imagery in his writing of fictional dialogue.

3.3. The *Elenctic* Mode of Argumentation

To add some extra force to my view, I shall now take a closer look into the *elenctic* mode of argumentation. Most Platonic dialogues are structured according to a general form: there are two parties, a main speaker (who is also the questioner), and an interlocutor (who is also the respondent) and it is the main speaker who directs the course of discussion in the question and answer mode. Suppose in a most simple manner, the questioner may ask only yes-or-no questions and the respondent gives what he thinks is the correct answer to these questions. In this basic form of question-and-answer format, even the questioner does not formally endorse the argument but, as Frede rightly notes, by giving what he thinks is the correct answer

it is the respondent not the questioner who is committed to the premises, the conclusion, and the validity of the argument.[181] The questioner may have no firm view but, if he does, his own view of the matter need not enter into the argument. There is no doubt that the questioner's questions have a decisive influence on the course of the argument. But this influence does not make the questioner formally endorse the argument as his own argument. The argument only reflects the questioner's views as to how different propositions, quite independently of their truth, are logically related to each other and as to which propositions have a strong bearing on the question at issue, or so at least Frede argues.[182]

Obviously in the dialogues Socrates seldom just asks yes-or-no questions, but the point I am stressing with the basic form of question-and-answer format is that it is an *intrinsic* formal feature of such a format that it resists the hypothesis that Socrates speaks Plato's views. A closer look at the *elenctic* mode of argumentation in the dialogues would reveal even more built-in resistance to this hypothesis. To a very large extent, the argument in the dialogues can neither be attributed to the fictional Socrates nor *a fortiori* to Plato the author.

In the case of didactic dialectic the respondent assumes a very passive role as he only receives the argument and has no real influence on its course. It is the questioner who leads the respondent with an argument or even a proof already in hand. But Frede rejects the possibility that a general characterization of the argument in the dialogues could be 'didactic dialectic'. According to Frede a substantial number of the dialogues are aporetic and this clearly suggests that Socrates is

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[181] Frede 1992.

[182] Frede 1992, 206.

engaged in *elenctic* dialectic.[183] Frede believes that *elenctic* dialectic is unduly assimilated to didactic dialectic because the term 'elenchus' is generally rendered as 'refutation' and such rendering gives the wrong connotation that the questioner's task is to refute the respondent's claim by producing an argument for, or a proof of, the truth of the contradictory claim. [184]

Frede protests that this assumption does not accord with *elenctic* dialectic and it does not make sense of the aporetic dialogues, in which the respondent no longer knows what to say about the question at issue because he is lost in the contradiction between his original claim and the conclusion of the ensuing argument. According to Frede, what really happens in the aporetic dialogues is that the questioner does not proceed to refute the respondent's claim. Instead the questioner refutes the respondent's claim to authority by showing that the respondent is committed to the contradictory of his original thesis. And what the questioner does is simply test the respondent's expertise by asking the right questions. The respondent is then brought to see that some beliefs have to go but he is not in the position to decide which belief has to go. He is in the state of *aporia*.[185]

Elenctic dialectic requires the question-and-answer format because it can reflect the respondent's contribution to the argument. The questioner shapes the course of argument by posing questions but his belief or knowledge does not matter for the purpose of elenchus. Because after all, it is not his belief or knowledge which are under cross-examination, but the respondent's. According to Frede the upshot is that

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[183] Frede 1992, 210. Frede also believes that there is an obvious connection between elenctic dialectic and the dialectical practice of the real Socrates.

[184] Frede 1992, 210.

[185] Frede 1992, 211-212.

given the elenctic character of the aporetic dialogues, their argument is not the argument of the questioner… however much and however clearly Plato may identify himself with Socrates, the questioner in these dialogues, he does not thereby commit himself in any way to the argument of these dialogues.[186]

4. CONCLUSION

By focusing on the difficulties around the Line and its problematic integration with the Cave, I have argued that all the assertoric readings of the material for Plato's doctrines have been unsatisfactory. Underlying these assertoric readings is the assumption that Plato does communicate his metaphysical views in disguise through the words of Socrates or the imagery. This exegetical assumption can be found in Annas's reading, in Rowe's reading, in Kahn's reading as well as in Cornford's reading. This exegetical assumption goes unchallenged.

My thesis is that we should give up this exegetical assumption for a number of reasons. First, assertoric readings have failed to deliver a satisfactory account of Plato's views and the prospect of such an account being developed in the future is rather dim. Secondly, Plato himself does not speak as a character and he is not explicitly identified with any character in the dialogues. I call this feature authorial silence. Rowe's attempt to identify the authorial voice in the voice of Socrates only

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[186] Frede 1992, 212. Frede agrees that there may be material clues for inferring the positions of the fictional Socrates or Plato but he insists that the formal status of the arguments makes such inference highly indirect. On a different note, Frede does not pretend that all dialogues are aporetic. He identifies Plato's earliest dialogues as almost invariably aporetic. He suggests that the non-aporetic dialogues 'seem to represent a spectrum of forms of dialectic falling between purely gymnastic dialectic, on the one hand, and didactic dialectic, on the other' but he also notes that 'the commitment of the questioner to the arguments is often rather qualified' (Frede 1992, 213-214).

evades the difficulties generated by authorial silence in a work that is fictional. Kahn has no problem in acknowledging the difficulties caused by authorial silence and the anonymity of the dialogue form. But he soon relapses into ascribing a hidden voice to Plato and he claims to recognize a gradual disclosure of Plato's view that starts in the threshold dialogues and becomes more explicit in the *Republic*. However, the starting point of Kahn's ingressive interpretation is false. Finally, because of the *elenctic* mode of argumentation in at least the aporetic dialogues, the arguments in these dialogues can neither be attributed to the persona Socrates, nor to Plato the author. Like Frede, I do not oversimplify the issue here and pretend that all the dialogues are the same in their logical structure. The important points, however, for my purposes, are elenchus as a negative technique for destroying knowledge claims, and the aporetic nature of the enquiry in some dialogues. The exponents of assertoric readings may take elenchus and the aporetic nature of the enquiry in some dialogues as constitutive of the authorial design and authorial intent. For Kahn, they form the initial stage of the 'gradual disclosure' of Plato's otherworldly visions, as Kahn believes. But again, this assumption carries no necessity with it.

My proposal is that we should give up the assertoric ways of reading the imagery either as illustrations or arguments for Plato's doctrines. Once we give up the exegetical assumption that Plato does communicate his metaphysical views in disguise through the words of Socrates or the imagery, we open up ourselves to a new way of engaging with the dialogues and the imagery. My proposal of non-assertoric reading should merit consideration because in recognizing the fact that Plato's imagery is meant to be frustrating and to defy doctrinal interpretation, my proposal provides a new perspective on the role they serve in Plato's philosophical method and exposition. It eliminates the unresolved puzzles about

what exactly Plato was trying to say and why Plato did not assert his doctrines more forcibly.

In this chapter, I have explored to what extent Plato's writing of philosophical dialogues, characterised by the use of images, authorial silence and the *elenctic* mode of argumentation as devices of non-assertion, can be construed as a paradigm case of non-assertoric discourse. In the next chapter, I shall consider a polar opposite of Plato's approach to non-assertoric writing. Sextus Empiricus opens his work, the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, with a first-person authorial declaration, a first-person chronicler proviso (*PH* I 4) that the whole work is nothing more than a report of what appears to him at the moment.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROBLEMS OF INCOHERENCE: A CASE STUDY IN SEXTUS EMPIRICUS'S WRITING

In this Chapter I discuss Sextus's writing as my second case study of non-assertoric discourse. The Pyrrhonist assents to the appearance (*PH* 1 19-20) and speaks only of his impressions like a chronicler who reports of what appears to him to be the case (*PH* 1 4).[187] Although the Pyrrhonist eschews dogmatic commitment to beliefs and suspends judgement about the real nature of things in this manner Pyrrhonian Scepticism has been subjected to the persistent problems of incoherence since its beginning. As we shall see in section 1.1, Pyrrho, Aenesidemus and Sextus are all confronted with the problems of incoherence against either Pyrrhonism or their uses of language. But unlike Pyrrho who resorts to *aphasia* (speechlessness) and non-writing, Sextus appears to be the first Pyrrhonist to undertake the task of clarifying the non-assertoric nature of his Pyrrhonian discourse in response to the charges of incoherence. Indeed Sextus's writing not only attempts to rebut the

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[187] Scholars and commentators disagree on whether the Pyrrhonist's assent to the appearance amounts to belief in some sense. Sextus himself seems to address this issue in a crucial passage, that is *PH* 1 13, in his writing. I visit this controversy on the belief of Pyrrhonist in section 1.2. As I shall explain in section 1.2 my discussion in this Chapter assumes a mild form of Pyrrhonism which targets only dogmatic commitment to beliefs about the real nature of things. Consequently, Sextus, as an urbane Pyrrhonist, eschews theoretical beliefs in his use of language and writing. He refrains from expressing theoretical beliefs about Pyrrhonism and how things really are in his writing.

charges of incoherence but also elaborates on different crucial aspects of his non-assertoric speech.

My view is that since Sextus formulates his writing in accordance with his non-assertoric speech therefore it is entirely apt to construe his writing as a non-assertoric discourse which, like his speech, expresses no beliefs of how things really are. To support my view it is incumbent on me to discuss in section 2 whether Sextus's language-use is consistently non-assertoric.

I distinguish four modes of non-assertion in the Pyrrhonian speech: avowal of appearance, the interrogative, the imperative, and the argumentative mode of non-assertion. Because of the Pyrrhonist's attitude of non-assertion to what is the case, his utterances like 'I am cold' or 'It is day' become avowals of appearance conveying his *phainomena* and *pathē* without belief.[188] Secondly it is the Pyrrhonist's common practice to use questions instead of assertions and unlike avowals of appearance, the interrogative mode of non-assertion does not report the Pyrrhonist's *phainomena* and *pathē* (*PH* 1 188, 189).[189] Thirdly, the Pyrrhonist sometimes uses the imperative to announce his *phainomena* and *pathē* without belief (*PH* 1 202-204).[190] Finally when the Pyrrhonist uses his non-assertoric speech to argue against the dogmatic opponent, his *ad hominem* argumentation only *reports* of dogmatic arguments pro and con his opponent's dogmatic belief. Just like 'fire is

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[188] Of the four modes of non-assertion, avowal of appearance is more controversial than the others. Avowal of appearance is actually a deviation of the normal use of declarative sentence. Secondly Pyrrhonian avowal of appearance is a general term as it actually covers two very different avowals: avowals of perceptual impressions and avowals of non-perceptual impressions. Commentators and scholars disagree on whether avowals of non-perceptual impressions may express belief in some subtle sense. I discuss these problems and issues in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

[189] I discuss the interrogative mode of non-assertion in section 2.2.

[190] Some elaboration of the imperative mode of non-assertion is offered in section 3.2.

signified to the person who sees smoke' (*PH* 2 102, also M *8* 157) the Pyrrhonist's arguments remind his opponent and audience of what can be said in response to the dogmatic belief within its dogmatic context. Pyrrhonian argumentation is like commemorative sign; it does not justify assertions about anything on the basis of what appears to be the case.[191]

My thesis is that Sextus's speech is thoroughly non-assertoric and he reports things like a chronicler, who records how things appear to him without affirming anything in reality (*PH* 1 4).[192] With his avowal of appearance and the imperative mode of non-assertion, Sextus can communicate his *phainomena* and *pathē* without belief. Secondly by using the interrogative and argumentative modes of non-assertion, he can argue against the dogmatists without asserting his own views on the real nature of things.

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[191] See Glidden 1983 for an important discussion of Sextus's appeal to commemorative signs or mnemonic signals in order to defend his Pyrrhonism against the charge that it makes discourse and even life impossible.

I offer my non-assertoric reading of Wittgenstein's statements in the *Philosophical Investigations* as non-assertoric reminders in Chapter Four.

[192] I shall refer to this disclaimer of assertion as the Chronicler Disclaimer throughout my discussion. On my view, this Chronicler Disclaimer recapitulates the Pyrrhonist's attitude of *aphasia* (non-assertion) which I discuss in section 2.1. Given this disclaimer of assertion the reader should take Sextus's account as nothing more than a report of what appears to him to be the case. It does not convey his beliefs about Pyrrhonism or anything whatsoever. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein renounces having advanced theories and asks his reader to discard what he has read as nonsense after using it as a ladder to ascend to the position in which he can see the world rightly. I discuss the *Tractatus*'s self-proclaimed nonsensicality (*T* §6.54) and Sextus's Chronicler Disclaimer (*PH* 1 4) in Chapter 4 when I argue for my non-assertoric reading of Wittgenstein's aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus*. No doubt Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Sextus's works are obviously distinct in their form and purposes. My view is that in reminding the reader of the non-assertoric mode of expression in the texts, the two passages are indicative of the textual strategy employed in the texts.

In short, what makes Sextus's writing non-assertoric is the use of non-assertoric speech throughout his work. Therefore, whether a fully non-assertoric language is ultimately consistent is an important issue. In order to assess the nature and consistency of Sextus's non-assertoric speech, which is clearly integral to the cogency of my thesis, I will discuss (a) the attitude of *aphasia* (non-assertion) in section 2.1, (b) Sextus's plea of *katachrēsis* for his avowal of appearance in section 2.2, (c) whether his *phainetai* sentence that reports on non-perceptual impression expresses a state of belief in section 2.3 and (d) sceptical *phōnai* (expression) and the deep grammar of '*ou mallon*' (no more this than that) in section 2.4. My comprehensive discussion in section 2 concludes that Sextus's language is thoroughly non-assertoric. It follows that Sextus's speech and writing do not register any belief claims as they do not communicate opinions about the non-evident or how things really are.

Moreover, my thesis resists the assumption that Sextus's writing (especially the 'general account', that is, Book I of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) is a metalinguistic account that aims at expounding his non-assertoric speech.[193] As we shall see in

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[193] Sextus's writings include the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in three books (thereafter abbreviated as *PH* 1 – 3 according to its original title *Purrhōneioi Hupotupōseis*) and *Against the Mathematicians* in six books (thereafter abbreviated as *M* 1 – 6 according to convention). In *M* 1 – 6, Sextus launches sceptical attacks against different *technē* (including grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, geometry, astrology, and music) and also those who claim expertise in these *technē*. Sextus also produces *Against the Logicians* (in two books), *Against the Physicists* (in two books) and *Against Ethicists* (in one book). These writings are incorporated with *Against the Mathematicians* and are conventionally known as *M* 7 – 8, *M* 9 – 10 and *M* 11 respectively. There is no common consensus on whether the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* predates *Against the Mathematicians* or the other way around. The chronology of Sextus's writing is a topic of scholarly debate and the order of the eleven books of *Against the Mathematicians* is also part of the debate.

section 2, Stough, Sluiter and Barnes do not dispute the consistency of Sextus's non-assertoric speech. However the assumption that Sextus's writing offers an explanatory account of his non-assertoric speech leads Stough and Sluiter to the conclusion that Sextus embraces the use of assertoric language to explain his non-assertoric speech at the expense of self-contradiction.[194] I do not share their assumption because in fact Sextus repeatedly stresses that to articulate any explanatory account of his speech is unbecoming to his Pyrrhonian Scepticism (*PH* 1 195, 207). I discuss this in greater detail in section 1.3.

By contrast my thesis is that Sextus never stops doing scepticism, and in his writing he never ceases to contest dogmatism (not even in the 'general account'). To be a Pyrrhonist is to have the disposition to use argumentation to oppose dogmatism in any issue (*PH* 1 8 – 11). The Pyrrhonist's sceptical argumentation is set to produce equipollence of arguments in order to bring an end to dogmatising (*PH* 1 12). Therefore my proposal is that Sextus's writing does not correspond to an explanation of his non-assertoric discourse, though it can be considered an embodiment of his defence against the charges of incoherence. In my view, Sextus's writing is consistent with his practice of sceptical argumentation, that is, to contest dogmatism in any topic that comes to his attention (*PH* 1 202-5). Sextus's writing is divided into two groups: Book I of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* as the 'general account' and the rest (that is Book II and III of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, plus *Against the Mathematicians* Book I to XI) as the 'specific account' (*PH* 1 5 – 6). The general account deals with Pyrrhonian Scepticism as it 'sets forth the

See for instance, Bett 1998 in which Bett argues against the orthodox opinion that the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* predates *Against the Mathematicians*. But Barnes reports an equipollence of arguments in this issue as he finds neither sides of the debate convincing. (See Barnes 2000, 'Introduction')

[194] See Stough 1984 and Sluiter 2000. I discuss their views in section 1.3

characteristic traits of Scepticism' whilst the specific account presents 'objections to each part of so-called "philosophy"' and dogmatic stances in other disciplines. Since different aspects of Pyrrhonism have become topics of contention Sextus has to contest dogmatic perceptions of Pyrrhonism in the 'general account'. Therefore what appears to be an explanatory metalinguistic account in Book I is actually a counter report that serves to offset the impact brought by dogmatic perceptions. Sextus never offers his 'general account' as an assertive testimony on Pyrrhonism; rather it is only supposed to be a chronicler's report of what Pyrrhonism appears to be.

On my view, Sextus's sceptical argumentation is therapeutic as it aims to bring about mental tranquillity by putting an end to dogmatising and detaching his audience from either side of the dispute about what is non-evident or the real nature of things. In the Pyrrhonist's own experience, equipollence of arguments causes suspension of judgement which somehow inexplicably leads to *ataraxia* (*PH* 1 8). Sextus's writing serves the same goal. It aims to give his audience a written presentation of sceptical arguments against dogmatic stances in a wide range of issues, some (especially those in the 'general account') concerned with Pyrrhonism itself, others (that is, the 'specific account') concerned with each part of philosophy and other disciplines. Sextus's argumentation constitutes a special kind of refutation. As a Pyrrhonist, Sextus always aims to achieve balanced pro and con arguments on any dispute about what is non-evident and he refrains from making affirmations or negations about the real nature of things. In his view the dogmatists and the Academics make such assertions about the non-evident whilst the Pyrrhonists go on with further enquiry (*PH* 1 3). I will give a more sustained discussion of my thesis in Section 3.

1. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS'S WRITING AND ITS PROBLEMATIC STATUS

1.1 Writing and the Problems of Incoherence in the Pyrrhonian Tradition

I will now give a sketch of writing and the problems of incoherence in the Pyrrhonian tradition although I do not set out to consider the history of Pyrrhonian Scepticism. My survey will show that regardless of writing or not writing, Pyrrho, Aenesidemus and Sextus all face the problems of incoherence in different ways.

Indeed, ever since the beginning of Pyrrhonian Scepticism the problems of incoherence followed it like a shadow followed its body. Pyrrho of Elis (c.360 – c.270 BC) was the founder of Pyrrhonian Scepticism. He wrote nothing at all.[195] He was famous for his detachment or indifference, as 'he avoided nothing and took no precautions, but withstood everything as it occurred, carts, precipices, dogs, etc., placing no trust in the senses' (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 62). To his critics Pyrrho's unusual way of life appeared to be more a hoax. His two anecdotes came to support the objection that a man cannot live without belief.

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[195] Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 102.

It was Timon of Philus (c. 320 – c.230 BC), Pyrrho's follower, who helped to spread out Pyrrho's ideas. Timon wrote prose and verse. In his most famous work *Silli* Timon outlined Pyrrho's philosophical outlook and also made a mockery of the dogmatic pretensions of the philosophers of other schools. Unfortunately Timon's writing is lost and only its fragments are preserved in the work of bishop Eusebius of Caesarea who copies from Aristocles of Messene, a first century AD Peripatetic.

'Once he [Pyrrho] got enraged in his sister's defence… and said to someone reproaching him for it that it was not in the case of women that one should make a show of indifference. And when a dog rushed at him and terrified him, he replied to someone accusing him that it was not easy entirely to divest oneself of one's humanity, but that one should strive against affairs with deeds as far as possible, and if that failed with words.'

(*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 66)

In Pyrrho's case, the problem of incoherence is concerned with whether his way of life is consistent with his philosophical ideal of a life without belief. It is a problem of theory and practice. So Pyrrho's critics regarded the two anecdotes as evidences that Pyrrho failed to live up to his 'theory' in some situations. However, it is not easy to reconstruct a coherent account of Pyrrho's actual views.[196] After all, he wrote nothing. But on the other hand, a passage of his pupil Timon may contain a valuable sketch of Pyrrho's ideas.

'Pyrrho left nothing in writing, but his pupil Timon says that whoever wants to be happy must consider these three questions. (1) How are things (*pragmata*) by nature? (2) What attitude should we adopt towards them? (3) What benefit will result for those who have this attitude? (1) Regarding things, Timon says that Pyrrho declared them equally indifferent, unstable and unresolved, and that for this reason neither our sensations nor our opinions are true or false. Therefore (2) for this reason we should not put our trust in these one bit, but we should be unopinionated, uncommitted and unwavering, saying of each thing that it no more is [this or that] than it is not, or both is an is not, or neither is nor is not. (3) The benefit for those who actually adopt this attitude, says Timon, will be first speechlessness (*aphasia*), then freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*).'

(Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 14 18 2-4)

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[196] For an attempt at such a reconstruction see Bett 2000.

Though the fragment may represent our best evidence for Pyrrho's ideas, its interpretation is disputed.[197] Bett believes that Pyrrho declared reality to be inherently indeterminate, and with this indeterminacy thesis Pyrrho's philosophical position was significantly different from the later phase of Pyrrhonian Scepticism represented by Sextus in his writing.[198]

It is true that Sextus shows ambiguous attitude to Pyrrho and seems detached from him in his writing.[199] The question of the historical accuracy of Timon's account of Pyrrho's philosophical ideas is a further matter which need not concern us here and I pass no judgement on the relationship between Pyrrho and Sextus. The important point, for my purpose here, is that the problem of incoherence already lies at the heart of Pyrrhonian Scepticism since the time of Pyrrho. Secondly because of his *aphasia* (speechlessness) Pyrrho never committed his philosophical ideas (or verbal doctrines) to writing. But as we shall see in Section 2.1 for Sextus the notion of *aphasia* would somehow acquire a new meaning and become non-assertion, that

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[197] For the interpretation of this fragment, see Long and Sedley 1987, 13-17. Also Hankinson 1996, 58-64. For a more detailed discussion see Brunschwig 1994, Bett 1994, and also Bett 2000.

[198] See Bett 2000. Bett's view is that Pyrrho's indeterminacy thesis was so radically different form Sextus's suspension of judgement that it would not be appropriate to call Pyrrho a Pyrrhonist, as the term was used in the later phase of Pyrrhonism.

But on the other hand, Burnyeat sees continuity in the Pyrrhonian ideal of a life without belief as a fundamental feature running through from Pyrrho to Aenesidemus and Sextus. (See Burnyeat 1998a, 28-36)

[199] In his writing, Sextus curiously gives only one direct and yet oblique remark on Pyrrho. Sextus reports that his sceptical tradition is named after Pyrrho because 'it appears… that Pyrrho applied himself to scepticism more vigorously and conspicuously than his predecessors did' (*PH* 1 7). Sextus mentions Pyrrho's name again when he refers to a famous remark by Ariston who said of Arcesilaus, the head of the Middle Academy, that 'He is Plato in front, Pyrrho in back, and Diodorus in the middle' (*PH* 1 234).

is, 'the avoidance of assertion in the wider sense, in which we say that both affirmation and negation are covered' (*PH* 1 192).

Pyrrhonian Scepticism came to a lapse after Pyrrho and Timon. Aenesidemus of Cnossus made himself a hero of Pyrrhonian Scepticism because he contributed most to its revival in the first century BC. Aenesidemus formulated the Ten Modes of Suspension of Judgement to challenge the justifications of perceptual judgements and beliefs about anything (*M* 7 345). Aenesidemus appeared on records to be a prolific author in the Pyrrhonian tradition. Most of his writings are lost; only a very brief summary of his *Pyrrhonian Discourses* is preserved in Photinus's *Bibliotheca*.[200] Aenesidemus was a major source for Sextus's argumentation.[201]

The revival of Pyrrhonian Scepticism in the first century BC by Aenesidemus enlivened a new problem of incoherence. Aristocles, for instance, raised the problem of incoherence as his critical response to Aenesidemus's argument against the reliability of perceptual judgements.

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[200] Aenesidemus's other writings include an *Outlines,* an *Elements* (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14 18 11 and 16), also *Against Wisdom, On Inquiry* (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 106) and finally a *First Introduction* (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Mathematicians* 10 216). All these writings are lost.

[201] Burnyeat believes that Sextus's polemic against belief can be traced back to Aenesidemus. (See Burnyeat 1998a, 32-36)

However Sextus alleges that Aenesidemus and his followers made Pyrrhonism a gateway to Heraclitean philosophy. Sextus dismisses this tendency to Heraclitean philosophy (*PH* 1 210-212).

See Polito 2004 for a discussion of Aenesidemus's alleged appropriation of Heraclitus's ideas.

Agrippa was another predecessor important for Sextus's argumentation. He formulated the Five Modes of Suspension of Judgement. Sextus only vaguely ascribes the Five Modes to some 'recent sceptics' (*PH* 1 164). It is Diogenes who names Agrippa the author of the Five Modes (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 88-9). Agrippa must have lived at some time in the period between Aenesidemus and Sextus. Other than this he remains a shadowy figure.

'when Aenesidemus in his *Outlines* goes through his nine modes,[202] in all of which he attempts to show that things are non-evident, are we to say he speaks with or without knowledge? For he says that there is a difference in animals, and in ourselves, and in states, and in the modes of life and customs and the laws.

(Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14 18 11)

'when he was making these and other fine speeches one would have liked… to ask him whether he was stating with full knowledge that this is the condition of things, or without knowledge. For if he did not know, why should we believe him? But if he knew, he was vastly silly for declaring at the same time that all things are uncertain, but yet saying that he knew so much'

(Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14 18 12)

In Aenesidemus's case, his problem of incoherence is a matter of theoretical coherence. Aristocles was troubled by Aenesidemus's arguments against the reliability of perceptual judgements. Aristocles's worry was not without a point. He felt that the credibility of Aenesidemus's arguments was somehow undermined because the Pyrrhonist never claimed to have any insight into the real nature of things. And yet Aenesidemus use rational arguments to establish the conclusions that perceptual judgements are not reliable and things are really non-evident. How could Aenesidemus convincingly argue that perceptual judgements are not reliable and things are really non-evident?

Sextus Empiricus (c.160 – 210 AD), the last prominent figure in the Pyrrhonian tradition, is our principal source for Pyrrhonian Scepticism. This is not only because we have lost the writings of his predecessors; a greater reason has to do with the writing itself. Sextus's writing appears to stand out as a Pyrrhonist speaking on his

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[202] The talk of 'nine modes' is likely to be an error. See Annas and Barnes 1985, 27.

own 'school of thought'.[203] It not only provided us with our most extensive account on important aspects of Pyrrhonism (especially his non-assertoric use of language) but also recorded voluminous sceptical arguments drawn from his predecessors.

On the other hand, we should note that Sextus's writing marks a great contrast to Pyrrho's non-writing. And if we recall the fact that Sextus's predecessors Timon and Aenesidemus are also prolific writers, then Pyrrho's non-writing appears more rare and exceptional in the Pyrrhonian tradition. If Pyrrho chooses non-writing because of some philosophical reasons, what happens to these reasons as his successors Timon, Aenesidemus, and Sextus choose to write about so many things, and even about Pyrrhonism itself? What can we make of this contrast in non-writing and writing between the first Pyrrhonist and his successors in the Pyrrhonian tradition? [204] As I have just mentioned, Bett suggests a discontinuity between Pyrrho and Sextus. But the relationships between Pyrrho, Timon, Aenesidemus and Sextus go beyond the scope of my discussion and hence I pass no judgement on this issue. My view is that regardless of the contrast in non-writing and writing Sextus's non-assertoric style of writing attests to his Pyrrhonian identity which is manifested in 'the avoidance of assertion in the wider sense, in which we say that both affirmation and negation are covered' (*PH* 1 192).

With reference to Sextus's writing, the problem of incoherence comprises two issues: (1) despite Sextus's frequent denial many statements in his writing seem to

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[203] But as we shall see in the next section Sextus's account seems to admit of radically different interpretations and thus gives two incompatible forms of Pyrrhonism: a radical Pyrrhonism that eschews all beliefs and a moderate Pyrrhonism that leaves everyday beliefs intact.

[204] Marchand asks if this contrast means that Timon and Sextus 'commit a kind of parricide against a philosopher whom they chose to present, if not as mater, at least as their main reference (See Marchand 2011, 114).

communicate the opinions he holds and therefore are expressive of beliefs on his part; (2) his attempt to give a descriptive account of Pyrrhonism in Book I of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is inconsistent with his claim that he has no philosophical beliefs. How can someone who has no beliefs, suspends judgement, and refrains from making assertion, offer to give a descriptive account on anything? Sextus's writing is problematic because of the fact that he is a Pyrrhonist and yet (so it appears) he attempts a descriptive account of Pyrrhonism. Any such attempt must evidently lead to incoherence. Aristocles questioned the creditability of Aenesidemus's arguments because his Pyrrhonian Scepticism undermined them. Sextus's reader may have a similar concern. Sextus would never want to assert the characteristic traits of Scepticism, then why should the reader believe his account? Indeed, in what manner should the reader take such an account (and how would she be able to judge the issue)? I give more elaboration of Sextus's problem of incoherence in Section 1.3.

1.2 Two Forms of Pyrrhonism

Different ways of reading a crucial passage in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* would give two different breeds of Pyrrhonists and they operate with different notions of belief and assent to appearance. At *PH* 1 13 Sextus seems to explain in what sense the Pyrrhonist is not dogmatic. To read the passage as if Sextus intends to eschew beliefs of all kinds would give a radical Pyrrhonist, a full-blooded sceptic (this term is used by Frede in 'The Sceptic's Beliefs') or a rustic sceptic (this term is used by

Barnes in 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist').[205] To read the passage as if Sextus intends to eschew only theoretical beliefs would give a moderate Pyrrhonist or an urbane sceptic (this term is used by Barnes in 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist').

Which breed of Pyrrhonist is Sextus? Is he rustic or urbane? Frede argues that the usual interpretation which ascribes a radical stance to Pyrrhonian Scepticism is fundamentally mistaken.[206] Frede believes that it is compatible with his scepticism that the Pyrrhonist as represented in Sextus's writing can have all sorts of views and beliefs. This type of Pyrrhonian Scepticism targets only beliefs of a certain kind, that is, those theoretical beliefs that depend on reasoned grounds whilst everyday beliefs are left intact.[207]

According to Frede's interpretation, the crucial passage, that is, *PH* 1 13 explains in what sense the sceptic is not dogmatic.[208] The Pyrrhonist assents to whatever

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[205] Frede's article is first published in 1979. My pagination refers to the reprint in Burnyeat and Frede 1998. Barnes's article is first published in 1982 and my pagination refers to the reprint in Burnyeat and Frede 1998.

[206] Frede proposes to deal with the question by consulting Sextus's writing. Frede gives two reasons why we need not be especially interested in what Pyrrho himself thought even if he has really thought that a proper sceptic has no beliefs. The first reason is that 'Pyrrho is the only ancient sceptic to whom the doxographers ascribe a life that can easily be regarded as at least an attempt at a life without beliefs' and secondly 'it might very well be the case that Pyrrho's influence on Pyrrhonian scepticism is far less than generally assumed' (See Frede 1998, 4-6).

[207] Frede 1998, 18-19

[208] Frede's translation of the *PH* 1 13 is as follows.

'We say that the sceptic does not dogmatize, not in the sense of 'belief' (dogma) in which some say, speaking quite generally, a belief consists in consenting to a thing (*eudokein tini pragmati*); for the sceptic does not assent to such affections which necessarily result when things appear to him in certain ways; he would not, for example, when he is hot or cold, say, 'I believe I am not hot (cold)'; We rather say, he does not dogmatize, in the sense of 'belief', in which some say a belief consists in assenting to one of the nonevident things which the sciences have as their objects of inquiry; for the Pyrrhonean assents to nothing nonevident' (Frede 1998, 16-17).

seems evident to him (or what experience suggests to him to be the case), and in accepting the judgement of *phantasia* a Pyrrhonist raises no objection against it and can thus be said to have beliefs (*dogmata*) in the wider sense.[209] This Pyrrhonist eschews only those theoretical beliefs about the nonevident objects of philosophical or scientific inquiry (that is, beliefs in the narrow sense). He does not eschew everyday beliefs and this is compatible with his suspension of judgement on how things really are.[210] Frede argues against the view that because the Pyrrhonist has no view about how things really are, he can only have a view about how things seem nonepistemically to him.[211] Frede believes that the Pyrrhonist is content with what seems to him to be the case and that includes a large number of observations about the world around him.

Suppose Sextus was to explain that his scepticism, as Frede suggests, was urbane not rustic. However, it is by no means clear that a less radical Sextus could escape the problem of incoherence. A moderate Pyrrhonist would be someone who operates

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[209] Frede finds in the crucial passage i.e. *PH* 1 13 a distinction between a wider and a narrow sense of belief and for Sextus only beliefs in the narrower sense count as dogmatic. Therefore a serious Pyrrhonist can have beliefs in the wider sense: accepting the judgement of *phantasia* as a form of believing. Frede supposes that unlike the dogmatists, who see assent as a voluntary act, Sextus sees things differently and the Pyrrhonist has no criterion, on the basis of which he could decide whether or not to assent to assent to an impression. (Frede 1998, 9 and 16-18)

[210] Frede argues that everything can be called into question and every question can be regarded as a question calling for a theoretical answer. Therefore every belief can be dogmatic, regardless of content. The distinction between dogmatic and non-dogmatic beliefs lies in the attitude of the person toward his beliefs.

[211] Frede argues that there is a perfectly good sense in which the Pyrrhonist can have beliefs about how things are – namely, to the extent that it seems to be the case that things are so or so. Frede believes that the proper contrast for Sextus is how things really are and how things seem to him to be the case. The other contrast between how things really are and how things appear is simply misplaced. (Frede 1998, 9-15)

with a restricted notion of dogma and his scepticism would attack only some specific dogmas or certain kinds of beliefs (in particular, theoretical beliefs). A moderate Pyrrhonist could thus hold some non-theoretical beliefs or ordinary beliefs without being inconsistent. But this will not help. A moderate Pyrrhonist is happy with everyday ordinary opinions he would have no appetite for philosophical or theoretical beliefs at all. But beliefs about Pyrrhonism are certainly not ordinary beliefs. They fall under the class of theoretical beliefs. Hence it follows that even a moderate Sextus cannot have theoretical beliefs about Pyrrhonism and a consistent Pyrrhonist cannot communicate such beliefs in his writing.

My discussion takes on urbane Pyrrhonism and accordingly Sextus assents to whatever seems evident to him and he only suspends judgements about how things really are. Since Sextus intends to eschew theoretical beliefs in his use of language and writing, he cannot express theoretical beliefs about Pyrrhonism and how things really are in his writing. Moreover as we have seen, the distinction between dogmatic and non-dogmatic beliefs lies in the attitude of the person toward his beliefs rather than in the content of beliefs. Therefore, as I shall argue, in offering his writing and also his account of Pyrrhonism Sextus cannot assume that he is theorising about the things that he talks about in his writing, After all, Sextus, as an urbane Pyrrhonist, remains cautious of the import of his speech and the implications it might have for matters of truth and real existence and his non-assertoric style of writing accords with this caution on his part.

Burnyeat's interpretation gives a rustic Pyrrhonist who gets rid of all beliefs.[212] Burnyeat argues that Sextus does not have a distinction between dogmatic and non-dogmatic beliefs because for Sextus dogma and *doxa* really do mean simply

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[212] Burnyeat 1998a.

belief which must be connected with truth and reason.[213] Burnyeat thinks that for Sextus to believe something is to assent to something non-evident; it is the accepting of something as true. Since the Pyrrhonist does not have a criterion of truth to determine to which opinion he should assent, he can neither accept conflicting opinions nor make a choice between them. Therefore the Pyrrhonist refrains from affirming or denying any one of the conflicting opinions is true.[214]

Burnyeat believes that Sextus wants to clarify the sense in which the sceptic does not dogmatize in the crucial passage *PH* 1 13. According to Burnyeat's interpretation truth is restricted to matters pertaining to real existence; it is closely tied to real existence as contrasted with appearance. The Pyrrhonist withholds his assent to anything not given in appearance. Statements which merely record how things appear are not called true or false. The Pyrrhonist assents to anything that appears in his impression (*PH* 1 19-20). The way things appear is a passive affection not willed by the Pyrrhonist who experiences it. The Pyrrhonist yields to things which move him affectively and lead him to assent by compulsion (*PH* 1 193). His assent to appearance is simply the acknowledging of what is happening to him. For the Pyrrhonist there can be no question of belief about appearance and his assent is

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[213] Burnyeat 1998a, 47-53. However, Burnyeat later renounced his view that for Sextus *dogma* just means belief. (See Burnyeat 1998b)

[214] Burnyeat notes that the conception of truth is pervasive in Sextus's account of Pyrrhonian Scepticism. He points out that 'the conflict of opinions is inconsistency, the impossibility of being true together (cf. M 7 392); the undecidability of the conflict is the impossibility of deciding which opinion is true; the equal strength of conflicting opinions means they are all equally worthy (or unworthy) of acceptance as true, *epochē* is a state in which one refrains from affirming or denying that any one of them is true; even *ataraxia* is among other things a matter of not worrying about truth and falsity any more' (Burnyeat 1998a, 30).

not open to question. As he does not accept anything as true he simply suspends all beliefs.

Suppose Sextus was to explain that his scepticism is rustic and therefore, as Burnyeat suggests, he held no beliefs of any kind, not even about his own philosophical position. Suppose Sextus further denied that his writing should commit him to beliefs of any kind. The problem of incoherence is still in the air. How can someone who has no beliefs describe anything? If Sextus's writing merely records how things appear (nonepistemically) to him, the worry persists. For if Sextus does not assert in his account that things are really so and so in Pyrrhonism, why should the reader take his account as a trustworthy account on Pyrrhonism?[215]

At any rate, the problems of incoherence prevail regardless of which view we take on the matter of moderate versus radical Pyrrhonism. Indeed, as Barnes rightly notes, the problem of incoherence is independent of the controversy between radical and moderate readings of Pyrrhonism.[216] Barnes mentions two troublesome issues in the problematic status of Sextus's writing.[217] First, ancient critics of Pyrrhonism already argued that the many sentences in Sextus's writing indicated a mass of ordinary beliefs on Sextus's part.[218] Secondly, Sextus's attempt to describe

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[215] As we shall see soon in the next section, Stough 1984 raises a similar concern.

[216] Barnes 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist'. Barnes's article appears first in 1982 in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* N. S. 28 (1982), pp.1-29. Since then there are several reprints. The last one is in 1998 in *The Original Sceptics*. My pagination refers to the 1998 reprint.

[217] Barnes 1998, footnote 17.

[218] Barnes's initial response to the first issue is that the various remarks that Sextus makes do not commit him to beliefs because Sextus is not speaking in *propia persona* and the remarks could be read 'catachrestically' as the kind of appearances that he calls *phainesthai* (cf. *PH* 1 139, 195, 202; cf. *M* 9 18-19), that is, Sextus is not saying how things really are.

Pyrrhonism 'is always close to incoherence – how can someone who purports to have no philosophical beliefs describe his own philosophical position?'[219]

Of course Sextus is well aware of the alleged problems of incoherence in his writing and he provides his own defences. However, as we shall see in the next section, Stough rejects Sextus's defences as unsatisfactory and undercutting Pyrrhonian Scepticism as a way of life.

1.3 The Problematic Status of Sextus's Writing: Implications and Defences

The problematic status of Sextus's writing has been a marginal issue. In those handful cases in which the problematic status of Sextus's writing is addressed, it is usually approached only as a side issue in the footnote. In one sense we might say that Barnes is the first to bring up the problematic status of Sextus's writing in modern times, although the chronology is a little unclear. Barnes's essay 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist' was published in 1982. As we have just seen, Barnes raises two troublesome issues in relation to the problematic status of Sextus's writing but he did not substantially deal with them.[220] About the same time Stough also addressed the problematic status of Sextus's writing.[221]

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[219] Barnes leaves the second issue aside because it is a side-issue for his discussion. He does pick up the second issue again but only years later. See Barnes 2000, xxii.

[220] See Barnes 1998, footnote 17.

[221] Stough's article 'Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion' appears in 1984 in *Phronesis* vol. XXIX/2 pp.137-164. But it is accepted in December 1982. According to her last footnote Barnes's article (published in 1982) came to her attention only after she had sent off her article in final form and that in writing her article she was unable to benefit from Barnes's article. Therefore, it seems reasonable

Stough examines Sextus's disclaimers of assertion issued throughout his writing.[222] To understand the language use of the Pyrrhonist, Stough investigates the force of his disclaimers, their status and how they are related to first-order utterances.[223] Stough proposes to construe Sextus's disclaimers of assertion as signifying his unwillingness to articulate a theory or set of beliefs about what is the case.[224] Stough then infers that Sextus qua being a Pyrrhonist would never want to make any assertion and his enunciation of the Pyrrhonist position in writing would not articulate a body of beliefs.[225] However, Stough believes that the status of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* as Sextus's metalinguistic account is more problematic. Reviewing Sextus's two strategies for defence (*PH* 1 4 & 206) against the charge of incoherence Stough concludes that they are either unsatisfactory or undercutting Pyrrhonian Scepticism as a way of life. I shall discuss Stough's views soon.

More than a decade after Barnes and Stough had raised their puzzles and objections against the status of Sextus's written text, Hankinson alludes to the function of Sextus's writing in his discussion on whether Sextus was prescribing

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to assume that Stough and Barnes come to raise issues with the problematic status of Sextus's writing independently and around the same period.

[222] Stough considered the following sorts of expressions as disclaimers of assertion: 'the Sceptic does not "dogmatize"; he neither "affirms" nor "denies" anything; he adopts a stance of "non-assertion"; he says only "what appears to himself"; he does not "positively claim" that matters are as he says; and many of his utterances "cancel themselves" along with all other statements' (Stough 1984, 137). I discuss Stough's analysis of Sextus's disclaimers of assertion in section 2.1.

[223] In addition, Stough considers other relevant issues. For instance, how can the sceptic assent to phenomena without committing himself to the truth of some assertion? Can the sceptic avoid asserting something when he gives linguistic expression to the sensory and mental states that shape his actions? Stough proposes to defend an interpretation that meets all these difficulties.

[224] Stough 1984, 144.

[225] Stough 1984, footnote 12.

Pyrrhonian Scepticism in the opening sections of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.[226] Hankinson's discussion does not concern itself with the problem of incoherence. He believes that the function of Pyrrhonism was supposed to be autotherapeutic and therefore Sextus might produce the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* as a self-help book for other apprentice sceptics.

Finally a comparatively more focused discussion of the problematic status of Sextus's writing comes in 2000. In her essay, 'The Rhetoric of Scepticism: Sextus against the Language Specialists', Sluiter discusses Sextus's dealing with the language specialists, grammarians and rhetoricians in the first two books of *Against the Mathematicians*. Sluiter wants to show that Sextus was able to use the principles of his dogmatic opponents to arrive at a sceptic conclusion without committing himself to the truth of the principles. Near the end of her essay, Sluiter takes up Sextus's views on the role and function of language in human communication and she explores briefly the relevance of Sextus's views to his perception of the status and purpose of his own writing.[227]

In my view, these various attempts at addressing the problematic status of Sextus's writing are not satisfactory. Barnes may be credited for making the first attempt to address the problem of incoherence and also for giving a very helpful formulation of the problem. But he actually passes over the problem. By contrast Stough gives a detailed elaboration of the problematic status of Sextus's writing. But I reject her view that the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is a metalinguistic account expounding Sextus's language of non-assertion. Hankinson suggests that Sextus

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[226] See Hankinson 1995, 304-306. Hankinson's brief discussion on the function of Sextus's writing forms part of his investigation on whether the Pyrrhonist's attitude is really preferable to that of the dogmatists.

[227] I discuss Sluiter's analysis of Sextus's views on language in section 2.2

produced his writing as a self-help book for other apprentice Pyrrhonists. Although Hankinson believes that his suggestion is promising he fails to develop it into a concrete solution to the problem of incoherence. Finally Sluiter suggests that explanatory metalanguage must be assertoric and there is no way that Sextus can avoid using the language of assertion in explaining his Pyrrhonism.[228] Naturally, I do not agree with Sluiter's view. My thesis is that Sextus's writing does not amount to an explanatory account of Pyrrhonian Scepticism. Consequently, the charge of incoherence is misconceived.

Now I shall go into Stough's elaboration of the problematic status of Sextus's writing and her critical review of Sextus's two defence strategies (*PH* 1 4 & 206). Stough believes that the attitude of non-assertion prohibits the Pyrrhonist from making factual claims and it represents the Pyrrhonist's attitude of caution in regard to the import of what he says, therefore Sextus cannot state his position.[229] According to Stough's analysis, the various disclaimers of assertion signify Sextus's unwillingness to articulate a theory or set of beliefs about what is the case. The Pyrrhonist refrains from making statements, or taking a side on questions of truth. He only gives reports of how things appear to him. His speech is informative of his assent to appearance without being descriptive of anything that appears.

Stough thinks that the chronicler defence at *PH* 1 4 is not satisfactory because the notion of conceptually meaningful discourse cannot be conceived independently of the idea of true and false assertion. If Sextus wants to report how things appear at the level of conceptually meaningful discourse he must employ the language of assertion, that is, a descriptive use of language; otherwise Sextus's account of

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[228] Sluiter 2000, 95.

[229] Stough 1984, 138-144.

Pyrrhonism will not be accepted as a conceptually meaningful discourse.[230] Sextus's language of non-assertion is informative of his assent to appearance but it fails to *describe* anything, therefore Sextus simply cannot use the language of non-assertion to *explain* how his non-assertoric discourse is to be understood at the level of conceptually meaningful discourse.

Stough believes that a better defence strategy can be found at *PH* 1 206.[231] According to Stough, since the chronicler defence does not work as intended, Sextus has no choice but to construe his account as assertions about Pyrrhonism and therefore his text is intended to be self-refuting.[232] Stough believes that although this could be done only at the cost of damaging Pyrrhonism as a way of life, Sextus

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[230] My thesis is opposed to Stough's idea that for Sextus's writing to be a conceptually meaningful discourse it must involve assertoric employment of language. In making the language of assertion the criterion for conceptually meaningful discourse, Stough has discounted the conceptual meaning of a whole range of writing (for example, poems and fictional novels). Moreover, we should note that although his statements usually take the form of factual claims, the Pyrrhonist purges from his speech the intention of making factual claims. It follows that the form of his statements is not indicative of the intended force of his statements and his statements are not meant to be 'true'. I put forth my view at the end of this section.

[231] Stough 1984, footnote 12. Stough gives no translation of *PH* 1 206. But apparently she understands the passage as indicating Sextus's acceptance of self-refutation.

[232] Other than Stough both Sluiter 2000 and McPherran 1987 also asserted that Sextus accepted self-refutation. McPherran characterized Pyrrhonian Scepticism as 'homeopathy'. According to McPherran Pyrrhonian Scepticism as sceptical homeopathy is consistent with its own self-refutation because Sextus's metaphorical accounts for sceptical self-refutation suggest a temporal gap. In Sextus's metaphorical accounts, one first climbs the ladder *and then* kicks it over; the purgative first cleans the bowels *and then* ejects itself; fire first consumes the fuel *and then* consumes itself.

I disagree with these authors on Sextus's alleged acceptance of self-refutation and I will look into Castagnoli's arguments against construing Sextus's speech as self-refuting when I discuss Sextus's language of non-assertion in section 2.4.

embraces this strategy without realizing the implied serious overtones for Pyrrhonism as a way of life.[233]

Sluiter proposes a similar interpretation. She thinks that Sextus's writing is just another instance of scepticism folding back to itself.[234] She believes that the Pyrrhonist never intends to make any assertions, and hence his speech is indeed non-assertoric. However, when it comes to explaining his Pyrrhonism, Sluiter too thinks that there is no way that Sextus can avoid using the language of assertion. But since all sceptical discourse is parasitic on dogmatic arguments, the use of assertive language to explain the non-assertoric discourse is justifiable, and serves as 'a temporary expedient only'. It will then make itself redundant once people know how to interpret the Pyrrhonist's non-assertoric discourse.

However, this alternative defence strategy fails again. Stough sees in this self-refutation defence elements that threaten a devastating result for Pyrrhonism both as a school of philosophy and as a way of life. She argues that the Pyrrhonist's non-assertoric discourse is not sufficient to establish a real theoretical or practical difference between the Pyrrhonist and his Academic counterpart or the 'negative dogmatist'. The Academic counterparts are negative dogmatists because, according to Sextus, they hold the dogmatic belief that contrary claims *are* equally strong. And on that basis, the Academic counterparts further believe that truth cannot be discovered. The Pyrrhonist certainly should not affirm the dogmatic belief that contrary claims *are* equally strong, even though, Stough suspects, that is how he is affected by the contrary claims.[235] And as the Pyrrhonist goes on with his enquiry

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[233] I shall move on to the serious overtones soon.

[234] Sluiter 2000, 95.

[235] Stough 1984, 162.

by confronting the dogmatist opponents with arguments, he will be doing things that are no different from what the Academic counterparts do. But Stough believes that their arguments may actually match each other in this regard. Therefore, she concludes that the Pyrrhonist is distinguishable only for his use of sceptical phrases and disclaimers of assertions; he will duplicate the philosophical tactics and maneuvers of the negative dogmatist in every other respect

According to Stough's criticism, the Pyrrhonist, of course, does not affirm or deny anything; he suspends his judgement and his non-assertoric attitude manifests only in his speech. In everyday life, the Pyrrhonist acts no differently from others. So his Pyrrhonism is evidently not given by his practice.[236] His outlook or any other aspects would, in fact, be no different from those of the dogmatists. Stough argues this is the natural outcome which follows from the sceptic's reluctance to have a theoretical position of his own. Of course the non-descriptive use of language does not prevent the Pyrrhonist from using arguments to refute the dogmatists. For

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Apparently the Pyrrhonist does not have an active programme of research. He is not in the state of wondering whether any of the contrary claims is the case because such wondering may induce anxiety and therefore undercut his *ataraxia*. All he can do is to regard it as an open question whether any side of the controversy is the case. But to attain *ataraxia*, the sceptic's enquiring mind must come to a state of rest or equilibrium. Burnyeat believes that 'the sceptic may hold himself ready to be persuaded that there are after all answers to be had' because unlike the negative dogmatist the sceptic 'is not furnished with *a priori* objections that rule out the possibility of answer as a matter of general principle once and for all (cf. *PH* 1 1-3)' (Burnyeat 1998a, 56).

But the problem is if the sceptic is to attain *ataraxia* he must be satisfied in some sense that no answers are forthcoming and that contrary claims are indeed equal. Burnyeat thinks that Sextus cannot deny this is something he believes. I shall return to this in section 2.3 when I discuss a philosophically important ambiguity in the Pyrrhonist modal operator '*phainetai*'.

[236] However as we have seen in section 1.1 Pyrrho seems to have lived an unusual way of life (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 62). Sextus also notes that 'Pyrrho applied himself to scepticism more vigorously and conspicuously than his predecessors did' (*PH* I 7).

instance, the Pyrrhonist may argue against his dogmatic opponents over the problem of the criterion and he may intend his arguing as a gesture indicating his on-going investigation. But the practice of arguing does not in itself constitute a real theoretical distinction to secure for Pyrrhonism the status of a philosophical school of thought. There is actually no substantial thought to be found in it. Therefore Stough postulates that Pyrrhonism as a school of philosophy is nothing more than 'a passive and indirect way of seeking the truth' when what it actually does is to produce arguments and counterarguments against the doctrines of the dogmatists.

Furthermore Stough believes that this production of arguments and counterarguments against the rashness of the Dogmatist cannot continue forever and as a result, the attitude of non-assertion is only provisional. The attitude of non-assertion indicates the Pyrrhonist's inability to affirm or deny whatever matter is currently at issue in his enquiry. He just goes on with his enquiry. The attitude of non-assertion thereby distinguishes the Pyrrhonist from both the dogmatists who claim to have discovered the truth, and the Academic who declares that it cannot be discovered (*PH* 1 1-4, 7). But the attitude of non-assertion is only provisional and the production of arguments and counterarguments against the dogmatist can only be 'a passive and indirect way of seeking the truth'. Therefore Stough imagines that the Pyrrhonist might in fact abandon his attitude of non-assertion and his suspension of judgement to embrace dogmatism if the occasion should arise at some point in his on-going investigation.[237]

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[237] I agree that the attitude of non-assertion is provisional. But I do not agree with Stough's idea that the Pyrrhonist will abandon the attitude of non-assertion and his suspension of judgement to embrace dogmatism. I share Barnes's view that the onset of suspension of judgement is something which simply happens to us; it is an affection that comes about in our mind after the investigation. (Barnes

Finally Stough dismisses the Pyrrhonist's undogmatic assent to appearances as only a trivial distinction and as a result Pyrrhonism becomes (in her words) 'a highly theoretical metalinguistic "position" interpreting the sceptic's discourse as expressive and regulative in function'.[238] She argues that since Pyrrhonism *as a way of life* would show no discernible consequences, therefore what is essential to Pyrrhonism as a way of life, and to the attitude of mind that makes someone a Pyrrhonist, can only be given in propositional form. If that is the case, Pyrrhonism ceases to be a way of life anymore. It becomes a propositional account of the content of a way of life.

Naturally, I do not agree with Stough's views. Stough's reasoning seems to run like this: for Sextus's written text to be a conceptually meaningful discourse and his account to be successful in expounding his Pyrrhonian position, Sextus has no choice but to abandon his language of non-assertion and temporarily adopt the language of assertion. The same reasoning is also found in Sluiter's discussion.[239] As these authors suggest, Sextus is supposed to propound his written account as self-refuting assertions. The use of assertive language is not consistent with his Pyrrhonian position of non-assertion but nevertheless, it is a necessity at the level of meaningful discourse.

According to this line of thought—which I shall go on to reject shortly—it seems that the author of any descriptive writing must assert his beliefs about the subject in

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1998, 58-59) Therefore I do not see how the Pyrrhonist can give up or abandon suspension of judgement as a voluntary decision as Stough may imagine.

[238] Stough 1984, 163.

[239] Sluiter 2000, 95: 'It is only when Sextus stops doing scepticism and starts explaining it that the risk of self-contradiction looms large. For clearly, there is no way in which he can make his explanatory metalanguage non-assertoric.'

his descriptive account. Suppose I want to produce a recipe for some Chinese dish. I list the ingredients and give a step by step account of the cooking. My writing of the recipe conveys what I believe to be a good way to prepare the dish. I will carefully structure my narrative to follow some logic so as to enhance understanding. For instance, I will not give out random cooking instructions. They will be in order and with reasons. The purpose of my descriptive narrative is not to entertain people. I want to teach them how to cook the dish. I want to bring about understanding. And I attempt this by publicizing my beliefs about the dish with my writing of the recipe. If this is correct, it seems that Sextus is doing the same with his writing of at least Book I of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.

Indeed the structure of Book I gives the impression that Sextus is conveying to his readers how he conceives of the important aspects of Pyrrhonism, in the way that the recipe book conveys the author's views on how to prepare a certain dish.[240] It seems as though, by writing Book I in that systematic order, Sextus is actually publicizing his beliefs about the nature of Pyrrhonism, the various sets of Modes, the Pyrrhonist's slogans, and how Pyrrhonism stands out from other neighbouring schools of thoughts. And it seems that the structure represents a deliberate decision on Sextus's part. He does not compile his descriptive account randomly. Instead, Book I reads like the result of careful planning and articulation and it gives the essential characteristics of his philosophical stance. After this general account, Sextus moves on to what he calls the 'specific account' of Pyrrhonism in the other two books of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and the eleven books of the *Against the*

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[240] In Sextus's own words, Book I is the 'general account' in which he 'sets forth the characteristic traits of Pyrrhonism, stating its basic idea, its origins, arguments, criterion and goal, as well as the modes of suspension of judgement, and how we take the sceptic *phōnai* , and the distinction between Pyrrhonism and the competing philosophies' (*PH* 1 5).

Mathematicians. The specific account consists of the Pyrrhonist refutation of the Dogmatist in different parts of philosophy and various disciplines (*PH* 1 6). Finally it appears that in his attempt at a descriptive account of Pyrrhonism Sextus has taken the effort to make sure that every section is well-planned and serves, in its own way, the whole project of explaining Pyrrhonism.

It is important here to consider whether descriptive writings must entail beliefs on the author's part. Can there be descriptive writing that expresses no beliefs or even bypasses beliefs? Some sorts of descriptive writings like poems and fictions can be descriptive of imaginary scenarios and fictional characters, and they do not require or entail beliefs about the unreal on the author's part. I have discussed fictions as non-assertoric in Chapter One. Of course I am not suggesting that Sextus's writing resembles poems or fictions, or they are non-assertoric in the same way. Sextus's writing belongs to a different genre of writing and it is non-assertoric because it is composed with the non-assertoric use of language that comprises four modes of non-assertion.

On my view, there are some important reasons why Sextus could not have articulated an explanatory account of his Pyrrhonism and his speech. First of all, Sextus has no intention to attempt any explanatory metalinguistic account of his speech because to articulate such account is unbecoming to his Pyrrhonian Scepticism (*PH* 1 195, 207). Sextus is well aware of the fact that he cannot assertively explain or state his Pyrrhonism because it requires the language of assertion, that is, a descriptive use of language, which is never consistent with his Pyrrhonian position of non-assertion. Secondly Pyrrhonism cannot be properly explained nor described from within because Pyrrhonism, unlike other rival schools of thought, if it can be said to be a school of thought in a very loose sense, has no

doctrine and no unique theory of its own. There is just theory or doctrine to be explained. Finally Sextus puts in the Chronicler Disclaimer (*PH* 1 4) at the beginning of his writing to renounce the aim of an explanatory account. The Disclaimer attests to Sextus's awareness that it could only result in incoherence if he attempts to explain or describe Pyrrhonism in his writing. As a Pyrrhonist, Sextus is well aware of this peculiar nature of Pyrrhonism. The Chronicler Disclaimer is not Sextus's only effort to keep his writing nothing more than a report of how things appear to him. His extensive uses of other minor caveats like 'perhaps', 'I suppose', 'I guess' and the quasi-operator 'It appears to me now that so and so' are all consistent with this effort.

On my view, the Disclaimer emphasizes the non-assertoric status of his writing as nothing more than a report of appearance and it also announces the textual strategy of his writing. For Sextus his writing is simply another instance of his practice of sceptical argumentation, that is, to contest dogmatism in any topic that comes to his attention, and in this practice, his non-assertoric speech expresses no beliefs of how things really are whilst his argumentation does not justify assertions about anything on the basis of what appears to be the case.

Barnes believes that the problem of incoherence is a genuine problem and Sextus's various remarks on his sceptical slogans (*PH* I 187-208) are designed as a response to it.[241] Barnes argues that Sextus is not prevented from giving us 'a reliable account of the nature and the aspirations of scepticism' because 'a mindless talker may be a reliable purveyor of information'.[242] According to Barnes, the fact

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[241] See Barnes 2000, Introduction.

[242] Barnes 2000, xxii

that Sextus does not believe his own writing 'is no reason at all for us not to believe what he says' because 'the words which flow from his mouth may tell truths'.[243]

I have no quarrel with Barnes's argument because it makes a great deal of sense to me. So if Barnes is right, it is possible for Sextus's writing to promote understanding of Pyrrhonism in his readership. But this must happen without Sextus's authorial intention. A reader may come to grasp the nature and aspirations of Pyrrhonism from Sextus's writing but this appears to be an unintended result for Sextus. Because Sextus reports as a non-committal chronicler and therefore the reader cannot be assured that Sextus's account is reliable. It is true that Sextus's account may give a reliable account of Pyrrhonism but because of the lack of authorial commitment the reader can never have full confidence in Sextus's writing.

2. PYRRONIAN NON-ASSERTORIC SPEECH

Sextus's language of non-assertion plays an integral role in distinguishing his writing as a work of non-assertoric discourse. Indeed the idiosyncratic mannerism of the Pyrrhonist is manifested mainly in his non-assertoric speech acts. I will now discuss how this excessively egocentric use of language contributes to Sextus's effort to produce his writing as a piece of non-assertoric discourse. Stough, Sluiter and Barnes all touch upon the Pyrrhonist's non-assertoric mode of speech in their discussions of the problematic status of Sextus's writing. By surveying their

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[243] Barnes's idea is that though Sextus's non-assertoric mode of speech does not state anything and he does not purport to make any truth claim, his speech may still be true, just like parrots have no beliefs but they may tell truths. According to Barnes, what matters is 'where the parrot got his information' and 'how he manages to reproduce it' (Barnes 2000, xxii).

discussions we shall be able to inform ourselves regarding how the Pyrrhonist deploys language in a distinctive way. To work out a thorough analysis of the subtleties of the Pyrrhonist's non-assertoric mode of speech I shall draw particularly on the works of Mates, Burnyeat and Castagnoli.

2.1 The Attitude of *Aphasia*

We should start, however, with Stough's discussion which explores the attitude of *aphasia* (non-assertion) and the various kinds of caveats that pervade the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. These caveats are indicative of Sextus's use of non-assertoric mode of expression in writing. Stough coins the term 'disclaimers of assertion' to incorporate all of Sextus's various kinds of caveats. Her discussion aims to give an interpretation of Sextus's non-assertion that can make sense of the force of the disclaimers. In a nutshell, it is obvious that the point of the disclaimers is to get rid of assertions in speech and writing. But the problem is Sextus frequently makes various seemingly assertive appearance statements in his writing. For instance, Sextus writes that '*phantasiai* do not arise from the same things because of the difference of the animals' (*PH* 1 40) when he articulates on the upshot of the first mode of suspension of judgement. And when Sextus talks of different ways that animals are produced, he says that human beings are born viviparously and birds are born oviparously (*PH* 1 42). Such seemingly assertive appearance statements appear to commit Sextus to assertions about how different animals are born.

These seemingly assertive appearance statements are problematic and Stough complains that grammatical form cannot be sure indicator of the force of his

speech.[244] She finds it important for her discussion to set forth how Sextus characterizes the distinction between assertion and non-assertion and she finds glimpses of this distinction implicit in Sextus's various remarks on his use of language.

> In making an assertion (in the sense in which he wants to employ the term), Sextus says, one is using language to affirm or deny something, for instance, that it is (is not) day (*PH* 1 192)
>
> assertion is speech uttered "dogmatically about what is non-evident" (*PH* 1 193)
>
> Non-assertion, then, would appear to be an attitude (called a *pathos* by Sextus at *PH* 1 193) of caution on the part of the Sceptic in regard to the import of what he says. While the statements of other philosophers are meant to affirm or deny (with or without qualification) that something is the case (is true), the Sceptic construes his own pronouncements, along with all others, as "no more true than false" (*PH* 1 14-15, 200, 206-208)[245]

Stough believes that the Pyrrhonist purges from his speech the intention of making factual claims, because the Pyrrhonist refrains from assenting to the non-evident, and making factual claims is assenting to the non-evident. Therefore she thinks that the attitude of non-assertion rules out only those speeches that are dogmatic in force (*PH* 1 193, 203, 208).[246] This attitude of non-assertion does not forbid the Pyrrhonist from making utterances like 'it is day' or 'honey is sweet' which seemingly resemble exactly the usual form of factual claims.[247] As she has

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[244] Stough 1984, 138.

[245] Stough 1984, 138.

[246] Stough 1984, 140.

[247] Of course, the Pyrrhonist regardless of rustic or urbane would suspend judgement on whether it really is the case that it is day or honey is really sweet because questions about how thing really and truly is count as non-evident matters of fact.

noted, the form is not indicative of the force of his speech. Stough postulates that the form of his speech does not commit the Pyrrhonist to affirmation or negation because it just reflects the Pyrrhonist's disregard for ordinary linguistic conventions and the fact that he is unmindful of the rules of ordinary discourse.[248] Therefore Sextus would not be put off making utterances that have the outward form of factual claims. But the point is that he makes these utterances only undogmatically, so that the outward form has no force and the utterances have no implications on matters of truth and real existence. Speaking undogmatically, the Pyrrhonist assents to appearances and his affections, whilst his words commit him to no truth claims, and his speech determines nothing about matters of fact (*PH* 1 197, 200). The function of his speech is not to give a descriptive account of external features of the world. Therefore, if the Pyrrhonist says 'it is day' no one can contradict him by saying 'it is not day'. As Stough puts it, 'The distinction between assertion and non-assertion is a formal distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive (hence "not open to dispute") uses of language.'[249]

As for the problem of speaking categorically with utterances like 'honey is sweet', Stough tries to explain it away with reference to Sextus's distinction between two senses of the word 'is' (*PH* 1 135, 198). Sextus notes in these sections that 'is' can be used to make factual claims about what is the case (is true). However,

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As we shall see, Sextus's distinction between two senses of the word 'is' will give more force to his denial that his appearance-statements are expressive of beliefs.

[248] Stough 1984, 138-140. For Sextus's relation to linguistic conventions and usage, see also Sluiter 2000. As my discussion will soon demonstrate Sextus is not simply 'unmindful of the rules of ordinary discourse' and his 'disregard for certain ordinary linguistic conventions' is motivated by practical reasons. All these will become clear when I take on Sluiter's discussion of Sextus's plea of *katachrēsis* for his deviation from ordinary conventions and usage in section 2.2.

[249] Stough 1984, 143.

he says that it can also be used noncommittally in the sense of 'appears', to merely register how something appears to someone. Obviously, the defence would be the idea that the Pyrrhonist does not use 'is' in the first sense. Speaking categorically, the Pyrrhonist reveals only how things appear to him; he is not making any statement about matters of fact. His utterances have no implications on matters of truth and real existence. Stough finds further support for this idea in Sextus's claim that his categorical modes of speech are interchangeable with non-declarative modes of speech, such as the interrogative (*PH* 1 189) and imperative (*PH* 1 204) so long as they can effectively report how things appear to him. Stough thinks that the use of the grammatical alternatives to categorical modes of speech suggests that Sextus 'is alluding to a function of language other than that which would provide an account of features of the world'.[250]

Finally Stough concludes that Sextus's non-assertoric speech performs the pragmatic function of informing others of the mental and perceptual states that determine his actions and Sextus as a language user refrains from making statements. Although he refrains from taking a side on questions of truth, he freely engages in discourse and expresses himself in a form of speech that signals his approval of the practical functions of language.[251]

I agree with Stough's interpretation of Sextus's disclaimers of assertion and the upshot that Pyrrhonian utterances have no implications on matters of truth and real existence as their outward form has no force and the attitude of non-assertion rules out those speeches that are dogmatic in force (*PH* 1 193, 203, 208). However, there is an important error in her discussion. Stough seems to conflate different modes of

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[250] Stough 1984, 143.

[251] Stough 1984, 144.

non-assertoric speech into one single category: avowal of appearances. But avowal of appearances cannot represent all modes of non-assertoric speech. For instance, interrogative (*PH* 1 189) and imperative (*PH* 1 204) modes of speech are also non-assertoric but unlike avowal of appearances they do not report the speaker's present *phainomena* and *pathē*. Unlike avowal of appearances they do not report how things appear to the Pyrrhonist. Moreover, Pyrrhonian argumentation works like commemorative sign (*PH* 2 102, also M *8* 157) as it reminds his opponent of what can be said in response to the dogmatic belief within its dogmatic context. Like interrogative and imperative modes of speech, Pyrrhonian argumentation does not tell us the Pyrrhonist's present *phainomena* and *pathē*. Among these four modes of non-assertion, avowal of appearances is more controversial and I discuss the problems and issues it raises in the next two sections. I shall first discuss avowal of appearance as a deviation of the normal use of declarative sentence.

2.2 The Plea of *Katachrēsis* for Pyrrhonian Avowal of Appearance

In her discussion of Sextus's views on form and meaning, Sluiter notes that Sextus adopts a practical and utilitarian approach to language.[252] Sluiter agrees with

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[252] Sluiter 2000, 94-95: 'He will not, of course, entertain any theories about it, but rather accept it as a social custom, a convention, and use it as is customary and acceptable. No system of rules dictates what he can or cannot correctly say, but he follows contemporary common usage.'

'He simply needs language, and uses it opportunistically, just like he needs and uses – but without commitment or conviction – dogmatist premises that are acceptable to his opponents, to be able to engage them in argument at all.'

'Again, his approach to correctness, which rests on convention, is practical and utilitarian. He realizes its importance for normal functioning in the community to which one belongs, and for successful communication and in that minimal sense accepts its value.'

Stough in thinking that the Pyrrhonist does not intend to make an assertion when he utters a declarative sentence (that is, an avowal of appearance for the Pyrrhonist). The function of the utterance is rather to report how things appear to him at a particular time, she suggests. Therefore what the declarative sentences do for the Pyrrhonist is, according to Sluiter, to report how the sceptic feels affected by the world at a particular moment. Sluiter regards this peculiar use of language as a crucial deviation but also as a characteristic innovation which Sextus justifies with his plea of *katachrēsis*.[253]

The Pyrrhonist's avowal of appearance is a deviation because it violates common linguistic conventions with regard to the declarative mode of speech. But the violation is not arbitrary. According to Sluiter, the violation is 'an emergency measure' taken by Sextus to meet a linguistic constraint for the Pyrrhonist. The constraint occurs because his Pyrrhonism clashes with common usage and linguistic conventions on the declarative mode of speech. A Pyrrhonist does not issue his utterances with dogmatic force. He does not want his speech to commit himself to affirmation or negation of anything. But the problem is that, in the normal situation where one would casually say 'it is day' when it is day, the Pyrrhonist is bound to remain cautious of the import of his speech or the implications it might have for matters of truth and real existence. He does not want to affirm or deny that it is day with his saying 'it is day'. He knows all too well that other speakers who follow common usage and linguistic conventions usually assume that saying 'it is day' implies that the speaker is asserting that it is day. And such assertion usually implies on the speaker's part his implicit belief that it is day. However, the Pyrrhonist is determined to avoid these implications. And he definitely does not want to pass into

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[253] Sluiter 2000, 95.

silence; he wants to engage in communication with others. Therefore in order to get out of the linguistic predicament, he appeals to a designated mode of speech, that is, his avowal of appearance which is serviceable in acknowledging his impression that it is day and yet without asserting that it is so.[254] As a result, the Pyrrhonist does not regress into silence; his avowal of appearance allows him to communicate a *pathos* without asserting it and Sextus can be outspoken with his writing.

Sluiter believes that Sextus's account of his Pyrrhonian *phōnai* (*PH* 1 187-208) can reveal not only his views on the *phōnai* but also his views on the role and function of language in human communication. She argues that Sextus's choice for the word *phōnai* is indicative of the essential nature of his non-assertoric speech and that Sextus purposefully use *phōnai* when there are other choices of words available to him. For instance, Sluiter argues, Sextus can use *logoi*, or *apophthegma*, or *epiphonema*, or an expression like *scepticon*.[255] She suspects that Sextus is attracted to the term *phōnē* because in ancient philosophical language and linguistic theory, it 'indicates articulated sound without giving information about semantic content'. In addition, she says that Sextus likes to construe *phōnas* with *propheresthai* (which emphasizes sound-production rather than the production of *logos* which would be suggested by *lēgō*). His other choices of accompanying verbs like *epiphtheggomai* is

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[254] Stough's formulation of the linguistic constraint for the Pyrrhonist is 'How can the Sceptic assent to phenomena without committing himself to the truth of some assertion or other?' (Stough 1984, 138) Stough's treatment of the constraint and the Pyrrhonist response differs from that of Sluiter. In her discussion Sluiter deals with linguistic elements like, semantic analysis of certain Greeks, form and meaning, interchangeability in the Pyrrhonist's unique speech and Sextus's plea of *katachrēsis* whereas Stough's discussion is more concerned with the notion of assent to appearances, the distinction between evident and non-evident, and also the distinction between dogmatic assent and undogmatic assent. See Stough 1984, 137-142.

[255] Sluiter 2000, 97.

also mostly associated with interjection-like utterances and interjections express precisely a *pathos*, which is irrational, and of which no theory can be given. Finally Sluiter believes that Sextus's *phōnai* (or disclaimers of non-assertion for Stough) are supposed to reflect just the personal experience of the speaker, and the choice for the word *phōnai* certainly does not commit Sextus to any theory of language.

Before Sluiter, Mates has already pointed out that Sextus's choice for the word *phōnai* is highly strategic and it reflects his defensiveness against the possible criticism that his words and slogans are in fact dogmatic assertions. Mates refers to a passage in Aristotle's *De anima,* 420b5, which defines a *phōnē* as a 'sound, properly the sound of the voice, whether of a human being or any animal with a larynx and lungs'.[256] Mates assumes that Sextus chooses the word *phōnai* for (as he puts it) its 'somewhat deprecatory air' so as to reinforce the idea that the Pyrrhonist does not offer his utterances as weighty assertions about anything; they are only reports of his personal experience.

Sluiter thinks that a closer look at the passages on *ou mallon* (*PH* 1 188-191) can unveil the rationale for Sextus's deviation from the common linguistic conventions with regard to the declarative mode of speech. According to Sluiter, Sextus makes the plea of *katachrēsis* when he remarks on the form and meaning of *ou mallon*. Regarding the form of *ou mallon*

> First, he points out (in *PH* 1 188) that the form is schematic: *ou mallon* should be supplemented to get a complete sentence.
> Secondly, the form is also *indifferent*: the same *pathos* can be expressed by a question 'why A rather than B?' (*ti mallon*;).[257]

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[256] Mates 1996 p.255.

[257] Sluiter 2000, 96. On the previous page, Sluiter gives a nice exegesis of the points of Sextus's remark on form. 'Sentence-types and speech acts should be carefully distinguished: The same

Regarding the meaning of *ou mallon*

Sextus points out that it may look like (have the *charakēr* of), an assertion, but that it is in fact used *katachrēstikōs* (*PH* 1 191).

Sluiter believes that the plea of *katachrēsis* can explain Sextus's exploitation of the declarative mode of speech to generate his avowal of appearance in order to provide an *ad hoc* escape from his linguistic predicament. According to Sluiter, the Greek word *katachrēsis* can be used to refer to two distinct phenomena. The first is 'an improper use of language, an "abuse" even, when a term is employed in spite of the fact that a better choice was available, one that is more regular in form, or proper in meaning'. The second is 'the more common meaning' and it refers to 'the extended use of a term, because there simply is no proper term to express whatever it is that needs to be expressed.'[258] Sextus's problem is the lack of a proper form of speech which can get him out of the linguistic predicament. He needs a form of speech that can express nothing more than the sole experience of a *pathos*. If it is acceptable to use a term beyond its usual meaning to express something differently when the proper term does not exist, perhaps the Pyrrhonist can do something similar, where the right form of speech does not exist. Therefore, he uses declarative mode of speech as an emergency measure in cases when the requisite form of speech

sentence-type can perform different functions or speech acts. For instance, the question "Is your glass empty?" may be a request for information, a hint from your partner that it is time to leave, or an offer of a refill. Different sentence-types can also be used to perform the same function. A rhetorical question is the speech-act equivalent of a declarative sentence with assertoric function' (Sluiter 2000, 95). See also *PH* I 189 for Sextus's own examples of interchangeability.

[258] Sluiter 2000, 96.

does not exist. Returning to Sextus's remark on the form of *ou mallon*, it is clear that the Pyrrhonian usage is indifferent to the grammatical form; *ou mallon* and *ti mallon* are used as if they are identical. If Sextus were to spell out the Pyrrhonian usage with regard to grammatical form, it would be: Do not look at the form to determine the meaning. For the Pyrrhonian usage is indifferent to the grammatical form. Sluiter finds textual support from *PH* 1 190, 197, 201 where Sextus repeatedly stresses the idea that the meaning of the sceptical *phōnai* like *ou mallon* lies in the *pathos* of the Pyrrhonist.[259] Finally Sluiter concludes that Sextus's understanding of the role and function of language in human communication is unduly overlooked and he should be given a place in the history of speech acts theory.[260]

I think Sluiter's discussion is useful in drawing out the issues concerning Sextus's avowal of appearance as a crucial deviation of the declarative mode of speech. However, there is an important misgiving in Sluiter's discussion of excusing avowal of appearance as an 'emergency measure'. Sluiter leaves an important question unanswered. Why does Sextus choose to borrow conventional usage of the declarative mode of speech when it is obvious that such borrowing would certainly invite confusion and objection? If the Pyrrhonist wishes to mark himself off from assertive speech, he can stick to his favourite form of statement 'it appears to me now that so and so'. His plea of *katachrēsis* seems puzzling, if not irritating.

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[259] But there is still room for a dogmatic interpretation of *ou mallon* and Sextus's *phōnai* can be interpreted as expressing dogmatic beliefs about reality despite his plea of *katachrēsis*. I discuss these in section 2.4 when I draw on Castagnoli's discussion of Sextus's distinction between a dogmatic and non-dogmatic interpretation of *ou mallon*.

[260] Sluiter 2000, 96: 'It is Sextus's awareness of the fact that the same function can be performed by the interrogative ti mallon and the declarative ou mallon, and his distinction of outward form (*charaktēr*) and function, that earn him a place in the history of speech-act theory.'

On this matter, Mates suggests that locutions of the form 'it appears to me now so and so' function as a kind of modal operator for Sextus and they resembles the so-called psychological verbs that, according to Frege, generate oblique contexts in which words and expressions no longer have their ordinary denotations. Mates himself proposes that the Pyrrhonist uses the appearance (*to phainomenon*) as a syncategorematic expression. A syncategorematic expression 'contributes to the meaningfulness of more complex expressions in which it occurs but that does not by itself have any denotation or reference.'[261] On my view, perhaps, as his distinction between two senses of the word 'is' suggests, Sextus chooses to borrow conventional usage of declarative form of speech because for him it is the content of what is said, not the actual forms of his statements that is important to him. This is also supported by his repeated stress on loose usage (*PH* 1 191, 195, 196).

2.3 Philosophical *Phainetai* Pronouncement and Belief

Barnes's discussion deals with Sextus's commitment to the *phainomena* in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and also Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance.[262] Barnes prefers to call Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance '*phainetai* sentences' or '*phainetai* utterances'. Barnes believes that given Sextus's willingness to say how things

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[261] See Mates 1995, 11-17.

[262] Barnes's discussion mainly deals with the scope of *epochē* in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. He wants to determine whether Sextus's Pyrrhonist of the *Outlines* is rustic or urbane. He approaches the question by examining three subordinate issues: the *Outlines's* commitment to the *phainomena* the notion of *dogma* and the *Outlines's* opposition to *dogmatikoi*, and finally the *Outlines's* attitude to *Bios* and the Meaning of Life. As I have shown, he mentions the problematic status of Sextus's writing as a troublesome side issue and he sees it as 'a problem independent of the dispute between rustic and urbane interpreters' (Barnes 1998, 62-63).

appear the Pyrrhonist of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is almost certainly committed to the *phainomena*. However, Barnes warns of the false move of taking the Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance that 'it appears to me that so and so' as meaning 'I believe that so and so'.[263] According to Barnes the avowals of appearance in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* do not carry the usual epistemic sense so that the appearing mentioned in the utterances is not epistemic but phenomenological. If his avowal of appearance is to imply an epistemic appearance statement, the Pyrrhonist would be expressing an assertion or a judgment about the thing that he talks about. He would be expressing a certain view and with the qualification that his judgement may be wrong. The speaker of epistemic appearance statements intends to affirm with qualification whatever that is being talked about. But on the other hand if his avowal of appearance implies only a phenomenological appearing, then the Pyrrhonist does not express a judgement on the thing that he talks about; he only reports on his experience.[264]

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[263] As we shall see shortly, unlike Barnes Burnyeat argues that in some cases where non-perceptual impressions are concerned it is a very legitimate move to take the Pyrrhonian utterance that 'it appears to me that so and so' as meaning 'I believe that so and so'.

[264] There is more to be said of this distinction between epistemic and phenomenal appearance statements. I can talk about external things by way of talking about my perceptual experiences. Suppose I say, 'The tree on the left appears higher.' I may be saying something about external object, the tree, by way of saying something about my experience. I may conclude that the left tree *is* higher and I reach my judgement about this left tree on the basis of my visual experience. In this case, appearances are considered as some special kinds of things, some mind-dependent objects like sense-data which we are directly aware of in perception and which may be compared and contrasted with the things of which they are appearances. As Burnyeat 1982 explains the ancient sceptics never doubted the existence of the external world. And idealism, in Burnyeat's own words, 'did not receive its first formulation in antiquity' (Burnyeat 1982, 4). According to Burnyeat, it was Descartes who has carried scepticism to the extreme when his hyperbolic doubt took on the existence of his own body and the external world. (Burnyeat 1982)

Moreover, phenomenological appearing is not restricted to perception only. It comprises non-perceptual impression. One can, as Barnes suggests, say 'That argument *looks* sound – but don't be taken in by it' in which the appearing is phenomenological but non-perceptual.[265] But in any case, Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance are not totally cut off from epistemic readings. As Barnes sees it, the phenomenological avowals of appearance can imply beliefs in at least four different ways.

> First, the utterer appears to refer to himself, and hence to presuppose his own existence (and perhaps also certain facts about his own nature, e.g. that he is a being capable of perception and thought). Secondly, the utterer appears to refer to the present time, and hence presuppose that there is such a thing as time. Thirdly – and more strikingly – the utterer appears to refer to external objects, and hence to assume their existence; for if I say 'That tower looks round', I may be in doubt about the 'real nature' of the tower, but I can hardly doubt that there *is* a tower there of some sort or other. Finally – and most obviously – the utterer appears to be expressing a belief by his very utterance, namely the belief that the honey tastes sweet to him, etc. For the utterance of an indicative sentence functions characteristically as a manifestation of belief in the proposition expressed by the sentence.[266]

On the other hand, Burnyeat argues that there is a very subtle way in which the Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance about impressions of thought can imply beliefs. As Burnyeat points out, Sextus's avowals of appearance in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* trade on a philosophically important ambiguity which is crucial to Sextus's assumption that the utterances 'it appears to me that so and so' and 'I don't

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[265] Barnes 1998, 63-4. If Burnyeat 1982 is right, then the first three objections would be anachronistic and Sextus would be immune to these post-Cartesian thinking. The critics of Sextus would challenge Sextus only in the fourth way.

[266] Barnes 1998, 64.

believe that so and so' are in general logically consistent. But in fact, this assumption is wrong when the utterance is made about an impression of thought. Non-perceptual avowals of appearance that speak of some impressions of thought are not on a par with avowals of appearance that speak of sense-impressions. Sextus cannot insist that his avowals of appearance that speaks of some impressions of thought are mere announcements of his passive affection or mental states. Unlike the avowals of appearance that report on a perceptual state, his philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement implies a state of belief.[267]

Burnyeat argues that what appears (*to phainomenon*) may be anything whatever given in the impression (*phantasia*), and in Sextus's Pyrrhonian framework, there are impressions (*phantasiai*) which are not and could not possibly be thought to be sense-impressions.[268] For instance, it would be impossible to regard the appearances in his *phōnai* like 'I determine nothing' (*PH* 1 15) and 'Everything is relative' (*PH* 1 135) as impressions of sense. They speak of some impressions of thought. And as Sextus suggests his *phōnai* are not expressive of dogmatic beliefs. Instead they are mere records of appearance. Burnyeat therefore concludes that for Sextus, appearance is not exclusively identified with sense appearance it comprises

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[267] Given their very difference, I think it is helpful here to distinguish two kinds of Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance. The first kind of avowals of appearance speaks of sense-impressions and thus they are mere announcements of his passive affection or mental states. The second kind of avowals speaks of impressions of thought. For the sake of clarity, I shall use 'Pyrrhonian philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement' to refer to the second kind of avowal.

[268] Burnyeat 1998a, 38-41. Burnyeat reports that sometimes Sextus 'goes so far as to speak of things appearing to reason (*logos*) or thought (*dianoia*) (ambiguously so *PH* 2 10, *M* 8 70, unambiguously *M* 7 25, 8 141)' (Burnyeat 1998a, 39).

impressions of thought; things that appear (*phainomena*) comprise objects of sense as well as objects of thought (*M* 8 362).[269]

Burnyeat thinks that the ultimate incoherence of the sceptic philosophy is found in his philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement as it is expressive of belief in a very subtle way despite its disguise as undogmatic avowal of appearance. An avowal of appearance that reports on the Pyrrhonist's sense impression describes a genuine experience (*a pathos, a phantasia*) that awaits his assent. Suppose a Pyrrhonist reports on his sense impression by saying 'Honey *appears* sweet' (*PH* 1 20) and then he continues 'But I do not believe that honey *is* sweet'. His refusal to assent to the first level proposition that honey *is* sweet does not invoke a self-contradiction because his utterances simply acknowledge to his perceptual state that honey appears sweet. He needs not assent to the first level proposition that honey *is* sweet. In short in Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance that speaks of sense impression assent and impression are logically independent.

According to Burnyeat, in the case of philosophical *phainetai* pronouncements assent and impression are not logically independent. Suppose after experiencing a number of occasions in which contrary claims have equal strength a Pyrrhonist says, 'It appears to me that contrary claims have equal strength but I do not believe that contrary claims have equal strength.'[270] This utterance, which speaks of some impressions of thought, is intelligible only if it carries epistemic sense. As Burnyeat suggests the philosophical impression that contrary claims have equal strength, 'being the effect of argument, is only to be made sense of in terms of reason, belief

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[269] Burnyeat identifies Stough's view which regards all appearances as impressions of sense as a mistaken interpretation.

[270] This is Burnyeat's example. See Burnyeat 1988a, 53-57.

and truth – the very notions the sceptic is most anxious to avoid'.[271] His repeated impressions that no claim is to be preferred to its denial support the conviction that the generalization *is* true.[272]

As Burnyeat sums up 'accepting the conclusion that *p* on the basis of a certain argument is hardly to be distinguished from coming to *believe* that *p* is *true* with that argument as one's *reason*.' The Pyrrhonist's impression that contrary claims have equal strength is actually identical to his assent to the conclusion that contrary claims have equal strength, which is a state of belief. It would not make sense for the Pyrrhonist to insist that that he does not assent to the conclusion as true because such denial would amount to contemplating a further act of assent to the assent already given, Burnyeat argues. The Pyrrhonist cannot treat his own thought as if it were the thoughts of someone else because such detachment from oneself is not humanly possible, Burnyeat concludes.

Alternatively Barnes believes it is not anachronistic to explain Sextus's avowals of appearance with speech acts theory.[273] He reckons that Diogenes, for instance, used the notion of 'confessions' to refer to the Pyrrhonist's utterances (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9 104) and Sextus, for his part, refers to his own utterances as 'avowals' (*PH* 1 4, 15, 197, 200, 203). Barnes observes that the notion of 'avowal' has attained currency in Wittgensteinian circles. He refers to a celebrated passage in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§ 244) where Wittgenstein elaborates on

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[271] Burnyeat 1998a, 54.

[272] Burnyeat thinks that believing this generalization true is indispensable for the sceptic if he is to attain *ataraxia*.

[273] Barnes 1998, 65: 'Greek philosophers had recognized, centuries before Sextus, that statements were only one among many speech acts.'

'*Äusserungen*', that is, 'expressions of feelings' or avowals.[274] In addition, Barnes also recalls Wittgenstein's objection to the mistaken assumption that avowals of a feeling constitute statements.[275]

The similarity between Wittgensteinian avowals and Pyrrhonian avowals is quite obvious here. A child *expresses* her pain by crying. She does not *state* anything; her cry is not a statement. Barnes suggests that the speech of the Pyrrhonist functions in the same way. When the Pyrrhonist is mentally affected, he would utter phenomenological *phainetai* sentences to *express* his *pathos*. His avowals express his *pathos*, not his belief that he is in certain *pathos*. He *states* nothing, not even that he is experiencing a certain *pathos*.[276] Barnes thinks that since the Pyrrhonist's avowals are not statements, they bypass belief.[277]

I think Barnes's discussion is helpful in drawing attention to the distinction between two very different kinds of Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance. The first kind involves perceptual appearance and in uttering this kind of avowals, the Pyrrhonist does not express judgement on the things that he talks about. He only reports on his perceptual experience. The second kind involves non-perceptual

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[274] Barnes 1998, 65-6: 'Words are connected with the original and natural expression of feeling [Empfindung = *pathos*], and are put in their place. A child hurts itself and cries: adults then talk to him and teach him exclamations and later sentences – they teach the child a new pain-behaviozur – "Then you're saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?" – Quite the opposite: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it (*Philosophical Investigations* §244).'

[275] Barnes 1998, 66: 'Wittgenstein calls such 'expressions of feelings' '*Äusserungen*' or avowals; and he explicitly says that 'to call the avowals of a feeling a statement is misleading (*Zettel* §549).'

[276] Stough reports that a similar point is made by A.D.E. Naess in his book *Scepticism*. His point is that 'When saying "I feel cold", the sceptic does not make an assertion *about* something, he assents *to* something' (Stough 1984, 143).

[277] Barnes suggests there is no need to suppose that the avowals by-pass truth as well. His reason is that an avowal may turn out to be true despite the utterer having no intention to make a statement.

impressions like contrary claims have equal strength. As Barnes rightly notes, Pyrrhonian avowals of appearance are not completely insulated from epistemic readings and thus may express beliefs. In this regard, the second kind of avowals is more controversial than the first kind.

I think Burnyeat makes a very strong case for taking the second kind of avowal, that is, Pyrrhonian philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement, as implying a state of belief. Barnes argues that Pyrrhonian philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement is like Wittgensteinian avowal; it is not statement and therefore it bypasses belief. I think is this argument is not conclusive.

But on the other hand, I think Burnyeat has overstated his argument when he claimed that in assenting to his impression that contrary claims have equal strength and yet failing to conclude that the generalization is true the Pyrrhonist invokes a kind of humanly impossible detachment from himself. Suppose someone is given two seeming incompatibles *x* and *y* to choose and to assist his decision-making he thinks through his options by considering a few self-addressed questions. He starts by asking himself questions like, '*Are x* and *y* equally worthy of choosing?', 'Do *I* really want *x*?', 'Will *I* regret if *I* choose *x* instead of *y*?' Does it follow that in considering these kinds of self-addressed questions he is in the danger of splitting into two people or invoking some kind of humanly impossible detachment from himself?

I think the self-addressed questions that he thinks through in his struggle to get a decision on the incompatibles are simply natural expressions of thoughts which we all may experience at some point in our lives when we are in similar situation. Therefore, I think the Pyrrhonist can assent to his impression that contrary claims have equal strength without also concluding it is *true* that contrary claims have equal

strength. The Pyrrhonist assents to his *impression* that contrary claims have equal strength. But he can withhold his assent from the *generalization* that contrary claims have equal strength. After all we should recall that Sextus characterizes Pyrrhonism as '*zetetic* (seeking or questioning) from its activity in investigation and inquiry', '*suspensive* from the state of mind produced in the inquirer after his search' and '*aporetic* from its indecision as regards assent and denial' (*PH* 1 7). All things considered, I think it makes good sense to conclude that Pyrrhonian philosophical *phainetai* pronouncement does not imply a state of belief. The discussion on sceptical *phōnai* in the next section will give further support to my view.

2.4 Sceptical *Phōnai* and the Deep Grammar of *Ou(den) mallon*

I shall now consider dogmatic interpretation of sceptical *phōnai*. When a Pyrrhonist says 'no more *p* than *q*', is he attributing an absolute reality to his *phōnai* and thus comes to hold some dogmatic beliefs about reality, for instance, that it is *really* 'no more *p* than *q*' in the external world?

Castagnoli suggests that this risk of dogmatic interpretation does not pass Sextus by, and he actually develops a defensive mechanism to stamp it out. Castagnoli argues that Sextus elaborates on a distinction between a dogmatic and a non-dogmatic interpretation of *ouden mallon* and he discards the dogmatic interpretation at *PH* 1 14-15. [278] According to the passages, in uttering his *phōnai* the

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[278] Sextus says (at *PH* I 14-15): '*But not even* [*all oyde*] in uttering [*prophēresthai*] the Sceptical *phōnai* about unclear matters [*peri tōn adēlōn*] nonevident things – for example, 'Nothing more' [*ouden mallon*], or 'I determine nothing' [*ouden orixō*], or one of the other *phōnai* which we shall later discuss – does he [the Sceptic] hold beliefs. For he who holds beliefs posits *as real* [*ōs uparchon*

Pyrrhonist does not posit his *phōnai* as absolutely real, that is, pertaining to what *really* is the case, and therefore he does not come to hold beliefs. Castagnoli argues that Sextus does not posit *ouden mallon* as real because he wants to avoid asserting the implicit maxim that

(M*) For every pair of conflicting unclear matters *p* and *q*, *p is* as persuasive as *q* and therefore *one* should believe neither the one nor the other (*one* must suspend judgement).

At *PH* 1 14-15 Sextus also reports that the Pyrrhonist does not posit his *phōnai* as pertaining to what *really* is the case because he realizes that his *phōnai*, for instance, 'Nothing more', resemble the claim that 'Everything is false'. The claim that 'Everything is false' is self-referring and its self-application conduces to an absolute self-refutation which is neither true nor false.

Castagnoli argues that the crucial verb *symperigraphei* in Sextus's passage should not be taken to signify any sense of self-refutation because for *ou mallon*, its self-application does not conduce to a self-refutation. Hence, he is opposed to McPherran who concludes that *ou mallon* is absolutely self-refuting as he construes the verb *symperigraphei* as meaning 'to refute along with'.[279]

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tithetai] what he is said to believe, whereas the Sceptic posits these *phōnai* not as absolutely real [*ouch ōs pantōs yparchoysas*] .

For they [the Pyrrhonists] suppose that, just as the *phōnē* 'Everything is false' says that it too, along with everything else, is false (and similarly for 'Nothing is true'), so also 'Nothing more' says that it too, along with the everything else, is no more, and hence it *cancels* itself *along with* [*symperigraphei*] the other things. And we say the same of the other Sceptical *phōnai*… Sceptics utter their own *phōnai* in such a way that they are implicitly cancelled [*perigraphesthai*] by themselves.'

The translations are from Castagnoli 2000, 265-276.

[279] Castagnoli complains that this line of interpretation is popular among many commentators and the incorrect translation informs the works of McPherran, Burnyeat, Stough, Fogelin, and Hankinson

Accoriding to Castagnoli, Sextus never uses *perigraphein* to indicate some form of refutation or self-refutation; its possible meanings in Sextus's text are: 'exclude', 'delineate', 'define', 'determine', 'draw a line around', circumscribe', and 'conclude'. In Sextus's usage, *symperigraphein* usually takes one of these possible meanings as 'to cancel' and it is a kind of cancellation that cannot be identified with refutation because the cancellation expressed by *symperigraphein* does not involve a falsification of the 'cancelled' item.[280]

On Castagnoli's view, the upshots of Sextus's report on his *phōnai* (*PH* I 187-208) concerning the correct meaning of the verb *symperigraphein* and the deep grammar of *ou mallon* are as follows.

1 *ouden mallon* (interchangeable with '*ou mallon*', 'No more') is elliptical: it implicitly stands for 'No more one thing than the other' (*PH* I 188).

2 it makes clear the Pyrrhonist's *pathos*; because of the equipollence of the opposed (i.e. conflicting) objects, the Pyrrhonist ends in equilibrium, i.e. he assents to neither side (*PH* I 190), where equipollence means 'equality in what appears persuasive to us [the Pyrrhonists]'. '*ouden mallon*' stands for 'I do not know which of these things I should assent to and which not assent to' (*PH* I 191), or for an equivalent question.

3 the Sceptic does not use his *phōnai* about all things universally, but *only* about those unclear things, objects of dogmatic enquiry (*PH* I 208), which he himself has examined (*PH* I 199, 203).[281]

(Castagnoli 2000, 264). Castagnoli's view is that the rendering of the key verb as such is misleading and wrong because 'Sextus *never* accepts, and *so much the less* embraces, the charge of self-refutation, either in relation to his *phōnai* or concerning the proof against proof' and 'what is interpreted by McPherran as an admission of self-refutation is actually an amazingly refined tool that Sextus uses *against* the charge of inconsistency and self-refutation that the dogmatist deploys against him.'

[280] Castagnili 2000, 270-1.

[281] Castagnili 2000, 278-9. It follows form these generalizations that a tentative meaning of *ou mallon* is: 'For every pair of conflicting unclear matters *p* and *q* I have examined, it appears to me

According to *PH* 1 13, the Pyrrhonist does not dogmatize because he does not assent to the non-evident; he assents only to the *pathē* that are forced upon him by a *phantasia*.[282] Therefore Castagnoli argues that the final meaning of *ou(den) mallon* should be:

> For every pair of conflicting unclear matters *p* and *q I* have examined, *it appears to me now* that *p* is as persuasive as *q*, and therefore *I* can believe neither the one nor the other (*I* suspend judgement).

Castagnoli argues that this is the deep grammar of *ou(den) mallon* for Sextus. If the Pyrrhonist is to hold beliefs in uttering 'no more *p* than *q*', his utterance would be purporting to make a truth-claim about some feature of the external world, something non-evident, that is, such that he is addressing the objective equipollence of *p* and *q* and thereby referring to an instance of intrinsic indeterminacy of the world.

But the deep grammar of *ou mallon* suggests instead that when a Pyrrhonist utters 'no more *p* than *q*', he is merely expressing his impression that *p* and *q* are equally worthy or unworthy of acceptance. Such frame of mind is merely contingent and subjective. The Pyrrhonist is mentally affected thus and so, but he does not assume

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now that *p* is as persuasive as *q*, and therefore I do not know which of these things I should assent to and which not assent to.'

[282] *PH* 1 13: When we say that the Sceptic does not dogmatize we are not using the term 'dogma' as some do, in its more common meaning, 'something that one merely agrees to', for the Sceptic does give assent to the *pathē* that are forced upon him by a *phantasia*; for example, when feeling hot (or cold) he would not say 'I seem not to be hot (or cold).' But when we assert that he does not dogmatize, we use 'dogma' in the sense, which others give it, of assent to one of the non-evident matters investigated by the sciences.

that everyone should be subject to the same affection. In the deep grammar of *ou mallon*, the quasi-modal operator 'it appears to me now that' and the first-person pronoun 'I' make it very clear that 'no more *p* than *q*' reflects a mere avowal of the Pyrrhonist's subjective impression that *p* and *q* are equipollent. He suspends judgement on which one is more worthy of acceptance.[283]

Returning to the translation of *symperigraphein*, Castagnoli raises issues concerning the rendering of the verb as 'to refute along with'. This translation seems to provide some defence for Sextus against the charge that he is dogmatizing with his *phōnai* because it is obvious that he cannot sensibly attribute an absolute reality to his *phōnai* if they are absolutely self-refuting and hence necessarily false. But Castagnoli detects two difficulties in this interpretation. The first one is a terminological issue. If Sextus really has self-refutation in mind, he could use his standard verb *peritrepein* or its noun.[284] Castagnoli argues that *symperigraphein* denotes in ancient Greek 'a very specific kind of cancellation: that kind of cancellation practised by copyists, correctors, and philologists on a text that we call 'expunction' or 'deletion'' by putting different diacritical marks, which would become round brackets in our time.[285] Therefore, Castagnoli concludes that the verb *symperigraphein* should be rendered as 'to bracket along with' and Sextus's *phōnai* would become self-bracketing, that is, its self-application conduces to

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[283] Castagnoli points out that if the quasi-modal operator and the first person pronoun are removed, *ou mallon* would cease to express an avowal and its meaning would be radically changed. It would transform into an implicit maxim, a dogmatic truth-claim about the external world: 'For every pair of conflicting unclear matters *p* and *q*, *p* is as persuasive as *q* and therefore *one* should believe neither the one nor the other (*one* must suspend judgement)' (Castagnoli 2000, 281).

[284] Castagnoli 2000, 280, see also 265-273.

[285] Castagnoli 2000, 286.

self-bracketing.[286] But this self-bracketing is the result of the self-application of the *phōnai* by dogmatic interpretation. The Pyrrhonist does not intend dogmatic interpretation of his own *phōnai*. Finally the reason that *ou mallon* is not self-refuting lies in its deep grammar. According to Castagnoli, we find

> in the deep grammar of *ouden mallon* the epistemic concepts of appearance, degree of persuasiveness, assent, and belief, *not* the semantic concepts of truth or falsity. '*p* no more than *q*' does not mean '*p* is false and *q* as well' (nor '*p* is true and *q* as well'); its actual meaning is: I can believe neither that *p* nor that *q* because they appear to me equally persuasive.[287]

To conclude, I have examined the nature and consistency of Sextus's distinctive use of language by looking into his attitude of *aphasia*, the plea of *katachrēsis* for his deviation of the declarative mode of speech, his *phainetai* sentences, his sceptical *phōnai* and the deep grammar of *ou mallon*, together they comprise the crucial framework of his non-assertoric speech. My discussion has confirmed that Sextus's speech is thoroughly non-assertoric. His utterances and writing do not register any belief claims as they do not purport to make any truth claims about the non-evident or how things really are. The result of my discussion can give much support to the cogency of my thesis. Therefore I conclude that it is entirely apt to construe Sextus's writing as a non-assertoric discourse which, like his speech, expresses no beliefs of how things really are.

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[286] I think this point is crucial for a fair grasp of Pyrrhonism.

[287] Castagnoli 2000, 280.

3. *Dissoi Logoi*: Misology and the Premature Dialectician

In this section, I discuss how Plato's use of *dissoi logoi*, that is, the practice of arguing on both sides of an issue or argument, in his *aporetic* dialogues can be contrasted with Sextus's sceptical mode of argumentation which leads to equipollence of arguments and then suspension of judgement. Then I shall complete my discussion in this Chapter by showing how Pyrrhonism represents a judicious course, a middle course caught between the threat of misology and the danger of premature practice of dialectic discussed in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Republic*.

Dissoi Logoi is the title given by posterity to a short collection of arguments for and against various theses authored by an Anonymous dated around 400 BC. According to Burnyeat, the work is 'not a high-powered debate' but there are numerous points of contact between its arguments for and against the teachability of wisdom and virtue, and Plato's *Protagoras* (319a-328d) and *Meno* (89e-96d). Since nothing can be said with certainty about the work, we do not know what can be made of these points of contact. Another thing worth noting is that the work came to us as an appendix to the manuscripts of Sextus.[288] Moreover, the work is written in Doric dialect; both Pyrrho and Aenesidemus came from Doric-speaking regions. But again, its murkiness prevents us from seeing the exact connection of this work to

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[288] Again we do not know what can be made of this and there is no evidence that Sextus read the *Dissoi Logoi* although the work could have been of great interest to him given his passion with arguing for and against a thesis to induce suspension of judgement about it.

Pyrrhonism. And as Burnyeat advises, 'Sober readers will suspend judgement on every question about the work'. [289]

Here for my discussion I use *dissoi logoi* to refer to conflicting arguments or the practice of arguing on both sides of an issue or argument. *Dissoi logoi* is an effective mode of arguing and in Sextus's treatment of belief it becomes a form of confrontational dialectic and a sceptical strategy that leads to equipollence of arguments and then suspension of judgement. Suppose the dogmatist makes the rash assertion that *p* then Sextus argues for both *p* and not *p* so that the arguments *pro and con* come out even. As it appears no more *p* than not *p* the dogmatist can no longer hold on to his belief and he has to suspend judgement.

Unlike Sextus, Plato does not argue to suspension of judgement. But the Socratic *elenchus* as depicted in Plato's dialogues appears to be another instance of confrontational dialectic – the discussion usually comes to an impasse (*aporia*) and the interlocutor has no clue of how to get out of the impasse brought by the contradiction between his original claim and the conclusion of the ensuing argument. The Socratic *elenchus* thus appears *negative*.

Cicero, writing in the first century BC, recapitulates at *Varro* 46 what he takes to be some essential features in Plato's writing in the following lines:

> nothing is assented to; there are many arguments on both sides of a question, and on all matters there is much enquiry, but nothing firm is said

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[289] Burnyeat 1998c, 107. According to Burnyeat, 'Nothing can be said with certainty about it. Not only its author, but its text, date, overall purpose and intellectual affiliations remain matters for scholarly speculation. Speculation has run riot' (Burnyeat 1998c, p.106). Therefore, I make no speculation about it. See also Bailey 2008.

Because of these contentious features in Plato's writing, Cicero argues that Arcesilaus and the New Academy should not be taken as marking any radical departure from Plato and the Old Academy. On his view, Arcesilaus's sceptical philosophizing actually resembled these contentious features in Plato's writing. The speech at *Varro* 46 breaks off but Cicero expresses his view more completely elsewhere.[290]

Of the three features Cicero mentions at *Varro* 46, the first concerns the form of writing. As I have argued in Chapter Two, although the reader may happen to find some very definite and strongly held ideas in the dialogues, the dialogue form together with Platonic silence and authorial anonymity make it difficult to hold Plato committed to the ideas voiced by the *dramatis personae*, be it Socrates or any other leading speakers. The result is that in the dialogues 'nothing is assented to'.

And this feature obviously gives rise to the third feature namely that 'on all matters there is much enquiry, but nothing firm is said'. As I have argued in Chapter Two, the dialogues are not to be taken as a vehicle of Platonic doctrines. They are *maieutic*; they represent on-going enquiries about justice, piety and so on, and at the

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[290] *De orat*. 3.67: 'First [in contrast to his predecessors in the Academy, who had made no radical changes of teaching method] Arcesilaus, Polemon's pupil, seized on the following in particular out of various writings of Plato and from the Socratic conversations: that nothing sure can be apprehended by either the senses or the mind. He is said to have employed an outstandingly attractive style of speaking in rejecting any judgements of the mind or senses, and to have been the first to set up the practice – though this was highly Socratic – of not showing what he thought but of arguing against what anyone else said that they thought.'

Also *Fin*. 2.2: 'He [Socrates] had the practice of drawing out his interlocutors' beliefs by conversation and questioning, so as to say what he thought in response to their replies. This custom was abandoned by his successors, but Arcesilaus revived it, and instituted the following practice: those who wished to hear him should not ask him questions but should themselves tell him what they thought: when they had told him, he would argue against it.'

same time they invite the reader to think for herself on the issues. So we are left with the second feature. According to the second feature Plato is closely akin to Arcesilaus's sceptical style and practice because in his writing 'there are many arguments on both sides of a question'. Arguably this seems to suggest a kind of *dissoi logoi* structure in Plato's dialogues. Why would Plato employ *dissoi logoi* in his dialogues? To what extent is Plato akin to scepticism because of his application of *dissoi logoi*?

Cicero thinks that the feature of arguing on both sides, which we are calling *dissoi logoi*, reveals a sceptical Plato. Cicero's view was *somehow* shared by an anonymous Neoplatonist commentator of the sixth century AD who compiled five arguments for a sceptical interpretation of Plato. [291] Anonymous's first two arguments are as follows.

> In his discussion of things, they say, he uses certain adverbs indicating ambivalence and doubt – e.g. 'probably' and 'perhaps' and 'maybe'; and that is a mark not of one who knows but of one who fails to apprehend any precise knowledge.
> They argue secondly that inasmuch as he tries to establish contrary views about the same things he clearly extols inapprehensibility (*akatalēpsia*) – for example, he tries to establish contraries when discussing friendship in the *Lysis*, temperance in the *Charmides*, piety in the *Euthyphro*. [292]

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[291] The five arguments are preserved in an anonymous *Introduction to Plato's Philosophy*. According to Annas, the anonymous Neoplatonist commentator was dated by the editor L.G. Westerink to the sixth century AD and in the school of Olympiodorus (Annas 1992, 62). The five arguments are also mentioned in Annas and Barnes 1985, 13-4.

[292] See Annas 1992, 63-5. I discuss the first two arguments in section 3.1 and I leave the other three arguments aside because Annas convincingly argues that they do not carry much force. The other three arguments are as follows.

'Thirdly, they say that he thinks that there is no such thing as knowledge, as is clear from the fact that he refutes every account of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, as well as number; how can we say that someone like this extols apprehension?'

Anonymous's second argument echoes Cicero's argument that Plato is closely akin to sceptical style and practice because in his writing 'there are many arguments on both sides of a question'. Both Cicero and Anonymous refer to the same style and practice, that is, *dissoi logoi* and because of this they both read Plato as a sceptic. However, there is one crucial difference on what they infer from it. Cicero concludes that in Plato's writing 'there is much enquiry, but nothing firm is said'. Anonymous, nevertheless, is more radical as he concludes that Plato embraces *inapprehensibility* because of his application of *dissoi logoi*. If both of them agree that Plato is closely akin to scepticism, they actually refer to different notions of scepticism. Not all forms of scepticism need to call upon *inapprehensibility* for credentials. Arcesilaus argues to inapprehensibility (*akatalēpsia*) but Philo abandons Arcesilaus's radical scepticism after he becomes the head of the New Academy. According to Sextus Pyrrhonism has nothing to do with *inapprehensibility* and it is the 'members of the New Academy' who argue for *inapprehensibility* (*PH* 1 226). This difference has great implications and I shall return to it soon. Before that, I need to visit Annas's discussion on whether the practice of arguing on both sides makes it plausible to read Plato as akin to the Pyrrhonist.

'Their fourth argument is this: if Plato thinks that knowledge is twofold, one sort coming through perception and other through thought, and if he says that each sort falls down, it is clear that he extols inapprehensibility. For he says, "We do not see or hear anything accurately; our senses make errors"; and again he says of objects of thought that "Our soul is entangled with this evil, the body, and cannot think of anything."

'This is their fifth argument: they say that he himself says in his dialogue, "I know nothing and I teach nothing: all that I do is raise problems". See how he says in his own words that he has no apprehension."

3.1 The Premature Dialectician

Annas reasonably dismisses Anonymous's five arguments as either too weak or inconclusive to make it plausible to read Plato as a sceptic.[293] She believes that it would be difficult to ascribe a sceptical mode of arguing to the Socratic dialogues because the Socrates in these dialogues only reduces his interlocutors to bafflement, admission of defeat, or silence, but never to suspension of judgement. Annas also notes that Plato occasionally uses the *ou mallon* description of the result of an argument but, unlike Sextus's employment, Plato is not describing equipollence of arguments.[294] Annas argues that Plato recognizes sceptical argument to equipollence and sceptical use of *ou mallon* but he disapproves of it. She makes her case with a passage from the *Republic* Book VII in which Socrates suggested that getting used to refuting people too soon, one will acquire the muddled thinking that anything is 'no more fine than foul, and the same with just and good and whatever else is esteemed' (538d6-e2).[295] Annas assumes that this passage expresses Plato's own view on the undesirable effects of the premature practice of dialectic and she proceeds to argue that,

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[293] Annas 1992.

[294] Annas gives the examples found in *Theaet*.182e10, 181e5-7, *Meno* 78e6, *Rep*. 340b3-5.

[295] Plainly it is only Socrates who says this in the dialogue but Annas argues in her text as if Plato is stating this as his own view, his disapproval of *ou mallon*. This over-interpretation of Plato's text is certainly problematic given all the indirect features of the dialogue form which I have argued in Chapter Two. There is another problem with Annas's reading of the passage. Socrates seems to be concerned only with the moral problem as he talks about fine and foul, just and good. The passage suggests that it is problematic if someone thinks that just and unjust are no different. But Annas makes the erroneous inference that in Plato's view it is dangerous to think that on ANY matter one should expect the arguments pro and con to come out even. In the case of sense impressions surely there can be cases in which something is rightly found to be no more this than that.

> Plato finds it dangerous to think, as the Pyrrhonist sceptics at least later did, that on any matter one should expect the arguments pro and con to come out even. Thinking this, for Plato, makes you irresponsible, aggressive, and negative in argument.[296]

Annas brings up another passage of the *Republic* Book VII (523-5) where Socrates explains how some things provoke the mind to think while others do not. In some cases, our experience reports contradictory sense impressions regarding the same thing – we find there is much to be said for a thing's being not-F as for its being F and we are thus stirred to attempt resolving the contradiction by carrying out more enquiry.[297] So Annas argues that for Plato equipollence is not necessarily undesirable; the intellectual discomfort caused by equipollence can trigger more thinking and further enquiry so that the perplexity may eventually be resolved. Therefore Annas believes that for Plato the real problem with the premature dialectician lies not in the practice of arguing to equipollence but in his attitude – 'remaining satisfied with the resulting discomfort rather than enquiring further'. On her view, Plato and Sextus would agree on the need for further investigation as a proper response to equipollence but they are divided when Plato makes a controversial diversion to the realm of Forms which, for Sextus,

> is the typical fault of dogmatism: giving up too soon, staying complacently satisfied when there are further problems to enquire into.

Sextus and the Pyrrhonist see themselves as persistent enquirers who keep pressing

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[296] Annas 1992, 66-7.

[297] Again Annas takes the passage (523-5) as representing Plato's own views on the positive value of contrary argument.

on with their enquiry. However, Annas suggests, for Plato

> insistence on further enquiry, when one has found intellectually satisfying results, is immature; it is to avoid just this that he insists that the Guardians do years of study before launching into dialectic.[298]

On Annas's view, the contrast is that Sextus and the Pyrrhonist would appear immature to Plato because of their insistence on pursuing the question when there emerges satisfying results. But on the other hand, Plato would appear to be dogmatic to Sextus because he abandons the enquiry and settles with the dubious Forms.[299]

According to Annas, the fundamental divergence is best explained in the different uses of arguing to equipollence in Plato and Sextus. In her view, for Plato arguing to equipollence is not part of a continuing enquiry. It is applicable only to cases where experience provides grounds for equipollence, which then leads the mind to the discovery of Forms as some intellectually graspable essences which are immune from the cognitive deficiency in perception. Hence, Plato's use of 'argument for opposites' in arguing for Forms becomes more comprehensible. It is a non-sceptical application of a form of argument which can be serviceable to establish a quintessentially dogmatic conclusion. The same form of argument, however, if applied in a sceptical spirit as Sextus does, leads first to equipollence of arguments and then suspension of judgement. Annas concludes that this may suggest 'a sceptical root of Plato's major metaphysical claim' which is arguably often neglected in Platonic scholarship but in any case it does not give a sceptical Plato.[300]

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[298] Annas 1992, 67.

[299] Such contrast depends on a doctrinal reading of Plato and the 'Theory of Forms'.

[300] Annas 1992, 68.

3.2 Objections to Annas's Views

My first objection to Annas's view is that she overlooks the fact that quite a number of the enquiries depicted in Plato's dialogues are *aporetic* or *maieutic* rather than *dogmatic*.[301] To name a few examples, the enquiry on piety is brought to an impasse when Euthyphro no longer knows what to say about piety, and so does the discussion on the definition of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*. It is almost as if, in conformity with a certain authorial intent, the interlocutor is usually overcome by contradictions imbedded in his own thinking and then reduced by Socratic *elenchus* to *aporia*, a state of intellectual bafflement in which one is at a genuine loss as to how to get out of the contradictions or difficulties in finding the right response. Secondly Annas argues that Socrates often reduces his interlocutors to bafflement, admission of defeat, or silence but never to suspension of judgement. However, I think 'bafflement, admission of defeat, or silence' are all reminiscent of *aporia* and consistent with *epochē* which refers to a standstill of the intellect, as a result of which one neither asserts nor denies anything. But on the other hand, a possible difference may lie in the fact that for Socrates's interlocutors the bafflement usually comes with distributing emotions and feelings whilst Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment is thought to lead to *ataraxia*.

Moreover, Annas's view seems to rely on the dubious assumption that Plato's dialogues are primarily *dogmatic* and Plato's authorial intention is to convey his metaphysical doctrines. However, in Chapter Two I have already challenged this

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[301] The early Socratic dialogues (especially the three dialogues o definition: *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*) are aporetic because they typically end in *aporia*. The *Meno* and *Protagoras* are aporetic. The *Theaetetus* is also aporetic. But as I have shown, some readings render it *euporetic* because it seems to end with an implicit hint on finding the answer.

assumption and argued for a more reasonable position, according to which we must recognize the *formal* indirectness of the dialogue form and the salient fact that the majority discussions in Plato's dialogues are either *aporetic*, or *maieutic* enquiries.[302] So if Plato's dialogues do not convey Platonic doctrines but represent on-going enquiries, it would bring us back to Cicero's observation: 'nothing is assented to; there are many arguments on both sides of a question, and on all matters there is much enquiry, but nothing firm is said'.

My second objection to Annas's view is that she wrongly suggests that the Pyrrhonist holds the view that on any matter one should expect the arguments pro and con to come out even. In *PH* 1 202-205 Sextus explains the slogan: 'To every argument an equal argument is opposed'. His first point is that the slogan is not meant to be a piece of assertion establishing any dogmatic claim about future enquiries. The slogan is rather intended as registering the Pyrrhonist's experience or impression that throughout his enquiry so far he has found that pro and con came out even. His final point suggests that the slogan expresses an injunction which the Pyrrhonist issues to himself but that should not be taken as making the assertion that the Pyrrhonist should expect arguments pro and con to come out even.

The Pyrrhonist may be keen on arguing to equipollence but he would never commit himself to the view that arguments pro and con always come out even. Suppose the dogmatist holds the rash belief that *p*. Sextus's response as a Pyrrhonist is to confront this rash belief and argue for both *p* and not *p*. *If* the arguments pro and con come out even, then the dogmatist is brought to equipollence. But Sextus

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[302] Like Frede 1992, I do not pretend that all dialogues are aporetic. But on the other hand, any general account of the dialogues should account for the aporetic dialogues and the *formal* status of the arguments expressed in the discussions.

need not claim that he can *always* make it happen with his argumentation.

The expectation that arguments pro and con always come out even is actually fostered by the dogmatic belief in inapprehensibility which is never held by the Pyrrhonist. Sextus ascribes this dogmatic position to the New Academy and on the other hand he is proud to announce that 'the Pyrrhonist continues to search' (*PH* I 3).[303] Suppose things are rendered not more X than not-X as a result of equipollence in arguments. The premature dialecticians would say that there is no difference between X and not-X. The Pyrrhonist would say that one should suspend judgement on the issue and the conflicting arguments call for further enquiry. The Pyrrhonist's further enquiry serves two purposes: to settle the issue and attain the truth about it. Before he finds any truth, suspension of judgement is an expedient that prevents him from giving rash assent to either side of the issue. Secondly if more enquiries do not appear to improve things, he takes the opportunity to undermine dogmatizing and dogmatic beliefs on the issue by arguing to equipollence. These endeavours keep him immune to the pathology of the premature dialectician who holds the *ou mallon* view, that is, things are not more X than not-X.

Annas does not deny that Plato employs *dissoi logoi* in his dialogues. She argues that Plato makes a non-sceptical application of arguing to equipollence in order to initiate the discovery of Forms. On her view, arguing to equipollence is limited to perceptual cases and it is only in these cases that there is as much to be said for a

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[303] There may appear some tension between the idea of a continued search and of the *epochē* that sometimes seems to follow the observation of conflicting arguments. No doubt conflicting arguments, if unresolved, would force the enquirer to suspend judgement but this is only expedient and it need not put the enquirer off from further enquiry. He can be motivated to continue with the enquiry hoping that the conflicts can be resolved and a proper judgement can be attained. I disucss how continuing enquiry can be reconciled with the present *ataraxia* in section 3.3.

thing's being not-X as for its being X. As such, *dissoi logoi* is just a means for Plato; it does not form part of his continuing enquiry but it is prior to the discovery of Forms. Hence Plato is drawn to *dissoi logoi* for the great philosophical harvest, that is, the discovery of Forms that it could bring about. However, on the other hand, he is aware of the harmful effects it could produce on the enquiring minds. This is why, according to Annas, he warns of the undesirable effects of the premature practice of confrontational dialectic.

But on the other hand, Sedley has a different view on Plato's use of negative *elenchus*. According to Sedley Plato's early methodology before the *Phaedo* is 'largely confrontational – a way of subverting the theories, value-systems and prejudices of Socrates's interlocutors'. [304] Sedley believes that Plato's early methodology employs confrontational dialectic as a preliminary procedure in removing false beliefs before a joint search for the truth via cooperative dialectic is possible. And in the *Meno* the negative elenchus is refined as the first stage of cooperative dialectic. A further twist comes in the *Phaedo* when the Socratic elenchus is made part of the discovery process. Sedley believes that 'Socrates's method of enlightenment, again and again, is to encourage doubts to come out into the open, and then to find the right arguments to quell them.' On Sedley's view, properly motivated doubt can be a positive asset to the philosopher as it can provide a powerful lead towards the truth whilst wrongly motivated doubt, fostered by uncritical attitudes, can only blind us to the truth when we do meet it. [305]

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[304] Sedley 1995, 21.

[305] Sedley 1995, 22: 'Doubts must not be suppressed, or they will subvert rational belief.'

3.3 The Misologist

I shall now discuss how Pyrrhonism represents a judicious middle course between the paths of the premature dialectician and the misologist. In Plato's *Phaedo* there are some methodological passages on 'misology' or hatred of arguments outlining a critical diagnosis of the pathology of the misologist who, like the premature dialectician, falls under the spell of contradictory arguments. The undesirable effects of premature practice of confrontational dialectic are also brought up in the *Republic* which supposedly is written in roughly the same period. In the *Phaedo*, Plato makes his Socrates raise another concern about undue exposure to contradictory arguments. He elaborates on the concepts of 'misology' and 'misologists' which are his terms for hatred of arguments and people who acquire this hatred. In the passage, Socrates said that there is no greater evil that could befall anyone than the hatred of argument (89d1-90d8). To explain how people acquire this condition, he related it to misanthropy because, in his view, both arise from the same source.

> Misanthropy develops when, *without skill*, one puts complete trust in somebody, thinking the person absolutely true and sound and reliable, and then a little later finds him bad and unreliable; and then that happens again with another person; and when it happens often, especially at the hands of those one would regard as one's nearest and dearest friends, one ends up, after repeated hard knocks, hating everyone, thinking there's no soundness whatever in anyone at all. (89d6-e4) [*my italics*]

> The resemblance is found, rather, when someone *who lacks skill in arguments*, trusts some argument to be true, and then a little later it seems to him false, sometimes when it is, and sometimes when it isn't, and then the same thing happens with one argument after another – it is, as you know, especially *those who've spent all their time on contradictory arguments*, who end up thinking they've become extremely wise: they alone have

discerned that there's nothing sound or secure whatever, either in things or arguments; but that all realities are carried up and down, just like things fluctuating in the Euripus, and never remain at rest for any time. (90b6-c6) [*my italics*]

Then, Phaedo, it would be a pitiful fate, if there were in fact some true and secure argument, and one that could be discerned, yet owing to association with arguments of the sort that seem now true and now false, one blamed neither oneself nor *one's lack of skill*, but finally relieved one's distress by shifting the blame from oneself to arguments, and then finished out the rest of one's life hating and abusing arguments, and was deprived both of the truth and of knowledge of realities. (90c8-d8) [*my italics*]

These telling passages provide some very important ideas for me to finish this Chapter. The misologists, as described in the *Phaedo*, are people who have spent all their time on contradictory arguments. They put complete trust in some arguments but then find contradictory arguments equally convincing. Their trust in the arguments which once appeared absolutely true and sound and reliable to them somehow shatters and fades away. However, they are misled into thinking that they have become very wise because only they can make the insightful observation that there is nothing sound or secure whatever in arguments. They become the misologists who spend the rest of their life hating and abusing arguments and they are deprived of the truth and knowledge.

On my view, Pyrrhonism represents a judicious course, a middle course caught between the threat of misology and the danger of premature practice of dialectic. Pyrrhonism is particularly prone to the charge of misology because the Pyrrhonist is notorious for the seemingly nihilistic result of his confrontational dialectic. The Pyrrhonist is *suspensive* and *aporetic*; he suspends judgement and is at a loss as to whether or not to assent to either side of an argument (*PH* 1 7). His arguments are intended to produce the same effects on his opponents. It follows that the

Pyrrhonist's confrontational dialectic deprives both himself and his opponents of the truth and knowledge of realities. This is certainly a serious and overwhelming accusation that could be brought against someone who professes to the pursuit of truth.

To defend the Pyrrhonist I need to compare the causal development of the misologists with a similar passage about the causal origin of Pyrrhonism.

> We say that the causal origin of Pyrrhonism is the hope of attaining *ataraxia*. Certain talented people, upset by anomaly in things and at a loss as to which of these things deserve assent, endeavoured to discover what is true in them and what is false, expecting that by settling this they would achieve *ataraxia*. But the main origin of Pyrrhonism is the practice of opposing to each argument an equal argument; it seems to us that doing this brings an end to dogmatizing. (*PH* 1 12)

The resemblance is striking. Both Plato and Sextus mention people who dwell on contradictions in things and arguments. In Plato's account, some of these people become misologists who abuse arguments. The sequence is: ungrounded trust – contradiction – disappointment – hatred of argument. In Sextus's account, some of these people become the Pyrrhonists who argue to equipollence and find *ataraxia* after suspension of judgement. The sequence is: enquiry – contradiction – equipollence – *epochē* – *ataraxia*. What can we make of this partial resemblance? What makes the final difference? Is arguing to equipollence an instance of abuse of argument?

The single theme present in all the three passages on misology is the importance of skill. The first passage refers to people's skills whereas the other two passages are concerned with skills in arguments. Socrates's diagnosis in the *Phaedo* seems to suggest that the root cause of misology is the lack of skills in arguments. Those

people who have spent all their time on contradictory arguments are retarded by their poor skills in arguments. However, they fail to identify the real problem within. Therefore, when they cannot distinguish the true and secure arguments from the false and unreliable arguments, they hastily shift the blame to arguments. This is why misology is about the hatred of arguments.

In Sextus's account, a crucial difference lies in the fact that the settlement of anomaly in things by arguments is a means to *ataraxia*. Sextus defuses the danger of misology and the potential threat of the undesirable effects of premature practice of confrontational dialectic by making *ataraxia* the *telos* and *epochē* the means to it.[306] The Pyrrhonist does not place ungrounded trust on either side of the argument during his search for the truth. In the causal account, the early Pyrrhonists embark on their search for the truth precisely because they were made puzzled at the beginning. They just did not know what to trust and what not to trust, and their search did not make things any better. But this intellectual loss became a blessing. It prevented them from assenting rashly to either side of the argument. As if by luck, they escaped the fate of becoming the misologists who stopped investigation thinking there was nothing sound or secure whatever in arguments. On retrospection the Pyrrhonists came to recognize the importance of not giving up investigation and not putting unjustified trust on either side of the argument. They also came to recognize the importance of putting arguments and beliefs to the test of arguing to equipollence and they emphasized putting their trust only on those arguments and beliefs that can survive the test of equipollence. In doing so they could avoid rash assent on their part and they could contain their opponents' dogmatizing and

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[306] Some notable Pyrrhonists have made *epochē* during investigation a goal of Pyrrhonism (*PH* 1 30). But I think for Sextus *epochē* during investigation remains the means to *ataraxia*.

dogmatic beliefs in their own dogmatic contexts. Finally arguing to equipollence could immerse them in dialectical exercises and drill their skills in argument. All these can serve the pursuit of truth.

People who pursue something would inevitably fear not attaining what they pursue. However, it is better to confront the fear instead of ignoring and eventually letting the fear overtake us especially when the pursuit comes to a standstill. It is at this point that Sextus and the Pyrrhonist come with the promise of Pyrrhonism. By arguing to equipollence Sextus releases the fear inside. Obviously, the impasse should not be exaggerated as though it removes any hope of bringing the pursuit to a fruitful end; and the good news is that we may even find *ataraxia* after suspension of judgement.

But we should recall that whether '*ataraxia* enters the soul along with *epochē*' is more a chance event (*PH* 1 10, 26, 29). There may appear some tension between the Pyrrhonist's continuing enquiry in the future and his present *ataraxia* which has followed *epochē*. If *ataraxia* follows from *epochē* then the Pyrrhonist should not want to escape from his present condition of *epochē* and there should be no need for continuing enquiry.

My view is that the Pyrrhonist's enquiry incurs two different kinds of *ataraxia*: the first kind is his intended goal (his *telos*); the other is an expedient result. I call the first one *ataraxia* as *telos* and the second one expedient *ataraxia*. The expedient *ataraxia* follows from *epochē* but the Pyrrhonist has not anticipated that it will enter his soul along with *epochē*. From the very beginning, the Pyrrhonist's intended goal is to attain the first kind of *ataraxia* by discovering what is true and what is false in the anomaly in things (*PH* 1 12). But his failure to resolve the conflicting arguments forces him to *epochē* and then to his surprise he finds *ataraxia*.

But I think this *ataraxia* which follows from *epochē* is very different from *ataraxia* as *telos*. The expedient *ataraxia* is more like a temporary state of at ease or unperturbedness with conflicting arguments. For the enquiring mind of the Pyrrhonist the expedient *ataraxia* is only transient because if it can just enter his soul along with *epochē* without his volition, it can go anytime. This expedient *ataraxia* is not secured. Secondly, the possibility of finding out the ultimate truth about the anomaly in things remains a disturbing sword of Damocles hanging over his expedient *ataraxia*. Therefore for the Pyrrhonist only the first kind of *ataraxia* is his proper goal. It is only through successfully resolving the anomaly in things can his enquiry mind finds the long-sought peace of mind.

Sextus and the Pyrrhonists are not the premature dialecticians who always expect the arguments pro and con to come out even. Nor are they the misologists who have lost their faith in the power of arguments. Unlike the premature dialecticians and the misologists, the Pyrrhonists refrain from giving up too soon or taking side too early on contradictory arguments and in this way they are persistent enquirers who continue to search.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CASE STUDY IN WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The self-proclaimed nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* (*T* §6.54) and its bearing on the status of its statements will be the main focus in the first section of my discussion in this chapter whilst the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*, as well as its dialogical structure will be the main concern in the second section.

As we shall see, my thesis is that we should take Wittgenstein's intention of non-assertion more seriously and thus recognize the non-assertoric status of his remarks in both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. This recognition can helpfully inform our understanding of the non-assertoric mode of expression featured in his works so that we would be in a better position to see that the seemingly theoretical or doctrinal remarks are not *theoretical assertions* or some *stated principles* on the *essences* of language and meaning. Following this idea, it can never be right to turn his non-assertoric remarks into 'the picture theory of the propositions', 'the doctrine of showing' or 'the theory of meaning as rule-governed use'. In my discussion of other theoretical readings of the *Tractatus*, I also make clear important aspects of my non-assertoric reading whilst a full exposition of my reading of the *Tractatus*'s spirit of non-assertion is provided in section 1.2.1. For the *Philosophical Investigations* I articulate my non-assertoric reading in section 2.2.

1. THE *TRACTATUS* AND THE AIM OF ELUCIDATION

I shall start with a review of some notable theoretical interpretations of the *Tractatus* and the problem of its self-proclaimed nonsensicality. My review in section 1.1 will show that these theoretical interpretations construe the remarks of the *Tractatus* as either: (a) theoretical statements pertaining to philosophical theories or doctrines, or (b) meaningless but instructive or useful propositions found in philosophical works. I will also show that in each case they encounter some problems and difficulties in ascribing theories to the *Tractatus* whereas my non-assertoric reading can avoid these problems.

Although there are important differences between the theoretical interpretations that I am going to discuss in section 1.1, they have the same point of departure. They all share a broadly similar assertoric approach to the *Tractatus* insofar as they construe the remarks of the *Tractatus* as theoretical statements or assertions and attribute various theories and doctrines on language and meaning to Wittgenstein though he declares his aim of elucidation at *T* §6.54.

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions; then he will see the world aright. (*T* §6.54)

Wittgenstein himself explicitly acknowledges the nonsensical nature of his remarks and he provides an immediate defence by declaring his aim of elucidation and thereby renouncing having constructed any theory in the *Tractatus*. *T* §6.54 is

among the most controversial remarks of the *Tractatus*. In announcing Wittgenstein's elucidatory aim, it seems to overrule the rest of the remarks and explicitly acknowledge their nonsensicality. My discussion in section 1.1 will show that the interpretation of the *Tractatus* depends on how one interprets *T* §6.54. Those who read the *Tractatus* by theoretical lights and thus a work of *theoretical philosophy* generally play down or neglect the importance of the instruction at *T* §6.54. By contrast resolute readings suggest that the reader should take the instruction of throwing away the 'Tractarian ladder' more resolutely, that is, to read the *Tractatus* as a work of *elucidation* and since none of its remarks are meant to present or argue for any philosophical doctrines or theories the reader should throw away the remarks as plain nonsense. I discuss resolute readings as a possible way to understand the textual strategy of the *Tractatus* in section 1.2.2.

1.1 The Cardinal Problem of Philosophy: The Distinction between What can be Said and What can only be Shown

In his letter to Russell dated 13 March 1919, Wittgenstein announces the completion of a manuscript for his book "*Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*". In 1922 the manuscript is eventually published but under Moore's suggestion it bears a different title "*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*". The *Tractatus* is the only philosophical book that Wittgenstein publishes during his lifetime.

Wittgenstein has high hope that Russell would understand his work.[307] In his letter to Russell Wittgenstein speaks of his worries that nobody will understand his

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[307] Frege is on Wittgenstein's list too. I discuss his reading of the *Tractatus* in section 1.2.1.

work and that even Russell 'would not understand it without a previous explanation as it is written in quite short remarks'. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein contends that his work 'is all clear as crystal'. But as things turn out Wittgenstein's hope of being understood by Russell (as well as Frege) is eventually shattered. After some intense discussions in letter and during their meeting at The Hague in 1919, Russell remains suspicious of what Wittgenstein regards as the main contention in his work, that is, the distinction between what can be said (*gesagt*) and what can only be shown (*gezeigt*). Whilst for Wittgenstein, Russell can only understand what he has said about the general form of the proposition and logic in the *Tractatus*, which is only 'a corollary' to his main contention about saying and showing, which according to Wittgenstein, is also 'the cardinal problem of philosophy'.[308]

Ever since its publication, the cardinal problem of the *Tractatus* is: what has it shown to the reader? My following discussion will look at the answers given by Russell, Kenny and Fogelin.

1.1.1 Russell's Reading of the *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein is so disappointed with Russell that he repudiates Russell's introduction to the *Tractatus* in which Russell acclaims the *Tractatus* as 'a work of extraordinary difficulty and importance' and praises Wittgenstein for having 'constructed a theory of logic which is not at any point obviously wrong'.

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[308] Russell reiterates his doubt again in his introduction to the *Tractatus*. See Russell 1922, 21-23. Ramsey, in response to the distinction, is reported to have remarked, 'What can't be said, can't be said and it can't be whistled either.'

Nevertheless, Russell detects a fundamental tension in the *Tractatus* and he gives an account of it in his introduction.

> Mr Wittgenstein maintains that everything properly philosophical belongs to what can only be shown, to what is in common between a fact and its logical picture. It results from this view that nothing correct can be said in philosophy. Every philosophical proposition is bad grammar, and the best that we can hope to achieve by philosophical discussion is to lead people to see that philosophical discussion is a mistake.
>
> "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something which stands above or below, but not beside the natural sciences.) The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions,' but to make propositions clear. Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred" (4.111 and 4.112).
>
> In accordance with this principle the things that have to be said in leading the reader to understand Mr W's theory are all of them things which that theory itself condemns as meaningless.
> (Russell's Introduction p.11)

After registering 'this proviso', Russell sets aside the problem of the self-destructive nature of the remarks (or the problem of inherent nonsensicality) in the *Tractatus* and continues with his exposition of the various theories and systems that he finds in the *Tractatus*.[309]

Russell cannot be completely unaware of Wittgenstein's *aim of elucidation* in the *Tractatus* because it is explicitly conveyed at *T* §6.54. In fact the two remarks that Russell just quoted (*T* §4.111 and §4.112) clearly communicate Wittgenstein's

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[309] Russell's introduction is concerned to expound Wittgenstein's theory of symbolism, his theory of molecular propositions, his theory of the construction of truth-functions, and his theory of number.

unconventional conceptions on philosophy and philosophical work to which his aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus* is only a corollary.

On my view, *T* §4.111 and §4.112 are indicative of Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal aim in the *Tractatus*. If we read the two passages more seriously as they demand, then it is very unlikely that we could have failed to grasp Wittgenstein's aim to do away with philosophical theories or doctrines in his act of philosophizing. I reformulate Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal conception on philosophy and philosophical work conveyed at *T* §4.111 and §4.112 as follows.

   i. Philosophy as the logical analysis of thoughts makes propositions clear.

  ii. Philosophy as an activity of elucidation does not result in philosophical propositions.

And most importantly:

iii. A philosophical work consists of elucidations.

As a result, concerning the *Tractatus* it follows from (iii) that

iv. The *Tractatus* being a philosophical work consists of elucidations.[310]

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[310] (iv) may not necessarily follow from (iii) because it is possible that the *Tractatus* is actually a theoretical work and thus not elucidatory. However, §6.54 comes to our aid as it unequivocally communicates the author's aim of elucidation.

And concerning Wittgenstein's own philosophical activity in the *Tractatus* it follows from (i) and (ii) that

v. Wittgenstein's activity of elucidation in the *Tractatus* makes certain propositions clear without resulting in any philosophical propositions.[311]

Surely this inference could not have escaped the attention of Russell the great logician. It is very unlikely that Russell could have failed to notice Wittgenstein's obvious aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus* when he quotes *T* §4.111 and §4.112. I believe the real problem for Russell is that because of his theoretical yearning and preoccupations, he could not concur or duly identify with (a) Wittgenstein's aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus*, (b) Wittgenstein's innovative conception of philosophy as the logical clarification of thoughts, and (c) Wittgenstein's novel conception of philosophy as an activity of elucidation. Whilst (a) is primarily concerned with the *Tractatus* (b) and (c) would have more far-reaching implications on the methodology of philosophizing and philosophy *per se*. On my view, they are all corollaries to Wittgenstein's spirit of non-assertion and if one can grasp them altogether one is in touch with Wittgenstein's spirit of non-assertion.[312]

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[311] Like (iv) this inference is contestable but, again, §6.54 comes to our aid. However, many interpretations, including Russell's, prefer to read the *Tractatus* by theoretical lights despite the obvious aim of elucidation declared in §6.54. As I have suggested earlier in a way the whole issue of interpreting the *Tractatus* depends on how one reads §6.54. Theoretical readings usually neglect or play down its importance whilst the resolute readings suggest that the reader should take §6.54 resolutely and throw away the remarks in the *Tractatus* as nonsensical. I discuss resolute readings in section 1.2.2.

[312] I argue for my view in section 1.2.

Obviously Wittgenstein's innovative conceptions are too foreign, if not altogether absurd, to someone like Russell who, with his theoretical yearning, is already too deeply occupied with his own doctrinal convictions and theoretical pursuits in philosophy. Therefore it is no wonder that he insists on pressing a theoretical reading of the remarks in the *Tractatus* despite his privilege to 'a previous explanation' supplied by the author on numerous occasions over the years.[313]

I shall now suggest as a result of his own theoretical yearning for and conviction of a hierarchy of languages, Russell is mistrustful of Wittgenstein's declared aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus* and he finds the distinction of saying and showing equally suspicious.

In his introduction Russell makes great effort in explaining 'the theory of Symbolism' which is also known as the picture theory concerning the general form of proposition. In pinpointing what he takes to be 'the most fundamental thesis of Mr Wittgenstein's theory' Russell states that it is in Wittgenstein's 'phraseology' that logical structure can only be shown but not said or represented in language.[314]

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[313] That should include their meeting in The Hague in 1919, Wittgenstein's viva in 1929 in Cambridge and the exchanges in letter over the years.

[314] Russell's account of the most fundamental thesis of the picture theory is as follows.

Russell 1922, 8: 'The essential business of language is to assert or deny facts.

In order that a certain sentence should assert a certain fact there must, however the language may be constructed, be something in common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact.

That which has to be in common between the sentence and the fact cannot, so he contends, be itself in turn said in language. It can, in his phraseology, only be shown, not said, for whatever we may say will still need to have the same structure.'

After explaining how the picture theory begins with *T* §2.1 Russell gives a preliminary general outline of the theory.[315] It is in the middle of this outline that Russell brings up the paradox of the *Tractatus*. As we have seen, he sets it aside and continues with his more technical exposition of the various theories that he finds in the *Tractatus*. However, Russell only temporarily passes over the paradox of the *Tractatus*.

Near the end of his introduction, he returns to the distinction of saying and showing and relates it to Wittgenstein's idea of 'the right method of teaching philosophy' (*T* §6.53). He deems that Wittgenstein uses 'very powerful arguments' to support the idea in the *Tractatus* and yet he admits that on his part he still has hesitation in accepting this right method because of 'the fact that after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to the sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages, or by some other exit.'[316]

Owing to his yearning for and conviction in an ideal language Russell finds the idea that logical structure cannot be said but only shown unsettling. As he expresses

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[315] Russell accounts of the picture theory as follows:

Russell 1922, 10-11: 'The fact that things have a certain relation to each other is represented by the fact that in the picture its elements have a certain relation to one another.

A picture can correspond or not correspond with the fact and be accordingly true or false, but in both cases it shares the logical form with the fact.

The proposition and the fact must exhibit the same logical "manifold," and this cannot be itself represented since it has to be in common between the fact and the picture.'

[316] Russell fully spells out his reservation. (See Russell 1922, 22: 'The whole subject of ethics, for example, is placed by Mr Wittgenstein in the mystical, inexpressible region. Nevertheless he is capable of conveying his ethical opinions. His defence would be that what he calls the mystical can be shown, although it cannot be said. It may be that this defence is adequate, but, for my part, I confess that it leaves me with a certain sense of intellectual discomfort.'

his own thinking: 'there may be another language dealing with the structure of the first language and having itself a new structure, and that to this hierarchy of languages there may be no limit.'[317] However he reckons that 'Wittgenstein would of course reply that his whole theory is applicable unchanged to the totality of such languages.' Thus it is obvious that actually Russell sees for himself the theoretical conviction in a hierarchy of languages is one of the principal fault lines separating himself and Wittgenstein.

1.1.2 Kenny's Reading of the *Tractatus*

Kenny also gives a doctrinal reading of the *Tractatus*. On his view, Wittgenstein pursues three important tasks in the *Tractatus*: (i) to spell out the relationship between an ideal language and ordinary language, '(ii) to indicate how everyday propositions were to be analysed so as to remove their non-pictorial appearance, and (iii) to describe the structure of the world in so far as the nature of language revealed this as a precondition for the possibility of propositions'.[318]

Kenny suggests that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein 'prefaces his theory that a proposition is a picture with some considerations on the nature of pictures in general'.[319] According to Kenny these considerations form a general theory of representation which Wittgenstein applies first to thoughts and then at a greater length to propositions in order to develop his picture theory of the proposition.

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[317] Russell 1922, 23.

[318] See Kenny 2006, especially 44-81.

[319] Kenny 2006, 44.

After giving a general exposition of some key notions like picture relationship (*abbildende Beziezhung*), pictorial form (*Form der Abbildung*), logical form and the relevant remarks, Kenny assembles and then discusses eight theses which, in his view, make up Wittgenstein's picture theory of the proposition.[320]

Kenny's approach is broadly similar to Russell's in that they both construe the remarks in the *Tractatus* as *theoretical assertions* or *stated principles* pertaining to Wittgenstein's theories on the *essences* of representation and proposition.[321] Kenny's exposition is more sophisticated and worked out in greater detail as he has made great use of Wittgenstein's other works like his *Notebooks 1914-1916*, and the *Prototractatus*.

However Kenny's interpretation suffers from some critical problems. In ascribing the picture theory of the proposition to Wittgenstein, Kenny's interpretation attributes a fundamental inconsistency to Wittgenstein and a perplexing paradox to the *Tractatus*. Kenny's interpretation violates a central idea of the *Tractatus*, that is, to say what cannot be said. If it is of the essence of propositions that they represent contingent states of affairs, and all propositions are either true or false, then what is necessary simply cannot be expressed in propositions. However, according to Kenny,

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[320] Kenny 2006, 50-57.

The eight theses are as follows.

1) A proposition is essentially composite. 2) The elements which compose a proposition are correlated by human decision with elements of reality. 3) The combination of such correlated elements into a proposition presents – without further human intervention – a possible state of affairs. 4) A proposition stands in an internal relation to the possible state of affairs which it presents. 5) This internal relationship can only be shown, it cannot be informatively stated. 6) A proposition is true or false in virtue of agreement or not with reality. 7) A proposition must be independent of the actual state of affairs which makes it true or make it false. 8) No proposition is *a priori* true.

[321] Kenny also follows Russell in ascribing the metaphysical doctrine 'logical atomism' to Wittgenstein, though he is aware of the differences between the thoughts of Russell and Wittgenstein.

one of Wittgenstein's important tasks in the *Tractatus* is 'to describe the structure of the world in so far as the nature of language revealed this as a precondition for the possibility of propositions'. In claiming that Wittgenstein offers his remarks in the *Tractatus* as theoretical statements about the necessary features of reality and language, Kenny's interpretation attributes a fundamental inconsistency to Wittgenstein and a perplexing paradox to the *Tractatus*.

Kenny's approach results in another inconsistency in his interpretation. In his discussion of the last thesis (that is 'No proposition is *a priori* true.') which, in his view, makes up Wittgenstein's picture theory of the proposition, Kenny notes that 'all genuine propositions are contingent propositions' and *logical propositions* are only 'proposition' by courtesy because they can be seen to be true from the symbols alone.[322] In addition strictly speaking *logical would-be propositions*, whilst being tautologies, are not pictures or propositions and therefore they cannot be called 'true'.[323] It is therefore puzzling to see how Kenny's interpretation of Wittgenstein's picture theory of the proposition, which states the essence of propositions, can fit in with the conception that no proposition is *a priori* true which he also ascribes to Wittgenstein.

Consequently it is incumbent on Kenny to look at the status of the remarks in the *Tractatus*. Kenny notes that 'the propositions of philosophy and of the *Tractatus* itself fall under the axe which cuts off pseudo-propositions' and the activity of philosophical clarification applied to philosophical propositions, 'it reveals them as nonsensical.'[324] Kenny notes that there is only one way in which a proposition can

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[322] Kenny 2006, 54.

[323] Kenny draws on the *Notebooks 1914-1916* (NB 21), the *Prototractatus* 4.44602, and the *Tractatus* 6.1-6.11 to support his exposition.

[324] Kenny 2006, 80.

be meaningless, namely, when the speaker fails to give meaning to a certain sign in the proposition and this usually happens when the speaker wants to say what can only be shown. According to Kenny the propositions of the *Tractatus* are meaningless because they *are* Wittgenstein's attempts to say what can only be shown. However, Kenny believes that this does not make the meaningless propositions of the *Tractatus* useless because 'their very failure, and the way in which they break down, is instructive.'

Kenny unhesitatingly believes that the author of the *Tractatus* attempts to communicate what can only be shown (in other words, to convey some ineffable truths) though he himself also knows so well about the cost involved in doing so: his propositions will be meaningless.[325] But clearly this assumption is dubious for two reasons.

Given all the problems of inconsistency caused by this assumption, it seems that the assumption itself should be subject to scrutiny. In other words, before one proceeds to read any theories or doctrines into the *Tractatus*, one must consider whether the author of the *Tractatus* really meant to advance theories or doctrines of any sort at all.

On my view, Kenny's doctrinal reading suffers from the critical problems that I have discussed. The reason that these problems arise is not because Kenny has messed up with some details of the general theory of representation or the picture theory of the proposition. Rather it is because Kenny's approach has been trying to fit the *Tractatus* into a conception of philosophy that is itself in jeopardy, if not

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[325] Hacker in his article 'Was He Trying to Whistle it?' holds a similar assumption as he believes that 'there are, according to the author of the *Tractatus*, ineffable truths that can be apprehended' (Hacker 2000, 368).

completely rejected, in the *Tractatus*. Therefore my reading suggests that we should refrain from imposing a theoretical conception of philosophy on the *Tractatus* and we should prioritise Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal conceptions on philosophy and philosophical work over the urge to read into any theories or doctrines in the *Tractatus*.

1.1.3 Fogelin's Reading of the *Tractatus*

Fogelin's approach to the *Tractatus* is 'chiefly indebted' to Russell and Ramsey.[326] However, Fogelin's theoretical reading is remarkable because he also argues that 'Wittgenstein's philosophy bears a close resemblance to Pyrrhonism' despite the fact that 'anti-scepticism seems to be a persistent theme from his earliest to his latest writings'.[327] Instead of looking into Fogelin's exposition of the various theories that he finds in the *Tractatus*, I want to go straight to his view that 'Wittgenstein's philosophy bears a close resemblance to Pyrrhonism'.[328]

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[326] Fogelin 1987, xi.

So it is natural that Fogelin pursues a more or less theoretical reading of the *Tractatus*. His exposition shows how Wittgenstein '*elaborates* or *unfolds*' his ontological atomism and then it takes on 'the picture theory'. However there are two dissimilarities. First unlike Russell, Fogelin argues in his exposition that 'the logic of the *Tractatus* is fundamentally flawed' (See Fogelin 1987 Chapter VI.). I discuss the second dissimilarity in the main text.

[327] Fogelin 1987 chapter XV.

[328] In his later work, Fogelin argues that given the evidences of conflicting strains of neo-Pyrrhonian and non-Pyrrhonian commitments in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, it is better to read his later writings as 'a constant battle between these two aspects of his thought' or as 'a conflict between doing philosophy and doing away with it' (See Fogelin 1994).

Fogelin is not alone in associating Wittgenstein's philosophy with Pyrrhonism. Following Fogelin, David G. Stern also believes that the tension between Pyrrhonian and non-Pyrrhonian approaches to

To begin with Fogelin notes that from the early *Tractatus* to his later work, *On Certainty* Wittgenstein offers essentially the same response to scepticism and what makes Wittgenstein's philosophy an adequate response to the sceptic's challenge can easily be seen within the Tractarian system. According to 'the principles of the *Tractatus*':

> Any question with a sense must have an answer which is, in principle at least, determined by an appeal to the contingent combination of things in the world. By its very intention, however, the system of sceptical challenges is non-terminating, and thus, by the principles of the *Tractatus*, must lack sense. General scepticism is nonsensical, then, just because it is, in principle, invulnerable.[329]

Fogelin notes that 'within the context of the *Tractatus* this "refutation" has an ambiguous status since, in being senseless, the sceptic's questions are no worse off than Wittgenstein's own pronouncements'. This is because it follows from 'the principles of the *Tractatus*' that Wittgenstein's own pronouncements are nonsensical and so they are on a par with the sceptic's questions.

Despite his remark to set aside the question of actual influence of Pyrrhonism on Wittgenstein, Fogelin suggests that Wittgenstein's defence at *T* §6.54, that is, the

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philosophy is at work in both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Moreover Stern puts different interpretations of Wittgenstein into two groups: Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians and non-Pyrrhonian interpreters. He identifies Diamond, Conant, later Baker as Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians and Hacker, early Baker, Pears, Hintikka and Hintikka, von Savigny as non-Pyrrhonian interpreters. (See Stern 2004, Chapter Two.) I discuss Stern's view when I conclude this section.

[329] Fogelin 1987, 229.

Wittgenstein's treatment of sceptical doubts in his later work *On Certainty* is similar. Accordingly sceptical doubts cannot be answered because they make no sense and hence the refutation or dissolution of sceptical doubts involves exposing them as illusions. (See *On Certainty* #3, 19, 481)

Tractarian ladder is an allusion to both Sextus and his response to peritropic refutation of scepticism.[330]

Fogelin suggests that Wittgenstein's arguments against sceptical doubts do not bear upon Pyrrhonian scepticism at all for the simple reason that Pyrrhonian scepticism was 'a critique of philosophizing and the anxieties it generates' and the Pyrrhonists did not raise hyperbolic doubts against common beliefs modestly held.[331] Fogelin believes that what makes the similarity between the positions of the Pyrrhonists and Wittgenstein evident is the *common goal* of eliminating philosophy as traditionally practiced.[332] Fogelin suggests that 'Wittgenstein agrees on the central point of ancient scepticism: philosophy is not possible as a theoretical, discursive, or rational discipline.' Fogelin believes that both 'the sceptic's self-defeating claims' and Wittgenstein's 'misfiring attempts to say things that can only be shown' attest to the futility of philosophical reflection in the sense that 'The truth of philosophical reflection, when carried to its limit, leads to paradox and self-refutation.'

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[330] Fogelin further believes that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein was half a sceptic and in his late writing he completed the journey of becoming a sceptic.

Sluga believes that from the time of the *Tractatus* (§4.0031) Wittgenstein is familiar with the works of Mauthner. According to Sluga, because of Mauthner's work Wittgenstein acquaints himself with Pyrrhonism and he borrows the ladder motif from Mauthner who, in turn, has taken it from Sextus. (See Sluga 1996. Sluga sketches his speculation in greater detail in Sluga 2004.)

[331] Fogelin 1987, 233.

[332] Fogelin 1987, 233-234.

Bob Plant also wants to highlight the 'common spirit' motivating and guiding Wittgenstein's philosophy and Pyrrhonism. His view is that 'the primary concern of both Wittgenstein and the Pyrrhonist is not philosophical *truth*, but the relief of conceptual *suffering*.' (See Plant 2004.)

Other than the common goal, Fogelin suggests that a fundamental difference between Wittgenstein and the Pyrrhonist lies in their methods. [333] On his view, the Pyrrhonist's method is external and incomplete as it does not deal with the source of our deep anxieties which is also the source of our drive to do philosophy.[334] However, by contrast Wittgenstein's critique of philosophical problems is more internal and complete as 'Wittgenstein's techniques proceed from a profound understanding of the sources and character of philosophical perplexity'. Fogelin notes that Wittgenstein's techniques can produce a more radical result.

> By seeing that a philosophical problem is meaningless we reach what might be called a suspension of concern, surely a more radical purge of our philosophical anxieties than the suspension of belief.

Finally Fogelin concludes that regardless of how much Wittgenstein actually knew about Pyrrhonian scepticism and whether he revived it or rediscovered it on his own, his chief contribution to philosophy 'is to free us to respond to the sceptical challenge by endowing it with seriousness and insight.'

I think Fogelin's comparison of Wittgenstein and the Pyrrhonist merits attention because it brings to light their common therapeutic goal of eliminating philosophy as traditionally practiced and the anxieties it generated. However his claim that Wittgenstein's Tractarian ladder at §6.54 is an allusion to both Sextus and his

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[333] Plant also suggests that we should not oversimplify the methodological particularities of both Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonism. (See Plant 2004.)

[334] Fogelin 1987, 234: 'The methods of the ancient sceptics tended to be stereotyped, wooden, and external. Even if the various modes designed to induce the suspension of belief had this effect, they gave no indication of the sources of our drive to do philosophy nor did they give any explanation of why this drive should lead to deep anxieties.'

response to peritropic refutation of scepticism lacks substance though it may sound fascinating.[335] If Fogelin is right to suggest that both Wittgenstein and Sextus accept the charge that their works are self-destroying, I think it is more instructive to see why they do so. On my view, the problem of self-destruction causes no embarrassment to Wittgenstein and Sextus because their works are non-assertoric, that is, they do not articulate their positive theoretical positions or advance theories or doctrines of any sort at all. The problem of self-destruction of their works only attests to the futility of the kinds of theorizing and system-building found in metaphysical or traditional philosophy. Their non-assertoric discourses are anti-doctrinal as they are opposed to the kinds of assertoric theorizing and system-building found in metaphysical or traditional philosophy. Therefore the charge that their works are self-destroying are misplaced.

Regardless of how much Wittgenstein actually knows about Pyrrhonism, it is obvious that the *Tractatus'*s self-proclaimed nonsensicality is comparable to Sextus's Chronicler Disclaimer (*PH* 1 4) and also his allegories of ladder, fire and cathartic drugs (*M* 8 480-1) which I discussed in Chapter Three. In declaring his aim of elucidation Wittgenstein uses the Tractarian ladder passage to renounce having constructed any theory in the *Tractatus*; the reader should discard the *Tractatus* after using it as a ladder to ascend to the position in which he can see the world rightly. Sextus uses the Chronicler Disclaimer passage and the allegories of ladder, fire and cathartic drugs to indicate that his arguments cancel themselves and his entire work, including his account of Pyrrhonism are nothing more than a non-assertoric report of what appears to him to be the case; the reader should not take it as conveying some

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[335] Sluga's repeated attempts at establishing the influence of Pyrrhonism on Wittgenstein remain speculative.

stated principles or beliefs about Pyrrhonism or anything whatsoever. So instead of making speculation on the actual influence of Pyrrhonism on Wittgenstein, I want to make a more modest claim. I think the passage of the Tractarian ladder and the Chronicler Disclaimer passage embody the spirit of non-assertion in each work, that is, the authorial intention of not advancing theories or doctrines of any sort at all in their writings. In addition, the Tractarian ladder and the Chronicler Disclaimer passages are also illustrative of the textual strategy of the works as they provide the reader with some kind of reminder about their non-assertoric mode of expression.

I agree with Fogelin's suggestion that Wittgenstein and Sextus have a common therapeutic goal, and also his view that Wittgenstein's critique of philosophical problems is more internal and complete than the Pyrrhonist's as far as the source of our deep anxieties and our drive to do philosophy are concerned.[336] However, I think the implication of this common therapeutic goal is somehow misrepresented. Following Fogelin, Stern discusses the Pyrrhonism in the *Tractatus* and he suggests that in eliminating philosophy as traditionally practised, and the anxieties that it generated, the critique of traditional philosophy by Wittgenstein and Sextus leads us not to a better philosophy but to stop philosophizing at all.[337]

Stern suggests that on the non-Pyrrhonian reading of Wittgenstein, the *Tractatus* offers 'a logico-linguistic critique of past philosophy that makes a new philosophy within the limits of language possible.'[338] Accordingly the non-Pyrrhonist interpreters all agree that Wittgenstein aims to replace mistaken views with a quite

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[336] I give my view on the methodological particularities of Wittgenstein and Sextus in section 1.2.2.

[337] Stern 2004, 34-46. Stern repeats his points in Stern 2006.

[338] Stern 2004, 35.

specific positive philosophical position of his own but the interpreters just do not agree on the details of Wittgenstein's positive position.

I think Stern's characterisation of non-Pyrrhonian interpretations of Wittgenstein is right in principle. However, his account of the implications of the Pyrrhonism in the *Tractatus* is mistaken. Stern explains the Pyrrhonism in the *Tractatus* in the following way.

> Pyrrhonian Wittgensteinians (e.g. Diamond, Conant, later Baker) see Wittgenstein's contribution as therapeutic, a critique of all philosophy, including his own. According to these interpreters, Wittgenstein aims to get us to give up all philosophical views, not to provide a better philosophy. On this reading, Wittgenstein offers us a form of scepticism that is aimed not at our everyday life, but at philosophy itself, with the aim of putting an end to philosophy and teaching us to get by without a replacement.[339]

No doubt in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein suggests that we should give up all the propositions and questions of traditional philosophy because they are senseless.

> Most propositions and questions, that have been written about philosophical matters, are not false, but senseless. We cannot, therefore, answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness. Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language. (*T* §4.003)

Obviously in giving up all the propositions and questions of traditional philosophy we put an end to traditional philosophy. But this could never mean we

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[339] Stern 2004, 35.

The contrast becomes less clear because, as Stern suggests on the next page: 'most Wittgensteinians oscillate, or vacillate, between these views. Although they would never admit it, they want both to be uncompromisingly opposed to philosophical doctrine, and still to make some sense of the non-Pyrrhonian view that giving up traditional philosophical theories can lead us to something better.'

end up with an impoverished philosophy or even with no philosophy unless the notion of philosophy and how different philosophies are evaluated must be conceived in terms of philosophical theorizing and system-building. Surely this can never be the case.

I think both Wittgenstein and Sextus objected to dogmatic or metaphysical philosophy (and the kinds of assertoric theorising and system-building found in it). But this does not mean that they are anti-philosophy. It follows from Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal conception of philosophy (*T* §4.111 and §4.112) that philosophy is an activity of elucidation which does not result in philosophical propositions and philosophy as the logical clarification of thoughts makes propositions clear. Therefore, if we give up all the propositions and questions of traditional philosophy, because they are senseless, it can never mean that we are doing away with philosophy *per se*, unless we assume that dogmatic or metaphysical philosophy is the only legitimate form of philosophy. But surely this can never be the case. What we have given up is only traditional philosophy.

On my view Wittgenstein does not provide any positive theoretical position of his own to replace the senseless propositions of traditional philosophy because at *T* §6.54 he renounces having constructed any theory in the *Tractatus*. But on the other hand, he does provide a replacement for traditional philosophy, that is, the new philosophy that he introduces and practises in the *Tractatus*. This new Tractarian philosophy takes the form of an activity of elucidation and logical clarification of thoughts. It is essentially anti-doctrinal and devoid of theories or doctrines of any sort as it repudiates the kinds of theorizing and system-building found in the philosophical tradition.

I think the new Tractarian philosophy can constitute a better philosophy in different ways. Firstly it can demonstrate the senselessness of the propositions and questions of traditional philosophy. We no longer want to say something metaphysical after coming to see for ourselves that these utterances are actually plain nonsense despite their deceptive appearance of profundity. Secondly the superiority of the new Tractarian philosophy can also be seen in its philosophical promise which Wittgenstein suggests *T* at §4.111 and §4.112: that is, after logical clarification our propositions are clear and our thoughts no longer opaque and blurred.

I think, therefore, contrary to the view of Fogelin and Stern, that Wittgenstein's criticism of traditional philosophy does not lead us to stop philosophizing. The result of his criticism of traditional philosophy should rather be this: we stop doing the kinds of theorizing and system-building usually found in the philosophical tradition; we start doing philosophy as the logical clarification of thoughts which makes propositions and thoughts clear without generating new philosophical propositions.

The goal of eliminating philosophy as traditionally practised and the anxieties it generated is clearly represented in the works of Sextus. The Pyrrhonist does not aim at bringing philosophy to an end; he is still investigating (*PH* 1 4, 7). He only aims at containing and, ideally, stopping dogmatizing in philosophy (*PH* 1 12).

On my view, we need to give up not just the propositions and questions of traditional philosophy in order to give up the theoretical conception of philosophy. We also need to abandon the problematic assumption that theoretical philosophy is the only legitimate form of philosophy. As I have argued in my discussion of Russell's reading of the *Tractatus*, unless we can abandon or at least detach ourselves temporarily from the traditional conception of philosophy as

system-building and assertoric theorizing, we can never appreciate or identify with Wittgenstein's novel conception of philosophy: a philosophy that does not result in doctrines.

1.2. The Spirit of Non-Assertion and the Textual Strategy of the *Tractatus*

Although the passage of the Tractarian ladder at *T* §6.54 provides a helpful reminder of the elucidatory aim of the *Tractatus* its importance has been played down by many theoretical readings. However things started to change when some interpreters, most notably Cora Diamond and James Conant, proposed that we should take the elucidatory calling of *T* §6.54 at face value. This particular line of anti-doctrinal interpretation is marked by an unprecedented emphasis on Wittgenstein's therapeutic aim in the *Tractatus*. A resolute way of reading the *Tractatus* would require the reader to throw away its propositions as nonsense because it follows from *T* §6.54 that none of its propositions are meant to present or argue for any philosophical doctrines or theories.[340] Before I discuss the resolute readings of Diamond and Conant as a possible way to understand the textual strategy of the *Tractatus* in section 1.2.2, I want to visit Frege's reading of the *Tractatus* in order to illustrate how the spirit of non-assertion is embodied in the *Tractatus*.

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[340] As we shall see in section 1.2.2 according to Conant this does not mean that all the propositions are nonsense because *T* §6.54 does not say *all* the propositions in the *Tractatus* bear the elucidatory burden and *T* 4.112 does not say a philosophical work consists *entirely* of elucidation.

1.2.1 Frege's reading of the *Tractatus*: Form over Content?

I think in contrast with Russell Frege arguably has at least some faint awareness of Wittgenstein's spirit of non-assertion in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein holds Frege in high regard and he earnestly sends his manuscript to Frege for his opinion. However, Frege finds Wittgenstein's work unclear to him and he makes the following remark to Wittgenstein.

> The pleasure of reading your book can therefore no longer be aroused by the content which is already known, but only by the peculiar form given to it by the author. The book thereby becomes an artistic rather than a scientific achievement; what is said in it takes second place to the way in which it is said.[341]

In the foreword to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein declares that the object of his book 'would be attained if it afforded pleasure to one who read it with understanding'. Before this he also announces that his work 'will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it-—or similar thoughts' and so he announces that his work 'is therefore not a text-book'. I think the object of the *Tractatus* as declared in the foreword is unequivocally descriptive of its spirit of non-assertion.

I think with this objective the *Tractatus* clearly distinguishes itself as completely different from the assertoric kinds of theorising and system-building usually found in traditional philosophical discourse and I think this is how Wittgenstein conceives of his own work. For the *Tractatus* to be a non-assertoric discourse the pleasure of reading it cannot be brought by the content (because the reader has already thought

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[341] Monk 1991, 174.

the thoughts which are expressed in it). Instead the pleasure of reading the *Tractatus* as a non-assertoric discourse is brought by the appreciation of 'the peculiar form given to it by the author'.

Frege's remark is obviously referring to the object of the *Tractatus*, namely to afford pleasure to someone who reads it with understanding. He draws the conclusion that the *Tractatus* becomes an artistic achievement and what is said in it takes second place to the way in which it is said.[342] I think Frege's conclusion touches on an important upshot of the *Tractatus*'s spirit of non-assertion, namely the important characteristic that its form precedes its content. Frege has a glimpse of the significance of 'the peculiar form' of presentation in the *Tractatus* but he finds it rather unsatisfactory because after all, he is more concerned with content of philosophical work. But at any rate, I think Frege stands closer to understanding Wittgenstein than he may himself be aware. But unfortunately, he could not align his reading of the *Tractatus* with his recognition that the *Tractatus*'s form precedes its content. Therefore, like Russell, he fails to understand Wittgenstein and his work.

In an important sense, the foreword and the conclusion of the *Tractatus* not only describe but actually contain its spirit of non-assertion. We should recall the last statement of the *Tractatus*: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.' (*T* §7) Other than the conclusion, this statement also appears in the foreword. Wittgenstein explains to Ficker, his prospective publisher, that he may not be able to understand his work because the content will be strange to him. However, Wittgenstein assures Ficker that the foreword and the conclusion of the *Tractatus* are illuminative of the nature of his work and above all, the criterion for what it

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[342] Rozema 2002 argues that the writing of the *Tractatus* can be legitimately called a kind of poetry as it bears the essential feature of all poetics in serving to shape the passions through catharsis.

would be for the general readers to understand his work.[343] The key that Wittgenstein releases in his letter is the suggestion that the manuscript forms only the written part of his work and there is a second part which puts everything firmly in place by being silent whilst many others 'are just babbling'.

On my view, the *Tractatus*'s spirit of non-assertion is also embodied in its 'peculiar form' of presentation and its intended shortness. The *Tractatus* gives the appearance of a set of remarks organized by a rigid numbering system.[344] Ogden calls this 'the peculiar literary character' in his Translator's Note. However, for Wittgenstein the function of the numbering system is very crucial as he explains earlier to Ficker, 'they alone give the book lucidity and clarity and it would be an incomprehensible jumble without them'.[345]

In his preparation for a bilingual publication of the *Tractatus*, Ogden is hindered by its obscurity despite Wittgenstein's collaboration. Knowing that Wittgenstein has withheld some supplementary passages that would make the book more accessible, he proposes to Wittgenstein that the supplementary passages should be published for the convenience of the reader. But Wittgenstein rejects this proposal. In his reply to

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[343] In his letter to Ficker, Wittgenstein writes 'The book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the foreword a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY rigorous way of drawing these limits. In short, I believe that where many others today are just babbling, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won't see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend to you to read the foreword and the conclusion, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book.'

[344] On the significance of the numbering system in the *Tractatus* see Mayer 1990.

[345] Letter to Ludwig von Ficker 97.

Ogden, Wittgenstein explains that he does not want to make up for the book's shortness as he thinks adding those supplements would disrupt the spirit of the book. In another letter to Ficker Wittgenstein explains the reason for the shortness of his work.

'this presentation is *extremely* compressed since I have only retained in it that which really occurred to me – and how it occurred to me.'[346]

So the shortness of the *Tractatus* is indeed an intended merit for Wittgenstein because it helps preserve the spirit in its purest form. And this is crucial to the elucidatory aim of the *Tractatus*. According to his reply to Ogden's request for the supplements, adding those supplements would disrupt the spirit of the work because

'The supplements are exactly what must *not* be printed… THEY REALLY CONTAIN NO ELUCIDATION AT ALL…'

Unfortunately whist for Wittgenstein the intended shortness of the *Tractatus* is a merit, those who prefer to read the *Tractatus* by theoretical lights see the shortness as a weakness if not a vice of the work. In response to the shortness those who prefer to read the *Tractatus* by theoretical lights usually attempt to reconstruct the text into various arguments for 'the picture theory of the propositions', or 'the doctrine of

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[346] Monk 1991, 177.

We should recall here that when he introduces his work to Russell, Wittgenstein announces that, 'it's written in quite short remarks' and that unless 'a previous explanation' is given Russell would not be able to understand his work. Nonetheless Wittgenstein believes that his short remarks are 'as clear as crystal'.

showing' which are ascribed to Wittgenstein. [347] But I have argued that this approach overlooks (a) Wittgenstein's aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus*, (b) his innovative conception of philosophy as the logical clarification of thoughts, and (c) his novel conception of philosophy as an activity of elucidation, which are all corollaries to Wittgenstein's spirit of non-assertion in the *Tractatus*.

To sum up, the urge to get rid of doctrines is a fundamental cause that shapes the works of Wittgenstein and his conceptions of methodology in philosophy. This anti-doctrinal character while being an essential feature of his conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus* also prevails in the *Philosophical Investigations*. My discussion of this aspect of the *Philosophical Investigations* is offered in section 2.

1.2.2 Resolute Readings of the *Tractatus*

My non-assertoric reading has much in common with Diamond's proposal of a resolute way of reading the *Tractatus* as it holds on to Wittgenstein's 'insistence that he is not putting forward philosophical doctrines or theses' and also 'his suggestion that it cannot be done'. [348] According to Diamond,

> there is almost nothing in Wittgenstein which is of value and which can be grasped if it is
> pulled away from that view of philosophy. But that view of philosophy is itself

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[347] This approach of reconstruction can easily lead to the fallacy of straw man in the interpretation of Wittgenstein's works. In this regard, Fogelin has a good point to make. As he notes, 'Wittgenstein's writing is often obscure and the text is surprisingly lacking in explicit arguments for one to evaluate.' Therefore on his part, he has 'resisted the temptation of reconstructing the text into an argument—especially when this is done as a prelude to showing that the argument is no good.' See Fogelin 1987, xi.

[348] Diamond 1995, 179.

something that has to be seen first in the *Tractatus* if it is to be understood in its later forms.

Following this conception, abandoning the Tractarian system is the only legitimate response for anyone who understands the author of the *Tractatus*.[349] On Diamond's view, to read the *Tractatus* as conveying the ineffable truth that there are indeed some features of reality, like the logical form of reality, the ethical, religious or mystical, that cannot be expressed in words but can be shown is 'chickening out' because in holding on to this doctrinal reading the reader has failed to follow the instruction at *T* §6.54 and also failed 'to take seriously what Wittgenstein says about philosophy itself'.[350]

Instead, the reader should throw away the notion that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves because according to Diamond, it is not Wittgenstein's view.[351] His view is rather that the notion of something true of reality but not sayably true may be useful as 'a very odd kind of figurative language' employed during the activity of elucidation but it is to be used only with the awareness that at the end of elucidation it itself belongs to plain nonsense and should thus be thrown away.

In addition, Conant also believes that the aim of the *Tractatus* 'is to show us that beyond "the limits of language" lies, not ineffable truth, but rather (as the preface

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[349] Diamond stresses on the point that at §6.54 Wittgenstein asks his reader to understand him as opposed to understanding his propositions in the *Tractatus*. See Diamond 1995 and also Diamond1991.

[350] Diamond 1995, 181-182.

[351] Diamond believes that Wittgenstein himself does not chicken out in the *Tractatus*. In other words he does not advance the view that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves.

cautions) *einfach Unsinn*.'[352] According to Conant, a resolute way of reading the *Tractatus* does not give a unitary reading of the work because a resolute reading is better thought of as a *program* for reading and it does not comprise a *reading*.[353] Following this conception, a resolute reading, as a program, leaves out the question about how the *Tractatus* ought to be read in detail unanswered. Instead it only gives 'a certain programmatic conception of the lines along which those details are to be worked out'.

Moreover according to Conant the elucidatory activity of the *Tractatus* can take off because of its elucidatory strategy. For the reader to begin ascending the *Tractarian* ladder he must yield to some of the temptations of its propositions in the first place. Therefore many of its sentences are intended to tempt the reader to accept them as 'philosophical illuminating nonsense', that is, a special kind of nonsense which can somehow convey insight by showing what cannot be said.[354] But eventually at the end of elucidation the reader must throw away what once appears to be illuminating nonsense as plain nonsense. On Conant's view, if the *Tractatus* succeeds in its aim of elucidation, what is to happen in the reader's subjective experience is that:

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[352] Conant 2002, 424.

In other words, no one, not even the author of the *Tractatus* can use language to get outside language.

[353] See Conant 2006 and also Conant and Diamond 2004.

[354] Conant 2002, 420-424.

According to Conant, in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein is opposed to the distinction between philosophically illuminating nonsense and misleading nonsense (or substantial nonsense and mere nonsense) because for him there is only one kind of nonsense which does not mean or show anything. Given the *Tractatus*'s 'austere conception of conception', it can never be right for the standard reading or the ineffability reading to support their doctrinal reading of the *Tractatus* with this distinction.

First I grasp that there is something that *must* be; then I see that it cannot be said; then I grasp that if it cannot be said it cannot be thought (that the limits of language are the limits of thought); and then, finally, when I reach the top of the ladder, I grasp that there has been no "it" in my grasp all along (that that which I cannot think I cannot "grasp" either).[355]

But unfortunately, by contrast, the reader of standard or ineffability interpretation holds on the distinction between illuminating nonsense and misleading nonsense and goes on to communicate what cannot be said under the guise of only showing it.

Finally I want to discuss Wittgenstein's elucidatory use of language as an instance of non-assertoric mode of expression and how this non-assertoric use of language can serve the aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus*.

According to Conant the early Wittgenstein already recognizes that language can be put to different kinds of use: constative and non-constative.[356] The first category is also the assertoric employment of language in which language is used to state what is the case. The second category is non-assertoric and it consists of elucidatory and ethical employments of language.[357] Strictly speaking, elucidatory uses of language are not employments of language *per se* but rather employments of *language-like* structures. In elucidatory uses of language, an apparently assertoric use of language is revealed as illusory. Conant suggests that

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[355] Conant 2002, 422.

[356] Conant suggests that to understand the *Tractatus* we need to 'distinguish the different sorts of things one can do with language over and above putting it to the use of saying something.' (Conant 2002, 382 and 429 footnote 24.)

[357] Conant believes that a proper understanding of what comprises an ethical use of language for Wittgenstein is indispensable for understanding his claim that 'the point of the *Tractatus* is ethical'. (Conant 2002, 429 footnote 26)

In order for a reader to pass through the first four stages of ascent up this Tractarian ladder, he must take himself to be participating in the traditional philosophical activity of argument, to be inferring conclusions from premises…

A reader of the *Tractatus* only ascends to the final rung of the ladder when he is able to look back upon his progress upward and "recognize" that he has only been going through the motions of "inferring" (apparent) "conclusions" from (apparent) "premises". Thus the elucidatory strategy of the *Tractatus* depends on the reader's provisionally taking himself to be participating in the traditional philosophical activity of establishing theses through a procedure of reasoned argument; but it only succeeds if the reader fully comes to understand what the work means to say about itself when it says that philosophy, as this work seeks to practice it, results not in doctrine but in elucidations.[358]

Conant also suggests that not all propositions in the *Tractatus* are to be recognized as nonsensical because the *Tractatus*, being a philosophical work, does not have to consist *entirely* of elucidations and above all, the activity of elucidation needs a certain framework to take place.[359] Therefore some sentences serve as elucidations and they should be recognized as *unsinn* at the end of elucidation. The second category being 'the frame of the work' 'offering instructions for how the work is to be read' should be recognized as *sinnvoll*. Conant identifies the foreword, §4.112, §6.54 and a few others as belonging to the second category. Moreover, it is a function of how a sentence occurs in the work that determines whether it belongs to the first category or the second category.

On my view, Wittgenstein's propositions in the *Tractatus* convey an illusion of sense as they appear to be seemingly assertoric employment of language pertaining

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[358] Conant 2002, 424.

[359] According to Conant, 'The aim of the passage [i.e. §6.54] is (not to propose a single all-encompassing category into which the diverse sorts of propositions that comprise the work are all to be shoehorned, but rather) to explicate how those passages of the work that succeed in bearing its elucidatory burden are meant to work their medicine on the reader.' (Conant 2002, 457-458 footnote 135)

to philosophical theories on the essence of language. The form and even the tone of his propositions are reminiscent of assertoric pronouncement on the essence of language. But near the end of the *Tractatus* §6.54 reveals to the reader its aim of elucidation and that the mode of expression is actually non-assertoric. This non-assertoric use of language is very important in serving the elucidatory strategy and the aim of elucidation so that Wittgenstein can renounce having advanced theses or doctrines of any sort at all in the *Tractatus*.

I think Sextus's writing is a parallel case to the *Tractatus* in that both comprise the non-assertoric mode of expression. In Sextus's case, he employs an apparently descriptive use of language to say a lot of things in his writing but all his sentences give only the illusory appearance of representing certain state of affairs. Conant suggests that the *Tractatus* consists of two categories of sentences; some serve as elucidations and some don't. I think Sextus's sentences, including the Chronicler disclaimer passage, falls to one category only. They are all arguments that he can use to bring about equipollence of arguments in the topics they concerned.

Finally I want to discuss some methodological particularities of Wittgenstein and Sextus. As we have seen, Fogelin suggests that insofar as the source of our deep anxieties and our drive to do philosophy are concerned the Pyrrhonist's method is external and incomplete whereas Wittgenstein's critique is more internal and complete.

On my view, Sextus's therapeutic use of argument can also be characterised as internal in the sense that he must attend to the patient's antecedent beliefs and make sure that his remedy can target these antecedent beliefs so that his treatment of belief can produce the ultimate effect of belief cancellation. Sextus's use of *ad hominem* argumentation is ideal in this regard because in turning dogmatic positions or

premises against themselves he can show that these positions or premises are not trustworthy or even fallacious by their own standards. Sextus does not have to advance his own premises and positions to argue against the dogmatists and this can save him from the rebuttal of self-refutation or inconsistency.[360]

If Sextus's *ad hominem* argumentation should succeed, the patients would no longer want to hold on to their dogmatic beliefs. Therefore, Sextus's treatment of belief is a process of belief cancellation from the inside. However, there is the danger of relapse into dogmatic beliefs. In view of this danger, Sextus repeatedly stresses the feature of self-cancellation in the allegories of ladder, fire and cathartic drugs. The basic idea is that his arguments do to themselves what they do to others, that is, they expel themselves after taking out the dogmatic arguments. This is a good strategy because his therapeutic treatment of belief only aims at the cancellation of belief. So in undoing or deconstructing dogmatic beliefs, Sextus's treatment of beliefs does not intend to provide the patients with a set of better beliefs.

To conclude my discussion of the *Tractatus*, I have argued that because of his own theoretical yearning and preoccupations Russell cannot identify with Wittgenstein's aim of elucidation in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal conceptions of philosophy and philosophical work are also too remote to Russell. I have argued that in ascribing theories on the essence of language to Wittgenstein Kenny's interpretation suffers from critical problems and what must go is his problematic assumption that Wittgenstein attempts to use language to communicate what can only be shown. I have argued that Wittgenstein's critique of theoretical

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[360] Of course Sextus's may misrepresent his dogmatic premises and positions in his *ad hominem* argumentation. But in principal the style of *ad hominem* argumentation is internal.

philosophy does not lead us to stop philosophizing because we are introduced to an alternative, that is, the new Tractarian philosophy that does not result in philosophical assertions and system-building.

My non-assertoric reading can be regarded as a resolute way of reading the *Tractatus* as it accords mostly with other resolute readings. For instance, my non-assertoric reading places much emphasis on §6.54, §4.112, and the foreword in discerning the spirit of non-assertion and the non-assertoric mode of expression in the *Tractatus.* In Conant's resolute reading, these passages are the frame of the *Tractatus*, making the elucidation possible.

Secondly like other resolute readings, my non-assertoric reading also leaves the question about how the *Tractatus* ought to be read in detail unanswered; hence it does not comprise a reading of the *Tractatus*. Instead of promising a coherent overall reading my non-assertoric reading proposes an interpretation of the *Tractatus* in which the status of its statements is revealed as non-assertoric though some of the statements may appear to be philosophical pronouncements on the essence of language. In Conant's resolute reading, Wittgenstein' use of language is elucidatory, a non-constative kind of use of language that employs language-like structures to create an illusion of sense.

Thirdly, like other resolute readings, my non-assertoric reading looks into how the form is important to its aim, and also how its employment of language can serve the aim of elucidation. The merit of my approach lies in holding on to Wittgenstein's anti-doctrinal conception of philosophy as a proper point of departure in understanding the *Tractatus*. As one way of approaching the ambiguous status of its statements and the tension brought by its self-proclaimed nonsensicality my non-assertoric reading of the *Tractatus* fares better than the theoretical readings that

I have discussed. Finally I have argued that Sextus's non-assertoric discourse is a parallel case to the *Tractatus* as they have much in common in the elimination of philosophical theories and doctrines, and also in their distinctive non-assertoric employment of language to serve their therapeutic aims.

2.   THE *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

Wittgenstein indicated his dislike for the Socratic type of dialogue in *Culture and Value*.[361] However it is a very widespread impression among commentators that *arguably* many parts of the *Philosophical Investigations* are written as dialogue between unnamed interlocutors. For instance Jane Heal notes that the writing of dialogues becomes a prominent feature of Wittgenstein's writing especially in the *Philosophical Investigations*, while occasional passage of dialogue can be found in his other later writings.[362] Secondly referring to the *Philosophical Investigations*, David G. Stern writes that 'there certainly is good reason to read the book as belonging to the familiar philosophical genre of the dialogue.'[363] Stern notes that the *Philosophical Investigations* is 'in large part made up of Socratic dialogues' as Wittgenstein 'makes liberal use of both the basic devices of Socratic dialogue: syncrisis – a debate between opposed viewpoints on a given topic – and anacrisis – forcing an interlocutor to express his opinion thoroughly and subjecting it to critical

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[361] *CV* 21: 'Reading the Socratic dialogues, one has the feelings: what a frightful waste of time! What's the point of these arguments that prove nothing & clarity nothing.'

[362] Heal 1995.

[363] Stern 2004 (See especially 21-28).

As my discussion will show, Stern and Heal have very different views on the nature of the dialogue found in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

appraisal.'[364] Finally in his discussion of 'the difficulty of writing about philosophy as practised by someone who uses the Socratic method' Mark W. Rowe argues that 'Wittgenstein was directly influenced by the literary solution Plato adopted'.[365] Rowe's conclusion is that 'Plato decided that the written dialogue was the best way to convey Socrates' philosophical spirit. And Wittgenstein, under Plato's influence, decided it was the best way to convey his own.'[366] My following discussion will first look at some difficulties and complexities concerning the extent and nature of the dialogue form in the *Philosophical Investigations*. My discussion will show that because of ambiguity of voices some stretches of text in the work can be read *simultaneously* as external dialogue between different voices as well as a representation of Wittgenstein's interior flow of thinking.

2.1.1 *Dialogue in the Philosophical Investigations*

On Heal's reading the *Philosophical Investigations* is a special kind of dialogue although its dialogue element is characterised by obliqueness and ambiguity.[367] These features reflect the fact that, unlike Plato's philosophical dialogues, which are like philosophical play scripts, Wittgenstein's script does not feature named characters. Secondly, there is no uniform syntactic device (such as dashes or inverted commas) that signals the beginning and end of parts in the dialogue. Like

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[364] Stern 2004, 24.

[365] Rowe 2007.

[366] Rowe also argues for a comparable pattern of philosophical development and a shared conception of philosophical method between Wittgenstein and Socrates.

[367] Heal 1995.

many readers, Heal has the strong impression that in the *Philosophical Investigations* 'from time to time, a voice other than Wittgenstein speaks, i.e. that some thought other than one endorsed by Wittgenstein himself is being expressed'.[368] Since the *Philosophical Investigations* is a dialogue between Wittgenstein and his interlocutor, we need to distinguish the voice of Wittgenstein from the voice of his interlocutor by attending to the content and context of every remark.

To validate her ideas Heal undertakes a textual analysis of three familiar passages from the *Philosophical Investigations*.[369] She first deals with the absence of named characters.

> 146. **a** Suppose I ask: 'Has he understood the system when he continues the series to the hundredth place?' Or – if I should not speak of 'understanding' in connection with our primitive language game: Has he got the system, if he continues the series correctly so far? – **b** Perhaps you will say here: to have got the system (or, again, to understand it) can't consist in continuing the series up to *this* or *that* number: *that* is only applying one's understanding. The understanding itself is a state which is the *source* of the correct use.
> **c** What is one really thinking of here? Isn't one thinking of the derivation of a series from its algebraic formula? Or at least of something analogous? – **d** But this is where we were before. The point is we can think of more than *one* application of an algebraic formula; and every type of application can in turn be formulated algebraically; but naturally this does not get us any further. – The application is still a criterion of understanding.
> 147. **e** 'But how can it be? When *I* say I understand the rule of a series, I am surely not saying so because I have *found out* that up to now I have applied the algebraic formula in such-and-such a way! In my own case at all events I sure know that I mean such-and-such a series; it doesn't matter how far I have actually developed it.' –

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[368] Heal 1995, 68.

[369] As we shall see, Heal analyses a very small number of specimens (*PI* §§146-147, 208-211, and 258; altogether 7 specimens). She anticipates that those who widely read in the corpus of Wittgenstein will agree with her view despite the limited specimens and lack of statistics.

> **f** Your idea, then, is that you know the application of the rule of the series quite apart
> from remembering actual applications to particular numbers. **g** And you will perhaps say:
> 'Of course! For the series is infinite and the bit of it that I can have developed finite.'
>
> (Heal 1995, 64-65. Heal inserted the letters for ease of reference.)

Heals finds a central clue to help resolve the absence of named characters in this first specimen. She notes that in §146-7 Wittgenstein explicitly assigns two remarks, namely **b** and **g,** to his interlocutor who is addressed as 'you'; and this interlocutor speaks again in the protest put in quotation marks at **e**. On Heal's view, the question at **a** and the interrogative sentence at **c** are both overtly flagged as being uttered in Wittgenstein's own voice, and Wittgenstein himself makes some move of his own, at **d,** in response to his own question.[370] Finally at **f** Wittgenstein comments on his interlocutor's protest given at **e**.

Heal suggests that it would be a mistake to take the use of interrogatives as evidence of dialogue throughout the writing.[371] The use of interrogatives can be part of a dialogue (in which case the question is directed at the interlocutor). But it could also represent the flow of Wittgenstein's own ideas (as a self-addressed question). Hence Heal believes that the use of interrogatives is not in itself any indication of the presence of a real and independent interlocutor.

In addition, Heal warns of the danger of taking every stretch of text to be either (a) interior debate or (b) real external dialogue, because some stretches can be read in either way.[372] Moreover the thoughts that Wittgenstein puts in the voice of his interlocutor could equally have figured in an interior debate in Wittgenstein's own

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[370] Heal 1995, 68.

[371] Heal 1995, 68-70.

[372] In section 2.2.1, I look into a particular stretch of text (*PI* §23) which can be read in either way as interior debate and external dialogue.

current thinking or a debate with his own thoughts at some earlier stage. As shown in §146-7 even when Wittgenstein no longer found a certain thought compelling, he still often recognizes and is tempted by the impulse that finds expression in such thoughts. Therefore Heal concludes that we need to look in every case and judge by the context and the general feeling of the passage to see whether it is the other or Wittgenstein himself who poses the question or offers a certain answer, and in doing so we can distinguish the voice of the interlocutor from the present or earlier voice of Wittgenstein, despite the absence of named characters.

In her second set of specimens, Heal considers some difficulties caused by Wittgenstein's inconsistent use of punctuation marks.

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h We should distinguish between the 'and so on' which is, and the 'and so on' which is not, an abbreviated notation. 'And so on ad inf.' is *not* such an abbreviation. The fact that we cannot write down all the digits of π is not a human shortcoming, as mathematicians sometimes think.

Teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different from that which '*points beyond*' them.

209. **i** 'But then doesn't our understanding reach beyond all the examples?' – **j** A very queer expression, and a quite natural one! –

k But is that *all*? Isn't there a deeper explanation: or mustn't at least the *understanding* of the explanation be deeper? – **l** Well, have I myself a deeper understanding? Have I *got* more than I give in the explanation? – But then, whence the feeling that I have got more? Is it like the case where I interpret what is not limited as a length that reaches beyond every length?

210. **m** 'But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don't you get him to *guess* the essential thing? You give him examples, – but he has to guess their drift, to guess your intention.' – **n** Every explanation which I can give myself I give to him too. – 'He guesses what I intend' would mean: various interpretations of my explanation come to his mind, and he lights on one of them. So in this case he could ask; and I could and should answer him.

211. **o** How can he know how he is to continue a pattern by himself – whatever instruction you give him? – **p** Well, how do I know? – If that means 'Have I reasons?' the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons.

(Heal 1995, 65-66. Heal inserted the letters for ease of reference.)

Heal thinks that Wittgenstein speaks directly at **h**, the interlocutor raises a question at **i** and Wittgenstein makes a brief comment at **j** in response to the interlocutor's question.[373] But then the passages at **k** and **o** pose some difficulties. To judge by content, since **l** is a counter question to **k** it seems plausible to assign both **k** and **o** to the interlocutor. But on the other hand, the use of quotation marks seems to suggest otherwise. It is obvious that the interlocutor speaks at **i** and **m** and they are both explicitly set off with quotation marks. There are no quotation marks in **k** and **o**.

Heal believes that this difficulty can be resolved easily. She notes that at §146a Wittgenstein poses his own questions first using quotation marks and then simply a colon. Therefore, Heal concludes that Wittgenstein's use of punctuation is not entirely consistent and thus it is plausible to assign both **k** and **o** to the interlocutor. Heal's textual analysis seems to show that once again, we can judge by the context and general feeling of the passage to see whether it is the interlocutor or Wittgenstein himself who speaks.

Heal's final specimen illustrates some further intriguing possibilities.

258. **q** Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign 'S' and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. – I will remark first of all that a definition cannot be formulated. – **r** But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. – **s** How? Can I point to the sensation? **t** Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak,

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[373] Heal 1995, 70-71.

or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation – and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. – **u** But what is this ceremony for? for that is all it seems to be. A definition surely serves to establish the meaning of a sign. – **v** Well, that is done precisely by the concentration of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation. – **w** But 'I impress it on myself' can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion *right* in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.

<div align="right">(Heal 1995, 66. Heal inserted the letters for ease of reference.)</div>

Heal notes that the natural impulse to assign **r**, **t** and **v** to the interlocutor does not square with 'the fact that 'I' occurs throughout where 'you' would seem to be required' by such construal.[374] Another option is to construe §258 as an instance of internal dialogue so that it is Wittgenstein himself who speaks at **r**, **t** and **v**. But Heal believes that this is equally unconvincing. This is because such construal is at odds with the denouement of §258. Secondly throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein presents himself as having succeeded in abandoning the false pictures which motivate the views expressed in **r**, **t** and **v**.

Therefore Heal suggests that another possible way of seeing the relation of the remarks is to construe §258 as initiating a particular enterprise in which the reader becomes the interlocutor, who expresses at **r**, **t** and **v** her views of how the project of diary keeping would go in her own case, supposing she were to undertake the project. Heal believes that in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein's interlocutor 'is whoever is addressed as 'you' and is the other part of the 'we'', and

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[374] Heal 1995, 71.

this interlocutor is to be played the reader who is reading the book and is willing to enter the exchange with Wittgenstein.[375]

Heal's discussion helpfully draws out some difficulties and complexities concerning the extent and nature of the dialogue form in the *Philosophical Investigations*. I completely agree with her analysis that although the dialogue element in the *Philosophical Investigations* is characterised by features that she notes, of obliqueness and ambiguity, it is entirely apt to consider the *Philosophical Investigations* as a dialogue, albeit a very special kind of dialogue. In general I also agree with her views that Wittgenstein's particular way of writing in the *Philosophical Investigations* is not 'an unnecessary and regrettable obfuscation' and that the dialogue form is wholly appropriate for Wittgenstein.

But the agreement only makes it more urgent to clarify what purpose Wittgenstein's particular way of using the dialogue form is intended to serve. Heal believes that the dialogue form is appropriate for Wittgenstein as 'his procedure is designed to provide and does provide the reader, precisely through the dialogue form, with a rational route to an end point which is properly thought of as a better understanding or insight into how things are'.[376] I do not share Heal's view. My concern is that Heal's approach seems to encourage a doctrinal reading of Wittgenstein's reminders in the *Philosophical Investigations*. My thesis is that Wittgenstein's reminders are non-assertoric; he does not offer them as *theoretical*

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[375] Heal 1995, 72-3.

[376] Heal 1995, 63.

In the next section, 2.1.2, I present Heal's account and I will follow up Heal's vague talk of 'an end point which is properly thought of as a better understanding or insight into how things are'. Heal's discussion is full of such vague notions and phrases. I will try to work out what they could have meant.

assertions on the *essences* of language and meaning. Therefore it can never be right to turn his remarks into doctrines or theories of language and meaning. In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein explains that his work is 'just an album' of his 'loosely connected remarks', which are only 'half-way decent' and being 'sketches of landscapes' the reminders 'give the viewer an idea of the landscape'. He does not say that his reminders are perfect and give a *definitive* overview of the landscape. He makes it clear that he wants his work 'to bring light into one brain or another'. But he does not mean that we should take his 'half-way decent' reminders as providing the *ultimate* truth, the *right* stance to language or a *definitive* picture of meaning like a philosophical thesis. He announces that he does not want his writing 'to spare other people the trouble of thinking'; instead he hopes that it should 'stimulate someone to thoughts of his own'.

On Heal's view the dialogue form 'is particularly appropriate as a vehicle for the intended content', and we can 're-express 'Wittgenstein's arguments' or 'Wittgenstein's views' in a more standard academic manner'.[377] Heal's inkling of a reconstruction of the *Philosophical Investigations* in terms of conventionally organized argumentative solutions and conclusions to philosophical problems raises another issue. Such reconstruction seems to depend on the problematic assumption that since the exchanges in the *Philosophical Investigations* take the form of a

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[377] Heal further believes that 'we need not be locked into an outlook which thinks that use of conventional expository forms is betrayal of Wittgenstein, or a betrayal of lack of understanding of him' (Heal 1995, 63-64).

Reconstructing W's views and arguments in a more standard academic manner would require one to represent Wittgenstein's views '*via* a straight-forward exposition, stating his premises, trying to make explicit the false presuppositions of those he disagrees with, proceeding through matters in an orderly way and generally making everything as clear and as easy to follow as the difficulty of the subject matter admits' (Heal 1995, 74).

debate between two voices which speak of opposing views, once we can distinguish the voice of the interlocutor we can simply extract from the other voice (that is the narrator's voice) Wittgenstein's arguments and his positive solutions to the philosophical problems discussed in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Naturally I do not agree with Heal's exegetical assumption that the dialogue found in the *Philosophical Investigations* is simply a representation of conversational exchanges between Wittgenstein and his interlocutor.[378] My view is that even if we can identify the interlocutor's voice in the way Heal suggests, we still cannot assume that everything that is said in the narrator's voice is a straightforward statement of Wittgenstein's philosophical convictions. On my view, to make such assumption is to take for granted that Wittgenstein's statements in the *Philosophical Investigations* should be read implicitly or explicitly as propounding philosophical theses. I will argue that this assumption misconstrues the status of Wittgenstein's non-assertoric statements in the *Philosophical Investigations* as providing discursive arguments for philosophical theses and theories that serve as argumentative solutions or conclusions to philosophical problems.

In opposition to the orthodox interpretation that ascribes to Wittgenstein the thesis that language is a rule-governed practice or the theory that meaning is rule-governed use, I argue that Wittgenstein's statements are *non-assertoric reminders* that serve to release us from the grip of certain compelling but ultimately incoherent philosophical conceptions. In other words, Wittgenstein's non-assertoric reminders do not deliver any thesis or theory. On this view, therefore, even if we

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[378] I argue in 2.2.1 that this assumption is made up of two supplementary assumptions and I shall call them 'the two-voice assumption' and 'the mouthpiece assumption'. I will argue that these assumptions are not mandatory as some prominent polyphonic interpretations resist them.

find the narrator of the *Philosophical Investigations* arguing for seemingly positive philosophical theses or simply asserting theoretical claims, it does not mean that Wittgenstein himself is advancing philosophical theses or theories as his definite answers to philosophical problems. I spell out my view in section 2.2 against the backdrop of the shortcomings in Heal's approach. I will show that her approach plays down the significance of Wittgenstein's insistence that he was not formulating philosophical theses and the therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*. I will also draw on the work of Kuusela to show that despite widespread doubt among interpreters, we have some good reasons to believe that Wittgenstein's disavowal of having formulated philosophical theses and his actual philosophical practice in the *Philosophical Investigations* can be interpreted as constituting a coherent whole.

2.1.2 *Dialogue as a Vehicle and the 'Intended Upshot' of Reading the Philosophical Investigations'*

On Heal's view, while all philosophical expositions demand active participation by the reader, Wittgenstein's particular use of the dialogue form can promote active involvement by the reader in a very special way.[379] Secondly, dialogue produces a

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[379] Heal 1995, 76-80.

In Heal's own words, 'Indeed, active engagement is required for any understanding at all; one cannot understand without at least alert and attentive; no grasp of any new idea is entirely passive and effortless. And this is even more markedly true of Philosophy than of other subjects, since in Philosophy beliefs are not conveyed via some classic Gricean process (of taking someone else's intention that one should believe as a reason for believing) but are presented as needing to be adopted, if they are, not on authority but on the basis of the reader's own appreciation of their force' (Heal 1995, 77).

particular kind of engagement which can produce more than just understanding (in the sense of 'mere acceptance of a description') because, in Heal's view too, the 'intended upshot' of reading the *Philosophical Investigations* is to get the right stance toward the philosophical understanding of meaning, and coming to have such stance has theoretical as well as practical aspects.[380] Heal uses the following example to illustrate her point.

> Suppose that I have made offensive and hurtful remarks to you, my friend. Reasoning may show me that any apology is called for. Unless I acknowledge the meanness and repulsiveness of what I did, show that I care about the damage to our friendship, show that I am willing to make myself vulnerable to the pain of having an attempt at reconciliation rejected – in short unless I apologise and thus throw myself on your mercy – our friendship is doomed and we shall both be worse off. But to realize all this, even to say it to you, is not to apologise. Unless the theoretical realization has its rational and proper outcome in remorse and attempted action I do not have a right stance to the world.[381]

Heal believes that the dialogue is a particularly appropriate form for Wittgenstein not only because it is lively and thus can get the reader engaged. A more important reason, in Heal's view, has to do with 'something about the content of 'the message' he is trying to get across, or, better something about the nature of the state which is the hoped-for upshot of an attentive and sympathetic reading'.[382] According to Heal, the dialogue form can enable the reader qua being an active participant of the

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[380] Heal repudiates the philosophical thesis that some clear line exists between the theoretical and practical aspects. On her view, 'rational enquiry is a route to both practical and theoretical positions' and 'coming to have the right stance, even on such an issue as the philosophical understanding of 'meaning', is something which has a practical side and which can be intelligibly actualized only in the context of a dialogue' (Heal 1995, 77).

[381] Heal 1995, 77-78.

[382] Heal 1995, 78.

conversational exchanges in the *Philosophical Investigations* to have an appropriate setting for taking up the right stance on the philosophical understanding of meaning after some attentive and sympathetic reading. Heal admits that it is not possible to canvass properly in her discussion the issue of what the content of the *Philosophical Investigations* is. At any rate, she proposes 'a brief and unsubstantiated account' of the *Philosophical Investigations* as one reading at least of part of 'the message' Wittgenstein is trying to get across.[383] On Heal's account, sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations* have to do with the dismantling of a tempting but ultimately incoherent picture of meaning. Heal sums up this incoherent picture of meaning as follows. [384]

> The picture to be dismantled is one on which for someone to understand a word one way rather than another is for him or her to have before the mind some item, for example an image or formula. This item is to guide the application of the world and set the standard for its correct use.

Heal believes that along with this original picture of meaning, sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations* also sketch and offer a different picture of meaning as the right stance on the philosophical understanding of meaning.

> The picture offered instead is one on which for someone to grasp the meaning of a word is for him or her (as the result of training) to apply the word with confidence but without appealing to any further guidance. That we can talk of meaning and find that we share understanding are, on this view, rooted in the fact of shared spontaneous responses.

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[383] I follow up Heal's elusive talks of the 'intended upshot' of reading the *Philosophical Investigation*', 'getting a right stance to the world' and 'the message' Wittgenstein is trying to get across in this section. I complete my discussion of these elusive terms in section 2.2.2.

[384] Heal 1995, 79.

As we have seen Heal believes that the 'intended upshot' of reading the *Philosophical Investigations* is to get the reader to adopt the right stance on the philosophical understanding of meaning. Accordingly, the reader is supposed to give up on the original picture of meaning and take up the second picture of meaning as the *right* stance after her reading of the *Philosophical Investigations*. At this point, I think Heal's unspoken hypothesis appears more explicit than ever. In Heal's discussion the 'intended upshot' of reading the *Philosophical Investigations* is to get *the* right stance on the philosophical understanding of meaning. For her interpretation, the second picture of meaning sketched and offered in sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations* provides just this right stance. We should recall Heal's suggestion that with the aid of the dialogue, the reader will come to 'an end point which is properly thought of as a better understanding or insight into how things are'. It follows that according to Heal's unspoken hypothesis the second picture of meaning, while being *the* right stance toward the philosophical understanding of meaning, represents 'a better understanding' of meaning and it propounds Wittgenstein's insight into how things are with respect to the philosophical understanding of meaning. Obviously Heal's underlying assumption is that the second picture of meaning constitutes Wittgenstein's positive solution to the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding. In the end, although Heal refrains from attributing a theory of meaning to Wittgenstein, she actually ascribes a substantive view of meaning to the *Philosophical Investigations* and she disguises

this philosophical understanding of meaning as 'the message' Wittgenstein tries to get across.[385]

Heal believes that coming to have the right stance on the philosophical understanding of meaning produces understanding not in the sense of 'mere acceptance of a description'; it has practical as well as theoretical aspects. Heals suggests that the practical aspect of getting a right stance 'can be intelligibly actualized only in the context of a dialogue'. On this view, the appropriateness of dialogue form can be seen as follows

> The difference between one who has read a theoretical non-dialogue version of the thoughts and one who has pursued them via the dialogue route is closely analogous to the difference between 'one who realises 'All humans are mortal' and one who realises 'I, like everyone else, am mortal'.[386]

According to Heal, through the dialogue form, the question 'What is involved in meaning?' is presented as 'What is it for me and for you to mean?' Therefore if a reader of the *Philosophical Investigations* is drawn along to see that the original picture of meaning is ultimately incoherent, she will come to acknowledge the fantasy nature of this picture of meaning, with vivid self-application built in her acknowledgement. In other words, she will realise the tensions or preconceptions in her own conceptual scheme and then she will give up the incoherent picture. By contrast if someone has read a theoretical non-dialogue version of the thoughts of

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[385] I continue with the implications of Heal's unspoken hypothesis in section 2.2.2.

[386] Heal 1995, 80.

the *Philosophical Investigations*, she may end up with a 'mere acceptance of a description'.[387]

In section 2.2.2 I will argue that to ascribe the above positive account (that is the second picture of meaning) to Wittgenstein as his theory of "meaning as use" runs the risk of discounting, if not totally silencing, a very prominent voice in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the voice that thoroughly renounces the use of philosophical theses in understanding the actual workings of our language. I think this voice speaks aloud of the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations* on several occasions. Some of the foremost examples are as follows.

> §109 …And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: in despite of an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.

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[387] In addition, Heal suggests that approaching the issues of meaning, truth and fact in the third-personal theoretical way can lead to various errors. According to Heal these errors may lead to another unsatisfactory and paradoxical picture of meaning. 'For example, we may overrate the individual's power to strike out with his or her own judgement or we may stress too much the grip on us of intellectual tradition or we may underrate the actual seriousness and commitment with which we make at least some of our judgements. The upshot may be that we get swept away from the original picture but end up with something just as unsatisfactory and paradoxical' (Heal 1995, 81).
Heal believes that on the other hand, Wittgenstein's way of proceeding has its own pitfalls and it may encourage some bad developments. For instance, it can lead to the adoption of a kind of bullying tone and unnecessary vigilant attitude to frivolity, idle chat and the ordinary superficial but friendly exercises of social life. (See Heal 1995, 82-83)

§116 When philosophers use a word—'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name'—and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?— What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

§118 Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand.

§119 The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery.

§127 The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.

§133 There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.

§255 The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness.[388]

2.2 The Anti-Doctrinal Character and Therapeutic Nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*

For a number of reasons I dispute Heal's suggestion that the dialogue in the *Philosophical Investigations* is a vehicle for the 'intended content' (as Wittgenstein's theoretical assertions) and that one could reconstruct this content 'in

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[388] I discuss these remarks in reference to the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic methods of the *Philosophical Investigations* in section 2.2.2.

a more standard academic manner'. Firstly, as I have said, such reconstruction seems to proceed on the problematic assumption that the narrator expresses Wittgenstein's philosophical convictions and hence that once the voices in the *Philosophical Investigations* are distinguished, the reader can simply take the narrator's points as Wittgenstein's own solutions to the problems discussed. In the following discussion, I will show that this assumption is problematic because of the ambiguity of the voices in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Heal's approach conceives of the exchanges in the *Philosophical Investigations* as a debate between two distinct voices (that is the voices of the narrator/Wittgenstein and his interlocutor) which express opposing views. I will argue that a two-voice reading is not mandatory, because polyphonic readings of the *Philosophical Investigations* are legitimate alternatives. Secondly, I am opposed to Heal's idea of reconstructing 'the intended content' of the *Philosophical Investigations*, if that leads to 'Wittgenstein's theory of meaning' or 'Wittgenstein's thesis that meaning-is-use'. On my reading, Wittgenstein's statements in the *Philosophical Investigations* are non-assertoric and they do not utter philosophical assertions. In section 2.2.2, I will argue that approaching any train of thought in the *Philosophical Investigations* as if it represents Wittgenstein's attempt at philosophical theorising and system-building is hard to reconcile with the voice that speaks of the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

2.2.1 The Two-Voice Assumption and the Mouthpiece Assumption

Despite the ambiguity of voices in some sections, there can be no denying that some passages in the *Philosophical Investigations* do give the strong impression that

Wittgenstein's own voice is somehow present in the exchange. For instance, at §46 the narratorial voice announces that 'Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary elements.' Since the narratorial voice speaks in the first person and Wittgenstein is the author of the *Tractatus* we seem to have strong reasons to believe that the narratorial voice here is Wittgenstein's own voice.

In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein said that he wanted to publish his new work along with his first book, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; because he believed that his new thoughts could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of his old way of thinking. At §23 the narratorial voice supplies a case of such comparison.

> It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)

This passage reveals Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction of his old way of thinking concerning the structure of language. Given the hints here in §23 and in the preface it seems that the reader is supposed to compare Wittgenstein's new thought about the multiplicity of language-games, with his old way of thinking, namely the *Tratatus's* 'picture theory of language', according to which every proposition is a picture of a state of affairs with a definite truth-value.

But notice that the narratorial voice at §23 simply says 'Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*'. Unlike §46 it does not speak in the first person. It merely identifies the author of the *Tractatus* as one of those logicians who have

misunderstood the structure of language. By speaking of himself in the third person, Wittgenstein seems to open the way for doubting that the narrator's voice is his own voice.

Alternatively, can the reader infer that the narratorial voice here is Wittgenstein's own voice? Perhaps, we could justify such an inference on the grounds that Wittgenstein wants to contrast his new thoughts with his old way of thinking, or that he wants to emphasize the 'grave mistakes' in the *Tractatus*? On this view, what happens here could be a matter of taking distance from oneself in order to examine one's old way of thinking more objectively. This self-examination may resemble an external dialogue between interlocutors but in fact it is an interior flow of one's own thinking.

So this speaking of himself in the third person at §23 raises two possibilities. As we have seen in Heal's discussion, the use of interrogatives by itself cannot be taken as evidence of dialogue throughout the writing because interrogatives can be part of a dialogue but it can also represent a flow of Wittgenstein's own ideas. In my opinion, this speaking of himself in the third person at §23 gives similar effect. It can open the way for doubting that the narrator's voice is Wittgenstein's own voice. But it can also open the way for a representation of Wittgenstein's interior flow of thinking.

I do not want to claim that Wittgenstein's own voice is never present in the *Philosophical Investigations*. I think §46 is among the very few passages where the ambiguity of voices is less acute and hence we can find a plausible and more or less straightforward connection between the narratorial voice and Wittgenstein's own voice. My real concern has to do with what I call 'a two-level inference', that is, the first inference from the narratorial voice to Wittgenstein's own voice and then the

second inference from Wittgenstein's voice to Wittgenstein's doctrines. On my view, even if we can grant the first level inference from the narratorial voice to Wittgenstein's own voice in passages like §46, it still requires much speculative reconstruction to make that connection support the second level inference from Wittgenstein's own voice to 'Wittgenstein's theory of meaning' in the *Philosophical Investigations*.[389]

Heal believes that it is possible to 're-express 'Wittgenstein's arguments' or 'Wittgenstein's views' in a more standard academic manner'. Her textual analysis finds several places where Wittgenstein supposedly speaks, comments and asks questions in his own voice. I would dispute Heal's claims that (i) the dialogue in the *Philosophical Investigations* is an exchange between two identifiable voices and (ii) the narratorial voice (which is also the leading voice) represents Wittgenstein's own voice, hence expressing his philosophical stances. Heal's textual analysis depends on (i) and (ii), but she never gives any reason to support them. She only claims that it is her 'strong impression' that 'from time to time, a voice other than Wittgenstein's speaks i.e. that some thought other than one endorsed by

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[389] In the *Tractatus*, the concept of an 'object' refers to a possible constituent of a state of affairs (*T* § 2.011). Among its other attributes, an object is said to be 'simple' in that it cannot be compound (*T* § 2.02 – 2.021). The passages §§46-48 in the *Philosophical Investigations* argues, in opposition to the *Tractatus*, that the talk of such simple constitutes parts of reality makes no sense.

No doubt the idea that the talk of something absolutely and contextlessly simple makes no sense constitutes part of the *Philosophical Investigations*' critique of a mistaken picture of language (according to this mistaken view, 'individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names' (*PI* §1). Ultimately this critique will contribute to the dismantling of the referentialist theory of meaning (that is, 'Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the object for which the word stands.). However, the attempt to reconstruct 'Wittgenstein's theory of meaning as use' in the *Philosophical Investigations* still has a long way to go.

Another formidable obstacle to such reconstruction stems from the non-assertoric status of Wittgenstein's reminders on language.

Wittgenstein himself is being expressed'. On my view, both (i) and (ii) are questionable assumptions and neither of them is mandatory. I call assumption (i) the two-voice assumption. I call assumption (ii) the mouthpiece assumption because it suggests that one of the two opposing voice in the *Philosophical Investigations* is Wittgenstein's mouthpiece and that it spells out his discursive arguments for philosophical theses and theories. Not all interpretations of the *Philosophical Investigations* take these two assumptions for granted. I will now sketch two prominent interpretations that eschew the assumptions.

Cavell's reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* denies the mouthpiece assumption. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell describes the two opposing voices in the *Philosophical Investigations* as the 'voice of temptation' and the 'voice of correctness' with neither voice being straightforwardly Wittgenstein's.[390] On Cavell's reading, the voice of temptation attempts to formulate philosophical theories on language, meaning, understanding, etc. whereas the voice of correctness, resisting the philosophical theories set out by the voice of temptation, tries to remind the reader what we ordinarily say and do in every day. Cavell believes that Wittgenstein is not advocating any systematic account of language, meaning, understanding, etc. through the voice of correctness, and that we should approach the *Philosophical Investigations* as a conflicted dialogue which shows the deep difficulties in philosophizing.

Stern's interpretation rejects both the two-voice assumption and the mouth-piece assumption.[391] Stern believes that while there is good reason to approach the *Philosophical Investigations* as belonging to the genre of philosophical dialogue,

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[390] Cavell 1979b.

[391] Stern 2004 (See especially pp.21-28).

Heal's reading is not the right way to approach the dialogues in the *Philosophical Investigations*. However, he notes that many interpreters unfortunately share Heal's assumptions.[392]

Stern rejects the mouthpiece assumption for two reasons. Stern grants that 'a clear-cut set of answers to the paradoxes of ostension, explanation, and rule-following' is present in the *Philosophical Investigations*. However, he believes that the connection between this train of thought and Wittgenstein's intentions is far from clear. Stern notes that unfortunately many interpretations make the common mistake of identifying the viewpoint defended in a particular strand of argument in the *Philosophical Investigations* as the view advocated by Wittgenstein. In these mistaken interpretations,

> The narrator is usually taken to be arguing for Wittgenstein's own philosophical position, 'ordinary language philosophy', while the interlocutor attacks our ordinary way of speaking, arguing that it does not do justice to his intuitions and his arguments.[393]

Stern sketches a general view of these interpretations in terms of Kripke's influential and widely discussed reading of the *Philosophical Investigations*.[394]

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[392] Stern 2004, 24-25.

On Stern's view the dialogues in the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book* do set out views endorsed by Wittgenstein, interspersed with occasional objections whereas for the *Philosophical Investigations* matters are not that simply any more.

Stern believes that accepting the two assumptions would prevent the reader from 'seeing how Wittgenstein's second masterpiece is not simply the result of simply putting together what he had already written'.

[393] Stern 2004, 24.

[394] See Kriple, 1982.

If we take Wittgenstein's narrator to be a behaviourist, or an ordinary language philosopher who maintains that the rules of our language guarantee that we are mostly right, then the sceptical paradox – namely, that ostension, explanation, and rule-following can always be undermined by sceptical possibilities – receive what Kripke calls a 'straight' solution: we really can provide a positive answer to the paradox, because the expressions in question can be defined in terms of public behaviour, or the rules of grammar that govern our use of language.

If, on the other hand, we follow Kripke in taking Wittgenstein to be a sceptic who endorses the paradoxes he has formulated, then the appeal to what the community ordinarily does in its use of these terms is only a negative answer to the sceptical problem (Kripke calls this a 'sceptical' solution): recognizing that we cannot solve the problem, we instead appeal to what we ordinarily do as a way of indicating the best reply available, albeit one that does not really solve the paradoxes.[395]

However, Stern believes that the 'straight' and the 'sceptical' solutions are all misguided as they both identify the outlook of the author with the strand of argument associated with the leading narrator, which is a mistake.[396] According to Stern, Wittgenstein actually provided neither a straight solution nor a sceptical solution to the philosophical problems discussed in the *Philosophical Investigations* because he aimed to dissolve the philosophical problems by means of a dialogue between opposing voices. In other words, the interpretations that depend on the mouthpiece assumption misunderstand the character and methods of the

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[395] Stern 2004, 21-22.

Apparently Heal's reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* opts for the first case.

[396] Stern 2004, 23.

In the 'straight' case the reasons given by Wittgenstein's narrator for solving the problem of rule-following are mistakenly identified as Wittgenstein's own solution to the problem. In the 'sceptical' case, the narrator's claims that the interlocutor faces the problem of rule-following are mistakenly identified as Wittgenstein's own conviction in the problem.

Philosophical Investigations. This is the second reason why Stern rejects the mouthpiece assumption.

Stern suggests that the reader should not assume that everything that is said in opposition to the voice of temptation in the *Philosophical Investigations* must be taken as a straightforward statement of Wittgenstein's philosophical stances. He warns that 'all this talk of Wittgenstein's arguments and of the positions he opposes, while unavoidable, is potentially deeply misleading' because such talk

> makes it tempting to suppose that Wittgenstein's distinctive contribution to philosophy turns on a clear distinction between unproblematic, 'everyday' uses of language, and their mirror image, the 'metaphysical' uses of language that are characteristic of traditional of philosophy.
>
> However, if Wittgenstein is correct, the accounts offered by all the participants in his dialogues are nonsense, and so cannot, in the end, be true or false.
>
> Ultimately, Wittgenstein's view is that the proto-philosophical accounts of meaning and mind that his interlocutor proposes and his narrator opposes cannot be understood'[397]

On Stern's view, Wittgenstein's idea is that when one says that a solution to the sceptical paradoxes of ostension, explanation, and rule-following or of 'private language' is possible, or when one says that such things are impossible, one's words do no useful work at all. [398] Therefore Stern believes that if we follow Wittgenstein's advice, we should not endorse any of the views that Wittgenstein

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[397] Stern 2004, 25.

[398] Stern 2004, 26.
Stern refers to *PI* §254 'What we 'are tempted to say' in such a case is, of course, not philosophy; but it is its raw material. Thus, for example, what a mathematician is inclined to say about the objectivity and reality of mathematical facts is not a philosophy of mathematics, but something for philosophical *treatment*.' And §255 'The philosopher treats a question; like an illness.'

discusses in the *Philosophical Investigations*. And we should give up both behaviourism and anti-behaviourism. According to Stern, Wittgenstein's discussion of philosophical problems in the *Philosophical Investigations* should produce this result: 'a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation' (*PI* §500).

Stern notes that the two-voice assumption is usually taken for granted. As an alternative to the two-voice reading, Stern proposes a three-voice reading that can do justice to 'the variety, diversity, and ambiguity of the voices in the *Philosophical Investigations*'. Stern's suggestion is that instead of seeing the arguments in the *Philosophical Investigations* as exchanges between Wittgenstein and his interlocutor, the reader should approach them as 'an exchange between a number of different voices, none of which can be unproblematically identified with the author's.' [399] In addition to the two opposing voices, Stern finds a third voice, the voice of a commentator.[400]

According to Stern, the commentator's voice is not always clearly marked off from the narratorial voice, and therefore most readers treat them both as expressions of Wittgenstein's views. As a result, the readers become 'unable to reconcile the trenchant and provocative theses advocated by the narrator and the commentator's

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[399] Stern 2004, 22-23.
Therefore Stern prefers to speak of the dialogues in the *Philosophical Investigations* as dialogues between Wittgenstein's narrator and an interlocutory voice rather than between Wittgenstein and the interlocutor.

[400] Stern notes that in *PI* §§39-142 while there are voices that express the positions set out in the *Tractatus*, the narratorial voice sets out the case against these Tractarian convictions. In *PI* §§ 140-693 while there is an anti-behaviourist voice that expresses mentalist, verification-transcendent, and essentialist intuitions and convictions, on the other hand, the narratorial voice sets out behaviourist, verificationist, and anti-essentialist objections to traditional philosophical views.

rejection of all philosophical theses'.[401] On Stern's view, the commentator's voice provides ironic commentary on the exchange between the two opposing voices, by raising objections to the assumptions of the two opposing voices. The commentator's voice also points out some platitudes about language and everyday life that the two opposing voice have overlooked.[402]

2.2.2 The Character and Methods of the Philosophical Investigations

Heal's interpretation merits attention for its judicious recognition that the *Philosophical Investigations* is written as a dialogue, and that the dialogue form is particularly appropriate for Wittgenstein. Heal refrains from saying that Wittgenstein advances a thesis or offers a theory of meaning in the *Philosophical Investigations*. She appears cautious, uses only some elusive notions such as 'the intended content', 'Wittgenstein's arguments', 'Wittgenstein's views', 'the content of the *Investigations*', 'the content of "the message"'.[403] She seems to substitute

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[401] I discuss these conflicting strands in the *Philosophical Investigations* in 2.3.2.

[402] Stern believes that these three voices in the *Philosophical Investigations* play roles quite similar to Demea, Cleanthes, and Philo in Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. (See Stern 2004, 22-23). According to Stern, the commentator comes closer to expressing W's viewpoint than either of his leading protagonists do.

Pichler 2004 also offers a polyphonic reading. He suggests that in the absence of the ultimate authorial voice, there is an indefinite number of voices and the *Philosophical Investigations* denies dogmatism precisely through the multiplicity of voices.

[403] Heal uses 'the intended content', 'Wittgenstein's arguments' and 'Wittgenstein's views' on p.63. She uses 'the content of the *Investigations*', 'the content of "the message"' and 'picture of meaning' on p.78. She mentions 'Wittgenstein's sketch' on p.79. I have already discussed other similar notions like the 'intended upshot' of reading the *Investigations*, 'the message' Wittgenstein is trying to get across, 'the right stance', 'a better understanding' and 'insight into how things are' in section 2.1.2.

'picture' and 'sketch' for 'theory' in her brief account of 'the content of the *Investigations*'. Unfortunately Heal never seeks to clarify what would distinguish views, content, message, picture or sketch from "theses" and "theories". As we have seen, on Heal's approach, interpreting Wittgenstein need not be fundamentally different from interpreting other philosophers. We have also seen in section 2.1.2 that on her reading Wittgenstein attempts two things in sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations*: to dismantle a tempting but ultimately incoherent picture of meaning; and secondly to sketch and offer a better picture of meaning as his positive views and thereby resolving the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding. It can be said that Heal conceives of Wittgenstein as engaging in both a negative task and a positive task. The negative task is the dismantling of a mistaken picture/theory of meaning and this negative task gives a negative result: the idea of a private language is shown to be incoherent. Now what is the positive task and what does it give?

Accordingly, the positive task is to sketch and offer a better picture/theory of meaning to replace the mistaken one. But as we have seen, Heal refrains from saying 'Wittgenstein's theory' and in her discussion the 'positive result' (the second picture of meaning) is disguised as just another picture of meaning, albeit a better one that conveys 'insight into how things are'. But again what would distinguish a picture from a theory? And when compared with the original picture, on what ground can

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According to Heal 'we should note that the *Investigations* is full of both assertions and arguments on the subject matters of traditional Philosophy, meaning, truth, fact etc. and that Wittgenstein is clearly at times engaging directly with the thoughts of Frege, Russell, etc.' The point she wants to make is 'it is not wholly wrong to think of Wittgenstein as addressing the same puzzlements (about meaning etc.) as previous philosophers and to think of him as wishing to address them by discursive rational means' (Heal 1995, 76).

the second picture of meaning be accepted as giving 'a better understanding' of meaning?

In arguing for the appropriateness of the dialogue form, Heal imagines that after some attentive and sympathetic reading the reader is ultimately 'drawn along to acknowledge the fantasy nature of the original picture and the truth of the reminders that are assembled' for the second picture of meaning.[404] So perhaps it can be said that Heal's interpretation actually entails the following ideas

(i) Wittgenstein's new picture or theory of meaning is sketched in some of the reminders in sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

(ii) The reminders that Wittgenstein assembles for his picture or theory of meaning are true reminders in that they are insights into how things are so far as philosophical understanding of meaning is concerned.

(iii) The reader will take up Wittgenstein's picture or theory of meaning as *the* right stance after realizing the fantasy nature of the original picture and also (ii).[405]

Insofar as Heal's interpretation proposes to treat Wittgenstein as articulating his arguments in the form of philosophical reminders pertaining to a theoretical overview of grammatical rules or as offering a *definitive* picture or theory of

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[404] Heal 1995, 80.

Referring to 'the original picture of meaning', Heal suggests that 'the picture is part of a larger story which (arguably) includes elements like a correspondence theory of truth and the idea that a complete natural science will reveal all the facts there are'.

[405] I suspect that Heal's interpretation is prone to an extra idea, that is, Wittgenstein's picture of meaning is part of a larger story which (arguably) includes elements like a behaviourist theory of language. But it is also fair to say that Heal's interpretation has been trying to hold back from this extra idea.

meaning to replace the original one, Heal's interpretation risks importing substantive views on language or a theory of meaning into the *Philosophical Investigations*. I believe such an exegetical move violates Wittgenstein's intention announced in the preface and fails to do justice to the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

I think that we can take Wittgenstein's intention more seriously and recognize the non-assertoric status of his statements in the *Philosophical Investigations*. This recognition can helpfully inform our understanding of the anti-doctrinal character and therapeutic nature of the *Philosophical Investigations*. I expound my non-assertoric reading of Wittgenstein as follows.[406]

(i) The *Philosophical Investigations* delivers Wittgenstein's reminders about language and meaning as well as other subjects.[407]

(ii) The reminders about language and meaning are true reminders in that they simply make things 'open to view' by 'assembling what we have long been familiar with' so that 'seeing connexions' becomes possible. In giving these 'perspicuous representations' the reminders shed light on our problem about language by 'clearing misunderstanding away' without adding new knowledge or information to 'the ground of language' though a new way to think about

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[406] In this synopsis I provide textual support for my non-assertoric reading. For further validation of my non-assertoric reading, I will discuss in what sense Wittgenstein's statements do not constitute philosophical theses.

[407] I shall not consider these other subjects (for instance, the concepts of logic, 'the foundations of mathematics', and 'states of consciousness'). But I believe that the import of my proposal of non-assertoric reading can be applied generally to Wittgenstein's reminders about these other subjects.

things is given to us. Our problems are thus solved in this manner. (*PI* §§90, 109, 118, 119, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129)

And most importantly:

(iii) The reminders about language and meaning may be used to establish 'an order in our knowledge of the use of language' but it does not give *the order*. Though the reminders 'are meant to throw light on specific features of our language', they are not intended to pave the way to 'a future regularization of language'. (*PI* §§130, 132, 133)

(iv) The reminders about language and meaning are not second-order theoretical explanations or revelations giving the *essence* of language and meaning. In other words, the reminders are not assertions of rules to which language *must* correspond. (*PI* §§90, 91, 92, 109, 120, 121, 124, 125, 131)

It follows from my non-assertoric reading that we should be careful in ascribing a picture of meaning to Wittgenstein. The talk of Wittgenstein's "picture" of meaning can be misleading if it implies that Wittgenstein intends to give us a replacement picture of meaning which is more superior in the sense that it is *definitive and exclusive* (like a philosophical thesis establishing *the order* in our knowledge of the use of language). Heal's interpretation is misguided because it seems to assume that after dismantling the original picture of meaning Wittgenstein's reminders offer a definitive and exclusive picture of meaning which is capable of giving the order in our knowledge of the use of language.

No doubt the original picture of meaning is dismantled. However, it is not the actual source of our problem but the mere symptom of it. The real source of our problem which is also the proper object of philosophical therapy is our urge to misunderstand the workings of language (*PI* §§109, 113, 125, 255). It is this underlying urge that gives rise to or finds expression in the original picture of meaning. We are held captive by this picture of meaning which lies in language (*PI* §115). Through his reminders Wittgenstein dismantles this problematic picture. But he never intends to give out an alternative picture of meaning as if it captures the *ultimate* order in our knowledge of the use of language.

PI §309 What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.

A fly is held captive by a fly-bottle. What would we do if we want to show the fly the way out of its predicament? We will not lead the fly to another fly-bottle, or any other fly trap device in disguise. Instead, we will set it free so that the fly will no longer find itself entangled in any fly-bottle.

Wittgenstein's reminders should produce the same result. They set us free so that we are no longer held captive by our problematic picture of meaning. There can be no denying that Wittgenstein's reminders can be used to produce a superior picture of meaning, that is, the meaning-as-use picture. But what makes this replacement picture of meaning superior should not be its potential for building up the ultimate philosophical order of things; rather it should be its capacity to serve clarificatory purpose.[408] According to my non-assertoric reading (especially (iii) and (iv)) the

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[408] I will soon look at Kuusela's suggestion that the meaning-as-use picture is better construed as a clarificatory model.

reminders at best can only establish 'an order in our knowledge of the use of language', not *the order*. This is because there are different therapies for different illnesses (*PI* §§133, 255) and the reminders are assembled for a particular purpose (*PI* § 127). In other words, the reminders assembled in the *Philosophical Investigations* are useful for some targeted illnesses, that is, some particular misunderstandings of the workings of language depended on referentialism. Wittgenstein assembled these reminders for the purpose of dismantling the referentialist picture of meaning. The reminders are particularly useful in clearing away misunderstanding caused by referentialism. However, being clarificatory model the reminders are also applicable to other cases of misunderstanding of the workings of language in other contexts.[409]

On this non-assertoric reading, any interpretation that seeks to extract and reconstruct 'Wittgenstein's thesis or theory of meaning' in the *Philosophical Investigations* or his definitive solution to the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding is misguided. A major problem with interpretations of this kind is that in trying to read Wittgenstein's reminders as implicit or explicit theses propounding his final and complete solutions to the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding, these interpretations run the risk of turning Wittgenstein's non-assertoric statements into his discursive arguments pertaining to a theory of meaning as his universal and conclusive solution to the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding. Many interpretations go astray because they misconstrue Wittgenstein's non-assertoric statements. However, some

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[409] In the *Nachlass*, Wittgenstein is more explicit about the incomplete nature of what he has said about meaning. 'The meaning of a word, I said, is its use. But an important supplement must be added to this' (*Nachlass* 180).

interpreters hold on to this approach even at the huge cost of attributing a fundamental inconsistency to Wittgenstein.

Kripke's controversial and widely discussed reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* is an outstanding example in this regard. On Kripke's view, Wittgenstein articulates a powerful case for an unsettling sceptical paradox of rule-following. Kripke believes that this paradox is 'the central problem of *Philosophical Investigations*' and it can be regarded as 'a new form of philosophical scepticism'.[410] Kripke confesses that he has expressed 'Wittgenstein's view more straightforwardly than he would ordinarily allow himself to do.' However, Kripke's excuse is that, regardless of Wittgenstein's repeated disavowals of having formulated philosophical theses or theories, Wittgenstein has actually formulated some sceptical theses. And yet because of the nature of his theses, Wittgenstein has to put them in disguise.[411]

A Kripke-style reconstruction may not give a desirable reading of Wittgenstein. At any rate, the *Philosophical investigations*' relation to theory and theses in

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[410] Kripke 1982, 7.

Commentators have widely disputed Kripke's reading. Baker and Hacker 1984 provides a judicious retort.

[411] Kripke 1982, 69: 'Wittgenstein's professed inability to write a work with conventionally organized arguments and conclusions stems at least in part, not from personal and stylistic proclivities, but from the nature of his work. Had Wittgenstein – contrary to his notorious and cryptic maxim in §128 – stated the outcomes of his conclusions in the form of definite theses, it would have been very difficult to avoid formulating his doctrines in a form that consists in apparent sceptical denials of our ordinary assertions.'

Referring to his reformulation of 'Wittgenstein's arguments', Kripke declares that 'Probably many of my formulations and recastings of the argument are done in a way Wittgenstein would not himself approve. So the present paper should be thought of as expounding neither 'Wittgenstein's' argument nor 'Kripke's': rather Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him'' (Kripke 1982, 5).

philosophy has become a watershed for the interpretations of Wittgenstein.[412] Pichler provides a survey of Wittgenstein interpretation in which the interpretations of the *Philosophical Investigations* are divided by the 'theory vs. therapy' debate.[413]

> Whereas one group of scholars, though on different levels and to varying degrees, sees the PI as a work advancing both philosophical theses and theories, another sees it as a work which aims to dissolve philosophical problems through a number of not necessarily systematically related therapies.
>
> When defending a theses or a theory understanding of the PI, one typically holds that the PI, in order to *solve* philosophical problems, itself proposes philosophical theses and arguments.
> In contrast to this, defenders of a therapeutic understanding of the PI typically holds that the PI *dissolves* philosophical problems by bringing to light their illusory nature (i.e. by showing the absence of any substantial claim and thus theory), rather than by developing and putting forward new theses and arguments to answer these problems.
> (Pichler's discussion uses PI as an abbreviation for the *Philosophical Investigations*.)

Pichlers notes that this 'theory vs. therapy' debate attests to 'a striking contrast' between the way Wittgenstein wanted the *Philosophical Investigations* and himself to be understood, and the way in which his interpreters want to understand and utilize the work itself.[414]

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[412] For a detailed account of the numerous exegetical approaches to Wittgenstein see the 'Introduction' in Kahane, Kanterian, and Kuusela 2007, 1-36.

[413] Pichler 2007, 123 – 124.

The theory vs. therapy debate is only one of the many possible ways to characterise interpretations of Wittgenstein. Another possible characterization is the text-immanent vs. contextual debate. With increasing number of Wittgenstein's texts (especially his *Nachlass*) becoming available to scholars, the contextual standpoint has become the more prominent approach.

[414] Pichler 2007, 125.

Kenny believes that a fundamental reason for this interpretative dilemma has to do with the fact that Wittgenstein seems to have two rather different and also conflicting views of philosophy: the overview theory of philosophy and the therapeutic theory of philosophy.[415] Kenny himself is pessimistic as to whether it is possible to reconcile Wittgenstein's account of philosophy with 'the entirety of his philosophical activity' in the *Philosophy Investigations*.[416] Kenny believes that if the reader is to give priority to Wittgenstein's account of philosophy, she will conceive of the substantive theses of the *Philosophical Investigations* as 'momentary yieldings to a form of philosophical expression that Wittgenstein had long rejected in theory, and to a great extent, grown out of in practice'. Accordingly she will excise all these substantive theses from the text. In return she will see a substantial gain in consistency in the work. If on the other hand, the reader is to give priority to Wittgenstein's practice, she will judge Wittgenstein's account of the nature of philosophy as an inadequate account even of his own philosophy. She will discard this account as one of the weakest parts of his philosophising. She will treat his statements as perfectly genuine arguments, as bearers of truth value. Finally Kenny concludes that 'We are forced in the end to make a choice between accepting his theory and following his practice.'

An important merit of my non-assertoric approach is that Wittgenstein's remarks on the therapeutic conception of philosophy and 'the entirety of his philosophical activity' in the *Philosophical Investigations* can constitute a coherent one. My

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[415] Kenny 1982, 1-26.

As Kenny sums up, 'On the one hand, he often compares philosophy to a medical technique, to a therapy, a method of healing. On the other hand, he seems to see philosophy as giving overall understanding, a clear view of the world' (Kenny 1982, 2).

[416] Kenny 2006, xix.

non-assertoric approach sheds new light on the 'theory vs. therapy' dilemma by suggesting a new option. According to my non-assertoric approach, Wittgenstein's philosophical reminders are non-assertoric; they do not advance any theoretical assertions pertaining to the meaning as use thesis or set out rules to which our language-use must conform. The reminders aim rather to give a therapeutic result: releasing people from misunderstanding of the workings of language in a referentialist context by making things 'open to view' and 'assembling what we have long been familiar with' so that 'seeing connexions' become possible. Those who are released from such misunderstanding are given a better picture of meaning but this better picture does not constitute a philosophical thesis or theory of meaning. This is a positive result in the sense that some concealed nonsense is now exposed and dispelled from our conceptual scheme. I will now draw on the work of Kuusela to show that Wittgenstein's reminders not only provide us with philosophical therapy in this sense but at the same time they also deliver 'a more nuanced understanding of the concepts of language and meaning' — something that even a theory would not be able to give.[417]

On Heal's reading, Wittgenstein pursues the philosophical problems of meaning and understanding in sections 1-242 of the *Philosophical Investigations* and like other philosophers who would have conducted a similar endeavour in the conventional way, Wittgenstein proceeds by first criticizing the original picture of

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[417] Kuusela 2008 (See especially chapter three and four).

To those interpretations that ascribe theories to Wittgenstein, Kuusela raises an important question. 'Now it might be, of course, that Wittgenstein's philosophy *is* inconsistent. But this cannot be accepted without further argument. That it is tempting to read Wittgenstein's statements as theses, and that it may be hard to see how else to construe them, does not mean that they *should* be read as theses – especially if this makes his philosophy contradictory' (Kuusela 2008, 6).

meaning and then advancing his own picture of meaning as a better solution. It seems that a foremost direct expression of this better alternative can be found in §43

> *PI* §43 For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.
> And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*.

My previous discussion has suggested some strong reasons to repudiate the connection between the train of thoughts expressed by the reminders and Wittgenstein's authorial intention. Now I will give more support to my discussion by showing in what sense Wittgenstein's statements do not constitute philosophical theses.

Some interpretations assign an almost boundless generality to the conception of meaning as "rule-governed use" despite the explicit reservations stated in §43 (that is, 'For a *large* class of cases—though not for all'). Baker and Hacker's interpretation is one of these interpretations.[418] Accordingly, Baker and Hacker suggest that the conception of meaning as rule-governed use holds necessarily for all cases of word-meaning.[419] In this way, Baker and Hacker take §43 as conveying the definition of the concept of word-meaning, which establishes a necessary condition of word-meaning.

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[418] Baker and Hacker 1983, 250-251.

[419] See Kuusela 2008, 153: 'According to the interpretation put forward by Baker and Hacker, examples of the use of "meaning" that are excluded are cases such as "those clouds mean rain" and "you mean so much to me," but all cases of word-meaning are included in Wittgenstein's statement about meaning.'

Kuusela believes that in turning the conception of meaning as rule-governed use into a philosophical thesis about the concept of meaning Baker and Hacker's interpretation has induced the problem of dogmatism. Kuusela asks:

> How can the philosopher be sure that in stating her rule she is not overlooking cases that do fall under our concept of word-meaning but do not fit the criterion of rule-governedness as a necessary condition of word-meaning?

> And what guarantees that her statement about what meaning *must* be is not yet another example of a philosopher projecting a mode of presentation (her definition of the concept of meaning) onto reality?[420]

Instead of reading §43 as putting forward a philosophical thesis of meaning, Kuusela proposes to approach the conception of meaning as rule-governed use as a clarificatory model, that is, 'a model to be used as an object of comparison' (*PI* § 131).[421] Kuusela believes that this clarificatory model is particularly helpful in the light of the manifoldness of the concept of meaning and the blurriness of language use.[422]

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[420] Kuusela 2008, 154.

A fundamental problem with Baker and Hacker's interpretation is that since they make Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as constituted by rules hold necessarily for all cases of word-meaning they need to uphold its universality by arguing those who disagree with the conception are either speaking nonsense or deviating from normal language use.

[421] Kuusela believes that 'To attribute to Wittgenstein a thesis about what word-meaning *must* be on the basis of §43 reads more into the text than it can support. Such a reading fails to take seriously the possibility that the statement is only meant to dissolve *certain particular philosophical problems*' (Kuusela 2008, 157).

[422] Kuusela 2008, 155: 'According to this interpretation, rather than stating that the use of "meaning" *must* accord with the model of meaning as rule-governed use, he is saying that one should *compare* the actual concept (or the actual use of the world "meaning") with this model, noting *both* the similarities and the dissimilarities between the model and actual use.'

Abiding by the method of comparison, however, one refrains from claiming that actual language use *must* fit the models one puts forward. In this sense no theses are advanced about how things—including language use or concepts—*must* be.

Thus when used as an object of comparison, the conception of meaning as constituted by rules does not amount to a thesis about the essence or the possibility of word-meaning.

Rather, it articulates a particular way of conceiving word-meaning, while leaving open the possibility that there might be cases that do not fit this model.[423]

A significant advantage of Kuusela's proposal is that when the conception of meaning as constituted by rules is made an object of comparison it becomes a great deal less controversial. For instance even those who do not accept the view that word-meaning *depends* on rules can now grant *some* role to rules in the constitution of word-meaning on the premise that the conception captures *at least* a particular aspect of the concept of word-meaning. The second advantage is that 'the necessity expressed by the rule is now treated as characteristic of the model and not projected onto the objects of description as a thesis about their essence'. Kuusela believes that in this way, Wittgenstein is *in principle* safeguarded against dogmatism.[424]

Finally Kuusela believes that treating Wittgenstein's conception as a clarificatory model can lead to an increase in the flexibility of philosophical thought. For instance,

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[423] Kuusela 2008, 156.

[424] Drawing on Wittgenstein's lectures of 1933-34, Kuusela provides more textual support for his interpretation and he concludes that 'it would be erroneous to maintain that Wittgenstein takes the rule-governedness of words to be a necessary condition of their meaningfulness.' (See Kuusela 2008, 158-163)

Kuusela also argues that Wittgenstein's conceptions of language as a rule-governed practice and language as a family-resemblance concept do not constitute philosophical theses about the essence of language because they are to be taken as centres of variation. (See Kuusela 2008, chapter 4)

because now we see that the conception of meaning as constituted by rules is not put forward as a philosophical thesis, we will be more receptive to cases of word-meaning in which the sound of words is relevant.[425] And in fact in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein himself too discusses such cases in which the sounds used as expressions are not governed by any rules at all (*PI* §§527-534). Such 'speaking with tongues' cases would include expressing feelings and sensations with sounds or conveying emotion with tone. Kuusela believes that Wittgenstein's purpose of including a discussion of 'speaking with tongues' cases in the *Philosophical Investigations* is 'to foreground this "non-rule-governed" dimension of meaning, in contrast to the conception of meaning as constituted by rules.'[426]

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[425] Kuusela 2008, 176-180.

[426] Other than 'speaking with tongues' cases, Kuusela finds two more examples: 'the soulless language' in §530and the onomatopoeic words in *Nachlass*.

CONCLUSION

My discussion has proved that applying the idea of non-assertoric discourse to the writings of Plato, Sextus and Wittgenstein can produce some fruitful results. Unlike dogmatic readings my proposal of non-assertoric reading can facilitate a better position for us to deal with the philosophical and interpretive challenges posed by the distinctive language-uses, as well as the unique styles and methods employed in their writings. For instance, unlike the futile attempts of the readers of assertoric reading to discern Plato's metaphysical doctrines, on the basis of the Sun, Line and Cave, or to harmonize the images into one holistic philosophical interpretation, my proposal of non-assertoric reading opens up a more rewarding way of engaging with the images and other aspects (like the use of a fictional Socrates and other *dramatis personae*, and the *elenctic* mode of argumentation) of the dialogues. On my non-assertoric reading, Plato uses the images of the Sun, Line and Cave to recommend that, certain comparisons between the Form of the Good and the images be followed up. But my non-assertoric reading does not assume that Plato uses the images as a means of ascent to his metaphysical doctrines. My proposal casts a new light on the role the images serve in Plato's philosophical method and exposition. Instead of being *propaedeutic* to Platonic doctrines, they are *maieutic*: they are invitations and provocations to explore likenesses and comparisons in the search of knowledge about the Good; and in considering the likeness and comparisons between the images and the Form of the Good the reader has accepted the invitation (or the challenge) to do philosophy along with his reading of the images and the argumentative exchanges in the dialogues. My proposal has yielded similar

successful results in the writings of Wittgenstein as opposed to doctrinal readings. Finally a major breakthrough of my proposal is that in recognizing Sextus's speech is consistently non-assertoric, I have shown that the charge of self-contradiction against his writing is misplaced because it arises from misunderstanding the non-assertoric nature of the Pyrrhonian discourse which comprises of avowal of appearance, the interrogative, the imperative, and the argumentative mode of non-assertion.

In so far as the case studies that I have examined in this thesis avoid making assertoric presentation of the authors' own views as theoretical doctrines, they can be put together as presenting a special mode of doing philosophy that does not result in theory or doctrine. Since each of my chosen philosophers works deals with different philosophical problems, in different times and within different traditions their methods are not all the same. In my discussion, I have highlighted the ways in which the different kinds of non-assertoric mode of philosophy differ from each other. Unlike Plato's dramatised dialogues, Wittgenstein's use of the dialogue form in the *Philosophical Investigations* is extremely austere (or minimalist): he has stripped his dialogue of essential dramatic elements like stage settings and even named characters as he allows only different voices to feature in his dialogue. Secondly, whilst Plato's dialogues give out many vivid images which may serve theoretical ends as they recommend certain likenesses and comparisons be followed up in the search for knowledge, Wittgenstein's dialogue in the *Philosophical Investigations* provides us with images (like the fly in the fly-bottle) and several thought experiments (e.g. the famous beetle-in-a-box (*PI* §293)) for therapeutic purpose. On the other hand, insofar as the *Tractatus*'s self-proclaimed nonsensicality is suggestive of its aim of elucidation, its textual strategy and non-assertoric mode of

expression; it resembles Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and its Chronicler Disclaimer. In bringing to light their common therapeutic goal of eliminating philosophy as traditionally practiced and the anxieties it generated, Fogelin takes the lead in comparing Wittgenstein with the Pyrrhonist. However, I have disputed his view that both Wittgenstein and Sextus accept the charge that their works are self-destroying. On my non-assertoric reading, their works do not articulate their positive theoretical positions or advance theories or doctrines of any sort at all. As a result, the problem of self-destruction causes no embarrassment to them. Instead, the charge of self-destroying only attests to the futility of the kinds of dogmatic theorising and system-building found in metaphysical or traditional philosophy. Sextus and Wittgenstein do not participate in dogmatic theorising and system-building and they are fiercely opposed to such endeavours in their works. In addition, I have also disputed Stern's view that the critique of traditional philosophy by Wittgenstein and Sextus leads us not to a better philosophy but to stop philosophizing at all. The Pyrrhonists spent all their time on contradictory arguments but unlike the premature dialecticians or the misologists who stopped investigation thinking there was nothing sound or secure whatever in arguments, the Pyrrhonists did not fell under the spell of contradictory arguments. Their confrontational dialectic can serve the pursuit of truth as it can check against dogmatizing and rash assent with its arguing to equipollence.

To conclude, in distinguishing different modes of non-assertoric discourse in my three case studies, the proposal of this thesis has dissolved some prevailing exegetical problems that confronted the readers who practise doctrinal readings. My proposal has also resolved the philosophical and interpretive challenges posed by the distinctive language-uses, unique styles and methods of the great philosophers. This

thesis can contribute to the on-going interest and investigations on philosophical writing, methods and styles by asserting itself on the proposal and discussion it offers. Hopefully it would be the greater success of this thesis if it does not come as an end but rather as the beginning in reinstating the non-assertoric modes of discourse in Plato, Sextus, Wittgenstein, and other great past or present philosophers.

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