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PHILOSOPHY AND EVERYDAY LIFE:
THOMPSON CLARKE AND THE LEGACY OF SKEPTICISM

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What is it that enables a man to open his view to considerations previously unnoticed, to stay open to new possibilities? Ultimately, this entails an affirmation of what is not yet seen, and an appreciation of the function of words to turn one appropriately toward the future.

– Richard Henry Luecke, *Perchings*

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Abbreviations

Works by Thompson Clarke

LS = "The Legacy of Skepticism"
(citations reference page number and paragraph number as provided in the "Appendix")

NTE = *The Nature of Traditional Epistemology*

SS = "Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects"

Other works

CP = Barry Stroud, "Contemporary Pyrrhonism" (Stroud 2004a)

M 7–8 = Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* (*Adversus Mathematicos*, Vols. 7–8)
(citations reference volume number and Fabrician section-number, e.g. 'M, 7.4')

PH = Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*Pyrrhōneioi Hupotupōseis*)
(citations reference book number and Fabrician section-number, e.g. 'PH, 1.4')

PR = Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*

SPS = Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*

UD = Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*

UHK = Barry Stroud, *Understanding Human Knowledge: Philosophical Essays*

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Introduction

Skepticism, Clarke, and the Clarkeans

0.1 Clarke and Pyrrhonism

My topic is philosophical skepticism. In my view, at the heart of the skeptical problematic lies the conflict between, on the one hand, what we take ourselves to know in everyday life and, on the other, the kind and scope of the knowledge we can justifiably claim to possess on the basis of abstract philosophical theorizing.[1] I refer to this as the conflict between philosophy and everyday life. I take it that, understood this way, the fundamental problem with which skepticism presents us is the twofold problem of (*a*) adjudicating the relations of epistemic and practical authority that obtain between philosophy and everyday life, i.e., between 'common sense' and the 'non-commonsensical' outcomes of certain lines of traditional-philosophical inquiry, such as those that lead, or seem to lead, to skepticism; and (*b*) determining to what extent, if any, either philosophy or everyday life enjoys inherent epistemic or practical authority.

My focal point is the work of Thompson Clarke (1928–2012), who spent most of his professional life at U.C. Berkeley and who had a wide-ranging, still-underappreciated impact on contemporary philosophy. Clarke is best known as the author of "The Legacy of Skepticism"

[1] This is not, it seems to me, an idiosyncratic position. Nancy Daukas gets it exactly right, I think: "The problem of skepticism lies in the conflict between skepticism and everyday epistemic attitudes" (Daukas 2002, 63). Michael Williams makes the same point in discussing what he takes to be Hume's position. He speaks of "an irreconcilable clash between two outlooks or perspectives: the outlook we naturally assume in common life, which involves no deep systematic doubts... and the outlook to which we are inevitably led when we step back and reflect on our everyday epistemic practices and procedures, which is total scepticism" (UD, 8). On the 'traditional' view Williams finds in Hume, the "catastrophic, though peculiarly unstable, discovery" of skepticism is "that there is a conflict between the epistemic attitudes typical of common life and the results of philosophical reflection" (UD, 9). See also McGinn 1989, Ch. 1; Marušić 2008, 30; Hamawaki 2014, 190.

(1972) and for having had a formative influence on the work of Barry Stroud and Stanley Cavell, among others. Given the depth of his influence on two of the most important philosophers to have written about skepticism in recent decades—both of whom are far more prolific and influential than he is—it isn't surprising that many commentators on Clarke read him, to greater or lesser extents, *through* Stroud or Cavell. My approach to Clarke is unusual, then, in that it is routed instead through contemporary debates surrounding ancient skepticism, particularly its role in shaping the emergence and subsequent course of modern philosophy, from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

It was in the context of studying ancient skepticism and its modern legacy that I first encountered Clarke's "Legacy of Skepticism" (LS). The paper figures prominently in a debate from the late 1970s and early '80s between Michael Frede and Myles Burnyeat regarding how to understand certain key features of ancient skepticism.[2] The Frede–Burnyeat debate continues to serve as the primary touchstone for scholarly discussions of the issues it addresses. Despite my early exposure to, and fascination with, LS, it was only years later that I came to explore the idea, first suggested by Burnyeat (in Burnyeat 1984/7), that there is a deep philosophical connection between Clarke and Pyrrhonism as Frede understands it. In what follows, I explore that connection in a way that links ancient and contemporary concerns. My overarching contention is that contemporary epistemologists still have a great deal to learn from both Clarke and Pyrrhonism regarding skepticism and the fundamental twofold problem with which it confronts us.

It must be admitted that there is no reason to think that Clarke was interested in, let alone

[2] This debate spanned four articles, two by Frede (1979, 1984) and two by Burnyeat (1980, 1984/7). They are collected, along with a contemporary contribution from Jonathan Barnes (1982), in Burnyeat & Frede (eds.) 1998. Burnyeat's contributions are also reprinted in Burnyeat 2012, while Frede's appear in Frede 1987. Eichorn 2014 represents my own contribution to the debate.

influenced by, the ancient skeptical tradition at the time that he wrote the texts we'll be discussing.[3] His thought is rooted squarely in the tradition of mid-twentieth-century analytic philosophy. This might seem to vitiate against any interpretation of Clarke that links him to Pyrrhonism. I'm inclined to think, however, that it speaks rather to the enduring appeal of the way of approaching and responding to traditional philosophy that, in the West, first emerged fully formed in the schools of ancient Greek skepticism. It is my contention that, unbeknownst to its author, Clarke's work represents an important chapter in ancient skepticism's modern legacy.

What follows is not, however, intended as a contribution to the literature on ancient skepticism, though parts of it may (indeed, I hope they do) serve that function. My use of Pyrrhonism is subordinated to the task of developing an interpretation and assessment of Clarke's thought. As already indicated, the guiding idea is to explore connections between Clarke's thought and the interpretation of ancient skepticism developed by Michael Frede. Frede's interpretation is itself highly controversial. It lies beyond the scope of this project to broach, let alone attempt to settle, that controversy. It is enough for my purposes that ancient skepticism as Frede understands it is a possible position to adopt. Even Burnyeat, Frede's primary exegetical opponent, agrees on that much. Indeed, Burnyeat goes so far as to allow that Frede's is "an attractive interpretation" of skepticism; his objection to it is that it is "anachronistic" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 345). I happen to disagree with that assessment. (I discuss

[3] To be more precise, I should say that there is no reason to think that Clarke (at least pre-1973) was *knowingly* aware of or influenced by the ancient skeptical tradition. It seems highly unlikely to me that he had read or thought about ancient skeptical texts, such as Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* or Cicero's *Academica*. If, however, we view the ancient skeptical tradition as extending well beyond its Hellenistic and Roman cultural moments, even into the present day, then it is safe to say that, in one way or another, virtually *all* contemporary philosophers are heirs to the ancient skeptical tradition. I claim it is 'safe to say' this on account of the wealth of research on the topic of ancient Greek and Roman skepticism's impact on later philosophy—though I must leave it up to readers to decide for themselves the extent to which that research is convincing. (See 1.2, below.)

some reasons for doing so in 1.2, below.) For present purposes, however, Burnyeat's objection is immaterial.

Another connection between Clarke and Pyrrhonism—one that links directly to concerns in contemporary epistemology—is provided by the self-proclaimed 'Neo-Pyrrhonist' Robert Fogelin. For Fogelin, Pyrrhonism just is the position outlined by Frede (PR, 3–9; Fogelin 2004, 163–4). In his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (PR), Fogelin argues that, with respect to "the philosophical problem of justification... [t]hings are now largely as Sextus Empiricus left them almost two thousand years ago" (PR, 11). In PR, he targets the 'traditional' justificationalist strategies of foundationalism and coherentism. He later extends his critique, though only briefly, to include those he dubs the "New Epistemologists," who propose versions of externalism, contextualism, or one or another hybrid theory (Fogelin 2004). Despite that he acknowledges Clarke's influence on him (PR, vii) and that he adopts the Fredean interpretation of Pyrrhonism that Burnyeat links to Clarke, Fogelin does not himself associate Clarke with the Pyrrhonism he defends. The connection between Clarke and Pyrrhonism that Fogelin provides, then, is indirect, but in a way that is particularly useful for my purposes.

Fogelin is the central node in a network of influence that links back to Clarke both directly and indirectly by way of Frede.

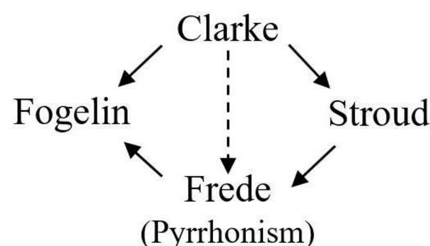

FIGURE 1: Network of Influence

Clarke influenced Fogelin and Stroud, but especially Stroud, whose work I view as an extended, multifaceted exploration of ideas and problems inspired by his close association with Clarke (see 0.2 and 1.1, below). As we'll see in 1.2, below, Frede's interpretation of ancient skepticism owes a debt to Stroud and, by extension, to Clarke at secondhand; it may even be that Clarke directly influenced Frede's views, for they were colleagues at Berkeley from 1971–76 (though Frede does not ever, to the best of my knowledge, mention Clarke in his writings). Finally, as we've seen, Frede influenced Fogelin by defining for him what Pyrrhonism is.

Fogelin's position in this network is useful for my purposes because in what follows I argue in favor of what I call 'the Pyrrhonian Reading' of Clarke. I contrast the Pyrrhonian Reading with what I call 'the Dissolutionist Reading,' which brings Clarke more or less into line with Stroud. In what follows, by 'Pyrrhonian' I mean a generally Fredean-style interpretation of the sort that Burnyeat rejects as anachronistic—the same sort of view endorsed by Fogelin. Thus, by virtue of his place in the network of influence pictured in Figure 1, Fogelin introduces back into contemporary epistemology, by way of Frede, a way of understanding skepticism that was itself partially inspired by Stroud and Clarke. I will argue that the Frede–Fogelin understanding of skepticism, derived to some degree from Clarke, is in fact closer to Clarke's own views than is Stroud's understanding of skepticism. By introducing his 'Neo-Pyrrhonism' into contemporary epistemology, Fogelin was thereby introducing that view to Stroud. If I'm right, then there's a small but important sense in which Fogelin was confronting Stroud with a reflection of Stroud and Clarke themselves, but at one remove, filtered through the lens of ancient skepticism. The fundamental argument of this work is that the reflection is, in the relevant respects, truer (of Clarke) than is its source (Stroud).

Fogelin's usefulness for my purposes goes further than that, however, for in the years

since the appearance of PR, Fogelin and Stroud have engaged in a pair of thematically overlapping debates about skepticism, Pyrrhonism, and the consequences of turning away from the traditional philosophical program.[4] The Stroud–Fogelin debate, then, can be read (albeit indirectly) as a debate between proponents of the two readings of Clarke I consider.

0.2 Clarke and the Clarkeans

Clarke's LS is remarkable for both its brilliance and its near-impenetrable density. It is, as Alexander Nehamas has said of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, "a work of dazzling obscurity" (Nehamas 1988, 46): individual ideas or passages dazzle, many suggesting elaborate lines of thought, yet the paper as a whole is shrouded in obscurity, frustrating attempts to recover from it a clear picture of Clarke's views. Unfortunately, Clarke published only one other article that relates to the topics discussed in LS. That paper is "Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects" (SS), which is a reworked fragment of his unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The Nature of Traditional Epistemology* (NTE).[5] Furthermore, the close relationship between the respective subject matters of SS and LS becomes apparent only when both are viewed in the broader context provided by NTE, his one book-length work. Given that NTE has never been published, readers of LS have had virtually nowhere to turn to supplement what Clarke has to say in LS.

In a sense, however, the opposite is true. In addition to the inherent quality of his work,

[4] The first round of debate centered on Fogelin's PR: see Stroud 1997, Fogelin 1997; Stroud returned to the topic, expanding on his 1997, in his 2004 article "Contemporary Pyrrhonism" (CP). The second round of debate centered on Stroud's *The Quest for Reality* (2000a): see Fogelin 2004, Stroud 2004b; Fogelin returned to the topic, further developing themes from his 2004, in Fogelin 2011. I will focus primarily on the first set of papers.

[5] Clarke's only other publication, "Reflections on Likeness of Meaning," which appeared in 1952, amounts to a critical notice on a then-recent article by Nelson Goodman ("On Likeness of Meaning"). As far as I can tell, it has no substantive connection to any of his later work.

Clarke is of interest because of the depth and breadth of his influence on a wide range of fellow philosophers, both students and colleagues. (I detail that influence in 1.1, below.) As Jean-Philippe Narboux notes, "Clarke's new forays into the question of 'the nature of traditional epistemology'... were made indirectly available through the writings of other philosophers, often personally acquainted with Clarke, and for whom Clarke's reinterpretation of the legacy of traditional epistemology was definitive."[6] The most prominent of the 'Clarkeans,' as I will call them, are Stanley Cavell and Barry Stroud, both of whom make no bones about the extent of their debt to Clarke, their friend and longtime colleague. Cavell writes that it was Clarke, whom he refers to as one of the two "finest philosophers of my generation" (Cavell 2010, 490), "from whose thoughts on skepticism ours [i.e., his and Stroud's] had both begun" (Cavell 2010, 496). In addition to dedicating his *Claim of Reason* to Clarke (and J.L. Austin), Cavell writes in that book's "Introduction" that "[m]y indebtedness to Thompson Clarke is so systematic and of such long standing that I want to give a little specification of it, particularly in view of his having to date published just two extracts from the work of his I have profited so much from"—those extracts being SS and LS (Cavell 1979, xxiv). Cavell goes on to explain that Clarke not only helped to guide his approach in Parts 1–3 of *The Claim of Reason*, much of which was initially worked out as early as Cavell's dissertation (submitted to Harvard in 1961), but that he also played a crucial role in inspiring the "fresh start [Cavell] needed in order to get on with Part Four" (Cavell 1979, xxv).

Clarke's influence on Stroud ran if anything even deeper, if only because Stroud's

[6] I would note that Narboux's claim that Peter Unger's *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* was "directly influenced" by Clarke is almost certainly false (Narboux 2014, 154 fn. 2). It does not seem that Unger was influenced by Clarke at all, either directly or indirectly. To begin with, I'm unaware of any evidence to support Narboux's claim; furthermore, Stroud told me in conversation, when I suggested (following Narboux) that Clarke influenced Unger's work, that this was a misapprehension on my part.

thinking remained, like Clarke's, along more narrowly philosophical lines than did that of Cavell, for whom "philosophy... essentially [partakes] of literature and theater and music" (Cavell 2010, 415). In the "Preface" to his watershed book *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (SPS), Stroud goes so far as to claim that the ideas presented in SPS reflect "our [i.e., Clarke and Stroud's] shared conception of the subject" (SPS, xiv). The preeminence of "[Clarke's] presence in both Stroud's and [Cavell's] texts" (Cavell 2010, 496) is such that even much of the secondary literature on these influential figures can be seen as bearing on Clarke's work.

Thus, readers of Clarke find themselves in a peculiar position, especially if they lack access to NTE. On the one hand, LS stands virtually alone as a statement of Clarke's views; on the other hand, those same views underlie and are, to one extent or another, actually further developed in works such as SPS and *The Claim of Reason*. On the one hand, there is very little secondary literature devoted to Clarke, and what there is makes no attempt to provide anything like a close reading of LS;[7] on the other hand, if even a tiny fraction of the secondary literature on Stroud or Cavell can be seen as engaging with Clarke's ideas, then there is at least potentially an enormous body of secondary literature relevant to Clarke.

It is my contention that although readers of Clarke are fortunate to have 'Clarkean' texts to consult in coming to grips with Clarke's difficult work, an overreliance on them ultimately obscures our view of Clarke himself. Like crutches, these works can help lever us onto our

[7] Currently, and with the exception of the present study, the only monograph on Clarke is the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Stéphane Cormier (Cormier 2012). I have been unable to consult that manuscript in its entirety, but I am familiar with its general shape and, unless I'm very much mistaken, Cormier does not attempt a close reading of LS. The best general introduction to Clarke is probably Gascoigne 2007, though I ultimately find his treatment of Clarke unsatisfactory in a number of respects. See also Narboux 2014 and Hamawaki 2014, which were published together in an issue of *The International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* devoted to Clarke. In my view, Narboux's paper leans too heavily on Cavell in interpreting Clarke, while Hamawaki's contribution does too little to provide textual evidence to support its reading of LS *as* a reading of LS.

exegetical feet, but must finally be cast aside if we're ever to walk upright. The quality or faithfulness of any interpretation of a text must ultimately be measured against the text itself. Even if some other work does faithfully echo a text, any determination that it does so must be predicated on an independent interpretation of the text in question. Moreover, there are good *prima facie* reasons for doubting that the works of Stroud or Cavell *are* reliable guides to Clarke's thinking. For one thing, despite their shared Clarkean roots, Stroud and Cavell do not agree with each other on the relevant topics and therefore cannot both agree with Clarke.[8] More generally, it is a mistake to assume that, given their close personal and professional relationships with Clarke, Stroud or Cavell *must* have gotten him right. Great familiarity with a person's work—even long face-to-face discussions with that person over many years—is insufficient to guarantee the accuracy or completeness of one's understanding of that person's views, especially when we're talking about complex philosophical views. It would be one thing if Clarke had himself endorsed any particular interpretation of him; but there is no evidence of any such endorsement.

Nor should we expect there to be. The idea of Clarke endorsing either Stroud's or Cavell's interpretation of him is inherently problematic, for, as Narboux points out, neither Stroud's nor Cavell's engagement with Clarke's work is "primarily exegetical" (Narboux 2014, 155). The vast majority—and all of the most important—Clarkean texts are themselves independent philosophical works that require independent interpretation and evaluation. Just as LS must ultimately be interpreted on its own, so must the Clarkean texts, for they are not simply

[8] Stroud's critical comments on *The Claim of Reason* are contained in Essay 5 of UHK. He also discusses both Clarke's and Cavell's diagnoses of skepticism (in LS and *Claim of Reason* respectively) in the final chapter of SPS. As for Cavell, his discussion in his memoir of the aftermath of the American Philosophical Association panel on *The Claim of Reason* in 1979, at which Stroud was one of two commentators and which Cavell describes as "a painful fiasco" (Cavell 2010, 495), provides a fascinating window onto the personal and professional relationship among Stroud, Clarke, and himself. What Cavell has to say there suggests to me that Clarke was uninterested in getting into the philosophical trenches with either of them. (See Cavell 2010, 496.)

(if at all) direct interpretations of Clarke's work. This points to another difficulty that attends leaning too heavily on Clarkean texts when interpreting LS: doing so threatens exponential growth of an already considerable interpretive burden. Clarkean texts are valuable resources, but as Narboux points out, they "do not make up for the neglect suffered by Clarke's own writings" (Narboux 2014, 155).

In what follows, I attempt to remedy this neglect by presenting an interpretation of LS that depends, beyond LS itself, not on Stroud's or Cavell's work, but on Clarke's own—specifically, his unpublished dissertation, NTE. That said, it would be bizarre were I to ignore Stroud and Cavell altogether, given their impact on both contemporary discussions of skepticism and interpretations of Clarke. I focus mostly on Stroud as offering (indirectly) a dissolutionist reading of Clarke. A separate or comparative treatment of Cavell would prove unwieldy, so I shall have relatively little to say about him. (I will, however, make important use of his idea of 'projecting' concepts into new contexts.) In adopting this approach, I am assuming that throughout his career Stroud has understood himself as pursuing, from various angles, the Clarkean project and as doing so in a Clarkean spirit. I believe this assumption is correct; but for my purposes it is no more essential that I get Stroud (let alone how Stroud reads Clarke) right than it is that I get Pyrrhonism right. What is important is that I make vivid and plausible both the Dissolutionist and the Pyrrhonian Readings of Clarke. As we'll see, these readings as I present them have much more in common than not. The fundamental points of interpretive divergence come very late, which is why the contrasting readings do not take center stage until the final chapter and assume general agreement regarding the interpretation of Clarke presented in earlier chapters.

0.3 Summary

I begin in Chapter 1 by discussing Clarke's influence on contemporary debates among epistemologists regarding external-world skepticism (1.1) and among classicists, historians of philosophy, and epistemologists interested in the ancient skeptical tradition (1.2). I then discuss two related distinctions that play a central role in what follows (1.3): the distinction between *dogmatic* and *classical* skepticism, and the distinction between *traditional* and *nontraditional* philosophy. The first distinction is borrowed from Michael Frede, who argues that modern ('Cartesian') skepticism is dogmatic, whereas ancient ('classical') skepticism is nondogmatic in the sense that classical skeptics, unlike dogmatic skeptics, are "not concerned to establish or to defend any [philosophical] position, let alone the position that nothing is, or can be, known" (Frede 1984, 201). To avoid confusion, I reserve, in keeping with contemporary usage, the term 'skepticism' for dogmatic skepticism; I refer to classical, nondogmatic skepticism as 'Pyrrhonism.' Thus, by 'Pyrrhonism' I mean for present purposes the interpretation of ancient skepticism advanced by Frede.

The second distinction (that between traditional and nontraditional philosophy) is crucial for Clarke, whose metaphilosophical reflections concern traditional philosophy almost exclusively. A hallmark of traditional philosophy is its attempt to position itself above or outside of everyday life in order to stand in judgment upon its judgments. A hallmark of nontraditional philosophy, on the other hand, is the privileging of the epistemic authority of everyday life ('common sense' or 'the ordinary') over that of traditional philosophizing. Nontraditional philosophy is to a large extent a response *to* traditional philosophy. Clarke is both a

nontraditional philosopher and a critic of existing nontraditional philosophies, particularly the sort of ordinary-language philosophy propounded by J.L. Austin, which he calls "Oxford philosophy" (NTE, 144). Traditional philosophical inquiries, Clarke argues, "have previously been deemed invalid for the wrong reasons" (NTE, 230). Furthermore, "Oxford philosophy has created, and is suffering under, the illusion that it has successfully answered Scepticism and explained how we can have empirical knowledge" (NTE, 243). Clarke presents an alternative diagnosis of traditional philosophy, one that maintains that skepticism both has much to teach us and leaves us with a "new, challenging problem" (LS, 769, ¶63). An underlying contention of this study is that Pyrrhonism is itself a nontraditional philosophy in the mold of commonsense and ordinary-language philosophies, but that it is to be preferred over those later attempts to 'overcome the tradition.' Seeing the connection between Pyrrhonism and later nontraditional philosophies is a first step toward seeing how Clarke might be interpreted through a Pyrrhonian lens.

I conclude Chapter 1 by introducing the three stages of the Clarkean project (1.4). I discuss those stages under the following rubrics: (*1*) the *lesson* of skepticism, (*2*) the *legacy* of skepticism, and (*3*) the post-skeptical *elucidation* of our empirical knowledge. The remaining chapters are structured around this progression, particularly (*1*) and (*2*), for Clarke does not himself carry out (*3*). Learning the lesson of skepticism requires that we develop (*a*) an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge, understood as a specimen of traditional epistemological inquiry, and (*b*) an assessment of the import of that challenge vis-à-vis our everyday, commonsensical commitments. This requires, in turn, an understanding of the nature of traditional philosophy (traditional epistemology in particular) and of its relation to what Clarke calls 'the plain' (which we can understand initially as 'the ordinary' or 'the everyday'). This is

because, for Clarke, (*a*) skepticism is the result of traditional philosophical inquiry, and (*b*) the defining characteristic of skepticism is its *paradoxicality*, i.e., the fact that it denies, or at least seems to deny, 'plain' truths of common sense.

In Chapter 2, I explore the distinction, which lies at the heart of LS, between the 'plain' and the 'philosophical,' focusing on the dialectical relation between the two. The plain, I argue, comes into view as such only when we attempt to step outside of it, that is, when we attempt to philosophize in a traditional manner. As a consequence, the plain is initially understood from a philosophical standpoint. From that standpoint, the plain appears to be 'restricted.' In Chapter 3, I turn to Clarke's account, contained in NTE, of the nature of traditional epistemological inquiry. Traditional epistemology, like traditional philosophizing in general, strives for absolute objectivity: "the philosophical is the pure" (LS, 760, ¶20). For this reason, it attempts to pursue its inquiries from outside of all everyday contexts; it attempts to make do with what Clarke refers to as mere 'skeletal' meaning. Clarke argues, however, that skeletal meaning is indeterminate. Therefore, pure philosophical questions, if properly understood, can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively and must be rejected. Traditional epistemologists think they can answer pure philosophical questions—and in a sense they can—but only because they surreptitiously 'contextualize' philosophical questions, thereby filling in the meanings of those questions. The way this is done, according to Clarke, is through the insertion within experience of 'mental planes' that, although they are artificial and so do not represent any objective fact of the matter, succeed in carving up the conceptual space in such a way that the (adulterated) questions can be answered. Moreover, given the mental planes, Clarke argues, skepticism reveals itself as the 'conditionally objectively determined' result of traditional epistemological inquiry. Indeed, skeptical conclusions become, on Clarke's account, *true* for the skeptic at the

phenomenological level, but only for as long as she sustains the effort of keeping the mental planes in place.

The first half Chapter 4 is devoted to summarizing and building upon the findings of Chapters 2 and 3 (4.1). In 4.1.1, I discuss Clarke's account of the traditional view of the relation between common sense and the everyday. In 4.1.2, I discuss Clarke's account of the Austinian view of that relation. In 4.1.3, I turn finally to Clarke's account of G.E. Moore's view. For Clarke, the philosophical interest of Moore's view lies in his bringing to light the category of *plain* common sense and hence of 'the plain' as distinct from both the philosophical and the everyday. The second half of Chapter 4 is devoted to unpacking the question with which Clarke opens LS (4.2): "What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage?" (LS, 754, ¶1). Barry Stroud refers to this as "Clarke's ground-floor question" (UHK, 137); Michael Williams deems it "the absolutely crucial question to ask about scepticism" (UD, 1). I discuss the near-consensus view that Clarke's answer is that the skeptic is examining "a large piece of philosophizing." While Clarke is clear that, on his account, the skeptic is examining philosophical common sense, and while, as philosophical, philosophical common sense is a product of philosophizing, it is not obvious that the propositions of philosophical common sense are precluded from counting among our most fundamental beliefs. I argue in 4.2.2–3 that there is something that deserves to be called a 'philosophy of everyday life.' That philosophy is *commonsense realism*. I tie our 'naïve' or 'prephilosophical' commitment to commonsense realism to a commitment to the absolute objectivity of the world. I argue in 4.2.4 that this commitment is rooted not in any theory or set of beliefs, but in what I call our 'common world-sense.' Though it is *philosophical* common sense that speaks to our common world-sense, our

most fundamental beliefs are, for Clarke, propositions of *plain* common sense.

In Chapter 5, I turn to the lesson of skepticism. I focus on §§4–5 of LS, though I also draw from NTE, showing how arguments presented in that earlier text (particularly Clarke's notion of 'mental planes') shed much-needed light on the more difficult and compact arguments contained in LS. Regarding the lesson of skepticism, Clarke tells us that "skeptical doubts, properly construed, reveal that [philosophical common sense] *and* its skeptical denial [i.e., philosophical skepticism] should both be erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29). In 5.1, I discuss §4 of LS, which details Clarke's account of the manner in which skeptics attempt to establish their skeptical conclusion. As a specimen of traditional philosophizing, the skeptical challenge proceeds by covertly contextualizing the question to which it is meant as a response. It does this by developing supposedly *philosophical* skeptical scenarios that nonetheless draw on *plain* counter-possibilities. Clarke argues that the skeptic fails to present a skeptical counter-possibility that is not itself plain in the sense of presupposing the possibility of plain knowing, which is the very thing that the skeptical conclusion claims we cannot have. Therefore, the skeptical scenarios developed by the skeptic (i.e., dreaming, evil deceivers, brains-in-vats) fail to support philosophical skepticism. These scenarios, understood 'philosophically' rather than 'plainly,' should be consigned to "the trash can" (LS, 765, ¶39).

In 5.2, I turn to §5 of LS, which contains Clarke's assessment of skepticism's import. It is here, in the penultimate and most difficult section of LS, that Clarke attempts to establish (*a*) not only that the skeptic's scenarios should be thrown "in the trash can," but also that philosophical skepticism itself should be "erased from the books," and (*b*) that philosophical common sense should likewise be erased from the books. He links the fates of philosophical skepticism and philosophical common sense. The root of the problem with philosophical

skepticism (i.e., why it is that the skeptic not only, as Clarke argued in §4 of LS, *has* not, but *can*not develop a coherent philosophical-skeptical scenario) is the indeterminacy of pure philosophical utterances as such, including the sort of 'pure' questions that philosophical common sense answers affirmatively and philosophical skepticism answers negatively. If "our most fundamental beliefs" *were*, as the traditional view has it, propositions of philosophical common sense, then reflection on the skeptic's inquiry would have devastating consequences for our rational right to our everyday, commonsensical commitments. But, Clarke argues, our most fundamental beliefs are propositions of *plain* common sense and are as such secure from philosophical assault.

Chapter 6 introduces two competing anti-skeptical strategies: dissolutionism and suspension of judgment, the latter of which is tied to Pyrrhonism. Dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies attempt to establish that skeptical problems are, at least in the final analysis, mere pseudo-problems. These strategies offer alternatives to attempts straightforwardly to *solve* skeptical problems. Dissolutionism comes in many shapes and sizes. My interest lies in a kind of dissolutionism that is closely related to the notions of philosophical 'diagnosis,' 'therapy,' and 'quietism'—though these terms are also employed in various ways in the literature. Pyrrhonism likewise pursues a 'therapeutic' strategy; but it leads not to dissolution and quietude, as I use those terms, but to suspension of judgment (*epochē*) and equanimity (*ataraxia*). Both dissolutionism and Pyrrhonism see themselves as returning us, in some sense, to prephilosophical everyday life. But whereas dissolutionism understands this movement as a return to a state of prephilosophical innocence in which our everyday epistemic practices are recognized as enjoying inherent (plain) epistemic authority, Pyrrhonism understands the return as a kind of *revolution*, one designed to purge everyday life of its 'naïve' dogmatism, thus

underlining the possibility that the world is, in reality, radically different from how we prephilosophically take it to be.

In 6.3–4, I lay out the central features of Frede's interpretation of Pyrrhonism. Of particular interest is his rejection of the modern 'Cartesian' understanding of the skeptical problematic, which is modeled on what I call the *subjectivist* appearance–reality distinction. I develop Frede's sketchy remarks on his preferred alternative model, which I call the *metaphysical* appearance–reality distinction. I argue for the superiority of the metaphysical model. The metaphysical model both contains, or is capable of containing, the subjectivist model and, it seems to me, better accords with many recent and contemporary articulations of the skeptical challenge—including, crucially, Clarke's. With the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction, I am rejecting the thesis advanced by Bernard Williams and Myles Burnyeat that idealism is a "kind of view... which we do not find in the ancient world" (Williams 1981, 5). On the metaphysical model, the fundamental task with which skepticism confronts us is not to escape from the prisons of our sealed-off minds, but to think our way beyond the world of our everyday experience to the mind-independent reality that is thought to underlie it.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I turn to the legacy of skepticism. I contrast a Dissolutionist Reading of Clarke that I associate with Barry Stroud with a Pyrrhonian Reading that I associate with Michael Frede and Robert Fogelin. The chapter is structured around the following question: For Clarke, what effect, if any, should the failure (dissolution or suspension) of the traditional-philosophical project have on our everyday epistemic attitudes? I begin by discussing a debate on this question between Stroud and Fogelin (7.1). Stroud argues that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project ought to have no effect on our everyday epistemic attitudes. He criticizes Fogelin for continuing to express dissatisfaction with the epistemic status of everyday

knowledge-claims, a dissatisfaction that, Stroud thinks, Fogelin's own Pyrrhonism ought to dispel. I argue that we find in Clarke a convincing explanation for Fogelin's 'Pyrrhonian' dissatisfaction and thereby a response to Stroud.

In 7.2, I discuss the competing interpretations of where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS vis-à-vis the philosophical. On the Dissolutionist Reading, Clarke has demonstrated that traditional philosophizing is incoherent or illusory. On the Pyrrhonian Reading, Clarke has demonstrated only that the traditional-philosophical slips our semantic grasp. In 7.3, I discuss the competing interpretations of the scope and disruptive potential of the 'new problem' that is the legacy of skepticism. On the Dissolutionist Reading, Clarke has shown us that the plain is secure from global skeptical assault and is therefore revealed as enjoying inherent (plain) epistemic authority. On the Pyrrhonian Reading, Clarke is understood as maintaining that, at least at the level of theory, our everyday epistemic practices and commitments remain in a deeply precarious state because still vulnerable to global skeptical assault in the form of *plain* skepticism. On the Dissolutionist Reading, a post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge is, while of profound philosophical interest, not itself required in order to establish the (plain) legitimacy of our plain knowing; with regard to skepticism, its purpose is to show in more detail or to provide a more dialectically effective account of the (plain) legitimacy of our everyday epistemic practices. On the Pyrrhonian Reading, a post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge *is* required in order to establish the (plain) legitimacy of our plain knowing.

On the Pyrrhonian Reading, which I defend, the legacy of dogmatic skepticism is, at least initially, classical skepticism: we remain in a state of suspension of judgment regarding the (plain) legitimacy of our plain knowing. I argue that, for Pyrrhonians, suspension of judgment on the traditional-philosophical project is supposed to impact our everyday epistemic attitudes by

freeing us of dogmatism. I link the sort of justification of the everyday provided by Pyrrhonism to Kant's notion, discussed near the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, of justification *cat´ anthrōpon* (i.e., according to human beings), which he contrasts with justification *cat´ alēthian* (i.e., according to the truth). The same justificatory strategy is endorsed by the ancient Pyrrhonian Sextus Empiricus.

In closing, I suggest that perhaps Clarke's 'new' problem is not the sort of thing that admits of a once-and-for-all answer or solution. Perhaps the Pyrrhonian association of skepticism with 'continuing the inquiry' points to a forever-ongoing activity. If that's the case, then Clarke has left us at the end of LS in a permanent, not a merely temporary, state of suspension of judgment.

Chapter 1

Thompson Clarke and the Skeptical Tradition

> The three papers Clarke had (has) published, whose intellectual quality is distinct and admired by a small but, however slowly, growing number of young philosophers, moved further and further into the past...
>
> – Stanley Cavell, *Little Did I Know* (369)

1.1 Clarke and the "New Skepticism"

What follows is the first monograph in English devoted to the thought of Thompson Clarke. Looked at one way, it's not surprising that Clarke has received such scant attention from the philosophical community. He published only three articles. Of those three, only his final one, "The Legacy of Skepticism" (LS), is even remotely well-known. Though it has rightly been called a "masterpiece,"[1] LS is extraordinarily dense, brimming with gnomic insights and elusive implications. Bits and pieces of it are often cited and used as jumping-off points for discussions or even for entire books (as with Michael Williams's *Unnatural Doubts* and Duncan Pritchard's *Epistemic Angst*), but until now no one has undertaken anything like a thorough statement of what Clarke himself was getting at in LS.

Looked at another way, however, it *is* surprising—astonishing, even—that Clarke's work has been so relatively neglected, for he exerted a profound influence over a generation of students and colleagues at Harvard and U.C. Berkeley. The two most conspicuous examples are Barry Stroud and Stanley Cavell, the latter of whose *The Claim of Reason* is dedicated to Clarke

[1] Narboux 2014, 154.

and J.L. Austin.[2] Cavell, who describes Clarke as one of "the finest philosophers of my generation" (Cavell 2010, 490), was a close friend of Clarke's, and his work on skepticism is to a large extent an attempt to come to terms with Clarke's rejection of ordinary-language solutions to skepticism, particularly those advanced by Austin in his paper "Other Minds."[3] Clarke's influence on Stroud, who like Cavell was a close friend of Clarke's, ran even deeper. In the "Preface" to his *The Significance of Philosophical Skepticism* (SPS), Stroud writes,

> In a quite special relation to this book stands my friend and colleague Thompson Clarke. It is simply impossible for me fully to identify and acknowledge my debt to him over the years... I have been too close to his work over the last twenty years to measure what I have got from him... It is no exaggeration at all to say that my whole way of thinking about philosophy... has been affected by him in untold ways, and I am happy to have the chance to acknowledge that here... I would be pleased if what I have presented here of our shared conception of the subject helps make his own quite special contributions to these questions more available to the philosophical world. (SPS, xiii–xiv)

Stroud makes a point of specifying Clarke's relation to or influence on each chapter of SPS individually.

Clarke is of interest, then, not only on his own account, but also because of the extent of his influence on the contemporary philosophical conversation surrounding skepticism, philosophy, and their relation to the 'ordinary' or the 'common' or the 'plain'—what I will usually refer to as 'the everyday' or 'everyday life.' These are issues that strike to the very heart of the philosophical enterprise, and I believe that we still have much to learn about them from Clarke. To be sure, Clarke's work is difficult, but it amply rewards the effort required to come to

[2] Cavell writes, "My indebtedness to Thompson Clarke is so systematic and of such long standing that I want to give a little specification of it, particularly in view of his having to date published just two extracts from the work of his I have profited so much from"—those extracts being SS and LS (Cavell 1979, xxiv).

[3] See Cavell 1979, xvi; Cavell 2010, 306, 357–367.

grips with it—a claim I hope the following chapters will substantiate.

Who was Thompson Morgan Clarke? He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard in 1962. By that time, he had already spent a year teaching at the University of Chicago (1957) and had found a home for himself in the philosophy department at Berkeley, first as a Visiting Assistant Professor (1958–9), then as a full member of the faculty (1960 onward).[4] Though he would live in Berkeley for the rest of his life, he withdrew more and more from academia over the course of the 1970s and '80s. Stanley Cavell writes quite eloquently of Clarke's impatience or dissatisfaction with professional philosophy and the demands of academic life in general.[5] In conversation, Barry Stroud told me that Clarke "hated teaching"—although he was apparently very good at it, as evidenced by the testimonials quoted in fns. 8, 9, and 11–13, below. Though he continued to pursue his philosophical interests, Clarke stopped working with students entirely in 1987 and grew increasingly reclusive—at least when it came to other philosophers—as the years went by. He passed away in 2012, having published nothing for forty years.

Alongside Stroud and Cavell, Clarke stood at the forefront of what has been called, misleadingly, "the New Skepticism of the 1970s" (Lycan 2001, 35).[6] That movement has rightly been said to have had "a serious impact on the philosophical scene" (Johnson 1978, 276), an impact that remains very much in evidence today. I say that the term 'New Skepticism' is misleading because the majority of the so-called 'new skeptics' did not endorse skepticism—or,

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[4] See Stroud 2012. Besides Stroud 2012, most of the biographical information I have on Clarke derives from Stanley Cavell's memoir (Cavell 2010). See also Wolff 2010.

[5] See Cavell 2010, 368, 415, 491.

[6] Michael Williams has also described this movement as a "New Scepticism," a characterization he takes to be synonymous with his calling its members "New Humeans" (UD, xiv). For a statement of Clarke's importance to that movement, see Burnyeat 1984/7, 93, who refers to "the paper which has contributed more than any other single factor to keeping alive an interest in scepticism during these days of exact philosophy, Thompson Clarke's famous paper 'The Legacy of Skepticism.'"

at least, they did not see themselves as doing so. Neither Cavell, Stroud, nor Clarke were or have ever been, by their own lights, skeptics. The same is true of Keith Lehrer, despite that he published an influential article in 1971 entitled "Why Not Skepticism?" Nor, I believe, is John Kekes a skeptic, despite that he published an article in 1975 entitled "The Case for Scepticism." The most prominent self-proclaimed skeptic among this first wave of 'new-skeptical' philosophers is Peter Unger, who published "A Defense of Skepticism" in 1971 and would unveil his *Ignorance: A Case For Scepticism* four years later.[7]

Properly understood, the "New Skepticism of the 1970s" was not so much an outbreak of skepticism as it was a movement within analytic philosophy toward a renewed engagement with and appreciation of the power and importance of traditional skeptical challenges to knowledge. Articulating this appreciation, Keith Lehrer writes,

> The theory of justification we shall ultimately defend may strike some as closely aligned with skepticism. We shall examine this charge, but even here it should be noted that our sympathies with the writings of the philosophical skeptics of the past are strong. Too often contemporary writers seek the most effective method for liquidating the skeptic without asking whether his teaching may not be of more importance than his mode of burial. Since the most brilliant philosophers of past and present have been skeptics of one form or another, it would behoove those who study skepticism to consider whether these skeptics have some truth in their grasp. We claim they do. (Lehrer 1990, 15; cf. 179–81)

As this passage suggests, many of the non-skeptics among the 'new skeptics' are, as we might put it, *halfway-skeptics*. Halfway-skeptics think that full-blown skeptics "have some truth in their grasp." There is, as Cavell says, a "truth of skepticism" (Cavell 1979, 48) or a "moral of skepticism" (Cavell 1979, 241). Clarke makes much the same point when he speaks of "the depth of truth in traditional epistemology" (NTE, 231; see 1.4, below). Of the halfway-skeptics,

[7] See also Rozeboom 1967, Oakley 1976, Johnson 1978.

many belong to what Brian Ribeiro calls "the half-true tradition," which "[finds] skepticism to be, in a manner of speaking, *half-true*" (Ribeiro 2004, 715). According to the half-true tradition Ribeiro has in mind, "[s]kepticism is right, *but only from some perspective*, *AND*"—here we get the part that distinguishes this brand of halfway-skeptic from others—"the perspective from which [skepticism] is right is *not our ordinary perspective*—the perspective from which it is right is *nonordinary* or *unnatural*" (Ribeiro 2004, 717). The insight into the 'nonordinariness' or 'unnaturalness' of the skeptical—really, the traditional-philosophical—standpoint is at the root of this segment of the halfway-skeptical tradition's anti-skeptical strategy. Tellingly, the 'half-truthers' Ribeiro identifies are: Cavell; Stroud; Thomas Nagel, who was strongly influenced by Clarke[8] and who, as Ribeiro points out, may well think that "skepticism is *much more* than half-true" (Ribeiro 2004, 716); Marie McGinn, who was likewise influenced by Clarke[9]; and Michael Williams, who in the "Preface" to *Unnatural Doubts* (UD) thanks both "Thompson Clarke for his challenging account of scepticism's deep sources" and Stroud for "his penetrating discussions of the significance of scepticism" in SPS, which "made me see my erstwhile approach to the problem as facile, and so forced me to rethink my position from the ground up" (UD, xxii).

Though Clarke is best known for having had something interesting to say about skepticism, it is misleading to think that skepticism was his central philosophical concern. As

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[8] In addition to the acknowledgements, Clarke is mentioned—together with Stroud—in Nagel 1986, 73 fn. 5. In an earlier book, Nagel writes, "I am aware that skepticism about the external world is widely thought to have been refuted, but I have remained convinced of its irrefutability since being exposed at Berkeley to Thompson Clarke's largely unpublished ideas on the subject" (Nagel 1979, 19 fn. 1; cf. Nagel 1979, 27).

[9] McGinn writes, "I first became interested in the problem of scepticism when I sat in on a seminar given by Thompson Clarke in Berkeley in the Autumn Term 1976. Watching him display the unsatisfactoriness of all the familiar arguments against the sceptic, on the one hand, taught me a real respect for the problem, while, on the other hand, his own concern to construct a reply with none of the dogmatic or verificationist defects of the standard arguments had the effect of persuading me that there must be a way out of the muddle. In the following pages I present the reply to the sceptic that I have developed in thinking about the problem more or less continually since I attended Clarke's seminar" (McGinn 1989, "Preface").

we'll see, his interest in skepticism grew out of a more general interest in the nature of philosophy itself. This progression is signaled in the titles of his two major works: *The Nature of Traditional Epistemology* and "The Legacy of Skepticism." As its title suggests, NTE is a work of metaphilosophy, that is, the theory or 'account' of philosophy itself. What is philosophy, and how is it pursued? What do we hope to gain by philosophizing, and what lessons should we learn from our perennial dissatisfaction with the outcome? Published a decade after NTE was submitted to Harvard, LS combines Clarke's metaphilosophical concerns with a sophisticated view of the power and importance of skepticism.

Clarke was driven out of philosophy proper, as it were, and into metaphilosophy by concerns about the nature and status of 'everyday life.'[10] He was particularly concerned (as were his main targets of criticism, J.L. Austin and G.E. Moore) with the status of the knowledge-claims we make in the course of our everyday lives. There are two central contentions running through NTE and LS. The first is that what I will call 'nontraditional' philosophers, such as ordinary-language philosophers (exemplified for Clarke by Austin) and commonsense philosophers (exemplified for Clarke by G.E. Moore), fail to appreciate not only the nature of traditional philosophy (and traditional philosophy's doppelganger, skepticism), but also the nature of the 'common' or the 'ordinary' itself. The second central contention is that it is because of their failure to understand traditional philosophy, everyday life, and their relation to each other that the 'refutations,' 'dissolutions,' or 'diagnoses' of skepticism offered by earlier nontraditional philosophers miss the mark, thereby failing in their attempts to vindicate everyday knowledge-claims. Clarke attempts to diagnose the failures of earlier nontraditional

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[10] In Clarke 1952, Clarke is clearly engaged in 'philosophy proper.' That paper is on a topic deep in the trenches of the semantic theory of its day and connects hardly if at all with what Clarke is doing in NTE and LS. I'll have nothing more to say about it in what follows.

philosophers in order to point the way forward. Doing so requires getting a handle on the nature of skepticism, philosophy, everyday life, and their interrelations. For Clarke, none of these can be properly understood independently of the others, for skepticism and philosophy are two sides of the same coin, while everyday life is shot through with substantive philosophical views—or so I shall argue.

Clarke's influence extends far beyond the philosophers I've mentioned. His thinking and teaching about skepticism and its relation to everyday life helped to shape in various ways such works as Charles Guignon's *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*,[11] John Richardson's *Existential Epistemology*,[12] Charles Travis's *The Uses of Sense*,[13] and Fogelin's *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*.[14] Given the breadth of his firsthand influence, it's not surprising that his influence is discernible even in philosophers who do not cite him and perhaps never read his work. Prominent early examples include, arguably, Bernard Williams's *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*[15] and P.F. Strawson's *Skepticism and Naturalism*.[16]

[11] Guignon lists Clarke as one of "my teachers who shaped my philosophical outlook" (Guignon 1983, 5). He also writes, "For my appreciation of the importance of the problem of skepticism, as well as my characterization of the stages of the skeptic's inquiry and the structure of epistemological arguments, I am deeply indebted to Thompson Clarke's lectures and seminars at Berkeley in 1970–1972" (Guignon 1983, 2 fn. 3).

[12] Richardson writes, "To [Clarke] I owe a certain basic conception of the nature and limits of epistemology, which has shaped the overall structure of this book, and guided some of its concrete arguments" (Richardson 1986, vi).

[13] Travis writes that he was "greatly inspired, and largely set in my present philosophical ways, by... Thompson Clarke and Hans Herzberger. Clarke gave me an appreciation of Wittgenstein and of Austin, and he also gave me some form of the idea which appears in this work as S-use sensitivity," that is, the idea of *occasion-sensitivity* that went on to become one of, if not *the*, central idea in Travis's work. Cf. Travis 2013 and Travis 2008, 11, 14.

[14] Fogelin writes that "hearing, then reading, Thompson Clarke's 'Legacy of Skepticism'" helped to confirm his growing dissatisfaction in the 1960s with ordinary-language resolutions of philosophical problems (Fogelin 1994, vii).

[15] Compare Williams's characterization of 'pure inquiry' with Clarke's discussion of the nature of philosophy at LS, 760–1. Given (*a*) LS's repeated use of the words 'pure' and 'purity' to describe philosophy and (*b*) the fact that Williams 1978 is dedicated to Stanley and Cathy Cavell, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Williams's conception of 'pure inquiry' may have derived in some measure, however indirectly, from Clarke.

[16] Clarke knew Strawson from his time at Oxford, but there is no evidence to suggest that Strawson 1983 was

Others—a prominent example being Michael Williams—appear to have found their way to Clarke through their reading of Stroud, Cavell, and others. Williams's *Unnatural Doubts* introduces its 'theoretical-diagnostic' approach to skepticism by quoting (misquoting, actually) the question with which Clarke opens LS, a question Williams refers to as "the absolutely crucial question to ask about scepticism" (UD, 1), namely, "What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage?" (LS, 754, ¶1). Indeed, it's not much of an exaggeration to say that Williams's catalog of "the New Humeans," whom he takes as his foils in *Unnatural Doubts* (Stroud, Nagel, and Cavell, with the "uneasy" addition of Strawson), could just as easily—and perhaps more accurately—be called "the Clarkeans."[17]

More recently, Clarke's influence is evident in such works as Neil Gascoigne's *Scepticism*, Annalisa Coliva's *Moore and Wittgenstein*, and Duncan Pritchard's *Epistemic Angst*, which opens with the identical misquote of Clarke that kicks off Williams's *Unnatural Doubts*.[18]

1.2 Clarke and Ancient Skepticism

Nor does the story of Clarke's reach end at the boundaries of contemporary

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directly influenced by Clarke. Even so, Clarke's influence is clearly present at secondhand in Strawson's discussion of Stroud. See esp. Strawson 1983, 5–6, where clear traces can be seen of such Clarkean themes from LS as what Clarke calls 'verbal twins' and the related distinction between 'the plain' and 'the philosophical.'

[17] UD, 10–17. Williams later adds Fogelin to his list of 'neo-Humeans' (see Williams 1999). There are two other groupings of philosophers that are striking given their members' relation to Clarke. The first is provided by Richard Bett, who argues that for Stroud, Nagel, and Bernard Williams, "the reality of sceptical threats is bound up with some version of an objective, or 'absolute', conception of reality" (Bett 1993, 336). The second is the "half-true tradition" described by Brian Ribeiro, mentioned in the main body of the text above.

[18] See also Kingwell 1995, Ribeiro 2004 and 2006, Sayward 2005, Marušić 2008, Narboux 2014, and Hamawaki 2014.

epistemology. Virtually simultaneous with the renewal of interest in 'modern,' 'Cartesian' skepticism among analytic philosophers in the 1970s came a renewal of interest in ancient skepticism among classicists and historians of philosophy.[19] For classicists, the question of how to understand ancient skepticism philosophically—whether the Academic skepticism of Cicero, the Pyrrhonism of Sextus Empiricus, or the positions of their forebears—took center stage with the seminal debate of the late 1970s and early '80s between Michael Frede and Myles Burnyeat.[20] Work on ancient skepticism, especially Pyrrhonism, has flourished ever since.[21] As was perhaps inevitable, it did not take long for these separate developments to intersect. An early example is Oliver Johnson's *Skepticism and Cognitivism* (1978), which brings together extended discussions of skepticism in antiquity with discussions of the skeptical (or halfway-skeptical) views of Lehrer and Unger.

Clarke occupies a fascinating place at the intersection of contemporary epistemology and work on ancient skepticism. In his final riposte against Frede's take on the ancient skeptics, Burnyeat argues that Frede cannot be right because he, Frede, interprets the ancient skeptics in a uniquely modern way. Therefore, Burnyeat argues, Frede's interpretation, though it is an "attractive" one, is "anachronistic" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 345). The (supposedly) modern

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[19] Early examples are Hallie 1968, Naess 1968, and Stough 1969. In separating out 'classicists' and 'historians of philosophy,' I mean to distinguish primarily between those focused on ancient Greek and Roman sources and those working on the history of skepticism in later periods. In particular, the 'historians' I have in mind belong, in a more or less 'orthodox' way, to the contemporary field of historically oriented skepticism studies forged by Charles Schmitt, Ezequiel de Olaso, Giorgio Tonelli, and especially Richard Popkin. (See Schmitt 1972; Popkin 1980, 1992, 2003; Popkin, de Olaso & Tonelli (eds.) 1997.) Popkin and Co.'s historical story begins with the influence of Cicero and Sextus Empiricus on the philosophical, theological, and sociopolitical upheavals of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Partly in response to the emphasis placed by Popkin and Co. on the 'rediscovery' of ancient skepticism in Western Europe in the sixteenth century, others have pushed the story further back. On this, see Lagerlund (ed.) 2010 and Heck 2014. Classicists and Popkinite historians come together in the seminal collection Burnyeat (ed.) 1983. For an up-to-date overview of the skeptical tradition that brings together the work of classicists, Popkinites, and contemporary philosophers, see Machuca & Reed (eds.) 2018.

[20] Frede 1979, 1984; Burnyeat 1980, 1984/7.

[21] See Bett 2018 and Machuca 2019.

innovation that Burnyeat has in mind is what he calls "insulation" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 316–7): the view that the beliefs, claims, and practices of everyday life are 'insulated' from philosophical doubts such that (*a*) "philosophical scepticism cannot be straightforwardly refuted by common sense" and (*b*) "common sense cannot be refuted by philosophical scepticism" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 317). In other words, what Clarke will call 'the plain' and 'the philosophical' are, as Clarke puts it, "unmixable types" (LS, 764, ¶33) despite that plain and philosophical questions, claims, etc., can be inscribed using identical words that have, at least along one semantic axis, identical meanings (LS, 759, ¶15; NTE, 42). Clarke calls such "typographically" (NTE, 39) identical questions, claims, etc., "verbal twins" (LS, 756, ¶7). "[W]e find," Burnyeat writes, "that [Clarke's] starting-point, the foundation of the whole thing, is the thesis that the judgements and knowledge-claims we make in ordinary life are immune (that is his word) from philosophical doubt" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 317). Frede's interpretation of ancient skepticism is anachronistic, according to Burnyeat, because 'insulation' of this sort did not enter the philosophical landscape until the appearance of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: "It was Kant who persuaded philosophy that one can be, simultaneously and without contradiction, an empirical realist and a transcendental idealist" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 343). With this "distinction of levels, Kant thought to refute scepticism once and for all. The effect, however, was that scepticism itself moved upstairs to the transcendental level" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 344). In wrapping up his breathtakingly ambitious historical story, Burnyeat brings back Clarke: "I say this because I find it interesting to notice how Thompson Clarke's sceptic repeats some of what Kant said, but in a quite different tone of voice." Why a different tone of voice? Because Clarke's skeptic, unlike Kant's, is a *transcendental* skeptic. As such, he is attempting to challenge not "the plain way" of making certain statements, but only the "philosophical way" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 344).

Burnyeat draws two main conclusions from his wide-ranging reflections. First,

> ... Clarke's skeptic... [along with] most of the references to 'the sceptic' in modern philosophical literature... has no historical reality. It is a construction of the modern philosophical imagination... [W]hen skepticism goes transcendental, the expression 'the sceptic' has to lose the historical reference it still carries in Hume, its connection with what certain historical figures actually said and thought. (Burnyeat 1984/7, 344)

Or, as he had put it a year earlier,

> Kant brought the skeptical tradition to an end. Not that there is nothing left for contemporary philosophers to say about various kinds of skepticism. But the skepticisms they are talking about are a free creation of the modern philosophical imagination. They no longer descend from the ancient lineage of Pyrrho and the Academy. (Burnyeat 1983, 3)

It follows—and this is Burnyeat's second main conclusion—that any attempt to read the ancient skeptics in a 'Clarkean' (i.e., post-Kantian) way is doomed to anachronism, for "of course it is true that when Sextus wrote Kant had not existed" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 345) and that therefore, if Burnyeat is right, insulation "was not yet invented" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 318).

A book—indeed, an entire critical history of Western philosophy—could be written in response to Burnyeat's paper. Suffice it to say that I remain unconvinced. Indeed, it seems to me that Burnyeat is fundamentally mistaken at each and every stage of his argument, beginning with his understanding of 'insulation' and of ancient skepticism. For present purposes, I will confine myself to the following remarks regarding this fascinating and problematic paper.

To begin with, it's worth noting (*a*) that Burnyeat's reading of Kant derives from Barry Stroud, (*b*) that Stroud's reading of Kant was largely inspired by Clarke, and (*c*) that connecting Stroud's reading of Kant to Clarke no doubt occurred to Burnyeat as a result of the time he spent in the early 1980s at Berkeley, where he met Clarke. "This paper," Burnyeat writes, "owes debts

to... the writings of Barry Stroud, and Burton Dreben's Howison Lectures at Berkeley in 1981," lectures that Clarke attended (Burnyeat 1984/7, 123 fn. 49).[22] Burnyeat tells us that "[t]hese sketchy remarks [on Kant] owe much" to Stroud's contribution to the anthology *The Skeptical Tradition*, edited by Burnyeat (Burnyeat 1984/7, 122 fn. 47). That contribution, "Kant and Skepticism," was incorporated a year later into Chapter 4 of SPS. In the paper's final footnote, Stroud writes that he is "grateful... to Thompson Clarke for my appreciation of the importance for epistemology of something like Kant's distinction between the transcendental and the empirical" (Stroud 1983, 434 fn. 11). A year later, in the "Preface" to SPS, he writes that his and Clarke's

> extended discussion of issues raised in that paper [i.e., LS] eventually gave me a grip on the distinction between what he [i.e., Clarke] calls 'the plain' and 'the philosophical' which in one form or another runs throughout this book. It then helped me to understand Kant's notion of the 'transcendental' as I try to explain it in Chapter Four. (SPS, xiii)

Burnyeat is surely on to something, then, in finding an affinity between Kant's empirical–transcendental distinction and Clarke's plain–philosophical distinction. I also believe that he's right to find affinities between Frede's interpretation of ancient skepticism and Clarke. In his second paper on ancient skepticism (Frede 1984), Frede, who taught at Berkeley from 1971–76, thanks, among others, Barry Stroud (Frede 1984, 369 fn. 12). Burnyeat, meanwhile, tells us that *his* second paper on ancient skepticism (Burnyeat 1984/7) "began as a further contribution to" the debate represented in Frede 1979 and Burnyeat 1980, but that his "opponent... has moved to a new position" and that Burnyeat 1984/7 "joins with Frede's current concern to see the whole

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[22] In commenting on an earlier draft of this chapter, Barry Stroud confirmed that Clarke attended Dreben's lectures. Dreben was "an old friend of Clarke's from Harvard undergraduate days and a classmate during their qualifying examinations" (Cavell 2010, 319). Stroud also informed me that, *contra* Burnyeat, the lectures Dreben delivered were *not* the Howison Lectures.

issue in a broader historical framework extending into modern times" (Burnyeat 1984/7 321, fn. 13). It strikes me as plausible that Burnyeat's charge against Frede—i.e., that Frede's reading of ancient skepticism is 'Clarkean' and therefore anachronistic—arose not just from historico–philosophical reflection on Burnyeat's part, but also from the fact that he *knew* that Frede 1984 was influenced by Stroud (and hence by Clarke at secondhand, if not directly).

The principal connection between Stroud/Clarke and Frede is, as suggested by the passage from SPS quoted above, that between Clarke's plain–philosophical distinction and what Frede refers to as the appearance–reality distinction. This latter distinction lies at the heart of Frede's metaphilosophical account: "dogmatic philosophy creates a global contrast between appearance and truth or reality" (Frede 1984, 210). According to Frede, this contrast introduces a schism between the epistemic practices of philosophers and those characteristic of everyday life; it does so by raising the standards of knowledge in philosophical contexts far beyond the standards that hold in everyday life: "in ordinary life and in ordinary language we do not subject ourselves to these [philosophical] standards" (Frede 1984, 211). For Frede, one thing that distinguishes 'classical' from 'dogmatic' skepticism is that the classical skeptic will "question not only the assumptions arrived at within [the dogmatists'] framework, but the very framework itself" (Frede 1984, 222). At the heart of that framework lies the 'global' appearance–reality distinction (Frede 1984, 221). Rejection of the dogmatic framework allows for the possibility of viewing everyday epistemic practices as being perfectly in order—but only *qua* everyday practices (i.e., not as *new dogmas*). In this way, descriptive claims such as "[w]hat we expect from somebody who knows varies enormously from context to context" (Frede 1984, 222) can be accepted as having an 'everyday' kind of normative authority. As we'll see, this questioning of the framework itself (appearance–reality, plain–philosophical) is central to Clarke's account

of the legacy of skepticism. It is in this sense especially that Clarke ends up looking a lot like Frede's ancient skeptic—or, if Burnyeat is right, vice versa.

It seems to me, however, that Burnyeat's insightful bringing-together of Sextus, Kant, and Clarke has precisely the opposite effect to the one he intended. Though Burnyeat links Frede's interpretation of Sextus to Clarke in an attempt to discredit that interpretation, I find that his arguments reinforce the notion that a philosophical kinship exists between Clarke and Pyrrhonism. If it could be shown, as I believe it can, (*a*) that Burnyeat mischaracterizes Pyrrhonism, (*b*) that he also mischaracterizes, by way of his notion of 'insulation,' Clarke's plain–philosophical distinction, and (*c*) that a correct understanding of Pyrrhonism and of Clarke's distinction would undermine the anachronism charge against Frede, then the way would be open to exploring the affinities between Clarke and Pyrrhonism, beginning perhaps with the sort of affinities suggested by Frede's "attractive interpretation" of Sextus Empiricus.[23] Indeed, Stroud himself suggests as much:

> The contrast implicit in [ancient] sceptical practice[24] between 'appearances' and 'the way things are' is... perhaps one version of an elusive distinction [i.e., Clarke's plain–philosophical distinction] I examine from various angles in what

[23] Regarding (*a*), see Part I of Eichorn 2014. For an excellent summary and assessment of the Frede–Burnyeat debate, see Brennan & Roberts 2018, Sec. 4. I address (*b*) in subsequent chapters, though not principally with reference to Burnyeat. For a direct critique, see Marušić 2008, 62–3. Regarding (*c*), a good place to start is Bett 1993, which, though it fails to challenge Burnyeat's reading of Kant and uncritically echoes his misreading of Clarke, makes a convincing case that "a general distinction between ancient and contemporary philosophers" of the sort Burnyeat proposes "cannot be made out" (Bett 1993, 381). See also Grgić 2011, 86 ff. and Eichorn 2014, 130–3, though my quick treatment of Clarke in that section requires considerable qualification. Brennan & Roberts conclude (correctly, in my view) that Burnyeat "has no argument to the conclusion [that Sextus did not 'insulate by level'], other than the claim that no one prior to Kant insulated by level. And this indirect argument from anachronism simply begs the question against Frede: Kant was not the first person to insulate by level if Sextus did it before him" (Brennan & Roberts 2018, 136).

[24] It is unclear what Stroud means by "implicit" and "practice." There is nothing *implicit* about the appearance–reality distinction in ancient skepticism; rather, it is explicitly and absolutely fundamental both to ancient skepticism and, I would argue (with Stroud—see Stroud 2000a, 3), to philosophy generally. I'm also not sure what he's getting at in specifying that this distinction is "implicit" in skeptical "practice." He might be saying that the appearance–reality distinction is implicit in the ancient-skeptical "way of life" (SPS, vii); but (*a*) it is *not* confined to their way of life, and (*b*) it is no more "implicit" in their way of life than it is in their philosophizing, as Sextus makes clear when he writes that "the criterion [of action] of the skeptical way of life is what appears" (PH, 1.22).

> follows. My concerns are to that extent continuous with those of ancient skepticism. (SPS, vii)

On this point, I could not agree with Stroud more heartily.[25] In fact, if we accept, with Stroud, that the Kantian distinction is a version of Clarke's plain–philosophical distinction (or vice versa), then the further philosophical connection between Clarke's distinction and the ancient appearance–reality distinction becomes virtually indisputable, for as both Giorgio Tonelli and John Christian Laursen have convincingly argued, the Kantian distinction between *phenomena* (roughly, appearances) and *noumena* (roughly, reality), to which the empirical–transcendental distinction is closely tied, was actually borrowed by Kant from the ancient skeptical tradition, specifically from Sextus Empiricus.[26]

If all this is on the right track, then far from bringing the ancient skeptical tradition to an end, as Burnyeat contends, Kant is better understood as having ushered that tradition into a new stage of development. There is little question in my mind that, at the very least, this makes better sense of the historical record. In the same year in which the first version of Burnyeat 1984/7 appeared, the renowned historian of skepticism Richard Popkin demolished, in person, Burnyeat's contentions regarding Kant's place in the skeptical tradition. Popkin recalls that

> at the Woffenbüttel conference [*Skepticism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, 1984], Myles Burnyeat had expressed the opinion that after Kant's achievement, skepticism had ceased to be a philosophic problem. I replied that Kant's solution lasted only a few weeks until it was attacked and skeptically

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[25] Stroud himself invokes an appearance–reality distinction throughout SPS. For example, he describes "the position we would all be in if Descartes's conclusion as he understands it were correct" (SPS, 31) this way: "if he is right, Descartes has lost the whole world. He knows what he is experiencing, he knows how things appear to him, but he does not know whether he is in fact sitting by the fire with a piece of paper in his hand" (SPS, 12). On the Cartesian picture, "[w]e are confined to the appearances we can never know to match or to deviate from the imperceptible reality that is forever denied us" (SPS, 34).

[26] See Tonelli 1967, 72–3; Laursen 1992, Ch. 8. I would note that Tonelli's claim that "we have found no grounds for assuming that Kant had even read Sextus Empiricus" (Tonelli 1967, 87 fn. 2) has been superseded by Laursen & Popkin 1998.

> challenged by Maimon, Hamman, Schulze and others. Burnyeat was surprised and asked if anyone but Popkin knew about these figures. (Popkin 1998, xi)

Anyone with a serious interest in the history of skepticism should find it astonishing that Burnyeat, editor of *The Skeptical Tradition,* would *fail* to know the names of Maimon, Hamman, and Schulze, the last of whom published his influential skeptical tract under the pseudonym 'Aenesidemus' after the founder of Pyrrhonism.[27] At least as astonishing as this is his evident failure to appreciate the role that ancient skepticism played in shaping the views of Hegel,[28] Kierkegaard,[29] Nietzsche,[30] Husserl,[31] Heidegger,[32] Wittgenstein,[33] and a great many others—a

[27] A number of primary texts central to post-Kantian German skepticism are collected in di Giovanni & Harris (eds.) 2000. See also Beiser 1987, Franks 2005, Limnatis 2008, and the articles in Part IV of Charles & Smith (eds.) 2013.

[28] In addition to the texts cited in the previous footnote, see Forster 1989; Westphal 1989, 1998; Walsh 2005; Heidemann 2007; and Trisokkas 2012.

[29] See Popkin, "Hume and Kierkegaard," in Popkin 1980; Maia Neto 1995, 1996; Rudd 1998, 2010.

[30] See Parush 1976, Conway & Ward 1992, Schmitz 1998, Bett 2000, Berry 2011, and Sommer 2018. We know that Nietzsche was familiar with the ancient skeptical tradition from a young age, given his early work on Diogenes Laertius. We also know that he was reading about ancient skepticism with great interest in the final productive year of his life on the basis of the following remark in *Ecce Homo* (as well as references in the *Nachlass*): "I have to go back half a year to catch myself with a book in my hand. What was it again? — An excellent study by Victor Brochard, *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, that puts my *Laertiana* to good use as well" (Nietzsche 2005, 89–90). As Richard Bett points out, Nietzsche "must have read [Brochard's book] rather carefully in order to see that his 'Laertiana'... were 'put to good use'. I have counted just five references to Nietzsche in Brochard, all buried in footnotes. And Brochard has no index or bibliography" (Bett 2000, 65).

[31] Surprisingly little work has been done on the connection between Husserl and Pyrrhonism, despite the obvious importance of the notion of *epochē* in Husserl's post-1907 output. Husserl's relation to the *actual* ancient skeptical tradition is obscured by the fact that, when he refers to 'the ancient skeptics,' he usually has in mind the Sophists. (See Husserl 1969, 1–2; Husserl 2008, 178.) Yet there is no question that he borrowed the notion of *epochē*, which became the lynchpin of his transcendental-phenomenological method, from the ancient skeptics, most likely by way of Albert Gödeckemeyer's *Geschichte des griechischen Skeptizismus* (see Spiegelberg 1994, 159–60); and he later distinguishes Sophistic and skeptical views regarding the existence of the external world by claiming that whereas Sophists *negate* the world (i.e., deny its existence), skeptics merely *doubt* its existence (Husserl 2014, 55–6).

[32] As with Husserl, surprisingly little work has been done on the connection between Heidegger and Pyrrhonism, despite the importance of ancient skepticism for Husserl and despite Heidegger's own (unfortunately aborted) plans to teach a course on "Skepticism in Ancient Philosophy" in the winter semester of 1922–3 (Kisiel 1993, 269, 299, 556). But see Köchler 1978, 1982; Rudd 2003.

[33] See esp. Sluga 2004, who points out that "Pyrrhonian skepticism was, in fact, familiar to [Wittgenstein]... from his reading of Fritz Mauthner's *Contributions to a Critique of Language*. In that book, Mauthner was explicit about his commitment to a nontheoretical, Pyrrhonian style of skepticism" (Sluga 2004, 102; cf. Sluga 1996, 13). On

list that is more than sufficient to give the lie to Burnyeat's rash claim that, after Kant, "the sceptic" spoken of by philosophers "has no historical reality" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 122). The ancient skeptical tradition not only survived Kant; it thrived, and continues to do so.

Further evidence that a Pyrrhonian interpretation of Clarke might prove fruitful is provided by links that commentators have drawn between Clarkeans and Pyrrhonism. Plinío Smith has argued that we find in Barry Stroud "a form of updated Pyrrhonism" (Smith 2016, 157; cf. Fogelin 2011; Virvidakis 2008, 169). Similarly, Markus Gabriel suggests that Stanley Cavell "pursues the Pyrrhonian project of saving everyday life" from the "semantic nihilism" of the dogmatic (Cartesian) skeptic (Gabriel 2008, 145; trans. mine). In Cavell, Gabriel concludes, we find "a new version of Pyrrhonian skepticism" (Gabriel 2008, 147; trans. mine).

1.3 Dogmatic vs. Classical Skepticism, Traditional vs. Nontraditional Philosophy

In the paper Burnyeat reads as 'Clarkean,' Michael Frede draws a distinction between "dogmatic skepticism" and "classical skepticism." Dogmatic skeptics hold "the position that nothing is, or can be, known for certain." Classical skeptics, on the other hand, "were not concerned to establish or to defend any position, let alone the position that nothing is, or can be, known" (Frede 1984, 201). Skepticism is and has been generally understood as dogmatic, but Frede argues that, contrary to the claims of their critics, the ancient skeptics, both Academic and Pyrrhonian, were in fact nondogmatic.[34] The ancient skeptics "criticize[d] those who did claim

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philosophical connections between Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonism, see Watson 1969; Fogelin 1992 (Essay 14), 1994 (Appendix B); Rudd 2003; Plant 2004; Stern 2004 (Ch. 3); Pritchard 2011; Tor 2014; Gutschmidt 2019.

[34] Barry Stroud writes that, "[Scepticism] is the view that we do not, or perhaps cannot, know anything" (UHK, 100). He shows more caution in SPS: "In modern, and especially recent, times scepticism in philosophy has come to be understood as the view that we know nothing, or that nothing is certain, or that everything is open to doubt" (SPS, vii). In specifying that the understanding of skepticism as dogmatic is "modern," Stroud is explicitly leaving

that nothing can be known as being as dogmatic as those philosophers who claimed that something can be known" (Frede 1984, 201). He goes on to ask, "[W]as something philosophically important lost because one was not aware of classical skepticism as an alternative to dogmatic skepticism?" (Frede 1984, 202).

The answer to this question, I am convinced, is "Yes." Something important is indeed lost when classical skepticism falls off our collective philosophical radar. As I will argue, partly directly and partly by implication, classical skepticism represents not only the earliest but, of those I discuss, the soundest full-blown (systematic) 'nontraditional' Western philosophy. By 'nontraditional,' I mean a philosophy that is at least in part a response to 'traditional' philosophy, particularly traditional philosophy's perceived bottoming-out in one or another kind of dogmatic skepticism. The other nontraditional philosophies with which I shall be concerned are commonsense philosophy, ordinary-language philosophy, and examples of their contemporary offspring.

A hallmark of traditional philosophy is its attempt to position itself above or outside of

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room for the possibility that ancient skepticism is *not* dogmatic. It seems likely to me that he had Frede's views in mind here, given Frede's acknowledgment of him (see Frede 1984, 369 fn. 12).

As Stroud's way of putting it suggests, it is tempting to gloss the dogmatic–classical distinction in terms of a *modern* (dogmatic) conception of skepticism versus an *ancient* (nondogmatic) conception of it. But if proposed as a general distinction, this is mistaken, for two reasons. First, while I agree with Frede that at least the most prominent actual, self-proclaimed skeptics of antiquity were not dogmatic skeptics, (*a*) they were routinely interpreted as such by their contemporaries (as well as by our own), and (*b*) there *were* philosophers in the ancient world who do seem to have embraced what we would call dogmatic skepticism. Sextus Empiricus claims that the Academic skeptics were dogmatic (PH, 1.3–4, 1.220–35), though that is at best an oversimplification. A far more plausible case can be made that at least some of the Sophists were what we would call dogmatic skeptics; and one often finds the term 'skepticism' or 'ancient skepticism' being used to describe *their* positions, or those of even earlier thinkers, rather than those of the self-proclaimed skeptics (e.g., Husserl 1969, 1–2; Lesher 1978; Grube 1980, 3; Hays 1990; Hussey 1990; Hankinson 1995, Ch. 3; Desmond 2008, 16, 77, 228; Husserl 2008, 178; see also Lee 2005). Second, it would be going much too far to claim that *no one* in modernity has been aware of the possibility of a nondogmatic skepticism or of the nondogmatic character of ancient skepticism. The most obvious example is perhaps Montaigne; but others include, I would argue, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Wittgenstein. Therefore, any *general* comparative treatment of 'ancient' and 'modern' skepticism that turns on something like Frede's dogmatic–classical distinction (such as Mates 1992; Naess 2005, Ch. 5) is fundamentally mistaken. This is *not* to say that all comparative treatments of ancient and modern skepticism(s) need to be general in this way. Hegel, for instance, is perfectly correct that the (dogmatic) skepticism of G.E. "Aenesidemus" Schulze is modern in its 'Cartesian' assumptions in a way that the (nondogmatic) ancient skepticism of Sextus Empiricus is not (Hegel 2000, 319 ff.).

everyday life in order to stand in judgment upon its judgments. David Hume gives voice to the traditional view when he writes that "[r]eason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority" (Hume 2007a, 125). For traditional philosophers, "one has to have some special reason [i.e., a philosophical justification] to make a claim" (Frede 1984, 206). A hallmark of nontraditional philosophies is their privileging of the epistemic authority of everyday life ('common sense' or 'the ordinary') over that of traditional philosophizing. For nontraditional philosophers, "there has to be *some*" "special reason to doubt" ordinary, commonplace claims (Austin 1970, 82; cf. 86–8). Hume's 'commonsense' opponent, Thomas Reid, expresses his 'nontraditional' orientation when he laments that "philosophers, pitying the credulity of the vulgar, resolve to have no faith but what is founded upon reason. They apply to philosophy to furnish them with reasons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed, without being able to give any reason for it."[35] Alas, these "great men... have not been able, from all the treasures of philosophy, to draw one argument that is fit to convince a man that can reason, of the existence of any one thing without him" (Reid 1892, 79). Reid proposes that the fundamental mistake of these (traditional) philosophers is that,

> from a natural prejudice in [philosophy's] favor, [they] have endeavoured to extend her jurisdiction beyond its just limits, and to call to her bar the dictates of Common Sense. But these decline her jurisdiction; they disdain the trial of reasoning, and disown its authority; they neither claim its aid, nor dread its attacks... [F]or, in reality, Common Sense holds nothing of Philosophy, nor needs her aid. But, on the other hand, Philosophy (if I may be permitted to change the metaphor) has no other root but the principles of Common Sense; it grows out of

[35] I would note that this sentence's last clause is interestingly ambiguous. Does Reid mean that *philosophy* is unable "to give any reason" why we should "apply to philosophy to furnish [us] with reasons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed," or does he mean that "all mankind" has believed, without justification, "those things" that philosophy seeks to justify? I take it that the second meaning is Reid's. The first reading, though not even on Reid's radar (I think), nonetheless resonates with anti-skeptical positions taken by certain contemporary inheritors of commonsense philosophy.

> them, and draws its nourishment from them. Severed from this root, its honours wither, its sap is dried up, it dies and rots. (Reid 1892, 81)

According to Reid, any attempt to invert this 'natural' hierarchy leads inevitably to the theoretical 'death' and 'rot' characteristic of skepticism.

The basic form of the conflict between what I'm calling traditional and nontraditional philosophy is aptly described by G.E.R. Lloyd, who notes a pervasive, cross-cultural "tension" between

> two opposing views of the aims of philosophizing. On one [the 'traditional' view], the focus is on what reason reveals has to be the case, and if that yields counter-intuitive conclusions or ones that conflict with ordinary opinions, reason should nevertheless prevail. On the second ['nontraditional'] view, the task of philosophy is rather to 'save the phenomena' in the sense of elucidating and clarifying what is normally believed, removing inconsistencies in those beliefs, and no doubt modifying some of them in the course of clarification. But on that view, if the conclusions are counter-intuitive, that suggests that the arguments should be reexamined, not that ordinary intuitions should be abandoned. (Lloyd 2009, 6)

The conflict between traditional and nontraditional philosophy—which is just a displaced version of the conflict between philosophy and everyday life—takes place at the metaphilosophical level. Regarding epistemology, Laurence BonJour suggests that "[t]here are, broadly speaking, only two main sorts of answers" to the "basic meta-epistemological question" of how to justify an epistemology.

> On the one hand, one may appeal to the deliverances of common-sense (and 'ordinary language'), arguing that an epistemological theory is acceptable if and only if it is congruent in some specified way with those deliverances. Or, on the other hand, one may reject the appeal to Common-sense as ultimately question-begging and attempt instead the perhaps quixotic task of constructing an independent, theoretical justification of one's epistemological theory. (BonJour 1979, 157–8)

I believe that BonJour's underlying insight here applies to philosophy generally, not just to epistemology.

Complicating matters is that the conflict I'm trying to capture plays out not only between rival metaphilosophies, but also within the hearts and minds of individual philosophers. Philosophers themselves are first and foremost 'plain men,' as Clarke would put it. They live, move, and have their being within the everyday world, no matter what views they hold about the ultimate nature of that world. If 'common sense' or 'ordinary language' can be said to have some sort of hold on all of us, regardless of philosophical persuasion, than to propound a sufficiently non-ordinary, non-commonsensical view would entail harboring within oneself a tension between fundamentally opposed views. At the same time, it seems to be a commonplace that, given adequate room to abstract from "the world of immediate experience" in order to indulge in "wider generalization and a freer movement of the reason in the sphere of pure concepts than submission to practical ends will allow" (Guthrie 1962, 31), human reason seeks a kind of satisfaction that only philosophy can provide. Kant refers to this, pessimistically, as 'the natural dialectic of human reason' (cf. Kant 1929, 30, Bxxxi): "Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge [namely, metaphysics] it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer" (Kant 1929, 7, Avii).

Even if Kant's metaphilosophical pessimism is unwarranted, there is no question that philosophy, both traditional and nontraditional, has perennially to face down the spectre of skepticism. The reason for this, I submit, is that the quest for the sort of rational satisfaction that only philosophy seems able to provide is something that most of us feel or can be made to feel. "[T]he threat of skepticism" is, as Cavell puts it, a threat posed by "the skeptic in oneself"

(Cavell 1979, 47; cf. Cavell 1969, 239). The same point has been made more recently by Duncan Pritchard: "Charging the sceptic with absurdity is... tantamount to charging *ourselves* with absurdity," for "the sceptic is, properly understood, not an adversary at all, but simply our intellectual conscience" (Pritchard 2007, 191–2).

Classical skepticism, I contend, shares the 'anti-philosophical' intuitions and motivations of later nontraditional philosophies while avoiding what I take to be their inexorable descent into dogmatism. It shows us how to achieve something like Richard Rorty's "don't-care" attitude toward dogmatic skepticism (Rorty 1972, 12); it licenses us to respond to dogmatic skepticism the way Donald Davidson wanted to, namely, by "telling [the skeptic] to get lost" (Davidson 1983/7, 154); it provides us with the stubbornly elusive "*intellectual right* to shrug our shoulders at skeptical questions" (McDowell 1996, 143; emphasis added). Philosophers of a nontraditional bent continue to struggle with the problem of securing this intellectual right;[36] but if my arguments are accepted, then their efforts are as unnecessary as they are dubious, for classical skeptics have *had it right all along*. More than anything else, it is *this*—that classical skepticism is at least a viable and attractive response to a philosophical problem that is very much alive today—that is lost when we are not aware of classical skepticism as an alternative to dogmatic skepticism.

When I say that classical skeptics 'had it right all along,' I mean that they had the right *answer* to the right *understanding* of the right *question*. The adequacy of an answer is determined by the question, or how we understand the question, to which it is meant as a response—in this case, that means *by the nature of the skeptical challenge*. I agree with Clarke that the only way to understand the nature of the skeptical challenge is to understand what

[36] E.g., Aikin 2011, Pritchard 2016, Schönbaumsfeld 2016, and Kern 2017.

‘philosophy’ is—or at least those kinds of philosophy that can find themselves vulnerable to skeptical challenges (which may turn out to be *every* kind of philosophy). If this is right, then in order to understand *why* classical skeptics ‘had it right,’ we must first come to some general understanding of what philosophy is. Only then can we properly understand the nature of the skeptical challenge. And only then are we so much as in a position to answer the skeptical challenge. By claiming that the classical skeptics ‘had it right,’ then, I’m claiming that they had the right metaphilosophy, the right understanding of the skeptical challenge, and the right response to that challenge properly understood. Obviously, it then falls upon me to argue that the skeptical challenge to which classical skepticism is the right response is, whether they realize it or not, the same challenge that philosophers face today under the banner of skepticism. I attempt to make that case—or at least make a start at doing so—in Chapters 6–7.

The distinction between dogmatic and classical skepticism, together with the widespread understanding of skepticism as dogmatic, has led one commentator to remark that “Pyrrhonism is commonly confused with scepticism in Western philosophy” (Kuzminski 2008, ix). With this sardonic observation in mind, I will in what follows reserve the term ‘skepticism’ to refer to dogmatic skepticism and will use the term ‘Pyrrhonism’ to refer to classical (nondogmatic) skepticism.[37] In doing so, I am not bowing to the ‘true’ or ‘strict’ meaning of the word ‘skepticism,’ but only to common philosophical usage.[38] In fact, ‘skepticism’ goes back to the Greek word *skeptikos*, meaning one who looks, examines, or inquires. This is how the ancient Pyrrhonian Sextus Empiricus characterizes skeptics in the opening passages of *Outlines of*

[37] By equating classical skepticism with Pyrrhonism, I should not be understood as taking a stand one way or the other on the exegetical question of the degree of concordance between Pyrrhonian and Academic skepticism.

[38] *Contra* Panayot Butchvarov, who claims that “the skeptic, *by definition*, denies that we have knowledge or even evidence, whether in general or in some particular domain” (Butchvarov 1998, 65; emphasis added). This is true neither etymologically nor lexicographically. Etymologically, ‘the skeptic’ is ‘one who inquires.’ Lexicographically, ‘the skeptic’ is ‘one who doubts’ (cf. *OED*).

Pyrrhonism (PH): "they are still investigating" (PH, 1.3). He offers alternative designations as well: skepticism is *zetetic* (skeptics question things), *ephectic* (they suspend judgment), and *aporetic* (they remain 'puzzled' or 'at a loss,' for they have yet to find a way—*a-póros*, no-pathway—through the problems they've encountered). Finally, Sextus tells us that skeptics can be called *Pyrrhonian*, for "Pyrrho" (*c*. 365–270 BCE) "appears to us to have attached himself to skepticism more thoroughly and conspicuously than anyone before him" (PH, 1.7).[39]

1.4 The Three Stages of the Clarkean Project

My presentation of Clarke's views is structured around what I take to be the three stages of the Clarkean project. I discuss these stages under the following rubrics: (*1*) the *lesson* of skepticism, (*2*) the *legacy* of skepticism, and (*3*) the post-skeptical *elucidation* of our empirical knowledge.

It must be understood from the start, however, that Clarke himself carries out only the first two stages. LS is essentially programmatic; it is intended to set an agenda for future research. Clarke concludes LS by saying that "[s]kepticism leaves us the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity,' and one major tool for unlocking its secrets, the plain skeptical possibilities" (LS, 769, ¶63). This 'programme'—this

[39] All passages from Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*Pyrrhōneioi Hupotupōseis*, abbreviated 'PH') should be assumed to be my own translations, though some differ only slightly or not at all from existing translations. My reference is the critical edition of the Greek, newly prepared by Emidio Spinelli (Sextus Empiricus, n.d.). In arriving at my renderings, I have consulted the translations of Julia Annas & Jonathan Barnes (Sextus Empiricus 2000), Benson Mates (Sextus Empiricus 1996), and R.G. Bury (Sextus Empiricus 1933), as well as the partial translations of Sanford G. Etheridge (in Sextus Empiricus 1985) and Brad Inwood & L.P. Gerson (Inwood & Gerson (trans.) 1997). For parenthetical in-text references to the original text, I have converted Sextus's Greek into Latin script with the conversion tool available at www.lexilogos.com/ keyboard/greek_conversion.htm (using the "Classic," rather than the "Scientific," style—though I depart from the "Classic" style in preferring macrons to circumflexes).

"something new to ponder" (LS, 769, ¶64)—is, according to Clarke, the legacy that skepticism has bequeathed to the contemporary philosophical world. The point at which Clarke leaves us in LS is a precarious one, then: lessons have been learned, an old problem has been superseded by a new one, and yet that new problem awaits resolution. It awaits what I call a 'post-skeptical' elucidation of our empirical knowledge (or at least what we think of as our empirical knowledge). Unfortunately, LS was Clarke's final publication, so we can't know what sort of post-skeptical elucidation he would have developed (or did develop).

Clarke does seem optimistic that solutions to his "new problem" will prove forthcoming once we've gotten the shape of the problem properly in view. It's worth asking ourselves, however, what becomes of skepticism if the "problem" that is its "legacy" proves intractable. Moreover, what's the most rational position to adopt in the meantime? Perhaps it's only his evident optimism that saves Clarke from embracing skepticism, at least provisionally, as in Kant's image of skepticism as "a resting-place for human reason" even if it is not or cannot be "a dwelling-place for permanent settlement" (Kant 1929, 607, A761/B789). This, I will argue in Chapter 7, is in fact the case—although the skepticism I have in mind is classical, not dogmatic. If the position in which Clarke leaves us at the end of LS is best understood as a kind of skepticism, then it is Pyrrhonian, not the sort of Cartesian external-world skepticism that, he argues, "frees us from... itself" (LS, 769, ¶63).

1. *The lesson of skepticism*. Central to the lesson of skepticism is the claim that if we think in general terms about knowledge in a particular way, then skepticism becomes unavoidable (cf. NTE, 231). The skeptical conclusion of traditional epistemological inquiries is, as Clarke puts it, "*conditionally* objectively determined as correct" (NTE, 204, 227; cf. 237–8). The idea of skepticism's 'conditional correctness' entered the epistemological mainstream by

way of Stroud, who refers throughout SPS to "the 'conditional correctness' of scepticism" (SPS, 179). All Clarkeans hold to the doctrine of conditional correctness; but their agreement goes deeper than that. What distinguishes them from more 'traditional' nontraditional philosophers (e.g., Moore, Austin) is that they all agree that there is something importantly *right* about skepticism. They all agree that the way of thinking in general terms about knowledge that leads to skepticism reveals or reflects something *true*.

From there, however, Clarke and the Clarkeans begin to diverge. In *The Claim of Reason* and elsewhere, Cavell argues that the "truth of skepticism" is "that our relation to the world as such is not one of knowing" (Cavell 1979, 48), but of "acknowledgement" of others (= other minds) and "recognition" (or "acceptance") of the world as we encounter it in everyday life.[40] Stroud likewise holds that there is a "truth in scepticism" (UHK, 120). Unlike both Cavell and Clarke, however, he thinks that that truth is essentially negative. *If* we hold to certain Cartesian assumptions regarding the relation between mind and world, then skepticism is the inevitable result.[41] Therefore, the upshot of the truth in skepticism is just that those Cartesian assumptions cannot be right.[42] Specifically, what must be rejected is what Stroud calls "the restricted conception of the scope of perception" (Stroud 2011b, 23). (Stroud develops these arguments

[40] On 'acknowledgement,' see esp. Essay 9 in Cavell 1969. All three terms (i.e., acknowledgement, recognition, acceptance) play prominent roles in much of Cavell's work.

[41] "The demand for completely general understanding of knowledge in a certain domain requires that we see ourselves at the outset as not knowing anything in that domain and then coming to have such knowledge on the basis of some independent and in that sense prior knowledge or experience. And that leads us to seek a standpoint from which we can view ourselves without taking for granted any of that knowledge that we want to understand. But if we could manage to detach ourselves in that way from acceptance of any truths in the domain we are interested in, it seems that the only thing we could discover from that point of view is that we can never know anything in that domain. We could find no way to explain how that prior knowledge alone could yield any richer knowledge lying beyond it. That is the plight the traditional view captures. That is the truth in scepticism" (UHK, 120).

[42] Stroud writes, continuing the passage quoted in fn. 41: "But then that seems absurd. We realize that people do know many things in the domains we are interested in. We can even explain how they know such things, whether they know that they do or not... That is the truth in 'externalism'" (UHK 120–1).

not in SPS, but in his later work.)[43] According to that conception, "whatever anyone could perceive always falls short of any states of affairs of the world" (CP, 319). Perception (or 'sensory experience') "would then be a veil... which we could not penetrate but which would be no reliable guide to the world beyond the veil" (SPS, 32–3). Indeed, if Stroud is right that "[i]f we were in such a position, I think it is quite clear that we could not know what is going on beyond the veil" (SPS, 33), then it would be more to the point to refer not to a veil, but, with H.H. Price, to "an 'iron curtain'" behind which "we are irremediably cut off from the material world" (Price 1950, viii).

As we'll see, Clarke's understanding of the lesson of skepticism differs in significant ways from both Stroud's and Cavell's. He argues that we *do* think, and are (qualifiedly) *justified* in thinking, about knowledge in a skepticism-inducing way, at least when we think of it in general terms (cf. NTE, 240–3), with the result that "we have no conception of empirical knowledge" (NTE, 241), either in philosophy or in everyday life. For Clarke, this 'truth in skepticism' is more broadly speaking a "truth in traditional epistemology" (NTE, 231). As Michael Williams puts it, "the sceptic" is the "*alter ego*" of "the traditional epistemologist" (UD, 194): she denies what the non-skeptical traditional epistemologist affirms.[44] Moreover, according to Clarke and the Clarkeans, she is qualifiedly *right* to do so, for, again, the skeptical

[43] In the first chapter of SPS, Stroud argues that the Cartesian assumption that must be rejected if we are to avoid skepticism is "the requirement that we must know we are not dreaming if we are to know anything about the world around us" (SPS, 30; cf. SPS, 43). He distinguishes this claim from "[t]he undeniable truth" that "you lack knowledge [of the external world] if you are dreaming." The Cartesian claim is stronger: "that you lack knowledge if you don't know that you are not dreaming" (SPS, 24). Though he links this assumption quite closely to (what he later calls) the restricted conception of the scope of perception (cf. SPS, 12–3), he does not in SPS single out the latter as the assumption in need of rejection.

[44] Cavell goes so far as to define skepticism in such a way as to include *all* traditional epistemologists. He does not "confine the term [skepticism] to philosophers who wind up denying that we can ever know; I apply it to any view which takes the existence of the world to be a problem of knowledge." He "[takes] the very raising of the question of knowledge in a certain form, or spirit, to constitute skepticism, regardless of whether a philosophy takes itself to have *answered* the question affirmatively or negatively" (Cavell 1979, 46).

conclusion is "*conditionally* objectively determined as correct," the 'condition' being the full meaningfulness of the conceptual framework of traditional-epistemological inquiries. But this conceptual framework is *ours* as well. Cavell writes, "The skeptic possesses a conceptual scheme (i.e., our conceptual scheme...)" (Cavell 1979, 47). Clarke argues that "in his examinations of common sense a traditional epistemologist is a plain man. He is not conducting a new kind of inquiry" (NTE, 240); and "[i]n these inquiries he does not depart from ordinary language nor make any mistakes" (NTE, 239). For Clarke and the Clarkeans, the "depth of truth in traditional epistemology" (Clarke) is the same thing as "the truth in/of skepticism" (Stroud, Cavell)—even if they don't agree on what exactly that truth is.

2. *The legacy of skepticism*. Where does skepticism leave us once we've learned the lesson it has to offer? Clarke concludes that "[s]kepticism frees us from antiquated problems, including itself," but that in doing so it "[offers] us a new, challenging problem." He calls that problem "the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity'" (LS, 769, ¶63). I take it that Stroud is articulating something of this 'new problem' when he writes,

> What exactly are the procedures or standards we follow in the most ordinary, humdrum cases of putative knowledge? Reflection on the source of Descartes's sceptical reasoning has led to difficulties in describing and therefore in understanding even the most familiar procedures we follow in everyday life. That is one of the rewards of a study of philosophical scepticism. (SPS, 30)

It should be clear, I think, how this 'legacy' follows from what Clarke takes to be the lesson of skepticism. The lesson of skepticism is that, given the failure of traditional philosophy, we have no general conception of empirical knowledge; the legacy of skepticism is to develop a general conception of plain knowing *without falling back into traditional philosophizing*. What we need

is "a *positive* characterization of the plain," that is, a "characterization of our pre-philosophical human stance to the world [that does] *not* amount to a double negation (i.e., to a denial of the skeptical denial of that stance) and so does *not* induce a change of subject-matter" from plain knowing to philosophical knowing (Narboux 2014, 181). Narboux reports that "[a]ccording to Stroud's testimony, such a positive characterization of the plain is one of the main tasks taken up by Clarke in unpublished manuscripts from the eighties" (Narboux 2014, 181 fn. 40).[45]

3. *The post-skeptical elucidation*. I refer to the task of producing a positive and general (yet *not* traditionally philosophical) conception of plain knowing 'post-skeptical elucidation.' I could just as well call it 'post-philosophical elucidation.' In LS, 'philosophy' just is *traditional* philosophy, just as skepticism just is *dogmatic* (Cartesian) skepticism. Given skepticism's conditional correctness, traditional philosophy and dogmatic skepticism are two sides of the same coin. In being 'post-skeptical,' then, the elucidation that is the third stage of the Clarkean project is likewise 'post-philosophical' in the sense in which that term is used in LS. Yet there is clearly a sense in which any general conception of plain knowing will deserve the title 'philosophical' even if it does not qualify as a product of traditional philosophizing, where 'traditional philosophy' is understood as that genre of inquiry that is peculiarly vulnerable to the kind of philosophical skepticism that is Clarke's concern. The problem of the plain is, as Clarke puts it, "a *philosophical* problem of the greatest magnitude" (NTE, 242; emphasis added).

The Clarkean elucidation of our plain knowing is post-*philosophical* only in the sense of

[45] Unfortunately, these manuscripts have never surfaced and, as Stroud informed me in 2017, never will, for they don't exist. Cavell tells us that Clarke "composed philosophy primarily on small squares of paper, and conceivably by now has amassed many thousands of them" (Cavell 2010, 369). Stroud confirmed this to me in conversation, saying that all that remains of Clarke's post-LS work is a trunk filled with such notes, some bound together with elastic bands, but most unorganized and all of them, according to Stroud, unorganizable by anyone but Clarke himself. Cavell writes: "Only [Clarke's] dying before I do would still my expectation" that one day his notes "will be assembled into consecutive prose," for though Cavell was sure that Clarke could pull off the feat, "I have no thought that anyone but Tom could manage the work of assembly" (Cavell 2010, 369). The philosophical world is the poorer for it.

traditional (as opposed to non-traditional) philosophy, yet it is post-*skeptical* in the sense in which I am using that term throughout the present essay, namely, in the sense of dogmatic (as opposed to classical) skepticism. This is the main reason why I opt for 'post-skeptical' rather than 'post-philosophical.' It should not be too-hastily assumed, however, that Clarke's claim that "[s]kepticism frees us from... itself" encompasses everything that deserves the title 'skepticism.'

Chapter 2

On the Plain and the Philosophical

There are three stages to the Clarkean project. First, we must learn the *lesson* of skepticism: we must develop (*a*) an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge and (*b*) an assessment of that challenge's import. Second, we must come to see the *legacy* of skepticism, the 'new problem' with which skepticism leaves us. Finally, we must address or solve that 'new problem' by providing a 'post-skeptical' *elucidation* of our empirical knowledge. We cannot begin straight away with the lesson of skepticism, however, for Clarke holds that several tasks must be carried out before we're in a position to learn that lesson. Specifically, we must come to understand the nature of traditional philosophy and of its relation to what Clarke calls "the plain." This is because, for Clarke, (*a*) skepticism is the result of traditional philosophical inquiry, and (*b*) the defining characteristic of skepticism is its *paradoxicality*, i.e., the fact that it denies, or at least *seems* to deny, 'plain' truths of common sense.[1] In order to understand the

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[1] Early in NTE, Clarke distinguishes between 'paradoxical' and 'skeptical':

> An inquiry's being paradoxical in import may mean that it is *sceptical* in import. However, the meaning of "sceptical" is not as clearly delimited as the meaning of "paradoxical," as least not as I am using this latter word, so that equating "paradoxical" and "sceptical" is not safe. A conclusion in traditional epistemology is paradoxical if and only if it repudiates one of the so-called common-sense beliefs which the traditional epistemologist examines. Hence the conclusion that we can't be certain of objective empirical facts is paradoxical. This conclusion might not, according to philosophical usage, be judged sceptical: it might not be if this conclusion allowed that we might know that such facts are probable. "Sceptical" in philosophical usage is, I think, more extreme than "paradoxical." (NTE, 43)

Clarke writes that "a paradoxical discovery... amounts to rejecting deeply ingrained beliefs about knowledge and the world which the plain man unthinkingly holds" (NTE, 62). By 'paradox,' then, Clarke has in mind not exclusively *logical* paradoxes, such as the Liar's Paradox, but something broader, nearer the original, etymological sense of the word. *Para-doxa* are that which is contrary to *doxa*, meaning what Aristotle meant by *eudoxa*, i.e., "received opinions" that are taken to have, as such, inherent (or at least *prima facie*) epistemic authority. To be paradoxical in this way is to be counter to *common sense*. As A.A. Long puts it, "a paradox is literally a thought that is incongruous with commonplace beliefs" (Long 1993, 14). It is because of his distinction between the paradoxical and the skeptical that Clarke has virtually nothing to say about skepticism in NTE. That said, his scruples regarding the paradoxical–skeptical distinction fall away even in that earlier text (cf. NTE, 126, 153, 243), and they are wholly

nature of the skeptical challenge, we must understand the nature of the kind of inquiry that gives rise to it; and in order to assess the import of the skeptical challenge, we must understand what bearing, if any, philosophical inquiry has on 'plain' common sense—specifically, we must determine the extent to which philosophical inquiry is capable of undermining plain common sense.

In this chapter, I explore the distinction, which lies at the heart of LS, between the 'plain' and the 'philosophical,' focusing on the dialectical relation between the two. The plain, I argue, comes into view as such only when we attempt to step outside of it, that is, when we attempt to philosophize in a traditional manner. As a consequence, the plain is initially understood from a philosophical standpoint; it is understood, as it were, *philosophically*. But the traditional-philosophical project, Clarke argues, inevitably collapses into dogmatic skepticism. That collapse is caused by and hence reveals the *indeterminacy* of philosophical utterances, which in turn reveals the possibility (or even the necessity) of a *plain*, as opposed to a philosophical, understanding of the plain.

2.1 The Plain and the Everyday

The most important and distinctive concept in LS is that of 'the plain.' This term-of-art makes no appearance in NTE. In all but one case—a reference to "the plain facts of [perceptual]

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abandoned by the time LS appears. In LS, Clarke characterizes skepticism in precisely the way that he had earlier characterized paradoxes: skeptical conclusions are the *denial* of some suitably 'philosophical' general commonsense proposition. (I say "suitably philosophical" in an attempt to accommodate the following passage: "Are all repudiations of general common-sense beliefs felt to be paradoxical? I think not. But all repudiations of the *so-called* common-sense beliefs which traditional epistemology examines *are* felt to the paradoxical" (NTE, 41–2). The importance of Clarke's distinction here between "commonsense beliefs" and "*so-called* commonsense beliefs" will become clear in Chapter 4: 'so-called' commonsense beliefs belong to what he will dub, in LS, *philosophical*—as opposed to *plain*—common sense.)

experience" (NTE, 14)—the word 'plain' appears in NTE only in references to 'the plain man,' a figure who plays a prominent role in LS as well.[2] Still, much of what Clarke means by 'the plain' is anticipated in NTE by his frequent use of the terms 'ordinary' and 'everyday.'

In LS, Clarke introduces the plain by connecting it with what he calls "everyday life." He speaks of "a domain of questions, claims, and the like" that he dubs "the everyday, the particular questions, claims, *et al.*, occurring within specific, elaborate contexts of everyday life." Such context-bound "questions, claims, and the like" are, Clarke tells us, "instances *par excellence* of what I shall call 'plain' questions, etc." (LS, 754–5, ¶4). Now, "instances *par excellence*" is not a phrase meant to capture *all* instances of the type in question—quite the opposite. It follows that it is not the case for Clarke that *all* 'plain' claims, questions, etc., are embedded in "specific, elaborate, contexts of everyday life." (Henceforth, I will shorten "questions, claims, *et al.*" to 'utterances.' This term should be understood as including merely potential utterances, i.e., thoughts and inscriptions.) The narrower domain of plain utterances—the context-bound—is "the everyday." All everyday utterances are plain, but not all plain utterances are everyday. The everyday is the 'core' of the plain, but it does not exhaust it.

What sort of plain utterances are not everyday, and why? Clarke broaches this question by asking, "[H]ow broad may be the dimensions of the circle of the plain[?]" (LS, 756, ¶7). He is asking whether the plain can encompass Moore-type propositions of common sense, the "'general propositions of Common Sense' Moore sets out to uphold" in works such as "Defence of Common Sense" and "Proof of an External World" (LS, 754, ¶3).[3] (Following Clarke, I will

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[2] In SS, 'plain' likewise appears in most cases in reference to 'the plain man,' but it is also used in the sense of that which is obvious (SS, 101, 103, 108, 114). None of these uses of the term employ that term in the way Clarke does in LS—though it *is* true that many things that belong to 'the plain' in LS's sense are going to be, or at least to seem, 'plainly true' in the colloquial sense.

[3] Both of these papers are reprinted in Moore 1959.

henceforth abbreviate 'common sense' as 'CS.') In "Defence," Moore begins by setting out "a list of truisms, every one of which (in my own opinion) I know, with certainty, to be true" (Moore 1959, 32–3). The list includes the following propositions: "There exists at present a living human body, which is my body... [A]t every moment since [this body] was born, there have also existed many other things, having shape and size in three dimensions... from which it has been at various distances" (Moore 1959, 33). These are not, however, *general* propositions. For Clarke, particular CS propositions are commonsensical by virtue of their accordance with one or another general proposition of CS. The most fundamental of these general propositions are, Clarke says, "the following three: We can know that there are physical objects in the world. We can see (and touch) physical objects. We can know that there are physical objects because we can see (and touch) them" (NTE, 5–6).[4] I take it that these—or propositions very much like them—are what Clarke means by the "'general propositions of Common Sense' Moore sets up to uphold." In "Defense," Moore does get around to discussing the proposition "Material things have existed" (Moore 1959, 53), and the ultimate generality of the propositions Moore is out to defend—as well as his understanding of those propositions' relation to particular instances of them—is evident in "Proof," in which Moore sets out to prove the existence of "things to be met with in space" (i.e., external objects) by proving "that two human hands exist" (Moore 1959, 145–6). On the relation between the general and the particular propositions, he writes, "I think... that from any proposition of the form 'There's a soap-bubble!' there does really *follow* the

[4] Elsewhere, Clarke refers to "the general common-sense belief that we can know there are physical objects because we can see them" (NTE, 68). The falsity of this proposition is the "'epistemological' conclusion or discovery" of what Clarke calls "the surface inquiry" (NTE, 68). In another place, he refers to "two basic general common-sense beliefs, viz., the belief that we can see physical objects and the belief that we can know there are physical objects because we can see them" (NTE, 95). And again: "The most fundamental of these common-sense beliefs are these: There are physical objects. We can know that there are because we can see them (and touch them)" (NTE, 235). These formulations differ substantively depending on whether Clarke is thinking only in epistemological terms (= what we can know) or if he's also including metaphysical common sense (= what exists).

proposition 'There's an external object!" (Moore 1959, 145).

General Moore-type propositions differ from everyday utterances not on account of their generality, but on account of their *freedom from context*: they are, Clarke writes, "very general and context-free" (LS, 755, ¶6; cf. LS, 757, ¶8)—or at least "virtually, perhaps entirely, context-free" (LS, 757, ¶10). One of Clarke's main points in §1 of LS is that generality alone does not entail or ensure freedom from context and hence from non-everydayness. The general question "Are there material objects?" is everyday—it is "a question to be settled by going and looking"—when it is "asked (indulging a fancy) by an immaterial being born and bred in a nonmaterial portion of the universe" (LS, 758, ¶14a). Less fancifully, Clarke imagines a physiologist who says, while lecturing:

> *Each of us who is normal knows that he is now awake, not dreaming or hallucinating, that there is a real public world outside his mind which he is now perceiving, that in this world there are three-dimensional animate and inanimate bodies of many shapes and sizes...* In contrast, individuals suffering from certain mental abnormalities each believes that what we know to be the real, public world is his imaginative creation. (LS, 756, ¶7)[5]

Such utterances are general yet still context-bound. They belong to the class of "plain" propositions that Clarke describes as "figuring in one or another general context" (LS, 756, ¶7). Moore's, on the other hand, are context-free: they are "'propositions' outside contextual wedlock" (LS, 756, ¶8).

Thinking that freedom from context is "the ultimate logical sin" (LS, 756, ¶8), mid-

[5] Regarding this passage, Hilary Putnam writes, "Actually, the 'physiologist' does not talk like any neural scientist *I* have ever heard. One of the peculiarities of his odd little speech is the claim that 'each of us who is normal' knows that he is now awake. Aren't any normal people now *sleeping*?" (Putnam 2014, 118 fn. 20). In response, I would say that *of course* there are 'normal people' now sleeping. Presumably, however, there are no 'normal' people who are now sleeping *in the lecturer's audience*, let alone is anyone *dreaming* the lecturer and his lecture. If one of them *does* believe that "what we know to be the real, public world is his imaginative creation," then that individual is decidedly abnormal.

twentieth-century ordinary-language philosophers, inspired by Wittgenstein, tried to rescue Moore from himself by reinterpreting his propositions as *meta*-commonsensical, that is, as "summings up of how things go with the relatively particular plain" (LS, 755, ¶4b).[6] They tried to read him as if he were a sort of *linguistic botanist*, "studying and recording how we plants fare in contexts varying in soil and climate" (LS, 755, ¶5). Like Moore himself,[7] Clarke rejects this view: this Moore, "this defender of meta-CS, is a Moore redesigned" (LS, 755, ¶4b). At issue is the *logical type* of Moore's propositions. Are they, in Clarke's terms, *plain* or *philosophical*? The overriding thesis of §1 of LS is that they are plain despite being context-free: they "wear their logical type on their face." When Moore says, "I know there are material objects," the proposition *as meant by him* is

> in general logical type like the assertion, made in an everyday circumstance, "I know there are two bottles of milk on my neighbor's doorstep"; it is not really, in disguised form, the thesis that there are certain particular contexts in everyday life within which we can know, but a first-order proposition directly about material objects, the public world. (LS, 755, ¶5)

The 'meta' thesis, which asserts a kind of contextualism, is *second-order*. If Moore's propositions are "recast as meta-figures" (LS, 756, ¶8)—that is, as particular expressions or illustrations of the contextualist thesis—that changes their logical type. (On just what the logical type of meta-CS *is*, see 4.1.3, below.) The motive for recasting Moore's propositions is the belief that Moore's propositions, being context-free, *cannot* be plain. The plain *just is* the everyday. If not everyday—if not embedded in either a "general" or a "specific, elaborate"

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[6] See Malcolm 1942 and Ambrose 1942. For dissenting opinions, see Chisholm 1951, to which Malcolm 1951 is a reply, and "G.E. Moore and Philosopher's Paradoxes" in Grice 1989. Grice points out that Moore himself seems, in Part III of Moore 1942, not to endorse this aspect of Malcolm's interpretation of him, albeit only by omission (1989, 157). Moore does, however, explicitly reject this aspect of Alice Ambrose's interpretation of him. This topic is discussed in SPS, 90 ff.

[7] See Moore 1942, Part III.

everyday context—then Moore's propositions are, on this view, *meaningless*. The "purported result" of ripping language out of its context is "'language on a holiday'" (a reference, of course, to Wittgenstein)[8]—though it is "a very poor holiday," as Clarke points out, for it would render language "a shell of itself, limp, ersatz" (LS, 756, ¶8).

Clarke rejects the ordinary-language doctrine and therefore finds groundless the criticism of Moore based on it. Even so, he thinks it points to "a valuable rule of thumb," namely, that though "[l]anguage can with impunity travel" outside of "elaborate everyday circumstances... as a rule of thumb, such excursions, ventured by philosophers, should be endeavored with bankerish caution." Unfortunately, "this practical guide has sometimes created a myopic fixation with one 'use' of language, and has insidiously been converted into a narrow dictum about conditions of meaningfulness." The 'use' of language in question is "to... convey information," particularly "novel information."[9] Epistemologists, Clarke claims, have focused on language as information-conveying so fixatedly that they have concluded that *only* information-conveying language is meaningful. Thus, when they consider Moore, they interpret his propositions "as intended, in certain contexts, to convey novel information." It is then concluded that his propositions fail to convey novel information, from which it follows that they are meaningless—or, putting it diplomatically, "*most* suspect" (LS, 756, ¶8).

Clarke's rejection of the ordinary-language doctrine hinges on his appeal to the work of H.P. Grice, who joined Clarke in the philosophy department at Berkeley five years prior to the

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[8] Wittgenstein 1953, §38.

[9] Cf. Grice 1989, 28, where Grice acknowledges both having fixated on this use and the inadequacies of doing so: "I have stated my [conversational] maxims as if this purpose [i.e., 'the particular purposes that talk... is adapted to serve'] were a maximal effective exchange of information; this specification is, of course, too narrow, and the scheme needs to be generalized to allow for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others." See also Grice 1989, 219: "Now perhaps it is the time to drop the pretense that we have to deal only with 'informative' cases."

publication of LS.[10] He claims, citing Grice's then-unpublished *Logic and Conversation* (the 1967 William James Lectures at Harvard),[11] that Grice has "long since buried" the "mistake" of "conflating oddity of assertional performance with meaninglessness of what's asserted" (LS, 756, ¶8).[12] Furthermore, Clarke rejects the interpretation of Moore's propositions according to which they are intended to convey novel information. Moore is not attempting an "enrichment of our store of knowledge"; rather, he is attempting to "[draw] up a compendium of the basic kinds of things we know" (LS, 756–7, ¶8). It follows, then, that Moore's performance is not even assertionally odd in the relevant sense.

To illustrate these points—the Gricean point and the point about the ordinariness of Moore's propositions—Clarke imagines someone tasked with compiling a record of human knowledge, i.e., a record of everything we take ourselves to know. Since the record must contain *all* human knowledge, it follows that it must contain propositions like the general propositions made by the lecturing physiologist. These, as we've seen, are context-bound, and Clarke begins by 'contextualizing' the compiler. He imagines that humans are forced to abandon the Earth and that they wish to leave behind a record of everything they know. He then imagines the context dropping away. Now the compiler puts together the record "*purely for its own sake*" (LS, 759,

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[10] By "ordinary-language doctrine"—and the 'ordinary-language philosophers' who subscribe to it—I mean certain followers of Wittgenstein (e.g., Malcolm and Ambrose) as well as the Austinian philosophers whose work Clarke discusses in NTE under the title "Oxford philosophy." I think of these as *traditional* ordinary-language philosophers. The qualification is important, for Grice was himself an ordinary-language philosopher in the Oxford tradition (see "Postwar Oxford Philosophy" in Grice 1989). Even so, he was, as one commentator puts it, something of a "traitor" to that tradition as it is exemplified by Austin (Lüthi 2006, 261).

[11] The lectures were widely distributed in manuscript form before finally appearing in their entirety as Part I of Grice 1989.

[12] In SPS, Stroud writes that "[p]ressing for the precise source of linguistic oddity or inappropriateness between meaning and use in the way [that]... I here rely on form the basis of a fundamental criticism of linguistic philosophy and a quite general theory of language and communication in the important work of H.P. Grice" (SPS, 75 fn. 12). Hilary Putnam avers, citing Charles Travis, that Stroud's work suffers from "an overestimation of the value of Grice's arguments" (Putnam 2014, 120). It seems to me, however, that Putnam is led to think this because he misunderstands Stroud's (and, by extension, Clarke's) views.

¶9). Clarke asks a simple question: How could the dropping-away of the context of the compiler's practice impact in any way the *meaning* (or, rather, *meaningfulness* or *legitimacy*)[13] of the propositions the compiler records? It seems to suffice for his purposes that these propositions are things we (take ourselves to) know.

Moore, Clarke argues, is like this imagined compiler. His 'compendium' is incomplete, of course, and he is not interested in the knowledge he records *purely* for its own sake, but rather "*primarily* for its own sake" (LS, 757, ¶9; emphasis added), since he does want to make use of his compendium in countering skeptics and idealists. But the propositions of the Moorean compendium themselves are, Clarke wants us to see, perfectly legitimate despite the protestations of ordinary-language philosophers. Nor is it the case that Moore is dogmatically asserting these propositions. He is, at least initially, simply reporting on what he takes himself, and everyone else, to know. Traditional philosophers (skeptics in particular) will argue that he is mistaken: we do *not* know all the things Moore claims we know. The fact remains, however, that by and large human beings do in fact take themselves to know all (or nearly all) of Moore's propositions. Regardless of the outcome of the debate between Moore and the skeptic, it no longer looks plausible to reject Moore's propositions as either meaningless or as dogmatically asserted: his propositions are "trivially true" (Grice 1989, 9), and the mere act of listing them is not dogmatic, for (again) it is a fact that these propositions are widely held to be known by everyone. If Moore can legitimately be called dogmatic, it is not because he lists his

[13] Clarke argues that the general everyday (context-bound) utterances of the lecturing physiologist have, "in one sense" (LS, 759, ¶15), the same *meanings* as do the general non-everyday (context-free) utterances of the 'de-contextualized' compiler of human knowledge (i.e., Moore). In that sense, though, they also have the same meanings as do the general philosophical propositions of CS, for in all three cases what Clarke calls in NTE the "skeletal meaning" (NTE, 200; cf. LS, 760, ¶6) of the utterances is the same. In a broader sense of 'meaning,' however—the "full-bodied" (NTE, 200) sense, which takes into account, in addition to skeletal meaning, "what *we* mean, say, or imply, *in* uttering words (with their meanings)" (LS, 760, ¶6)—all three utterances mean something different. It is this "'meaning' in a different dimension" (LS, 760, ¶6—what Clarke calls in NTE the "non-rule-like dimension" (NTE, 171–2)—that comes into play in questions of the 'meaningfulness' or 'legitimacy' of utterances.

propositions or claims to know them (and their underlying general formulations). In that, he is simply acting as a 'plain man' interested in truth (primarily) for its own sake. "Moore," Clarke concludes, "is not a philosopher's philosopher, but a philosopher's plain man: he drags us down from our ivory towers, we reflective, ethereal beings, back to our earthly selves, and confronts us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men" (LS, 758, ¶12).

Moore's propositions, then, are context-free. Therefore, they are not everyday—yet they are nonetheless, as meant by him, *plain*.[14] They belong to what Clarke calls "a *plain* species of Common Sense (CS_{pl})" (LS, 757, ¶11).[15] CS_{pl} is a "plain species" of general, context-free propositions that mirror those propositions that philosophers talk about ('philosophically') under the rubric 'common sense.'

This is *not* to say that for Clarke there is nothing problematic about general Moore-type propositions. Before getting into that, though, let's discuss what I call *typographical twinhood*.

2.2 Typographical Twinhood

Moore's propositions *mirror* those propositions that philosophers refer to,

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[14] Many commentators on Clarke miss the crucial distinction between the everyday and the plain. Annalisa Coliva, for instance, writes that

> Thompson Clarke introduced a distinction between 'plain talk' and 'philosophical talk'. In his view, the former is what is produced within all our usual linguistic practices, with their characteristic embedment within non-linguistic activities... While in plain talk the conditions of meaningful discourse are subject to pragmatic constraints—such as relevance, and other forms of appropriateness—in philosophical talk all these limitations are removed and words are considered as such. (Coliva 2010, 37)

Here, Coliva is expressing the *traditional* view of the plain as 'restricted' (discussed below). It is precisely this view of the plain that Clarke calls into question in LS when he argues that "the dimensions of the circle of the plain" are "broad" enough to include Moore's context-free propositions.

[15] We can see, then, that Michael Williams fundamentally misunderstands Clarke when he writes that Clarke "argues that Moore's propositions belong to 'philosophical' common sense" (UD, 180).

philosophically, as CS propositions, yet they differ in logical type. That they differ in meaning from the propositions of what Clarke calls "*philosophical* Common Sense (CS_{ph})" (LS, 759, ¶15) is evidenced by the fact that they differ in their truth-conditions. A plain positive answer to the plain, context-bound question "Are there material objects?" does not amount to a positive answer to *a typographically identical question* meant philosophically. Similarly, Moore's plain, context-free question "Do external objects exist?" differs in logical type from "what we [philosophers] ask 'inside our studies,' using these words" (LS, 758, ¶14a). Hence, Moore's plain, handwaving 'proof' of the existence of external objects fails so much as to address, let alone answer, "our intended philosophical question" (LS, 758, ¶14b). In LS, Clarke refers to as "verbal twin[s]" (LS, 756, ¶7) those utterances that are, as he puts it in NTE, "typographically the same" yet of distinct logical types (NTE, 39, 42).

As we've seen, Clarke rejects the ordinary-language doctrine that context-free language is meaningless. For the moment, let's leave to one side Moore's plain context-free utterances and consider only the relation between *everyday* utterances (both general and particular), which are context-bound, and *philosophical* utterances (both general and particular), which are context-free. Clarke argues, in line with (and perhaps to an extent following)[16] Grice, that "*verbal* twins" are "in one sense *meaning* twins also, for the words used have the same meanings in each

[16] Clarke submitted NTE to Harvard in 1962, five years before Grice gave the William James Lectures. He makes no mention of Grice in NTE, and it is possible that he developed his semantic theory independently of reading Grice—certainly he did so independently of reading (or hearing) *Logic and Conversation*. It seems likely, however, that when writing NTE Clarke was familiar with Grice's paper "Meaning" (in Grice 1989), which was first published in 1957 and which anticipates many of the ideas Grice goes on to develop in *Logic and Conversation*. In "Meaning," Grice distinguishes between what he calls the "*natural*" and the "*nonnatural* sense" (or meaning) of expressions (Grice 1989, 214; cf. Grice 1989, 88 ff.). In *Logic and Conversation*, he contrasts "conventional meaning" (Grice 1989, 25) with "nonconventional implicatures," the most well-known subclass of which are "*conversational* implicatures" (Grice 1989, 26). (I think it's safe to say that Clarke's repeated uses in LS of 'imply' and its cognates in connection with the meaning of utterances should be read in a Gricean spirit.) Conventional meanings are carried by words alone (Grice 1989, 25), whereas nonconventional implicatures depend also on "the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance" (Grice 1989, 31). In this way, Grice's distinctions parallel (and may have contributed to the development of) Clarke's distinction in NTE between 'skeletal' and 'full-bodied' meaning.

version" (LS, 759, ¶15). They are meaning twins in the sense that the meaning carried by the words alone is the same in both the everyday and the philosophical cases. In everyday life, however, the (full) "'meaning'" of what we say "is not to be identified with the meaning of words, alone or in combination, but with 'meaning' in a different dimension, with what *we* mean, say, or imply, *in* uttering words (with their meanings)" (LS, 755, ¶6). In NTE, Clarke refers to this "different dimension" as the "extra-linguistic" or "non-rule-like dimension" (NTE, 181). He associates the non-rule-like dimension with everyday life: it is "constitutive of daily life" (NTE, 180). The non-rule-like dimension is, as he puts it in LS, "nonsemantical" (LS, 760, ¶18) in the sense that it has nothing to do—at least not directly—with the rules built into our language. Rather, it is bound up with "our practices... elemental parts of our human nature," with "whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain" (LS, 761, ¶21). It does not alter the meaning of words or concepts, including words such as 'know' and 'certain' (and concepts such as 'knowledge' and 'certainty'). What it does is contribute its portion to what Grice calls "utterance-type occasion-meaning" (Grice 1989, 89–91) or simply "speaker meaning" (Grice 1989, 298). The everyday context supplies the non-rule-like dimension that, in concert with the meaning of words alone, more or less fixes what *we* mean, say, or imply when speaking "within specific, elaborate, contexts of everyday life" (LS, 754, ¶4a). As Clarke puts it in NTE, context-free meaning is "skeletal" as opposed to "full-bodied" (NTE, 200). It is not, as ordinary-language philosophers would have it, simply meaningless. In considering an example of a context-free question, Clarke writes that "[t]he words *alone as a part of language* carry some meaning" (NTE, 199); they carry "the *skeletal* meaning of the finished question": "The [context-free] utterance is meaningful in the sense that it has skeletal meaning. The utterance is not fully meaningful in the sense that it does not ask a full-bodied question" (NTE, 200).

Let's return to what Clarke finds problematic about general Moore-type propositions. To begin with, he writes that "[c]ontextual features, *their presence or absence*, exercise control, on us and on how the language segments within the context are to be understood" (emphasis added). The point Clarke makes in this paragraph is that the "fewer the contextual features" embedded in a proposition, "the more option we have, the larger the role of our decision and resolve" in how we understand the proposition, specifically whether we understand it plainly or philosophically (LS, 757, ¶10). I have emphasized "their presence or absence" to highlight the fact that, for Clarke, the absence of contextual features can do more than simply free us *to decide* how to understand propositions; it can actively *exercise control* on how we understand them. As we'll see shortly (and will explore in more detail in Chapter 4), Clarke believes that, for any proposition *p*, the absence of contextual features embedded in *p* has a strong tendency to promote a *philosophical* understanding of *p*. Moore understands his context-free propositions as plain and does so, Clarke claims, "effortlessly, automatically, almost as though he had had a philosophical lobotomy"—that is, almost as though he has lost the ability to see so much as the possibility of the philosophical, of anything lying 'beyond the plain.' Those of us who do *not* act as if we have had philosophical lobotomies, however, will tend in the opposite direction: we will tend, and with reason (as discussed in 4.2), to understand context-free utterances as philosophical.

I take it that what Clarke finds "illuminating" about Moore—why he devotes §1 of LS to him—is that Moore's inability to see beyond the plain reveals CS propositions in a new aspect (LS, 758, ¶12).[17] We tend to understand CS philosophically. For Clarke, CS is initially a

[17] Cf. SPS, 99: "We know that some philosophers have said or implied that no one knows whether there are external things. But if there is a way of understanding Moore's assertions as fully legitimate we are now faced with the possibility that what those philosophers meant to assert is not the same thing Moore proves to be false. This is precisely why I think G. E. Moore's proof of an external world is so important; he better than anyone else opens up

product of philosophizing (NTE, 241). "In each of these beliefs—e.g., the belief that we can see physical objects—there is implicit a conception of the nature of empirical knowledge" (NTE, 241), a conception that "everyone" (rather, everyone who does not act as if he has had a philosophical lobotomy) "succumbs to... as soon as he begins thinking in general" (rather, context-free) "terms about empirical knowledge" (NTE, 243).[18] According to this epistemology, "empirical knowledge" (rather, 'pure' or 'absolutely objective' empirical knowledge) "is *independent* of what I have referred to as the non-rule-like dimension," that is, of the contribution of everyday contexts (NTE, 241). We might say, borrowing a phrase from Marcus Singer, that CS_{ph} is "the Common Sense view of common sense" (Singer 1986, 227). But Moore, the inveterate plain man, encounters CS_{ph} and systematically misunderstands it as plain. Ironically, Moore's misunderstanding—his philosophical handicap, as it were—reveals something of great philosophical importance: the category, or logical type, of CS_{pl}.[19]

As we'll see in Chapter 7, one of the two main interpretive fault-lines separating the Dissolutionist and the Pyrrhonian Readings of LS concerns where Clarke leaves us vis-à-vis plain knowing (see 7.3). Bound up with this issue is the question of how we are to understand the category of CS_{pl}. According to the Dissolutionist Reading, what Clarke finds problematic about CS_{pl} is not so much the logical type itself—the propositions of CS_{pl} are, as Moore thought,

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this possibility for us."

[18] My parenthetical corrections to this quote from NTE, as well as subsequent parenthetical corrections, reflect what I take to be some of LS's innovations over Clarke's earlier work. These innovations revolve around the concept of CS_{pl}, and many of them stem from, or at least are framed in LS in terms of, Clarke's engagement with Moore, a figure who makes no significant appearance in NTE.

[19] Cf. SPS, 100: "Perhaps a steadfast refusal or inability to speak or think in a 'philosophical' or non-everyday way could reveal something of the greatest philosophical significance." And a bit later: "It is precisely Moore's refusal or inability to take his own or anyone else's words in that increasingly elusive 'external' or 'philosophical' way that seems to me to constitute the philosophical importance of his remarks... If Moore in his responses represents the ordinary man, he is a most extraordinary ordinary man in not being 'lured' into the traditional philosopher's understanding of his questions" (SPS, 119).

simply general, context-free formulations of everyday propositions—but rather the broader type of the conceptual scheme to which they belong, i.e., the plain. This is a problem to be addressed by way of a post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge. With the skeptical threat dissolved, however, "the problem of the plain" (LS, 769, ¶63) is not 'pressing' in the sense that failure to have solved it would leave the plain open to global skeptical undermining. According to the Pyrrhonian Reading, however, CS_{pl} is inherently problematic, for it opens the door to plain skeptical problematics that pose the same sort of global threat to our empirical knowledge that, on the Dissolutionist Reading, is precluded by the dissolution of philosophical skepticism.

I want to explore the conception of knowledge implicit in CS_{ph} more closely, particularly in order to see what light it can shine on what a contrasting, plain conception of knowledge might look like. First, though, let's ask, with Clarke, "[W]hat is *philosophical* Common Sense... those general propositions which answer general philosophical questions affirmatively? And what is the source of CS_{ph}'s intellectual grip? ... What is the siren call of whatever lies outside the circle of the plain?" (LS, 760, ¶15).

2.3 Beyond the Plain: Purity and Restrictedness

Beyond the plain, we're told, lies the philosophical, the domain of "questions of perennial philosophical concern" (LS, 758, ¶13). Unlike Moore, we find ourselves deeply concerned to answer such questions and are frustrated by the thought that we cannot do so. Such questions "satisfy a deep intellectual need, unfulfilled by their plain versions" (LS, 760, ¶15). We feel that "there must be more than just the plain," since otherwise philosophical questions—the very questions about whose answers "so many [have] cared so much, passionately desiring either to

defend or to repudiate" them (LS, 760, ¶15)—"could not... even be asked," let alone answered (LS, 758, ¶13). If there were nothing beyond the plain, then we feel that "[s]omething important would be denied us, which 'inside our studies' we seek, not questioning its availability" (LS, 760, ¶15). But why? Why are we not "content at home like Moore, inside the plain...?" (LS, 759, ¶15)?

Clarke's answer:

> We should be intellectually frustrated just because prohibited access to the *objective*. (LS, 761, ¶27)
>
> ... this simple quest for absolute objectivity drives us beyond the plain, moving us to philosophize. (LS, 762, ¶28)
>
> ... what *is* frustrating about Moore's plain questions is, it does seem, their not enabling us to ask how things *really* are objectively... [It] seems to be a visible fact, that the objectivity attainable within the plain is only skin-deep, *relative*. We want to know not how things are *inside* the world, but how things are, absolutely. (LS, 762, ¶28)

To know how things are "absolutely" is to know how things "*really* are objectively," which is to know how things are *non-relatively*. But relative to what? The relativity at issue is, ultimately, relativity to *us* as knowers of the world. An absolutely objective description of the world—or of anything within the world—requires that we overcome "the slightest hint of psychologism or anthropocentrism" (UKH, 37); it requires that we describe mind-independent states-of-affairs in such a way that the human knower falls out of the picture, leaving just the states-of-affairs as they are in themselves. Complicating matters is that human knowers belong to the world we seek to describe and understand objectively. Not only would our impoundment within the plain prevent us from asking and answering absolutely objective questions about the world, it would also prevent us from "assess[ing] our epistemological position *objectively*" (LS, 761, ¶27). "The

limiting eyeglasses of the restricted [i.e., the plain] would prevent us from seeing, even trying to see, things and ourselves as they and we really are" (LS, 762, ¶27).

We do not question the availability of philosophical understanding because, in carrying out traditional epistemological inquiries, we are already "in [the] grip" of the conception of knowledge implicit in CS_{ph} (NTE, 242–3). "The purpose of traditional epistemology," Clarke writes, "is to examine common-sense beliefs critically" (NTE, 235). Both traditional epistemologists and their critics agree on this, which means that both find that "*philosophy begins after* the common-sense beliefs. On this idea what is philosophical... are the *examinations* of common sense" (NTE, 239–40). Clarke wants to convince us, however, that in fact "[p]hilosophizing *ends* with the common-sense beliefs" (NTE, 240), meaning with *philosophical* CS beliefs, i.e., general, context-free CS beliefs that presuppose a philosophical conception of knowledge. Assuming the validity of CS_{ph}, "a traditional epistemologist is a plain man" "in his examinations of [philosophical] common sense... He is not conducting a new [un-plain] kind of inquiry." Traditional philosophers have not, as their critics would have it, "repudiated common sense for (mistaken) philosophical reasons." In examining CS_{ph}, a traditional epistemologist "is performing kinds of inquiries he performs in daily life, in accordance with the rules which govern these mundane inquiries" (NTE, 240). Again, in a sense "[p]hilosophizing *ends* with the common-sense beliefs." The traditional epistemologist, whose inquiries end in skepticism, "is not responsible for [the nature of] his particular inquiries" (NTE, 239). He "is innocent, without an independent thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave to CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement" (LS, 762, ¶30a). As Cavell puts it: the skeptic's "conceptual scheme" is "our conceptual scheme"; "the threat of skepticism" is a threat posed by "the skeptic in oneself" (Cavell 1979, 47).

Clarke discusses relativity-to-us in terms of relativity-to-everyday-contexts. He is particularly concerned with the potential relativity of our concepts and the conceptual schemes to which they belong. As we've seen, he distinguishes between *skeletal meaning*, which is that dimension of meaning carried by "words, alone or in combination," and *full-bodied* meaning, which adds a second, non-rule-like dimension to skeletal meaning. Full-bodied meaning is "what *we* mean, say, or imply, *in* uttering... words (with their meanings)" (LS, 755, ¶6). When we philosophize, we seek absolute objectivity, which calls for freedom from relativity, which requires that we prescind our discourse from everyday contexts. In philosophizing, we attempt to "step outside the nonsemantical practice, then, speaking simple English, ask, affirm, assess, but, as a consequence, in unrestricted, untrammeled fashion" (LS, 760, ¶19).[20] When we philosophize, we concern ourselves only with context-free meaning, with what words mean *per se*: "the philosophical case is obtained by eliminating the non-rule-like dimension present in daily life without replacing it with another dimension" (NTE, 183). This freedom from context is thought to account for "the peculiarly philosophical character of questions and propositions," namely, "their 'purity.'" As philosophers, "[o]ur commitments, implications, are dictated solely

[20] Keren Gorodeisky and Kelly Dean Jolley write that "Clarke talks in ways that suggest that what the words mean *per se* is, somehow, more than what they mean when we mean something by using them. The words *per se* are replete with meaning, too replete: they mean too much, as it were. What we mean by the words when we use them seems comparatively impoverished, meager" (Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 243 fn. 15). They have in mind the passage where Clarke writes that, when a person is speaking within an everyday context, "he is saying, meaning, implying, committing himself to *less* than would his words *per se*, if untrammeled by the practice prescribed by the identification procedure" (LS, 760, ¶18; cf. LS, 763, ¶30b). They contrast this "repletion-characterization" of the meaning of words *per se* with the "depletion-characterization" offered by Charles Travis, one of Clarke's students. For Travis, Gorodeisky and Jolley write, "what the words *per se* mean is less than the words mean when we use them. The words *per se* have a depleted meaning" (Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 243–4 fn. 15). They conclude (correctly, to my mind) that either characterization is acceptable; it's just a matter of how you look at it. Indeed, Clarke himself talks in both ways. As we'll see, in everyday contexts skeletal meaning does mean *more* than full-bodied meaning in the sense that, at least very often, a 'skeletal' knowledge-claim will entail the ruling-out of a greater number of counter-possibilities than will its 'full-bodied' twin. Yet there is obviously something *depleted* about 'skeletal' meaning when compared to 'full-bodied' meaning; Clarke's metaphor could hardly be clearer on that point. In LS, Clarke will conclude that 'pure' or 'skeletal' questions do not have enough semantic heft, as it were, to admit of either affirmative or negative answers (cf. LS, 768, ¶55). In Clarke's view, the meaning of words *per se* is profoundly 'depleted.'

by [skeletal] meanings" (LS, 760, ¶19). "We *are* philosophizing... asking philosophical questions, *et al.,* when any extraneous factors, especially inhibiting procedures, are debarred" (LS, 761, ¶24).

Clarke illustrates the conception of philosophizing as pure inquiry, and the concomitant conception of the plain as "restricted" (LS, 760, ¶18), by way of the analogy of the wartime airplane-spotters. Stroud develops a version of the same example in Chapter 2 of SPS. The airplane-spotters are instructed to distinguish among ten types of enemy aircraft, types *A–J*, on the basis of a "checklist of features" (LS, 759, ¶16a). Stroud refers to the airplane-spotters' "manuals" (SPS, 67), and I will do the same. The identification procedure yields objective facts only if the aircrafts being spotted belong to one of the ten types. If older, antiquated aircraft (types *X*, *Y*, and *Z*) are spotted, then the technique will fail to distinguish them from *any* aircraft of types *A–J*: the identification procedure "specifies features sufficient for distinguishing the ten types one from another but none from *X*, *Y*, *Z*" (LS, 759, ¶16a). The airplane-spotters know of the existence of these older aircraft, and so know of the ultimate fallibility of their identification procedure, but they "are instructed to ignore" this complication due to "certain overriding practical advantages" (LS, 759, ¶16a).

It is important to Clarke's story that the airplane-spotters are *not* human beings like us. They "never dream or hallucinate," and their "senses are unerring" (LS, 760, ¶16b). I take it that these qualifications are meant to preclude a number of possible angles of skeptical attack (most obviously, arguments from dreams or hallucination). The airplane-spotters' perceptual relation to the world is direct and infallible. They differ from us also in that they "have only the concepts presented [in the manual], plus any others needed for what the humanoids do, ask, and say in this state of affairs" (LS, 760, ¶16b). I take it that this qualification is meant to preclude skeptical

attacks based on mundane 'undefeated defeaters.' In the absence of any concepts not directly required by the practice of airplane-spotting, the following type of skeptical queries would be impossible in the airplane-spotters' "small, independent universe" (LS, 760, ¶16b): "But might it be that aircraft *x* is not an aircraft at all, but an aircraft-shaped balloon sent up to deceive you?" Such queries could be neither conceived nor formulated because no one in that universe possesses the concept of balloons. It may even be that the qualification is meant to preclude the possibility of the *existence* of aircraft-shaped balloons in the airplane-spotters' universe, for if no one in that universe possesses the concept of balloons, then presumably there are no balloons in that universe, for balloons (in the relevant sense, at least) are not natural occurrences.

Given these qualifications, Clarke thinks that "[t]hese creatures... are not in a skeptical position," for "[t]hey can know several kinds of objective empirical facts." Not only can they know what certain aircraft are according to the identification procedure, they can also know, "if they ignore the restrictions on the identification procedure, the real type of an aircraft" (LS, 760, ¶17).[21] Given their infallible senses and the absence of any concepts that might 'defeat' (perhaps even the nonexistence of any unnatural objects that might be developed in an attempt to defeat) their apparent seeing of an aircraft, the airplane-spotters need only consult the deliverances of their senses (what marks or features does aircraft *x* exhibit?) and correlate those deliverances with the checklists contained in the manual. Figure 2 illustrates this everyday practice.

[21] In fact, we must add one more stipulation if we are to conclude that the airplane-spotters can legitimately philosophize: we must, as Stroud points out, stipulate that the airplane-spotters know that their manual is both complete and accurate. See SPS, 80.

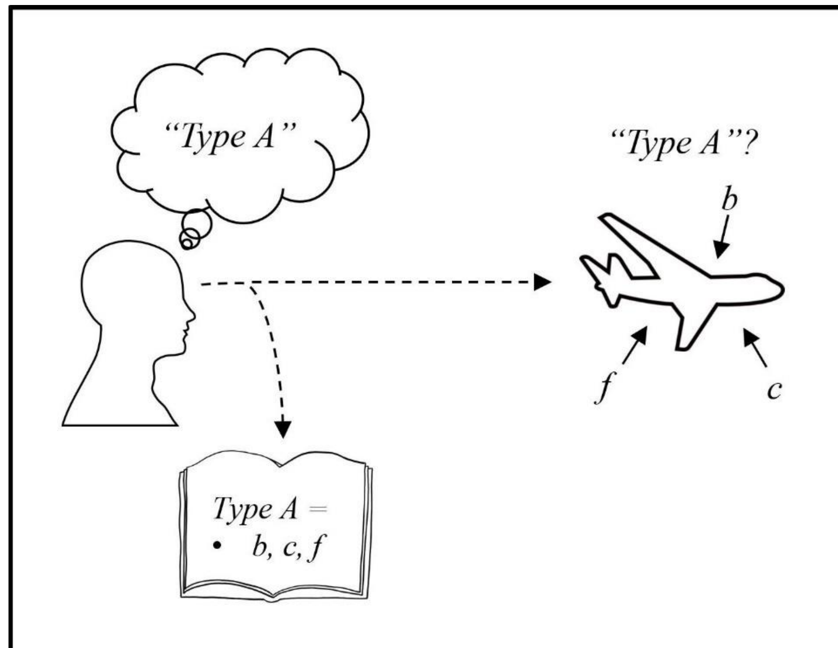

FIGURE 2: The Everyday Practice of an Airplane-Spotter

Crucially, the everyday practice does not guarantee the *absolutely* objective truth of the airplane-spotter's belief (or assertion) that aircraft *x* is of type *A*. It guarantees the truth only of the more restricted belief (or assertion) that, *according to the identification procedure*, aircraft *x* is of type *A*. Understood in this way, the assertion "Aircraft *x* is of type *A*" is both true and immune to outside undermining, by which I mean undermining based on appeals to the purely objective (the 'real') facts regarding aircraft *x*. Even if aircraft *x* is not of type *A*, it is still true that it is a type *A* aircraft *according to the identification procedure*.

Central to the airplane-spotter story is the idea that, distinct from questions of purely objective fact, there is an everyday practice within which it is *right* (both appropriate and correct) to shout out, in appropriate circumstances, "Aircraft of type *A* spotted in quadrant three!" Strictly speaking, the airplane-spotter who correctly makes this assertion does not necessarily know it is purely, objectively true. From a purely objective standpoint, an aircraft's being of

type *A* precludes that aircraft being of any other type, on the simple principle that $A \neq \sim A$. Within their everyday practice of airplane-spotting, however, the assertion "Aircraft of type *A* in quadrant three!" is meant—it is intended to be understood—as elliptical for the fuller assertion, "According to the identification procedure outlined in the manual, aircraft *x* in quadrant three is of type *A*." If the airplane-spotter has fulfilled what Robert Fogelin describes as her "epistemic responsibility" (PR, 26 ff.) by carefully and judiciously employing the identification procedure, then not only is her performance not criticizable, *her claim is true* even if aircraft *x* is not in fact of type *A*. The key idea here is that, by virtue of the fact that the 'fleshed-out' restatement of the original assertion remains true *even if the proposition it contains is strictly speaking false*, the original assertion remains true as well, for the original assertion is meant to be understood as belonging within the context of the everyday practice, that is, it is meant to be understood as elliptical for the fleshed-out restatement.

It is important to note that Clarke never abandons the conception of the philosophical as the pure: it is "a truth" that "the philosophical is the pure" (LS, 760, ¶20). What he will call into question is our ability to *ask* or *answer* 'pure' philosophical questions. Nor does he abandon the view, articulated in the opening paragraphs of LS, that the everyday is context-bound in something like the manner of the airplane-spotters' everyday practice. What he will call into question is the conception of the plain as 'restricted,' for part of the legacy of skepticism is that we are as yet in no position to venture *any* general characterization of the plain. The conception of the plain as restricted is one that purports to view it from a philosophical standpoint, that is, from a standpoint outside the plain. Philosophers clearly do attempt to adopt such a standpoint; and moreover, when they are 'in their studies' they take for granted that they can succeed in the endeavor. From that standpoint, there is only one way the plain can look. If there is an 'outside'

to the plain, then the plain must be restricted in some sense.[22]

The conception of the plain as restricted, and the concomitant conception of CS as philosophical, is the *original* conception of the plain. The plain comes into view as such only when we attempt to step outside of it. Doing so triggers doubts about its legitimacy. This doubt takes the form of general philosophical-skeptical questions, and those questions elicit the general propositions that answer them affirmatively, i.e., CS_{ph}. This is why Clarke concludes that the "so-called beliefs" of CS_{ph} "are the product of philosophizing" (NTE, 241). With this, Clarke is on solid historical ground, for it does seem that the concept of CS was invented by philosophers.[23] Seeing the possibility of CS_{pl}, and the concomitant conception of the plain as *not* restricted to the (context-bound) everyday, is the result of the opposite movement: Moore's unwillingness (or even inability) even to attempt to step outside the plain. The result is to 'implain' CS_{ph}. In this way, Moore "drags us down from our ivory towers, we reflective, ethereal beings, back to our earthly selves, and confronts us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men" (LS, 758, ¶12).

2.4 Plain vs. Philosophical Knowing

We are now in a better position to characterize the conception of knowledge implicit in

[22] Cf. SPS, 127: "Once one grasps the traditional epistemological project it is difficult to see the claims of everyday life as anything other than restricted in the way outlined in Chapter Two."

[23] Pavel Gregoric notes that "our notion of common sense has been traced back to Greek philosophers, especially the Stoics, and the germs of that notion have been found in Aristotle" (Gregoric 2007, viii)—though *not* in Aristotle's own conception of what he called 'common sense' (*coenē aethēsis*). To find traces of CS philosophy in Aristotle, we need to look at the so-called 'eudoxic method,' which grants some degree of inherent epistemic authority to *eudoxa*, i.e., 'received opinions.' (See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1145b; *Topics*, 100b.) For more on the development of the concept of CS in the ancient world, see Brittain 2005. For a brief but worthwhile critical discussion of attitudes toward CS among English-speaking philosophers, see Sprigge 1986.

CS_{ph} and to see how that conception gives rise to the standard or 'traditional' understanding of plain knowing.

In everyday life, our utterances are plain. As such, they aver or lay claim to *plain knowing* (K_{pl}). Philosophical utterances, on the other hand—including the propositions of CS_{ph}—aver or lay claim to *philosophical knowing* (K_{ph}). The primary features of K_{ph} are:

1. *Absolute objectivity*, and
2. *Absolute invulnerability*

Regarding (*1*), Clarke writes that "from an *absolutely objective* perspective," K_{pl} seems to be "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only" (LS, 767, ¶51). It "seems to be a visible fact" that "the objectivity attainable within the plain is only skin-deep, *relative*" (LS, 762, ¶28). Philosophy represents the "intellectual quest" to overcome relativity and attain knowledge that is absolutely objective (= non-context-relative) (LS, 761, ¶27). Regarding (*2*), Clarke writes that CS_{ph} "dictat[es] that knowing meet a certain requirement," namely, "*invulnerability*" (LS, 762, ¶30a; LS, 765, ¶41). To this list I would add a third feature:

3. *Presuppositionlessness*

Clarke does not say much about presuppositionlessness in LS. It's clear from NTE, however, that it plays the crucial role of a necessary (perhaps even a sufficient) condition of absolute invulnerability, which in turn is a mark of absolute objectivity.

The question of what is required for a claim to count as presuppositionless is fraught with difficulties. For present purposes, I'll say only that it seems to me that presuppositionlessness, insofar as it is more than an epistemic aspiration, must always be presuppositionlessness *within* a

certain domain; it cannot be absolute.[24] As we'll see in more detail in Chapter 3, for Clarke empirical knowledge, if it is to qualify as philosophical, must be presuppositionless in the sense that it must consider as relevant—and therefore must rule out—*all* possible empirical alternatives: "'Know', its meaning, requires that to know ___ we be able to 'rule out' any counterpossibility to ___, any possibility which, if realized, would falsify ___" (LS, 763, ¶30b). K_{ph} eschews what Clarke calls, referring to J.L. Austin's "Other Minds," "the requirement of special reasons" (NTE, 150). According to the requirement of special reasons, farfetched or extra-ordinary alternatives are relevant, and therefore must be ruled out, only if there is some special reason for thinking they obtain. Clarke agrees that this requirement is operative in everyday life, but denies that it is operative in philosophy. He writes: "The effect of ignoring this requirement is... that considerations which in daily life have repudiating significance *under special circumstances* are taken to have this same significance *always*" (NTE, 150). In everyday life, claims are "placed *within* the world as an unquestionable context" (NTE, 179). When we philosophize, however, we cannot take the world—we cannot take any empirical claim—for granted, either as obtaining or as not obtaining. To presuppose *anything* about the world is to invite doubt, which entails vulnerability. Bernard Williams stresses, in his description of Descartes's inquiry as 'pure'—a description that may well owe a debt to Clarke (see 1.1)—that presuppositionlessness (i.e., not taking anything for granted) is "the central characteristic of Pure Enquiry" (Williams 1978, 40).

There is one passage in LS where Clarke suggests a link between invulnerability and presuppositionlessness. Unfortunately, we're not yet in a position to understand the passage as it's written. (I return to this quote in 5.1.1.)

[24] On this, see Marvin Farber's brief note on the idea of presuppositionlessness in phenomenological analyses (Farber 1947). I think many of the points he makes there apply to philosophy more generally.

> Philosophical P_e collapses because, in brief, the overriding epistemological characteristic of a constitution of the standard type is that knowing requires invulnerability. Philosophical P_e, therefore, of necessity, calls into question (negates) the very knowing it presupposes. (LS, 765, ¶41)

What Clarke is saying here, basically, is that if you raise *in a philosophical context* a skeptical scenario (P) that presupposes some bit of empirical knowledge, or (as he goes on to say) even just the possibility of knowing something, then that scenario will "collapse," since in a philosophical context no bit of empirical knowledge—not even the possibility of knowing—can be presupposed. Why not? Because in a philosophical context knowing requires invulnerability, and 'presuppositional' knowing is vulnerable. In a philosophical context, any and all presuppositions are, "of necessity," called into question. They are thereby 'negated' *qua* knowledge. Even if they are true, and even if we correctly believe that they are true, we do not *know* (philosophically) that they are true.

Turning to K_{pl}, its fundamental features as traditionally understood are the opposite of K_{ph}'s. K_{pl} is thought to be:

1′. *Relative (to contexts)*,
2′. *Not absolutely invulnerable*, and
3′. *Not presuppositionless*

Regarding (*1′*), Clarke writes—as we've just seen—that it "seems to be a visible fact" that "the objectivity attainable within the plain is only skin-deep, *relative*" (LS, 762, ¶28). He speaks of the plain's "relative 'non-objectivity'" (LS, 769, ¶63). Claim (*2′*) holds that K_{pl} is not *absolutely* invulnerable. The significance of the qualifier is that there is an important sense, crucial especially for the Dissolutionist Reading of LS, in which Clarke argues that it *is* invulnerable (see 5.1.2). As we've seen, Clarke claims that the plain is "immune... from skeptical assault"

(LS, 754, ¶4a): it "is secure against outside undermining" (LS, 767, ¶51), meaning undermining from outside the plain, i.e., from philosophy. In NTE, he claims that "what the plain man 'would say' in ordinary life is not vulnerable to philosophy" (NTE, 147). Knowledge-claims "can be absolutely secure when inside elaborate everyday circumstances" (LS, 756, ¶8). K_{pl} is, as he puts it, immune to "implained [skeptical] doubts" (LS, 755, ¶4a). But what does this 'immunity,' this limited invulnerability, amount to? As we'll see in Chapter 5, according to the Dissolutionist Reading it is such that, as Barry Stroud puts it, global (i.e., philosophical) skeptical threats to our knowledge leave "everyday knowledge and our 'epistemic practices' untouched" (CP, 312). Everyday life is 'insulated' from philosophy.[25] As Alice Crary puts it in her characterization of 'the New Wittgenstein,' "abandoning the idea of an external standpoint" (Crary 2000, 3)—in Clarke's terms, abandoning the idea of a philosophical standpoint beyond the plain—is "*without consequence* for our entitlement to our basic epistemic ideals" (Crary 2000, 4). This is a nice statement of the core position that the Dissolutionist Reading defends and that the Pyrrhonian Reading rejects.

The assertion of the airplane-spotter in Figure 2—"Aircraft *x* is of type *A*"—is an example of plain knowing as traditionally understood. Its truth is relative to the everyday practice codified in the identification procedure. Its relativity entails that it is restricted. It is *not absolutely invulnerable*, for it might be false from an absolutely objective standpoint. Even so, understood *as* a relative, context-bound claim, its truth does not depend on its corresponding to the purely objective facts of the matter. This renders it invulnerable (immune) to criticisms that cite alternative possibilities not relevant to the identification procedure. The only relevant

[25] Clarke does not himself use the metaphor of insulation, but it is common in the literature on LS. (See Bett 1993, 374–6; Ribeiro 2006, 29; Gascoigne 2007, 8; Marušić 2008, 62 ff.; Hamawaki 2014, 193.) To the best of my knowledge, the term was introduced into discussions of Clarke by Myles Burnyeat in Burnyeat 1984/7.

alternatives are those that emerge from within the everyday context. For example, if the manual stated that type-*A* aircraft are to be identified on the basis of four features, not just the three features the airplane-spotter sees, then the airplane-spotter's assertion "Aircraft *x* is of type *A*," based as it is on her seeing only features *b*, *c*, and *f*, would not be known to be true even *qua* a relative, context-bound claim. The airplane-spotter's assertion is also *not presuppositionless* in the sense that it is not a claim the truth of which requires ruling out all possible empirical alternatives, such as aircraft *x*'s being of type *Z*, one of the antiquated types ignored by the identification procedure.

As the example of the airplane-spotter suggests, the traditional conception of K_{pl} is better understood, by Clarke's lights, as a conception of *everyday* knowing. As we've seen, Clarke does not abandon the conception of the philosophical as the pure nor the conception of the everyday as context-bound. It is its context-boundedness (i.e., *1′*) that accounts for the fact that everyday knowing is also characterized by (*2′*) and (*3′*). As traditionally understood, the plain just is the everyday, but Clarke wants us to see that outside the everyday there lies the context-free plain of Moore-type propositions, i.e., CS_{pl}. It is *this* logical type that is not captured by (*1′*)–(*3′*), as evidenced by the fact that Moore-type propositions are context-free and therefore do not satisfy (*1′*). The Dissolutionist and the Pyrrhonian Readings differ regarding the import of this fact. The main point of disagreement is the same as we saw in 2.2, above: namely, the scope and disruptive potential of *plain* skepticism. On the Dissolutionist Reading, the logical type of CS_{pl}, though it stands in need of elucidation, is fundamentally *familiar* in its plainness. As plain, it is secure against skeptical undermining—or, at least, it is as secure as is our everyday knowing. On the Pyrrhonian Reading, however, CS_{pl} is, at least initially, fundamentally *mysterious*. Moreover, this mysteriousness threatens to infect our everyday knowing, thereby

calling into question its legitimacy. We simply do not understand, according to the Pyrrhonian Reading, the kind of knowledge averred or laid claim to by CS_{pl}. Nor, then, do we understand how (or whether) everyday knowing is genuinely possible. It is evidently possible for the airplane-spotters, but that is because (*a*) their everyday knowing is grounded in (available) philosophical knowing, just as traditional philosophy seeks to ground *our* everyday knowing in philosophical knowing, and (*b*) by stipulation, the airplane-spotters' everyday practice is invulnerable to an assortment of skeptical arguments that *can* be raised against *our* everyday knowing (e.g., dreams, hallucinations, mundane undefeated defeaters). For better or worse, we are not "humanoids" occupying "a small, independent universe" in which our everyday practices unfold in blissful isolation from skeptical challenges (LS, 760, ¶16b).

Now, it is important to see that Clarke does *not* represent K_{pl} and K_{ph} as embodying distinct *standards* of knowledge. A number of commentators have misread him on this point. It is linked to the question of the extent to which Clarke is a contextualist. Annalisa Coliva writes that Clarke and Stroud "can be seen as the forefathers of contemporary contextualist strategies in epistemology" (Coliva 2010, 37). Hilary Putnam, on the other hand, has argued that Stroud's SPS is "an attack on the idea that 'know' is a context-dependent verb" and hence an attack on contextualism, which holds "that the truth-evaluable content of a sentence of the form *X knows that p* will depend on the particular context of utterance (or inscription) of the sentence" (Putnam 2014, 107). Clarke's (and Stroud's) contextualism is found in the distinction between the plain and the philosophical. As Clarke says, if Moore's propositions are understood philosophically, then he will seem "blatantly dogmatic" (LS, 758, ¶10), whereas if they are understood plainly, then "his Defence and Proof" deserve "full marks" (LS, 758, ¶11), for "within specific, elaborate, contexts of everyday life" "a 'proof' like [Moore's] *is* a proving" (LS, 754, ¶4a). In

the philosophical context, Moore's proof fails, but it succeeds in everyday contexts. Thus, on such a view, Coliva writes, Moore's proof "*contradicts* scepticism while being *compatible* with it" (Coliva 2010, 40). This is because contextualism holds that

> there are different contexts, determined by different standards about what must be the case in order for knowledge to be obtained. So, what may be known in a context may turn out not to be so in a different one. This would in fact be what happens in the passage from ordinary contexts to philosophical ones. Moore's proof could thus be correct in the ordinary context, yet fail as an anti-sceptical weapon. (Coliva 2010, 40)

She continues:

> A corollary of this view is that, contrary appearances notwithstanding, 'knowledge' is a context-sensitive term (or concept), like ordinary indexical terms such as 'I' and 'yesterday', which pick out different people and days, respectively, according to the context of their utterance. Accordingly, also the extension of 'knowledge' varies according to shifts in the context of utterance (or of assessment, on the relativist variant of contextualism). (Coliva 2010, 41)

Clearly, Putnam and Coliva cannot both straightforwardly be right about Clarke and Stroud.

In response to Coliva, it's important to note that neither Stroud nor Clarke accept that dogmatic philosophical skepticism is correct *at all*. It is *conditionally correct* in its context, but that condition (= the full meaningfulness of philosophical utterances), Stroud and Clarke argue, cannot be satisfied. Philosophical utterances, both positive and negative, ought to be "erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29). It is true that Stroud writes that

> The price of conceding the truth of Moore's assertions, as it were, would be their lack of logical connection with the thesis of philosophical scepticism. But on that alternative philosophical scepticism would no longer imply the falsity of the knowledge-claims made by Moore and all the rest of us in everyday life. The price of philosophical scepticism's immunity, as it were, would be the corresponding immunity of all our ordinary assertions to philosophical attack. (SPS, 127)

But he then goes on to say: "Could philosophical scepticism be compatible with the truth of what we say and believe in ordinary life? I confess it is difficult for me to see how it could be so" (SPS, 127). *If* philosophizing is possible—if philosophical-skeptical questions are answerable—then the context of the philosophical is legitimate. If the philosophical is legitimate, then "it is difficult to see the claims of everyday life as anything other than restricted," as in the case of the airplane-spotters. As a consequence, "[i]t would be difficult to see how philosophical scepticism could fail to be true" in its assessments of everyday utterances. Stroud concludes that "[o]nly something other than that traditional conception [of the plain as restricted] would enable us to avoid or defuse philosophical scepticism" (SPS, 127).

It seems, then, that Putnam is right that Stroud (and, by extension, Clarke) reject contextualism understood in terms of differing standards of knowledge. The interpretation of the airplane-spotter analogy presented above supports this conclusion. There is one and only one conception of knowledge at play in the airplane-spotter story—something that is missed by Michael Williams and Brian Ribeiro. I'll begin with Ribeiro. He argues that "the Clarke/Stroud story" (Ribeiro 2006, 25) leads to the conclusion that if some airplane-spotters end up identifying a type *Z* aircraft as a type *A* aircraft, they "are not to be blamed for their failures and... they are *not criticizable*" (Ribeiro 2006, 28). Against this, Ribeiro contends that "[t]he skeptic sees our ordinary claims to knowledge as wrong and as criticizable, on the very standards we accept" (Ribeiro 2006, 28). Ribeiro's misreading of the airplane-spotter story results in part from a failure to understand Stroud's distinction in SPS between two dimensions of epistemic appraisal: what Robert Fogelin calls 'epistemic responsibility' and 'adequate grounding' (see SPS, 57; PR, Chapter 1). The airplane-spotters' identification procedure does not enable them to know the

type of aircraft *x* in an absolutely objective sense ('adequate grounding'). To the extent that they think they *do* know in an absolutely objective sense that, e.g., aircraft *x* is of type *A* on the basis of the identification procedure alone, they *are* criticizable ('epistemic responsibility') *even if* we cannot appropriately criticize their performance in the context of the war effort, given that, when understood as belonging *within* their everyday practice, the claim *is* adequately grounded and therefore literally true *even if* aircraft *x* is in fact of type *Z*.

Now, to be fair to Ribeiro, my interpretation of the airplane-spotter analogy is an interpretation of *Clarke's* version of it, not Stroud's. They are not, alas, identical in all essential respects. Stroud's presentation misses a number of features that are important for Clarke. These include the qualifications regarding the nature of the humanoids in their "small, independent universe." Stroud's presentation differs from Clarke also regarding the airplane-spotters' understanding of their own situation. Stroud writes that "[t]he trainees were never told about" the older, antiquated aircraft that are not included in the identification procedure (SPS, 67). Following Stroud, Ribeiro writes that "*for various practical reasons* the spotters are not told about" the antiquated types of aircraft (Ribeiro 2006, 25).[26] Clarke, on the other hand, is clear that the airplane-spotters are not so left in the dark: "It is recognized that [the identification procedure] may result in misidentifications," but the airplane-spotters are "instructed to ignore" the antiquated types of aircraft (LS, 759, ¶16a). This is what allows them to make not only everyday, context-bound knowledge-claims, but also philosophical, context-free knowledge-

[26] Stroud does, however, argue against a 'contextualist' (two-standards) account of knowledge, though not in his discussion of the airplane-spotters: "We do not ordinarily insist on the dream possibility's being ruled out unless there is some special reason to think it might obtain; the philosopher insists that it must always be known not to obtain in order to know anything about the world around us. But on his understanding of everyday life that difference is not to be explained by the philosopher's insisting on or inventing a conception of knowledge stricter or more demanding than that of the scientist or the lawyer or the plain man. Rather he claims to share with all of us one and the same conception of knowledge—that very conception that operates in everyday and scientific life" (SPS, 70).

claims. The airplane-spotters can, Clarke tells us, "know several types of objective empirical facts, including even, if they ignore the restrictions on the identification procedure, the real type of an aircraft; for types *X, Y, Z* [i.e., the antiquated types] too are 'defined' in terms of distinguishing features" (LS, 760, ¶17).

Michael Williams also follows Stroud on this crucial point: "Unbeknownst to [the airplane-spotters], the checklists do not suffice to distinguish the types of aircraft they are taught to recognize from certain very rare, obsolete types" (UD, 183). In this case, the airplane-spotter in Figure 2 "does not know that the aircraft he has seen is a type A, even though he thinks he does" (UD, 184). Williams draws the same conclusion as Ribeiro: "The example of the spotters... show[s] how the standards for assessing claims to knowledge can change" (UD, 184). "The analogy..." he writes, "is a dramatic illustration of the sceptic's two-factor conception of justification" (UD, 184). According to that conception, "everyday justification can be resolved into two components: an epistemic component, which has to do solely with factors relevant to the truth of our beliefs, and a second component which affects, in light of practical exigencies, how high a standard of evidence it is (practically) reasonable to insist on" (UD, 191). If I'm right, however, this fundamentally misunderstands the airplane-spotters' everyday (context-bound) utterances. It is *not* the case that, on the airplane-spotter analogy, the plain is 'restricted' in the sense that "'restricted' knowing... is knowledge-for-all-practical-purposes, not the genuine article" (UD, 184). Rather, an airplane-spotter's everyday utterance, "Aircraft of type *B* in quadrant three!" is *literally true* if understood *as* an everyday utterance: it counts as genuine knowledge. It is not, of course, *absolutely objective* knowledge, but its relativity to a context is embedded in its meaning—at least, it is *for* the airplane-spotters in the rush and whirl of their wartime practice. When fully fleshed-out, the utterance says, means, implies (again, for the

active airplane-spotters) the following: "In quadrant three there is an aircraft that according to the identification procedure is of type *B*." The whole issue of higher or lower standards of evidence simply plays no role here. Knowledge is knowledge, always and everywhere. But some knowledge-claims are context-bound while others are context-free. In either case, the standard of knowledge is the same.

Are we to conclude, then, that Putnam is right that Clarke and Stroud reject contextualism? The answer, I think, is no. Recall that the airplane-spotter analogy is meant to illustrate the traditional-philosophical understanding of the relation between the plain and the philosophical. Both Clarke and Stroud set out to challenge this understanding of the plain. Clarke rejects the view that "[p]lain knowing" is "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only" because such 'knowing' is not "*absolutely objective*" (LS, 767, ¶51). Philosophical utterances are, Clarke will conclude, *indeterminate*. Philosophical questions do not admit of answers, either affirmative or negative (LS, 768, ¶55). Skeletal meaning alone is too semantically thin to provide us with 'truth-evaluable contents.' Thus, Clarke agrees with what Putnam calls "[t]he thesis of contextualism," which is "that in general *the truth-evaluable content of sentences depends both on what they mean (what a competent speaker knows prior to encountering a particular context) and on the particular context, and not on meaning alone*" (Putnam 2014, 105). In Clarke's terms, the truth-evaluable content of utterances depends both on skeletal *and* full-bodied meaning. This is why 'skeletal' philosophical utterances are indeterminate. Different contexts will put different 'flesh' on the skeleton of language, with the result that what is true in one context might be false in another in just the sorts of ways Putnam describes in his paper.

Chapter 3

On the Nature of Traditional Epistemology

> The epistemologist is fundamentally *unlike* a mathematician: he does not infer, argue, or prove. He is fundamentally *like* a discoverer of new lands; new facts of experience are revealed to his eyes.
>
> – Thompson Clarke, NTE (82)

> When you think like a hermit, you forget what you know.
>
> – Will Oldham, "New Partner"

Clarke holds that before we can learn the lesson of skepticism we must first come to understand the nature of traditional philosophy and of its relation to what he calls "the plain." In the previous chapter, I explored the distinction between the plain and the philosophical. In this chapter, I explore Clarke's account of the nature of traditional epistemology, which is of course an instance of traditional philosophizing.

3.1 The Sense-Data Inquiry

As we've seen, for Clarke full-bodied meaning is a function of two factors: the skeletal meaning of language alone and the 'extra-linguistic' meaning provided by the non-rule-like dimension of everyday life. Why, though, must the everyday dimension be 'non-rule-like'? As it happens, Clarke makes no attempt to establish this conclusion by direct argument: "I said that the crucial dimension 'must be' non-rule-like. I don't really put much stock in any argument that

it *must* be" (NTE, 179).[1] His argument rests rather on a kind of 'phenomenology of philosophizing,' the results of which lead him to conclude that the contextual dimension is non-rule-like. Continuing the just-quoted passage, he writes, "The real basis for our conclusions is that when one passes from one kind of case [i.e., a philosophical case] to the other [i.e., an everyday case] one experiences directly that a special kind of dimension is added" (NTE, 179).

Clarke focuses most of his attention in NTE (and subsequently SS) on "the 'surface' inquiry" (NTE, 53), but his ultimate target is the "*sense-data inquiry*" (NTE, 10). The idea is that these inquiries, along with "the 'hallucination' inquiry" (NTE, 26), have the same logical structure, but that the surface inquiry allows us to get that structure in view more easily: "I believe the sense data inquiry is too complex to tackle head on," but fortunately "[t]he surface inquiry... has essentially the same logic as the sense data inquiry" (NTE, 52, 53).[2] The result of the sense-data inquiry is "the 'sense data thesis.'" "One version of this thesis," Clarke writes, "is that sense data are the 'given element' in perception; another is that sense data are 'epistemologically prior' to physical objects" (NTE, 1). According to the sense-data thesis, what we can truly be said to *see* when looking at an object is not the physical object itself, as CS

[1] The closest Clarke comes to providing a direct argument to support his view regarding both the necessity of the contribution of the contextual dimension and its non-rule-like character is to claim that "traditional epistemology" has performed the "grand experiment" of "discover[ing] *decisively* by Mill's methods that neither ordinary language nor ordinary standards are responsible for the operation in daily life of the requirement of special reasons" (NTE, 172, 173). Even here, though, Clarke does not argue that traditional epistemology has shown that the contribution of the contextual dimension *must be* non-rule-like. Despite the use of "Mill's methods," the crucial moment of the philosophical inquiry is the *discovery* that a demand for special reasons *presents itself to us* as inappropriate in philosophical cases. The philosopher doesn't "argue that it must be so" (NTE, 177). It might be the case, however, that Clarke means also to suggest that traditional epistemology establishes these conclusions "*decisively*" only to the extent that Mill's methods are themselves taken to be decisive. As it happens, few think that Mill's Canons of Induction in themselves establish *anything* decisively (cf. Scarre 1998, 126; Ducheyne 2008, 374–5).

[2] In SS, Clarke does not treat the surface inquiry as preliminary to or a simplified form of the sense-data inquiry, as he does in NTE, where he writes: "I believe that traditional epistemology is fundamentally unified and that a part of this unity lies in the fact that various basic inquiries—the hallucination inquiry, the sense data inquiry, and one other to be discussed in Chapter II [i.e., the surface inquiry]—are all the same in type. It is thus a thesis of this study that in characterizing the type of the hallucination [or the surface] inquiry we are *ipso facto* characterizing the type of the sense data inquiry" (NTE, 26–7).

would have it, but rather a more or less orderly concatenation of the mysterious intermediary entities (or events) known as 'sense data.'

Clarke ties the sense-data thesis to traditional epistemology: it is, he says, "the fundamental thesis in traditional epistemology... held by Descartes, the British Empiricists, and Kant, and amongst contemporary philosophers by C.I. Lewis, H.H. Price, and C.D. Broad" (NTE, 1). Beyond worries about oversimplification, this usage has a distinct air of anachronism to it, for the technical term 'sense data' was not invented until the nineteenth century and did not take on wide currency until the twentieth, notably in the works of Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore.[3] It has since fallen out of philosophical favor. As Willem deVries and Timm Triplett note, "The conventional wisdom among philosophers at the present time is that the credibility of sense-datum theories has been destroyed beyond hope of redemption" (deVries & Triplett 2000, 1). That may be something of an overstatement, but the fact remains that the point deVries and Triplett make about Wilfrid Sellars's focus on sense-data theories in the opening of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" applies to Clarke as well: "it certainly is not the mode of introduction that Sellars would pick if he were writing today" (deVries & Triplett 2000, 1). (It is noteworthy that 'sense data' make no appearance in LS.) In order not to tie Clarke's account of traditional epistemology to any particular sense-data theory or theories, I prefer to think of the sense-data thesis as discussed by him on the model of the more general problem of a *veil of perception*.[4] Stroud repeatedly uses this image in his discussion of the problem in the first

[3] See deVries & Triplett 2000, 2–7 for a brief historical overview of sense-data theories. I would note that the earliest use of "sense data" recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes from an 1855 review article of Kant's *Sämmtliche Werke*, in which Kant's 'manifold of intuition' is translated or glossed as "the multiplicity of sense-data." See p. 35 of *The British Quarterly Review* 21: The judging faculty "applies the *à priori* conceptions of the understanding to the multiplicity of sense-data." (I have been unable to discover the name of the author of this wide-ranging article.)

[4] For a general discussion of the philosophical problem of perception, see Crane & French 2017. The problem, they write, "is created by the phenomena of perceptual illusion and hallucination: if these kinds of error are possible, how

chapter of SPS. According to what he will later call "the restricted conception of the scope of perception" (Stroud 2011a, 23), we are left in the position of "finding a barrier between ourselves and the world around us. There would then be a veil of sensory experiences or sensory objects which we could not penetrate but which would be no reliable guide to the world beyond the veil." We would find that "we are permanently sealed off from a world we can never reach. We are restricted to the passing show on the veil of perception, with no possibility of extending our knowledge to the world beyond" (SPS, 33–4; cf. 37, 38). Michael Huemer describes the veil of perception problem this way: it is "the idea that all one is ever immediately aware of is one's perceptual *experiences*, or *representations* of external objects, not the objects themselves... Thus"—the skeptical thought goes—"our processes of perception are like a 'veil' standing between us and the real world, preventing us from ever really perceiving (objective) reality" (Huemer 2001, xix).

It should be clear how easily the veil-of-perception doctrine can lead to skepticism, where that term is understood as the claim that we do or can have no knowledge of empirical facts (= the external world). If perception is indeed a 'veil' hanging between our minds and the world, then it becomes plausible that the CS conviction that, as Clarke puts it, "*physical objects* are the 'furniture of our world'" is false. In place of physical objects, the skeptical thought goes, "colors-in-certain-shapes (together with what is given to the other senses) are revealed to be the 'furniture of our world,'" with the consequence that "the world we really live in is fundamentally unlike the world we thought was ours" (NTE, 99–100). *Our* world is a world of perceptions, which are dependent on us to some degree, not a world of mind-independent *things*. There *may*

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can perception be what we ordinarily understand it to be, an openness to and awareness of the world?" It seems to me that the image of a veil of perception—not the doctrine that there *is* one, but the worry that there *might* be one—nicely captures this basic idea.

be a world of mind-independent things out there, of course, but the stuff of *that* world is not the stuff of our experience. In that sense, the sense-data inquiry "'reveals' that the common-sense world is an illusion, and that the real world is made up of surfaces" or, ultimately, sense data (NTE, 104).

Clarke's turn to something like phenomenological analysis results from his contention that the sense-data thesis is not the conclusion of an *argument*. If it were, it would be obviously ungrounded or unjustified, for the "arguments given for the sense data thesis are, on the face of it, desperately weak" (NTE, 15). Nontraditional philosophers such as J.L. Austin are 'comfortable' supposing "that philosophers of the caliber of C.I. Lewis and H.H. Price have such a poor nose for odorous argumentation" (NTE, 16). Clarke, however, "cannot share Austin's contempt for the mental habits of traditional philosophers" (NTE, 17). Like Austin, Clarke wants to diagnose what has gone wrong in traditional philosophy, but he maintains that unless we "[c]an come to share with the traditional epistemologist the intellectual experience of being compelled to his sense data thesis," we will be unable "to get ourselves into a position to diagnose. We have to 'intricate' ourselves before we extricate ourselves" (NTE, 18). In treating the sense-data thesis as the conclusion of an argument, it is tempting to look for formal or conceptual deficiencies in the argument. But, Clarke maintains, "[s]ince conceptualization at this level is not the *cause* of our being trapped in paradoxical conclusions [e.g., the sense-data thesis], pointing out a mis-conception at this level will not free us" (NTE, 92). "At the end of the [surface or sense-data] inquiry the grounds for our answer are not intellectual but, we might say, *experiential*" (NTE, 213).

Clarke's phenomenological analysis is unusual in that it takes as its initial object not *everyday* (lived) experience, but *philosophical* experience, by which I mean the kind of

experience of the world that philosophizing can induce. Clarke's phenomenological analysis is, we might say, *regressive* where Husserl's and Heidegger's are *progressive*. Where Husserl begins with everyday lived experience and gradually 'reduces' it in order to arrive at the 'pure' standpoint of the transcendental ego, Clarke wants to begin by evoking the 'pure' philosophical standpoint that "reveal[s] sense data before our eyes" and then explain that standpoint's relation to the everyday phenomenology according to which we see not just surfaces, let alone mere sense data, but physical objects. Thus, it is consistent with his phenomenological approach to deny that the sense-data thesis results from any sort of philosophical scrutiny of *everyday* or *commonsensical* cases of perception. Traditional epistemologists do not take a 'phenomenological' route, as it were, to their phenomenological standpoint. Far from it: "Both casual and systematic observation of our perceptual experiences seem to contradict [the sense-data] thesis... Sherlock Holmes peered as carefully at experience as anyone could. He discovered things that ordinary men overlooked, but he never discovered sense data" (NTE, 13). Clarke claims that phenomenologists, "who make a science of scrutinizing experience" (NTE, 13), do not discover sense data either—a claim that, as we'll see in a moment, is not quite true.

Even so, "[t]he sense data thesis is not based on argument but on an examination of perceptual experience." The traditional epistemologist "reads off his conclusion from the facts of experience"—but the experience in question is peculiarly 'philosophical.' As such, it departs in crucial ways from everyday, commonsensical experience. Thus, "we shall not have understood the epistemologist until we have experienced this mode of examining experience" (NTE, 23). We must endeavor to "share the epistemologist's experience of finding the sense data thesis compelling" (NTE, 21) as a result of "a mode of inquiry which seems valid, which seems to reveal sense data before our eyes, and which takes priority over the other examinations

of experience" (NTE, 23). But again, that mode of inquiry is not itself 'phenomenological' in the sense of beginning with the phenomena of everyday lived experience.

3.2 The Philosophical-Theoretical Standpoint

What, then, is the philosophical mode of inquiry that eventuates in the 'seeing' of sense data and thereby in the positing of the sense-data thesis? For Clarke, it is a mode of inquiry that takes into consideration only the skeletal meaning of words, discounting entirely the full-bodied meaning provided by the contextual dimension of the everyday. Such inquiry either gradually or with startling abruptness cuts human experience off from the world, *not* in the sense of proving that human experience *is* cut off from the world, but in the weaker sense of problematizing the relation between experience and the world, prompting us to look for a way to prove or demonstrate what we had previously *assumed* to be the case, namely, that human experience is, if not directly *of* the objective, mind-independent world, at least inextricably intertwined with it.

It has plausibly been argued that if we begin from the opposite direction—that is, from *within* the world, *within* our everyday, 'engaged,' 'absorbed' experience—we will not find the sense-data thesis compelling except as an extreme privation of the 'full-bodied' experience of everyday life, in which case 'sense data' would remain "*within* the world as an unquestionable context" (NTE, 179) as opposed to occupying the presumptive position of intermediary between us and the world. Husserl and Heidegger, for example, argue that global philosophical-skeptical doubt is discontinuous with everyday epistemic practices. In characterizing "the *philosophical attitude*" as opposed to the "*natural attitude* of the mind," Husserl writes,

> Once reflection on the relation between knowledge and the object is awakened,

> abysmal difficulties open up. Knowledge, the thing taken most for granted in natural thinking, suddenly stands before us as a mystery. But I must be more exact. What is *taken for granted* in natural thinking is the possibility of knowledge. Constantly engaged in productive activity, advancing from discovery to discovery in newly developed sciences, natural thinking finds no occasion to raise the question of the possibility of knowledge as such. (Husserl 1999, 16)

And in one of his first lectures as a philosophy professor, Heidegger says that

> The lectern is given to me immediately in the lived experience of it (*Kathedererlebnis*, lit. the 'lectern-experience'). I see it as such, I do not see sensations (*Empfindungen*) or sense data (*Empfindungsdaten*)... [T]he sensation is itself there, but only in so far as I destroy what environmentally surrounds it (*Umweltliche*), in so far as I remove, bracket and disregard my historical 'I' and simply practise theory, in so far as I remain primarily *in* the theoretical attitude. This primary character is only what it is when I practise theory, when the theoretical attitude is in effect, which itself is possible only as a destruction of the environmental experience (*Umwelterlebnisses*). (Heidegger 2008, 66–7)

The suggestion seems to be that nothing that occurs within the lived experiences of everyday life can compel us to call into question the whole of lived experience. No 'natural thinking' can compel us to call into question the whole of natural thinking. Only by first *destroying*—or to borrow another of Heidegger's terms, 'de-vivifying' (*entlebendes*)—our 'worldly,' 'environmental' experience (*Erlebnis*) can we arrive at the 'theoretical' or 'philosophical' standpoint from which what we *see*, what we *experience* (*erfahren*) in experience (*Erfahrung*), is not objects, not the world, but more or less orderly concatenations of sense data, where these orderly concatenations are understood in such a way that in principle they might be disconnected from the world (i.e., removed from "the world as an unquestionable context").[5]

Given his focus on language, Clarke is able to provide a simple account of the

[5] To capture the German phenomenologists' distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* by way of ampliative translations, we might say that *Erlebnis* refers to "lived experience," *Erfahrung* to "empirical experience." As Brad Inwood notes, "*Erfahrungswissenschaft* is 'empirical science'; by contrast, an *Erlebnisaufsatz* is an essay based on personal experience" (Inwood 1999, 62). See also Drummond 2007, 71; Moran & Cohen 2012, 115.

theoretical–philosophical 'destruction' of 'lived experience.' All we must do to destroy our 'environmental experience' is resolve (in the proper philosophical spirit) to consider as valid only skeletal meaning. As we've seen, skeletal meaning is meaning abstracted from the everyday contexts that render our utterances full-bodied. To consider as valid only skeletal meaning is to tear our questions and assertions, our very concepts, out of their worldly contexts.

It is the quest for absolute objectivity that motivates the adoption of the philosophical-theoretical standpoint. In the philosophical attitude, we strive for objectivity. This requires removing or overcoming the relativizing effects of the subjective in our thinking about the world. Ironically, this has sometimes led, as in Berkeley's case, to a radical idealism according to which there is no 'objectivity,' only 'subjectivity.' And it often leads to some sort of more or less idealistic rejection or reconceptualization of the commonsense view of the relation between objectivity and subjectivity.[6] But wherever philosophizing ends, it *begins* with the quest for objectivity, for *reality*. We leap courageously, heroically, out of our everydayness with the faith that philosophy will support us—either reveal ground under our feet or teach us to fly.

3.3 The Parallel Logical Structure of "Seeing" and "Knowing"

In NTE, Clarke's semantic theory emerges out of his diagnosis of the surface inquiry. His conclusion is that philosophers who find the surface inquiry compelling are led to that point by discounting, or failing to see, the contribution of everyday contexts to the meaning of our

[6] Stroud concludes that even Carnap (with his 'internal'–'external' distinction) was an idealist: his position would be "idealism of truly heroic proportions" (SPS, 193); "a view like Carnap's" involves an "apparently unavoidable idealist thesis" (SPS, 194). Carnap's idealism, Stroud argues, is basically Kantian: "[Carnap's] notion of alternative linguistic frameworks denies the possibility of 'external' theoretical grounds on which such frameworks could be judged adequate or inadequate. The parallel Kantian explanation is transcendental idealism; if we allowed that the things we sought to know were fully independent of our ways of perceiving and knowing them, scepticism would be inevitable" (SPS, 196).

words and concepts. In striving for objectivity, traditional philosophers take into consideration only skeletal (de-vivified) meaning. The crucial link Clarke draws between his semantic theory and his diagnosis of the surface inquiry is that the full-bodied meanings deployed in everyday life have their intentional counterparts in *physical objects*. Just as what we say in everyday life is (at least ordinarily) full-bodied, what we can be said to *see* in everyday life is (at least ordinarily) physical objects themselves—the lectern, not a 'brown sensation.' The intentional counterparts of skeletal meanings are surfaces or, ultimately, sense data. Just as everyday, full-bodied meaning "is the resultant of two factors, the rules of ordinary usage and a non-rule-like dimension" (NTE, 180), so 'seeing' is a function of two "factors" (NTE, 118) or "dimensions" (NTE, 112), "the physical situation and the unit arrangement" (NTE, 119).

What does this mean? The surface inquiry begins when the traditional epistemologist asks the "how-much" question: How much of an object do we *actually* see? Clarke refers to an answer to the how-much question as "the how-much fact" (NTE, 84; cf. SS, 99). "It is interesting," he points out,

> that [philosophers] present no argument on [the how-much fact's] behalf. On the contrary, they talk as if all we need do is *note* that we can't see the far side and inside but only part of the surface of the object before us and then we shall *see immediately* that we are not as well off as Common Sense supposed. (SS, 99)

This is because philosophers treat the question, 'How much of an object do we *actually* see?' as a question to be answered solely in terms of "the physical situation," a phrase meant to capture the 'objective' situation as well as its relation to the perceiving subject, but to exclude the sort of "stories Oxford philosophers invent," stories that "provide non-physical contexts for physical situations" (NTE, 111–2). Concepts that apply to physical situations alone—that is, concepts whose applicability can be determined on the basis of physical situations alone—are "physical

concept[s]" (NTE, 119). If Seeing were "a physical concept," then there would be "*one basic* how-much fact" (NTE, 120) determinable solely on the basis of the physical situation. All we would need do is step back from a best-case instance of our seeing, filter out the obscuring layers of context, and ask in a 'pure' way, 'How much of *x* can I *actually* see?'

Clarke argues that if it were true that Seeing is a physical concept, then it would be "objectively determined" that all we see of physical objects are surfaces or, ultimately, sense data. In fact, however, that conclusion is only "*conditionally* objectively determined" (NTE, 204). The 'objective determination' that applies in the philosophical context is conditional upon the full meaningfulness of the concepts deployed in that context—that is, it is conditional upon the legitimacy of philosophical inquiry itself. If it were true that Seeing is a physical concept (along with other assumptions), then there would be "*one* basic how-much fact for Seeing" (NTE, 122), and it would be objectively determined that that basic fact—the fact that fixes the 'units,' the basic elements, of our seeing—must be *the most basic fact possible*. In philosophical cases, we find that "we *should* subtract each sub-portion not itself seen from what's properly seen" (NTE, 195). This parallels Clarke's claim that, in philosophical cases, it is conditionally objectively determined for Knowing that *all* possible alternatives are relevant (cf. NTE, 204–5). In both cases, the requirement of special reasons is not operative (cf. NTE, 172–3; 190–1), and "[t]he effect of ignoring this requirement is, in general terms, that considerations which in daily life have repudiating significance *under special circumstances* are taken to have this same significance *always*" (NTE, 150).

I'll explain this in more detail in a moment. First, I would like to jump ahead to the punchline. For Clarke, Seeing is *not* a physical concept; it is a "*unit* concept" (NTE, 119; SS, 110). How much of an object we can be said to see depends not only on the physical situation,

but also on "the unit arrangement" (NTE, 119), i.e., on what we designate as the basic units of our seeing. In everyday life, it is the context that fixes units, just as it is the context that transforms skeletal into full-bodied meaning. In everyday life, physical objects are usually the relevant unit. "When I begin the surface inquiry [using the best-case of peering in good light, etc., at a tomato] my seeing seems 'to embrace' the tomato itself" (NTE, 71). Just as certain farfetched possible alternatives require 'special reasons' to be relevant in everyday contexts, "in daily life it takes something special to remove the unit-hood of physical objects" (NTE, 190). In philosophical cases, however, there are *no* contextual constraints that fix unit-hood nor any contextual constraints that fix full-bodied meaning.

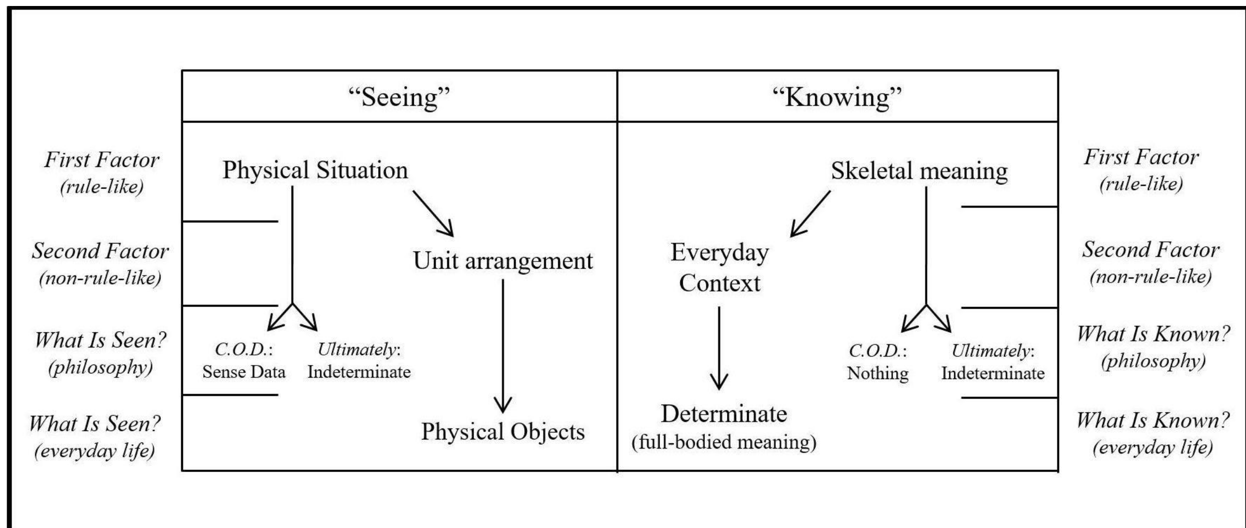

FIGURE 3: Philosophical and Everyday "Seeing" and "Knowing"

It is because of the contribution of the unit arrangement to the physical situation that we (usually) see physical objects in everyday life. In the same way, it is because of the contribution of the everyday context to the skeletal meaning of our words and concepts that what we know in everyday life is (in most cases) determinate or full-bodied. If the second factor is ignored, then,

everyday life is (in most cases) determinate or full-bodied. If the second factor is ignored, then, in the case of Seeing, it is conditionally objectively determined (abbreviated 'C.O.D.' in Figure 3) that all we see are sense data. Ultimately, however, it is indeterminate what we see, meaning that in philosophical cases *there is no answer* to the how-much question. What we see in the philosophical case is ultimately indeterminate because the 'condition' on the conditional objective determination cannot be met. In the case of Knowing, if the second factor is ignored, then it is conditionally objectively determined that we know *nothing* about the world (= that skepticism is true). Ultimately, however, it is indeterminate what we know in philosophical cases, meaning that we cannot claim either to know or not to know anything about the world, for the 'condition' on the conditional objective determination cannot be met. Here, we can see in NTE a precursor to Stroud's insistence on "the 'conditional correctness' of scepticism," according to which (in the formulation that most closely echoes Clarke's in NTE) "*if* the traditional philosopher did manage to raise a meaningful question about our knowledge of the world, his sceptical answer to it would be correct" (SPS, 179).

What is the 'condition' on Seeing and Knowing that renders it conditionally objectively determined that we see only sense data and that we know nothing (or, more precisely, that we do not know that we know anything) about the world? I've already suggested that that condition is the full meaningfulness (the determinacy) of the questions to which skepticism is a response. But there is more to say. In both cases, it is assumed that *true*, *genuine, 'pure'* (i.e., philosophical) Seeing and Knowing are functions of the 'first factor' only. What we see and know is determinable solely on the basis of, respectively, the physical situation and skeletal meaning. In other words, Philosophical Seeing is a physical concept. Philosophical Knowing is a function of the skeletal meaning of words/concepts alone. *If* this were true, then it would

follow, Clarke argues, that all we could properly be said to see are sense data and that skepticism would be correct. If it is *not* true—if Seeing is a unit concept and Knowing is indeterminate outside of everyday contexts—then we *can* properly be said to see physical objects in the contexts of everyday life, where physical objects are usually fixed as the relevant units, and philosophical skepticism would be indeterminate in the sense that we would be unable to answer philosophical questions about our knowledge either affirmatively or negatively.

3.4 Seeing Sense Data and Physical Objects

In NTE and SS, Clarke illustrates the necessity of the contribution of the second factor by way of a number of increasingly elaborate thought experiments, from sectioned-off tomatoes to nibbled-at cheese to his *pièce de résistance*, the game of Hooking described at NTE, 113 ff. It seems to me that Clarke had good reasons for developing the game of Hooking: none of the less elaborate thought experiments makes his point quite so thoroughly. Even so, Hooking is complicated. Unsurprisingly, it makes no appearance in SS. Instead, in SS Clarke develops the same ideas by way of the concept 'Nibbled-At' (SS, 106 ff.), which he touches on only briefly in NTE (NTE, 222). I'm not going to take on the burden of describing the pieces and the rulebook for Hooking, nor am I going to describe his analysis in SS of 'Nibbled-At,' since that example has never struck me as convincing on its own. Instead, I want to illustrate the sense-data inquiry, and by extension the necessity of the contribution of the second factor to Seeing, by way of Clarke's example of the dyed tomato.

"Suppose," Clarke writes, that "a tomato has been partially immersed for a short time in a vat of dye. The dye gradually seeps into the tomato, discoloring the part into which it seeps." Now "[s]uppose we ask this question of someone who is looking at [the dyed tomato]: 'How

much of the tomato was dyed?'" (NTE, 120).

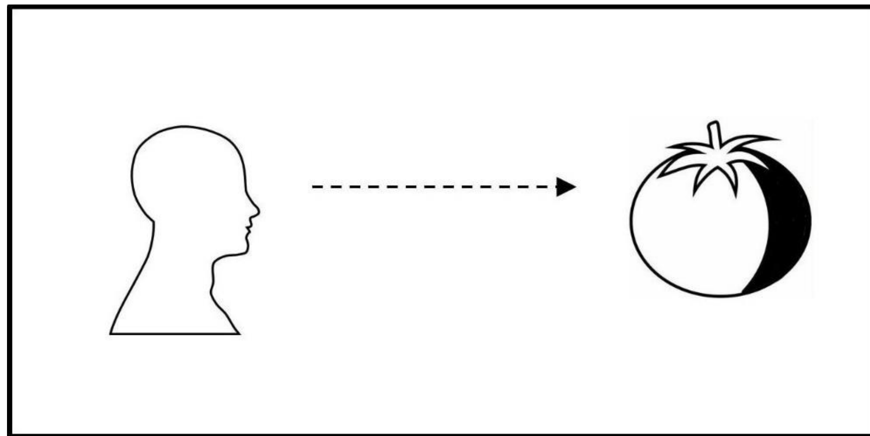

FIGURE 4: The Dyed Tomato

The natural response would be to say that only the right quarter (or so) of the tomato is dyed. "But," Clarke continues, "suppose that *before* we ask this question we say: 'Now let's distinguish this tomato into the right half and the left half'" (NTE, 120–1), as in Figure 5.

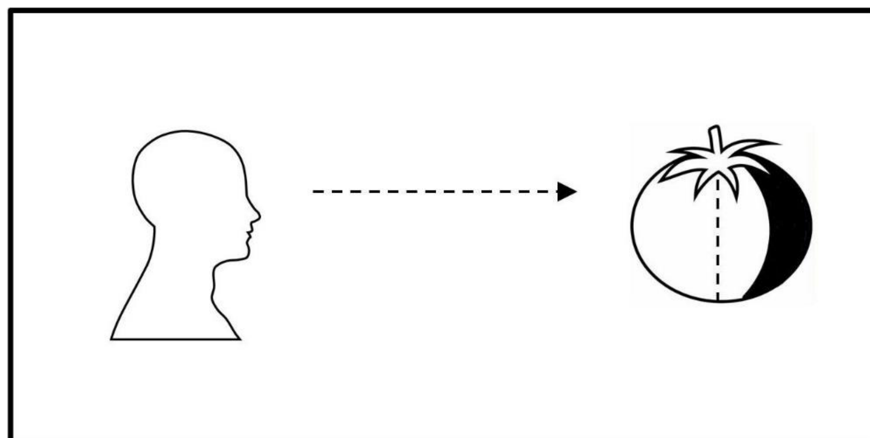

FIGURE 5: The Dyed Tomato Contextualized

How should we answer the 'how-much' question now?

> The person questioned might reply “the right quarter” or he *might* reply “the right half.” Would the second response be incorrect? ... The answer “the right half” is not *wrong*. But in this case the right half can be said to be dyed *only in a manner of speaking*. What is *really* dyed is the right quarter... In this case the fact that the right quarter is dyed is *the basic* how-much fact. The fact that the right half is dyed is, in this case, *not* a *basic* how-much fact. (NTE, 121)

Dyed is, we are imagining, a physical concept, and so there is *one* basic how-much fact in this case. Strictly speaking, only the *blackened portions* of the tomato have been dyed. But if it is specified that the relevant units are ‘left half’ and ‘right half’—i.e., if it is specified that the question is to be answered in terms of which half of the tomato has been dyed—then it is *correct* to say that the right half of the tomato has been dyed. The context, according to which ‘right half’ and ‘left half’ are the relevant units, makes it literally true that the right half, and not the left half, of the tomato has been dyed, even though, strictly speaking, only the right quarter has been dyed.

The distinction between what is true ‘strictly speaking’ (what words mean *per se*) and what is true only ‘in a manner of speaking’ makes regular appearances in LS. When it comes to concepts such as Seeing and Knowing, Clarke will eventually problematize this distinction, for he will conclude that there is *no* ‘strictly speaking true’ answer to questions as to how much we see or how much we know in philosophy or everyday life. In order to make full sense of the dyed-tomato example, we must imagine the Seer in Figures 4–5 on the model of the airplane-spotters: he must have unerring senses, must never dream or hallucinate, etc. In that case, then there is a perfectly legitimate sense in which we can say that, strictly speaking, the Seer knows that only the right *quarter* of the tomato is dyed, even though in the context where halves are fixed as the relevant units, it is true to say that he knows that the right *half* of the tomato is dyed. In the case of Dyed, the Seer can step outside of the everyday context and ask how much of the

tomato is dyed strictly speaking, i.e., according to the skeletal meaning of the words alone, shorn of the contribution of the contextual dimension. In this case, the 'strict' answer ("the right quarter") and the 'full-bodied' or 'contextual' answer ("the right half") are *both* true.

Now let's consider an ordinary case of seeing a physical object. Suppose someone is looking at a normal, undyed tomato.

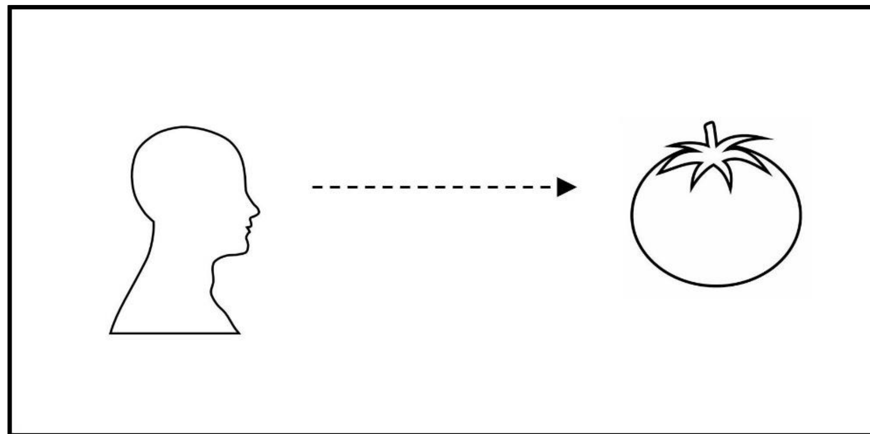

FIGURE 6: Everyday Seeing of a Tomato

What is this person seeing? In everyday life, the answer is, unremarkably, "A tomato." "When I begin the surface inquiry," Clarke writes, "my seeing seems 'to embrace' the tomato itself" (NTE, 71), just as Heidegger's *Kathedererlebnis* was an experience of seeing *the lectern*, not a 'brown surface,' let alone 'a brown sensation.' But according to Clarke, this is the case only because everyday contexts fix *objects* as the relevant units, as the basic "furniture of our world" (NTE, 190). Now suppose that the contextual dimension is discounted. The way is then cleared for the epistemologist to ask, "How much of the tomato do you *actually* see?" In the absence of any context to fix the relevant units, it seems natural—it seems that we *should*—consider as relevant only those portions of the object that we *actually* (directly) see. Do we see the far side

of the tomato? The inside of the tomato? Obviously not. We see at most only *the fronting surface*, as illustrated in Figure 7.

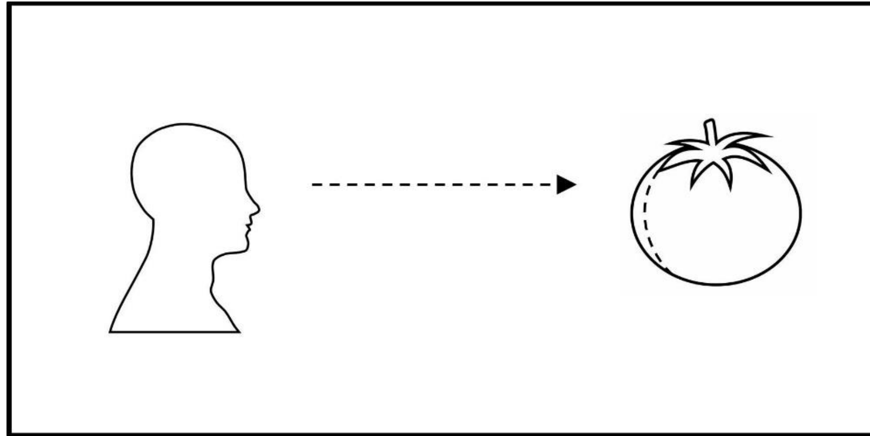

FIGURE 7: Seeing Surfaces

To be sure, we can walk around the tomato, look at it from different angles, pick it up, swivel it in our hands, etc., but in every instance we will see only the surface facing us. The sense-data inquiry differs from the surface inquiry only in pulling the veil of perception still farther back from the object itself.

> Most traditional epistemologists would maintain that the sense data inquiry merely goes the surface inquiry one better, discovering that not (even) surfaces but only sense data have that privileged status which common sense accords physical objects. I believe their sense of parallelism between the two inquiries is correct... I infer that the basic discovery in the sense data inquiry is that only colors-in-certain-shapes can be properly seen. (NTE, 96)

In Figure 8, we do not *see* the tomato at all. We see only the sensory representation (or whatever) of a tomato.

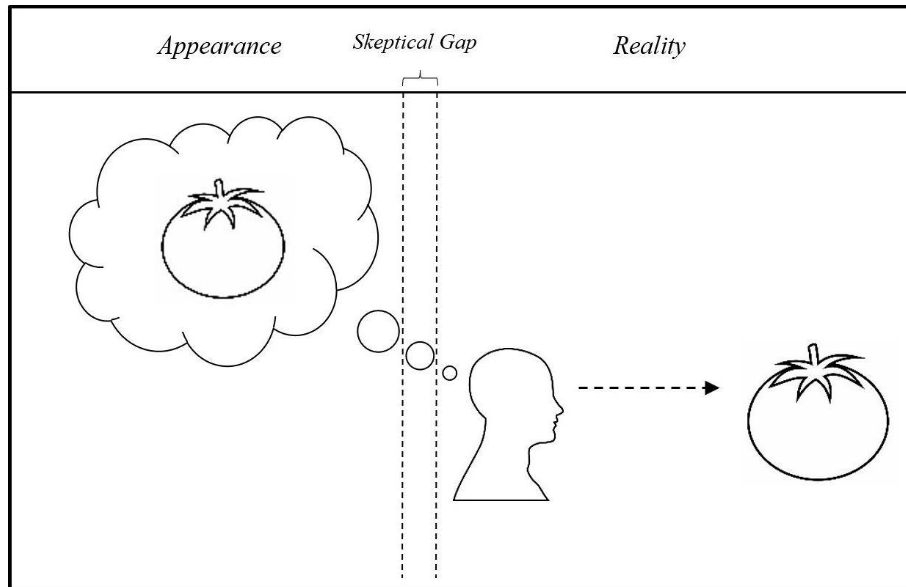

FIGURE 8: Seeing Sense Data

It is usually presumed, of course, that beyond the veil (the 'skeptical gap') there exists in reality a tomato that corresponds with the tomato as represented in our minds, but whether or not that is the case has become a problem.

There is, Clarke thinks, a 'plain' way of 'attending to' even the sense-data discovery (NTE, 92–3), one that does not tear sense data out of the background of "the world as an unquestionable context" (NTE, 179). There is a perfectly reasonable, everyday sense in which we can be said to see only what we *see*, as opposed to *what* we see. In other words, there is a perfectly everyday sense in which we can be said to see only *what appears to us*, which does not in every case license us to draw conclusions about the *reality* of what appears to us, especially if that 'reality' is understood as exceeding phenomena (the facts of appearances). In short, there is a 'plain' appearance–reality distinction. Philosophy, however, makes use of a very different kind of distinction, though it describes that distinction using those same words. It is consistent with Clarke's arguments elsewhere, as we'll see, that the intelligibility of this *plain* way of attending

to the 'how-much' fact makes us think that we can understand (and therefore affirm or deny) that fact *philosophically*.

3.5 The Conditional Correctness of Skepticism

3.5.1 Mental Planes

How does one reach the point of seeing only sense data? "The key to the surface inquiry," Clarke writes, "is what we might think of as a 'mental act.'" In performing this act, "the perceptual and epistemological discoveries are before our eyes" (NTE, 84), i.e., it is before our eyes that we see only surfaces (the perceptual discovery) and that we can*not*, contrary to CS, know that there are physical objects because we see them (the epistemological discovery). Performing this mental act "seems to be just a *natural part* of attending to the how-much fact" (NTE, 84).

What kind of 'mental act' does Clarke have in mind? The "marking-in" of the tomato in Figure 7 "is intended to be only a physical *analogue* of the act... which the epistemologist performs in attending to the how-much fact" (NTE, 94).

> Suppose that I am imagining a tomato in front of myself. Then when I say to myself that I can't see any of the far half I run a mental plane between this part and the rest, and I *keep the plane fixed there*. I do the same for the rest of the amounts I can't see. At the end of the inquiry a mental plane "separates" the surface half towards me from the rest of the tomato. (NTE, 95)

In SS, in which he abbreviates "how-much fact" as "*HM* fact," Clarke breaks down the surface inquiry into two steps. First, "We do what *seems* to be just noting a fact (the *HM* fact) about the

sort of [physical] situation in which we commonly suppose another person [or, in the case we're imagining, *we ourselves*] can see a physical object" (SS, 104). He further specifies that, in 'noting' the how-much fact, "we do two things. (i) We focus on a portion of the physical object's surface, singling it out. (ii) We *hold* this portion singled out when we consider what the real truth is about whether the physical object itself can be seen" (SS, 113). Second, "*After* 'noting' this *HM* fact, we see that the perceptual position *X* is [or *we ourselves are*] in is inferior to the position we took him [or *ourselves*] to be in before we 'noted' this fact" (SS, 104). It is much the same in the case of the sense-data inquiry: "... in the sense data inquiry I think a mental act is required which puts a mental plane 'between' the colors of our experience and 'the rest.' Once such a mental act is performed, our seeing will embrace only colors-in-certain-shapes" (NTE, 98). What we *seem* to discover in the sense-data inquiry is that instead of *physical objects* being the basic furniture of our world (the world of *our* experience), that position is filled by mere sense data.

Just as traditional philosophy, which treats skeletal meaning as meaning *per se*, leads to skepticism (= we don't know, or don't know *that* we know, what we commonsensically thought we knew), so traditional-philosophical accounts of perception lead to the 'paradoxical' conclusion that "the 'common-sense' belief that we can see physical objects and on this basis know that there are such objects must either be flatly rejected or importantly qualified" (SS, 98). We've seen that Clarke identifies these two beliefs—"the belief that we can see physical objects and the belief that we can know there are physical objects because we can see them"—as the most fundamental of all commonsense beliefs (NTE, 95). We cannot know that there are physical objects because, according to the surface inquiry—and even more so the sense-data inquiry—we do not in fact *see* physical objects; all we can be said to see *strictly speaking* are

surfaces or, pulling back the veil even further, sense data.

> The full paradoxicalness of the surface inquiry is this: The inquiry discovers that only surfaces have that status of being seeable which common sense believed physical objects enjoyed. Correlatively, the inquiry discovers that the kind of seeing of physical objects which we can achieve is quite inferior to the kind we thought we had achieved. (NTE, 77)

These are the *conditionally objectively determined* results of traditional epistemology: we see only sense data, and we do not know that we know anything at all about the world as it exists independently of our perceiving of it, even *whether* it exists independently of our perceiving of it.

One of the most interesting aspects of Clarke's analysis is his claim that the 'mental act' the traditional epistemologist performs *makes it true* that she sees only sense data. It alters the physical situation, for the physical situation includes the perceiving subject's relation to the perceived object. "'Noting' the '*HM* fact' alters this situation exactly to the extent required in order for it to be true that all we can see of the physical object is part of its surface" (SS, 111; cf. NTE 71, 109, 131, 227).[7] Given that Seeing is a unit concept, "[d]istinguishing one portion of a physical object from another destroys the physical object's unithood" (NTE, 131).

> When I begin the surface inquiry my seeing seems "to embrace" the tomato itself. This is what I express in saying "I see the tomato." But once I have attended to the fact that I can't see the whole of the tomato my seeing seems to embrace only part of the surface of the tomato. I express this by saying "All I can see is part of the surface." (NTE, 71)

[7] One of the more interesting uses of Clarke's work in the secondary literature is found in Charles Sayward's "Thompson Clarke and the Problem of Other Minds" (Sayward 2005). Applying Clarke's insights from SS, Sayward argues that the same sort of alteration of the physical situation occurs in the case of epistemological inquiries into the existence of other minds: a 'mental plane' is inserted between minds and behavior, one that is not present in everyday life.

3.5.2 The Skeptic's Innocence

Here, the important thing for Clarke is to do justice to what I've called the phenomenology of philosophizing. Traditional epistemologists do not, as ordinary-language or commonsense philosophers would have it, make some horrendous mistake in reaching their conclusions. Rather, they adopt a standpoint from which their conclusions are *true*. But 'true' in what sense? Well, if Seeing is a unit concept, then what we see—the "how-much fact"—is partly determined by the unit arrangement, i.e., by how we *choose* (or how the context compels us) to designate the units. The skeletal meaning of the words "I can see *x*" does not constrain us to understand the basic unit-type of *x*'s in any particular way. At the same time, Clarke also wants to do justice to everyday phenomenology, according to which the basic unit-type of *x*'s are usually physical objects. The fixing of physical objects as the basic units of Seeing, however, is the result of the contribution of the everyday context. If that context is suspended (or, to use Husserl's phrase, 'bracketed'), then there is nothing to determine the unit arrangement. The lack of contextual constraints means that we are *free*—it belongs to our "decision and resolve" (LS, 757, ¶10)—to fix the units as we see fit. Furthermore, Clarke argues that it is conditionally objectively determined that in the philosophical context only the smallest possible units *should* be fixed as the basic units of Seeing. In other words, all possible unit-divisions are equally relevant in the philosophical context, just as all possible alternative possibilities are equally relevant to Knowing in the philosophical context. But again, this objective determination is *conditional*. Clarke wants to argue that it is *not* true that we can see only sense data even though it *is* true that the traditional epistemologist, upon performing the 'mental act' (upon donning the veil of perception), *does* see only sense data. *This*, according to Clarke, is the only mistake

traditional epistemologists make.

Why do they make this mistake, though? Are they stupid?[8] Are they insane or mentally impaired in some way?[9] Are they, as some philosophers argue, *neurotic*:[10] pathologically blind to commonsensical matters of fact, indeed to matters of fact that are (according to some philosophers) *so commonsensical* that they *cannot* 'seriously be doubted' even in the midst of philosophizing?

Clearly these are not Clarke's conclusions. He intends his diagnosis of the traditional-philosopher-cum-skeptic's mistake to forestall just these sorts of rash claims. According to Clarke, traditional philosophers do *not* make any logical or conceptual mistakes, for their conclusions are not based on arguments or conceptual analyses; rather, their conclusions are based on having performed a 'mental act' that actually makes those conclusions (at least particular, first-personal expressions of them) *true*. The facts they cite are, as Clarke puts it, "before [their] eyes" (NTE, 22). For the same reason, then, they are not insane or mentally impaired. There may be *some* truth to the charge of neurosis, but (*a*) it hardly amounts in itself to a rational criticism of philosophers, at least not if 'neurosis' means only anxiety or concern about matters that do not worry 'normal' ('plain') people (at least not *qua* 'plain men'), and (*b*) if

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[8] In discussing Sextus Empiricus, Jonathan Barnes characterizes ancient skeptics as "*homo insipiens*" (Barnes 2000, xxv). Few commentators are so forthright. Even so, it is difficult to avoid the sense that many anti-skeptical arguments imply or entail that skeptics are indeed, at least in the final analysis, simply stupid. I take it that Clarke is expressing frustration with such appraisals when he rejects Austin's "contempt for the mental habits of traditional philosophers" (NTE, 17), which he characterizes this way: "We must [if we understand traditional-philosophical inquiry as Austin does] be baffled... by how any intelligent philosopher could find such reasoning compelling. Can we comfortably suppose that philosophers of the caliber of C.I. Lewis and H.H. Price has such a poor nose for odorous argumentation? Austin... is comfortable in this supposition" (NTE, 16).

[9] In Eichorn 2014, I discuss in relation to the Pyrrhonism of Sextus Empiricus a number of unflattering characterizations of skeptics offered by some of the most prominent classicists to have written on the subject. Jonathan Barnes's characterization suggests a picture according to which skeptics are more akin to zombies than to human beings, while ethically oriented criticisms advanced by (e.g.) Richard Bett and Martha Nussbaum suggest a picture according to which skeptics are more akin to degenerate heroin addicts than to ordinary human beings.

[10] See Hymers 2000 (discussed in 4.2.2, below).

Clarke's account of the traditional epistemologist's mistake is right, then no matter how 'neurotic' philosophers might be, it does not follow that they cannot seriously or consistently entertain their doubts. After all, if Clarke is right, the grounds for their doubts *are right there before their eyes*.

Traditional epistemologists' mistake, rather, begins with *generalizing* their own situation in a philosophical case, i.e., a case in which the 'paradoxical' facts are before their eyes.

> By attending to the how-much fact we see that in this position X can properly see only the near part of the surface. *Next we generalize*. We see that no matter what X does—no matter if he moves around to the rear of the object, or even cuts up the object—he will *never* properly see *more than* a surface of the object. When we generalize—if we perform a certain act as part of this generalizing—surfaces are before our eyes as the independent entities

of our world (NTE, 101). To achieve full generality, this act must be cumulative and exhaustive. "In the full generalization we try to put in *simultaneously all* the mental planes that are required" by the conditionally objective determination provided by the philosophical context (NTE, 103). The full generalization of the philosopher's case leads to the conclusion that not only can *she* see only sense data, but all that *anyone* can *ever* see is sense data. This generalization is sound, however, only if Philosophical Seeing (or Knowing) is both continuous with and more fundamental than Everyday Seeing (or Knowing). Traditional epistemologists believe it is.[11] Why?

Characteristically, Clarke shifts the blame for this mistake away from skeptics and other traditional epistemologists. He holds that "the skeptic is innocent, without an independent

[11] In this way, the traditional epistemologist attempts (and, Clarke thinks, fails) to avoid a possibility that is well-stated by Michael Williams: "... the sceptic must claim to have discovered, under the conditions of philosophical reflection, that knowledge of the world is impossible: it is not enough for him to have discovered that knowledge of the world is *impossible under the conditions of philosophical reflection*" (UD, 161).

thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave of CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement" (LS, 762, ¶30a). This is because "[t]he purpose of traditional epistemology is to examine common-sense beliefs critically" (NTE, 235), and as we've seen, commonsense beliefs are initially and for the most part understood philosophically. CS_{pl} does not emerge until *after* traditional epistemology reaches skeptical conclusions about philosophy's ability to answer philosophical-skeptical doubts affirmatively. Now, we've seen that CS beliefs are fundamentally general propositions: "I can see physical objects," not "I see a tomato." If one sets out to examine such general propositions, then one must decontextualize particular cases ("I see a tomato") so that they can stand-in for one of the general CS beliefs that are the *real* target of examination (NTE, 237).

> [E]very particular claim which an epistemologist examines has a special relationship to its corresponding common-sense belief: it is a particular instance of such a belief; if one of these particular claims is invalid, then its corresponding common-sense belief is invalid. (NTE, 42; cf. NTE, 235)

As we've seen, Clarke *does* argue that such general propositions needn't be understood philosophically. Moore's propositions are, as meant by him, plain. But CS_{pl} emerges to challenge philosophy only *after* philosophy has called into question CS_{ph}. CS_{pl} emerges as an 'implaining,' a 'verbal twinning,' of CS_{ph}. (For more on this, see 4.1.3, below.)

3.5.3 Traditional Epistemological Inquiry

Initially and for the most part, then, CS propositions are philosophical and context-free. It is for this reason that traditional epistemologists must utilize *philosophical* cases, not everyday cases, for in everyday cases particular assertions do *not* stand-in for general CS propositions. To

see this, we need only realize that what Clarke calls ‘mundane epistemological inquiries,’ no matter how surprising or ‘skeptical’ their outcome, do not generalize in this way.

> In showing that we don’t know that the suspect was in his room typing [for we hadn’t ruled out the possibility that, being a “hi-fi enthusiast with excellent equipment,” the suspect had “played a long-playing record of typing, meanwhile sneaking out of his room and returning after committing the murder” (NTE, 30)] the detective has not shown that we can have no knowledge of *any* objective empirical facts. But in showing that we don’t know that there is a tomato there the hallucination inquiry *does* show this. The detective’s repudiation does not signify that a general common-sense belief must be abandoned; the philosopher’s repudiation does. (NTE, 41)

It is the *philosophical* generality of CS as usually understood that is responsible for the nature of traditional epistemological inquiries. “[T]he skeptic is... the submissive slave of CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement,” namely, “*invulnerability*” (LS, 762, ¶30a), which requires that “we be able to ‘rule out’ any counterpossibility” (LS, 763, ¶30b). K_{ph} requires invulnerability, and Philosophical Seeing embraces only the smallest possible sub-portions, because it is conditionally objectively determined that all possible alternatives or sub-portions are equally relevant in the philosophical context.

What is the source of this conditional objective determination? As we’ve seen, the ‘leap’ into the philosophical-theoretical attitude is a leap *out of* everyday contexts. But what is the nature of everyday contexts’ contribution to Knowing and Seeing (et al.)? Clarke considers two possibilities. First,

> The rules of ordinary usage may legislate that *every* possibility, including any questioning the reality of the object, is *always* relevant. The non-rule-like dimension may in daily life *mitigate* the severity of these rules, requiring that for a possibility questioning reality to be relevant it must be backed by a special reason. On this alternative, if this dimension were removed, then the rules would operate unchecked, requiring that we rule out every counter-possibility. (NTE, 182)

This conception of the contribution of everyday contexts embodies the traditional-philosophical picture of the everyday as restricted by practical ends. "It is expressed in the common charge that Oxford critiques mistake what is due to *pragmatic* considerations as due to *meaning* or *rules*. These so-called 'pragmatic considerations' constitute the non-rule-like dimension" (NTE, 184–5). According to the second possibility, which Clarke himself endorses,

> The non-rule-like dimension... may supply the *criterion* of the relevancy/irrelevancy of possibilities questioning reality. On this alternative the rules for "certain" would say nothing about whether such possibilities were relevant; the rules would leave this to be determined by context in its broadest sense, according to which "daily life" would be *one* such context, mathematics another. In the philosophical case special possibilities questioning reality would be neither relevant nor irrelevant; there would be no criterion for their relevancy/irrelevancy, for the philosophical case is obtained by eliminating the non-rule-like dimension present in daily life without replacing it by another dimension... which would supply the necessary criterion. (NTE, 182–3)

We can see, then, that Clarke is rejecting an assumption common to both traditional and nontraditional epistemologists: that the criterion of relevancy is fixed by the rules of language. Traditional philosophers believe that ordinary usage in philosophical cases objectively determines that *all* possibilities are relevant, despite that "pragmatic considerations" often intrude upon ordinary usage in the course of everyday life, thereby influencing our epistemic assessments. Nontraditional philosophers (or Austinian ordinary-language philosophers, anyway) believe that ordinary usage objectively determines that the requirement of special reasons is operative in *all* cases. Both are mistaken. The requirement of special reasons *is* operative in everyday contexts, but that is because of the contribution of the non-rule-like dimension.

As for the philosophical context, removing the non-rule-like dimension conditionally

objectively determines that all possibilities are relevant, as traditional epistemologists think; but they overlook the *conditionality* of that determination. Strictly speaking, the result of discounting the non-rule-like dimension is that *no* criterion of relevancy is fixed: "The philosophical case would be underdetermined" (NTE, 194; cf. NTE, 205). Strictly speaking, then, "the only correct answers" to philosophical questions "amount to rejecting the question" (NTE, 201; cf. SS, 107). In addition to generalizing their peculiar situation, a crucial feature of the traditional epistemologists' mistake is that they assume that philosophical inquiry is possible. They assume ('inside their studies') that philosophical utterances are *fully* meaningful. Notice, though, that *if* it were true that everyday contexts served only to restrict the meaning of our utterances, traditional epistemologists *would be right*. But if instead Clarke is right that everyday (and other) contexts actually *supply* the criterion of relevancy, thereby rendering our utterances fully meaningful, then philosophical inquiry is *indeterminate* and therefore *illegitimate*. We can answer philosophical questions neither affirmatively nor negatively: we must reject the questions. Traditional philosophers, however, assume that the rule-like 'skeletal' meaning of words alone does or can fully determine *our* meaning *in* uttering those words. Again, since traditional philosophers have abstracted their inquiries from everyday contexts, it is *true* that the requirement of special reasons is not operative in their cases, but that is only because there is *no* criterion of relevancy to appeal to. "In the philosophical case the fact that a sub-portion is not backed by a special reason does not mean that it is irrelevant" (NTE, 191)—but neither does it mean that it *is* relevant. Even so, on the assumption of the legitimacy of philosophical inquiries, in which the requirement of special reasons does not obtain, it seems to follow necessarily that *all* possible alternatives (or sub-portions) are relevant, for *all possible alternatives are equally relevant*. What is overlooked is that they are also equally *irrelevant*.

> If we enter the philosophical case as a plain man with no theoretical convictions about the rules for Seeing, we *find* that we *should* consider every sub-portion of the tomato, and that we *should* subtract each sub-portion not itself seen from what's properly seen. Thus we find that we *should* conclude that only the near surface half can be properly seen. (NTE, 195)

In short, "*if this* [philosophical] *question did admit of this kind of answer*, then *the* correct answer would" accord with the conditionally objective determination that all possible alternatives or sub-portions are relevant (NTE, 204).

Ordinary-language philosophers' twofold mistake is to think (*a*) that full-bodied, context-bound meaning is the only kind of meaning there is, and (*b*) that the requirement of special reasons is built into the rules or standards of ordinary usage. Traditional epistemologists' initial mistake is to think that the skeletal meaning of words alone suffices for us to engage in legitimate inquiries. Their ultimate mistake, though, is to think that what we 'discover' in *philosophical* cases—that we see only sense data and do not know that we know anything—is the deep truth of *everyday* cases, a truth hidden under obscuring layers of "pragmatic considerations." In fact, what we 'discover' in philosophical cases is only what those cases themselves *make true*. "The fundamental mistake" of traditional epistemologists, Clarke concludes, "lies in taking these [philosophical] situations to be the true reality. In less abstract terms, the basic mistake lies in taking these situations to be the ones the inquiry set out to examine" (NTE, 138).

Philosophy *distorts* appearances. Just because philosophers can bring themselves to see only sense data does not mean that all *anyone ever* sees is sense data. On the contrary, not only do we *start out* by seeing physical objects—"When I begin the surface inquiry my seeing seems 'to embrace' the tomato itself" (NTE, 71)—we also *return to* seeing physical objects the moment

we relax the mental effort required to sustain Philosophical Seeing. Appealing again to a phenomenological observation, Clarke contends that neither traditional nor nontraditional accounts of what goes on in philosophical cases can do justice to *both* (*a*) our ability to bring ourselves to the point of seeing only sense data, *and* (*b*) the 'popping back' of the world the moment we cease philosophizing. It is his account's ability to explain both of these phenomena that is, by Clarke's lights, one of the most significant points in its favor. Nontraditional philosophy fails to do justice to (*a*), if it so much as recognizes the *possibility* of (*a*), while traditional philosophy fails to do justice to (*b*).

Regarding (*b*), if philosophical cases *were* both continuous with and more fundamental than everyday cases, then though we might, having completed the sense-data inquiry, take ourselves, for 'pragmatic reasons,' to see physical objects instead of colors-in-certain-shapes, or occasionally slip and confuse seeing colors-in-certain-shapes for seeing physical objects, we could nevertheless make no sense of the *phenomenological fact* that, "when a traditional epistemologist 'steps outside his study' he once again sees physical objects... *in exactly the way* in which" he had, inside his study, seen only surfaces or sense data (NTE, 108–9). Clarke denies that sense data are 'epistemologically prior' to physical objects in the sense that, upon 'seeing' sense data, we realize that we stand in a "*special*"—"*immediate* or *direct*"—relation to them, whereas the "ordinary seeing" of physical objects "is *indirect* or *mediate*" (NTE, 97). Rather, it is *ordinary* seeing, if any, that is immediate or direct. If there is any peculiar (indirect, mediate) mode of seeing, then *that* seeing is a product of philosophy "intrud[ing] between ourselves and [our] experience" (NTE, 109): for example, the mode of seeing a tomato according to which it "involves seeing part of [the tomato's] surface" (NTE, 109). "That seeing of a physical object which *does* involve seeing part of its surface is the philosopher's own creation" (SS, 111).

When we see sense data, "the perceptual relationship in question is ordinary seeing" (NTE, 96). In other words, we see sense data in exactly the same way that we see physical objects, and as soon as we relax the effort required to hold in place the 'mental planes' distinguishing possibly relevant sub-portions, we go back to seeing physical objects in exactly the same way that we had been seeing surfaces or sense data only moments before. Clarke's explanation of this 'popping back' of the world is that the how-much fact *is not an objective (physical) fact* (SS, 106–7). What we see—how much of something we see—depends also on our "decision and resolve" (LS, 757, ¶10), on how we choose (or how the context compels us) to fix the units. Thus, "[m]aking the 'popping back' experience intelligible is one and the same task... as making intelligible how the surface inquiry could be invalid" (NTE, 110). Again, what is invalid about the surface inquiry is that it takes itself to be an inquiry *into* Everyday Seeing, while in fact the process of inquiry alters the very nature of the Seeing it sets out to examine.

The real discovery of the surface inquiry, Clarke concludes, is that the context-free phrase "'I see the tomato'... is not fully meaningful in English" (NTE, 72). It is, of course, *partly* meaningful.

> The question ["Can X see the tomato?"]... is not simply meaningless. It has enough meaning to tempt us to answer "yes," and also "no." This ambivalence is due to the question being less than completely determined in meaning though not completely meaningless. If we wish to answer the question in its own terms—if we wish to reply "yes" or else "no"—then it is up to us to *decide* how to complete its meaning. (NTE, 73–4)

Such questions fall into a semantic "no-man's land" (SS, 109). Thus, "the only correct answers amount to rejecting the question" (NTE, 201). Even so, Clarke is at pains to insist that traditional philosophy nonetheless reveals something *important* and *true*. Namely, it reveals that the propositions of CS_{ph} are *also* not fully meaningful.

> The critical account of the surface inquiry I have offered may... seem to be part of a *defense* of common sense. To so interpret its significance is, however, to miss the philosophical importance of traditional epistemology... The fundamental significance of traditional epistemology lies in the fact that it is valid if the common-sense beliefs it examines are fully intelligible... [I]f these beliefs make sense they are invalid. (NTE, 142–3; cf. NTE, 237)

As we've seen, Clarke contends that "[i]n each of the common-sense beliefs... there is implicit a conception of the nature of empirical knowledge. This conception is that empirical knowledge is *independent* of what I have referred to as the non-rule-like dimension" (NTE, 241). But "there is no valid defense of [philosophical] common sense" (NTE, 239), nor is there any readily available alternative to its conception of knowledge, a conception embodied in what Clarke will call the "standard conceptual-human constitution" (see 5.2.1, below). The failure of the traditional-philosophical project demonstrates that "the so-called common-sense beliefs constitute a faulty conceptualization of empirical knowledge... In sum, the significance of traditional epistemology is that we do not understand empirical knowledge" (NTE, 143). It is *this* insight that articulates "the depth of truth in traditional epistemology" (NTE, 231).

Clarke thinks that "[i]f properly understood traditional epistemology comes as a shock, and it leaves us with a philosophical problem of the greatest magnitude" (NTE, 242), namely, the problem of "how knowing and seeing can be genuine even though essentially dependent on [the non-rule like] dimension" (NTE, 248). This 'problem of the greatest magnitude' is the legacy of skepticism.

3.6 Clarke and Classical Phenomenology

Before moving on, I would like to return briefly to the early lecture of Heidegger's that I

quoted above. The similarities between what Heidegger says there and Clarke's conclusions in NTE and SS are striking. Furthermore, connecting Clarke and Heidegger reinforces my contention that, in NTE and SS, Clarke's arguments turn on a phenomenology of philosophizing.

Standing behind his lectern, Heidegger tells his students that "[t]he attitude in which I naively live within my environing world—for example, the experience I have of the lectern—is prescientific and epistemologically untested." We must, as philosophers, rise to the *philosophical* level. "Epistemology arouses us out of this slumber and points to problems. These cannot be seen by clinging to immediate life-experience... One must be free and able, in a progressive age of reason and culture, to place oneself over oneself. In this way one enters a new dimension, the philosophical" (Heidegger 2008, 63).

Immediately upon taking this 'leap,' we find ourselves in a strange new world. "If, from this standpoint, I consider the experience of the lectern, it is clear that what is primarily given are sensations, *initially optical* ones... *These data of sense are given*" (Heidegger 2008, 63). But what are we to make of this strange new world? Heidegger considers two philosophical theories that, he says, begin from sense data: critical realism and critical-transcendental idealism. For both, "the point of departure is the existence of sense data (*Empfindungsdaten*)" (Heidegger 2008, 63). Needless to say, the two theories do not agree. We're naturally led to ask, then, "Which solution is genuine, which standpoint is correct?" (Heidegger 2008, 65).

Since he doesn't think it *can* be answered, Heidegger approaches this question diagnostically. True, we arrived at the philosophical standpoint by attempting to free ourselves from naive presuppositions, but "[i]n order to strip away the presuppositions of environmental experience (assumption of the reality of the external world [*Außenwelt*])... we make other presuppositions," namely, we presuppose "epistemology and its way of questioning," which

includes the ‘stripping away’ of environmental experience that led to the seeing of sense data (Heidegger 2008, 62). Why, though, do we presuppose the epistemological way of questioning? Why do we take this ‘leap’ into the philosophical standpoint? According to Heidegger, we set out “with the assurance—for our own sake and for the sake of the strict demands of genuine method—of eventually ‘justifying’ this presupposition” (Heidegger 2008, 63). Yet it seems to Heidegger, as it does to Clarke, that no such retroactive justifications are in the offing. So let us, Heidegger suggests, call into question *this* presupposition: “Let us inquire...: what is to be achieved by” the explanation of experience by means of sense data (Heidegger 2008, 66)?

“It is indisputable,” Heidegger claims, that we can bring ourselves to see only sense data (Heidegger 2008, 67), but how does this ‘seeing’ relate to the experience it is intended to explain? We arrive at the seeing of sense data by way of “a destruction of the environmental experience”; we see sense data only as long as we “remain primarily *in* the theoretical attitude” (Heidegger 2008, 67). What becomes of sense data in everyday life? Even supposing that realism or idealism could manage to solve the numerous epistemological puzzles that sense data give rise to, “would that in any way amount to an explanation and justification of environmental experience, even if only a moment of it were ‘explained’?” (Heidegger 2008, 67). Heidegger is unconvinced. Contrasting ‘plain’ (contextual) meaning and ‘philosophical’ (pure) meaning, he invites us to imagine the following:

> Let us illustrate this from the moment of... an environmental perception. In the course of a hike through the woods I come for the first time to Freiburg and ask, upon entering the city, ‘Which is the shortest way to the cathedral?’ This spatial orientation has nothing to do with geometrical orientation as such. The distance to the cathedral is not a quantitative interval; proximity and distance are not a ‘how much’; the most convenient and shortest way is also not something quantitative, not merely extension as such. (Heidegger 2008, 67)

In other words, to answer, “A straight line,” would be either rude, idiotic, or a symptom of genius. He concludes that

> these [plain, everyday] meaningful phenomena of environmental experience cannot be explained by destroying their essential character, by denying their real [full-bodied] meaning in order to advance a theory. Explanation through dismemberment, i.e., destruction: one wants to explain something which one no longer has as such, which one cannot and will not recognize as such in its validity. (Heidegger 2008, 67–8)

The problem, as Clarke argues in NTE and SS, is that our initial move in theorizing about our experience (our Seeing and Knowing) *distorts* that experience, the very thing we set out to explain. “When I attempt to explain the environing world theoretically, it collapses upon itself” (Heidegger 2008, 68). If we want to understand our everyday experiences, we cannot tear those experience out of their everyday contexts. Yet that is what philosophy, what ‘theory,’ seems to demand. Therefore,

> ... the question ‘Is this lectern (as I experience it environmentally) real?’ is... an *absurd* (*widersinnige*) question... A theoretical question about the existence of my environmental world... distorts the meaning of this world. (Heidegger 2008, 71; trans. modified)
>
> The genuine solution to the problem of the reality of the external world consists in the insight that this is no problem at all, but rather an absurdity (*Widersinnigkeit*). (Heidegger 2008, 71; cf. NTE, 175)

It is an absurdity not because there are *no* problems in this vicinity. Indeed, Heidegger would be the last person to deny that there are real, important, and unanswered questions to ask about Being and our knowledge of it. Rather, it is an absurdity because something about the nature of theorizing (philosophizing) generates the problem of ‘reality’ in such a way that it seems to cut off our access to the very thing we’re attempting to explain. When we look back, from the

philosophical standpoint, at everyday life and try to explain it, we find that we can't make sense of our philosophical questions sufficiently to answer either 'yes' or 'no' to them.

I do not want to overdraw the comparison between Clarke and the early (in this case, *very* early) Heidegger, and I'll not pursue the connection further. But it seems to me that the two figures do mutually illuminate each other. Furthermore, the comparison highlights the depth of Clarke's work by linking it to a philosophical tradition that appears to have had no influence on any of his public output.[12]

[12] Relatedly, Jean-Philippe Narboux has suggested that there are important similarities between Clarke's project of providing a positive characterization of the plain and the work of the later Merleau-Ponty, particularly his *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1968). See Narboux 2014, 165 fn. 17; 181 fn. 40. See also Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 237 fn. 9; Baz 2014, 267–9, 285.

Chapter 4

Common Sense, the Everyday, and Our Most Fundamental Beliefs

Retain, I pray you, this suspicion about common sense.

– William James, *Pragmatism* (86)

In the preceding two chapters, I laid out what Clarke takes to be necessary preliminaries to learning the lesson of skepticism and thus to getting into view skepticism's legacy. According to Clarke, the lesson of skepticism arises from (*1*) an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge and (*2*) an assessment of that challenge's import—specifically, of what impact, if any, it has on our rational right to the 'plain truths' of common sense. The preliminaries to (*1*) and (*2*) are: (*1′*) We must develop a general understanding of the nature of traditional-philosophical inquiry, for skepticism is a species of traditional philosophizing; and (*2′*) in order to assess skepticism's import vis-à-vis common sense, we must first have in hand an account of the relations of epistemic authority that obtain between common sense and traditional philosophy.

In Chapter 2, we explored, focusing on §§1–3 of LS, Clarke's nuanced views on the relation between philosophy and what he calls 'the plain.' In 4.1, I build upon those findings. In 4.1.1, I discuss Clarke's account of the traditional (and, I think, commonsensical) view of the relation between common sense (CS) and the everyday. In 4.1.2, I discuss Clarke's account of the Austinian view of that relation. And in 4.1.3, I turn finally to Clarke's account of Moore's view. For Clarke, the philosophical interest of Moore's view lies in his bringing to light the category of CS_{pl} and hence of 'the plain' as distinct from both the philosophical and the everyday.

This leads us to Clarke's ground-floor question, with which he opens LS and to which I turn in 4.2: "What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage?" (LS, 754, ¶1). I argue that Clarke's question is complicated by the possibility, endorsed by the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday, that "our most fundamental beliefs" are themselves "products of philosophizing." I argue in 4.2.2–3 that there is something that deserves the title of a 'philosophy of everyday life.' That philosophy is *commonsense realism*. I tie our 'naïve' or 'prephilosophical' commitment to commonsense realism to a commitment to the absolute objectivity of the world. I argue in 4.2.4 that this commitment is rooted not in any theory or set of beliefs, but rather in what I call our 'common world-sense.' I take the idea of a common world-sense to develop Clarke's claim that, although the "so-called beliefs [of philosophical common sense] are the product of philosophizing," the philosophizing in question is "of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind," so much so that the propositions of philosophical common sense "seem to be *a priori*" (NTE, 241).

4.1 Common Sense and the Everyday

4.1.1 The Tradition: CS_{ph} and the Everyday

For Clarke, the plain includes 'the everyday,' i.e., the domain of our everyday epistemic practices (LS, 754, ¶4a), both the *particular* and the *general* everyday; but it excludes CS as commonly understood, i.e., "the Common Sense view of common sense" (Singer 1986, 227). The commonsensical view of CS is that CS is *philosophical*. As Clarke puts it, CS is initially "a

product of philosophizing—though of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind" (NTE, 241). It is CS understood *this* way—CS_{ph}—that is commonsensically thought to underwrite our everyday epistemic practices.

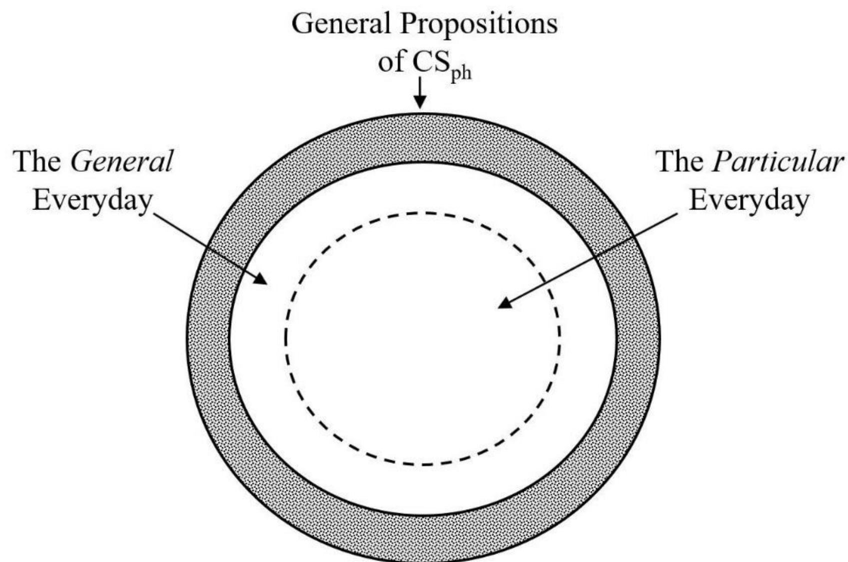

FIGURE 9: Relation Between Common Sense and the Everyday (I)

Let me explain this scheme in more detail.

An example of a particular everyday utterance is "That is a goldfinch" (Austin 1970, 77). The hallmark of everyday utterances is their context-boundedness (LS, 754, ¶4a), not their generality, for there are also, Clarke argues, general propositions that are likewise everyday and thus context-bound. For example, the general proposition "Material objects exist" could be an everyday, context-bound utterance if uttered "by an immaterial being born and bred in a nonmaterial portion of the universe" (LS, 758, ¶14a). Correspondingly, on the traditional view, the hallmark of the philosophical—the contrast-class to the everyday—is its freedom from context, i.e., its "'purity'" (LS, 760, ¶20). It is freedom from context that distinguishes general propositions of CS_{ph} from 'typographically identical' general everyday utterances, which as

everyday “figur[e] in one or another general context” (LS, 756, ¶7; cf. LS, 760, ¶15). Clarke refers to these general everyday utterances as “verbal twin[s]” of context-free philosophical utterances (LS, 756, ¶7).

As philosophical, the general propositions of CS_{ph} aver or lay claim to philosophical knowing (K_{ph}). Thus, to say that CS_{ph} is the commonsensical understanding of CS is to say that K_{ph} is the commonsensical understanding of genuine or full-fledged knowledge. According to that conception, “empirical knowledge is *independent* of what I have referred to as the non-rule-like dimension” (NTE, 241). In other words, it is thought, on this picture, that at the root of all genuine empirical knowledge is knowledge that is pure and context-free (cf. LS, 762, ¶30a), i.e., philosophical knowledge. In NTE, Clarke claims that “everyone succumbs to the conception [of empirical knowledge] implicit in the common-sense beliefs as soon as he begins thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge” (NTE, 243). As we’ve seen, he retroactively qualifies this claim in LS, for Moore is a peculiar exception—but Clarke stresses that Moore is *peculiar*, an unusual case, and that is important. Clarke continues to hold in LS that *most of us* will succumb to the philosophical construal of CS and to do so with reason. When we start thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge—when we start to consider the status of general expressions (“There’s an external object”) of particular claims (“There’s a soap-bubble”)[1]—we will, Clarke argues, tend to understand those generalities in a philosophical way.

In 2.4, I characterized K_{ph} as (*1*) absolutely objective, (*2*) absolutely invulnerable, and (*3*) presuppositionless within the relevant domain (in the cases we’re concerned with, the domain of empirical knowledge-claims). It is freedom from context that allows K_{ph} to satisfy these standards, for (*1*) the presence of “contextual features” (LS, 757, ¶10) renders utterances less

[1] The parenthetical examples are Moore’s (Moore 1959, 145).

than purely objective in meaning and implication: utterance *p* in itself, or "*per se*," says, means, implies "more" (LS, 760, ¶18; 763, ¶30b)—or perhaps less (see Chapter 2, fn. 20)—than does full-bodied, context-bound *p*. Furthermore, a hallmark of contextuality is the 'standing-fast' of certain propositions,[2] and such standing-fast entails both (*2*) vulnerability and (*3*) non-presuppositionlessness. As I argued in Chapter 2, it is a claim's presuppositionlessness that is supposed to underwrite its invulnerability; and its invulnerability is a consequence of its objectivity. It is absolute objectivity that is, for Clarke, the fundamental feature of K_{ph}. The "simple quest for absolute objectivity" is what "drives us... to philosophize" (LS, 762, ¶28); it is why we do not "[rest] content at home like Moore, inside the plain" (LS, 759, ¶15). Thus, to a great extent CS is commonsensically understood as CS_{ph} simply on account of our commonsensical commitment to objectivity (cf. LS, 760, ¶19; LS, 761–2, ¶¶27–8). On this picture, the objective validity of our everyday knowledge-claims (to the extent that they are objectively valid) is underwritten by general propositions of CS_{ph}. Everyday, context-bound, non-philosophical claims are justified, ultimately, by the non-everyday, context-free propositions of CS_{ph}.

We can see the commonsensical dependence of the everyday on CS_{ph} in how Clarke distinguishes between everyday and philosophical versions of the question "Are there material objects?" He notes that, as an everyday question regarding empirical matters of fact, the question can, at least in principle, be confirmed or disconfirmed "by going and looking" (LS, 758, ¶14a). As everyday, it is an *empirical*, not a *metaphysical*, question (see 6.4.3). As we've seen, Clarke identifies the "most fundamental... common-sense beliefs" as these: "There are physical objects. We can know that there are because we can see them (and touch them)" (NTE,

[2] The image of 'standing-fast' goes back to Wittgenstein. See Wittgenstein 1969, §§144, 152, 234.

235).[3] These general propositions of CS underwrite our everyday epistemic practices regarding the empirical in the sense that they articulate what we might call the 'canons of everyday justification.' Everyday life accepts what Sextus Empiricus calls "common (*coenōs*)" or "everyday (*biōtica*)" criteria of truth (*alēthias*) or reality (*hyparxeōs*), the most salient category of which is "'natural criteria' (*physica... critēria*)... such as seeing" (PH, 2.15)—all the multifarious deliverances of the "naturally constituted" (*physicēn... catasceuēn*) "common sense-organs" (*coena tōn aesthētēriōn*) (M, 7.32). But given a commitment to objectivity and to K_{ph}, these everyday criteria fail, in themselves, as criteria of truth. The everyday criteria are genuine criteria of truth or reality only if underwritten by the CS_{ph} proposition that we can know that there are physical objects because we can sense them. But what justifies *this* proposition? Given the standards of K_{ph}, the problem is acute.

In outlining the traditional-philosophical view of the relation between philosophical and everyday criteria of truth, Sextus contrasts common, everyday criteria with the "logical (*logica*)" criteria of philosophers (PH, 2.15; M, 7.33). *Logica* has connotations of 'dialectical' and 'argumentative.' Logical criteria trade in *logoi*, or rational accounts, which is the original version of the notion contemporary epistemologists talk about in terms of 'epistemic justification.' These logical criteria are, Sextus claims, "thought to be able to test" the common criteria (M, 7.27). The "everyday [criteria]" alone are, from a traditional-philosophical standpoint, "no longer" considered criteria (M, 7.33). Rather, the logical criteria are thought to underwrite the kind of "common belief (*coenēs pisteōs*)" regarding which Pyrrhonians are thought to be "rash and dismissive" (M, 7.27). The common criteria are genuine criteria of truth

[3] Clearly, these would not be the most fundamental CS beliefs of "nonmaterial beings born and bred in a nonmaterial portion of the universe." One of Clarke's 'human' examples of a general everyday utterance is the lecturing physiologist (LS, 756, ¶7).

if and only if they are underwritten by a vindicatory *logos*, a justification or rational account.

One consequence of this view is that, as philosophical, CS_{ph} must *defend itself*, particularly against the skeptic, who "den[ies] that we *can* know what CS_{ph} maintains" (LS, 762, ¶30a). As Clarke puts it, "CS_{ph} is as vulnerable to the skeptic's doubts, properly interpreted, as plain knowing is to certain everyday doubts" (LS, 763, ¶31).

4.1.2 J.L. Austin: Meta-CS and the Everyday

Returning to ancient Pyrrhonism for a moment, Sextus insists that Pyrrhonians do not themselves endorse this view of the relation between philosophy and everyday life. As Sextus puts it, Pyrrhonians are not "obliged to judge dogmatically (*dogmaticōs... epicrinae*)" (PH, 2.254), that is, in accordance with the "logical criteria that the dogmatists bring forward in order to judge the truth" (PH, 2.15). For Pyrrhonians, the status (whatever it turns out to be) of everyday epistemic practices, which proceed on the basis of everyday criteria of truth, is independent of the sort of philosophical *logoi* (justifications) that philosophers insist are required in order to legitimize everyday criteria and hence everyday epistemic practices. Sextus insists that, however much it may "totter," everyday life does not require philosophy's aid (PH, 2.229). Indeed, when everyday life does totter, philosophy is incapable of righting it: philosophy's attempted solutions are "useless" (PH, 2.236, 2.246). Instead, following "common observances (*coenas tērēsis*)" and "everyday preconceptions (*prolēpsis bioun*)" (PH, 2.246), Pyrrhonians can "know (*ginōscomen*) directly that [an] argument is not true and not conclusive from the fact that it has a false conclusion" (PH, 2.250), i.e., a conclusion that is an "absurdity (*atopōs*)" and is therefore "unacceptable" (PH, 2.251). It is unacceptable because it is "agreed to be absurd." It

is agreed to be absurd because it contradicts "what seems... to be the case (*docounta epaxomen*)" (PH, 2.253). In other words, such absurdities are *paradoxical* in the original sense of that word:[4] "a thought that is incongruous with commonplace beliefs" (Long 1993, 14). Pyrrhonians, Sextus tells us, "do not assent to the absurdity because of the argument (*logon*)—rather, we abandon the argument because of the absurdity" (PH, 2.252).

In these passages, Sextus can clearly be read as anticipating commonsense philosophy, not in the way suggested by Myles Burnyeat—i.e., not in the sense of failing, like Moore, to recognize a distinction between the philosophical and the everyday (Burnyeat 1984/7, 337–8)—but in the sense that, in these passages, Sextus seems clearly to endorse what I take to be the basic tenet of commonsense philosophy: that the everyday enjoys a kind of inherent epistemic authority. As inherent, the everyday's epistemic authority is underived from philosophy. For the same reason, Sextus can also be read as sympathetic to Austinian ordinary-language philosophers ('Austinians,' for short), who likewise understand the relation between CS and the everyday differently from the traditional view discussed in 4.1.1. Clarke arrives at his account of 'the plain,' a notion that he finds fully formed in Moore, by way of a consideration of the Austinian view, which he rejects both philosophically and as a reading of Moore.

For Austinians, context-free utterances—"'propositions' outside contextual wedlock" (LS, 756, ¶8)—are meaningless. Thus, there are no meaningful general, context-free propositions of CS. The general propositions of CS_{ph}, then, are nonsense. Indeed, as context-free, all traditional-philosophical utterances are nonsense. Accordingly, Austinians want to dispense with the category of CS_{ph} on the grounds that it is logically spurious. They propose to replace it with descriptive investigations into ordinary language-use, following Wittgenstein's

[4] '*Doxa*' (opinion, belief) is etymologically related to '*docounta*' ("what seems to be").

admonition: “don’t think, but look!” (Wittgenstein 1953, 36, §66). These investigations give rise to second-order propositions *about* our everyday epistemic practices (cf. LS, 755, ¶5): “summings up of how things go with the relatively particular plain” (LS, 755, ¶4b). Clarke refers to this type as “meta-CS” (LS, 755, ¶4b); its propositions arise from “observing us talking in particular contexts... [and] making general records of the results” (LS, 755, ¶5).[5] Meta-CS will note, for instance, the everyday’s reliance upon Sextus’s “everyday criteria,” but will refrain from understanding those criteria in ‘philosophical’ terms (i.e., as averring or laying claim to K_{ph}).

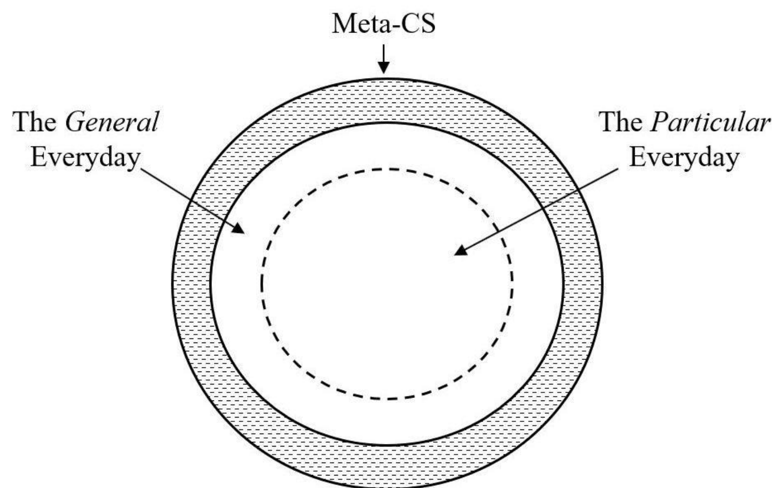

FIGURE 10: Relation Between Common Sense and the Everyday (II)

There are two questions to ask about this scheme. First, can meta-CS fill the role CS_{ph} plays in the traditional scheme? Can it function to ground or legitimize our everyday epistemic practices? Second, are Moore’s propositions best understood as meta-CS?

[5] Thus, meta-CS is not second-order with respect to CS; rather, it is CS understood as second-order generalizations of first-order utterances. Meta-CS has no independent content; it is simply reiterating in generalized form what is said in everyday life.

We have already seen Clarke's answer to the second question (2.1): Moore as a "defender of meta-CS" "is a Moore redesigned" (LS, 755, ¶4b). In this, Clarke is in agreement with Moore himself, who explicitly rejected the Austinian reading of his response to skepticism and idealism (Moore 1942, Part III).

Regarding the first question, Clarke thinks that meta-CS cannot ground or legitimize our everyday epistemic practices. "Oxford philosophy," he writes, "has created, and is suffering under, the illusion that it has successfully answered Scepticism and explained how we can have empirical knowledge" (NTE, 243). The key assumption at work in ordinary-language investigations, he argues, is that accurate *descriptions* of ordinary language-use suffice for *explanation* or *justification* of those uses of language. Specifically, the assumption is that what I've called 'the canons of everyday justification' are built into "ordinary [language] usage," either in the form of "rules" or "standards" (NTE, 44, 159). It is this, according to Clarke, that Austinians think accounts for the everyday's inherent epistemic authority. How so? Well, as we've seen, Austinians do not understand everyday criteria philosophically. In particular, they do not take everyday criteria to be presuppositionless within the relevant domain. Rather than defending them against skeptical attacks—or thinking that they need to be defended—Austinians *take for granted* the fundamental general propositions of CS Clarke identifies: "There are physical objects. We can know that there are because we can see them (and touch them)" (NTE, 235). Understood as meta-CS, however, these propositions are first and foremost descriptive. Our everyday epistemic practices regarding the empirical *do* seem to take these propositions for granted. Clarke himself is enough of an ordinary-language philosopher to maintain that "within specific, elaborate contexts of everyday life," "a 'proof' like [Moore's] *is* a proving" (LS, 754, ¶4a). Stroud refers to the claim "that human beings get their knowledge of the world somehow

from sense-perception" as "a very general 'anthropological' fact about the human condition," something "we feel we cannot deny" (UHK, 128–9). To do so would be 'paradoxical' in the original sense mentioned above. But how does one transmute description into justification or legitimation?

Again, according to Clarke, Austinians take the sensory knowability of the world to be built into ordinary language-usage, either in the form of 'rules' or 'standards.' Clarke makes this point in the context of discussing what he calls the "requirement of 'special reasons'" (NTE, 150). According to that requirement, any legitimate doubt regarding a particular case instantiating general CS propositions—e.g., "I can see that that's a goldfinch"—"*must* have... a special basis" (Austin 1970, 87); it must be backed by a "special reason" (Austin 1970, 82). To insist in any particular case that the requirement of special reasons doesn't hold is to violate rules fundamental to the proper functioning of 'language-games.'[6] As Austin puts it,

> If you say 'That's not enough' [to establish the truth of an apparently unproblematic empirical knowledge-claim], then you must have in mind some more or less definite lack... If there is no definite lack, which you are at least prepared to specify on being pressed, then it's silly (outrageous) just to go on saying 'That's not enough'.

Austin then unveils the ordinary-language slogan: "Enough is enough: it doesn't mean everything" (Austin 1970, 84). It doesn't mean, for instance, enough to rule out certain types of "worries about 'reality' and about being 'sure' and 'certain'" (Austin 1970, 86). Farfetched or 'extra-ordinary' possibilities are relevant to our 'certainty' regarding empirical matters of fact

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[6] Austin does not himself use this Wittgensteinian term. But he does compare "talking" with "play[ing] (competitive) games" at Austin 1970, 82–3: "It is fundamental in talking (as in other matters) that we are entitled to trust others, except in so far as there is some concrete reason to distrust them. Believing persons, accepting testimony, is the, or one main, point of talking. We don't play (competitive) games except in the faith that our opponent is trying to win: if he isn't, it isn't a game, but something different. So we don't talk with people (descriptively) except in the faith that they are trying to convey information."

only if there is a special reason for thinking that they obtain. This holds, Austinians argue (at least implicitly—cf. NTE, 165), not just descriptively, but normatively as well.

The connection between the requirement of special reasons and the doctrine of the sensory knowability of the world lies in the fact that the former, understood in reference to empirical knowledge-claims, precludes rejection of the latter. "The importance of this requirement of special reasons cannot be over-emphasized. It stands between the plain man and scepticism about the physical world" (NTE, 153). 'Enough is enough' means enough to show that (within reason, and for present intents and purposes) it 'can't' be anything else, that there is no place in our everyday epistemic practices for an alternative, competing, description of it. It doesn't mean, for example, enough to show that "you're not dreaming" (Austin 1970, 86). The requirement of special reasons precludes *global*, as opposed to *local*, skeptical challenges; likewise, it precludes *metaphysical*, as opposed to *empirical*, skeptical challenges (see 6.4.3, below). The only genuine challenges to everyday empirical knowledge-claims are themselves everyday counter-possibilities that, as such, will themselves appeal to physical facts that are known only on the basis of sensory receptivity. The very giving of (empirical) 'special reasons' *requires* that the general fact of the sensory knowability of the world 'stand fast' for us.

Given his focus on knowledge and skepticism, it's not surprising that Clarke focuses particular attention in this connection on the concept of certainty. It is with reference to certainty that he discusses the Austinian view that the requirement of special reasons is built into the 'rules' or 'standards' of everyday usage. Austinians, Clarke argues, hold the view that the requirement of special reasons "is either part of what is meant by 'certain' or part of our standards for certainty" (NTE, 154). The *meaning* of a word is, for Clarke, bound up with the *rules* for its use: there are, Clarke claims, "*rules* embedded in... concepts" (NTE, 166). These

rules belong to the rule-like dimension of language. Standards are less fixed than rules are: the rules for 'certain' might allow for the adoption of varying standards of certainty. Either way—whether the requirement of special reasons is thought to be built into the rules or into the standards of ordinary usage—the result is the same: in everyday life, the requirement holds in *all* cases. For Austinians, according to Clarke, the fundamental mistake of traditional epistemologists is to drop this requirement in their investigations. In doing so, they are thought to distort either the *meaning* (the rules) or the *standards* of knowing. Clarke ascribes the first view to Norman Malcolm, the second to A.J. Ayer (NTE, 155). Again, in either case the result is supposed to be the same: "In his [i.e., the traditional epistemologist's] special sense of the word 'certain,' or on his special standards, *all* counter-possibilities must *always* be ruled out" (NTE, 155).

Clarke agrees with Austinians that, as a matter of descriptive fact, the requirement of special reasons is indeed operative in everyday life. That this is so is not "[j]ust a matter of *general opinion*." Rather, it is, he argues, "*objectively determined* that... [in everyday contexts] enough is enough and that 'enough' doesn't mean enough to rule out every last possibility" (NTE, 170–1). What he rejects is Austin's *explanation* of the everyday applicability of the requirement of special reasons.

> Making the rules [of language or concept-use] responsible for [the requirement of special reasons]... exceeds the fact of its objective determination. It *explains* this objective determination. That this requirement is objectively determined in daily life does seem to be indicated by what the plain man would say in daily life. But the 'ordinary language' explanation for this fact does not seem to be warranted by this data. (NTE, 172–3)

Clarke argues that nothing in the description of what 'plain men' would say in the contexts of everyday life is sufficient to establish that the applicability of the requirement of special reasons

is due to the rules or standards of ordinary language usage. In fact, the evidence points in the opposite direction. 'Plain men,' Clarke notices, do not respond to philosophical-skeptical doubts the way Austinians do (NTE, 167). Moreover, there is every reason to think that plain men *would* respond as Austinians do *if* it were true that the requirement of special reasons is built into the rules or standards of language, for plain men do respond as Austinians do in cases where it *is* true that the rules or standards of language are being violated, such as in the imagined case of the person who insists on calling only five-legged objects 'chairs' (NTE, 166). There is a disconnect, Clarke argues, between "ordinary usage" and "what we would say in daily life" (NTE, 164).

Clarke insists, *contra* Austin, that the requirement of special reasons is *not* operative in all cases of "ordinary usage" (NTE, 164); it is operative only in *everyday cases* of ordinary usage. In philosophical cases, the plain man would, without deviating from ordinary usage, say precisely what the traditional epistemologist says: "What *the plain man* would say in the epistemologist's *cases* deviates from what the plain man would say *in daily life*" (NTE, 180). Presented with philosophical cases, in which particular assertions (Stroud's "representative case[s]" of knowledge (SPS, 10)) are taken as stand-ins for general propositions of CS_{ph}, the plain man does not somehow cease to abide by ordinary usage, for "English as a system of rules is present in both kinds of cases" (NTE, 179). It is present, as we've seen, in the *skeletal* (context-free) meaning of words. Thus, the ordinary-language philosophers' equation of 'ordinary usage' and 'what we would say in daily life' is mistaken. When it comes to the language they're speaking—to the *rules* operative in our shared discourse—philosophers focused exclusively on skeletal meaning are following ordinary usage *even though* what they say deviates from what plain men (a category that includes philosophers themselves when they're not

philosophizing)[7] would say in everyday life. Clarke concludes: "I don't think there is really anything in the kind of data examined by 'ordinary language' philosophers which would warrant ascribing the requirement of special reasons to the usage of 'certain' or to the standards for certainty" (NTE, 166).

Not only, then, is it a mistake to interpret Moore's propositions as meta-CS, it is also the case, Clarke thinks, that meta-CS is unable to fill the role that is reserved for CS_{ph} in the traditional scheme and that Austinians believe it *can* fill in their revised scheme, namely, the role of justifying or legitimizing everyday epistemic practices. How, then, *should* we understood Moore's propositions? And do they fare any better than does meta-CS as replacements for CS_{ph}?

4.1.3 G.E. Moore: CS_{pl} and the Everyday

For Clarke, the commonsensical understanding of CS is that CS is *philosophical*. This is also the traditional view. That it is both is no coincidence, for the category of CS itself emerged as a product of philosophizing. CS was introduced by philosophers as that which *grounds* (or, according to skeptics, fails to ground) the everyday. As the everyday's putative epistemological ground—as "those general propositions which answer general philosophical questions affirmatively" (LS, 759, ¶15)—CS must lie beyond or outside of the contexts of everyday life. Now, I have argued that, for Clarke, the absence of "[c]ontextual features" (LS, 757, ¶10) encourages philosophical interpretation. Furthermore, a defining characteristic of the philosophical is its *absolute objectivity*. Therefore, we are inclined to understand CS philosophically to the extent that we are inclined to think that the general propositions of CS

[7] "We [philosophers] are plain man in the sense that we *can* be, and very often are, so" (NTE, 174).

express absolutely objective (context-free) knowledge.

CS_{ph} is thought, both commonsensically and by the philosophical tradition, to ground (or fail to ground) the context-relative claims of everyday life. Clarke is convinced, however, for reasons discussed in Chapter 3, that philosophy has *failed* in this task—it has failed to make sense of CS_{ph} and therefore failed to show that CS_{ph} grounds our everyday epistemic practices. Skepticism, he argues, is conditionally correct: *if* the sort of general philosophical questions to which the propositions of CS_{ph} are affirmative answers were fully meaningful, then skeptics would be *right* that the propositions of CS_{ph} are false (= we can't know, or at least can't know that we know, what they claim we can know). In other words, the correct response to such questions would be the skeptical response, i.e., the denial of CS_{ph}. In a complicated way discussed in SS and laid out in more detail in NTE, abstract philosophical-theoretical reflection actually *makes it true* for the philosopher (whilst she is philosophizing) that the general CS propositions that ground all empirical knowledge-claims are false (see 3.5.1). But this, Clarke argues, is what is true only *from a philosophical standpoint*; it is not, as skeptics believe, the deep truth of everyday cases of knowing (see 3.5.2). Moreover, the philosophical standpoint is unstable in such a way that *any* answer to general philosophical questions, whether affirmative or negative, is equally indeterminant. Thus, "the only correct answers" to philosophical questions, Clarke argues, "amount to rejecting the question" (NTE, 201; cf. SS, 107).

Moore, Clarke argues, responds to traditional philosophy in this way: he rejects its questions *as they are meant* by the tradition, i.e., as *philosophical* questions. But he does so in a peculiar, seemingly oblivious manner. When confronted by philosophical-skeptical doubts, Moore automatically 'implains' those doubts (LS, 755, ¶4a). Doing so transforms them from philosophical to plain. He is free to do this, for as we've seen, Clarke holds that "[t]he fewer the

contextual features, the more option we have, the larger the role of our decision and resolve" (LS, 757, ¶10). Philosophical utterances, as context-free, lack all contextual features. Therefore, Moore can "resolve" to understand them plainly, to 'implain' them. It is important to see, however, that implaining skeptical doubts is to *misunderstand* those doubts, just as to 'de-plain' or 'philosophize' Moore's propositions is to misunderstand *them*. To understand the meaning of an utterance, Clarke thinks, one must understand not only the skeletal meaning of the words used, but also what speakers "mean, say, or imply, *in* uttering the words (with their meanings)" (LS, 755, ¶6)—even if only to understand that the speakers mean to say or imply *only* what is contained in the skeletal meaning of the words they utter.

Moreover, it isn't quite right, on Clarke's account, to say that Moore *resolves* to understand skeptical doubts plainly. Rather, he fails to see any other way that they could possibly be understood. Moore is "the inveterate plain man, for whom there *is* nothing outside the circle of the plain" (LS, 758, ¶11); Lilliputian Moore's "logical horizon encompass[es] only this plain" (LS, 755, ¶4b). It is, Clarke writes, as if Moore "had had a philosophical lobotomy" (LS, 757, ¶10). This apparent obliviousness on Moore's part lies at the root of so many people's puzzlement and dissatisfaction with Moore's response to skepticism. Given that the commonsensical understanding of CS is that CS is philosophical, and given that the skeptic "is innocent, without an independent thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave of CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement" (LS, 762, ¶30a), the fundamental problem with Moore's response is that both the tradition *and* the skeptic *speak for us*—that is, for all of us who've not had philosophical lobotomies. By implaining philosophical skepticism, Moore has *changed the subject*, just as philosophical skeptics change the subject when they call into question everyday knowledge-claims *qua* everyday (cf. LS, 755,

¶4a).

Despite all of this, Clarke finds something of great philosophical value in Moore: namely, the category of CS_{pl} and hence a new, broader conception of the plain as such. Moore does not attempt to reconfigure the traditional view of the relationship between CS and the everyday (Figure 9) the way Austinians do (Figure 10). Rather, he systematically misunderstands it, replacing CS_{ph} with CS_{pl}.

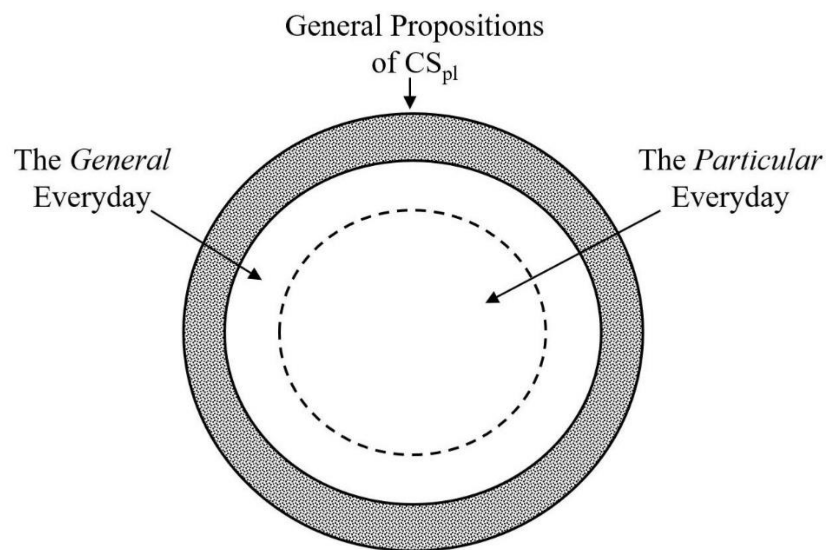

FIGURE 11: Relation Between Common Sense and the Everyday (III)

The general propositions of CS_{pl} are verbal twins of *both* general everyday (context-bound) propositions, such as those uttered by the lecturing physiologist, and the general philosophical (context-free) propositions of CS_{ph}. Whereas meta-CS attempts to leverage, Münchhausen-like, the (everyday) legitimacy of the everyday, particularly the legitimacy of the *general* everyday, in order to legitimize (or reveal the inherent legitimacy of) the everyday as such, Moore simply confronts us with a different way of understanding the propositions of CS_{ph}, namely, as propositions of CS_{pl}, which are like meta-CS propositions in being plain (meta-CS are plain at

second-order), but like CS_{ph} propositions in being context-free.

The question remains, though: if Moore's replacing of CS_{ph} with CS_{pl} results from a *misunderstanding*, then what does Clarke find "illuminating" about Moore? His answer:

> Moore is especially illuminating because he is not a philosopher's philosopher, but a philosopher's plain man: he drags us down from our ivory towers, we reflective, ethereal beings, back to our earthly selves, and confronts us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men. (LS, 758, ¶12)

This passage, which closes §1 of LS, recalls what Clarke says early in that section:

> A salient fact is that there is a large, important domain of questions, claims, and the like, ideal for Moore, where a "proof" like his *is* a proving, where knowing stands in need of no argued defense because the epistemic is immune (oversimplifying slightly) from skeptical assault. (LS, 754, ¶4a)

As I suggested in 4.1.2, this observation is first and foremost *descriptive*; it is a statement of meta-CS of the sort leveraged by Austinians in an attempt to justify our everyday epistemic practices. As plain men, Clarke thinks, even philosophers will agree with Moore, and they will do so even when Moore's propositions are understood (as they ought to be) as context-free. But as descriptive, Clarke's observation in ¶4a does not in itself *justify* or *legitimize* the everyday as such.

What I want to suggest—and this is one way of stating what is perhaps the crux of the Pyrrhonian Reading of Clarke—is that Clarke thinks that Moore reveals a disconnect between *what we commonsensically believe as plain men* and *how we commonsensically understand the status of* what we commonsensically believe as plain men. To mark this distinction, I would like to introduce a distinction between a concept and a C-concept, where a C-concept is a conception of a concept. When concepts are deployed in general propositions, the tendency is to understand

those concepts philosophically. This is to have philosophical C-concepts of those concepts. We're already familiar with the distinction between plain and philosophical knowledge; that is a distinction between C-concepts of the concept 'knowledge.' The same sort of distinction can be drawn between different C-concepts of 'Awake,' 'Dream,' and 'the Real'—between 'Awake_{pl}' and 'Awake_{ph},' 'Dream_{pl}' and 'Dream_{ph},' etc. Thus, we might commonsensically believe *p*, "We can know_{pl} that we're awake_{pl}, not dreaming_{pl}," while commonsensically understanding *p* as *meaning* that we can know_{ph} that we're awake_{ph}, not dreaming_{ph}. In this way, our *actual* concepts can come apart from our C-concepts of those concepts. Plain and philosophical concepts differ in that philosophical concepts are *absolutely* objective whereas plain concepts can be at best, it seems, only *relatively* objective, where 'objectivity' is understood on the model of what I call 'commonsense realism' (see 4.2.2–3, below).

As plain men who have not had philosophical lobotomies, we all, Clarke thinks, succumb to the philosophical interpretation of CS propositions as soon as we begin thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge. I have suggested that this is because we are, even *qua* plain men, committed to objectivity. Insofar as this sort of objectivity is *philosophical*, everyday life is shot through with philosophical content or commitments, even if only inchoate ('implicit,' 'naïve,' 'pretheoretical') philosophical content. So although Moore is indeed, on Clarke's view, "confront[ing] us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men," the 'confrontation' is a *provocation*, for it reveals that we have misunderstood the status of the CS propositions that underlie our everyday epistemic practices: we have faulty C-concepts of the concepts deployed in the CS propositions that *actually* underwrite our everyday epistemic practices. We thought, even as plain men, that we believed the propositions of CS_{ph}, that *they* underlay our everyday claims. In fact, however, it is CS_{pl} that lies at the foundation of the everyday.

But we've gotten ahead of ourselves. Initially, all that Moore has shown is that the general propositions of CS *can* be understood plainly and that, so understood, we *do* (*qua* plain men) ascribe to those propositions. More work is needed to show that *our* CS *cannot* be CS_{ph}. That it cannot be is central to the lesson of skepticism: it is, we might say, borrowing a phrase from Cavell, the "moral of skepticism" (Cavell 1979, 241). Since we do nonetheless ascribe to CS in the form of CS_{pl}, we would then be left with the problem of understanding how our everyday knowing could be legitimate even though it is grounded not in CS_{ph}, but (to the extent that it's grounded at all) in CS_{pl}. What is the "structure" of "the plain," understood as encompassing both the (context-bound) everyday and (context-free) CS_{pl}? How can our knowing be legitimate ('objective,' 'true') yet thoroughly plain? We must, as Clarke puts it in the closing words of NTE, "try to make sense of how knowing and seeing can be genuine even though essentially dependent on [the non-rule-like] dimension" of everyday life (NTE, 248).

4.2 Clarke's Ground-Floor Question

With the preliminaries out of the way, we are now in a position to explore the lesson of skepticism. I take up that topic in Chapter 5. First, I would like to unpack the question with which Clarke opens LS: "What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage?" (LS, 754, ¶1). I begin by discussing the near-consensus view that Clarke's answer is that the skeptic is examining "a large piece of philosophizing." I agree with this assessment, but insist that matters are more complicated than they might seem. Clarke is clear that, on his account, the skeptic examines CS_{ph}. As philosophical, CS_{ph} is a product of philosophizing; but it

is not obvious that that precludes the propositions of CS_{ph} from counting among our most fundamental beliefs.

4.2.1 Philosophy and Our Most Fundamental Beliefs

Clarke opens LS with the following twofold question: “What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage? And what do his reflections, properly construed, reveal?” (LS, 754, ¶1). Barry Stroud refers to the first half of this “twofold” question as “Clarke’s ground-floor question” (UHK, 137). Michael Williams refers to it as “the absolutely crucial question to ask about scepticism” (UD, 1). More recently, it serves as the epigraph to Duncan Pritchard’s *Epistemic Angst* (2016).[8] Answering Clarke’s twofold question amounts to articulating the lesson of skepticism. To answer the ground-floor question is to provide an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge. To answer the second question is to provide an assessment of the import of that challenge.

To a certain extent, there is no mystery as to how Clarke answers his twofold question. Regarding the ground-floor question, he argues that the skeptic examines CS_{ph}: “the skeptic assaults CS_{ph}” (LS, 767, ¶51); skepticism is the “denial” of CS_{ph} (LS, 762, ¶29); CS_{ph} is what “the *real* skeptic cross-examines directly” (LS, 759, ¶15). Regarding the second question, Clarke argues that “skeptical doubts... reveal that CS_{ph} *and* its skeptical denial should both be

[8] It should be noted that all of the sources mentioned here (Stroud, Williams, Pritchard), in the texts mentioned, actually misquote Clarke. In place of “our most fundamental beliefs,” they have “our most fundamental convictions.” I suspect that Stroud and Pritchard follow Williams in this, since his misquote is the earliest. The mistake may be harmless, i.e., it may have no effect on how Williams, Stroud, Pritchard, or their readers understand the question Clarke is intending to ask. On the face of it, however, ‘beliefs’ and ‘convictions’ are not the same, and it may be that Williams’s influential misquote has contributed to misunderstandings of Clarke’s question.

erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29). So far, so good. But how should we understand these answers?

To begin with, although Clarke tells us that the skeptic "properly construed" examines CS_{ph}, he does not explain this answer in terms of the options mentioned in his ground-floor question. He never tells us whether CS_{ph} encompasses or includes "our most fundamental beliefs," whether it is instead "the product of a large piece of philosophizing," or whether it is in fact both of these. Now, the overwhelming consensus in the literature is that, according to Clarke, CS_{ph} is a product of philosophizing and is *not* the logical type of our most fundamental beliefs. Michael Williams writes that he "fully agree[s]" with Clarke "both that this [i.e., the ground-floor question] is the right question to ask and that the object of the skeptic's reflection is the product of a large piece of prior philosophizing" (UD, 360 fn. 1.1).[9] Having echoed Williams's misquote of Clarke's ground-floor question, Stroud writes that "I think Williams and I (as well as Clarke) would all agree that the answer is 'The latter'" (UHK, 137).

We are already in a position to assess this virtual consensus view. There is no question that CS_{ph} is, for Clarke, the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge. We have had multiple occasions to cite a passage that I would like now to quote at greater length.

> I must say something about what so-called common sense is... Aren't common-sense beliefs just those beliefs which the man in the street happens to hold? ... No. Common sense has really little or nothing to do with *common* sense. These so-called beliefs are the product of philosophizing—though of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind—and, in a certain respect, seem to be *a priori*. (NTE, 241)

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[9] Williams does not, however, agree with Clarke "about the essential character of the piece of philosophizing in question" (UD, 360, fn. 1.1).

What is ‘philosophical’ about CS_{ph} is that

> ... in each of these common-sense beliefs—e.g., the belief that we can see physical objects—there is implicit a conception of the nature of empirical knowledge. This conception is that empirical knowledge is independent of what I have referred to as the non-rule-like dimension. The common-sense beliefs are assertions that we can know and see physical objects, and these assertions are themselves independent of that dimension. (NTE, 241)

It is not obvious, however, that a belief’s being philosophical in this sense precludes it from counting among our most fundamental beliefs.

4.2.2 Objectivity and Metaphysical Realism

I have suggested that human beings are commonsensically committed to a robust notion of objectivity and that it is this commitment that explains the perennial allure of philosophy. The ‘world’ spoken of in the problem of the external world is “the objective world” (Huemer 2001, 7). In both philosophy and everyday life, the most basic, unreconstructed conception of objectivity is what philosophers call *metaphysical realism*, according to which “the existence or at least the nature of things, ‘reality,’ is independent of our cognition of them, whether in perception, conception, or description” (Butchvarov 2002, 282). Stroud writes that “[w]hat is at stake in the problem of the *external world* is all of our knowledge of *independent objects* or states of affairs” (UHK, 131; emphases added); he describes the “class of propositions” that refer to the external world as “those which are true or false independently of the experiences or thoughts or even the existence of any human beings who might know or believe them” (UHK, 125; cf. SPS, 77 ff.). Proceeding more slowly, Brian Garrett cashes out the notion of ‘independence’ in terms of satisfying one or more of the following conditions (where ‘F’ stands

for some existing thing):

(i) If we hadn't existed, Fs would still have existed.
(ii) If we were to cease to exist, Fs would still exist.
(iii) The nature of Fs is not determined simply by whatever we take their nature to be.

He goes on to say that "[i]ntuitively, we are realists about the planets... but non-realists about the fashionable" (Garrett 2006, 138). He clarifies the scope of realism as follows:

> Condition (ii) allows us to be realists about trains, planes and automobiles. Although they would not have existed, had we not existed, were we to cease to exist, they would still exist. Condition (iii) allows us to be realists about mental states. Although it is true that, had I not existed, my mental states would not have existed, and true that were I to cease to exist, my mental states would cease to exist, the nature of my mental states is not fixed by whatever I take their nature to be. Since we may be mistaken about the nature of our mental states, realism about mental states is still an option. (Garrett 2006, 171)

Nicholas Rescher describes metaphysical realism as "the doctrine that the world exists in a way that is substantially independent of the thinking beings it contains that can inquire into it, and that its nature—its having the characteristics it does actually have—is also comparably knowledge-transcending" (Rescher 2010, 9). The latter aspect of the doctrine as he describes it reflects Rescher's contention that metaphysical realism entails the "cognitive opacity of real things" such that "we are not—and will never be—in a position to evade or abolish the contrast between 'things as we think them to be' and 'things as they actually and truly are'" (Rescher 2002, 249). This is a deep point of contrast between scientific and metaphysical realism: "Traditional scientific realists see the basis for realism in the substantive knowledge of the sciences; the present metaphysical realism, by contrast, sees its basis in our realization of the inevitable *shortcomings* of our knowledge—scientific knowledge included" (Rescher 2002, 246).

Others have drawn a stronger conclusion, one Rescher at least claims to eschew (cf. Rescher 2010, 17), namely, that the quest for objective knowledge "offers a standing invitation to scepticism" (Williams 1978, 48). As Thomas Nagel puts it,

> Objectivity and skepticism are closely related: both develop from the idea that there is a real world in which we are contained, and that appearances result from our interaction with the rest of it. We cannot accept those appearances uncritically, but must try to understand what our own constitution contributes to them. (Nagel 1986, 68)

The quest for objectivity may even be sufficient in itself to make skepticism unavoidable, for in order to achieve it, it seems that "we must get outside of ourselves" (Nagel 1986, 67). In striving for absolute objectivity, "[w]e are in a sense trying to climb outside of our own minds, an effort that some would regard as insane and that I regard as philosophically fundamental" (Nagel 1986, 11). The difficulty as Nagel sees it is that it is unclear how finite human beings (beings who exist *within* the world) could possibly "leave [their] own point of view behind entirely without ceasing to exist" (Nagel 1986, 67).

Michael Hymers has argued, *contra* Nagel, Bernard Williams, Stroud, and others, that the belief that the notion of objectivity is the top of a slippery slope that leads to, or at least threatens to lead to, skepticism is based on a mistake, specifically a failure to distinguish between types of realism about what exists. I want to say that he thinks there is no great difficulty in being "a metaphysical realist without being a skeptic about the 'external' world" (Hymers 2000, 13), but he specifically claims that this is *not* his view. Rather, Hymers distinguishes between (what he calls) "*metaphysical* realism," which he rejects, and "*modest* realism," which he accepts.[10]

[10] More recently, a similar distinction has been made by Genia Schönbaumsfeld, who contrasts "modest realism" and "hyper-realism" (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 132). I believe that the same criticism I level against Hymers applies to her distinction.

Metaphysical and modest realism "diverge," he claims, "precisely over how to interpret the 'mind-independence' or 'discourse-independence' or 'objectivity' of the world" (Hymers 2000, 13). Both kinds of realism accord, however, with how metaphysical realism has been characterized so far. This is how Hymers distinguishes between the two.

> First, it might simply be that the world could exist much as it does, with trees and shrubs and diatomaceous earth and planetary nebulae, in the absence of human beings and a fortiori in the absence of our epistemic capacities. It is not unusual to believe that it once did so exist, and sober reflection will easily convince many that someday it might so exist once again. Call this view *modest realism*. Modest realism is a view that does not have a great deal of content (hence its "modesty"). The modest realist further believes that we can hold empirical beliefs that are false, but she does not draw the additional conclusion that there is a serious skeptical threat to our knowledge of the world around us. From the mere fact that any given empirical belief might be wrong it does not follow that all our empirical beliefs might be wrong, any more than from the mere fact that some money is counterfeit it follows that all money might be counterfeit.
>
> There is nothing aberrant in referring to the foregoing position as a kind of realism. It is certainly not a variety of idealism. But it is not yet *metaphysical realism*. The metaphysical realist insists that the nature and existence of the world are independent of the reliability of our epistemic capacities in a much stronger sense: Our empirical beliefs might fail quite systematically to represent the world correctly. In other words, the metaphysical realist, but not the modest realist, sees the mind-independence of the world as characterized by our vulnerability to the doubts of the external-world skeptic... Of course, as I indicated above, the modest realist allows that we can have false beliefs, but that fact, she insists, does not *entail* that we can be wrong in the encompassing way that the skeptic suggests. (Hymers 2000, 15)

It seems to me that, contrary to what Hymers himself says, both the 'modest' and the 'metaphysical' realist can or do share the same conception of objectivity or mind-independence. Note that he offers no characterization of the metaphysical realist's supposedly competing ("much stronger") conception of the mind-independent world. They differ not in their ontology (their 'realism' about what exists), but in their view of such realism's vulnerability to skeptical undermining. The 'modest' realist is what we might call a 'commonsense fallibilist,' whereas

the 'metaphysical' realist is at least potentially a traditional philosopher (and hence no proponent of commonsensism). As a commonsense fallibilist, the 'modest' realist accepts that "any given empirical belief [we hold] might be wrong" while nonetheless insisting that we *do* know all sorts of things about the world. Skepticism (i.e., the global denial of our knowledge of the external world) "does not follow" from the standing possibility of local, isolated errors. The 'metaphysical' realist, on the other hand, allows that local, isolated errors might be symptomatic of a global, systematic disconnect between appearances and reality.

Presumably, Hymers would want to say that, *contra* the 'metaphysical' realist, the 'modest' realist holds that the world could *not* be *so* mind-independent that it might slip the bounds of cognition altogether. But this is not a different kind of *realism* in the relevant sense, that is, a doctrine about the 'objective' nature of the world. Rather, it is a different kind of realism regarding *the human epistemic-cognitive standpoint*. The 'modest' and the 'metaphysical' realist differ in their conception not of the world, but of the relation of human knowers *to* the world. 'Modest' realists insist that fallibilism does not entail denying that we directly apprehend the world in nondeficient cases, a theory of perception or cognition known as *direct realism*.[11] Hymers specifies that 'metaphysical' realists claim not that fallibility *entails* denying the very possibility of direct apprehension of the world, but only that it *allows for* the possibility that we never directly apprehend the world. What, then, does the distinction really amount to? 'Modest' realists insist that fallibilism does not support the rejection of the possibility of a direct-realist cognitive relation to the world. But 'metaphysical' realists agree. The only difference between them, it seems to me, is that 'modest' realists are going to insist that we *do* have a direct-realist relation to the world (in nondeficient cases), whereas 'metaphysical'

[11] A better term might be "natural realism." See Putnam 1999, 10–11.

realists are, given what Hymers has said so far, going to claim that the question of our cognitive relation to the world remains open. If this is right, then Hymers gets things precisely backward when he says that "[m]odest realism is a view that does not have a great deal of content (hence its 'modesty')." The implication of this claim is that 'metaphysical' realism has a great deal of content (hence its lack of 'modesty'). It seems to me, however, that the 'modest' realist is already presupposing doctrines regarding our cognitive relation to the world (and hence of the nature of the world itself), even if only of a 'commonsensical' sort, whereas the 'metaphysical' realist remains at the point of simply asking questions. It is a commitment to 'modest,' not to 'metaphysical,' realism that requires one to assume "a great deal of content."

A commitment to metaphysical realism does not presuppose or entail a commitment to any view about the human epistemic–cognitive relation to the world. It results simply from a commitment to a robust conception of objectivity. That conception has struck many as perfectly ordinary, not the product of some dubious philosophical theorizing from which a simple 'diagnosis' can free us.[12] Even if Hymers is right that entertaining skeptical doubts can appear to reflect a kind of "epistemic neurosis" (Hymers 2000, 1), that does not show that skepticism is false. After all, "[a]n insane person can be right about what he believes, just as a sane person can be wrong about what *he* believes" (Butchvarov 1998, 5). Nor does it show that skeptical doubts are not built on a foundation of common sense. Perhaps behavior that looks like insanity is in fact the most rational behavior of all—*by our own standards* (or at least by standards we accept). Alternatively, it might be that "the grace that saves us from a psychiatric diagnosis is nothing more than the sheer good fortune that millions of others happen to share our delusion" by virtue of being the same sort of creatures that we are (Fine 2006, 104).

[12] For responses to arguments to the contrary, see Ribeiro 2004, Rudd 2008, Fosl 2015.

4.2.3 A Philosophy of Everyday Life?

As we've seen, Clarke argues that the "simple quest for absolute objectivity" is what "mov[es] us to philosophize" (LS, 762, ¶28). He characterizes this quest as "simple" because he thinks that a metaphysical-realist conception of objectivity, together with a direct-realist conception of human perception or cognition, is in an important sense *intuitive* or *commonsensical*. He singles out the following as "[t]he most fundamental... commonsense beliefs": "There are physical objects. We can know that there are because we can see them (and touch them)" (NTE, 235). The most basic, unreconstructed, 'commonsense' interpretation of the second of these beliefs finds in its expression a commitment to direct realism (= realism regarding our perceptual–cognitive relation to what exists). When direct realism is combined with the first belief (i.e., "There are physical objects"), the result is what we might call *commonsense metaphysical realism* (= metaphysical realism regarding the familiar objects of everyday life).[13] Accordingly, I will use the term 'commonsense realism' to refer to the conjunction of metaphysical realism and direct realism. To discover that commonsense realism is mistaken, Clarke argues, would be to discover that "the world we really live in is fundamentally unlike the world we thought was ours" (NTE, 100). "Intuitive philosophers" (LS, 762, ¶28)—that is, philosophers for whom traditional-philosophical questions, or rather to whom traditional-philosophical *construals* of certain questions, come naturally—seek the absolutely objective without "questioning its availability" (LS, 759, ¶15). Such philosophical questions (or,

[13] For a defense of commonsense metaphysical realism, see Baker 2007, which "present[s] a theory that focuses on the familiar objects that we encounter in everyday life—flowers, people, houses, and so on—and locates them irreducibly in reality" (Baker 2007, 3).

again, such construals of questions) “satisfy a deep intellectual need” (LS, 759, ¶15). Garrett remarks that “[f]or many, [metaphysical] realism is the default view of the world” (Garrett 2006, 140), while direct realism represents, as Butchvarov puts it, “our commonsense and phenomenologically firmly grounded view” (Butchvarov 1998, 12); it “is the bedrock of everyday and scientific thinking” (Butchvarov 2002, 282). The supposition of “an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated” is, according to Hume, the “universal and primary opinion of all men” (Hume 2007b, 133).

Because direct realism is part of our ‘commonsensical’ or ‘default view,’ it is sometimes referred to as ‘naïve.’ The term ‘naïve realism’ features prominently in H.H. Price’s *Perception* (1932). Its fashionability has waned in the intervening decades, and even Price notes that “[t]he name is not a very suitable one (for the view is hardly a faithful analysis of the unreflective assumptions of the plain or naïve man)” (Price 1950, 26). In a similar vein, Clarke argues that the “so-called common-sense beliefs” that underlie traditional philosophy—including the ‘intuitive’ or ‘commonsensical’ notion of absolute objectivity—are *not* “just those beliefs which the man in the street happens to hold.” Rather, they are “the product of philosophizing” (NTE, 240–1). He argues that “there is implicit” in CS_{ph} “a conception of the nature of empirical knowledge” (NTE, 241). According to that conception, the only genuine empirical knowledge is absolutely objective. As a product of philosophizing, CS_{ph} cannot be entirely “unreflective.” Nor, as we’ll see shortly, does Clarke think CS_{ph} accurately captures the “unreflective assumptions of the plain... man”—though he does think it answers to *something* that is ‘commonly’ or ‘naturally’ present in everyday life, namely, an unarticulated sense of what and how the world *is*.

Bimal Matilal writes that "[n]aïve realism is not really naïve. To describe a philosophic doctrine as naïve is at best misleading and at worst false" (Matilal 1986, 1). This seems to assume that all "products of philosophizing" are by definition too sophisticated to count as naïve. It's not clear that that is the case. Perhaps 'naïve realism' deserves the title insofar as the philosophizing that underlies it is "of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind." Clarke goes on to say that "everyone succumbs to the conception [of empirical knowledge as absolutely objective] implicit in the common-sense beliefs as soon as he begins thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge" (NTE, 243). If this is right, then it seems that it is only *later* that 'commonsensical' naïve realism and its implicit epistemology is worked out in greater detail. It is, as Wilfrid Sellars puts it, a "paradox" to refer to a position as 'naïve' only if and when it has become "as sophisticated as an ably defended philosophical position" (Sellars 1963, 61). *Qua* naïve, realism is not 'ably defended'; rather, it is our 'default view.' It seems to me, as I believe it does to Clarke, that commonsense realism (which, again, encompasses both metaphysical and direct realism) arrives on the scene as a *naïve philosophy*, which is no contradiction in terms; only later does it cease to be naïve.[14]

If this is right, then there is indeed something that deserves the title 'philosophy of the plain man.' That philosophy is largely implicit, but never far from the surface. It is, as we've seen, "the product of philosophizing—though of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind" (NTE, 240–1). Indeed, it is *so* natural, immediate, and compelling that it initially presents itself as *self-evident*. As such, it normally *goes without saying*. As Pierre Bourdieu puts it in a

[14] In a brief aside in one of his lectures, Wittgenstein distinguishes between "the common-sense philosopher" and "the common-sense man." He claims that, unlike the commonsense philosopher, "the common-sense man... is as far from realism as from idealism" (Wittgenstein 1958, 48). It is difficult to say just how Wittgenstein would have us unpack this remark. The most plausible interpretation, it seems to me, is that he means to distinguish between the sophisticated realism of the commonsense philosopher (= realism as "an ably defended philosophical position") and the naïve 'realism' of the commonsense man.

similar connection:

> The [purported] self-evidence of the world is reduplicated by the instituted discourses about the world in which the whole group's adherence to that self-evidence is affirmed... Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of that world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition. (Bourdieu 1977, 167)

William James makes a similar claim: "*our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time*. They form one great stage of equilibrium in the human mind's development, the stage of *common sense*" (James 1907, 76). Common sense, the "natural mother-tongue of thought" (James 1907, 81), is a "stage of philosophizing" (James 1907, 73). It is the philosophy of everyday life: what Clarke calls "the ontology of the plain man" (NTE, 99); what Paul Churchland calls "the familiar ontology of common sense" (Churchland 1979, 4); what Alexander P.D. Mourelatos calls "the naïve metaphysics of things" (Mourelatos 1970, 300); what Wilfrid Sellars calls "the manifest image," i.e., "the pre-reflective orientation which is our common heritage" (Sellars 1963, 3); what Husserl calls "the *natural attitude* of the mind" (Husserl 1999, 15; cf. Husserl 2014, 48–50); and what Hegel refers to as 'consciousness' at the stage of "perceptual understanding, often called 'sound common sense'" (Hegel 1977, 77). The plain man holds this philosophy naïvely and for the most part implicitly, but it becomes sophisticated in the hands of philosophers. As Jay Garfield notes, "arguably, the person on the street thinks of the physical as substantial, thinks of causation as a real force, thinks of personal identity as grounded in a soul, and so forth." Williams James writes: "'Self,' 'body,' in the substantial or metaphysical sense—no one escapes subjection to *those* forms of thought" (James 1907, 81). "But," Garfield continues, "these views are probably in the typical

case rather inchoate." The activity of philosophers seeking to vindicate such beliefs "can be seen as a careful conceptual refinement of... everyday metaphysics" (Garfield 1990, 262). What enters the world as the naïve philosophy of the plain man becomes sophisticated in the hands of philosophers.

Generally speaking, traditional philosophers will hold that the naïve philosophy stands or falls with its sophisticated expression, whereas nontraditional philosophers will hold that sophisticated philosophy is sound (or justified or meaningful) only to the extent that it accords with or does justice to the naïve philosophy. For traditional philosophers, naïve philosophy is naïve not because it is not "ably defended," but because it is not defended *at all*. It goes without saying; it is taken for granted. The first-order beliefs that comprise the naïve philosophy of the plain man become sophisticated when they are defended. Such defense, if successful, will result in the production of reflective second-order knowledge *regarding* the first-order beliefs endorsed by the naïve philosophy, namely, reflective second-order knowledge to the effect that the naïve philosophy is correct and known to be so. Such reflective second-order beliefs are products of *sophisticated* philosophizing. The plain man may *know* (in some sense) that there are physical objects, et al., but only the philosopher knows (reflectively) *that* the plain man knows (rather than merely believes correctly) that there are physical objects, for only the philosopher has produced a *justification* or *rational account* of the truth of the plain man's everyday beliefs.

4.2.4 Our Common World-Sense

If this is right, then there is indeed something that deserves to be called the 'philosophy of everyday life.' That philosophy is *commonsense realism*, which combines *metaphysical*

realism (a view regarding what exists) and *direct realism* (a view regarding our perceptual–cognitive relation to what exists). Together, these 'realisms' are expressed in Clarke's fundamental propositions of CS. According to metaphysical realism, external, mind-independent physical objects exist in more or less just the way we commonsensically think they exist (rather than 'existing' in some, e.g., reconstructed Berkeleyan sense); according to direct realism, we can know that such objects exist because we can see them (and touch them, taste them, etc.). These seem like prime candidates for "our most fundamental beliefs"—and they are precisely that on the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday (Figure 9). Yet how can these proposition belong to "our most fundamental beliefs"—how can they be a genuine 'philosophy of everyday life'—if they are, as Clarke claims, *not* "beliefs which the man in the street... hold[s]"?

To begin with, Clarke claims, as we've seen, that the general propositions of CS_{ph} are *so* "natural, immediate, and compelling" that "everyone succumbs to the conception [of knowledge] implicit in the common-sense beliefs as soon as he begins thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge" (NTE, 243). The idea is that we are naturally inclined—we 'succumb'—to a philosophical interpretation of any sufficiently general question. Consider the following:

(Q_1) "Can we ever know we're awake, not dreaming?" (LS, 767, ¶53)

Understood as a plain question, the answer to Q_1 is evidently "Yes." This answer is based on the sort of data 'summed up' by meta-CS. So understood, the knowing averred to in Q_1 is K_{pl}. As philosophical, however, Q_1 avers not to K_{pl}, but to K_{ph}. It is *this* notion that we find so natural, immediate, and compelling that we think to answer Q_1, understood philosophically, with a proposition of CS_{ph}.

(CS_{ph}) "[W]e can know [philosophically] we're not dreaming." (LS, 768, ¶55)

It is *this* claim—along with similar claims responding to different sorts of general philosophical questions—that is the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge that skeptics set out to examine.

It is worth pausing to consider just how unorthodox this view is. As Clarke says,

> Common to virtually all critiques of traditional epistemology... is the idea... that *philosophy begins after* the common-sense beliefs. On this idea what is philosophical, that is, what is suspicious, are the examinations of common sense. Philosophers are alleged to have repudiated common sense for (mistaken) philosophical reasons. I have been urging, in contrast, that in his examinations of common sense a traditional epistemologist is a plain man. He is not conducting a new kind of inquiry... There is, as I should like to put it, no philosophy in the basic traditional epistemological inquiries which examine common sense. Philosophizing *ends* with the common-sense beliefs. (NTE, 239–40)

In Chapter 3, we saw some of Clarke's reasons for thinking that the traditional epistemologist (and by extension the skeptic) is "a plain man" "in his examinations of common sense." The skeptic "is innocent, without an independent thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave to CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement," namely, "*invulnerability*" (LS, 762, ¶30a), which in turn requires presuppositionlessness: we must "be able to 'rule out' any counterpossibility" (LS, 763, ¶30b). If philosophizing ends with CS_{ph}, then it begins with Q_1 meant and understood philosophically: it begins the moment we start thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge.

This isn't enough, however, to show that in 'succumbing' to the philosophical conception of empirical knowledge we have not distorted or deviated from our most fundamental beliefs. In discussing the philosophy of everyday life, I've had recourse to epistemologically vague

expressions such as ‘implicit,’ ‘inchoate,’ ‘pretheoretical,’ ‘taken for granted,’ etc. These expressions are supposed to explain, or at least shed light on, how it is that the plain man’s most fundamental beliefs could be philosophical despite that the plain man, *qua* plain man, harbors no philosophical theories. Clarke himself is clear that plain men are not ‘philosophical’ in this way:

> We [philosophers] are plain men in the sense that we *can* be, and very often are, so. When we ask *ourselves* what we would say in particular cases we deliberately and carefully lay philosophical theories and convictions aside. We become the men we are when absorbed in particular tasks of daily life and blissfully free, for the moment, of philosophical thoughts. (NTE, 174)

Why is it, then, that plain men will tend to ‘succumb’ to the philosophical conception of empirical knowledge implicit in Q_1 and CS_{ph}? Clarke has taken pains to show that Q_1 doesn’t *force* us to interpret it philosophically. What is at the bottom of this tendency toward philosophy? The key, I want to suggest, lies in Clarke’s suggestion that not only is the philosophical conception of empirical knowledge “natural, immediate, and compelling,” but that the propositions of CS_{ph} “seem to be *a priori*” (NTE, 241). What is the significance of this seeming apriority?

Despite holding that to become the plain men they are “in daily life,” philosophers must “lay philosophical theories and convictions aside” (NTE, 174), Clarke nonetheless maintains, as we’ve seen, that there is something that deserves to be called “the ontology of the plain man” (NTE, 99). Traditional epistemology, he claims, leads to the “discovery... that the world we really live in is fundamentally unlike the world we thought was ours” (NTE, 100). In what sense, though, do plain men, prior to philosophizing, hold *any* general ontological views? For Clarke, I submit, they do so in the form of an unarticulated sense of what and how the world *is*, a sense that is affirmed by CS_{ph}, that traditional epistemology calls into question, and that SK_{ph}

denies us knowledge of. This 'world-sense' seems *a priori* because it seems to precede any and all of our encounters with the world: we are, to use a Heideggerian phrase, 'always already' in the grips of this world-sense. The "ontology of the plain man" is not a theory or even a conviction (belief), at least not if to have a conviction (belief) requires conscious assent to a proposition. Rather, it is, as I want to put it, our pretheoretical—indeed, in some sense perhaps even pre-experiential—orientation toward the world as such.[15]

This is suggested, I take it, in the following passage from NTE: "Common sense believes that *physical objects* are the 'furniture of our world.' (Perhaps instead of saying that common sense *believes* this one should say this *is* the common sense world)" (NTE, 99; cf. NTE, 104). It is this parenthetical suggestion that I mean to capture by referring to an unarticulated sense of what and how the world *is*. As a set of general propositions, CS articulates a prior sense of the world as mind-independent (metaphysical realism) and as unproblematically mind-accessible (direct realism). That this *is* "the common sense world" is what makes the general propositions of CS_{ph} 'commonsensical' even though they do not express beliefs that "the man on the street... hold[s]." Genuine "*common* sense" (NTE, 240–1), as that which is common to all or most plain men *qua* plain men, is not a compendium of general propositions, but an unarticulated 'world-sense,' which we might think of as akin to Bertrand Russell's "robust sense of reality" (Russell 1920, 170). The seeming apriority of this world-sense explains why the propositions of CS_{ph} "seem to be *a priori*" (NTE, 241), for they seem to speak to something we already 'knew' in a primordial way.

But why do we succumb to philosophy "instead of resting content at home like Moore,

[15] This is reminiscent of Cavell's claim that "the 'truth' of skepticism" is "that our relation to the world as such is not one of knowing" (Cavell 1979, 48), which is itself reminiscent of Heidegger's argument that 'knowing' is 'founded upon' a prior state of being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962, 86–90, §13).

inside the plain" (LS, 759, ¶15)? We've already seen the answer, and it's built into our world-sense itself: our deep-seated commitment to the absolute objectivity of the world. As *not* absolutely objective, CS_{pl} does not fit the bill. CS_{pl} comes into view by our refusing (or being incapable of) philosophizing, yet there is a species of philosophy—the philosophy of everyday life—that comes to most of us quite naturally indeed, for (again) it speaks to our initially inarticulate world-sense. It is this common world-sense, I submit, that lies at the root of the following sorts of observations Clarke makes in LS: "philosophical questions satisfy a deep intellectual need, unfulfilled by their plain versions"; we find "frustrating" the thought that we can ask only plain questions, for it seems to us that "[s]omething important would be denied us, which 'inside our studies' we seek, not questioning its availability" (LS, 759, ¶15). We would be "intellectually frustrated" because, Clarke tells us, "prohibited access to the *objective*... The limiting eyeglasses of the restricted would prevent us from seeing, even trying to see, things and ourselves as we and they truly are" (LS, 761–2, ¶27).

There is a sense, then, in which our most fundamental beliefs *are* propositions of CS_{ph}. To maintain as much, we need only hold that "our most fundamental beliefs" are whatever we think they are, upon reflection. In other words, we need only think that our most fundamental beliefs must, as *our* beliefs, aver to *our* C-concepts of the concepts deployed in stating those beliefs. Upon reflection, we are inclined to think that our most fundamental beliefs—those general propositions that underlie our everyday epistemic practices—are propositions of CS_{ph}. Clarke wants us to see, however, that we are (indeed we *must be*) mistaken about this. In fact, our most fundamental beliefs are propositions of CS_{pl}. The mistake is easy to make, for the propositions of CS_{pl} and those of CS_{ph} are verbal and typographical twins.

To quote a recent book that adopts a dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategy, the crucial

question for our purposes—the crux of the debate between the Dissolutionist Reading and the Pyrrhonian Reading of LS—is whether or not traditional-epistemological inquiry and the skepticism to which it leads "just returns us to our pre-theoretical notions which an illusion of doubt had seemed to put in peril" (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 132). It is my view—and part of the Pyrrhonian Reading—that, for Clarke, the 'return' to everyday life in the wake of skepticism is *not* a simple return to some prior state of philosophical innocence. Yes, philosophical skepticism reveals to us that our most fundamental beliefs are and have always been CS_{pl}, not CS_{ph}, but this is not so much a 'return' as it is a *revolution*. It entails rejecting the commonsensical view of CS. This rejection, I shall argue, calls for a fundamental revision of our commonsensical conception of ourselves, the world, and our place in that world.

Now let's see how Clarke presents the lesson of skepticism.

Chapter 5

The Lesson of Skepticism

So far we've focused on §§1–3 of LS and, in Chapter 3, the early chapters of NTE. In doing so, we've explored what Clarke takes to be necessary preliminaries to learning the lesson of skepticism. With those preliminaries out of the way, I want to turn our attention to §§4–5 of LS. The lesson of skepticism arises from (*1*) an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge, understood as a specimen of traditional epistemological inquiry, and (*2*) an assessment of the import of that challenge vis-à-vis our everyday, commonsensical commitments. In 5.1, I discuss §4 of LS ("Cross-Examining Common Sense$_{ph}$"), which details Clarke's account of the manner in which skeptics attempt to establish their skeptical conclusions. In 5.2, I turn to §5 of LS ("The Fate of CS$_{ph}$"), which contains Clarke's assessment of skepticism's import. Here, I draw on NTE, showing how arguments presented in that earlier text shed much-needed light on the more difficult and compact arguments contained in LS.

5.1 Knowability and the Plainness of Skeptical Scenarios

5.1.1 The Skeptic's Epistemic Possibility

In his ground-floor question, Clarke tells us that the "large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge" that "the skeptic examin[es]" is "done before he [i.e., the skeptic] comes on stage" (LS, 756, ¶1). That the "philosophizing" in question is done "before" the skeptic "comes on stage" is important for a number of reasons, one of which is that it means that the

skeptic, though for Clarke a plain man, is nonetheless ‘in the grip’ of the traditional view of the relation between common sense and the everyday (Figure 9). The skeptic examines CS_{ph} *because* it is assumed, on this view, that CS_{ph} is the epistemological ground of our everyday epistemic practices. Thus, the traditional view is that if the skeptic can undermine CS_{ph}, he will thereby have undermined the everyday as well. As Clarke puts it in NTE, the traditional epistemologist works with “philosophical cases” (that is, cases where particular utterances stand in for general propositions of CS) instead of “everyday cases” (in which particular utterances do *not* stand in for general propositions of CS) because, on the traditional view, “[t]hese [i.e., philosophical] cases, as opposed to those of daily life, are primary; the cases of daily life are somehow less fundamental than philosophical cases” (NTE, 232).

Thus, although he is a plain man reacting as a plain man would, the skeptic is concerned exclusively with philosophical utterances, either the general propositions of CS_{ph} or particular everyday utterances that are taken as instantiations of those general propositions and are therefore themselves understood as appealing not to K_{pl}, but to K_{ph}. The skeptic is not concerned with plain utterances *qua* plain, i.e., *qua* relative and context-bound; rather, to the extent that he is concerned with plain utterances at all, he is concerned only with their putative philosophical-epistemological ground, i.e., their supposed rootedness in CS_{ph}.

Clarke’s skeptic is an external-world skeptic whose arguments turn, like Descartes’s, on presenting skeptical scenarios. But as Clarke points out, “[a] major complication” for the skeptic “is that skeptical doubts, too, are equivocal, plain and philosophical.” This is, Clarke says, “a fact to be reckoned with only at some cost” (LS, 763, ¶32). Just as CS_{ph} and CS_{pl} differ in that the former appeals to K_{ph} and the latter to K_{pl}, so *plain* skepticism (SK_{pl}) differs from

philosophical skepticism (SK_{ph}) on account of the sort of knowing that is challenged.[1] And just as every proposition of CS_{ph} has a plain verbal twin, so too does every claim and argument of SK_{ph} have a typographically identical plain version. The "cost" of reckoning with the existence of SK_{pl} is borne first of all by the skeptic, but ultimately, on the Pyrrhonian Reading, by all of us. For now, though, let's focus on how the equivocality of skeptical scenarios impacts the skeptic's 'cross-examination' of CS_{ph}.

Consider the following general question.

(Q_1) Can we ever know$_{ph}$ we're awake, not dreaming? (Cf. LS, 767, ¶53.)

In order to qualify as a genuine response to *this* question and not to the typographically identical question understood as plain, the CS response must itself appeal to K_{ph}, as in the following:

(CS_{ph}) We can know$_{ph}$ we're not dreaming. (Cf. LS, 768, ¶55.)

Let's imagine this claim being supported by the following supposition:

(S) I know *right now* that I'm not dreaming. (Cf. LS, 756, ¶7; 758, ¶14a.)

Confronted with the dogmatic statement of CS and its supposed support, the skeptic remains unconvinced. In keeping with the original meaning of *skeptikos*—one who looks, examines, or

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[1] A reader of earlier material of mine on this topic pointed out to me that Clarke does not explicitly allow for the category of SK_{pl}. This indicates, it was suggested, that for Clarke there is no such thing as SK_{pl}. I disagree. It is certainly true that all references to 'skepticism' in LS refer to SK_{ph}, just as all references to 'philosophy' refer to traditional philosophy. But just as not all philosophy is 'traditional' even by Clarke's own lights (consider: even Moore is a philosopher—cf. LS, 758, ¶12; 769, ¶63), so too, I take it, is not all skepticism 'philosophical.' I find it exegetically unproblematic—indeed, enlightening—to extrapolate the category of SK_{pl} from Clarke's numerous references to "plain skeptical possibilities" (LS, 764, ¶35; 767, ¶51; 768, ¶57; 769, ¶¶62–3), not to mention from the passage just quoted in the main body of the text: "skeptical doubts... are equivocal, plain and philosophical" (LS, 763, ¶32). What could this mean if not that there is indeed such a thing as SK_{pl}? (This is not, of course, to say that SK_{pl} necessarily has the same import, scope, or significance as does SK_{ph}.)

inquires—the skeptic continues the investigation (cf. PH, 1.1–3). He poses what Clarke calls an "epistemic possibility" (P_e).

> (P_e) All this now might turn out to be a dream: I might wake up later in different surroundings, remembering what had really happened in the past, and *discover* I had just been dreaming. (LS, 764, ¶36)

The skeptic raises this possibility in an attempt to establish his skeptical conclusion, which is the denial of CS_{ph}.

> (SK_{ph}) We can*not* know$_{ph}$ that we're not dreaming. (Cf. LS, 765, ¶39.)

Clarke argues that P_e is either plain or, if meant philosophically, self-refuting in relation to SK_{ph}. What the skeptic has initially done, he argues, is the same thing that I've imagined the defender of CS_{ph} doing in putting forward S: he has adduced a plain proposition of the sort uttered by the lecturing physiologist (LS, 756, ¶7) or the experimenter with soporifics (LS, 758, ¶14a), a Clarkean figure we've not encountered yet. The experimenter with soporifics, having earlier administered a dose to himself, writes in his records,

> I've been asleep but am wide awake now, rested and feeling normal. *I know,* of course, *that I'm not dreaming now*, but I remember, while asleep, actually thinking I was really awake, not dreaming. (LS, 758, ¶14a)

The only difference in this respect between the skeptic and the defender of CS_{ph} is that, whereas the defender of CS_{ph} claims knowledge of our mental state (dreaming or awake?) in the present, the skeptic is presuming the possibility of acquiring knowledge of our mental state in the future, knowledge that would render S false. But P_e is intended by the skeptic, at least ultimately, to undermine not S, understood plainly, but rather CS_{ph} understood as a response to Q_1. The

question is whether we can *ever* know we're awake, not dreaming. CS_{ph} answers, "Yes, we can"—and so does P_e, albeit plainly.

If P_e is understood as plain, then while it does present a plain skeptical challenge to plain S, it fails to challenge CS_{ph} on account of "mix[ing] unmixable types" (LS, 764, ¶33). (More on this idea in 5.1.2.) If P_e is understood as philosophical, then it refutes SK_{ph}, for it is built into the scenario that we *can* "wake up later in different surroundings, remembering what had really happened in the past, and *discover* [we] had just been dreaming" (LS, 764, ¶36). P_e is incompatible with SK_{ph}, then, because the same possibility that called into question S (i.e., "All this now might turn out to be a dream") would apply to our purported *future* knowledge just as much as it applies to the purported *present* knowledge claimed in S. As Clarke puts it, "[C]atching himself out, [the skeptic] turns on P_e and asks (pointedly) how... we could *know later* that we were awake *then*, not just dreaming" (LS, 765, ¶39).[2] Such purported knowledge cannot be a case of K_{ph}, for K_{ph} requires invulnerability, and the knowledge imagined in philosophical P_e would clearly be vulnerable (at least, as vulnerable as the purported knowledge claimed in S).

> Philosophical P_e collapses because, in brief, the overriding epistemological characteristic of a constitution of the standard type is that knowing requires invulnerability. Philosophical P_e, therefore, of necessity, calls in question (negates) the very knowing it presupposes. (LS, 765, ¶41)

We'll discuss what Clarke means by "a constitution of the standard type" in 5.2.1. For present purposes, it suffices to know that, according to Clarke, human beings are able to possess philosophical knowledge and deploy philosophical concepts only if they have such a

[2] This sort of challenge to dreaming scenarios is anticipated, though in a far less conceptually sophisticated form, by G.E. Moore (Moore 1959, 248–9).

"constitution."

5.1.2 The Immunity of Plain Knowing

P_e fails as a counter-possibility to CS_{ph}, Clarke argues, because it "mix[es] unmixable types" (LS, 764, ¶33). I would like to pause for a moment to discuss this important idea, which plays a pivotal role in the debate between Dissolutionist and Pyrrhonian readings of LS. It is closely related to Clarke's claims regarding the 'immunity' of K_{pl}.

K_{pl}, Clarke argues in the opening paragraphs of LS, is "immune (oversimplifying slightly) from skeptical assault" (LS, 754, ¶4a): it "is secure against outside undermining," meaning undermining from outside the plain, i.e., from philosophy (LS, 767, ¶51). In NTE, Clarke claims that "what the plain man 'would say' in ordinary life is not vulnerable to philosophy" (NTE, 147). Knowledge-claims "can be absolutely secure when inside elaborate everyday circumstances" (LS, 756, ¶8). Removing the 'oversimplification,' Clarke writes that

> The skeptic's doubts notoriously fare badly if "implained," that is, *if* raised *inside* these contexts, without "changing the subject," *directly* against the epistemic, to show such claims unequivocally wrong. To remove the oversimplification, it is skeptical doubts so raised, with this intention, from which the plain is immune, for these implained doubts are ignorable—either absurd, irrelevant, or out of place. (LS, 755, ¶4a)

Relatedly, Clarke tells us that the plain and the philosophical are "unmixable types... [T]o raise a pure question... and allow an affirmative settlement by" a plain proposition—in our example, to allow plain S to 'settle' philosophical Q_1 affirmatively—"is confusing the stakes, to pay off a debt of a million dollars with a million lire" (LS, 764, ¶33).

What are we to make of these claims? We saw in 1.2 that Myles Burnyeat interprets

Clarke as advocating what Burnyeat dubs "insulation" (Burnyeat 1984/7, 316–7): the view that the plain and the philosophical are mutually 'insulated' from each other such that the one can have no direct bearing on the other. Sometimes insulation is understood in even stronger terms, as "suggest[ing] that plain knowing is invulnerable to philosophical attack at all" (Hamawaki 2014, 193 fn. 2), i.e., that there cannot be even an indirect bearing of the one on the other. However 'insulation' is understood, many commentators have followed Burnyeat in using this language despite that Clarke himself does not do so.[3] Clarke's term is 'immunity,' which has importantly different metaphorical connotations. Let's look closely at what Clarke actually says regarding K_{pl}'s immunity.

1. "The skeptic's doubts notoriously fare badly if 'implained.'"

The skeptic, we know, raises doubts regarding CS_{ph}. Thus, those doubts are themselves intended philosophically. As we saw in 4.1.3, to 'implain' philosophical utterances is to misunderstand or misrepresent them. It is no mark against the skeptic if his doubts "fare badly" when misunderstood or misrepresented. (It is another matter entirely, of course, if the skeptic is *unable* to present a legitimate counter-possibility that is not plain. In that case, the skeptic himself is, as it were, doomed to 'implain' his own arguments.)

2. "The skeptic's doubts notoriously fare badly... *if* raised *inside* these [i.e., plain, everyday] contexts, without 'changing the subject,' *directly* against the epistemic, to show such claims unequivocally wrong."

The skeptic might, by raising his doubts within a plain or everyday context, succeed in "changing the subject"—e.g., turning a physiology lecture into a philosophy lecture. Short of that, however, his philosophical doubts cannot "*directly*" undermine "the epistemic." I take it

[3] See UD, 132–3, 173, 209, 348; Bett 1993, 374–6; Ribeiro 2006, 29; Gascoigne 2007, 8; Marušić 2008, 62 ff.; Hamawaki 2014, 193. See also Wong 2002.

that by “the epistemic,” Clarke means “the known.” In the context of ¶4a, he must mean what is known plainly.

Clarke imagines Descartes confronting the experimenter with soporifics.

> Descartes should not, as though a colleague, enter into the experiment on soporifics, asking *philosophically*, “But *how can* you *know* that you’re not dreaming now? Mightn’t it be that...?”, and conclude that the experimenter’s records were erroneous. The experimenter’s records are not to be assessed in this way: Descartes’s querying is out of place, a changing of the subject. (LS, 765, ¶42)

It is “a changing of the subject” because Descartes is responding to the experimenter’s plain knowledge-claim (“*I know,* of course, *that I’m not dreaming now*”) as if it were a philosophical knowledge-claim. His skeptical challenge is “out of place” because, in posing that challenge, he is not acting in the capacity of “a colleague” to the experimenter, in the sense of being a fellow scientist engaged in a shared ‘paradigm-bound’ practice, in Kuhn’s sense. If Descartes *were* able to change the subject—if we were able to bring the experimenter to the point of interpreting his knowledge-claim philosophically—then his challenge would “*directly*” undermine the experimenter’s knowledge-claim (now understood philosophically). Otherwise, Descartes’s challenge can at best undermine the experimenter’s knowledge-claim only indirectly. We can see how this might work by recalling the traditional picture of the relation between CS and the everyday (Figure 9). If everyday epistemic practices depend for their legitimacy on the legitimacy of CS_{ph}, then Descartes can indirectly undermine the experimenter’s K_{pl} by undermining CS_{ph}. In ¶4a, Clarke allows even for *this* possibility. What Descartes *cannot* do is to raise his philosophical question *directly* against the experimenter’s plain knowledge-claim, to show the claim to be “unequivocally wrong,” i.e., wrong even *qua* a plain, context-bound claim. At most, Descartes will be able to show that, “viewed from an *absolutely objective* perspective,”

the experimenter's K_{pl} is "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only" (LS, 767, ¶51).

3. "... it is skeptical doubts so raised, with this intention, from which the plain is immune."

What Clarke is saying, then, is that K_{pl} is "immune" from philosophical-skeptical doubts that are raised *within* plain, everyday contexts with the intention of showing *directly* that K_{pl} as such is *unequivocally wrong*, i.e., wrong even *qua* plain. Since the "subject" has not been "changed"—in which case the experimenter's plain knowledge-claim would be transformed, as in Stroud's "representative case[s]" of knowledge, into an instantiation of a general proposition of CS_{ph} and would therefore cease to function for the purposes of the inquiry as a case of K_{pl}—the experimenter's knowledge-claim remains an example of K_{pl}. As plain, it has a plain kind of epistemic authority. The plain may be, as the tradition would have it, subordinate to the philosophical; it may be that philosophical reflection can reveal that K_{pl} is "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only"; but it *cannot*, even on the tradition's own conception of the relation between the plain and the philosophical, show that K_{pl} is not knowing in *any* sense of the word.

That this is true even by the tradition's own lights is evident if we consider the simplified case of the airplane-spotters, discussed in Chapter 2. The airplane-spotters are supposed to represent the traditional view of the plain, the philosophical, and their relation. The assertion of the airplane-spotter in Figure 2, who, in accordance with the manual, identifies aircraft *x* as being of type *A* on the basis of its exhibiting features *b*, *c*, and *f*, is immune to undermining based on the pure (philosophical) possibility that aircraft *x* is one of the antiquated types that also exhibits features *b*, *c*, and *f* (along with some other feature or features not included in the wartime identification procedure). The reason it is, *qua* plain, immune from such challenges is that, properly understood, the airplane-spotter's assertion, "Aircraft *x* is of type *A*," says, means,

implies *more* than would its pure twin: it says, means, implies that according to the identification procedure outlined in the manual, aircraft x is to be identified as being of type A. This remains true *even if*, from a purely objective standpoint, aircraft x is *not* in fact of type A. On the traditional view, immunity is a consequence of restrictedness. If a claim is not intended to be understood as reflecting the absolutely objective facts of the matter, then that claim is not necessarily falsified by pointing to a possibility that, if realized, would demonstrate its failure to reflect the absolutely objective facts of the matter.

4. "... these implained doubts are ignorable—either absurd, irrelevant, or out of place."

Thus, such skeptical doubts are ignorable. They are "absurd" if understood plainly. They are "irrelevant" to the present inquiry if they trigger a change of subject. And they are "out of place" if they are intended to undermine plain utterances *qua* plain. K_{pl} is, as such, immune from outside undermining. To raise a pure (philosophical) counter-possibility against a plain utterance meant as plain is to "mix unmixable types." Pure counter-possibilities have no tendency to undermine plain utterances *qua* plain. To mix these "unmixable types" is to hopelessly confuse matters, to attempt "to pay off a debt of a million dollars with a million lire." It is due in part to failures to distinguish between plain and philosophical claims that philosophers such as Moore think to "pay off" the skeptical debt so cheaply. (One million Italian lire is, as of December 1, 2016, equivalent to 548.84 USD.) I would note, furthermore, that different currencies, though not equivalent, are exchangeable and that the fate (worth) of one can have a bearing on the fate (worth) of the other. One cannot *directly*—that is, unit-for-unit—"mix" dollars and lire, as if they were equivalent. Even so, the two currencies are nonetheless mix*able*, for we know how many lire equal a dollar. The outstanding question concerns the *relation* between the two, as well as the question of their respective worths (though that too must

be expressed relationally).

5.1.3 The Skeptic's Nonepistemic Possibility

Let's return to the skeptic's cross-examination of CS_{ph}. Having recognized the inadequacy of plain P_e as a skeptical response to CS_{ph}, the skeptic, Clarke argues, advances a new counter-possibility, one that is "distilled from P_e." It is the "*nonepistemic possibility* (P_{ne})" (LS, 766, ¶¶45–6).

> (P_{ne}) It might be that we're now asleep, dreaming.... There is no implication, pro or con, that we could (ever) find out. (LS, 766, ¶46)

Unlike philosophical P_e, philosophical P_{ne} is not overtly self-refuting in relation to SK_{ph}, for it does not explicitly presuppose the possibility of knowing that we are awake, not dreaming. Clarke's inclusion of the qualification "pro or con" indicates that, since it does not *deny* that we can know whether we're now asleep or dreaming, P_{ne} is not 'nonepistemic' in the sense of ruling out the knowing presupposed in P_e; it is 'nonepistemic' only in the sense that it excludes any implication that we *can* (or can't) know whether we're now asleep or dreaming: it implies nothing one way or the other. It is, we might say, an *agnostic* possibility. In that sense, it is an improvement over P_e. Nonetheless, Clarke argues that, unlike P_e, P_{ne} suffers from an underdevelopment that, if rectified, would render P_{ne} no less self-refuting in relation to SK_{ph} than plain P_e is.

P_e presents a fully realized and conceivable possibility: the possibility that we might, at T_2, wake up and discover that we had, at T_1 (the present), been dreaming even though we explicitly believe (and claim to know) at T_1 that we are awake. In itself, however, P_{ne} presents

only a half-realized (and therefore only half-conceivable) possibility. To see this, imagine that the defender of CS_{ph} responds to P_{ne} by asking, "How so?" The idea that we might literally be asleep, dreaming, for our entire lives, without ever waking up, is a very different sort of possibility from the more ordinary one raised in P_e. It calls for explanation.

It seems to me that, to understand Clarke's arguments in this stretch of text, the crucial question to ask about P_{ne} is what we are to make in such a scenario of the ordinary, everyday experience of waking up (or seeming to wake up) and knowing that we're no longer asleep—precisely the possibility envisaged in P_e. It seems not only that we *do* have such experiences, but also that it is because of just those experiences that we have the concept 'Dream' in the first place. Whatever scenario is imagined in P_{ne}, it cannot be one that is properly describable using our ordinary concept 'Dream'—at least not using it in an ordinary way. As it figures in P_{ne}, 'Dream' is something like what Cavell calls a "projection" of a word or concept into a new or novel context.[4] As Clarke puts it, in imagining P_{ne} conceivable the skeptic is "drawing on ordinary, everyday possibilities and judging that they could have unusual application" (LS, 766, ¶47).[5] The projected concept, though, is still a *plain* concept. As such, it carries its plainness with it into the new scenario. In particular, it carries with it the possibility of knowing that we are awake, not dreaming. There is, Clarke thinks, a 'knowability requirement' built into the (plain) concept 'Dream.'[6] To be sure, P_{ne} does not require, as does P_e, knowability-*by-us*; but it

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[4] See Cavell 1979, Ch. 7.

[5] In fact, Clarke claims that this is true in finding P_e conceivable as well, for it is "unusual" to apply the concept 'Dream' to a stretch of experience that we take to be one of being awake. But P_{ne} represents a still *more* unusual application of the concept.

[6] Clarke refers not to a 'knowability requirement,' but to an "epistemic requirement" (LS, 767, ¶50). The term 'knowability requirement,' however, is standard in the secondary literature on Clarke. It appears in Stroud's original comments on LS, from 1972, which were published in UHK. The full term does not appear in SPS, but the portions of Ch. 7 of SPS that descend from Stroud's initial comments on LS contain numerous references to "knowability."

does, Clarke thinks, require knowability. Thus, if fully developed, P_{ne} is, like P_e, both plain and self-refuting as a counter-possibility to CS_{ph}.

The claim that 'Dream' has a knowability requirement built into it is the most debated and, I think, least understood part of LS.[7] Let's see what Clarke says about the "covert but unavoidable epistemic requirement" built into P_{ne} (LS, 767, ¶50).

As we've seen, compared to P_e, P_{ne} is severely (perhaps fatally) underdeveloped. Its underdevelopment consists in its failing to specify a scenario in which we might conceivably be asleep and dreaming our whole lives without *ever* waking up (i.e., without ever coming to *know* that we were/are asleep and dreaming). The skeptic does not, however, rest content with raising P_{ne}. Rather, as Clarke puts it, "[s]keptics reveal their true conception [of P_{ne}] by the character of the examples endlessly manufactured to reinforce P_{ne}" (LS, 767, ¶49). Clarke considers two such examples. The first is "Descartes's Evil Demon, the arch outsider," who, Clarke says, "is so natural-seeming because he fills the shoes built into our conception [of 'Dream']: he knows in fact what must, as I suggest we conceive of P_{ne}, be *knowable*" (LS, 766, ¶48).[8] What must be knowable is our "*real* surroundings" while we're dreaming. In conceiving of P_{ne}, we "tak[e] for granted that these [real] environs could be observed, known to be real, by outsiders, if any, in

Presumably, it is Stroud's usage that is the source of the term's dominance in the secondary literature.

[7] At the APA symposium where Clarke presented LS, the commentators were Stroud and Keith Lehrer. Both rejected the knowability requirement. Stroud's comments are contained in Essay 3 of UHK and were incorporated into Ch. 7 of SPS. Lehrer's comments never made it to print, nor have they survived. In personal correspondence with me, he indicated that his response to LS turned on ideas he had developed a year earlier in his article "Why Not Scepticism?" He argued that the 'Googols' scenario presented in that paper is conceivable yet fails to satisfy the knowability requirement. More recently, Arata Hamawaki has attempted to defend the knowability requirement by linking it, in a Kantian–McDowellian way, to the nature of judgment via a transcendental argument (Hamawaki 2014).

[8] In Descartes, the Dreaming Argument and the Evil-Deceiver Argument are separate and designed to serve distinct functions. Descartes thought that the Dreaming Argument was sufficient in itself to establish external-world skepticism; the Evil Deceiver was introduced in order to call into question knowledge that Descartes thought the Dreaming Argument left standing (e.g., mathematical knowledge).

appropriate positions" (LS, 766, ¶47). The second example Clarke considers is "an updated Evil Demon": "we are asked whether we cannot easily imagine that a physiologist using advanced neurological techniques might, by appropriate cortical stimulation, have put us to sleep and produced this very real-like nonveridical 'experience' in us" (LS, 767, ¶49). In these cases, 'Dream' remains conceivable *because* it remains conceivable how our dreaming fits into the larger worldly frame of 'the Real.'

This touches on an important point. For Clarke, the relevant contrast to 'Dream'—its "antithesis"—is not 'Awake,' but "the real" (LS, 768, ¶59). The 'Dream'–'Awake' contrast is amenable to being interpreted as distinguishing between kinds of *mental states*. It is at least potentially, as I want to put it, 'subjectivistic.' The 'Dream'–'Real' contrast, on the other hand, more strongly suggests a distinction between *sources of experience*. Understood this way, the 'Dream'–'Awake' contrast might be negotiable *even if* it is deemed that there is no metaphysical connection between 'Awake' and 'Real'—though, to be sure, this would constitute an unusual (noncommonsensical) conception of 'Awake.' Commonsensically, we think that if we are awake then we are, unlike when we are dreaming, in touch with the real; we commonsensically believe that the real is the source of waking experience. But as I've argued repeatedly above, the 'real' as the absolutely objective state of affairs is, even commonsensically, a *philosophical* concept. It is the metaphysical (commonsense-realist) counterpart to the epistemology implicit in the propositions of CS_{ph}. If we allow that it is possible that we are like Hilary Putnam's brains-in-vats, who are *ex hypothesi* cut off from the Real but who nonetheless successfully distinguish between dreaming and waking, then we must allow that it is possible for our (plain) concept 'Awake' to come apart from the (philosophical) concept 'Real,' where philosophical concepts are absolutely objective and plain concepts are at best only relatively objective. We must allow

for the possibility that waking-experience can be successfully distinguished from dream-experience *without* implying in any way that waking-experience is therefore experience of objective reality. ‘Dream’ and ‘Awake’ would then be, as Putnam puts it, concepts “in the image” or concepts of “vat-English,” the language spoken by denizens of the vat (Putnam 1981, 14).[9]

In both the case of the Evil Demon and that of the futuristic physiologist, the concept ‘Dream’ is given *flesh*—it is rendered full-bodied—by virtue of the contribution of the contextual (non-rule-like) dimension to the meaning of utterances such as “(I know that) I’m awake” and “(I know that) I’m dreaming.” The effect of filling in the bare possibility of P_{ne} is, as I should like to put it, to open up an *imaginative space* within which we can contextualize ‘Dream,’ thereby rendering it full-bodied in meaning. In order to grasp its full-bodied meaning, we must understand the imagined context in which it is being used. Hence the need for the skeptic to “endlessly [manufacture]” “examples... to reinforce P_{ne}” (LS, 767, ¶49). But if ‘Dream’ as it is used in P_{ne} is a context-bound concept, then it is plain—indeed, it is everyday. As we saw in 5.1.2, the plain as such is immune from philosophical-skeptical undermining. *Qua* plain, the concept ‘Dream’ is of the sort that we *can* $know_{pl}$ that we’re $awake_{pl}$, not $dreaming_{pl}$. Indeed, unless there is a ‘special reason’ to doubt that I’m currently $awake_{pl}$, then for Clarke I *am* (fallibly) justified *right now* in claiming to $know_{pl}$ that I’m $awake_{pl}$, not $dreaming_{pl}$. But what exactly is it that I’m justified in claiming to $know_{pl}$? It can’t be that I $know_{pl}$ that, as $awake_{pl}$, I’m in touch with the $Real_{ph}$. That is to mix unmixable conceptual types. At most, I would be justified in claiming to $know_{pl}$ that I’m in touch with the $Real_{pl}$. But *our* CS conception of the Real is philosophical, i.e., absolutely objective. Or rather, our CS C-conception of the Real is

[9] Note that Putnam never ‘envats’ the concept ‘Real.’ I argue in 7.3.2 that this is a loose thread with which we can, with surprising ease, unravel the entirety of Putnam’s anti-skeptical strategy in “Brains In A Vat.”

philosophical in the sense that we commonsensically believe that there is available to us a context-free concept of 'the Real' that is, *qua* context-free, an absolutely objective concept. Not all uses of 'Real' in everyday life employ this context-free concept, but according to CS_{ph} we *can* $know_{ph}$ that we are $awake_{ph}$, not $dreaming_{ph}$, and that we are therefore in touch with the $Real_{ph}$. The idea, then, is that even if our concept of the Real—the concept we *actually* use, or the concept as we actually use it—is *always plain*, our C-concept of the Real remains philosophical. That is, even when we *think* we're referring to the $Real_{ph}$—such as when we're responding to philosophical-skeptical questions—we are *in fact* referring to the $Real_{pl}$. This is just the same sort of mistake that the skeptic makes in presenting his scenarios, according to Clarke.

The plainness of 'Dream' as it figures in P_e was demonstrated by its presupposing (plain) knowability. The plainness of 'Dream' as it figures in P_{ne} is importantly different in that it presupposes not (plain) knowledge that is necessarily in principle available to *us*, but (plain) knowledge that at least in principle must be available to *someone*, say, the futuristic physiologist with her envatted brains. In that case, the concept 'Dream' as it figures in P_{ne} would be a projection of the plain concept 'Dream' into a context occupied by the futuristic physiologist. Perhaps *we* can't or never will $know_{pl}$ whether we're awake or dreaming in *this* contextual sense, but the physiologist *will* be able to $know_{pl}$. These concepts, however, are not *our* (commonsensical) concepts as *we* understand them, i.e., our C-concepts 'Dream' and 'Awake.' Neither, for that matter, would 'Dream' as used by the physiologist be any normal sort of everyday (plain) concept of 'Dream,' for we do not normally project 'Dream' into a context in which it is contrasted by a state of being 'Awake' in the sense of *not* being an envatted brain whose 'experiences' are fed to it by a futuristic physiologist. Even so, we *can* imagine that such a scenario obtains for us, right now. We *can* project these concepts into the physiologist's

context and use them accordingly. Thus projected, the scenario presented to reinforce P_{ne} is "readily imaginable" and so "does serve to reinforce P_{ne}" (LS, 767, ¶49). Clarke concludes that "what plain P_e and P_{ne} suggest could happen, *could*, indeed, just possibly" (LS, 768, ¶57). The skeptic is forced to abandon philosophical P_e and P_{ne}—to throw them "in the trash can" (LS, 765, ¶39)—for they are self-refuting as part of a skeptical rejoinder to CS_{ph}; but both plain P_e and plain P_{ne} remain to threaten our K_{pl} (LS, 767, ¶50).

5.1.4 The Knowability Requirement

It is important to see that the knowability requirement as it figures in the skeptic's inquiries refers to K_{pl}, not to K_{ph}. When Clarke writes that, in imagining P_{ne} conceivable, "I'm taking for granted that these [i.e., my] environs could be observed, known to be real, by outsiders, if any, in appropriate positions" (LS, 766, ¶47), he is referring to *plain* knowledge and the *plain* concept 'Real': "P_{ne}, as I conceive it, is, of course, plain: the knowability by outsiders of what's real is quite obviously so" (LS, 766, ¶48; cf. LS, 768, ¶59). The skeptic is "drawing on ordinary, everyday possibilities and judging that they could have unusual application" (LS, 766, ¶47). It is true, as we'll see in 5.2.2, that Clarke does briefly consider the possibility of philosophical concepts satisfying a philosophical knowability requirement. But the knowability requirement is not, as such, concerned with philosophical knowing. Indeed, virtually all references to the requirement in LS have in view plain, not philosophical, knowability. Thus, Arata Hamawaki's defense of the knowability requirement—insofar as it is intended as a defense of Clarke's view—evinces a misunderstanding, for, unless I'm very much mistaken, Hamawaki implicitly holds that to defend the knowability requirement just is to defend the *philosophical*

knowability of a *philosophical* concept of “reality itself” (Hamawaki 2014, 223). At the very least, he does not note the prototypically Clarkean ambiguity in the concept of ‘knowability.’

It seems to me that a similar misunderstanding is at work in Stroud’s rejection of the knowability requirement. Clarke asks whether there is any conceivable P_x, a “leaner possibility... that lack[s] this epistemic requirement” in the sense that “outside knowability” would be “irrelevant” to the conceivability of the scenario (LS, 766, ¶48). Clarke writes:

> I feel confident... that it is inconceivable that I could now be asleep, dreaming, *if* no outsider could know my real environs because in the same boat, for the same reason, because he, too, could not know he was not asleep, dreaming. Does Descartes’s possibility even *seem* to make sense, if we ask ourselves how the Evil Demon, or God, could know that he, too, wasn’t dreaming—and allow that neither could? (LS, 766, ¶48)

To this, Stroud responds:

> *Must* we suppose that the evil demon, or some being lurking somewhere in the wings, knows, or even could know, what is really going on? Again, it seems to me the answer is ‘No’. And that is because, when the question arises of how or whether the demon or the physiologist does know what’s really going on, I think I can concede that he does not, or even could not know, without in any way threatening the intelligibility of the possibility I am trying to conceive of. If *I* could be in such a situation then I don’t know now that I’m not being fooled by a demon or a physiologist, and if *they* could be in a similar situation (as they could) then they don’t know either. So we are all in the same boat... Such stories serve to make the possibilities dramatically real, especially to the more recalcitrant, but it does not seem essential that the demon or the physiologist (or anyone) be thought to be actually immune to the kinds of doubts we manage to raise about our own position. In fact, granting that the possibilities, and therefore, the doubts, are relevant to oneself seems enough to give the whole game away. (UHK, 35–6; cf. SPS, 270–2)

If I’m right, however, Stroud has fundamentally misunderstood what Clarke is saying. He reads the passage from Clarke just quoted as if Clarke were necessarily saying the following (clarified by my inserted subscripts):

> I feel confident... that it is inconceivable that I could now be asleep$_{ph}$, dreaming$_{ph}$, *if* no outsider could know$_{ph}$ my real environs because in the same boat, for the same reason, because he, too, could not know$_{ph}$ he was not asleep$_{ph}$, dreaming$_{ph}$.

If we're talking about K_{ph} and Dream$_{ph}$, as Stroud seems to think, then I think Clarke would agree with him: It is *not* the case that we must "suppose that the evil demon" knows$_{ph}$ "what is really going on," where 'really' refers to the Real$_{ph}$. In *that* respect, the evil demon is in the same boat as we are. But the evil demon is *not* in the same boat as we are with respect to *our* K_{pl} and *our* plain concept 'Dream.' Clarke's point is that the very concept 'Dream' makes sense only if it can be contrasted with 'being awake' in the sense of 'being in touch with the real.' The same holds true, he is saying, even for "the Evil Demon, or God." This is a point about how concepts work. Clarke seems to be saying that even God—as far as we can conceive of Her standpoint at all, at least—could not conceive of a scenario involving the concept 'Dream' where the meaning of 'Dream' swings free of any concept of what 'not-Dreaming' is. That would be like having a concept of a Fake *X* in the absence of any concept of a Real *X*: the concept *X*, and hence the concept of a Fake *X*, would lack all meaning.

Some commentators have found in Clarke's insistence on the knowability requirement a commitment to verificationism (UD, 196; Gascoigne 2007, 19; Hamawaki 2014, 211–2). If what I've been saying is right, however, the knowability requirement on concepts is grounded in Austinian-style meta-CS *description* of everyday epistemic practices. It is not a theory or principle of meaning—certainly not one like the verification principle, which (at least in many cases) is treated axiomatically.[10] To be sure, there is a sort of 'verificationist sheen' to Clarke's

[10] "According to the logical positivists any scientific use of language must be the utterance either of a tautology or of an empirical statement"—yet it was only late in the game that positivists came around to asking "what... is the status of the verification principle itself?" (Urmson 1956, 168). I take it that the widespread lack of critical engagement

thought, as there is to Austin's, but, like Austin, Clarke is not a verificationist, nor does the knowability requirement commit him to verificationism.[11] If it entails a commitment to any philosophical view, it seems to me that it would be not verificationism, but contrastivism—though I'll not explore that possibility further here.[12]

We've now seen Clarke's account of the nature of the skeptic's inquiry. His conclusion is that the skeptic fails to present a full-bodied (conceivable) skeptical scenario of the familiar Cartesian sort that is not plain. As plain, these scenarios are unable to support SK_{ph}. With respect to the views of the relation between CS and the everyday discussed in 4.1, we and the skeptic remain predominantly within the traditional view (Figure 9)—although it is significant that, with the knowability requirement, Clarke's arguments incorporate an appreciation of the significance of the Austinian view (Figure 10). Clarke has shown that the skeptic has failed to mount a legitimate, non-self-refuting challenge to CS_{ph}: he has failed "to show CS_{ph} as given to excessive claims." The question, then, is this: "Does CS_{ph}, therefore, remain intact?" (LS, 767, ¶52). The skeptic has been "disarmed" in his assault on CS_{ph} (LS, 767, ¶51), but does that mean that "in his assault" he was "really empty-handed" from the start, unable to inflict *any* damage upon CS_{ph} (LS, 767, ¶52)? In other words, does the story end here?

Clarke's answer, of course, is "No." As we've already seen, he concludes that "skeptical

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with the principle—particularly regarding its susceptibility to reflexive self-dissolution—is indicative of the view that the principle did not require justification, i.e., that it could be treated as an axiom.

[11] Adam Leite argues that Austin does not embrace verificationism, for Austin did not think the claim (e.g.) that we *can* distinguish between waking and dreaming "needed sophisticated philosophical defense" of the sort provided by verificationist theories of meaning. His strategy, rather, was "in part to remind readers of the relevant facts," facts that "'we all know.'" Thus, "[t]his strand of Austin's argument is... ultimately empirical." Furthermore, it "is an instance of a style of argumentation that we all regard as unexceptionable in ordinary life and science" (Leite 2011, 81–2). Whether or not this is true of Austin, I believe it *is* true of Clarke. For an opposing view on Austin and verificationism, see UD, 160–1.

[12] On contrastivism, Blaauw (ed.) 2013, esp. Essay 5.

doubts, properly construed, reveal that CS_{ph} *and* its skeptical denial should both be erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29). In §4 of LS, he has shown that philosophical P_e and P_{ne} should be erased from the books; but that is not enough to show that SK_{ph} as such should be erased from the books, let alone that CS_{ph} should be also. There is much left to be done, then, in §5 of LS.

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Before turning to §5, I want to say a few words about the final paragraph of §4. Here is the paragraph in its entirety:

> It is time to rectify a misimpression, one though, if what I've been saying is correct, which no longer matters. I emphasized that the skeptic assaults CS_{ph} directly, not the plain. If successful, however, he indirectly and partially undermines the plain also. He would have revealed, if successful, the plain to be at best like the humanoids' [i.e., the airplane-spotters'] restricted. Plain knowing would then be, viewed from an *absolutely objective* perspective, "knowing" in a manner of speaking only. But with the skeptic disarmed, plain knowing, including that presupposed by *plain* P_e and P_{ne}, is secure against outside undermining; hence plain knowing and *plain* skeptical possibilities need to fear only these *plain* skeptical possibilities themselves. (LS, 767, ¶51)

Clarke never tells us outright what the "misimpression" is or why it "no longer matters." I take it that the "misimpression" is one that can arise from his talk of 'immunity' and 'unmixable types': it is the misimpression that the plain–philosophical distinction rules out from the start the possibility that a skepticism that targets only the philosophical could impact the plain.[13] The misimpression, in other words, is that Clarke holds to a strong insulationism, according to which the plain and the philosophical can have no bearing on each other. Strong insulationism would render the plain invulnerable to philosophical skepticism regardless of the intelligibility or soundness of the skeptical conclusion. Hamawaki responds to this misimpression when he writes, "The distinction between plain and philosophical isn't meant to do any anti-skeptical

[13] I thank Anubav Vasudevan for helping me work through my confusion on this point.

work on its own. To view Clarke as employing it to such an end would be a serious misreading" (Hamawaki 2014, 193 fn. 2). In NTE, Clarke writes that

> I shall assume... that what the plain man 'would say' in ordinary life is not vulnerable to philosophy. I realize this assumption will be inacceptable to many philosophers. One reason for their attitude, however, is their belief that consequences follow from this assumption which in fact do not. (NTE, 147)

He never specifies what these supposed "consequences" are, but I suspect that he has in mind the 'consequence' of strong insulationism.

As we've seen repeatedly, on the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday, to undermine CS (which is, on the traditional view, philosophical) is simultaneously to undermine the everyday by robbing it of its epistemological ground. As Clarke puts it, "if successful" in his attack on CS_{ph}, the skeptic "would have revealed... [p]lain knowing [to be], viewed from an *absolutely objective* perspective, 'knowing' in a manner of speaking only." Why, then, does the misimpression no longer matter? Presumably, it's because Clarke has shown that the skeptic is *not* successful in his assault on CS_{ph}. It no longer matters because the idea of the plain being undermined from "outside" is no longer a problem: "with the skeptic disarmed, plain knowing... is secure against outside undermining." If the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday were correct, then SK_{ph} *would* undermine the everyday; but it is *not* correct.

A crucial point (which we saw in Chapter 3 and will come back to in 5.2.3) is that in order for the skeptic's assault on CS_{ph} to have been successful, it would have had to be the case that CS_{ph} were fully meaningful. For Clarke, if CS_{ph} *were* fully meaningful, then skepticism would be correct. Therefore, it is *because* CS_{ph} is not fully meaningful that the skeptic fails to show that K_{pl} is "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only."

5.2 Unanswerability and the Standard Conceptual-Human Constitution

5.2.1 The Standard Conceptual-Human Constitution

In 4.1.3, I introduced the notion of C-concepts and later began adding PH and PL subscripts to concepts such as 'Dream,' 'Awake,' and 'Real.' In the background of these conventions lies the one pivotal Clarkean idea from LS that I've not yet discussed: the notion of "a conceptual-human constitution of the standard type" (LS, 768, ¶56). Clarke introduces this idea in §3 of LS (¶20), but I've put off discussing it until now, partly in order to ease exposition and partly because it seems to me that the idea of a 'standard conceptual constitution' starts to play a crucial role in LS only now, in §5.

What is the standard conceptual-human constitution (SCHC)? Stroud calls it "a certain conception of concepts, or what might be called 'concept-use'" (UHK, 29). It seems to me, however, that it implies more than that. The SCHC is a conception (a 'picture') of the 'human constitution' as it pertains to the relations among ourselves, our concepts, and the world. It is a 'picture' of the *human epistemic standpoint*. Specifically, Clarke argues that it is *the* picture of the human epistemic standpoint that would make traditional (pure) philosophizing possible for human beings. The SCHC reflects both our traditional (commonsensical) notion of concept-use *and* our pretheoretical world-sense. Central to both is our commitment to the ideal of absolute objectivity.

We can characterize the SCHC by how it answers the following questions:

(a) Are concepts context-bound or context-free?

(b) How do concepts relate to their objects?
(c) How do we relate to concepts and their (interrelated) objects?

The SCHC answers these questions as follows (LS, 760–1, ¶¶21–3):

1. Concepts are context-free: they are "self-sufficient unit[s]," or they "retain their identity" within conceptual schemes that are themselves "self-sufficient unit[s]."
2. The objects (or domains of objects) to which concepts relate are "fully separate from concepts."
3. Human beings "are outsiders" with respect to concepts, their objects, and the relation between the two.

(*1*) To say that concepts (or the conceptual schemes to which they belong) are "self-sufficient" is to say that what they mean is fully determinable (full-bodied) even when considered in isolation from everyday contexts (the non-rule-like dimension): "Each concept or the conceptual scheme must be divorceable intact from our practices, from whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain, from elemental parts of our human nature" (LS, 760, ¶21). (*2*) To say that objects (or domains of objects) are "fully separate from concepts" is to say that, just as concepts are self-sufficient with respect to objects, so objects are self-sufficient with respect to concepts. The individuation of objects (or domains of objects) in no way depends on our concepts. Concepts and objects are isolated, independent units. They retain their meaning (concepts) or their being (objects) regardless of context, circumstance, or the practices of everyday life. (*3*) To say that human beings are "outsiders" with respect to concepts, objects, and their relations is to say that, though they're responsible for "'creating' concepts," human beings are detached "observers" who seek, "usually by means of [their] senses," to "ascertain, when possible, whether items fulfill the conditions legislated by concepts." According to this picture, human beings, "standing back detached" from both concepts and objects, attempt, "when possible," to determine whether the concepts they have (in some sense) 'created' succeed in referring to (self-sufficient) objects,

that is, objects whose being is in no way dependent on us, our practices, or our concepts (LS, 761, ¶23).

The SCHC is what Charles Guignon (one of Clarke's students, in a stretch of text explicitly indebted to Clarke) refers to as "the subject/object model of our everyday epistemic predicament" (Guignon 1983, 31), a model he associates with Descartes. The subject/object model pictures us as "subjects distinct from a world of objects about which we come to have beliefs" (Guignon 1983, 30).

> These objects exist independently of us: they are what they are regardless of our beliefs or interests. At a basic level we are subjects ascribing concepts to objects outside of us. Each concept has a determinate extension that is legislated by necessary and sufficient conditions built into the meaning of that concept. (Guignon 1983, 31)

Only the SCHC would enable us to philosophize because only such a constitution would allow us to adopt the standpoint of a detached spectator with respect to independent ("self-sufficient") concepts and objects. The alternative to the detached standpoint of the SCHC is an *engaged* standpoint, according to which objects and concepts are bound up in some way with our experiencing of them. The worry is that an engaged standpoint would render our knowledge ultimately relative, that only the detached standpoint would allow us to ask and answer pure, absolutely objective questions. Figure 12 illustrates the detached standpoint of the SCHC. The similarity to the standpoint of the airplane-spotters should, I think, be obvious.

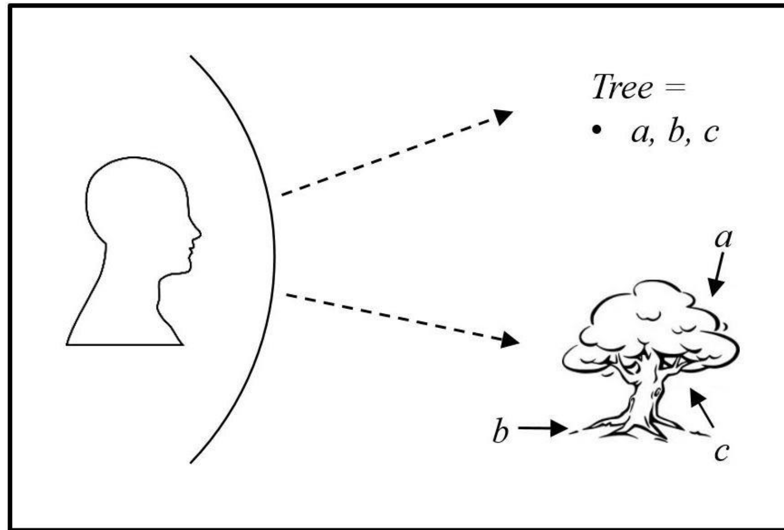

FIGURE 12: The Standard Conceptual-Human Constitution (I)

It seems that the SCHC would make it possible for us to adopt what Thomas Nagel, who like Guignon was influenced by Clarke's teaching at Berkeley, calls "the view from nowhere," meaning a view from nowhere *within the world*. The impulse to adopt the detached standpoint arises from a commitment to absolute objectivity, both ontological (there is an objective, mind-independent Reality out there) and epistemological (real, genuine knowledge involves correspondence between Reality and our self-sufficient concepts). As Stroud puts it,

> This conception of what it is like to possess concepts, and to philosophize, expresses the traditional philosopher's goal of complete or absolute objectivity. He wants to ask just how things are, not how we all think they are, or even how we in some sense must think they are. He wants to escape the restrictions and limitations of ordinary practical and scientific life and ask a question, so to speak 'from outside', about even those practical and scientific goings-on themselves. (UHK, 30)

Once it is properly understood, the SCHC can seem not just compelling, but obviously correct, at least insofar as we believe that human beings are able to ask questions and make claims that are not ultimately relative. To quote Stroud again:

> Isn't everything said in characterizing the 'standard' conception obviously true? 'Our concepts either have things falling under them or they do not.' 'Whether they do or not is a purely objective matter to be settled solely by the concept and the item.' 'If an item falls under a concept it does so whether anyone could ever know that it does or not.' And so on. These remarks seem to express the very heart of objectivity, and to deny the slightest hint of psychologism or anthropocentrism. (UHK, 37)

Though he takes issue with (*1*),[14] Michael Williams argues that "(2) and (3) seem innocuous. Indeed, they seem innocuous because almost vacuous" (UD, 198).

However compelling it might be, however, the SCHC immediately presents us with a deep problem. It is part of our conception of the world that we ourselves are *within* the world: some "items are aspects of ourselves," and some concepts "'hav[e] reference' to aspects of one's self" (LS, 761, ¶22). An inability to philosophize would prevent us not only from "inquir[ing] what the objective fact really was, to raise an issue to be settled solely by the concepts and the item"; it would also prevent us from "assess[ing] our epistemological position *objectively*... The limiting eyeglasses of the restricted would prevent us from seeing, or even trying to see, things and ourselves and they and we really are" (LS, 761–2, ¶27). It would seem that, if we are to achieve absolute objectivity, "we must get outside of ourselves" (Nagel 1986, 67), as in Figure 13.

[14] Williams also claims that Clarke does not target (*1*) for criticism. We've already seen reasons, in 4.1, to think this is false, and we'll see more in what follows. Indeed, it seems to me that (*1*) is Clarke's *primary* target.

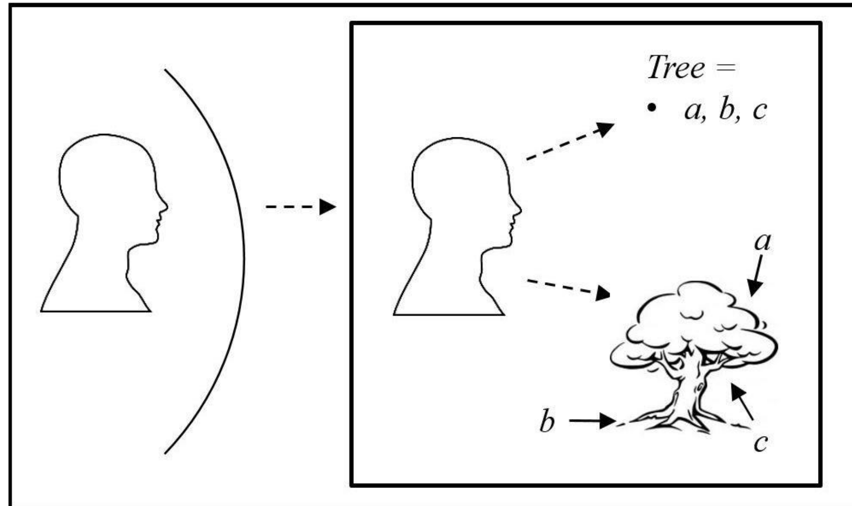

FIGURE 13: The Standard Conceptual-Human Constitution (II)

Such drastic measures are not required of the airplane-spotters, but only because they are not human beings like us: they are, as we've seen, humanoids in a "small, independent universe... who never dream or hallucinate, whose senses are unerring, and, most important, who have only the concepts presented, plus any others needed for what the humanoids do, ask, and say in this state of affairs" (LS, 760, ¶16b). For them, 'relativity' can mean only that their claims are relative to some everyday practice that restricts the meaning of their utterances such that those utterances are properly understood as belonging within the context of that practice. For them, absolute objectivity requires only that they ignore the restrictions of the everyday practice. For us, the threat of relativity goes far deeper: it opens up the possibility of a global disconnect between *appearances* (which are, or seem to be, dependent on us to some degree) and *reality* (which is absolutely independent of us). It opens the door, in other words, to full-blown external-world skepticism.

5.2.2 The Unanswerability of Philosophical Questions

As we've seen, Clarke's answer to the second half of his twofold question—"[W]hat do [the skeptic's] reflections, properly construed, reveal?" (LS, 754, ¶1)—is that "[the skeptic's] skeptical doubts, properly construed, reveal that CS_{ph} *and* its skeptical denial should both be erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29). In §4, we saw why philosophical P_e and P_{ne} should be erased from the books: if understood as intended (i.e., as philosophical), they are self-refuting as counter-possibilities to CS_{ph}; if reinterpreted as plain, they cease to count as philosophical. But that is not the same thing as showing that SK_{ph} should be erased from the books, let alone that CS_{ph} should be as well. This is particularly obvious in the case of CS_{ph}. After all, as Clarke points out, "[t]he skeptic fails, if this is correct"—that is, if the only scenarios the skeptic can come up with are plain (LS, 767, ¶50)—"to show CS_{ph} as given to excessive claims" (LS, 767, ¶52).

In 5.1, I stressed the applicability of the knowability requirement to plain concepts. For Clarke, however, the knowability requirement is a condition of conceivability full stop: it would apply, he thinks, even to concepts used by God (LS, 766, ¶48)—and surely those would not be 'plain' concepts, at least not if God is understood as being omnipotent and omnipresent. Clarke does not, then, presume straight away that only plain concepts satisfy the knowability requirement. He uses the knowability requirement as a test of the conceivability of philosophical concepts also. He writes: "Philosophical P_e or P_{ne} *is* genuine if its epistemic requirement can be met" (LS, 768, ¶54), that is, if the concepts '$Dream_{ph}$,' '$Awake_{ph}$,' and '$Real_{ph}$' can satisfy the requirement. Only then would the philosophical-skeptical possibilities be conceivable, for, as he claims in §4, there is no conceivable P_x, that "leaner possibility... that lacked this epistemic

condition" (LS, 766, ¶48). The inconceivability of any P_x does not, however, entail that there is no conceivable philosophical P and therefore no conceivable defense of SK_{ph}. It remains open, at this point, for us to try to improve upon the work of Clarke's skeptic. In §5, however, Clarke wants to show us that we cannot. The skeptic's failure to mount a genuine assault on CS_{ph} is not due to any failure of imagination or ingenuity on her part. It is a result of the fact that philosophical Q_1 is unanswerable by human beings (or, perhaps I should say, 'using human concepts'): "Q_1 can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively. The 'proposition' of CS_{ph}, that we can know we're not dreaming, can be neither affirmed nor denied" (LS, 768, ¶55). Q_1 is unanswerable, he argues, in terms of "our concept Dream," for that concept "cannot be fitted into a conceptual-human constitution of the standard type" (LS, 768, ¶56). Since only concepts that *can* be fitted into the SCHC are able to be deployed philosophically, we have no concept '$Dream_{ph}$.' Therefore, we cannot answer Q_1.

True, we can project our concept 'Dream' into many unusual contexts, but the range of projection is limited. After a certain point (perhaps one that is unique for each concept), we simply lose any grip on the concept's possible conditions of applicability. For example, what would 'Dream' mean to an omniscient and omnipresent God, as applied to God? Perhaps there can be no such concept, given omniscient omnipresence. But then again perhaps there can be. Either way, it seems to me to outstrip our capacities for 'projection' to apply *our* concept 'Dream' to such a God. Indeed, it seems to me that at the outer limits of the projective conceivability of our concept 'Dream' there stands just such a God, as the true "arch outsider" who "knows in fact what must... be *knowable*" (LS, 766, ¶48).

The root of the problem, then, lies in Q_1 itself. As we've seen, Clarke thinks that the skeptic is "innocent": he does not use "'know' in some special sense (way), as requiring of

knowing much more than is appropriate for empirical knowledge" (LS, 762, ¶30a). Rather, his use of 'know' is dictated by how the defender of CS_{ph} uses 'know.' The skeptic speaks the language of traditional philosophy only because what he is examining is itself "the product of a large piece of philosophizing" (LS, 754, ¶1). Yet there is a sense in which the defender of CS is innocent in the same way, for he too has simply found himself 'in the grip' of the philosophical conception of knowledge. He "succumbs" (NTE, 243) to that conception the moment he is confronted by Q_1.

(Q_1) Can we ever know we're awake, not dreaming?

The parallelism between the skeptic and the defender of CS_{ph} goes deeper still. Just as the skeptic's proposition of SK turns out to be plain (to be a proposition of SK_{pl}, not of SK_{ph}), so too does the defender of CS_{ph}'s proposition turn out to be plain. In other words, when the defender of CS claims that "we can know we're not dreaming," he is averring to K_{pl}, not K_{ph}. Therefore, he is not after all a defender of CS_{ph}. In both cases—that of the skeptic and of the defender of CS—their conclusions (CS and SK) inherit their plainness from the fact that their support for those conclusions are conceivable only as plain. Just as the skeptic's P_e and P_{ne} are plain, so too is the defender's S ("I know *right now* that I'm not dreaming"). This thoroughgoing parallelism indicates that the root of the problem lies in philosophical Q_1 itself: it "can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively" (LS, 768, ¶54).

By the end of §4, Clarke's skeptic has thrown the philosophical-skeptical possibilities "in the trash can" (LS, 767, ¶50), but now Clarke tells us, cryptically, that "[p]ossibilities in the trash can are not yet in the incinerator, and can make their presence felt" (LS, 767, ¶52). How so? If we've rejected philosophical-skeptical doubts, how can they continue to have an effect? What

use can we or the skeptic continue to make of them? They are, after all, in the trash can. The idea, I take it, is that traditional philosophers will be compelled to pick the skeptical-possibilities *out* of the trash can if they persist in endorsing the propositions of CS_{ph}, for such endorsement is *ipso facto* the endorsement of the legitimacy of the philosophical-skeptical doubts. It would be one thing if the doubts had been 'incinerated,' but they will *never* be incinerated as long as CS_{ph} lingers, as long as it still has us in its "intellectual grip" (LS, 759, ¶15). There is, for Clarke, a cost to abandoning once and for all the philosophical-skeptical possibilities. That cost is nothing less than the abandonment of *traditional philosophy* itself, of the quest for absolute objectivity.

Clarke's argument in LS for the unanswerability of Q_1 (and, by extension, all pure philosophical questions, at least regarding the empirical) is that any attempt to answer philosophical Q_1, whether affirmatively or negatively, lands us in a logical spiral, a kind of circular *reductio ad absurdum*. The logical spiral results from the fact that an affirmative answer to Q_1 leads to the conclusion that we must answer Q_1 negatively, while a negative answer to Q_1 leads to the conclusion that we must answer Q_1 affirmatively. (As we'll see, however, this characterization is not quite right.) Clarke presents this argument in a highly compressed form:

> Philosophical P_e or P_{ne} *is* genuine if its epistemic requirement can be met. (a) Suppose Q_1 is answered affirmatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are genuine, since their epistemic requirements are satisfied. But if those philosophical possibilities are genuine, Q_1 is to be answered negatively. (b) Suppose, then, Q_1 *is* answered negatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are not genuine, for their epistemic requirements cannot be met. But, then, Q_1 is to be answered affirmatively, for there are no genuine philosophical contravening possibilities. But, then, back to (a) again.... (LS, 768, ¶54)

Let me try to unpack this.

(*a*) If we can answer Q_1 affirmatively (= CS_{ph}), then it must be the case that the concept 'Dream' as it is used in CS_{ph} is conceivable. But if '$Dream_{ph}$' is conceivable, then so too are the

philosophical-skeptical scenarios in which 'Dream$_{ph}$' figures (= P_e, P_{ne}). And if the philosophical-skeptical scenarios are conceivable, then *they refute CS_{ph}*, thereby establishing its opposite, the negative answer to Q_1 (= SK_{ph}). (In the background here lies Clarke's argument for the 'conditional correctness' of skepticism.) So if we initially answer Q_1 affirmatively, then we must ultimately answer it negatively.

(*b*) Now suppose that we answer Q_1 negatively (= SK_{ph}). In that case, 'Dream$_{ph}$' is *not* conceivable, for it is a direct consequence of SK_{ph} that its knowability requirement cannot be satisfied. But if 'Dream$_{ph}$' is not conceivable, then it cannot figure in philosophical-skeptical scenarios, rendering those scenarios inconceivable. And if philosophical-skeptical scenarios are inconceivable, then *they are incapable of refuting CS_{ph}*. CS_{ph}, then, remains intact. Therefore, Clarke argues, "Q_1 is to be answered affirmatively, for there are no genuine philosophical contravening possibilities." So if we initially answer Q_1 negatively, then we will ultimately answer it affirmatively.

What are we to make of this argument? I would note two things.

First, there is an important differential in logical or rational force between Clarke's two references in ¶54 to how Q_1 "is to be answered." Under (*a*), in which Q_1 is initially answered affirmatively, the question "is to be answered" negatively in the end because, if philosophical P_e and P_{ne} are genuine, they *refute* CS_{ph}, which amounts to establishing the truth of SK_{ph}. Under (*b*), however, in which Q_1 is initially answered negatively, the question "is to be answered" affirmatively in the end only because philosophical P_e and P_{ne}, as inconceivable, *fail to refute* CS_{ph}. In itself, however, this failure does not lead to the conclusion that CS_{ph} is correct; it leads only to the conclusion that CS_{ph} has not been shown to be false.

The skeptic's failure to undermine CS_{ph} is sufficient reason to affirm CS_{ph} only given a

commitment to what I've identified as the basic tenet of commonsense philosophy, which is that CS has inherent or 'default' epistemic authority, something like what Thomas Reid called "a right of ancient possession" (Reid 2010, 235). Thus, ¶54 can be seen as demonstrating that Clarke remains to some degree a commonsense philosopher. That would provide one way of understanding what he means when he says that until and unless the skeptic can present a "genuine philosophical contravening possibility," CS_{ph} is to be affirmed. On this reading, Clarke's view is that our *default* attitude regarding CS_{ph} ought to be one of acceptance. Perhaps, however, all Clarke is pointing to in this passage is that acceptance of CS_{ph} is *in fact* our 'default' attitude. Most of us naturally succumb to a philosophical reading of Q_1 *and* commonsensically think that we *can* answer Q_1 affirmatively. For most of us, then, CS_{ph} is our default response to Q_1. CS_{ph} is, as it were, considered innocent until proven guilty.[15] But this is an ancillary commitment that itself stands in need of defense, for it is not obviously true that so-called 'defaultism' is justified—especially in light of the fact that it is widely rejected. As description, 'defaultism' seems right; and there is little question that Clarke endorses defaultism as descriptively accurate. But that does not mean that he endorses it as philosophical doctrine. It is open to us to interpret Clarke as allowing that an initial negative answer to Q_1 does not *rationally compel us* to answer Q_1 affirmatively in the end and that therefore there is an important asymmetry between (*a*) and (*b*), one that may very well threaten the soundness of the argument by calling into question the structural integrity, as it were, of the logical spiral.

The second point I would like to make is that Clarke does not *need* the argument he presents in ¶54 in order to establish the conclusion that philosophical questions are

[15] This legalistic language is used in relation to 'defaultism' about justification in Brandom 1994, 177. It echoes, intentionally or not, Thomas Reid's claim that 'common sense' "ought to stand good till it be overturned" (Reid 2010, 235); and it is directly echoed by Michael Williams in a number of places (e.g., Williams 2001, 149).

unanswerable, for he already reached that conclusion by other means in NTE and SS. In NTE, Clarke focuses on what he calls the 'sense-data inquiry,' which is taken by traditional epistemologists to lead to the conclusion that direct realism cannot be the correct theory of human perception. The first stage of that inquiry is what Clarke calls "the 'hallucination' inquiry," which is supposed to lead to the conclusion that "the fact that we might on any occasion be hallucinating... mean[s] that we can't know with certainty that there are physical objects" (NTE, 26; cf. NTE, 36). This is, of course, the same implication of arguments appealing to dreams. Indeed, Clarke is clear, in NTE but especially in LS, that he considers 'Dream' and 'Hallucination' to be interchangeable for the skeptic's purposes (NTE, 147, 152; LS, 761, ¶22; LS, 768, ¶¶56–60). The connection between, on the one hand, the sense-data inquiry and skeptical possibilities based on hallucinations, and, on the other hand, between skeptical possibilities based on hallucinations and those based on dreams is the central point of connection between NTE and LS.

For Clarke, the crucial issue regarding the philosophical or skeptical import of dreams and hallucinations concerns the "propriety of the demand for special reasons" (NTE, 178). If it is appropriate even in philosophical cases to insist that skeptical possibilities be backed by a special reason—i.e., a special reason to think we might be dreaming or hallucinating—then the general skeptical conclusion is blocked. Indeed, for Clarke this is the *only* direct way to block skepticism: "It is only the requirement of special reasons that makes it possible for there to be ways in which we can make sure that we're not hallucinating" (NTE, 152). This requirement is all that "stands between the plain man and scepticism about the physical world" (NTE, 153). It blocks skeptical conclusions by setting limits on what counts as genuine or acceptable counter-possibilities.

Now, as we saw in Chapter 3, Clarke argues in NTE that the requirement of special reasons is operative in everyday life, but not in philosophical cases. This is because philosophical cases abstract from everyday contexts, and everyday contexts, Clarke argues, are what *supply* (context-sensitive) criteria of relevancy (NTE, 182–6). They add a 'non-rule-like' dimension to the meaning of context-bound utterances that renders those utterances full-bodied in meaning. A hallmark of a full-bodied question is that it is answerable. It is answerable because the context provides a kind of *default* that is to be accepted unless countered by a genuine (relevant) counter-possibility. And what makes counter-possibilities genuine (relevant) is that they are backed by special reasons. For example, in everyday life 'physical objects' are the default 'unit' for Seeing. It takes a special reason to deny in any particular case that what we are seeing, when we appear to be seeing a physical object, is not in fact a physical object. This contextually defined 'default' can be overridden (e.g., if there is a special reason to think we're hallucinating), but it cannot be globally rejected. Within contexts of everyday life, in which physical objects are the default units of Seeing, it is just a fact that physical objects are see*able* even if we might be wrong that we're seeing a physical object in any particular case. Thus, the everyday, context-bound question, "Can we see physical objects?" can be answered, and the answer is "Yes."

If everyday contexts are the sole source of criteria of relevancy, then philosophical cases, in abstracting from everyday contexts, lack such criteria. In abstracting from everyday contexts, philosophy tries to do away with the non-rule-like dimension of meaning; it attempts to trade in skeletal ('pure') meanings only. As we saw in Chapter 3, however, Clarke holds that skeletal questions, as not fully meaningful, cannot be answered except on the basis of a *decision* on our part to "complete [their] meaning" in a particular way (NTE, 76; LS, 757, ¶10). But an answer

to *that* more-developed question, so understood, is not an answer to the original, skeletal question. To the skeletal question, "the only correct answers amount to rejecting the question" (NTE, 201; SS, 107). To the pure (philosophical, skeletal) question "Can we ever know we're not dreaming?", the only correct response is to say something to the effect of, "It all depends on what 'dreaming' is being contrasted to," which amounts to saying, "It all depends on what counts as a genuine counter-example or counter-possibility" (cf., NTE, 200–1). Until *that* is settled, the question is indeterminate: "[t]he philosophical case would be underdetermined" (NTE, 194; cf. NTE, 205).

For Clarke, the first fundamental mistake made by traditional philosophers is to assume that skeletal utterances are determinate and therefore answerable. Because of this assumption, "*[t]he philosopher does only what is required to make [his] assertion fully meaningful in the case he's considering*" (NTE, 216–7). This involves, as we saw in Chapter 3, a "mental act" (NTE, 218) that actually alters, at the phenomenological level, the philosopher's cognitive–perceptual relation to the world (cf. SS, 111; NTE 71, 109, 131, 227). The specific sort of mental act Clarke has in mind is the insertion of "mental planes" (NTE, 103) between possible sub-portions of what is seen. The analogous act in the case of Knowing would be the insertion of 'mental planes' between *us* and *the world*.[16] These mental planes fill-out the skeletal meaning of philosophical questions in such a way that skeptical conclusions become true *for* the philosopher (but only for as long as the philosopher maintains the mental effort required to keep the planes in place).[17] This is a radical, and radically important, claim. As Clarke puts it in one

[16] Cf. Sayward 2005. In that paper, Sayward extends Clarke's analysis of 'philosophical Seeing' in SS to the problem of other minds.

[17] "No matter how ingenious he may be, the skeptic cannot avoid knowing many things. It might even turn out that, with great effort, imagination, and cleverness, he could bring about that he knows less and less" (Frede 1979, 179).

place, "The epistemologist is fundamentally *unlike* a mathematician: he does not infer, argue, or prove. He is fundamentally *like* a discoverer of new lands; new facts of experience are revealed to his eyes" (NTE, 82).

The second fundamental mistake made by traditional philosophers is to generalize their skeptical conclusions (NTE, 101 ff.) in such a way that they take their peculiar, artificial relation to the world to be "the true reality" underlying everyday cases. Their second mistake, in other words, is to take "these situations to be the ones the inquiry set out to examine" (NTE, 138). Traditional epistemological inquiry sees itself as examining cases of everyday life, but indirectly, by way of an examination of "so-called common sense" (NTE, 142)—i.e., CS_{ph}—upon which our everyday epistemic practices are thought to depend. On the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday, philosophical cases *are* more fundamental than everyday cases are (NTE, 237). What is true in philosophical cases *should* be generalized. But, as we've seen, Clarke rejects the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday.

If we must reject philosophical questions on account of their indeterminacy, then CS_{ph} is to be rejected along with SK_{ph}. "There is," Clarke concludes, "no valid defense of [philosophical] common sense" (NTE, 239). Moreover, there could be a valid defense of CS_{ph} only if philosophical questions were determinate; but, given the conditional correctness of skepticism, if philosophical questions are determinate then they are to be answered negatively.

5.2.3 Getting the Plain Into View

We have now arrived at the final stretch of argument in LS (768–9, ¶¶56–62). It is perhaps the most confusing part of the paper. I will move through it slowly, building off of the

material from NTE discussed in the previous subsection.

As we just saw, the philosopher (the skeptic) does what is needed to make his assertion (= SK_{ph}) fully meaningful: he inserts a mental plane between his experience and the world. This 'contextualizes' Q_1 in such a way that the problem now becomes one of knowing, on the basis of bare experience alone (= sense-data, or sensible species, ideas of sensation, impressions, *Vorstellungen*, sensations, sensa—whatever[18]), whether those experiences are or are not rooted in the world, i.e., the Real.[19] Inserting a mental plane between experience and the world alters, at the phenomenological level, the philosopher's relation to the world: it transforms it from *X* to the relation represented by the SCHC. By '*X*,' I mean whatever our plain, everyday relation to the world is.

In the final paragraphs of §5 of LS, Clarke wants to establish the following two related conclusions: (*a*) "our concept Dream (Hallucination) cannot be fitted into a conceptual-human constitution of the standard type" (LS, 768, ¶56); therefore (*b*) "our conceptual-human constitution can't be of the standard type" (LS, 769, ¶62). It is important to understand that he does not start out presuming that "our concept Dream" is either '$Dream_{pl}$' or '$Dream_{ph}$.' It is a *conclusion* of his argument in this section that *our* concept 'Dream' is '$Dream_{pl}$' and that it cannot be 'projected' into '$Dream_{ph}$.' He *does* presume, however, that plain P_e and plain P_{ne} are "genuine" possibilities. Plain P_e and P_{ne} make use of the concept '$Dream_{pl}$.' So Clarke *is* presuming that we *do* have a plain conception of 'Dream.' The question of the status of "our

[18] I borrow this list from Price 1950, 19.

[19] We can see, then, just how mistaken Michael Williams is when he claims that Clarke "[fails] to identify what really generates the threat of scepticism." What generates the threat, Williams argues, is "the sceptic's crucial doctrine: the priority of experiential knowledge over knowledge of the world" (UD, 198). *Contra* Williams, it is absolutely central to Clarke's diagnosis of skepticism that the skeptic inserts a 'mental plane' (a skeptical gap) between experience and the world and that doing so distorts our everyday relation to the world. In rejecting the sense-data thesis, he is rejecting the "thesis... that sense data are 'epistemologically prior' to physical objects" (NTE, 1).

concept Dream," then, concerns what that concept is *fundamentally*. Is 'Dream$_{pl}$' a *projection* of our fundamental concept 'Dream,' which is philosophical; or is 'Dream$_{ph}$,' if it is conceivable at all, a projection of our fundamental concept 'Dream,' which is plain? On the traditional view, according to which the SCHC is true of us, 'real' or 'genuine' concepts are philosophical, while plain or everyday concepts are projections of those concepts into 'restrictive' contexts. Recall the airplane-spotters. Their 'plain' concept of a Type-*A* aircraft is parasitic upon the genuine, fully objective concept of a Type-*A* aircraft; their restricted everyday practice of identifying aircraft is possible only as a 'restrictive' application of 'pure' concepts. In their case, the 'direction of projection' is from the philosophical to the plain, from the pure to the restricted. Clarke's question is whether the same is true of us, which amounts to asking whether the SCHC is true of us.

So, presuming the genuineness of plain P_e and P_{ne}, Clarke sets out the following argument.

(*1*) 'Dream' is not a marks-and-features concept.

Descartes finds this to be true, and plain P_e and P_{ne} "support" him in this. It belongs to the concept's 'design' that "there are no features of... [experience], no marks, incompatible with his being asleep, dreaming" (LS, 768, ¶58). Clarke is assuming, I take it, that any projection of the concept 'Dream'—whether from the philosophical to the plain or vice versa—will have to retain this element of its 'design.' The fact that 'Dream' is not a marks-and-features concept cannot fall away in the process of projection. Thus, regardless of whether our concept 'Dream' is fundamentally plain or philosophical, the fact that our plain concept 'Dream' is not a marks-and-features concept means that the philosophical concept cannot be either.

(*2*) 'Dream' is a non-bankrupt concept only if it fulfills the knowability requirement, in

which case dream-experience *can* be distinguished from waking-experience.

In the case of 'Dream$_{pl}$,' which features in plain P_e and P_{ne}, the knowability in question is K_{pl}, and the requirement *is* satisfiable. Therefore, 'Dream$_{pl}$' is a genuine (full-bodied) concept and plain Q_1 is a genuine (full-bodied) question. The outstanding question is whether there can be a philosophical application of 'Dream.' If 'Dream' is to function as a philosophical concept, then it would have to satisfy the knowability requirement. In a philosophical context, however, K_{pl} is not enough; the knowability would have to be philosophical, i.e., invulnerable. Moreover, the philosophical knowability requirement would have to be satisfied while holding in place the mental plane between experience and the world. Therefore, all we would have to go on in distinguishing between 'Dream' and 'Awake' is our experience. If all we have to go on is our experience, then 'Dream' would be distinguishable from 'Awake' only on the basis of certain marks-and-features present in our experience. Per (*1*), however, 'Dream' is *not* a marks-and-features concept. Therefore, 'Dream$_{ph}$' cannot be a genuine concept.

Clarke concludes, then, that answering philosophical Q_1 affirmatively is incompatible with (*1*), for in order to do so, 'Dream$_{ph}$' would have to satisfy the knowability requirement, which could be done only if 'Dream' were a marks-and-features concept, and that is what is denied by (*1*). On the other hand, answering philosophical Q_1 negatively is incompatible with (*2*), for if we cannot know that we're not dreaming, then the knowability requirement for 'Dream' cannot be satisfied, in which case 'Dream' is not a genuine concept and Q_1 is not a genuine question. This reinforces what we've already seen: that the root of the problem that leads to skepticism lies with philosophical Q_1 itself: "The philosophical question Q_1 begged the question, the question whether it could be a question, in supposing that 'dream' could figure in the question itself" (LS, 769, ¶61).

Our concept 'Dream,' then, is plain. Clarke concludes this on the following grounds: we have a plain concept 'Dream'; we *cannot* have a philosophical concept 'Dream.' Furthermore, what this shows is that even if we *could* make sense of '$Dream_{ph}$,' it would be a projection of our plain concept 'Dream.' Contrary to the traditional view, the 'direction of projection' would go from the plain to the philosophical. If what is true of 'Dream' is true of human concepts generally (and I take it that Clarke believes it is, at least for concepts regarding empirical matters of fact), then the conceptual-human constitution cannot be of the standard type. Why not? Because "if it were, it would be seriously concept-impoverished" (LS, 769, ¶62). If the SCHC were true of us, then '$Dream_{pl}$' would be a projection of '$Dream_{ph}$' into a restricted everyday context. Therefore, if the SCHC were true of us, and if Clarke is right that '$Dream_{ph}$' is not a genuine concept, then we *could not* (and therefore would not) have the concept '$Dream_{pl}$.' But we *do* have the concept '$Dream_{pl}$.' Therefore, the SCHC cannot be true of us.

That the SCHC cannot be true of us, Clarke says, is "revealed by the *plain* skeptical possibilities," i.e., by plain P_e and P_{ne}. How so? Because it is only by having reflected on P_e and P_{ne}—that is, it is only by having looked closely at the nature of the skeptic's interrogation of CS_{ph}—that we see (*1*) that 'Dream' is not a marks-and-features concept and (*2*) that 'Dream' is conceivable only if it satisfies the knowability requirement.

I take it that these realizations, along with what follows from them, are the "large dividends" that Clarke thinks are paid by "[s]tudying the skeptic," and they are acquired, as Clarke says, "*partly* because of [the skeptic's] large nonskeptical side" (LS, 759, ¶16a). Studying the skeptic reveals that, throughout his inquiry, he has "one foot within the philosophical, the other within the plain. His inquisition of CS_{ph} is philosophical, but the possibility he puts to imaginative test is drawn from the well of the plain" (LS, 765–6, ¶44). The

philosophical by definition transcends the plain. CS_{ph} uncritically affirms the possibility of this transcendence. It is left to the skeptic to examine such pretensions. In interrogating CS_{ph}, the skeptic shows us many things—though none of them lead to the conclusion that SK_{ph} is true. He shows us that our most fundamental beliefs are *plain*, not philosophical. Our beliefs are plain because so are our *concepts*. Thus, he also shows us that the SCHC cannot be true of us. He shows us that plain concepts are fundamental; they are not restricted projections of philosophical concepts. Thus, the direction of our conceptual projecting is *outward*, not *inward*: we project concepts *out of* everyday contexts, not *into* them from outside. He shows us, moreover, that there are limits to the projective conceivability of our plain concepts. When we attempt to transcend the plain, we "fall," as Clarke puts it in SS, into a "no-man's land" (SS, 109). Thus, the skeptic is fully (as Clarke says is qualifiedly true of Moore) "the compleat philosopher," for he shows us that "outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed" (LS, 769, ¶63). This is for Clarke the final revelation awaiting us at the end of the traditional-philosophical road: we are all—at least insofar as we are users of concepts, utterers of language, purveyors of meaning—inveterate plain men.

It seems to me that Clarke would agree with the German Idealist J.G. Fichte that "philosophical reason owes every noticeable advance it has ever made to the observations of skepticism upon the precariousness of the position where it has for the moment come to rest" (in Di Giovanni & Harris (eds.) 2000, 137). And with Fichte, he would agree with Kant that

> The sceptical idealist... who merely challenges the ground of our assertion and denounces as insufficiently justified our conviction of the existence of matter, which we thought to base on immediate perception, is a benefactor of human reason in so far as he compels us, even in the smallest advances of ordinary experience, to keep on the watch, lest we consider as a well-earned possession what we perhaps obtain only illegitimately. (Kant 1929, 351, A377–8)

Chapter 6

Anti-Skeptical Strategies: Dissolution vs. Suspension

In this chapter, I introduce two competing, though interestingly similar, anti-skeptical strategies. The first turns on *dissolution*, the second on *suspension of judgment*. In Chapter 7, I will develop competing interpretations of LS along the lines of these anti-skeptical strategies. The brand of dissolutionism I have in mind belongs to a sequence that moves from diagnosis and therapy to 'quietism,' which for my purposes I understand in a specific—perhaps unusually limited—sense. Pyrrhonian suspension belongs to a structurally identical sequence, one that moves from diagnosis and therapy to *ataraxia* (equanimity). Both dissolutionism and Pyrrhonism, as I'm using those terms, see themselves as returning us, in some sense, to prephilosophical everyday life. But whereas dissolutionism tends to understand this movement as a return to a state of prephilosophical 'innocence' in which our everyday epistemic practices are recognized as enjoying inherent (plain or 'default') epistemic authority and so are straightforwardly reaffirmed, Pyrrhonism understands the return as a kind of *revolution*, one designed to purge everyday life of its naïve dogmatism, thus underlining the possibility that the world is, in reality, radically different from how we prephilosophically take it to be.

6.1 Dissolutionist Anti-Skeptical Strategies

Sextus Empiricus opens his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (PH) by noting what he takes to be the three most basic possible outcomes for any inquiry and *a fortiori* for philosophical inquiries (PH, 1.1–3). An inquiry, he says, will result in one of the following:

1. A discovery; in philosophical inquiries, this means discovery of "the truth" (*alēthes*).
2. A denial of discovery and a confession of "inapprehensibility" (*acatalēpsias*); in philosophical inquiries, this means denial of the apprehensibility of the truth of the *pragma* (the 'thing' or 'matter'—the 'subject') under investigation.
3. A continuation of the inquiry.[1]

(*1*) Philosophers who believe they have discovered the truth are "dogmatists" (*dogmaticoe*), a term that for Sextus is not inherently pejorative. As Jonathan Barnes has shown, a dogma is, for Sextus, "a philosophical principle or a scientific theory" (Barnes 1982, 73); dogmas are "weighty, substantial beliefs—tenets, doctrines, principles" (Barnes 1982, 69). So understood, the term 'dogmatist' becomes pejorative for Sextus only when dogmas are held in the absence of sufficient justification—as, it seems to him, all such beliefs always are.[2] (*2*) Philosophers who claim that the truth of the thing or matter under investigation is 'inapprehensible' are, to use Frede's terminology (see 1.3, above), *dogmatic skeptics*. Their skepticism is dogmatic because, as the conclusion of a philosophical inquiry, the doctrine of inapprehensibility is itself 'a weighty, substantial belief.' In the secondary literature, such skeptics are sometimes referred to as *negative dogmatists*. (*3*) Those who are true skeptics by Sextus's lights—that is, ('classical') Pyrrhonian skeptics—belong to the third category. They claim neither that the truth has been apprehended nor that it is inapprehensible. Thus, they

[1] It is also possible, of course, simply to cease inquiring; but this, I take it, is not so much an *outcome* of inquiry as it is a failure to inquire. The common view that, at least with respect to skepticism, (*1*) and (*2*) offer the only possible satisfactory outcomes of inquiry is expressed by Kant (1929, 604–5; A756–7/B784–5) and Clarke (NTE, 247).

[2] 'Dogmatism' as a non-pejorative contrast-class to 'skepticism' has been making a comeback in recent years. Oliver Johnson rejects the usage, since "dogmatism has long since taken on overtones that have destroyed its original Greek meaning, turning it into a pejorative term" (Johnson 1978, 6). He opts instead for "cognitivism," which "becomes the view that affirms the possibility of knowledge in general" (Johnson 1978, 7). But this is to replace a term that exhibits a tension between technical and everyday uses with a term that has such a plethora of existing technical uses that it seems unwise to burden it with yet another. More recently, James Pryor has not only employed the term 'dogmatism' in a non-pejorative way, but actually defended a theory of perceptual warrant that he calls 'dogmatism' (Pryor 2000, 2004). More recently still, Nick Zangwill has, following Sextus, embraced 'dogmatism' as the principal contrast to 'skepticism' (Zangwill 2016, 110).

continue the inquiry—or, at least, they are *free* to do so in a way that their dogmatic counterparts, who believe the inquiry has been settled, are not. (One can, of course, revisit prior conclusions, consider new evidence, double-check one's calculations, etc.; but this would be not so much a continuation of the original inquiry as it would be a new inquiry into the proposed justification of the dogma.)

There is a genre of response to philosophical inquiries that doesn't fit neatly into Sextus's scheme. I refer to this genre as 'theoretical dissolutionism' ('dissolutionism' for short). Dissolutionist responses, whether to positive or to negative (= skeptical) philosophical dogmas, figure prominently in twentieth-century philosophy, both 'analytic' and 'continental.'[3] On the analytic side, we find Wittgenstein claiming that, once sufficiently clarified, "philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (Wittgenstein 1953, 56, §133). Regarding skepticism, he writes that it "is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked" (Wittgenstein 1921, 88, 6.51). On the continental side, we find Heidegger claiming that "[t]he 'problem of Reality' in the sense of the question whether an external world is present-at-hand and whether such a world can be proved, turns out to be an impossible one" in the sense that the question cannot even be legitimately or coherently asked (Heidegger 1962, 250). In an early lecture course, he concludes that "[t]he genuine solution to the problem of the reality of the external world consists in the insight that this is no problem at all, but rather an absurdity" (Heidegger 2008, 71). It is clear how dissolutionists can see their views reflected in such remarks.

[3] This is not to deny that there is a wealth of earlier examples. A kind of dissolutionism about skepticism, for instance, goes back to the ancient world in the form of self-refutation (or *peritropē*) arguments, which attempt to dissolve the skeptical problem by showing that skeptical conclusions cannot be consistently or coherently stated. Presumably, Sextus would have counted these arguments under category (*1*), as based on a purported discovery (e.g., some sort of semantic theory). This points to what I take to be the major flaw with theoretical-dissolutionist strategies generally, which is that they fall prey to dogmatism. I return to this point below.

Dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies attempt to establish that skeptical problems are, at least in the final analysis, mere pseudo-problems. These strategies offer alternatives to attempts straightforwardly to *solve* skeptical problems. Dissolution is contrasted with 'direct' or 'straight' *refutation*. From the "point of view" of Wittgenstein's methodology, J.O. Urmson writes, "a philosophical problem is an enigma to be dissolved rather than a question which is susceptible to a straightforward answer" (in Rorty (ed.) 1967, 298). If skeptical problems *are* mere pseudo-problems, than any proposed solution to them would be at best useless, at worst incoherent, like 'solving' the 'problem' of what's north of the North Pole. Dissolutionism about traditional philosophy in general is a hallmark of a great deal of analytic philosophy.[4] In his "Introduction" to the influential anthology *The Linguistic Turn*, Richard Rorty claims that "dissolving philosophical problems" is (or, rather, was) "the primary task of linguistic philosophy" (Rorty 1967, 25; cf. 30). He associates it with logical positivism (Rorty 1967, 31) and refers to it as "the common aim of Ideal Language and Ordinary Language philosophers" (Rorty 1967, 17). Rorty may be overstating the case somewhat, but not egregiously so, if at all. Hans-Johann Glock notes that "[t]he word 'analysis' stems from the Greek *analusis*, which means 'loosening up' or 'dissolving'" (Glock 2008, 21), which I think is more than just an etymological curiosity. Dissolutionism is evident in Rudolf Carnap's short book on epistemology, *Pseudoproblems In Philosophy* (Carnap 2003), though Carnap does not himself use the term. And we find the language of dissolution being used by such diverse thinkers as J.L. Austin (1962, 5), W.V. Quine (1960, 203; 1969, 85), and Karl Popper (1959, 138; 1962, 70), to name just a few.

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[4] In his *Pseudo-Problems: How Analytic Philosophy Gets Done*, Ray Sorensen's focus is dissolution: "the topic is the *selection* and *dissolution* of disputes and problems" (Sorensen 1993, 1). The connection he draws between dissolution and pseudo-problems could not be more direct: he argues that "given that we cannot get a unified account of pseudo-problems by a direct route, we must fashion an alternative." That alternative is the notion of "dissolution" (Sorensen 1993, 67–8).

Clearly, then, dissolutionism is a broad category that allows for a great deal of variety regarding such fundamental issues as what is being dissolved (what is susceptible to dissolution), how dissolutions are carried out (are Wittgensteinian 'reminders' enough,[5] or is more substantive philosophizing required?), and what exactly is to be achieved by way of dissolving philosophical problems (are *all* philosophical problems, or even philosophy itself, supposed to disappear, or only certain ways of formulating philosophical problems?[6]). In what follows, my interest lies in a kind of dissolutionism that is tied in with the notions of philosophical 'therapy,' 'quietism,' and 'diagnosis.' Some or all of these terms are frequently associated or even run together. Richard Rorty tells us that "'epistemology' is a collection of obsessive concerns with certainty to be dissolved by therapy" (Rorty 1979, 228). Avrum Stroll, in describing Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy, writes that "philosophy is a kind of therapy whose main function is not to create metaphysical visions but to dissolve the sorts of philosophical perplexities that such conceits invariably engender" (Stroll 2000, 32). Nick Zangwill associates what he calls "quietist quasi-realism" with "the prospect of realism debates dissolving before our eyes" (Zangwill 1992, 162). Stelios Virvidakis links quietism to "philosophical therapy," which he links in turn to 'diagnosis'; he says of one variety of quietism that it has the aim of "dissolving, rather than trying to solve, philosophical (pseudo)-problems" (Virvidakis 2008, 162). Finally, Brian Leiter describes "*quietism*" as the view that "philosophy can solve no problems; philosophy becomes a kind of *therapy*, dissolving philosophical problems, rather than solving them" (Leiter 2004, 2).[7]

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[5] Cf. Wittgenstein 1953, 55, §127. The original G.E.M. Anscombe translation of §127 reads: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders (*Erinnerungen*) for a particular purpose." The new (fourth) edition reads instead: "The work of the philosopher consists in marshalling recollections for a particular purpose."

[6] Cf. Rorty 1967, 32.

[7] Recent examples of this sort of dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategy include Pritchard 2016, Schönbaumsfeld 2016, and Kern 2017. Pritchard does not use the language of diagnosis, therapy, and dissolution; but his dissolutionist

In UD, Michael Williams associates, almost without exception,[8] dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies with philosophical therapy and links both to a particular kind of diagnosis, which he calls "therapeutic diagnosis." Therapeutic diagnosticians "argue that sceptical claims and arguments are defective in point of meaning" (UD, xvi): "The problem of scepticism must be *dissolved* by showing that the sceptic doesn't or can't mean what he seems to mean" (UD, 32). Indeed, perhaps the skeptic "fails to mean anything at all" (UD, xvi). Therapeutic diagnosis "treats philosophical problems—epistemological problems included—as pseudo-problems generated by misuses or misunderstandings of language" (Williams 1999, 201). For Williams, the paradigm of therapeutic diagnosis is "post-Wittgensteinian (or 'ordinary language')" philosophy (UD, xiv)—which is, at least in its Austinian form, Clarke's primary target in both NTE and LS. Williams contrasts therapeutic diagnosis with "theoretical diagnosis," which aims "to show that sceptical arguments derive their force, not from commonsensical intuitions about knowledge, but from theoretical ideas that we are by no means bound to accept" (UD, xvii). For Williams, whereas the aim of therapeutic diagnosis is the 'dissolution' of skepticism, the aim of

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orientation is signaled by his stated aim to show skeptical problems "to be merely pseudo-problems" (Pritchard 2016, 6). Genia Schönbaumsfeld employs most of the terms I've associated with dissolutionism: her approach, she says, is "'diagnostic': to show that the notion [of radical skepticism] is based on mistaken or incoherent assumptions, so that once we have applied sufficient argumentative pressure to them, the notion will collapse, or dissolve, all by itself" (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 1); this sort of strategy, she writes, is thought (at least by its critics) to be a "'quietist' way of dealing with the issue" (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 2). Finally, Andrea Kern describes her approach as "diagnostic critique," which is "a form of debate with the skeptic that refutes her by diagnosing a presupposition of skeptical doubt and attempting to show that such a presupposition is not genuinely compulsory" (Kern 2017, 77). And while she does say that "[t]he refutation of the skeptic is achieved precisely by means of an alternative account of the nature of knowledge" (Kern 2017, 77), she later refers to that 'refutation' as the result of dissolution: "The capacity conception [= her 'alternative account of the nature of knowledge'] understands knowledge in a manner that dissolves skeptical doubt by showing that the very intelligibility of such doubt depends on the idea of a capacity for knowledge, which it seeks to deny at the same time" (Kern 2017, 273). The 'refutation,' then, is really *self*-refutation; and self-refutation arguments against skepticism are probably the earliest—they are certainly the most prevalent—form of dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies.

[8] A clear exception can be found at UD, 317, where he refers to "[t]hose who dissolve scepticism by denying closure." A possible exception is found at UD, 176, where, in discussing Marie McGinn, he refers to "Wittgenstein's dissolution of scepticism" as turning at least in part on "a 'naturalistic' conception of our knowledge of the world."

theoretical diagnosis is simply "to redistribute the burden of theory, thereby depriving the sceptic of what would otherwise be an overwhelming dialectical advantage" (UD, xvii; cf. 31–2, 61, 133, 166). Theoretical diagnosis, then, does not in itself dissolve skepticism; work remains to be done after having shifted the burden of theory.

Even so, both therapeutic and theoretical diagnosis are dissolutionist in the sense in which I'm using the term. Indeed, it seems to me that both pursue the sort of specifically *theoretical* dissolutionism that I have in mind. Theoretical dissolutionism is 'theoretical' in the same way that Williams's theoretical diagnosis is 'theoretical': it aims to dissolve philosophical problems by freeing us from our commitment to the views or presuppositions that seem to make skepticism the unavoidable result of any sustained philosophical inquiry into the grounds or legitimacy of our empirical knowledge. Williams himself notes that the therapeutic–theoretical distinction is not "clear-cut": "In particular, if we think that the sceptic's deep theoretical presuppositions have to do with meaning, and that these presuppositions encourage an illusory sense of his having presented coherent problems, the distinction threatens to vanish" (UD, xvii). He draws the distinction in order "to underline the fact that my diagnostic strategy nowhere depends on accusing the sceptic of incoherence" in the manner of ordinary-language philosophers (UD, xvii). But it is hardly the case that ordinary-language philosophers have a monopoly, either *de jure* or *de facto*, on the notions of 'dissolutionism' or 'philosophical therapy.' Theoretical dissolution is, in my view, the result of a philosophical therapy that begins with theoretical diagnosis.

Clarke describes his study of the sense-data inquiry in NTE as a "diagnosis" (NTE, 1; cf. 3, 15, 230). As the term implies, diagnoses of philosophical problems presume that there is something *wrong* with those problems (beyond, of course, their being 'problems' in the first

place). The sense of wrongness precedes the diagnosis; the diagnosis is intended to bring to light just *what* is wrong. For Clarke, what is ultimately wrong with the sense-data inquiry is that it is "invalid." He believes, however, that previous diagnoses intended to explain this invalidity have missed the mark: traditional epistemological inquiries, of which the sense-data inquiry is a "fundamental" instance (NTE, 1, 6), "have previously been deemed invalid for the wrong reasons" (NTE, 230). Even so, *that* traditional epistemological inquiries are invalid is taken for granted from the start. They are known to be invalid because of their paradoxicality (NTE, 7), which consists in their repudiation of CS: any "conclusion" that "flatly repudiates the common-sense belief that we can have certain knowledge of physical objects... is thereby paradoxical" (NTE, 26; cf. 43, 62). The paradoxical (= skeptical) conclusions of traditional epistemology differ from "genuine paradoxes like Zeno's," however, for

> Our only problem with Zeno's argument is diagnostic. Our problem with arguments in traditional epistemology is to get past their veneer of implausibility in order to get ourselves into a position to diagnose. We have to 'intricate' ourselves before we extricate ourselves.[9] (NTE, 18)

The source of the difficulty, Clarke argues, is that we must properly understand the nature of the traditional epistemological "*discovery*" (NTE, 6) if we are to diagnose it successfully. Presumably no one *believes* the conclusions of Zeno's paradoxes, yet traditional epistemologists *do* believe the sense-data thesis (NTE, 22). Indeed, as we've seen, the 'discovery' that she sees not physical objects but only sense-data is, according to Clarke, *true* for the traditional

[9] This point is well-put by John McDowell: "Therapeutic philosophy is designed to spare us the travails of positive philosophy, but it has its own difficulties... Therapy designed to dislodge such a conviction [i.e., that one has an 'intellectual obligation' to solve philosophical problems] will be ineffective if its target can say, 'That's not how the difficulty that seems to me to call for positive philosophy arises.' So this kind of philosophy needs a precise and sympathetic appreciation of the temptations it aims to deconstruct. There is no question of quickly dismissing a range of philosophical activity from the outside" (McDowell 2009, 371–2).

epistemologist—though only for as long as she maintains the effort of keeping in place the 'mental plane' cutting off her experience from the world. Once the diagnosis has been carried out, however, we should, Clarke thinks, be in a position to "extricate ourselves" from the problems of traditional epistemology. The problems are not *solved* in the straightforward sense of proving the traditional epistemologist wrong. In the case of the problem of our knowledge of the external world, that would require vindicating CS_{ph}, which, as we've seen, Clarke thinks cannot be done. Rather, as Clarke puts it, "Skepticism frees us... from itself" (LS, 769, ¶63). In other words, thought through to the end, traditional philosophy is *self-dissolving*.

6.2 Quietism and the Return to Pre-Philosophical Everyday Life

As we've seen, the notions of diagnosis, therapy, dissolution, and quietism are often associated or even run together. I suggested above that theoretical dissolution is the result of a philosophical therapy that begins with theoretical diagnosis. With this, the relations among these associated concepts—or at least one way of thinking about how they might relate—begins to come into view.

Diagnosis ⟶ Therapy ⟶ Dissolution ⟶ Quietism

FIGURE 14: From Diagnosis to Quietism

The idea is that *diagnosis* points the way toward a *therapy* that eventuates in a 'cure'—the *dissolution* of the problem. *Quietism*, then—as I'm using the term, anyway—refers to the state of 'health' that follows dissolution. But what is the 'quietistic' state? The term derives from the

Greek word *hesychasmos*, which comes out of the Greek Orthodox monastic tradition. According to Virvidakis, "Hesychasts rejected rational thinking in the attempt to attain some kind of cognitive access to or contemplation of God" (Virvidakis 2008, 168 fn. 6). "In philosophy," Simon Blackburn writes, quietism is "the doctrine associated with Wittgenstein that there is no standpoint from which to achieve the traditional philosophical goal of a theory about some concept or another" (Blackburn 1996, 315). Quietism, then, is quietist *about* the traditional philosophical project; it is a position that holds, for one reason or another, that that project cannot be carried out. McDowell characterizes quietism—which he associates, at least in its Wittgensteinian form, with "therapeutic philosophy" (McDowell 2009, 371)—as the "rejection of any constructive or doctrinal ambitions" (McDowell 1996, 93) and as "the avoidance of any substantive philosophy" (McDowell 1996, 176).

Substantive philosophy should be 'avoided' because it misleads one into taking seriously mere pseudo-problems; it should be 'rejected' because the problems with which it deals have, once subjected to sufficient therapeutic treatment, 'disappeared.'

> Wittgenstein's quietism is not a refusal to engage in substantive philosophy in the face of what everyone has to accept as genuine problems. It is an activity of diagnosing, so as to explain away, some appearances that we are confronted with genuine problems. The supposed problems disappear, leaving no need for theory construction to make things "less mysterious." (McDowell 2009, 371)

Here, McDowell is saying that quietism is the *practice* (the "activity"), not the *outcome*, of diagnosis–therapy–dissolution. I agree that quietists will adopt this practice, especially if, as McDowell (and Pyrrhonians) thinks, the need for philosophical therapy arises again and again.[10]

[10] McDowell writes of Wittgenstein that "[h]e is not... envisaging a future for himself in which he is definitively cured of the philosophical impulse. The impulse finds peace only occasionally and temporarily" (McDowell 1996, 177).

But we can also single out a meaning of 'quietism' according to which it refers specifically to that which is consequent upon having successfully carried out the philosophical therapy. Let's call the state of the quietest at this stage 'quietude.' Since quietism (as I'm using the term) is first and foremost quietism about traditional philosophical problems, then quietude will be, minimally, the state in which one is no longer troubled by philosophical problems or the supposed difficulties that give rise to them. An overarching objective of McDowell's diagnosis of traditional philosophy, for instance, is "to unmask... as illusion" the sense that "we seem to be confronted with philosophical obligations of a familiar sort," obligations that give rise to "some characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy" (McDowell 1996, xi), including "anxiety about empirical knowledge" (McDowell 1996, 15), "about a felt distance between mind and world" (McDowell 1996, 147). He aims at "exorcising" these anxieties (McDowell 1996, xx). Quietude, then, is minimally freedom from such anxieties.

Looked at this way, the following passage might serve as the *locus classicus* for quietism, at least in its Wittgensteinian form: "The real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing when I want to. — The one that gives philosophy peace (*Ruhe*), so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question" (Wittgenstein 1952, 57, §133; cf. McDowell 2009, 370). *Ruhe* suggests 'quiet,' 'calm,' 'repose,' 'tranquility.' Quietude, then, is a kind of tranquility with respect to supposed philosophical problems, the repose of mind that follows from coming to see that the problems are mere pseudo-problems that have been dissolved and thus do not require treatment in the form of substantive philosophy—at least, not philosophy of a *traditional* sort.

There is, however, another dimension to the psychological 'quietude' of quietism as it is often understand. I take it that what is anxiety-inducing about philosophical problems is that

they call into question—or perhaps even make "unintelligible" (McDowell 1996, 113)—our everyday, commonsensical understanding of ourselves, the world, and the relation between the two. This points to what, in my view, lies at the heart of skeptical problematics: the tension between (*a*) what we take ourselves to know in everyday life and (*b*) the kind and scope of the knowledge we can justifiably claim to possess on the basis of abstract philosophical theorizing. A key thought behind much quietism is that, having dissolved philosophical problems, we are thereby *returned* to where we were before having heeded the "siren call" (LS, 759, ¶15) of traditional philosophy—namely, prephilosophical everyday life. This assumes, however, that everyday life (*our* everyday life) is innocent of the kind of philosophy that dissolutionism dissolves. It assumes, as Virvidakis puts it, that there is a philosophy-free "'ground level' of our conceptual and linguistic practices," a "'natural', or 'ordinary' ground level of everyday domains of discourse" that is rooted in "the pre-philosophical experience of common usage." There is a presumption, in other words, of a "supposedly natural 'default' position" that stands in contrast to "the supposedly artificial, contingent and ultimately useless edifices of philosophers" (Virvidakis 2008, 164). The default position is 'default' because, at least in the absence of legitimate challenges, it stands in no need of "theoretical support" (Virvidakis 2008, 165). Thus, dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies "aim at reestablishing the status quo of our common linguistic practices, acquiescing in the pre-philosophical uses of words in our language-games" (Virvidakis 2008, 171).

In short, as Rico Gutschmidt puts it, "quietism... is supposed to bring us back to where we were in our everyday lives before we got disturbed by philosophical questions" (Gutschmidt 2019, 1). On the assumption that, in everyday life, we take our everyday epistemic practices to be legitimate, this suggests that the quietude of quietism is not just a matter of no longer being

'anxious' about philosophical problems; it is the deeper quietude borne of "resting content at home like Moore, inside the plain" (LS, 759, ¶15). Everyday life is, as Clarke puts it, "secure against outside undermining" (LS, 767, ¶51). Given this security, we are free to acquiesce once again in everyday life: we have acquired the "intellectual right to shrug our shoulders at skeptical questions" (McDowell 1996, 143). This dimension of quietude, then, goes hand-in-hand with recognition of what I've been calling, throughout this essay, the inherent (plain) epistemic authority of everyday life. As inherent, everyday life's (plain) authority is underived from philosophy. Its authoritativeness—the 'legitimacy' or 'genuineness' of our everyday epistemic practices—is not the conclusion of a philosophical argument, nor of any other sort of argument; it is rather a recognition (an 'acknowledgement') of what "everyone knows" (McDowell 2009, 370), at least "until we forget it in philosophical reflection" (McDowell 2009, 369). As we've seen, Clarke holds that in everyday life "a 'proof' like [Moore's]" handwaving proof of the existence of his hands "*is* a proving." These sorts of everyday proofs succeed, for Clarke, because in everyday life our (plain) knowing of such things "stands in need of no argued defense." Crucially, this is so "*because* the [plain] epistemic is immune... from skeptical assault" (LS, 754, ¶4a; emphasis added). Clarkean quietism, then, will lean on a kind of 'defaultism' of the sort we've seen in Austin and Michael Williams. Everyday life has inherent (plain) epistemic authority in the sense that, though fallible, all (at least the majority) of the sorts of ordinary, everyday knowledge-claims we make in the course of everyday life are to be considered (plainly) legitimate *until and unless* a legitimate challenge against them is raised.

The idea of a return to a state of prephilosophical innocence is present in the works of several recent authors who pursue dissolutionist anti-skeptical strategies. Genia Schönbaumsfeld, for instance, writes that "the realism this book makes available just returns us

to our pre-theoretical notions which an illusion of doubt had seemed to put in peril" (Schönbaumsfeld 2016, 132). Duncan Pritchard is more circumspect.

> With the radical skeptical problem dealt with, does this mean that we can return to a state of epistemic innocence, on par with how we conceived of our epistemic position prior to engaging with the skeptical problem? One might think that the answer to this question is straightforwardly yes, but, as we will see, I'm not convinced that matters are quite so straightforward. (Pritchard 2016, 184)

Even so, Pritchard is comfortable concluding that "there is nothing epistemically amiss... with the beliefs and commitments held by those who... never left a state of epistemic innocence" (Pritchard 2016, 184–5). The only vestiges of anxiety—what Pritchard calls "epistemic vertigo"—are held by *philosophers*, who can perhaps never entirely return to a state of prephilosophical innocence.[11] But Pritchard accepts that there *is* such a state: "[T]he epistemic position of those who haven't engaged with this problem is... perfectly in order" (Pritchard 2016, 186). As we'll see in Chapter 7, Clarke (and Stroud) can be read as likewise holding that a successful diagnosis–therapy–dissolution of skepticism straightforwardly returns us to our prephilosophical everyday life, understood as enjoying inherent epistemic authority.

Before moving on, let's return to Sextus's scheme of possible outcomes of inquiry and ask where within it we ought to place dissolutionism. Is it a discovery, a denial of discovery, or a continuation of the investigation? It might be thought that dissolutionism is a kind of discovery. It is not the sort of discovery Sextus has in mind, namely, discovery of the "truth" of

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[11] One might support Pritchard's intuitions here by appeal to al-Ghazālī's thought that "there is no point in reverting to conformism once one has left it behind," for "[i]t is a precondition of being a conformist that the conformist not know that he is merely conforming" (al-Ghazālī 2005, 64). The same point is made by Pierre Bourdieu with his distinction between *doxa*, "that which is taken for granted... and therefore goes unquestioned" (Bourdieu 1977, 166), and *orthodoxy*, "straight, or rather *straightened*, opinion" (Bourdieu 1977, 169). Bourdieu argues that the category of orthodoxy emerges only with the breakdown of "the primal state of innocence of doxa"; it "aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring" that primal innocence (Bourdieu 1977, 169). In outlining what he takes to be Hume's position, Michael Williams expresses what seems to be basically the same idea: "Innocence once lost is never regained" (UD, 9).

the matter under investigation. In the case of 'Cartesian' external-world skepticism, that would amount to the discovery that we *can* have empirical knowledge in philosophical cases or, stated differently, that we can have knowledge under the conditions of philosophical inquiry set by the Cartesian framework. More promising is to classify dissolutionism as a kind of denial of discovery. Again, the dissolutionist denial is not of the sort Sextus has in mind: it is not a negative answer to the 'Cartesian' question. It denies that any 'positive' or 'substantive' philosophical 'discovery' is required if we are to conclude that we can have empirical knowledge. Dissolutionists reject the inquiry itself. But on what basis? If they have no *principled rationale* for rejecting the inquiry, then they will be susceptible to the objection that they have simply refused to address the problem. Dissolution is not straightforward refutation, but neither is it "resolutely turning one's back on" philosophical problems (McGinn 1989, 56). Now, dissolutionists' rationales for rejecting the inquiry will depend on the form of therapy they adopt. In some cases, at least, it seems that the dissolutionist denial of discovery must itself be based on a discovery, e.g., the discovery that philosophical-skeptical questions are meaningless. If they are to prove dialectically effective, such conclusions cannot simply be foisted onto the inquiry from the outside, as it were. To stick with the 'meaninglessness' objection, traditional philosophical inquiries are not *obviously* meaningless. Therefore, any attempt to show that they *are* must arise from an engagement with the problems themselves. In that case, though, it seems that the conclusion of meaninglessness is itself a positive outcome of inquiry. I propose, then, the ambiguous positioning of dissolutionism represented in Figure 15.

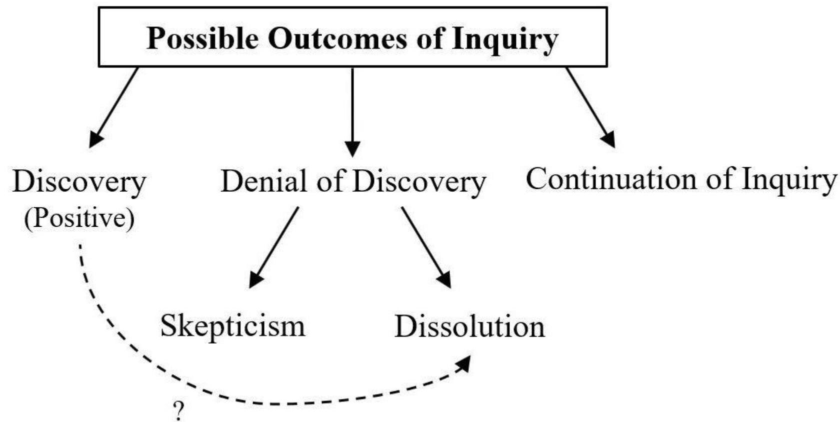

FIGURE 15: Possible Outcomes of Inquiry

Applying this scheme to Clarke, the inquiry is into Q_1: "Can we ever know$_{ph}$ we're awake, not dreaming?" Positive discovery takes the form of CS_{ph}: "We can know$_{ph}$ we're not dreaming." The skeptical denial of discovery takes the form of SK_{ph}: "We cannot know$_{ph}$ that we're not dreaming." The dissolutionist denial of discovery is a rejection of the question (Q_1) on the grounds that it is indeterminate: "The philosophical question Q_1 begged the question, the question whether it could be a question, in supposing that 'dream' could figure in the question itself" (LS, 769, ¶61). (In what follows, I cash out the notion of 'rejecting the question' in terms of rejecting the question's *conceptual framework*.) What, though, is the status of the dissolutionist response? Is Clarke's conclusion the result of a positive philosophical discovery? Is he saying, in effect, "We now know$_{ph}$ that Q_1 cannot be answered because it is indeterminate"? The answer must be "No." Yet the alternative, it seems, is that he concludes that we can know$_{pl}$ that Q_1 cannot be answered because it is indeterminate. In that case, though, the worry is that, since this conclusion avers only to K_{pl}, it cannot underwrite the dissolution of philosophical Q_1 in the sense that the problem it represents simply disappears. The underlying questions here are: Just where does Clarke leave us at the end of LS vis-à-vis the philosophical (the topic of 7.2),

and what is the scope and disruptive potential of the 'new problem' that is the legacy of skepticism (the topic of 7.3)?

6.3 Pyrrhonian Suspension of Judgment

In this section, I offer as a contrast to theoretical dissolutionism a Fredean interpretation of the Pyrrhonian anti-skeptical strategy. The Pyrrhonian philosophical therapy leads not to dissolution and quietude, as I'm using those terms, but to suspension of judgment (*epochē*) and equanimity (*ataraxia*). There are, however, deep affinities between dissolution and suspension and between dissolutionist quietude and suspensive equanimity. Ray Sorensen asks, "Is there an analogy between dissolution and Sextus Empiricus' *epoche*...?" (Sorensen 1993, 1). He does not follow up on this question, but I take it that he thinks there is. Virvidakis argues that "the first well-known example of quietist tendencies... is that of ancient sceptics," particularly "Pyrrhonian sceptics" (Virvidakis 2008, 158). There is no question that Pyrrhonism, like all the Hellenistic schools, understands itself as a kind of philosophical therapy intended "to cure by argument (*logō*)... the conceit and rashness of the dogmatists" (PH, 3.280). The medical analogy is central to the connection numerous commentators have drawn between Pyrrhonism and Wittgenstein.[12] As for 'quietude' specifically, it is itself an acceptable translation of *ataraxia*, as evidenced by the fact that that is how R.G. Bury translates it.[13] Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that the two dimensions of quietude I singled out above are central to *ataraxia*, namely, freedom from

[12] See Chapter 1, fn. 33.

[13] The current standard translation, used by both Etheridge and Annas & Barnes, is 'tranquility.' Benson Mates opts not to translate many of the terms that are central to Pyrrhonism, including *ataraxia*. I prefer 'equanimity' for reasons I won't get into here. A.A. Long, referring to the Epicureans' use of *ataraxia*, writes, "I am tempted to translate [*ataraxia*] very freely as 'enlightenment'" (Long 2006, 30)—a proposal I find as fascinating as it is problematic. (I would note that Long does not give in to this temptation.)

the anxiety induced by the felt need to answer traditional philosophical problems and the peace of mind that attends recognition of everyday life's inherent epistemic and practical authority (see Eichorn 2014, 137–9). Adrian Kuzminski tells us that *ataraxia* was "originally a military term indicating calm by soldiers under attack" (Kuzminski 2008, 2). Analogously, we might think of quietude–equanimity as the calm acceptance of everyday life in the face of philosophy's assault upon it, an attitude undergirded by the sense that philosophy (the skeptic) has been "disarmed" (LS, 767, ¶51). Philosophical therapy is supposed to bring us to the point that we can, as Kant put it, "look upon all [the] vain attacks [of philosophy] with tranquil indifference" (Kant 1929, 596, A743/B771).

Despite their deep affinities, it seems to me that the difference between dissolution and suspension is fundamental enough to warrant terminological distinction. What, then, is Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment, and how does it differ from dissolution? To begin with, let's return to Sextus's scheme of possible outcomes of inquiry. Unlike dissolution, suspension of judgment is in no way a denial of discovery in the relevant sense. Pyrrhonians respond to Q_1 neither as skeptics do nor as the sort of dissolutionists I have in mind do. If there is a dissolutionist element in Pyrrhonism, then it is *practical*, not *theoretical*. What dissolves is not the philosophical problem, but a sense of the problem's *importance*. Specifically, what dissolves is the worry that failure to solve (or dissolve) the problem would open the door to full-blown epistemic and practical nihilism. The difference between 'practical' and 'theoretical' dissolution is simultaneously subtle and, I think, profound. (I return to this distinction in 7.3.3, below.)

The second thing to note about suspension vis-à-vis Sextus's scheme is that suspension is not explicitly part of that scheme. Sextus tells us that Pyrrhonians continue the inquiry: they claim neither a positive nor a negative discovery. The question of whether, and if so why and

how, Pyrrhonians continue philosophical inquiry after having achieved *ataraxia* is much-debated in the secondary literature. For present purposes, it is enough to see that Pyrrhonians are *free* to continue the inquiry in a way that philosophers falling into the other categories are not (for reasons discussed above). For Sextus, this freedom goes hand-in-hand with the at-least-preliminary result of a non-settled inquiry: suspension of judgment. Thus, we can restate Sextus's scheme in terms of the following three options: acceptance (of a conclusion to the inquiry), rejection (of all conclusions to the inquiry), and suspension of judgment.

It is important to see that Pyrrhonian *epochē* is at least primarily an *outcome* of inquiry. One might think that suspension of judgment is a prerequisite for inquiring in the first place. After all, if one has already rendered a judgment on the matter to be investigated, then what is the point of the investigation? One can choose to inquire into one's *judgment*, as it were, but that is not the same thing as inquiring into the object of the judgment, the thing or matter itself—though doing so may involve or call for such direct inquiry. Sextus is clear, however, that *epochē* regarding *p* is the *result* of failing to reach a determinant conclusion in one's inquiry into *p*: Pyrrhonism is called 'suspensive' (*ephecticē*) "from the state of mind (*pathous*) that comes about in the inquirer (*sceptomenon*) *after* the investigation" (PH, 1.7; emphasis added). I take this to suggest that Pyrrhonian *epochē* is distinct from merely being uncertain, having no opinion, or not knowing what to say, all of which might precede inquiry. Suspension of judgment as it fits into the diagnosis–therapy–suspension sequence is obviously consequent to diagnosis and therapy.

Even so, there *is* a kind of suspension of judgment that is antecedent to traditional-philosophical inquiry. (I'll put aside the question of whether this sense of *epochē* can be found in Sextus.) Though in what follows I will not principally have in mind this sense of suspension,

it is worth pausing to say a few things about it. As we saw in discussing Clarke (2.3, 3.2), adoption of the traditional philosophical-theoretical standpoint requires prescinding our discourse from the contexts of everyday life. We take this 'leap' out of our everydayness in an attempt to achieve absolute objectivity. This requires suspending judgment on everyday common sense. We find this 'methodological' use of *epochē* in Husserl, for whom *epochē* means suspending judgment on what he calls "the general thesis of the natural attitude."[14] The 'general thesis' is more or less what I refer to as commonsense realism (4.2.2–3): the thesis of the world's existence, in metaphysical-realist terms, and of our epistemic–cognitive access to it, in direct-realist terms.[15] Husserlian *epochē* in no way entails denying or even ceasing to hold everyday first-order beliefs:

> In relation to *each* thesis we are able, with complete freedom [as the rational beings we are], to exercise this distinctive *epochē*, *a certain withholding of judgment that is compatible with the unshaken and even unshakeable (because evident) conviction of truth*. The thesis is 'put out of action,' bracketed, it is transformed into the modification 'bracketed thesis,' the judgment simply into the '*bracketed judgment*.' (Husserl 2014, 54–5)

Suspending judgment in this sense "is not a transformation of the thesis into the antithesis, of the positive into the negative... *We do not give up the thesis that we have posited, we alter nothing in our conviction*" (Husserl 2014, 54). Given a commitment to the traditional-philosophical project, we are called upon to 'give up' the general thesis of the natural attitude only if

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[14] Husserl adopted the term *epochē* from the ancient skeptics (see Chapter 1, fn. 31), but uses it as a 'methodological' replacement for Cartesian skepticism.

[15] Husserl states, in a phenomenological mode, the general thesis of the natural attitude this way: "I find constantly on hand opposite me the one spatiotemporal actuality to which I myself belong, as do all the other human beings who find themselves in it and related to it in a similar way... No doubt or rejection of anything given in the natural world changes anything in *the natural attitude's general thesis*. As an actuality, 'the' world is always there; at most it is here or there 'other' than I supposed; this or that is to be stricken *from it*, so to speak, under the title of 'illusion,' 'hallucination,' and the like, stricken from it as the world that—in the sense of the general thesis—is always there" (Husserl 2014, 52).

skepticism turns out to be the result of philosophical inquiry. Whether it is antecedent or consequent to philosophical inquiry, *epochē* is not a kind of negative dogmatism.

Contrasting 'antecedent' and 'consequent' *epochē* brings into focus a crucial feature of the Fredean interpretation of Pyrrhonism. Whereas antecedent *epochē* is suspension of judgment on prephilosophical everyday life, consequent *epochē* is suspension of judgment on the project of traditional philosophy that was inaugurated by the original, antecedent *epochē*. From a Fredean perspective, confusion over the scope of Pyrrhonian *epochē*—does Sextus call for suspension of judgment on *all* beliefs or on only some subset of (perhaps suspiciously abstruse) beliefs?—results from a failure to appreciate that how one answers this question (or even the spirit in which one asks it) will depend on one's view of the relation between the philosophical and the everyday. On the traditional view (4.1.1), the philosophical takes precedence over the everyday. If everyday beliefs are justified or legitimate only if they are supported by a philosophical account, then Pyrrhonians will suspend judgment on *all* beliefs. As Frede puts it, "[E]verything, if considered only as an object for reason, can be called into question... Nothing, looked at in this way, will be evident to the skeptic, not even the most lowly, ordinary belief" (Frede 1979, 195). Given a shift from the 'natural' to the 'philosophical' attitude, "things which we ordinarily would count as true no longer necessarily qualify as such" (Frede 1984, 210). But—and this is one of Frede's main points—skeptics are under no obligation to assent to the traditional account of the relation between the philosophical and the everyday. Indeed, they will suspend judgment on any such account, at least insofar as it is intended philosophically.

For Frede, the defining characteristic of the philosophical attitude is the creation of "a global contrast between appearance and truth or reality." Given that, for at least most of our empirical beliefs, we ordinarily think of them as beliefs about reality, not appearances, it is by

way of the global appearance–reality distinction that "dogmatic philosophy" manages to "[call] into question all the truths we ordinarily go by" (Frede 1984, 210). The philosophical ('global') appearance–reality distinction is a sort of *magnification* of the ordinary appearance–reality distinction that we routinely invoke in everyday life, e.g., "in the case of illusions, or in the case of deception" (Frede 1984, 221).[16] "If, for example, it is pointed out that we have not properly seen the thing, that we falsely presupposed this or that, that we inferred something incorrectly etc., we shall no longer think that what seemed to be the case is so" (Frede 1979, 189). The philosophical appearance–reality distinction, on the other hand, opens up the possibility that *all* we ever experience are appearances, that reality lies beyond our cognitive reach. For Clarke, as we've seen, this sort of appearance–reality distinction emerges when we insert 'mental planes' between our experience and the world (3.5.1). The effect is to give the problem of empirical knowledge a particular shape. The task becomes one of demonstrating, on the basis of what is available to us on the near-side of the 'mental plane' (i.e., perceptual experiences), that we have knowledge of what lies on the plane's far-side (the objective world). The resulting 'picture' of our epistemic predicament becomes the *conceptual framework* of the traditional-philosophical inquiry into the possibility of empirical knowledge. On the Cartesian model, perceptual experience is conceptualized as belonging to an "inner world" of "mental contents (ideas or

[16] This point is well-put by Rachel Barney: "... the sceptic's investigation takes place in a particular dialectical context. The appearance–reality distinction is itself entrenched in *bios* [everyday life]. But by the time the sceptic appears on the stage"—note the Clarkean echo here—"the distinction has been seized upon and transformed by the dogmatic philosophers. *Bios* admits that what appears green in a certain light may really be blue; the dogmatist claims that colour phenomena as a whole are only apparent. *Bios* notes that when we sail past land, it seems to move; the dogmatist claims that all motion is unreal. The dogmatist takes the everyday distinction between apparent and real, made in particular cases and with regard to particular respects, and applies it to some general feature of experience, creating an opposition in which the whole pre-dogmatic realm is cast as appearance. In *bios*, the apparent is what has yet to be confirmed by procedures of investigation (calculating, weighing, measuring). The dogmatist is someone who has a specially privileged procedure of investigation, involving the application of his philosophical knowledge. The dogmatist thus views any results obtainable otherwise, the findings of *bios*, as merely preliminary and defeasible, and so merely a matter of appearance" (Barney, 1992, 307).

representations)" that "are directly accessible." The "outer world" is conceptualized as that which exists independently of any and all mental content. Thus, "the [epistemological] problem is... how to get from these representations to knowledge of the things that the representations represent" (Frede 1979, 187). Frede refers to this version of the philosophical appearance–reality distinction—which I will call *subjectivist*—as "a disastrous misunderstanding of the epistemological problem" (Frede 1979, 187); it is bound up, he says, with "a degenerate form of skepticism," namely, dogmatic skepticism (Frede 1984, 221).

Before turning to his alternative account of the philosophical appearance–reality distinction, I want to round-out Frede's account of Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment. Just as antecedent *epochē* suspends judgment on the conceptual framework of everyday life, according to which we can know there are physical objects because we can perceive them, consequent *epochē* suspends judgment on the conceptual framework of traditional philosophy.

> For all [the skeptic] knows it might be a mistake to distinguish quite generally and globally between how things appear and how they really are... [The] primary function [of the arguments of classical skepticism] is to present the dogmatic with the difficulties which arise from the framework of notions and assumptions within which the dogmatic moves. And we should expect a proper skeptic to question not only the assumptions arrived at within this framework, but the very framework itself. This is what, from the point of view of classical skepticism, the later skeptical tradition failed to do. (Frede 1984, 221–2)

For classical skeptics, the framework of traditional philosophy itself—its presuppositions, its modes of inquiry, its rationalistic pretensions—are just more things to be skeptical about (in the 'classical' sense). Sextus suggests in multiple places that such reflexive philosophical skepticism—that is, skepticism about philosophy—is guiding the skeptic even when she appears to be challenging ordinary, everyday beliefs. Pyrrhonians do not, we're told, "deny what appears (*phaenomena*)"; they "do not overthrow experiential appearances (*phantasian pathēticēn*)" (PH,

1.23). Indeed, "what appears" is "the criterion of the skeptical way of life (*scepticēs agōgēs*)" (PH, 1.22)—not a "criterion of truth" in the dogmatists' strong sense of 'truth,'[17] but rather a criterion of action or "choice" (*haereseōs*) (M, 7.30; cf. PH, 1.16), "that by attending to which [Pyrrhonians] live [their] lives" (PH, 2.14; cf. PH, 1.23–4). What they *do* insist upon is that "reasoning (*lógos*)" does not seem able to provide a satisfactory "rational account (*logō*)" (PH, 1.20) of "the true reality (*hyparxeōs*) of things" (M, 7.27), where 'reality' is understood as necessarily transcending appearances. Thus, even when they seem to be challenging ordinary, everyday beliefs, Pyrrhonians are in fact attempting to undermine philosophy. Philosophy's failure to vindicate everyday commonsense beliefs—i.e., that which appears to be true—reflects badly upon the enterprise as a whole:

> ... if reasoning (*lógos*) is such a trickster that it all but snatches out from under our very eyes even what appears, surely we should view it with suspicion in nonapparent (*adēloes*)[18] matters, so as not to be led into rashness by following it? (PH, 1.20)

Like Thomas Reid some fifteen or so centuries after him, Sextus thinks that traditional philosophy's inability to justify common sense is a reason to reject traditional philosophy.

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[17] Though he often talks as if there were only one kind of criteria of truth, Sextus in fact recognizes three kinds: what he calls "common (*coenōs*), private (*idiōs*), and very private (*idiaetata*)" criteria (PH, 2.15). Among the common criteria of truth are what Sextus calls "'natural criteria' (*physica... critēria*) such as seeing." Sextus "propose[s] to deal principally with the logical"—that is, 'very private'—"criteria," which are "technical measure[s] of apprehension of something nonapparent (*adēlou*)" (PH, 2.15) of the sort that dogmatists "bring forward in philosophizing" (M, 7.33). He focuses on the 'very private' criteria because his primary targets are philosophical dogmatists, according to whom the 'logical' criteria are able to stand in judgment over ("to test") everyday criteria (M, 7.27). Sextus does not himself accept this 'traditional' view of the relation between philosophy and the everyday: the dogmatists' "technical measure[s] of apprehension," he tells us, do not apply "to everyday (*biōtica*) criteria" (PH, 2.15).

[18] This term, *adēlos*, is usually translated 'non-evident' (Bury, Etheridge, Mates); Annas & Barnes opt for 'unclear.' I have chosen 'nonapparent' in order to highlight the contrast between what is *adēlos* and what appears (*phaenomenon*). A more literal Greek rendering of 'nonapparent' is *aphanesin*—a term that Sextus does use (cf. PH, 1.181) and which, I take it, is for him equivalent to *adēlos*.

Unlike Reid, however, Sextus is not dogmatic in his rejection. He does not *deem to be false* the framework of traditional philosophy; rather, in suspending judgment, he rejects that framework in the weaker sense that he no longer *takes it to be true*. It *might* accurately represent our cognitive–perceptual relation to the world, but (*a*) there seems little reason to believe that it does[19] and, more importantly for a Pyrrhonian for whom appearances serve as the criterion of action, (*b*) it does not *seem to be the case* that it is true, at least not in the midst of everyday life.

As with theoretical dissolution, the supposed result of suspension of judgment is a return to everyday life. Sextus tells us that

> ... attending to what appears, we live undogmatically (*adoxastōs*) in accordance with the observances of everyday life (*biōticēn tērēsin*). (PH, 1.23)
>
> ... not only do we not conflict with everyday life, but we actually join the struggle on its side, assenting undogmatically to what it has found to be worthy of belief and taking a stand against the private (*idiōs*) inventions of the dogmatists. (PH, 2.102)
>
> It is enough, I think, to live by experience and undogmatically, in accordance with the common observances and everyday preconceptions (*prolēpsis bioun*), and to suspend judgement about what is said with needless dogmatic subtlety and far beyond the needs of everyday life. (PH, 2.246)

The Pyrrhonian return to everyday life avoids the potential difficulty faced by the dissolutionist return discussed above, for it does not presume a simple reversion to some prior state of philosophical innocence.

Anticipating the next chapter, it is important to note that Robert Fogelin, who sees himself as taking over a Fredean interpretation of Pyrrhonism, misreads Frede on this point. Fogelin claims that

[19] Regarding the Cartesian version of the philosophical appearance–reality distinction, Clarke notes that "arguments given for the sense data thesis are, on the face of it, desperately weak" (NTE, 15).

> The classical sceptic (and here I shall take the Pyrrhonian scepticism of Sextus Empiricus as my example)... was not interested in the plain man's natural and unpretentious beliefs. As long as a person remained content with modestly reporting how things struck him, then the sceptic had nothing to say against him. The object of the sceptic's attack was the philosopher, in particular, the philosopher of a dogmatic cast who attempted to maintain that his opinions enjoyed a special status above those of others. (Fogelin 1992, 216–7)

Anthony Rudd, who likewise sees himself as adopting a Fredean interpretation of Pyrrhonism, holds that what he calls global metaphysical skepticism leaves everyday beliefs intact "provided we construe those beliefs in a modest, pragmatic fashion" (Rudd 2003, 13). But *are* the beliefs of 'plain men' held modestly and pragmatically? Does the 'plain man' "[remain] content with modestly reporting how things strike him"? It seems to me that the answer is clearly, "No." It may be that the plain man's beliefs are "natural and unpretentious" in *some* sense, but it seems to me that most people will not easily abandon commonsense realism if they're pressed on it, as evidenced by Moore's incredulity at the very thought. Still less will they readily abandon their evaluative (ethical, political, aesthetic) judgments or indeed virtually *any* of their opinions. The key notion here is *dogmatism*, which is, alas, not confined to philosophers, but seems to come quite naturally to human beings, most of whom absolutely believe that their "opinions [enjoy] a special status above those of others" (meaning, above those who hold contrary opinions). To be sure, 'dogmatism' and 'philosophy' are not synonymous; but if Clarke is right, then the sort of 'commonsense' beliefs that the skeptic denies—a denial that "comes as a shock" to philosophers and plain men alike (NTE, 62, 242)—are products of philosophizing, a philosophizing rooted in what I have called our common world-sense (4.2.4).

Frede does say that "there is no reason to suppose that [the skeptic's] belief would differ from anyone else's" regarding matters of empirical fact (Frede 1979, 190–1). Even so, "the skeptic [does] differ from the man on the street" in two ways:

> (i) presumably the average person is quite dogmatic about some of his views, especially moral or ethical ones. As far as scientific speculation is concerned, he may be quite content to leave that to others, but when moral or political questions are at stake, he will tend to claim that he does have some deeper insight... (ii) In contrast to the man on the street, the skeptic is acutely aware of the fact that in all sorts of ways things might, in reality, be quite different from how they appear to be. He takes the phenomena as they come, but he knows better than anyone else that nothing rules out the possibility that things could really be radically different. (Frede 1979, 198)

Thus, "[w]hat fundamentally distinguishes the skeptic from other people are not the beliefs he has but his attitude toward them. He no longer has the more or less naive and partially dogmatic attitude of the 'ordinary' man; his relation to his beliefs is permeated by the awareness that things are quite possibly different in reality." Alluding to equanimity or *ataraxia*, Frede goes on to distinguish the skeptic from the philosophical dogmatist as well:

> ... but this possibility ["that things are quite possibly different in reality"] no longer worries [the skeptic]. This distinguishes him from the dogmatist who is so worried by the question, how are things in reality, that he succumbs to the illusion that reason could guarantee the truth of his beliefs, could give him the knowledge which would be secure because of his awareness that things could not, in reality, be different from the way reason says they are. This dogmatic craving for the security of true belief as a necessary, perhaps even a sufficient condition for the tranquility and healing of the soul strikes the skeptic as, at best, futile, perhaps even pathological and harmful. (Frede 1979, 199)

Ultimately, then, what distinguishes Pyrrhonians from both plain men and dogmatic philosophers is that they follow everyday life undogmatically (*adoxastōs*), meaning with an awareness that "what one said one knew could be radically otherwise.... that the whole practice of using the verb 'to know' the way we ordinarily do might be radically mistaken" (Frede 1984, 212). By the same token, of course, perhaps things are *not* radically otherwise; perhaps we are *not* radically mistaken in our everyday knowledge-claims. Insofar as this is a matter to be settled by reason

alone, Pyrrhonians suspend judgment.

'Dogmatic,' then, is a status that can apply to any belief, regardless of content. A belief is dogmatic when it is held dogmatically; thus, it is what I call a *metadoxastic* attitude. Specifically, it is the attitude according to which one regards a belief as absolutely certain, as in Nietzsche's conception of 'convictions' (*Ueberzeugungen*).[20] As we saw in 6.1, dogmas are for Sextus "weighty, substantial beliefs" (Barnes 1982, 69), the paradigm of which are "philosophical principle[s] or... scientific theor[ies]" (Barnes 1982, 73). The relation between dogma so understood and dogmatic everyday beliefs is either *direct* or explicit, as when one self-consciously takes an everyday belief to be underwritten by a philosophical principle or scientific theory that renders it absolutely certain, or *indirect* or implicit, as when one holds a belief *as if* it were known to be absolutely certain. An implicit dogmatist might hold, at least upon reflection, that certain beliefs surely *can* be supported by 'dogmas' in the strict sense or that they require no such support (which is itself, somewhat ironically, a "weighty, substantial" belief).

6.4 Mind, Appearances, and the Objective World

As we've seen, Frede rejects the Cartesian version of the philosophical appearance–reality distinction. It is, he claims, "a disastrous misunderstanding of the epistemological problem" (Frede 1979, 187). The dogmatic skepticism to which it gives rise is "a degenerate form of skepticism" (Frede 1984, 221). What, then, is the correct way to understand the philosophical appearance–reality distinction, according to Frede?

Unfortunately, he does not develop his alternative view of skepticism in any detail,

[20] See 7.3.3, below.

despite that it lies at the heart of his account of Pyrrhonism, as evidenced by the fact that it explains his initially mysterious distinction between having beliefs about "how things are" and having beliefs about "how things *really* are."

> I want to maintain that, although there is a sense in which the skeptic has no beliefs about how things are—namely, he has no beliefs about how things *really* are—there is a perfectly good sense in which he does have beliefs about how things are—namely, to the extent that it seems to be the case that things are so or so... (Frede 1979, 186)

If skepticism is understood on the Cartesian model, this distinction is difficult—if not impossible—to grasp. The easiest way to understand Frede's alternative view of skepticism is to unpack his reference to Plato's Divided Line (Figure 16).

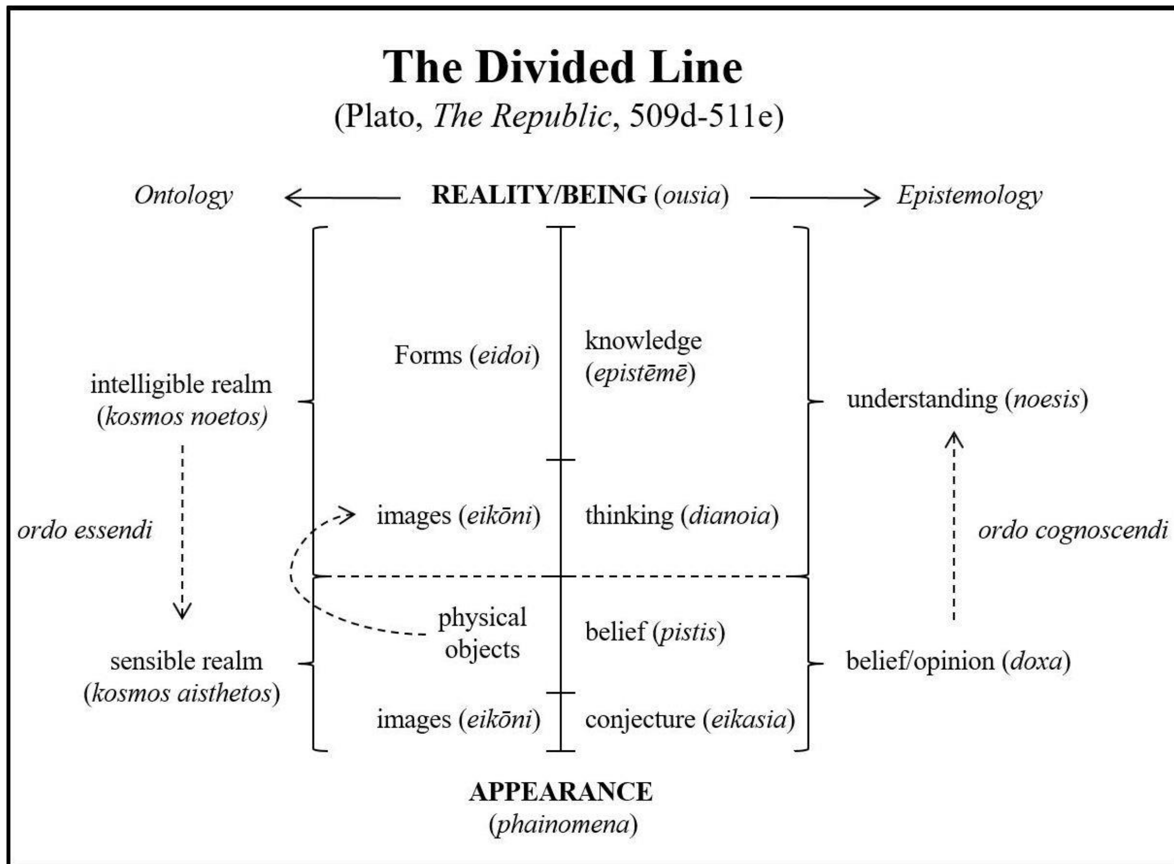

Figure 16: The Divided Line

Frede writes:

> Plato... ascribes a precarious intermediate status to the objects of belief or *doxa* in the *Republic*; they come between what really is, the objects of reason and knowledge, and what does not exist at all. He does not say that what we ordinarily call 'reality' is nothing but appearance, that our ordinary beliefs and impressions are no better than hallucinations. Though they fail to capture true being and, thus, are not really true, this does not mean that they are simply false.

For Plato, the Heraclitan flux of the sensible realm (the realm of appearances) is not simply *unreal* in the sense of lacking any kind of objective reality. Nor is it an 'inner' realm of impressions, representations, or whatever. Yet it is not what is *really real*. What is really real transcends and underlies appearances. It is accessible only to reason or intellect (*nous*) and thus belongs not to the sensible realm, but to the intelligible realm (*kosmos noetos*). In Clarke's terms, the 'mental plane' between appearance and reality is placed not between the 'inner' and the 'outer,' as on the Cartesian model, but between the world as it appears and the world as it is in itself.

> ... it is characteristic of the dogmatists that they believe it is possible to go behind the surface phenomena to the essence of things, to the nature of things, to true reality. We believe that the objects around us are colored; in reality, however, they only reflect light of certain wave-lengths that makes them appear colored... It is in the sense of *this* distinction that the skeptic suspends judgment on how things really are. (Frede 1979, 187).

This amounts, in Clarkean terms, to suspending judgment on *philosophical* claims, understood as claims purporting to be *absolutely objective*. This leaves Pyrrhonians free to make *plain* claims, understood as claims about *appearances*, the sensible realm—how things seem to be. In a passage that is strikingly Clarkean, Frede writes (using as an example a 'philosophical' disagreement over the evidently false claim "Socrates died in 398"),

> ... what is at issue is not whether or not Socrates died in 399 [and therefore not in 398], but whether it is appropriate, given the true nature of things, whether it correctly mirrors reality, to speak of Socrates' having died in 399. This question is not at all settled by the fact that it is clear that we ordinarily do say Socrates died in 399. For it might be that, given the true nature of things, it is inappropriate to speak of persons and times. (1979, 190)

In the remainder of this chapter, I develop an account of Frede's 'Platonic' conception of the appearance–reality distinction. I refer to it as *metaphysical*, as opposed to the 'Cartesian' *subjectivist* version of the distinction. I discuss how the two relate and argue that the metaphysical problem subsumes the subjectivist problem and is therefore the more fundamental of the two.

6.4.1 The Subjectivist Appearance–Reality Distinction

As we saw in 4.2.2, direct realism is a view regarding our cognitive–perceptual relation to the objective ('external') world. Panayot Butchvarov characterizes it in two related ways: first, it is the view "that at least seeing and tactual feelings are simply cases of being mentally confronted with (aware, conscious of) material objects" (Butchvarov 1998, 12); second, it is the view "that perception, whether veridical or not, involves no intermediaries such as sense data, sensations, ways of being appeared to, sense experiences, mental representations, ideas, images, looks, seemings, appearances, occurrent beliefs or 'assents,' or anything else" (Butchvarov 1998, 13). Such intermediaries are, according to the direct realist, "philosophical inventions, whether they are supposed to be particular objects, such as sense data, or properties, such as ways of being appeared to" (Butchvarov 1998, 13). To adopt direct realism is to deny that there is an ontological 'gap' between how things appear to us to be and how things really are in themselves.

Call this 'the skeptical gap.' Given direct realism, we might still contrast '(mere) appearances' with 'reality,' but only in the sense that (mere) appearances are not veridical. Appearances cease to be understood as "intermediaries" standing between us and the world.

But what are 'appearances'? The simplest answer is that they are *how things appear (to one) to be*. This platitude can be understood in different ways, however. Especially in the modern era, 'appearances' are often taken to be *subjective (inner, private) mental states* of one sort or another. In that case, 'reality' (as the contrast-class to 'appearance') is understood, at least in the relevant sense, as that which is *mind-transcendent*.[21] The 'real' external world, as Michael Huemer puts it, "refers to everything that exists outside of one's own mind" (Huemer 2001, 7). Michael Williams writes, "'External' in the phrase 'external world,' does not mean 'in one's surroundings' but 'without the mind.' The essential contrast to external reality is inner experience" (Williams 1996, 369). In this case, the skeptical gap—what Clarke would refer to as a 'mental plane'—is located between the contents of the mind and everything outside of it, including our own bodies.

[21] I say 'in the relevant sense' because one might reasonably suppose that the 'mind' and its 'appearances' also belong to reality. Still, even on this view, paradigms of the Real are mind-transcendent material objects—tables and chairs, etc. The problem of whether, and if so how, mind and its appearances (its 'qualia') are reducible to matter is, needless to say, a profound philosophical conundrum.

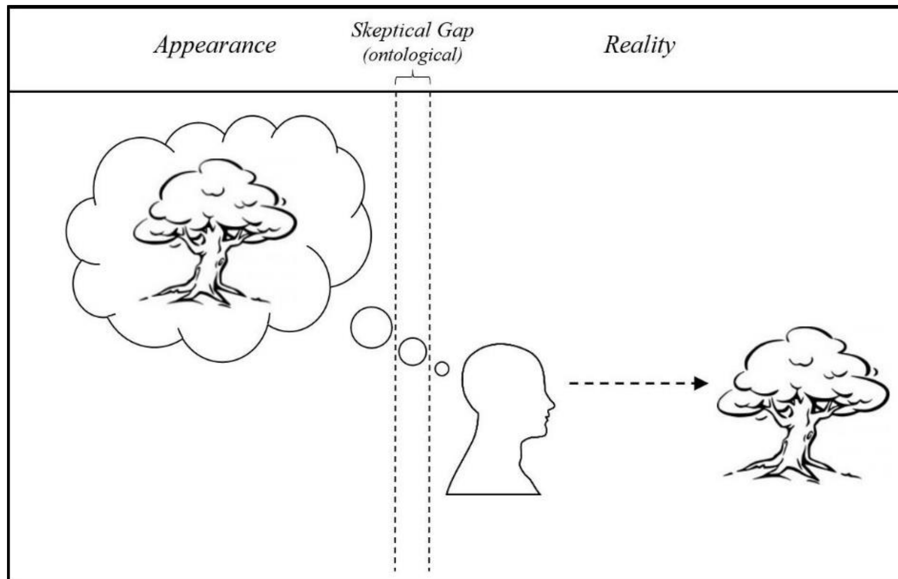

Figure 17: The Subjectivist Appearance–Reality Distinction (I)

I call this *the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction*. It is often associated with Descartes and the mind–body problem. Looked at in these terms, the problem of our knowledge of the external world takes on a particular shape. John McDowell describes it this way:

> In a fully Cartesian picture, the inner life takes place in an autonomous realm, transparent to the introspective awareness of its subject; the access of subjectivity to the rest of the world becomes correspondingly problematic, in a way that has familiar manifestations in the mainstream of post-Cartesian epistemology... [According to that picture,] there is... a gulf, which it [is]... the task of philosophy to try to bridge, or to declare unbridgeable, between the realm of subjectivity and the world of ordinary objects. (McDowell 1986, 236–7; cf. SPS, 32–3)

If all we're ever directly aware of are *subjective appearances*, then how are we to confirm (or disconfirm) that those appearances accord with their purported objects? How are we to transcend that which alone is available to us in perception? We seem to be trapped in our own minds, cut off from the world. This opens up the possibility that the world itself does not *really* exist—that there is only mind, perhaps only *your* mind and perhaps only in *this* moment.

Now, skeptics needn't—and should not—actually *endorse* metaphysical doctrines such as the one represented in the Cartesian picture of the human epistemic standpoint. They needn't prove that the Cartesian picture is true; they need only insist that it is *possible* (or only *possibly* possible, given what we know—i.e., that it is possible *in theory* that it is possible *in fact*) that it *might* be true. Furthermore, they needn't establish that we *are* trapped in our minds, cut off from the world, only that we do not *know* that we are *not* so trapped. The result would be that we do not know whether or not we know anything about the external world—though we *might* know a great deal about it. For genuine skeptics, the skeptical gap is treated not as (known to be) *ontological*, but as *epistemological*, a position I try to represent in Figure 18.

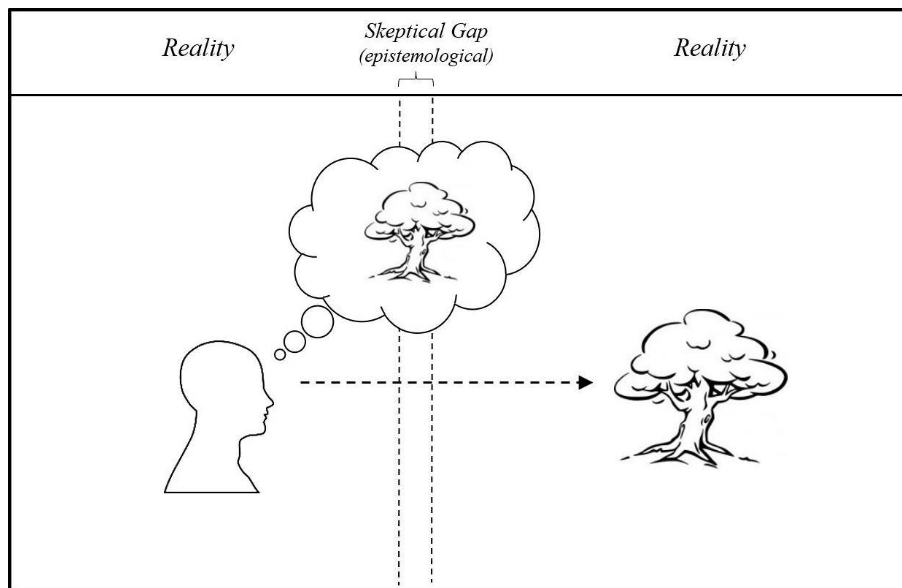

Figure 18: The Subjectivist Appearance–Reality Distinction (II)

(The key idea behind Figure 18 is that the 'skeptical gap' initially emerges from—and remains located within—our *thinking*, which intrudes between us and the world; it is like what

Wittgenstein calls in one place a "philosophical fog."[22])

6.4.2 The Metaphysical Appearance–Reality Distinction

It has been argued with considerable subtlety that external-world skepticism depends on philosophical innovations that we owe to Descartes. If this is right, then no one prior to Descartes so much as considered the possibility of doubting or denying the existence of reality itself—at least, not in a strictly 'philosophical' way.[23] According to such views, the threat of external-world skepticism arises only given the conceptual resources (or perhaps just the philosophical temperament) needed to formulate the doctrine of *idealism*. This is what the ancients are thought to have lacked.[24] Bernard Williams describes idealism as the view "that

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[22] See Wittgenstein 1998, 65. Cf. Wittgenstein 1953, 7, §5.

[23] Regarding this qualification: Anthony Palmer charges Stanley Cavell, in Cavell's 'skeptical' reading of Shakespeare's tragedies, of anachronism, for (*a*) Descartes wrote decades after Shakespeare, (*b*) there is no evidence that Descartes was familiar with the English playwright, and (*c*) "it is becoming increasingly clear that the scepticism which Shakespeare knew from his reading of Montaigne, Pyrrhonian scepticism, was quite different from the scepticism which Descartes sought to overcome in the *Meditations*" (Palmer 2004, 261). Palmer's point is that Cartesian skepticism is in some crucial way *different* from anything that came before it, a claim with which Cavell agrees. How then, Palmer asks, do we square this with Cavell's claim that "the advent of scepticism as manifested in Descartes's *Meditations* is already in full existence in Shakespeare" (Cavell 1987, 3)? In response, Cavell writes that "'full existence' was not to be taken to mean that Shakespeare already contained Descartes' arguments" (Cavell 2004, 279). He goes on to say:

> Why is Palmer so sure that Shakespeare had no equivalent perception [of the 'Cartesian' problem of the external world]? Because it was not 'the scepticism which Shakespeare knew from his reading of Montaigne'? But why assume Shakespeare was incapable of going beyond what he read? [...] Shakespeare's heroes are bedevilled, and I came to follow the idea that what they are bedevilled by is what Descartes, in his philosophical terms, will discover in his hyperbolic doubt. (Cavell 2004, 279–80)

Given that (as my arguments in 6.4 are meant to demonstrate) I take a modest view of the extent and significance of Descartes's innovations over the ancients, I do not share Cavell's way of understanding the relation between Shakespeare's skepticism and the broader skeptical tradition. That said, I agree with him that there is no reason to deny that problems given 'philosophical' expression might very well have been (indeed, probably were) anticipated in earlier forms, particularly in literature and the arts.

[24] This line of thought goes back to Bernard Williams (Williams 1981) and was developed in an influential paper by Myles Burnyeat (Burnyeat 1982). (For earlier statements of related views, see Matson 1966 and Rorty 1979, 139

nothing ultimately exists except minds and their experiences." It is "this kind of view, with its numerous variations, descendants, and modifications, which we do not find in the ancient world" (Williams 1981, 5). Without the idea that it might be the case that "nothing ultimately exists except minds and their experiences," there was no way for the ancients to formulate the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. They might distinguish between 'inner' and 'outer'—indeed, they most assuredly did—but unless they at least envisaged the possibility that there might be *nothing* on the far side of the 'skeptical gap' (except, perhaps, for *more mind*, e.g., ideas in the mind of God), there could be for them no genuine problem of the external-world. Michael Williams claims that the Cartesian problem's "sudden appearance at a definite point in time is suggestive of its dependence on a particular, newly emergent theoretical outlook" (UD, 1), which would render the problem rife for the sort of 'theoretical diagnosis' he propounds.

Advocates of this sort of view hold that all the arguments of the ancient skeptics assume the existence of reality; what those arguments called into question was the reliability of appearances as a guide to reality. The ancients doubted not that reality existed—indeed, they never so much as called into question reality's existence; rather, they doubted at most only that we could *know* what reality was like. This is "the realist assumption" that "Greek thought even at its most radical never quite managed to throw off" (Burnyeat 1982, 275). As Steven Everson puts it,

> The subject-matter of the sceptic's investigation—and thus what he will find himself suspending judgement about—is what the honey is really like. What he does not question is whether the honey is actually there. Whereas Descartes

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ff.) It is at least qualifiedly endorsed in McDowell 1986, 238; M. Williams 1986, 118 & 1991, 1–2; Everson 1991; Hankinson 1995, 26; Stroud 2008, 13; and Bett 2013, 135–8. It is powerfully, and to my mind convincingly, rejected in Bracken 1985. See also Groarke 1984, 1990; Moran 1989, 1999; Bussanich 1994; Fine 2000 & 2003; Dunham, Grant & Watson 2011; and Machuca 2013. Richard Sorabji rejects the view as well, but only because he finds a full-blown ('Berkeleyan') idealism in Saint Gregory of Nyssa's response in the fourth century CE to "the pagan philosopher" Porphyry (Sorabji 2007, 375).

> will... doubt that there is anything beyond that experience, the ancient sceptic merely suspends judgement as to whether the honey is as it appears. Although he points to a distinction between appearances and reality, he does not, as the Cartesian sceptic does, argue that since our knowledge is limited to the first half of that divide, we cannot say whether there is anything at all on the second. His doubt is just whether reality is like its appearance. (Everson 1991, 127; cf. Burnyeat 1982, 257–8)

To be sure, one can marshal a great deal of textual evidence to support this view, and it seems to me to point to something importantly right about the ancients' understanding of the skeptical problematic and how that understanding differs from more distinctively 'modern' formulations. What I disagree with is the further claim that the failure to formulate external-world skepticism on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction constitutes any kind of oversight on the ancients' part, that it signals a restriction on the scope of their skepticism. I disagree, in other words, that Cartesian skepticism represents "a doubt more radical than the traditional sceptic had dared suppose" (Burnyeat 1982, 273). On the contrary, it seems to me that the ancients' understanding of the skeptical problematic is superior to—more plausible, powerful, and intractable than—modern 'Cartesian' formulations. Foremost among the reasons for its superiority is that the ancient model contains, or is capable of containing, the subjectivistic idealism that goes together with the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction as a possible position to take within the conceptual space laid out by that model. Furthermore, it seems to me that the ancient model better accords even with many recent and contemporary articulations of the skeptical challenge—including Clarke's.

For the ancients (and many others after them, down to the present day) the basic question is, as Everson says, *What is reality* really *like?* What is reality 'in itself,' independent of the human mind? Stated in terms of perception, the question is: What is the *ultimate truth* (the ultimate reality) of the objects we seem to perceive? Are they more or less just as and what they

appear to be, as commonsense realism would have it? Or are they instead, 'in themselves,' something radically different—e.g., atoms-and-the-void, an eternally changeless unity-of-being, a network of granular quantum events, et al.? Or is there perhaps ultimately, 'in itself,' nothing more to reality than mind? On this model, the fundamental problem is not subjectivistic, but more broadly *metaphysical*. Accordingly, I refer to it as the 'metaphysical' appearance–reality distinction.

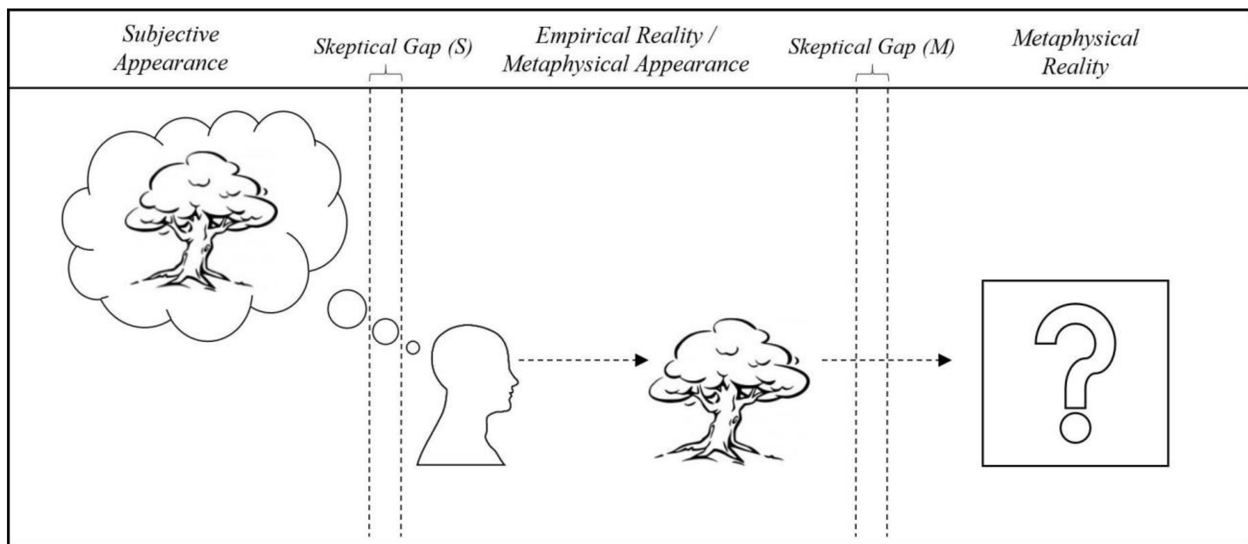

Figure 19: The Metaphysical Appearance–Reality Distinction

There are two skeptical gaps in the metaphysical model: the 'subjectivist' gap between perceptions (subjective appearances) and empirical reality, and the 'metaphysical' gap between empirical reality and metaphysical reality, where metaphysical reality is understood as the *ousia ontōs ousa* spoken of by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*: the *really real reality*.[25]

That the ancients recognized a subjectivist skeptical gap is uncontroversial, what with

[25] I borrow this literal translation from Campbell 1992, 43. Nehamas & Woodruff opt for "a being that really is what it is" (Plato 1997, 525; *Phaedrus*, 247c).

their overt preoccupation with illusions and perceptual relativity. What is denied by what I'll call, in honor of its originator and its most influential expounder respectively, the 'Williams–Burnyeat thesis' is (*a*) that they understood that gap in a robustly ontological way, i.e., as distinguishing between distinct realms or types of being in the style of Descartes's distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and (*b*) that they ever denied or even doubted the existence of a reality on the far side of the subjectivist gap. Regarding (*a*), I'm willing to grant that it may be true. It does seem that at least in a great many cases the ancients understood the subjectivist gap in a far less philosophically loaded way than how it is often understood in the post-Cartesian era. But this fact strikes me as counting *in favor* of the ancient model; for as many philosophers have argued, from Descartes's time down to our own, there seem to be few if any convincing reasons to accept the Cartesian distinction, especially if doing so amounts to accepting the much-maligned doctrine of Cartesian mind–body dualism. Certainly, any skepticism that *depends* on acceptance of such a loaded philosophical doctrine is a curious kind of skepticism indeed. With the ancient model in view, one might wonder, with Hegel, what the ancient skeptics would have made of "a bastard off-spring of this kind, a skepticism which can come to terms with" such "glaring dogmatism" (Hegel 2000, 322).

I'm likewise willing to accept that (*b*) may be true. Perhaps the ancients never did doubt or deny the existence of a reality on the far side of the subjectivist gap. But we need to ask ourselves just what this amounts to. What does it mean to accept that there is something beyond subjective appearances, that there is something that those appearances are appearances *of*? The obvious, and I think correct, answer is that there is no *one* thing it could mean. The Williams–Burnyeat thesis holds that this acceptance amounts to a presupposition of *realism*. It is their realism that kept the ancients from developing "a doubt more radical than the traditional [i.e.,

ancient] sceptic had dared suppose" (Burnyeat 1982, 273). But what is this 'realism'? The Williams–Burnyeat thesis seems to hold that the realism in question is what I've been calling commonsense realism. If this is right, then the ancients never moved beyond acceptance of the naïve philosophy of everyday life. Some doubted or denied that we could *know* the truths associated with the naïve philosophy, but they never called into question the framework of that philosophy itself.

It is here, I think, that the Williams–Burnyeat thesis goes profoundly awry. Consider what is minimally entailed by accepting that there is something that appearances are appearances *of*. Does Berkeleyan idealism deny this claim? No. For Berkeley, subjective appearances are appearances of ideas that are ultimately housed in the mind of God. Berkeley does not deny the existence of the empirical world, understood as the 'commonsensical' world of everyday objects; what he denies is that 'everyday objects' are *really*, in *ultimate reality*, what they appear to us to be. Crucially, the assumption here is that how things 'appear to us to be' accords with the *account* of what things *are* provided by commonsense realism, the naïve philosophy of everyday life. It is because he does not deny some degree of reality to the empirical world that Berkeley could think of himself as a defender of common sense. He is not, to be sure, a defender of commonsense realism; but he claims that commonsense realism is just a false *theory*, one that can be replaced without denying 'reality' to the phenomena that commonsense realism purports to explain. In his view, commonsense realism "is the very root of scepticism" (Berkeley 2008, 117). In order to regain our commonsense knowledge, we need only reconceive the meaning of such terms as "'thing', 'reality', 'existence'" (Berkeley 2008, 118) so as to eliminate any connotation of a connection to mind-independent matter. Then we will again be free, as we are in prephilosophical everyday life, to speak knowingly of 'real existing things'—only now those

‘things’ will be understood as things that exist only so long and insofar as they are perceived, whether by us, other human beings, or ultimately God. Shorn of the false equation of ‘realism’ and ‘commonsense realism,’ the “realist assumption” of the Williams–Burnyeat thesis is such that, as Harry Bracken argues, “it is hard to imagine a philosophical position which is not realist” (Bracken 1985, 65).

It is helpful at this point to recall Clarke’s thought that the theory of knowledge that goes together with commonsense realism is a product of philosophizing. It is “natural, immediate, and compelling” (NTE, 241), and as such virtually “everyone succumbs” to it “as soon as he begins thinking in general terms about empirical knowledge” (NTE, 243). Nonetheless, it is a philosophical *theory* and therefore is, as all theories notoriously are, underdetermined by the data it purports to explain.

If this is right, then ‘Cartesian’ subjectivistic skepticism is *at best* a problem that is subsidiary to ancient ‘metaphysical’ skepticism, by which I mean that even should we solve the Cartesian problem—even should we bridge (or dissolve) the subjectivist gap—we will have done so only to confront the problem of metaphysical skepticism. It might be argued that subjectivistic skepticism is more fundamental since unless we can solve *it*, then we can’t even begin to address metaphysical skepticism. But as I’ve said, it is widely thought (correctly, to my mind) that subjectivistic skepticism depends on holding contentious philosophical doctrines that we are by no means rationally compelled to accept. As Hegel argued, Cartesian skepticism is itself *dogmatic*: far from being *more* skeptical than ancient skepticism, it is “*not* skeptical *enough*” (Hegel 2000, 327; cf. PR, 192–3). An initially nondogmatic skepticism will take as its starting-point not ‘sense-data,’ ‘impressions,’ Lockean ‘ideas,’ or any other substantial intermediaries between us and the world; rather, it will begin with the empirical world as we

encounter it in our everyday lives (which includes our subjective experience, for subjective experience itself appears to be a part of or to be intertwined with the empirical world). From there, a subjectivist idealism à la Berkeley might emerge, but only by crossing the *metaphysical* skeptical gap. As in Figure 20, below, the ancient model allows that it might turn out that the truth of the metaphysical world is that it is *mind* (subjectivist idealism), or that it is more or less just what we thought it was (commonsense realism), or that it is something else entirely, something other than the thoughts and objects with which we're familiar. I refer to this last position as *metaphysical idealism*, which is another, non-subjectivist alternative to commonsense metaphysical realism.[26]

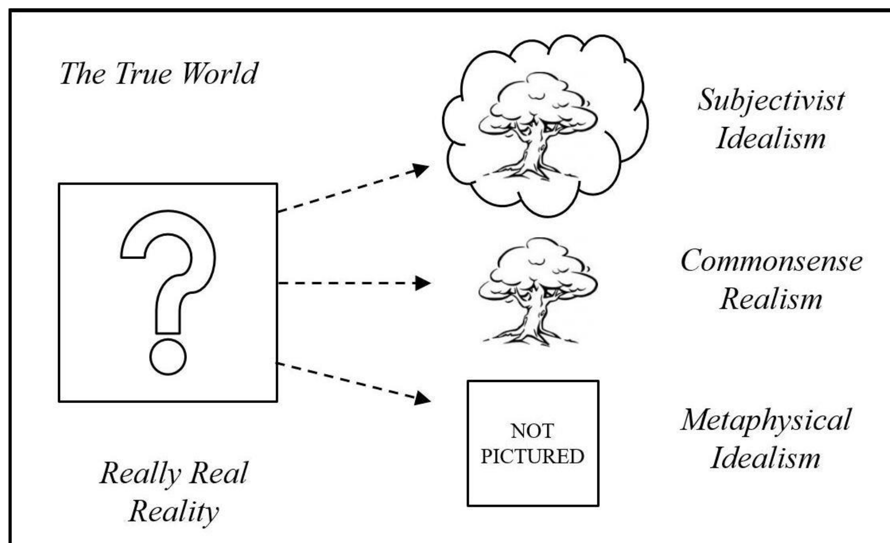

Figure 20: True Worlds

There is no question that the ancients formulated metaphysical-idealist doctrines. As we've seen, Bernard Williams characterizes idealism in such a way as to exclude from its ranks

[26] Strictly speaking, I consider subjectivist idealism to be itself a kind of metaphysical idealism. I separate it out here for presentational reasons that I should think are obvious.

anything other than subjectivist idealism à la Berkeley. In this very restricted sense of 'idealism,' the Williams–Burnyeat thesis might be right, at least for the most part (though I remain unconvinced). Even so, it is bizarre on its face to deny idealistic doctrines *tout court* to the ancients. According to Plato's theory in the *Republic*, all that is *really real* are *eidoi*, a term that used to be translated as 'Ideas,' but which is now more commonly rendered 'Forms.' For the Plato of the *Republic*, whatever reality inheres in the objects or phenomena of the sensible realm is subsidiary to the really real reality of the *eidoi*. The same holds, at least generally speaking, for any kind of metaphysical idealism. Straightforward scientific realism, for instance, insists that the empirical world is in some way or another an illusory *way in which* the truth of reality *appears* to creatures like us.[27] It remains true, in some sense, that there are tables and chairs (and thoughts and feelings); but all that *really* exists is something else entirely. The same is true, as we've seen, with subjectivist idealism. Berkeley doesn't deny that tables and chairs exist; what he denies is that they are in reality the material objects posited by commonsense realism.

The crucial 'philosophical' move is to treat—at least provisionally, for methodological

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[27] For an engaging and accessible (though somewhat philosophically lightweight) attempt to recover our commonsense conception of the world from the picture of reality offered by quantum mechanics, see Omnès 1999, Ch. 10. An even more radical effort is made by Shimon Malin. Malin is not satisfied with vindicating our commonsense conception of the world from the onslaught of quantum theory; he sets out to "provide Western civilization with a comprehensive world-view" that, in supposed harmony with quantum theory, once again accords to "each human being... a place of great significance and great dignity... albeit in a post-postmodern context" (Malin 2001, xii, xiv).

It might seem strange that I should associate scientific *realism* with metaphysical *idealism*. I should think it is clear, however, that by the 'empirical' world I mean roughly the world understood in terms of the objects of our everyday experience. The empirical world in this sense is the familiar, 'commonsensical' world of tables and chairs and other people: it is "the everyday vision of the world, as it is revealed to us by common sense and visual intuition" (Omnès 1999, 184). By the 'metaphysical' world, I mean roughly the world understood independently of our (direct) experience. The at least in-principle empirical tractability of the 'metaphysical' world posited by many versions of scientific realism can confuse the distinction I'm drawing. What is important is that the metaphysical world be in some important sense *hidden* from us in our everyday lives—it is a world of "unobservables" understood as "things one cannot perceive with one's unaided senses" (Chakravartty 2007, 4). The 'empirical world' is perhaps best thought of, then, as 'the everyday world.' (Notice the terminological shift between Rudd 2000 and Rudd 2003, Ch. 1.)

purposes—empirical reality as the *appearance* of a deeper metaphysical reality. The ‘empirically real’ is (potentially, should idealism prevail) mere appearance. As Rachel Barney writes,

> The dogmatist takes the everyday distinction between apparent and real, made in particular cases and with regard to particular respects, and applies it to some general feature of experience, creating an opposition in which the whole pre-dogmatic realm is cast as appearance... The dogmatist is someone who has a specially privileged procedure of investigation, involving the application of his philosophical knowledge. The dogmatist thus views any results obtainable otherwise, the findings of *bios* [i.e., everyday life], as merely preliminary and defeasible, and so merely a matter of appearance. (Barney 1992, 307)

The idea is that, as in Plato’s Divided Line, we iterate at a higher (metaphysical) level the ‘empirical’ contrast between mere images (“shadows... reflection in water... [e]verything of that sort”) and what those things are images *of* (“the animals we see every day, the entire plant world, and the whole class of human artefacts”) (Plato 2000, 217, 510a). For my purposes, I want to replace ‘mere images’ with subjective appearances. In everyday life, we assume that empirical reality is the ultimate reality with which subjective appearances may or may not correspond. This encapsulates the entire conceptual space of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. But that model depends for its philosophical interest on Cartesian assumptions about the relation between the subjective and the empirical. For Plato, philosophy at this point has hardly even begun, if it’s begun at all. Things really get going only when “the soul... treats as images the things which were treated as originals” previously (Plato 2000, 218, 511a)—that is, when we treat *everyday empirical reality* as being (at least potentially) naught but *metaphysical appearance*.

We find the same move being made by Husserl in his Pyrrhonian reconfiguration of the Cartesian skeptical method. In what he calls “the *natural attitude* of the mind... our attention is

turned... *to things* given to us, and given as a matter of course... In perception, for example, a thing stands before us as a matter of course" (Husserl 1999, 15). Once we adopt "the *philosophical attitude*," however, "[w]hat appears to natural thinking as the matter-of-fact givenness of known objects within knowledge becomes a riddle" (Husserl 1999, 17). The shift from the natural to the philosophical attitude is achieved by adopting *epochē* with respect to "the general thesis of the natural attitude." That 'attitude' amounts to commonsense realism. We needn't "*give up the thesis*," but only 'modify' it: "*we place it as it were 'out of action,' we 'suspend it,' we 'bracket it'*" (Husserl 2014, 54). That is, we no longer treat empirical reality as *ultimate* (and hence unquestionable) reality: "At the outset of the critique of knowledge, the entire world—physical and psychological nature, and ultimately one's own human ego...—must be assigned the index of *questionableness* (*Fraglichkeit*). Its being, its validity, remains undecided" (Husserl 1999, 23; trans. modified).

6.4.3 Empirical vs. Metaphysical Skepticism

According to the modern, subjectivist model of the human epistemic standpoint, 'mind-independence' means *mind-transcendent*. To grasp mind-independent reality, we must transcend the gap between the 'inner' contents of our minds and the 'outer' empirical world that we assume those contents to mirror. But this position assumes, among other things, that the empirical world that we discover upon transcending our minds is necessarily mind-independent. The ancient, metaphysical model makes no such assumption. On that model, the empirical world itself is thought to be (at least potentially) dependent on the mind in the sense that it is what it is only *for us*. It allows that we seem to occupy an objective (and intersubjective) world and asks what the

ultimate or *absolutely objective truth* of that world is, independent of subjectivity. True 'objectivity,' on this model, is not to be found in the everyday empirical world—at least not straight away. We must endeavor to see the everyday world *from outside*, or (as Nagel puts it) *from nowhere within the world*, in order to determine what that world is *in itself*, independently of our perceiving or experiencing of it. The fundamental task is not to escape the prisons of our sealed-off minds, but to think our way beyond the world of our everyday experience to the mind-independent reality that is thought to underlie it.

Empirical skepticism targets our knowledge of the empirical world. It trades in arguments from illusions, substitutions, et al. It is in this vein that we read about painted zebras, false barn facades, and stuffed goldfinches. In such cases we are mistaken about particular empirical facts on account of not knowing certain other empirical facts. Metaphysical skepticism, on the other hand, calls into question, in the ways I've described, the status of the everyday empirical world itself.

Not only do I think that skepticism is best understood as metaphysical; I also believe that it is in fact widely understood as metaphysical rather than empirical even by those who continue to think that the conceptual space of the skeptical problematic is captured by the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. As Anthony Rudd notes,

> Philosophers as such are not interested in particular empirical claims ("the cow is in the field") but in general categorical ones ("material objects exist")... The dispute about whether that is a real cow or a replica arises on and can be settled on a straightforward empirical level. (We can go up and look at the beast.) A properly philosophical dispute—and therefore one which a philosophical skeptic will be interested in—will have a quite different character.
>
> To see this point, it may help to imagine a group of philosophers in the field, all of whom have looked carefully and who therefore agree on the empirical fact that there is a cow there. What they may still disagree with one another about is the fundamental ontological analysis of that fact. We can suppose that one is a phenomenalist, one a "common-sense" direct realist, one a Scientific Realist, one a

> Whiteheadian Process Philosopher. Let us now suppose that they are joined by a skeptic... If the skeptic is to contribute to that [discussion], it would have to be by arguing that all the above-mentioned positions are possible, but there is no rational basis for choosing between them. All five philosophers, despite their disagreements, can perfectly well agree that it is a cow in the field, that it is not a pig or a sheep or a replica. (Rudd 2003, 15–6)

Rudd makes this point in arguing against Fogelin's claim in PR that "it does not take radical—globally dislocating—scenarios to introduce suspension of judgment" (PR, 193), that is, to "lead us to withdraw epistemic commitment in a wholesale way" (PR, 94). Fogelin argues that

> given any empirical assertion, it is always possible—indeed always easy—to point to some uneliminated (through eliminable) possibility that can defeat the claim. Nothing like brains in vats are needed to achieve this purpose... A reliance on examples involving papier-mâché will usually be sufficient. (PR, 193)

This surprising claim is undoubtedly the weakest part of PR.[28] Barry Stroud singles it out for criticism as well, arguing that "I think the reflections that have that negative outcome in that project [i.e., traditional epistemology] are not just reflections on the fact that we make knowledge-claims without checking every one of the possible ways in which what we say could be wrong" (CP, 318). Pyrrhonism is, Stroud contends, "correct in its response to the traditional epistemological project" because "reflections leading to the traditional problem rest on the idea that all knowledge of the world around us comes ultimately from perception, and that what we receive in perception can be seen to be limited in a certain systematic way" (CP, 318). Given the disastrous "restricted conception of the scope of perception" (Stroud 2011a, 23), "the threatening possibilities... *are* systematically or globally ineliminable" (CP, 318).

I agree with one way of understanding what Stroud is saying here—though I don't think

[28] It is worth noting that in Fogelin 2004, he uses Putnam's brains-in-a-vat scenario to illustrate the skeptical problematic. I take this as evidence that he later abandoned this unfortunate argument from PR.

it's *his* way of understanding it. Presumably,[29] Stroud's skeptic, standing among the philosophers and the cow, would raise the possibility that there is no cow in the field because we might, one or all of us, be dreaming. But that problem too, for all its notorious intractability when treated philosophically, is a possibility that we do routinely rule out in the course of our everyday lives. ("Pinch me, I think I'm dreaming!") It is a perfectly ordinary, 'plain' possibility, in that respect no different from the possibility that the cow was made of papier-mâché. What the other philosophers are advancing, including the "'common-sense' direct realist," is an account of the *ultimate* or *metaphysical truth* of cows—and by extension, presumably, of the everyday empirical world in its entirety. They might turn to the skeptic and say, "Granted, perhaps I'm dreaming—but even so, this is a most enlightening dream. Let us continue our discussion on the true nature of reality!" This point is reminiscent of Descartes's claim that the dreaming possibility does not threaten mathematical knowledge, for we can know that 2+2=4 even while asleep. To stay with the dreaming possibility, the skeptic would have to pivot from the possibility that this, here and now, is a dream to the possibility that *there is nothing but dream*, that 'reality' itself is naught but dream-stuff. Only then would the skeptic present a possibility that is in direct conflict with the philosophers' views, thereby setting up the fundamental epistemological problem as Rudd understands it: "to present us with undecidable alternatives" (Rudd 2003, 16).[30]

What Stroud calls the "restricted conception of the scope of perception" is the view that "whatever anyone could perceive always falls short of any states of affairs of the world" (CP,

[29] Cf. the reference to "the possibility that I am dreaming" (CP, 319).

[30] This is, of course, to understand the skeptical problematic as fundamentally Pyrrhonian, for it transforms Cartesian skeptical scenarios into counter-possibilities deployed in a Pyrrhonian-style equipollence argument.

319). But which world, the empirical or the metaphysical?[31] Understood on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction, as I think Stroud and many others understand it, the problem is that perception always falls short of everyday empirical reality. We are trapped within our minds, perceptually cut off from 'the world.' In this context, the dreaming possibility is such that all would be well if only we could somehow know that we are not dreaming, but are awake and so in perceptual contact with the everyday world. Understood on the model of the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction, however, the problem is that perception always falls short of (or, more accurately, the problem is the *possibility* that perception always falls short of) metaphysical reality.[32] We are trapped within our way of experiencing the world, perceptually cut off from "any states of affair of the world" *in itself*—that is, the metaphysical world.

In this context, the idea of dreams serves an importantly different function. The worry is not that we are dreaming now, or might be dreaming all the time, but that *everyday empirical reality itself is like a dream*—or stated more precisely, that empirical reality stands in the same relation to ultimate reality as our waking experiences do to our dreams. Interestingly, this is one

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[31] We can ask the same question of Michael Williams, who writes in a Stroudian or McDowellian vein,

> The twist that Descartes gave scepticism was to insist that (what we naturally take to be) the source of our knowledge of the world—sense-experience—is severely restricted as to the kind of information it provides. Experience tells us how things appear to us, where what we want to know is how they are. Thinking of experience as *informationally bounded* in this way, we can ask how we get from experience to knowledge of the world. (Williams 2004, 465).

This passage can be read in very different ways depending on whether one has in view the subjectivist or the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction. Examples of similarly ambiguous characterizations abound. I will point out just one more. Ram Neta writes, "By 'the external world', I mean the world that is the way it is logically independently of how it is represented in thought or experience" (Neta 2003, 1 fn. 1). This might seem unmistakably subjectivistic, but only if we conceptualize 'represented,' 'thought,' and 'experience' in Cartesian terms, as all confined to some 'inner' realm. Alternatively, we can be said to "represent" the ('outer') empirical world "in thought or experience" in a way that is not simply 'inner' yet is nonetheless cut off from the *entirely mind-independent* ('external') metaphysical world.

[32] The parenthetical amounts to distinguishing between an 'ontological' and an 'epistemological' skeptical gap. For skeptics, the gap is always primarily epistemological, though it is motivated (at least in part) by the possibility of a corresponding ontological gap.

of the primary ways that dreams figure in the skeptical tradition prior to Descartes. The medieval philosopher al-Ghazālī, for instance, writes:

> ... sense perception underscored the problem [of justifying our confidence in sensory beliefs] by referring to dreams, saying: "Do you not believe things in dreams and imagine situations that you believe to be permanent and stable, never doubting them while you are in that state? And do you not then wake up and come to know that all your imaginings and beliefs were baseless and futile? Why are you so sure that everything that you believe in your waking state on the basis of the senses or reason is true in relation to your current state? A state may arise that bears the same relation to your waking state as your waking state does to your dream state. By comparison to that state your waking state would be like sleep... [P]erhaps that state is death, for the Prophet of God (blessings be upon him) said: 'People are asleep, and when they die they wake up.' Thus, perhaps the temporal life is slumber by comparison with the afterlife, and when you die things will appear differently to you from the way they do now. At that point, you will be told: 'We have removed your veil and your vision is now acute' [Qur'an 50:22]. (Al-Ghazālī 2005, 62–3)

As in Stroud (SPS, 33–4), we encounter in al-Ghazālī a 'veil of perception,' but al-Ghazālī's veil separates not the world from the content of our sealed-off minds, but the world of our experience from the world as it really is. We find the same use of dreams in Montaigne:

> Those who have compared our life to a dream were perhaps more right than they thought. When we dream, our soul lives, acts, exercises all her faculties, neither more nor less than when she is awake... Since our reason and our soul accept the fancies and opinions which arise in it while sleeping, and authorize the actions of our dreams with the same approbation as they do those of the day, why do we not consider the possibility that our thinking, our acting, may be another sort of dreaming, and our waking another kind of sleep? (Montaigne 1958, 451)

Elsewhere, we find dreams figuring in arguments to the effect that we have no rational justification for preferring waking-experiences to dream-experiences as guides to reality. Often such arguments are used in conjunction with the ancient (yet still contemporary) problem of the criterion of truth, as in Aristotle (Aristotle 1998, 104, 1011a), Sextus Empiricus (PH, 1.112–7),

and Henry of Ghent (in Duns Scotus 1963, 101).

The idea that "our waking [is] another kind of sleep" clearly leaves open the possibility of a full-blown idealist interpretation of ultimate reality. Nietzsche suggests in one place that the fact that we dream explains where we came up with the idea of a 'true world,' a metaphysical-idealist world beyond the empirical, in the first place.

> In the ages of raw, primordial culture, people believed that in dreams they came to know a *second real world*; here is the origin of all metaphysics. Without dreams, there would have been no reason to divide the world. The separation into soul and body is also connected to the oldest view of dreams, just like the assumption that the soul can appear in bodily form (*Seelenscheinleib*),[33] hence the origin of all belief in ghosts, and probably also the belief in gods. "The dead live on; for they appear to the living in dreams": that was the conclusion one previously drew, throughout many millennia. (Nietzsche 1995, 18, §5)

In sum, far from evidencing some lack of philosophical ingenuity, imagination, or sophistication on the part of the ancients, it seems to me that their 'failure' to utilize dreams to motivate a skepticism modeled on the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction should be seen as a mark in their favor—that is, as a sign that they possessed a superior understanding of the skeptical problematic than many modern and contemporary philosophers do. The idea that *all* of our experience might be a dream—that we might, literally, *be asleep in a bed dreaming*, or something similar, for our entire lives—is notoriously problematic, fraught (as Clarke shows us) with deep conceptual and epistemological difficulties. These difficulties are avoided by the ancients and those who follow them in their treatment of the skeptical significance of dreams.

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[33] *Seelenscheinleib*, a Nietzschean neologism, is more faithfully translated, as it is by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann, "spiritual apparition" or something similar. It literally means 'soul-appearing-to-live.'

Chapter 7

The Legacy of Skepticism: Two Readings

> A major complication is that skeptical doubts, too, are equivocal, plain and philosophical, a fact to be reckoned with only at some cost.
>
> – Thompson Clarke, LS (763, ¶32)

In this concluding chapter, I present competing interpretations of where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS. The discussion is structured around how the two interpretations—Dissolutionist and Pyrrhonian—answer the following question: For Clarke, what effect, if any, should the failure (the dissolution or suspension) of the traditional-philosophical project have on our everyday epistemic attitudes? I begin by discussing a debate on this question between Barry Stroud and Robert Fogelin, whose positions in this debate I take (for present purposes) to represent salient features of the Dissolutionist Reading and the Pyrrhonian Reading of Clarke respectively. Stroud argues that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project ought to have no effect on our everyday epistemic attitudes. He criticizes Fogelin for continuing to express dissatisfaction with the epistemic status of everyday knowledge-claims, a dissatisfaction that, Stroud thinks, Fogelin's own Pyrrhonism ought to dispel. I argue that we find in Clarke a convincing explanation for Fogelin's dissatisfaction and thereby a response to Stroud. This is surprising insofar as virtually all of Stroud's philosophical output bears the stamp of Clarke's influence (1.1). Yet it is the Fredean-style Pyrrhonism that Fogelin expounds that, I contend, both better explains where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS and points the way toward what is at least a viable and attractive response to a philosophical problem that is very much alive today.

7.1 Stroud, Fogelin, and Epistemic Dissatisfaction

What effect, if any, should the failure (dissolution or suspension) of the traditional-philosophical project have on our everyday epistemic attitudes? I have argued that everyday life is not innocent of philosophy (4.2.3). The philosophy of everyday life—commonsense realism—is initially implicit, inchoate, or 'naïve.' It is, Clarke says, philosophizing "of the most natural, immediate, and compelling kind," so much so that the propositions of CS_{ph} "seem to be *a priori*" (NTE, 241). I have explained this seeming apriority in terms of commonsense realism being rooted in, and speaking to, our initially inarticulate world-sense (4.2.4). It is on account of our common world-sense that skeptical denials of CS can strike us as paradoxical even if we have never formulated the general propositions of CS that skepticism denies.

Most traditional philosophers in the grip of the traditional view of the relation between philosophy and the everyday will argue that, given the failure of the traditional-philosophical project, we ought to cease believing—or even that we *cannot but* cease believing—that we know what we thought we knew in everyday life. With respect to everyday life, however, all that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project shows is that traditional philosophers cannot ably defend the naïve philosophy; it does not show that the naïve philosophy is mistaken. (For that conclusion, though negative, would count as a *success* for traditional philosophy.) It certainly provides us with *some* reason to think the naïve philosophy is or might be mistaken, but it does not *show* that it is. The failure of the traditional-philosophical enterprise threatens our everyday beliefs only given a supplementary commitment to what Fogelin calls "Cliffordism" after W.K. Clifford's dictum, "made (in)famous by Williams James" (PR, 114) in James's essay "The Will to Believe": "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon

insufficient evidence" (Clifford 1876–7, 295). Frede makes much the same point when he says that "according to... [philosophical] canons, one has to have some special reason to make a claim" (Frede 1984, 206).

Even a commitment to Cliffordism isn't enough, however, for the failure of traditional philosophy to threaten our everyday beliefs, for the question remains: what counts as 'sufficient evidence' for a belief? Fogelin refers to "Cliffordian standards" (PR, 115) without ever specifying what those standards are. He seems to assume that Clifford's standards are those of traditional philosophy, according to which the failure to ground or justify our everyday beliefs in philosophical terms entails that those beliefs are groundless and unjustified. Thus, only Cliffordism combined with a commitment to traditional-philosophical epistemic criteria would directly threaten our everyday beliefs. For his part, Clifford rejects traditional-philosophical standards. He asks, upon stating his dictum: "Are we then to become universal sceptics, doubting everything...?" (Clifford 1876–7, 295). He responds, sounding (pardon the pun) a distinctly Reid-y tone:

> The beliefs about physical nature which guide our actions in dealing with animate and inanimate bodies, these never suffer from investigation; they can take care of themselves, without being propped up by 'acts of faith,' the clamour of paid advocates, or the suppression of contrary evidence. (Clifford 1876–8, 296)

In this, Clifford is clearly a kind of nontraditional philosopher. If traditional philosophy fails to justify our everyday beliefs, then so much the worse for traditional philosophy, for it is everyday life that takes precedence. It is everyday life that serves as the yardstick against which we must measure our philosophizing.

But there is a third possibility as well. It represents a different sort of nontraditional philosophy. The underlying insight is straightforward. Doxastic states come in not two, but

three, fundamental varieties: acceptance (belief), rejection (disbelief), and suspension of judgment. Traditional philosophers, committed to Cliffordism plus traditional-philosophical epistemic criteria, will hold that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project entails that we ought to reject our present everyday beliefs, for they are, by traditional-philosophical standards, groundless and unjustified *here* and *now*, *for us*. On the other hand, nontraditional philosophers such as Thomas Reid and G.E. Moore—and with them, as we'll see, Stroud—will hold that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project has and ought to have no effect whatsoever on our acceptance of our everyday beliefs, for everyday life has some kind of inherent epistemic authority. The third option is to hold that the failure of the traditional-philosophical enterprise entails that we ought to suspend judgment on the ultimate truth of our everyday beliefs. This is the Pyrrhonian way, for unlike dissolutionism and dogmatic skepticism, Pyrrhonism ends not in any species of denial, but in suspension of judgment (*epochē*).

In a pair of articles, Stroud levels the following criticism of the position Robert Fogelin stakes out in his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (PR): why does Fogelin's Pyrrhonism, which targets not everyday epistemic practices but only philosophical attempts "to account for human knowledge of the world in general" (CP, 308), leave Fogelin holding "what sound like very pessimistic or skeptical views about his own knowledge and the knowledge of all the rest of us" in everyday life (Stroud 1997, 413)? Fogelin's Pyrrhonism shows, Stroud claims, "that the philosophical problem of the justification of our beliefs in general cannot be solved" (CP, 309). Stroud agrees both with this conclusion and with how it is reached (though he does not agree with Fogelin's account of either[1]): "The systematic failure of

[1] Specifically, Stroud rejects Fogelin's claim that radical skepticism can be motivated without appeal to "Hyperbolic Doubts," which "rest on systematically uneliminable possibilities," and that reflection on eliminable but uneliminated mundane doubts is sufficient (PR, 91). I return to Stroud's objection in 7.3.2.

all such attempts to transcend the available data [of perception understood as 'limited in a certain systematic way' (CP, 318)] is what the Pyrrhonian reflections reveal. On that point... I think the Pyrrhonist is completely right, and for the reasons he gives" (CP, 319). He says of Fogelin's Pyrrhonian response that it "seems to me exactly the kind of response I think we should make to what we all know by now as traditional epistemology" (CP, 307). Indeed, he goes so far as to allow that perhaps "there are two of us," i.e., two contemporary Pyrrhonians—Fogelin and himself (CP, 309).[2]

Fogelin's 'Pyrrhonian reflections' reveal what Stroud calls "the 'conditional correctness' of skepticism" (SPS, 179): if the skeptic or traditional philosopher is right in holding any number of skepticism-inducing underlying assumptions, then skepticism is (obviously) the inevitable consequence. But skepticism is correct only given such assumptions, and those assumption are philosophically loaded and therefore dubious on their face. By revealing the bankruptcy of those assumptions, Pyrrhonism is supposed, on Fogelin's own account, to free us from our commitment to the assumptions and thereby to the skeptical conclusions that depend on and follow from them. As a result, we turn away, at least for practical purposes, from the traditional-philosophical project and readopt or reaffirm our everyday epistemic practices and attitudes. The worry, Fogelin explains, is that

> Having unleashed what amounts to an unmitigated skepticism with regard to empirical justification, how can the Pyrrhonists, in good faith, continue to employ—apparently without qualms—standard terms of epistemic appraisal? The answer is that the Pyrrhonist is under no constraint to conform his activities—including his linguistic activities—to philosophical standards. In daily life, levels of epistemic standards are fixed (often unreflectively) by the exigencies of the given context. The Pyrrhonist undogmatically accepts the everyday epistemic practices of his culture. (PR, 195)

[2] I would note that there are in fact a great many more than one, or even two, contemporary Pyrrhonians—and that that claim was as true in 2004, when CP was first published, as it is now. In making such comments, Stroud seems to be considering only members of a *very* select group.

But if this is so, Stroud asks, why then does Fogelin continue to insist on "the fragility of our common epistemic practices" (PR, 193)? Why does he claim, for instance, not to know that his own name is Robert Fogelin on the flimsy grounds that there *might* have been a mix-up at the hospital on the day he was born (PR, 93)? Stroud writes: "The negative Pyrrhonian verdict can be a correct conditional proposition about any such epistemological enterprise *without having any implications one way or the other* for what we do, or should do, in everyday or scientific life" (CP, 320; emphasis added). Stroud argues—rightly, I think[3]—that according to Fogelin's own account of Pyrrhonism, the failure of the traditional-epistemological project *ought* to have, by Pyrrhonian lights, no implications one way or the other regarding everyday epistemic practices. "Conceding that we cannot know on... traditional [philosophical] standards leaves everyday knowledge and our 'epistemic practices' untouched" (CP, 312). Fogelin's continued dissatisfaction with the state of everyday human knowledge, evinced by his willingness to claim not to know his own name, indicates to Stroud that Fogelin has been "lured away from the comforts of an unthreatening Pyrrhonism by some so-far-unexplained longing for legitimacy" (CP, 321). In effect, Stroud is suggesting that perhaps *he*, Stroud, is the true contemporary Pyrrhonian, not Fogelin!

As Stroud reads him, Fogelin is, despite claiming otherwise, like the Cynic who finds that the failure of philosophy to reach any determinant conclusion—particularly its failure to ground or provide an independent justification of our everyday epistemic practices—reveals the ultimate

[3] More accurately, I should say that there is both tension and lack of clarity in Fogelin's account of Pyrrhonism in PR. Stroud astutely identifies the tension, and it is made plausible by the lack of clarity. Fogelin himself admits in response to Stroud that, though "I reject Stroud's suggestion that I have, for unaccountable reasons, abandoned my own neo-Pyrrhonian standpoint," "I now realize that it is harder to avoid giving this impression than I thought" (Fogelin 1997, 424–5).

rational bankruptcy of at least a great many of those everyday practices. Far from returning to the observances of everyday life, as Pyrrhonians do, the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope, the "Socrates gone mad,"[4] is led, in keeping with his project of "defacing" or "adulterating the currency (*nomima*)"—a pun or metaphor "meant to capture [the Cynics'] widespread opposition to conventional values and practices (*nomima*)" (Brown 2014, 404)—to embrace deliberately provocative and outrageous behavior: "Characteristic examples are his masturbating in public, living in a wine-jar [i.e., a vat], sleeping rough, walking on snow, trying to eat raw meat" (Long 1999, 625). To be sure, Fogelin has never (to the best of my knowledge) engaged in such outrageous displays; yet in the realm of *epistemic* practices, his claiming not to know his real name strikes Stroud as equally outrageous.

It's not surprising that Stroud should read Fogelin in this way. Fogelin does seem to hold that, though Pyrrhonism reveals to us a rational justification for declining the invitation to adopt "philosophical standards," thereby allowing us to accept "everyday epistemic practices," the failure of the traditional-philosophical project nonetheless casts some sort of shadow on those everyday practices. He seems to think that that shadow—the shadow of ultimate epistemic illegitimacy—outlives commitment to the traditional-philosophical project itself. For Fogelin, it remains a possibility that *we don't* really *know anything*. This is a concern about human knowledge in general. But, Stroud insists, if Pyrrhonism leads to a genuine acceptance of everyday epistemic practices, then as a matter of fact we *do* 'really' know all sorts of things. Stroud claims "without reservation" to know, for instance, that Robert Fogelin's name is Robert Fogelin (CP, 315). As an everyday assertion, this claim is, Stroud insists, absolutely certain—barring (and this is the crucial bit) various *everyday* reasons to doubt it, i.e., some actual

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[4] This from Diogenes Laertius: "On being asked by somebody, 'What sort of a man do you consider Diogenes to be?' 'A Socrates gone mad,' said he [i.e., Plato]" (Diogenes Laertius 1925, 55; *Lives*, 6.54).

evidence to suggest that there was a mix-up at the hospital the day Fogelin was born (cf. CP, 316). Such everyday reasons to doubt are incapable of generalizing to our empirical knowledge as a whole, for they themselves will inevitably invoke other bits of ordinary empirical knowledge (e.g., security-camera footage from the hospital on the day in question). We might be mistaken in assenting to any particular empirical knowledge-claim, even one regarding something as seemingly evident as the identities of Robert Fogelin's biological parents, but we cannot be mistaken in *all* of our everyday empirical knowledge-claims. Countenancing that possibility would amount to countenancing the possibility of the global illegitimacy, indeed the practical impossibility, of ever successfully employing our everyday epistemic practices—and it is our everyday epistemic practices that, according to Stroud's reading of Fogelin, Pyrrhonism is supposed to lead us to accept as legitimate and (plainly) authoritative.

Moreover, for Stroud, given this understanding of the inherent security of everyday knowing as such, it is just a fact that there are things that, if we *do* know what we take ourselves to know in everyday life, then we *cannot* be wrong about despite the standing (logical) possibility of error. I take it that this view, or something like it, lies behind Stroud's claim that

> if I say that I know that the name of this man before us is Bob Fogelin—something I certainly do say, and without reservation—do I leave "uneliminated" the possibility that there was a mix-up at the hospital and it is really Herbert Ortcutt instead? I think I do not. I say that I know the name of this man is Bob Fogelin, son of the parents of Bob Fogelin, so what I say is inconsistent with, and in that sense eliminates or rules out, a mix-up at the hospital. What I believe is established by my grounds eliminates that possibility as actual. "But what reason do you have to eliminate that possibility?", someone might ask. I say I have all the reasons that I have for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin. And those reasons, I judge, are enough to establish the truth of that. That is what I commit myself to in saying that I know his name is Bob Fogelin. (CP, 315)

Stroud goes on:

> I admit that I am not infallible. Someone who knows or has reason to believe something that I am not aware of might reasonably conclude that I am wrong—that my grounds do not establish that his name is Bob Fogelin after all. That is a possible development. The matter can be settled only by looking at that person's reasons for doubt. (CP, 316)

One obvious response, I take it, is to point out that knowledge, as necessarily factive, is not a purely dialectical matter. No doubt the debate between Stroud and this imagined "[s]omone who knows... something that [Stroud is] not aware of" is to be settled on the basis of their respective reasons for holding their beliefs; but the objective fact of the matter itself is indifferent to such goings-on. The truth of Stroud's claim, in this (I think primary) sense of empirical 'truth,' is settled only by *the world*, the objective state-of-affairs itself.

Defaultism about justification does not entail defaultism about knowledge. Stroud seems to be—and may be fine with—running together his own earlier distinction in SPS between "the conditions of reasonable assertion" and "the conditions of truth" (SPS, 58), which is mirrored in Fogelin's distinction between the "adequate-grounds" and "epistemic responsibility" dimensions of justification (PR, Ch. 1). I would insist, however, that the distinction must be maintained. Stroud argues that, if we ponder our reasons for claiming that Robert Fogelin's name is Robert Fogelin, "[w]e will then find that the possibility we were dwelling on"—the possibility of a mix-up at the hospital on the day Fogelin was born—"is not actual" (CP, 316). Stroud seems to be saying that any such farfetched possibility is ruled out on the basis of what he, Stroud, reasonably asserts. Naturally, if Stroud is *right* that Bob Fogelin's name is Bob Fogelin, and if he's right (and knows) that that's being true precludes there having been a mix-up at the hospital on the day Fogelin was born, then it follows that Stroud knows that there was not a mix-up at the hospital that day. But that's far too many ifs to show that "the possibility we were dwelling on is

not actual" (CP, 316).[5]

At any rate, on Stroud's reading, Fogelin's Pyrrhonism is supposed to free us from the traditional-philosophical epistemic standards that underwrite the very dissatisfaction that Fogelin nonetheless continues to express. The proper response, Stroud suggests, is to see that there is no basis for such generalized dissatisfaction. Pyrrhonians not only *conform to* everyday epistemic practices; they *accept* those practices as (plainly) legitimate, though fallible, for they put no stock in the global threats to knowledge advanced by traditional philosophers.

Though there is much of interest in this objection to Fogelin's position in PR (or, rather, to misleading aspects of Fogelin's presentation of that position), Stroud's response to PR turns on a fundamental misunderstanding of Pyrrhonism. He claims that

> The updated Pyrrhonist holds that that attempt [i.e., 'to explain how we know... all or most of the things we think we know'] *can never* succeed... The updated Pyrrhonist... says that the philosophical problem of the justification of our beliefs in general *cannot* be solved. (CP, 308–09; emphases added)

As the emphasized words in these passages make clear, Stroud thinks that Pyrrhonism eventuates

[5] It is possible, as David Finkelstein pointed out to me, that in these passages Stroud is endorsing some kind of disjunctivism. No doubt disjunctivism about knowledge or justification is a position worth exploring in the context of a discussion of Clarke (particularly of Clarke's legacy), but (*a*) I find disjunctivism to be quite far removed from Clarke's own writings, even if Clarke can be read as anticipating it in some way, and (*b*) disjunctivism itself, particularly as a response to philosophical skepticism, is too complex a position for me to treat properly within the confines of this study. John McDowell, who is probably the most prominent proponent of epistemological disjunctivism, is, as Duncan Pritchard notes, "uncomfortable with the very idea of calling his [disjunctivist] treatment of scepticism an 'answer' to the [skeptical] problem... remarking, for example, that his view is 'not well cast as an answer to skeptical challenges; it is more like a justification of a refusal to bother with them'" (Pritchard 2008, 301). Alan Millar notes that "McDowell from time to time appears to be dismissive of skepticism. He sometimes gives the impression that once we reinstate the commonsense picture on which we are open to the world, directly embracing facts, skepticism ceases to be of interest" (Millar 2008, 597). I believe, although I will not make the case here, that the argument I advance below regarding Stroud (= that his 'transcendental' anti-skeptical strategy works at best only against skepticism understood on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction) applies to disjunctivist responses to skepticism as well or, if Stroud *is* best understood as a disjunctivist, more generally. Of interest in this connection is Wang Huaping's "Disjunctivism and Skepticism," which argues that while disjunctivism is a successful response to Cartesian skepticism, it fails when faced with Pyrrhonian skepticism (Huaping 2011).

in a *negative dogmatic* conclusion regarding traditional philosophy: Pyrrhonism has *positively shown* that traditional philosophy, in any guise, is "doomed" from the start (CP, 312). It is "a sceptical or negative response to something that arises in philosophy" (CP, 308). But this is false. Pyrrhonism ends by *suspending judgment* both on first-order philosophical questions and on second-order questions regarding the very legitimacy of (including the question of the possibility of carrying out) the traditional-philosophical project. Fogelin writes that

> It is the dogmatist, not the skeptic, who imposes high, sometimes, as in the case of Descartes, unrestrictively high, epistemic standards. The project of traditional epistemology, down into the second half of this [i.e., the twentieth] century, is to show how knowledge is possible even under these severe constraints. In response to this activity, the Pyrrhonist simply notes what the dogmatist is doing and then shows that, *according to the dogmatist's own standards*, his project has failed. (Fogelin 1997, 420)

Even here, in a piece intended to clarify his position, Fogelin isn't careful enough. He should say that what Pyrrhonians try to do is *to convince* the dogmatist, for dialectical purposes, that his project has failed by his own standards. Pyrrhonians themselves suspend judgment even on the question of whether that project has *in fact* failed (by its own standards). It *seems to them* that it has failed, which is why they think that they ought to be able to convince the dogmatist that it has failed; but that it *actually has* failed (let alone that it *must* fail, as Stroud would say) is not something they're going to commit themselves to, for the simple reason that doing so would commit them to a dogmatic philosophical claim, which is precisely what they eschew.

Stroud, then, is mistaken in thinking that Pyrrhonism reveals the hopelessness of the traditional-philosophical project. Without that conclusion in hand, there is no way to reach the further conclusion that everyday epistemic practices are therefore secured from generalized doubts, even on the assumption that only traditional philosophizing is capable of generating such

doubts. Here is the crucial point at which to begin distinguishing between the Cynic, who rejects the authority of everyday life on the grounds that *nomos* is philosophically groundless; the Pyrrhonian, who "undogmatically" (PR, 195) accepts the authority of everyday life despite its apparent philosophical groundlessness; and philosophers such as Stroud, who seem to think that everyday life's philosophical groundlessness, being as it is a consequence of traditional philosophy's inability to ground anything, including itself, is an indirect *vindication* of the inherent authority of everyday life. Viewed this way, Stroud is a commonsense philosopher insofar as he accepts what I take to be the basic tenet of commonsense philosophy: that everyday epistemic practices enjoy a kind of inherent epistemic authority.

It isn't clear, however, that adopting the Pyrrhonian position vis-à-vis traditional philosophy licenses us in drawing *any* conclusion regarding the authority of our everyday epistemic practices, whether negative, like the Cynic's, or positive, like the commonsense philosopher's.[6] The problem, I want to suggest, is that any general view regarding the status of our everyday epistemic practices given the failure of the traditional-philosophical project to reach determinant conclusions must presuppose a metaphilosophical view regarding the relations of epistemic authority that obtain between philosophy and everyday life. Any such view must in turn presuppose a metaphilosophical view on the question of whether, and if so in what sense and to what extent, philosophy and everyday life enjoy inherent epistemic authority. This problem can be avoided, it seems to me, only by suspending judgment.

Stroud is right to think that Fogelin appears to continue to hold something like the traditional-philosophical view according to which philosophizing takes precedence over everyday life—hence his apparent willingness to express, in his own voice, dissatisfaction with

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[6] Berislav Marušić calls this "the *Nihil Sequitur* Problem": "Even if skepticism is true, there is *nothing in particular* that one should believe as a consequence of it" (Marušić 2008, 76).

everyday knowledge. For his part, Stroud seems to hold the opposite view: that everyday epistemic practices take precedence over philosophy—hence his assumption that, in the absence of a viable philosophical-skeptical threat, our everyday epistemic practices, though fallible, are legitimate and authoritative. But what licenses *these* commitments? It seems to me that, in and of itself, the failure of traditional philosophy to reach any determinant conclusions says nothing one way or the other about the legitimacy of our everyday epistemic practices. The contest between philosophy and everyday life is not a zero-sum game. Philosophy's epistemic and practical authority is not demonstrated by the apparent instability or incoherence of everyday common sense; nor is everyday life's epistemic and practical authority demonstrated by philosophy's inability to sustain a skeptical attack upon it. Ultimately, each side in the debate must stand on its own merits. If philosophy takes precedence over everyday life, it is because it has inherent epistemic authority, and vice versa.[7] In Clarkean terms, the failure of the traditional-philosophical project leaves us with the problem of developing a positive characterization of the plain. As we'll see, the Pyrrhonian Reading takes seriously Clarke's claim that, until and unless the problem of the plain is solved, "we have no conception of empirical knowledge" (NTE, 241), no way "to make sense of how knowing and seeing can be genuine even though" plain, i.e., even though "essentially dependent on [the non-rule-like] dimension" of meaning supplied by everyday contexts (NTE, 248).

[7] This is to reject arguments-by-elimination, which first posit some fixed number of options then set out to establish that one of those options is the correct one by establishing the inadequacy of all the others. In response to such argumentative strategies, one need only point to the possibility that there is *no* solution to the problem under consideration. This point is made by Fogelin in the context of a discussion regarding philosophical accounts of epistemic justification: "The coherentist must say something about the possibility of mutually exclusive yet equally coherent systems. The foundationalist must tell us how a belief can be justified by something that is not itself another belief. And so on. The tacit assumption that dominates the philosophical literature on epistemic justification is that, if it is possible to show that one's own theory can 'get off the ground' whereas all others remain grounded, then the battle is won. But this is wrong because it begs the question" by supposing that there *is* an answer to the problem of epistemic justification (and that it must be one of the imagined options) (PR, 118–9).

7.2 The Fate of Traditional Philosophy

7.2.1 Recapitulation

We are finally in a position to ask what Clarke thinks the legacy of skepticism is. We had first to learn the *lesson* of skepticism, which arises from (*1*) an account of the nature of the skeptical challenge, understood as a specimen of traditional epistemological inquiry, and (*2*) an assessment of the import of that challenge vis-à-vis our everyday, commonsensical commitments. Learning the lesson of skepticism required that we first reach some kind of understanding (*a*) of the nature of traditional philosophy (traditional epistemology in particular) and (*b*) of its relation to the plain.

(*a*) What we found is that traditional philosophy is the *pure*. In striving for absolute objectivity, traditional philosophy attempts to pursue its inquiries from outside of all everyday contexts; it attempts to make do with mere 'skeletal' meaning. Since skeletal meaning is indeterminate, pure philosophical questions, if properly understood, must be rejected. Clarke argues, however, that traditional epistemologists surreptitiously 'contextualize' philosophical questions by filling-in their meanings enough so that the 'pure' questions can be answered. The way this is done, according to Clarke, is through the insertion within experience of 'mental planes' that, though they are artificial and so do not represent any objective fact of the matter, succeed in carving up the conceptual space in such a way that the questions can be answered. Given the mental planes, skepticism reveals itself as the conditionally objectively determined result of traditional epistemological inquiry. Moreover, skeptical conclusions become, on Clarke's account, *true* for the skeptic at the phenomenological level, but only for as long as she

sustains the effort of keeping the mental planes in place.

(*b*) Regarding the relation between traditional philosophy and the plain, what we found is that the plain comes into view as such only in the attempt to transcend it, i.e., only in the attempt to philosophize. Thus, the plain is initially conceptualized from a philosophical standpoint. From that standpoint, it appears to be 'restricted.' Plain concepts are, on this picture, restricted applications of pure concepts, as illustrated by the analogy of the airplane-spotters. The plain is, in other words, 'restricted' to the everyday. This reflects the traditional view of the relation between CS (understood philosophically) and the everyday, according to which CS_{ph} is the everyday's epistemological ground. Yet given the indeterminacy of the philosophical, it becomes mysterious how this relation between CS and the everyday could hold true. This amounts to calling into question the traditional view of the relation between the plain and the philosophical.

(*1*) As a specimen of traditional philosophizing, the skeptical challenge proceeds by covertly contextualizing the question to which it is meant as a response. It does this in two ways. First, the skeptic develops supposedly *philosophical* skeptical scenarios that nonetheless draw on *plain* counter-possibilities that, as plain, provide the needed context. Second, as I suggested in 5.2.2, the skeptic's contextualizing of the skeptical challenge is also helpfully understood with reference to the idea of 'mental planes' that Clarke introduces in NTE. The insertion of a mental plane between experience and the world makes it so that any claim to empirical knowledge must be rooted ultimately in experience. This way of contextualizing the problem is usually understood on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction, but it is amenable to being understood on the model of the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction as well. Despite the mental plane, the skeptic is unable, Clarke argues, to present a skeptical counter-

possibility that is not itself plain in the sense of presupposing the possibility of K_{pl}, which is the very thing that the skeptical conclusion says we cannot have. Therefore, the skeptical scenarios fail to support the conclusion of SK_{ph}. This reveals the indeterminacy of pure philosophical utterances. There is simply no way, according to Clarke, for the skeptic to develop a coherent skeptical scenario that does not presuppose the possibility of K_{pl}. SK_{ph} must be "erased from the books" (LS, 762, ¶29).

(*2*) For the same reason, CS_{ph} must be erased from the books as well. If pure philosophical questions are indeterminant, than they can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively. If "our most fundamental beliefs" were CS_{ph}, then reflection on the skeptic's inquiry would have devastating effects on our rational right to our everyday, commonsensical commitments. But, Clarke argues, our most fundamental beliefs are *not* CS_{ph}; they are CS_{pl}. With that, we are left with the legacy of skepticism, which Clarke describes this way:

> Skepticism frees us from antiquated problems, including itself, offering us a new, challenging problem. In his practice Moore was, in one sense, the compleat philosopher: outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed. Skepticism leaves us the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative "non-objectivity," and one major tool for unlocking its secrets, the plain skeptical possibilities. How radically that structure must differ from the standard type, if capable of permitting concepts with the characteristics of Dream to be concepts, and the plain skeptical possibilities to be possibilities, is evident enough. (LS, 769, ¶63)

Before turning to legacy of skepticism, let's collect in one place the various lessons of skepticism.

1. Skepticism is the conditionally correct outcome of traditional philosophical inquiry.
2. Therefore, since our initial ('commonsensical') conception of CS is philosophical, we have (as Clarke puts it) "no conception of empirical knowledge" (NTE, 241). Indeed, as Stroud points out, given (*1*) we may *never* be able to develop "a satisfactory explanation of how human knowledge in general is possible" (UHK, 121).

Even so, there are some positives to the lesson of skepticism. Studying the skeptic has, Clarke thinks, taught us the following:

3. ‘Dream’ (along with similar concepts) is not a marks-and-features concept.
4. ‘Dream’ (and presumably, many if not all other empirical concepts) are conceivable only if they satisfy the knowability requirement determined by the concepts’ logical type. (Plain concepts require plain knowability; philosophical concepts require philosophical knowability.)
5. The standard conceptual-human constitution (SCHC) cannot be true of us.
6. Our most fundamental beliefs and concepts are plain, not philosophical.
7. Concepts are ‘projected’ outward from the everyday, not inward from the philosophical.
8. There are limits to the ‘projective conceivability’ of plain concepts.
9. Thus, there is a sense in which we are all, like Moore, inveterate plain men.

What exactly, though, is the “new, challenging problem” with which skepticism leaves us, given these lessons?

In what follows, I suggest two ways of understanding where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS: the Dissolutionist Reading and the Pyrrhonian Reading. I use Stroud to illustrate what a Clarkean dissolutionism might look like. For ease of exposition, I lean heavily on Jason Bridges’ “Skepticism and Beyond: A Primer on Stroud’s Later Epistemology,” which Stroud has lauded as “a model of sensitive, accurate philosophical interpretation, understanding, and exposition,” saying that “[i]t is a distinct, and rare, pleasure to me to be so well understood” (Stroud 2016, 223). I take Stroud at his word here and so assume the correctness of Bridges’s interpretation—though it is not essential for my purposes that I get Stroud right. Despite the plausibility (not to mention pedigree) of any basically Stroudian way of understanding the legacy of skepticism (and, of course, LS), I will argue that the Pyrrhonian Reading is to be preferred, not only in explaining where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS, but also in pointing the way

toward the sort of post-skeptical elucidation that Clarke thinks is needed to address the "problem of the plain"—though, admittedly, it is doubtful that Clarke himself would have arrived at or been satisfied with the Pyrrhonian-style 'elucidation' that I describe. (But then the same can be said of *any* elucidation we might develop. We simply don't know what Clarke himself would have said.)

7.2.2 The Unintelligibility of the Philosophical

> *The limits of language* mean the limits of my world.
>
> – Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (5.6)

> There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.
>
> – Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (6.522)

Even if we largely agree on what the lesson of skepticism is—not necessarily every detail, but in the main—how we understand the legacy of skepticism will depend on where we think Clarke has left us vis-à-vis traditional philosophizing and plain knowing. Specifically, has he shown that the traditional-philosophical (= the absolutely objective, absolutely context-free, etc.) is incoherent or an illusion, or only that it slips our semantic grasp? Regarding K_{pl}, has he shown it to be secure (particularly from global skeptical assault), or does its status as 'knowing' remain in some way precarious? In this section, I discuss traditional philosophizing. I turn to the fate of K_{pl} in 7.3.

I begin my discussion of the fate of traditional philosophy with the two examples of gnomic Tractarian wisdom that serve as epigraphs for this subsection. I do so innocent of

exegetical aspirations: I neither pretend to know what these elusive remarks mean in the context of the *Tractatus* nor do I wish to foist any specifically Tractarian intents or purposes upon either the Dissolutionist or the Pyrrhonian Readings of LS. I use them only as evocations of ways of thinking about the limits of traditional philosophizing. The first evokes the Dissolutionist understanding of the fate of traditional philosophy, the second the Pyrrhonian.

Let's begin with dissolutionism. For the Dissolutionist Reading, what Clarke has shown to dissolve first and foremost is the problem of philosophical skepticism. "Skepticism frees us from antiquated problems, including itself" (LS, 769, ¶63). How does this happen? The general diagnosis is Cartesianism, which can be cashed out in any number of ways. As we've seen, Clarke's student Charles Guignon characterizes the SCHC as "the subject/object model of our everyday epistemic predicament" and associates it with Descartes (Guignon 1983, 31). I will focus instead on the related idea that the traditional epistemologist (and, by extension, the skeptic) inserts 'mental planes' between experience and the world.[8] The resulting picture is what Stroud calls the "restricted conception of the scope of perception" (Stroud 2011a, 23), according to which "perception contributes only knowledge that is noncommittal on how things stand in the world around us" (Bridges 2016, 83). It is this picture of the human cognitive–perceptual relation to the world that, according to Stroud, renders skepticism conditionally correct: "if we grant the restricted conception of perception, it is too late to vitiate the ensuing skeptical line of thought" (Bridges 2016, 84), for "[i]f our 'sensory experiences' never tell us anything about what is going on in the world outside, how could the knowledge they provision possibly ground our

[8] I'm an unsure whether Stroud ever came around to rejecting the SCHC, though I suspect he did, partly because of how closely the SCHC, with its implied 'detachment' of perceivers from the world, is related to the restricted conception of perception (see 5.2.2). In his original comments on LS, he asserts his commitment to the SCHC: "My initial devotion to that 'standard' account of concepts is unshaken by what Clarke has said in his paper, but I recognize its unpalatable sceptical consequences, and so I would be willing to jettison it if I could. But how can it be rejected? Isn't everything said in characterizing the 'standard' conception obviously true?" (UHK, 37).

knowledge of that world?" (Bridges 2016, 82). For Clarke, what we see and know in everyday life is partly a function of a non-rule-like dimension that *we* (or our everyday contexts) supply: what we see is not a function of the "physical situation" alone; what we know is not a function of "skeletal meaning" alone (3.3). Our seeing and knowing results from a human engagement with the world, one shaped by "our decision and resolve" (LS, 757, ¶10). As seers and knowers, we are 'in the world' in a way precluded by the restricted conception of perception.

The dissolutionist philosophical therapy consists in undermining this conception of perception and its concomitant conception of experience as limited to 'inner' sensations (or whatever it is that lies on the near side of the veil of perception). The therapy unfolds from within the traditional epistemological project rather than by attempting to undermine it from outside, e.g., on the basis of some independently developed theory of meaning. Dissolutionists attempt to carry out the traditional project in traditional terms. When they do—when they attempt "to stand back detached from [their] experiencing" (LS, 761, ¶25)—they find themselves unable to formulate utterances that are full-fledged in meaning; they find themselves stranded in a semantic "no-man's land" (SS, 109). The therapy culminates in the realization that the philosophical as traditionally understood—the absolutely objective, the context-free, etc.—is in one sense or another an *illusion*. The problem of skepticism dissolves because it is a traditional-philosophical problem and so dissolves along with the domain of the traditional philosophical itself. As Bridges puts it, that "there is only the illusion of an intelligible question here" is "just what Stroud thinks we ought to find" (Bridges 2016, 78).

What we identified in Chapter 5 as the *unanswerability* of pure philosophical questions reveals itself as the *unintelligibility* of all such utterances. But what does it mean, exactly, to say that pure philosophical utterances (including the skeptic's) are unintelligible? It is "not to say

the skeptic's words must add up to an indigestible nugget of nonsense... If that were so, skepticism would be of no interest" (Bridges 2016, 79). What is unintelligible, ultimately, is the restricted conception of perception itself. "If successful," the dissolutionist philosophical therapy

> ... will show us that this conception is itself spectral, that it is a fantasy. We think we grasp the conception. But we do not. Since we cannot make genuine sense of the conception, we cannot make genuine sense of the supposed question of how we acquire knowledge of the world outside through perception so conceived. (Bridges 2016, 84)

Yet, as Bridges admits, the conception *seems* perfectly intelligible. To show that it is not, he says, we must "[try] to genuinely take [the conception] up in our thinking and to see how doing so would square with other commitments and concepts we can recognize ourselves to possess" (Bridges 2016, 85). The restricted conception of perception, then, is not so much unintelligible in itself as it is unintelligible *in light of* our existing "commitments" and "concepts."[9] If we try to think our way through the traditional epistemological problematic, we find that we cannot. The domain of traditional philosophy thereby dissolves. To be sure, there is for Stroud more to the story: there is, namely, the post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge, which Stroud seems to think is a necessary supplement to therapy, if the dissolution of the skeptical problem is to be complete or effective.[10]

The crucial point for any dissolutionist reading of Clarke is to draw out a logical

[9] The appeal to our "commitments" is reminiscent of Clarke's rejection of the paradoxical, understood as whatever runs counter to CS. As for our "concepts," we saw in Ch. 5 that central to Clarke's argument in the final paragraphs of §5 of LS is the fact that we *do* possess the plain concept 'Dream' and that we would *not* possess that concept if "our conceptual-human constitution" were "of the standard type" (LS, 769, ¶62).

[10] I take it that Bridges is making this point in saying that when we "come to see that the skeptical question cannot be satisfactorily raised," we will "have *in a sense* successfully dealt with the problem that skepticism seemed to pose to our epistemic capacities" (Bridges 2016, 80; emphasis added).

consequence of the dissolution of the philosophical: the dissolution of the plain–philosophical distinction itself. As we've seen, the plain first comes into view in the attempt to transcend it by philosophizing. It is initially conceived of as the 'restricted' as opposed to the 'pure' philosophical. But if the pure philosophical is an illusion—if the pure-philosophical standpoint is just the illusion of a standpoint, an incoherent 'view from nowhere'—then there is no basis for claiming (no standpoint from which to claim) that the plain is 'restricted.' Indeed, there is no basis for making *any* general pronouncements about the plain as such, at least not from some purported 'outside.' Whatever the conceptual cartography of the plain turns out to be, it will have to be mapped from within. Really, though, on the Dissolutionist Reading the plain is *unbounded*, at least in the sense that we have no conception of anything 'beyond' the plain. This idea is advanced by Keren Gorodeisky and Kelly Dean Jolley:

> Our idea is that Clarke may be read as ultimately revealing what we might call "the Unboundedness of the Plain." The distinction between the plain and the pure, as Clarke uses it for most of the paper, could be thought of as a dialectical distinction and each of its terms as dialectical terms. The plain dialectically is treated as if it were the restricted, the pure as the unrestricted, as the philosophical. By the end of the paper, Clarke has tunneled under the pure, causing it to collapse, or, shifting vertical metaphors, has revealed the pure as a sterile promontory. But the fate of the pure is the fate of the plain (as restricted) too. And so the dialectical distinction is done in. The plain (no longer restricted, the term 'plain' no longer employed dialectically—at least not as it had been dialectically employed) opens and does not close. True, 'plain' now has no real contrastive force, and could be dropped. At this point, to be implained is just to be. (Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 253)

This is reminiscent of Nietzsche's assertion that if we "get rid of" the idea of the "'true' world," we will have "*got[ten] rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*"[11] The 'plain' as traditionally understood makes sense only in contrast with the 'philosophical'—it has no other

[11] Nietzsche 2005, 171; *Twilight*, "How the True World Became a Fable."

contrast, since it was by way of philosophizing that the idea of the 'plain' emerged in the first place, just as it was by way of the idea of a 'true' world that there first emerged the idea that the world of our everyday experience is 'illusory.' Therefore, by dissolving the philosophical, we dissolve the plain–philosophical distinction itself.

With that, we should no longer be troubled by skepticism. (Nietzsche refers to a "return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness.") Dissolutionist quietude, as I'm using that term, results from seeing that the plain is "secure against outside undermining" (LS, 767, ¶51). Whatever 'skeptical' problems may arise will be *plain* problems; and plain problems have, as Austin argued (Austin 1970, 87–8), *plain* solutions. Some of these problems may prove intractable, but none will be "systematically or globally ineliminable" (CP, 318) in the manner of full-blown skeptical problems. Any genuine problem that is raised can be dealt with on an individual basis and in an ordinary way, by looking at the reasons that speak in its favor and those that speak against it. This is why, I take it, Stroud is willing to conclude, in his debate with Fogelin, that he knows that there was not a mix-up at the hospital on the day Fogelin was born *because* that would mean that Stroud doesn't know what Robert Fogelin's name is. This is, I take it, an example of what William Rowe dubbed "the G.E. Moore shift" (Rowe 1979, 339), which turns the skeptic's *modus ponens* in an anti-skeptical *modus tollens*: whereas Fogelin claims not to know his own name because he doesn't know that there was not a mix-up at the hospital on the day he was born, Stroud claims that he *does* know Fogelin's name and therefore knows that there was *not* a mix-up at the hospital on the day Fogelin was born. Stroud is, like Moore (and Clarke?), confronting Fogelin "with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men" (LS, 758, ¶12).

"*The limits of language* mean the limits of my world," Wittgenstein wrote. Restated in

Clarkean terms: the limits of the plain are the limits of my language, and the limits of my language are the limits of my world. “[T]o be implained is just to be” (Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 253). In striving for the philosophical, we are striving after an illusion. We can, after all, “[rest] content at home like Moore, inside the plain, and, if inclined to a little defending or crossexamining, [concentrate] on *plain* knowing” (LS, 759, ¶15). The plain is not just the plain; it is *all there is*. Therefore, it has (must have), simply as a matter of logic, some kind of inherent epistemic authority, for it is the ground and frame of rationality itself.

7.2.3 Philosophy, Science, and the ‘Mystical’

Proponents of the Pyrrhonian Reading will find all of this too easy, even if the details turn out to be tortuous. They will find the tone too self-assured for a report on matters so fraught and murky. “If properly understood,” Clarke wrote, “traditional epistemology comes as a shock, and it leaves us with a philosophical problem of the greatest magnitude” (NTE, 242). Where is the moment of shock in the Dissolutionist Reading? We might speak of a certain *surprise* or even *frustration* at discovering to be illusory something that we thought “important” and that, at least “‘inside our studies,’” we sought without “questioning its availability” (LS, 759, ¶15). On the Dissolutionist Reading, however, there are no grounds for being shocked by skepticism, certainly not after the problem has dissolved. This is just the point on which Stroud and Fogelin’s debate turns: whereas Fogelin continues to speak of “the fragility of our common epistemic practices” (PR, 193), Stroud holds that the lesson of skepticism is such that the kind of Pyrrhonian response to traditional philosophy that Fogelin endorses—and with which, as we’ve seen, Stroud is in agreement—“leaves everyday knowledge and our ‘epistemic practices’

untouched" (CP, 312). Stroud thinks that Fogelin has been "lured away from the comforts of an unthreatening Pyrrhonism by some so-far unexplained longing for legitimacy" (CP, 321). It will seem to proponents of the Pyrrhonian Reading that Stroud departs from Clarke to the extent that he is *not* shocked by "the depth of truth in traditional epistemology" (NTE, 231). By the same token, it will seem that the Dissolutionist Reading gets Clarke wrong to the extent that it concludes that we should not only *not* be shocked by the position at which Clarke leaves us at the end of LS, but that we should be *comforted* by it, as Stroud thinks Fogelin should find his Pyrrhonism 'comforting.' (Ultimately, of course, Pyrrhonism is supposed to lead to equanimity, but *ataraxia* is not the quietude of certainty, whether that's understood as fundamentally cognitive or affective; it is the resolute, perhaps even cheerful, embracing of the mysterious. I return to this thought in 7.3.4.)

Proponents of the Dissolutionist Reading might respond that it is a mistake to read too much into the perhaps overly dramatic declarations of the young Clarke of NTE. Where *in LS* is the evidence that tells against the Dissolutionist Reading? The majority of the evidence I will bring forward concerns the fate of K_{pl}, the topic of 7.3. Here, I will note only the following. First, Clarke does not say that pure philosophical utterances are unintelligible. He says of pure philosophical questions that they are *unanswerable* by us. They are unanswerable by us because they lack full-bodied meaning and are therefore indeterminate. It is one thing to say that we cannot deploy philosophical concepts (e.g., 'the $Real_{ph}$') in a determinate manner; it is another thing entirely to say that 'the $Real_{ph}$' is unintelligible in the sense of being "spectral... a fantasy," something we cannot "grasp" or "make genuine sense of" (Bridges 2016, 84). True, Clarke argues that we cannot conceive of an actual philosophical-skeptical scenario, one involving human beings, in which 'the $Real_{ph}$' figures, but even that is not enough to support the

conclusion that the concept is unintelligible. After all, 'the $Real_{ph}$' evidently makes perfect sense in the case of the airplane-spotters. A stronger case could be made that '$Dream_{ph}$' is unintelligible, given the apparent inconceivability of it ever satisfying the philosophical knowability requirement; but even if inconceivability amounts to unintelligibility, Clarke nowhere claims to have positively shown that '$Dream_{ph}$' is inconceivable. He concludes at most that *we do not possess* such a concept and so scenarios or questions that incorporate it are inconceivable and unanswerable (by us) respectively.

Now, it might seem that I'm trading in distinctions without differences; but I believe there *is* a fundamental difference here and that an understanding of the Pyrrhonian Reading helps bring it out. Pyrrhonians, by suspending judgment, decline to take the final step with dissolutionists: they decline to make determinate proclamations about (or to adopt determinate dispositions regarding) the indeterminate. We might update the Pyrrhonian motto "no more this than that"—which Sextus cashes out as meaning "'I do not know which of these things I should assent to and which not assent to'" (PH, 1.91)—to read: "Maybe so, maybe not." Even if we grant that 'the $Real_{ph}$' *is* something we cannot "grasp" or "make genuine sense of" (Bridges 2016, 84) given our existing "commitments" and "concepts" (Bridges 2016, 85), it does not follow that 'the $Real_{ph}$' is to be rejected as illusory. *Maybe* it is illusory, but then maybe not: maybe our failure to make genuine sense of it in light of our existing commitment and concepts means so much the worse for our existing commitments and concepts.[12] The only way to

[12] Fogelin makes a similar point in response to Donald Davidson's externalist coherentism: "The skeptic, as Davidson pictures him, holds that it is possible for most of our simplest, plainest beliefs about the world to be false. Davidson responds: Those beliefs would not be the beliefs they are, indeed, they might not be beliefs at all, unless most of them were true. But now a new and equally fearsome skeptical challenge arises: Couldn't I be mistaken in my belief that I have beliefs; and don't the skeptical scenarios show how this could be possible? On an internalist semantics that contains something like the doxastic principle, this is not possible since, on such a theory, the content of our beliefs is largely accessible to us. Davidson rejects such internalist theories, for, among other things, he thinks that they lead to an unresolvable skepticism. He put it this way in 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and

foreclose this 'maybe not,' it seems to me, is with some sort of ancillary theory regarding the inherent authority of our existing commitments and concepts.

Second, Clarke does not say that there is nothing beyond the plain. Indeed, he seems to affirm that there *is* at the end of LS when he writes that "outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed." He doesn't say that *nothing* lies outside the circle of the plain or even that the plain is not a "circle." Furthermore, there is Clarke's puzzling reference to the "relative 'non-objectivity'" of the plain (LS, 769, ¶63). What's puzzling are the scare-quotes. If the plain–philosophical distinction has dissolved, then so has the distinction between plain and philosophical objectivity. I take it that the scare-quotes are intended to signal that Clarke is not using the term 'non-objectivity' in its usual or expected sense, perhaps even that he is using it in a way that cuts against its usual or expected sense. At any rate, in the context of LS there seem to be only two basic ways of understanding 'non-objectivity': either plainly or philosophically. There are difficulties in either case. If the plain is relatively non-objective$_{pl}$, then what counts as the relatively objective$_{pl}$? (How can the plain be non-objective relative to itself?) The more natural reading, I think, is that he has in mind philosophical (absolute) objectivity. In that case, the scare-quotes signal that, by having called into question the plain–philosophical distinction, the idea of philosophical objectivity has itself become problematic and with it the notion of the plain's non-objectivity relative to the philosophical. As we'll see, the Pyrrhonian Reading can make sense of both ways of interpreting this passage.

The Pyrrhonian therapy gives rise not to dissolution–quietude, but to suspension–equanimity. The Pyrrhonian Reading, then, interprets Clarke not as dissolving the plain–

Knowledge': 'It is ironical. Trying to make meaning accessible has made truth inaccessible' (313). Davidson seems to have fallen into the reverse difficulty. In arguing that most of our basic beliefs (if we have any) must be true, he seems to have foreclosed the possibility of establishing that we have any such beliefs at all. We can call this the semantic update of Cartesian skepticism. It is surely no less palatable than the original" (PR, 188).

philosophical distinction, but as calling it into question and consequently suspending judgment on it. Is there anything beyond the plain? A negative answer would be as problematic as a positive answer. Now, the Pyrrhonian therapy *does* try to show us that the pure-philosophical seems to exceed our ability to articulate it, at least in theoretical terms. In a sense, then, it slips the bounds of language—at least, of our plain language (which, Clarke thinks, is *not* rooted in the philosophical). I've argued, however, that for Clarke our commitment to the philosophical is rooted in our common world-sense (4.2.4). It is hard to see how an inability to articulate that world-sense would have any tendency to dislodge it, short of taking to heart some abstruse philosophical theory concerning the relation between language and reality. Even if our plain language is, *qua* plain, untouchable by the philosophical, that does not mean that the plain–philosophical distinction has dissolved. It will remain operative in our thinking so long as we continue to possess our common, inarticulate and perhaps inarticulatable world-sense.

"There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words," Wittgenstein wrote. "They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical." On the Pyrrhonian Reading, Clarke's conclusion is that, as users of concepts, utterers of language, purveyors of meaning, we are (or, rather, we seem to be) inveterate plain men. Moreover, *as* users of concepts, etc., this is no failure or contingent limitation on our part; it seems to belong to the structure of the plain and so of our plain speech as the plain beings we are. Suspending judgment on the plain–philosophical distinction allows that perhaps the pure-philosophical *is* an illusion; but until and unless we lose our common world-sense, the distinction will continue to have a hold on our thinking. (Notice that Clarke does not drop the term 'plain.') It will continue to seem to us—manifestly, as it were—that there *is* something beyond the plain. Perhaps we will want to call it 'mystical,' at least in Wittgenstein's sense: "To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole—a

limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical" (Wittgenstein 1921, 88, 6.54). Perhaps we cannot put this feeling into words—indeed, perhaps it is unintelligible, possessing only an illusion of sense—but Pyrrhonians hold that it does and will continue to impact our thinking and our lives, if only as a sort of regulative ideal against which to measure ourselves and our pretentions to knowledge. To turn Wittgenstein's image around, it may be that what is mystical is the sense of our inescapable *finitude*.

As we saw in Chapter 3, for Clarke skepticism in the form of the sense-data thesis is arrived at—moreover, it is (in a sense) *made true*—by inserting 'mental planes' between all possible sub-portions of the experienced object under consideration. The initial result is that the world of our experience is occupied not by physical objects, which are the 'default units' for Seeing in everyday life, but by surfaces. The final result, which arises when we insert what I would call the (Cartesian) 'subjectivist' mental plane between the 'inner' realm of sensations and the 'outer' realm of objects, is that the world of our experience turns out to consist not even of surfaces, but only of sense-data (or whatever). Given the subjectivist mental plane, the ontological ground of our experience *in toto* is seen as no more inherently superior than that of dreams or hallucinations. We also saw, however, that Clarke rejects the traditional notion that this peculiarly philosophical mode of Seeing represents the deep truth of everyday cases of Seeing. He rejects the thesis "that sense data are the 'given element' in perception" as well as the thesis that "sense data are 'epistemologically prior' to physical objects" (NTE, 1; cf. NTE, 97). Far from representing the deep truth of the everyday, philosophical Seeing is a highly artificial *distortion* of everyday Seeing. Clarke's argument here turns on making sense of "the 'popping back' experience" (NTE, 110), i.e., the experience that accompanies relaxing the mental effort required to keep in place the mental planes that produce the experience of

philosophical Seeing. With the ‘popping back’ experience, Clarke argues, our Seeing once again embraces physical objects, as in everyday life—and it does so in precisely the same way that it had previously ‘embraced’ sense data. What ‘pops back,’ though, is the everyday empirical world, not the metaphysical world, which was *never* taken to be directly accessible to experience.

Let’s turn now from NTE to LS. Plain P_e establishes only fallibility, not SK_{pl}. We might, just possibly, wake up later in different surroundings and discover that we had been dreaming. If this possibility is eventually realized, then it would accurately reflect our current state if we were to insert a mental plane between our experience and the ‘real’ world. There do arise situations, particularly in dreams, in which we are unsure whether or not such a mental plane ought to be put in place. Such occasions might call for suspension of judgment on the appropriateness of the division between experience and the real. Even so, plain P_e presupposes the negotiability of the plain ‘Dream’–‘Awake’ contrast. Restated in Clark’s terms from NTE, plain P_e presupposes that we *can* have the ‘popping back’ experience, where what ‘pops back’ is the real world upon awakening. But in this case as well, what ‘pops back’ is the everyday empirical world. To be ‘$Awake_{pl}$’ is, as we’ve seen, to be in touch with the ‘$Real_{pl}$’—the everyday empirical world. The popping back of the everyday world, or the knowability of the $Real_{pl}$, is compatible with suspension of judgment on the ultimate metaphysical status of the $Real_{pl}$. This, I contend, is what plain P_{ne} shows us. Suspending judgment in this way is not to *deny* that the $Real_{pl}$ is the Real *full stop*, i.e., that “to be implained is just to be” (Gorodeisky & Jolley 2014, 253); it is to leave the question open. Perhaps, as Frede puts it, “it might be a mistake to distinguish quite generally and globally between how things appear” (= the everyday empirical world) “and how they really are” (= the metaphysical world) (Frede 1984, 221)—but

then again perhaps it is not a mistake. Perhaps we *are* brains-in-vats, etc., etc. Less fancifully, perhaps the world that science continues to reveal to us *is* more fundamental than, yet radically alien to, the world of our everyday experience.

That the empirical–metaphysical distinction underlies contemporary physics puts non-Pyrrhonian anti-skeptics in the unenviable position of trying to use philosophy, in the name of 'common sense,' to trump natural science. Unlike in the case of the highly artificial mental planes of the sense-data inquiry, it seems to me to require no great mental effort to keep in place the 'plane' separating the empirical from the metaphysical world. Indeed, given our common world-sense, according to which reality in itself is absolutely objective, the opposite is true: it requires considerable mental gymnastics to *erase* the posited division between the empirical and the metaphysical. As Alexander P.D. Mourelatos notes, the same intellectual impulse that gave us the perhaps lamentable metaphysics of "Plato, medieval theology, and the dominant outlook of post-Cartesian philosophy" also

> gave us theoretical physics as we have come to know it. The attitude of transcendence, of penetration into that which is beyond or behind sense-experience, the attempt to interpret the familiar and obvious in terms of the unfamiliar and the unknown has been vital for Western science. The promise and the allurement of physics... is that its theoretical concepts (Newton's matter, or the particles or states of modern physics) are somehow *closer to reality* than the colors, textures, sounds, and tastes of our everyday experience. (Mourelatos 1965, 365)

It may or may not be true that the theoretical concepts of physics are closer to reality than are our everyday concepts and experiences; but the possibility is not easily dismissed, certainly not in anything like the ways in which Cartesian subjectivism can be dismissed.[13] As Wilfrid Sellars's

[13] Bryan Frances has argued that "real, scientifically respectable, 'live' hypotheses" cannot be rejected out of hand (as, e.g., 'paradoxical') and that this fact can be leveraged to make 'skepticism come alive' (Frances 2005, ix).

distinction between 'the manifest image' and 'the scientific image' implies, these images are not only different, but *prima facie* in conflict, hence in need of being "fused into one" (Sellars 1963, 4). Taken together with the obvious 'otherworldliness' of many scientific-realist accounts of reality, the distinction of 'images' suggests that philosophers such as Stroud are at least too quick, if not outright mistaken, in running together, in opposition to traditional philosophizing, the epistemic practices of "everyday and scientific life" (SPS, 31, 40, 53, 57, et al.).[14] On its face, science is as much a challenger of 'everyday common sense' as traditional philosophy has ever been. It is true, as Nietzsche puts it, that "[w]e have science these days precisely to the extent that we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses" in a way that traditional philosophy challenges or outright rejects—but this does not mean accepting the world as it appears to us. No, we "have science... to the extent that we have learned to sharpen [the senses], arm them, and think them through to the end" (Nietzsche 2005, 168; *Twilight*, 'Reason,' §3).

7.3 The Fate of Plain Knowing

7.3.1 A Fallibilist Transcendentalism

On the Dissolutionist Reading, Clarke concludes that it makes no sense to speak of plain

[14] It is interesting to note that unlike many modern and contemporary philosophers, who tend to link science and common sense as standing together in opposition to traditional philosophy, it was far more common among the ancients to link science and traditional philosophy as standing together in opposition to common sense. This is true partly because, of course, the terms 'science' and 'philosophy' were only clearly distinguished in modern times, when what had been called 'natural philosophy' came to be called 'natural science.' Still, the ancients—starting at least with the Sophists—did distinguish between 'natural philosophy' and 'philosophy' in a broader sense. Sextus speaks of "scientific (*epistēmas*) inquiry" (PH, 1.13) and of "natural science (*physiologoumen*)" (PH, 1.18), the latter of which is more literally translated "the study or account of physics." For Sextus, these sorts of inquiries belong to philosophy; but they do not exhaust the philosophical, since philosophy is also concerned (*inter alia*) with how to live (cf. PH, 1.17).

knowing as "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only" (LS, 767, ¶51), for there is no "*absolutely objective* perspective" from which to render such a judgment. In a sense, the Pyrrhonian Reading agrees. *Our* concept 'knowing' is plain. Therefore, plain knowing is not knowing in a manner of speaking only; it is knowing, full stop. The Dissolutionist Reading holds that, resulting as it does from the dissolution of the plain–philosophical distinction, this marks a return from philosophical confusion to "the plainness of what we do believe as plain men" (LS, 758, ¶12); it "leaves everyday knowledge and our 'epistemic practices' untouched" (CP, 312). Indeed, it shows those practices to be inherently epistemically authoritative. To be sure, questions remain, deep and important questions. Dissolutionist quietude of a Clarkean sort is 'quiet' when it comes to traditional philosophy, but not when it comes to everything that deserves the title 'philosophical.' No reading of Clarke can get around the "new, challenging problem" with which he says skepticism leaves us: "the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity.'" Even so, on the Dissolutionist Reading, this "new, challenging problem" arises against the background of the plain's (plain) inherent epistemic authority, which has already been secured by the end of LS as a result of the dissolution of the plain–philosophical distinction. The Dissolutionist Reading interprets the scare quotes around 'non-objectivity' as a nod in the direction of the recalcitrant. Skeptics and other committed traditionalists may need a more intensive therapy than Clarke has provided; they may need to have the post-skeptical elucidation carried out before they come around to seeing what has already been shown.

Stroud's strategy for elucidating our empirical knowledge targets the restricted conception of perception and is essentially Davidsonian in spirit (Bridges 2016, 86). It starts, for dialectical purposes, from within the skeptical problematic and sets out to elucidate "the

conditions of possessing and understanding the concepts needed even to be presented with the traditional epistemological problem" (Stroud 1988, 97). The result is a kind of fallibilist transcendentalism.[15] It is fallibilist because it "would not establish the correctness of anything [i.e., any particular thing] we take ourselves to believe about things located outside us" (Bridges 2016, 86–7); but it

> would clear away an apparent challenge to the legitimacy of capacities for knowledge we take ourselves to possess, and it would do so by revealing that the very intelligibility of that challenge is inconsistent with what we can come to see, through philosophical reflection, about the structure of our thought about these capacities. (Bridges 2016, 87)

The conclusion is that "we cannot make sense of the supposed possibility of human beings whose perceptual capacities do not yield knowledge of 'things located outside'" (Bridges 2016, 87). Stated in more detail:

> Descartes' question purports to proceed from an alternative view of what perception, "strictly speaking", might amount to: a capacity for knowing only what one seems to see, hear, etc. The envisioned "transcendental" reflections show us that we cannot make sense of such a capacity. There is no understanding the subject's acquiring knowledge of what she seems to see or hear except as a deliverance of a capacity generative of knowledge of how things are in the world around one. Insofar as a skeptical challenge to our beliefs acquired "from or through the senses" purports to deviate from this understanding, it loses its subject matter. (Bridges 2016, 88)

I will not interrogate this argumentative strategy at any length, not least because doing so with any justice would require diving deep into Stroud's work (and beyond), which lies outside the scope of this project. I would note, however, that it is consistent with the Dissolutionist

[15] According to Bridges (Bridges 2016, 86–7), its fallibilism is what allows the later Stroud's transcendentalism to avoid the early Stroud's well-known objections to 'traditional' transcendental arguments (for which see esp. UHK, Essay 2).

Reading of LS that this sort of argument might well elucidate the possibility of empirical knowledge. The argument starts from within the plain—with "capacities for knowledge we take ourselves to possess"—then attempts to show that we could not have the concept of such capacities unless we were in fact able to exercise them successfully. Even so, this sort of transcendental argument takes a great deal for granted. To begin with, it clearly operates within the conceptual space of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. It understands appearances ("what one seems to see, hear, etc.") as private inner mental phenomena of some sort. Moreover, it assumes with Descartes that subjects have direct, unproblematic access to those appearances—something that no skeptic worth her salt ought to concede, if for no other reason than that she should also refrain from conceding that the 'phenomena' in question are what they are thought to be on the Cartesian picture. It is this twofold Cartesian assumption (of an 'inner realm' that is 'immediately accessible') that Hegel derides as "a bastard off-spring" of genuine skepticism (Hegel 2000, 322). Frede writes that the classical skeptic "has no reason to think that impressions are immediately given and unquestionable" (Frede 1984, 222). He argues, moreover, that classical skeptics have no reason to assent to the existence of "mind" (*nous*) as it was conceived (and, if Frede is right, *invented*) by dogmatic philosophers (Frede 1996, 18).[16] For Pyrrhonians, contemporary debates surrounding 'eliminative materialism' are just more things to suspend judgment on. But without the Cartesian assumption that we *can* and *do* conceive of "the subject's acquiring knowledge of what she seems to see or hear" (in the peculiar Cartesian sense of 'seems'), there is no way to leverage that supposed knowledge to reach the conclusion that we therefore have a capacity for objective (outer) knowledge since (inner)

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[16] "[T]he notion of reason [*nous*] originally was a philosophical construct, rather than part of the framework in terms of which Greeks had always thought about things and which philosophers just tried to articulate further... Such a notion of reason only seems to emerge very slowly under the influence of philosophical considerations, and we only meet it in a full-blown developed form in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle" (Frede 1996, 3).

knowledge of ‘seemings’ is conceivable only given a capacity to know the world.

Furthermore, even if we can manage to escape from the prison of our sealed-off minds by way of a transcendental argument, we would do so only to confront the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction. Kant seems to have seen this clearly: we can argue our way to knowledge of empirical reality (understood as metaphysical appearance), but there we must draw rein. The world-in-itself (the metaphysical world) remains mysterious, unknown and unknowable, for dialectic, which Plato thought could lift us beyond the sensible realm to the realm of the really real, is in fact “a *logic of illusion*” (Kant 1929, 297, A293/B349). Now, Pyrrhonians will not assent to the Kantian view either. My point is to suggest that transcendental arguments of the sort Stroud makes use of are *at best* effective only in combating skepticism understood on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. It seems to me, however, that Clarke is better understood as having the metaphysical appearance–reality distinction in view. Stroud’s post-skeptical elucidation presumes, moreover, that the plain—our plain concepts—enjoys a kind of integrity that, on the Pyrrhonian Reading, Clarke would not uncritically accept. On the Pyrrhonian Reading, Clarke has *not* shown that the plain (*our* plain) is inherently epistemically authoritative.

7.3.2 The Significance of Plain Skepticism

As we’ve seen (5.1.2), Clarke holds that K_{pl} is “immune... from skeptical assault” (LS, 754, ¶4a), meaning “from implained skeptical assault” (LS, 756, ¶7), from “outside undermining” (LS, 767, ¶51)—in short, from *philosophical*-skeptical assault. This is the case even on the traditional conception of the relation between the plain and the philosophical, as

evidenced by the analogy of the airplane-spotters. Regarding K_{pl}, the most that SK_{ph} could hope to achieve is to show that it is "'knowing' in a manner of speaking only" (LS, 767, ¶51). In fact, however, SK_{ph} cannot accomplish even that much, for the concept of 'plain knowledge' is not projected *inward* from the philosophical; rather, 'plain knowledge' is primitive, as it were. Plain knowing just is what knowing is (for us). What, though, is the *status* of plain knowing? Clarke tells us that "plain knowing... need[s] to fear only... *plain* skeptical possibilities" (LS, 767, ¶51). What is the scope and disruptive potential of SK_{pl}?

On the Dissolutionist Reading, SK_{pl} can take the form only of what I shall call *everyday* skepticism (SK_{ed}). SK_{ed} takes the form of the sort of "everyday doubts" that Clarke mentions in ¶31, just prior to introducing the idea of SK_{pl} in ¶32. SK_{ed} trades in *context-bound* challenges or counter-possibilities of the sort that might be raised against an airplane-spotter's plain knowledge-claim. Everyday doubts are, I take it, the sort of doubts emphasized by Austin.

> In various *special*, *recognized* ways, depending essentially upon the nature of the matter which I have announced myself to know, either my current experiencing or the item currently under consideration (or uncertain which) may be abnormal, *phoney*. Either I myself may be dreaming, or in delirium, or under the influence of mescal, &c. (Austin 1970, 87)

But given that they instantiate *recognized* error-possibilities, such doubts

> are all to be allayed by means of recognized procedures... appropriate to the particular type of case. There are recognized ways of distinguishing between dreaming and waking (how otherwise should we know how to use and to contrast the words?). (Austin 1970, 87)

It is true, to all appearances, that we have ways of distinguishing between $Dream_{pl}$ and $Awake_{pl}$ in everyday life. It is this sort of 'knowability' that is explicitly invoked in P_e. Because it fails to interrogate the metaphysical status of the concepts deployed in the scenario, P_e leaves our C-

concepts (that is, our conception-of-concepts) ‘Dream’ and ‘Awake’ untouched.

It seems to me, however, that P_{ne} represents us with a very different and more difficult skeptical challenge, one that I think outstrips mere everyday doubts by calling into question our C-concepts of the concepts used in the scenario. In this way, it presents us with full-blown (non-everyday) SK_{pl}. What P_{ne} ultimately calls into question, by way of calling into question the status of the CS_{pl} propositions that underlie our everyday epistemic practices, is the metaphysical status of *our* plain concepts, what we *actually* say, mean, imply in deploying them in everyday life. In other words, it calls into question our C-concepts ‘Dream,’ ‘Awake,’ and ‘Real,’ asking the crucial question whether *our* plain deployment of those concepts lines up with our corresponding C-concepts of those concepts. We have a CS C-concept of ‘Dream,’ ‘Awake,’ and ‘Real’ according to which these concepts are deployed within a ‘world’ understood on the model of commonsense realism. Such realism speaks to our common, pretheoretical world-sense. There are also various everyday contexts in which these terms, even when couched in general propositions, take on an intelligible plain meaning, such as in the case of the lecturing physiologist or the experimenter with soporifics. These plain, general (or generalizable) deployments of the concepts fall in line with Austin’s account of ordinary usage in ordinary cases of everyday life—they abide by the requirement of special reasons. But P_{ne} as Clarke imagines it forces us to question the metaphysical status of those concepts as they are used by us in everyday contexts. Does ‘Real’ (as used by us) mean *really real* (as imagined by us)?

Moreover, P_{ne} manages this while avoiding Austin’s objection that “[t]he wile of the metaphysician consists in asking ‘Is it a real table?’ (a kind of object which has no obvious way of being phoney) and not specifying or limiting what may be wrong with it, so that I feel at a loss ‘how to prove’ it is a real one” (Austin 1970, 87). P_{ne} *does* specify what may be wrong with the

CS_{pl} claim that we can know we're awake, not dreaming. It doesn't deny the negotiability of the *everyday* 'Dream'–'Awake' contrast, but it does call into question the metaphysical status of those terms as used in everyday life. Austin thinks that, to avoid these sorts of philosophico-metaphysical problems, "we should insist always on specifying with what 'real' is being contrasted—'not what' I shall have to show it is, in order to show it is 'real'" (Austin 1970, 88). This is precisely what P_{ne} does, by opening up an imaginative space within which to project the relevant concepts. In the case of the futuristic physiologist with her envatted brains, 'real' is contrasted with the 'unreal' 'experiences' that are fed into the envatted brains.

It is important to see that the propositions of CS_{pl}, like those of CS_{ph}, stand *outside* of our everyday epistemic practices. On the traditional view of the relation between CS and the everyday (4.1.1), the general propositions of CS_{ph} are thought to ground or legitimize our everyday epistemic practices. As we saw in Chapter 5, however, Clarke finds that CS_{ph} is not fully meaningful and is therefore unable to play this foundational role. We saw in 4.1.2 that Clarke also does not think that Austinian 'meta-CS' is capable of stepping in to fill the gap left by CS_{ph}. What grounds our everyday epistemic practices, then? In 4.1.3, we saw that, for Clarke, the everyday is grounded not in CS_{ph}, but in CS_{pl}. This is what Moore shows us: it explains why Moore is, as Clarke puts it, "in one sense, the compleat philosopher," for he arrives at the conclusion that 'completes' traditional philosophy: "outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed" (LS, 769, ¶63). The propositions of CS_{pl} are like those of meta-CS in being plain, and they are like CS_{ph} in being context-free. SK_{pl}, then—which targets CS_{pl}, just as SK_{ph} targets CS_{ph}—is also context-free. It presents us with conceivable scenarios in which our everyday concepts are projected into unusual contexts in order to open up an imaginative space within which we can ask the context-free question, "Can we ever *really*

know$_{pl}$ that we're awake$_{pl}$, not dreaming$_{pl}$?", where this question is no longer something to be settled on the basis of our everyday knowledge, for it is asking a question not from *within* our everyday epistemic practices, but one about those practices themselves, where the practices are understood as grounded in CS$_{pl}$.

Now, in this attempt to explain the relation between CS$_{pl}$ and the everyday, I was forced into making what appears to be a contradictory statement: that we project our everyday concepts into unusual *contexts* in order to ask a *context-free* question about the everyday as such. This flirtation with contradiction relates to the difficult problem of how it is possible for a proposition to be both plain and context-free. We can begin working this out by considering what P$_{ne}$ suggests about the status of the concepts 'Dream' and 'the Real' as they figure in propositions of CS$_{pl}$. The basic idea is that, given a conception of CS as plain, context-boundedness and freedom-from-context reveal themselves to be *contextual* determinations. Plain proposition *p* can, from within context *x*, be correctly deemed (plainly) context-free in the sense that it stands (= is made from a standpoint) outside of context *x*. Yet as plain, *p* is nonetheless bound to a broader context (context *y*), which is taken to subsume context *x*. The plain meanings of concepts bound to context *x* are then 'objectively' grounded in the plain meanings of 'verbal twins' of those concepts as deployed in context *y*. To sloganize the thought: it's contexts all the way down. Even the notion of 'context' itself is contextual. Likewise contextual are the notions of 'objectivity' and 'the Real.'

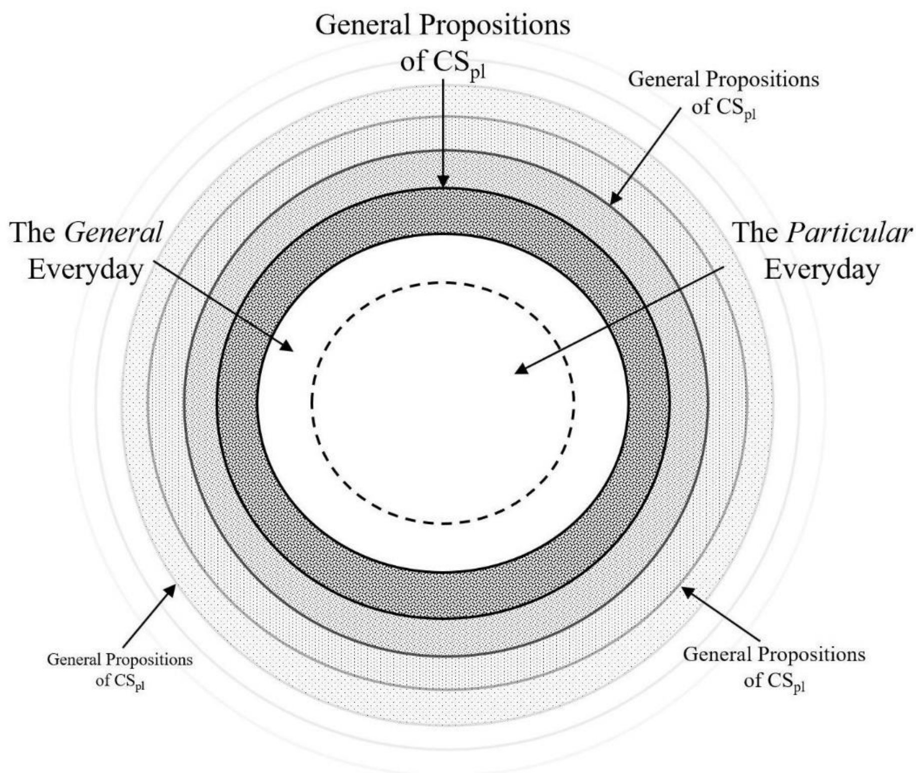

FIGURE 21: Contexts All the Way Down

If this is right, then the only intellectual grip we have left on *absolute* objectivity, understood as an objectivity free of *all* contexts, lies in our pretheoretical world-sense. I suggested that that world-sense is initially inarticulate. Perhaps, Clarke is suggesting, it *cannot be* articulated, at least not literally or directly, e.g., in the form of philosophical-theoretical statements.

Let's see how this idea can shed light on Clarke's arguments regarding P_{ne}.

Clarke tells us at the end of LS that "the plain skeptical possibilities" are "one major tool for unlocking [the] secrets" of "the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity'" (LS, 769, ¶63). These plain skeptical possibilities are, he thinks, "genuine." Thus, "[w]hat must the structure of the plain be that it can accommodate these possibilities" (LS, 768, ¶57)?

The plain skeptical possibilities turn on projecting our concepts into radically

noncommonsensical contexts. In allowing that we *might* be brains-in-vats—this is, for Clarke, a genuine plain skeptical possibility—Clarke is allowing that our *real* situation might be describable in terms of the (plain) concept 'Dream' where that concept is tied to *being a brain in a vat* (as opposed to existing 'in the real world,' as does the futuristic physiologist). In that case, the context-free (non-everyday) proposition of CS_{pl}, "We can $know_{pl}$ we're $awake_{pl}$, not $dreaming_{pl}$," is true and fully meaningful because its knowability requirement is (potentially) fulfilled by the physiologist. It is possible to *know*, in a sense that falls outside of our everyday epistemic practices, that we are awake, not dreaming, even if *we*, being brains-in-vats, will or can as a matter of fact never find out. The proposition of CS_{pl} ("We can know—that is, it's possible to know—we're awake, not dreaming") lies outside the circle of *our* everyday, but (*a*) it remains plain because it falls within the circle of the *physiologist's* everyday, and (*b*) it remains conceivable because the scenario "manufactured" to "reinforce" P_{ne} opens up an imaginative space within which we can project our plain concepts.

Indeed, the knowability requirement is so lax that it does not require even the possibility that the knowability in question could ever be actualized: "P_{ne}, as I conceive it, is *this* possibility"—the futuristic-physiologist possibility—"without the *actual* (active) outsider" (LS, 767, ¶49). All that must be conceptually opened up by the plain-skeptic's scenario is an imaginative space in which a person or entity *could* $know_{pl}$ the $truth_{pl}$ of our $real_{pl}$ surroundings. That person or entity needn't exist, let alone ever actualize the K_{pl} in question. Moreover, it needn't actually *be the case* that we *are* in the situation described by the scenario in order for the scenario's possibility to call into question the *objective facts*—what I've called 'the worldly frame of the Real'—of *our* actual everyday situation in the world. The 'skeptical gap' needn't be understood metaphysically; an epistemological gap is sufficient to confront us with global

skeptical doubts.

What becomes, in such a scenario, of *our* concept 'Dream' and its contrasting concept, 'the Real'? If we are brains-in-vats, then those concepts are, as Putnam would say, concepts "in the image" or concepts of "vat-English." In Clarke's terms, they are themselves contextual. Within the 'envatted' context, propositions employing these concepts can be true or false and known to be so. Within the vat-context, there can be everyday procedures for distinguishing between dreaming and being awake. But as for what is *really real* (what is 'objective'), *that* is grounded in the physiologist's (plain) knowledge regarding our "*real* surroundings." We ourselves would remain, like Putnam's brains-in-vats, unaware of the worldly frame of the Real within which we deploy our everyday, context-bound concepts. Those concepts would remain legitimate *qua* plain propositions. Our plain, everyday identifications of states as ones of 'Dreaming' or 'Waking' would fail to track the 'objective' ('context-free') facts of the matter while nonetheless remaining immune to outside undermining. We would be usually *correct* ("in the image," in "vat-English") when we make this sort of distinction. Even so, relative to our everyday context, there is a (relatively) context-free meaning of 'Dream' and 'Awake' according to which our everyday distinctions between 'Dreaming' and 'Waking' are *false*, for they fail to track the 'objective' facts of the matter expressed by the propositions of CS_{pl}. Here it is useful to recall Montaigne's skeptical use of dreams, discussed in Chapter 6: "why do we not consider the possibility that our thinking, our acting, may be another sort of dreaming, and our waking another kind of sleep?" (Montaigne 1958, 451). If we *are* brains-in-vats, then something of this sort is as a matter of fact the *truth* expressed in the general propositions of CS_{pl} that underlie our everyday epistemic practices. *Per se*, strictly speaking, or in an objective sense—one that is, paradoxically, *relative to us*—'the Real' is the 'everyday empirical world' of the futuristic

physiologist. To be *truly* 'Awake' ('truly' from the perspective of the futuristic physiologist, at least) is to experience *that* world rather than the waking 'world' fed into our envatted brains.[17]

With this, there comes into view what I take to be a fatal flaw in Putnam's semantic-externalist anti-skeptical strategy in "Brains In A Vat." The problem is that Putnam never 'envats' the concept 'Real,' instead reserving it and its cognates for experiences that are 'real' in the way we commonsensically think about reality. The "real world" remains for Putnam the world that is "external" to the vat (cf. Putnam 1981, 10). But, of course, "vat-English" would contain the word 'real,' just as it contains the word 'awake.' Putnam's mistake is to hold that *our* concept 'Real' is necessarily commonsensical (philosophical) rather than 'envatted' or otherwise 'implained.' In other words, his argument begs the question—indeed, it does so with a seeming obliviousness that is nearly as stunning as is Moore's seeming inability to understand utterances as intended philosophically. According to Putnam's semantic externalism, brains-in-vats could not, as we supposedly can, *say* or *think* that they are brains-in-vats. Stuck with speaking (and thinking) 'vat-English,' they could at best say or think what *we* would render in 'real-life' English as "*we are brains in a vat in the image*" (Putnam 1981, 15), i.e., in-the-vat; but that is not the same thing as saying or thinking that they are brains-in-vats in, as it were, 'reality.' If I'm right, however, then P_{ne}-type scenarios open up an imaginative space within which we can project our concept 'Real' into a context in which, even if we *are* brains-in-vats, we *can* say (and mean and imply), "Perhaps we are *really*—in 'relatively objective' reality—brains-in-vats."

[17] We can easily imagine how a brain-in-a-vat might be made to experience the 'real' world. Perhaps the brain can be hooked up to sensory apparatuses that allow it to 'see,' 'feel,' etc., its 'real' environs (i.e., the environs of the futuristic physiologist). Perhaps the physiologist and the envatted brain have regular sessions in which they exchange information about the artificial experiences of the envatted brain. More dramatically, we can imagine that the brains can be sensorially connected to robots ('avatars') that navigate the 'real' world for them, allowing them to experience the 'real' world 'directly.' It is easy to imagine that people might come to refer to such brains as 'awake,' where 'awake' is contrasted with the state the brains are in when *not* linked up to the reality-connected robot. When the robot 'sleeps,' so too does the brain—though the brain also *dreams*.

Clarke writes, "It seems almost beyond question that what plain P_e and P_{ne} suggest could happen, *could,* indeed, just possibly. Hence one leading question in the study of the plain, shaping our approach, is, What must the structure of the plain be that it can accommodate these possibilities?" (LS, 768, ¶57). If SK_{pl} is confined to what I've called SK_{ed}, then it would be the case that we can, at least in principle, rule out these farfetched possibilities, just as Stroud thinks he can rule out there having been a mix-up at the hospital on the day Fogelin was born on the basis of his knowing what Fogelin's real name is. This is how the Dissolutionist Reading will understand Clarke's admission of the possibility of SK_{pl}. Any such view, however, must immediately confront the fact that P_{ne}-type scenarios are fundamentally unlike the sort of skeptical doubts that are or can be raised in everyday life. Stroud is right, it seems to me, to reject Fogelin's claim that radical skepticism can be motivated without appeal to the sort of "Hyperbolic Doubts" that "rest on systematically uneliminable possibilities," i.e., that reflection on eliminable but uneliminated mundane (everyday) doubts is sufficient (PR, 91). Stroud writes:

> I think the reflections that have that negative outcome [i.e., radical skepticism] in that project [i.e., traditional epistemology] are not just reflections on the fact that we make knowledge-claims without checking every one of the [ordinary] possible ways in which what we say could be wrong. I think the reason "Pyrrhonian scepticism" is correct in its response to the traditional epistemological project is precisely because the threatening possibilities in that case *are* systematically or globally ineliminable. The reflections leading to that traditional problem rest on the idea that all knowledge of the world around us comes ultimately from perception, and that what we receive in perception can be seen to be limited in a certain systematic way. (CP, 318; cf. Rudd 2003, 13–4)

To all appearances, P_{ne}-type skeptical scenarios have the potential to be systematically or globally eliminable despite being plain. Moreover, these scenarios do *not* "rest on" the restricted conception of perception as understood on the model of the subjectivist appearance–reality distinction. Such scenarios can serve their skeptical function while allowing that perception

reaches out and embraces the everyday empirical world (understood as possibly constituting mere metaphysical appearance)—indeed, Clarke holds that this is in fact the case, but that that world (i.e., the 'objective' facts regarding its 'objects') is itself partly a product of our engagement with it: the imposition of everyday contexts, of "our practices... whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain... elemental parts of our human nature" (LS, 761, ¶21). The everyday empirical world, understood as the world of our everyday experience, is the product of *two* dimensions: the "physical situation" and the "unit arrangement," and the latter is due to us (3.3). When we attempt to ask 'pure' questions about the world as it exists independently of our engagement with it, the semantic ground falls out from under our feet. Seeing and Knowing will always, according to Clarke, fall short of the *metaphysical* world, the really real world-in-itself. Perhaps such a world is ultimately unintelligible and is a sort of illusion; but then again perhaps it's not. As Clarke says in a different connection, "We have no satisfactory techniques for handling a question like this objectively" (LS, 766, ¶48). Thus, we are left, like Sextus, with "report[ing] descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at the time" (PH, 1.4): Pyrrhonians "say what appears to themselves and report their own experiences (*to pathos*) undogmatically, affirming nothing about extrinsic underlying objects (*exōthen hypocimenōn*)" (PH, 1.15).

I should take this opportunity to note that, for Sextus, *exōthen hypocimenōn* are not, as Annas & Barnes misleadingly translate it, "external objects" in the sense in which that phrase is bound to be understood by contemporary philosophers. *Hypocimena*, as Bury notes, are literally "underlying things," which he cashes out this way: "the essences or reals which lie behind, and give rise to, sensations or 'appearances'" (Sextus Empiricus 1933, 10–11 fn. b). This too can be misunderstood if we foist upon it a Cartesian conception of 'appearances' as private inner mental

states (or whatever). For Pyrrhonians, appearances are at least initially taken to exist, as we might put it, *outside* us, in the world.[18] But they are not, or are not known to be, the *really real*. Thus, in saying that *hypocimena* are *exōthen*, Sextus does not mean 'external' in the sense of without-the-mind; he means that which is external to or outside of *appearances* understood as that which make up the sensible realm of everyday experience. I say all of this to illustrate the fundamental difference between skepticism understood 'subjectivistically' as opposed to 'metaphysically,' and how easily the two can be conflated.[19]

Now, of course Clarke does not *endorse* any P_{ne} scenario as being actual. Its actuality or nonactuality is beside the point, for the problem is epistemological, not metaphysical: the question is whether we can know what the world is like in itself. Perhaps our being *does* unfold within a worldly frame that is reflected in our common world-sense. In other words, perhaps commonsense realism is the correct account of the really real. But then again perhaps it is not. The structure of the plain is such that these questions, though they are framed in terms of plain concepts, appear to be unanswerable. Clarke concludes that "outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed. Skepticism leaves us the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity'" (LS, 769, ¶63). What does this mean, according to the two readings we're considering?

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[18] As Annas & Barnes note, "When the Pyrrhonists talk of appearances or of how things appear they are not indulging in technical philosophical jargon... There is no suggestion that 'appearances' are somehow entities distinct from the objects which purportedly produce them. The Pyrrhonists are not assuming that when we attend to 'the appearances' we are attending to a peculiar sort of entity, a mental image or a sense-datum, say. On the contrary, to attend to the appearances is simply to attend to the way things appear—it is to notice that honey appears sweet, oil viscous, butter rancid." Moreover, crucially: "Appearing is not something which only perceptible objects can do: music may sound, and hence appear, loud; sandpaper may feel, and hence appear, rough; but equally an argument may appear valid, a statement may appear true, an action may appear unwarranted—and arguments, statements and actions are not perceptible items. To say how things appear is to say how they impress us or how they strike us, whether or not it is via our perceptual apparatus that the impression is made" (Annas & Barnes 1985, 23; cf. Burnyeat 1980, 39).

[19] For a particularly egregious example of such conflation, see Chisholm 1941.

1. "[O]utside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed."

On the Dissolutionist Reading, Clarke is saying either that *nothing* lies outside the circle of the plain or at least that nothing *thinkable* or *intelligible* does. We wished for and presumed was an accessible realm of something like pure (absolutely objective) philosophical facts. Alas, skepticism shows us how wrong we were. The Pyrrhonian Reading agrees about what we had wished and presumed. It holds, however, not that nothing (or nothing intelligible) lies outside the circle of the plain, but that what lies outside the circle of (our) plain is just *more plain*, circles upon conceivable circles, stretching out beyond our semantic horizon. In attempting to understand the structure of the plain, we project our plain concepts outward. They find purchase for a time, but eventually they slip our grasp. This is demonstrated in P_{ne}-type scenarios. We can conceive of the futuristic physiologist, but down that road lie an infinite regress of plains. Alternatively, we can try to climb the metaphysical ladder, from physiologists to demons and gods. But down that road lies ultimate inconceivability, where our concepts lose all meaning (or we lose our grip on our concepts' meanings).

2. "[T]he problem of the plain" is the problem "of its structure, the character and source of its relative 'non-objectivity.'"

On the Dissolutionist Reading, the problem of the plain is just the problem of providing a post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge, one that is capable of rounding-out the philosophical therapy that is supposed to free us from philosophical confusions and anxieties. Stroud concludes that, once elucidated by transcendental reflection, the structure of the plain reveals itself to be such that we have direct, unproblematic access to the world.

> A message of our "transcendental" reflections can be put like this: in perceiving the world around me, I can thereby know something about it to be so. To say that I "thereby" acquire knowledge is to say that nothing more need be required to,

> say, know that a fire is before me than for me to perceive it to be present. The belief that most proximately results from this nexus is not readily viewed as a belief that is justified by something else I know or believe. I am justified in believing there's a fire before me simply because I perceive, and thereby know, it to be so. (Bridges 2016, 90)

This amounts to returning us to our prephilosophical epistemic attitudes, though now those attitudes have made been explicit:

> Perception is a faculty for such immediate knowledge of the world around us. This is something we already knew, as manifested by our competence in the application of the concepts of knowledge, perception, belief and so on to other people and ourselves. Engagement with the skeptical challenge has brought this knowledge to philosophical consciousness. (Bridges 2016, 92)

With our prephilosophical relation to the world explicated, we can then appeal to it in responding to skeptical challenges. The "source" of the plain's apparent "'non-objectivity'" is the confused conception of ourselves generated by philosophizing; its "character" is brought out by way of the post-skeptical elucidation of our empirical knowledge. Once brought to light, the philosophical picture, and the problems associated with it, dissolve, revealing the notion of the plain's "relative 'non-objectivity'" to be a chimera. ("Relative to what?" the dissolutionist will ask.)

On the Pyrrhonian Reading, the problem of the plain is not something that can be solved by reminding us of what "we already knew." The structure of the plain remains deeply mysterious, meaning that the structure of our own concepts remains mysterious. The problem of the plain's "relative 'non-objectivity'" is not at all illusory. This is evidenced by the disruptive potential of P_{ne}-type scenarios. Above, I said that 'objectivity' in ¶63 of LS must refer either to plain or to philosophical objectivity and that the Pyrrhonian Reading can make sense of it either way. If Clarke is referring to "relative 'non-objectivity$_{pl}$,'" then the problem is that *our* plain is 'non-objective' relative to the conceivable plains posited by P_{ne}-type scenarios. Yes, we possess

and successfully deploy a subjective–objective distinction in everyday life, but that is separate from the context-free sense of 'objective' that features in the general propositions of CS_{pl}. The threat of a gap opening up between the two can be forestalled only by arguing that the everyday has inherent epistemic authority such that no 'non-everyday' (context-free) possibility, even if it is conceivable, is capable of undermining that authority. The Dissolutionist Reading, as I understand it, presents no such argument, but rather takes the everyday's inherent authority for granted. The thought behind doing so, I take it, is that the contest between skepticism and everyday life is a zero-sum game: if the philosophical skeptic can be disarmed, as Clarke clearly believes he can be, then we have all the proof any reasonable person could want that the everyday is epistemically authoritative. The everyday is not only innocent until proven guilty; its accuser has been discredited, all charges cleared.

If Clarke is instead referring to "relative 'non-objectivity$_{ph}$,'" then the problem is that we cannot shake our common world-sense. Looked at this way, Clarke is saying that any account of the structure of the plain will have to do justice to the sense that it is non-objective relative to our (inarticulate, perhaps inarticulatable) sense of the absolutely objective. We will have to show, as Clarke puts it in NTE, "how knowing and seeing can be genuine even though essentially dependent on" the contribution of everyday contexts, which inevitably render them less than fully objective (NTE, 248). Clarke writes that

> There are only two possible answers to traditional epistemology. One would be a conception of empirical knowledge which makes sense of how it can be genuine and yet essentially dependent on the non-rule-like dimension. The other would be an effective demonstration that it is impossible to understand empirical knowledge in general terms. (NTE, 247)

Clarke opts for the first possibility. He tries to show that K_{pl} is genuine knowing. In LS, he

succeeds insofar as he's shown that K_{pl} is the only kind of 'knowing' that we can make sense of. Yet the problem of the plain, on the Pyrrhonian Reading, is the problem not just of showing that K_{pl} is genuine knowing—a semantic issue, ultimately—but that the relation of 'knowing' to the world is enough to satisfy human beings' lauded "long[ing] to know" (Aristotle 1998, 4, 980a). As we've seen, Stroud thinks that Fogelin has been "lured away from the comforts of an unthreatening Pyrrhonism by some so-far-unexplained longing for legitimacy" (CP, 321). If I'm right, however, the problem of the plain is precisely the problem of *providing a legitimizing account of* K_{pl}. Moreover, as Clarke repeatedly suggests, any such account must be developed while accepting that "the plain skeptical possibilities [are] possibilities" (LS, 769, ¶63). If I'm right about the disruptive potential of P_{ne}-type scenarios, then this is indeed "a philosophical problem of the greatest magnitude" (NTE, 242), not something to be settled by "transcendental reflections" whose starting point is a faulty and dogmatic conception of the skeptical problematic.

To be sure, Clarke seems optimistic that a legitimizing account of the plain *can* be developed—though it is perhaps significant that he never offered one to the world despite that, by all accounts, he continued to work on the problem for decades after the appearance of LS. Even so, the question I want to ask now is this: Where are we left *until* the problem of the plain is solved? Where does Clarke leave us at the end of LS? The answer, it seems to me, is that we're left in a state of suspension of judgment. The plain–philosophical distinction has not dissolved; it is suspended. The appearance–reality distinction has not dissolved; it is suspended. If this is right, then the legacy of dogmatic skepticism is, at least initially, classical skepticism.

7.3.3 The Pyrrhonian Life *Adoxastos*

I began this chapter by asking what effect, if any, the failure (the dissolution or suspension) of the traditional-philosophical project ought to have on our everyday epistemic attitudes. Stroud holds that it ought to have no effect. Fogelin is ambivalent: though he claims that "the Pyrrhonist is under no constraint to conform his activities—including his linguistic activities—to philosophical standards" and "undogmatically accepts the everyday epistemic practices of his culture" (PR, 195), he also speaks of "the fragility of our common epistemic practices" (PR, 193), a fragility resulting from their continued susceptibility to skeptical undermining. Philosophical standards, for Fogelin, have not dissolved; they have not been shown to be chimerical. In suspending judgment on the traditional-philosophical project, the Pyrrhonian does not claim to have discovered that all was right with our everyday epistemic practices all along. The effect of the Pyrrhonian skeptical therapy is twofold: (*1*) it is supposed to cure us of dogmatism; (*2*) it is supposed to reinstate not the *epistemic*, but what I will call the *practical* authority of everyday life in the way Kant describes in Chapter 1, Section 2 of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method.

1. As we saw in Chapter 6, Fogelin and Anthony Rudd both interpret Fredean Pyrrhonism as targeting only philosophical doctrines, not the everyday beliefs of plain men (Fogelin 1992, 216–7; Rudd 2003, 13). I argued that this misrepresents or overlooks a fundamental feature of Frede's view. The target of the Pyrrhonian therapy is dogmatism, which comes in everyday as well as philosophical forms.[20] I want to suggest that the undogmatic (*adoxastos*) attitude characteristic of Pyrrhonians—an attitude of *epistemic modesty*—is, if not

[20] As Martha Nussbaum notes, "Most people hold many of their beliefs about the world firmly and dogmatically, even without the guidance of the philosopher" (Nussbaum 1994, 284).

the result of upbringing or temperament, an *achievement* and that such modesty represents an alteration of our prephilosophical attitudes. This achievement might well deserve to be called philosophical—though, ironically, it results from the failure of the traditional-philosophical project. Plato describes precisely this sort of 'transformative experience' at the close of the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue that ends in aporia. Referring to the idea that he is an 'intellectual midwife,' Socrates says,

> And so, Theaetetus, if ever in the future you should attempt to conceive or should succeed in conceiving other theories, they will be better ones as the result of this inquiry. And if you remain barren, your companions will find you gentler and less tiresome; you will be modest and not think you know what you don't know. This is all my art can achieve—nothing more. I do not know any of the things that other men know—the great and inspired men of today and yesterday. But this art of midwifery my mother and I had allotted to us by God; she to deliver women, I to deliver men that are young and generous of spirit. (Plato 1997, 233–4; *Theaetetus* 210b–d)

It seems clear that, as far as the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is concerned, philosophers—or at least those who have come into contact with philosophical thinking—are in fact far *less* likely to be dogmatic than plain men are.

Nietzsche makes the same point. What I'm calling 'dogmatism' he calls 'conviction' (*Ueberzeugung*). "Conviction is the belief that we possess the absolute truth about some specific point of knowledge." Convictions are not themselves "opinions" (*Meinungen*), but are rather "belief in opinions" (*des Glaubens an die Meinungen*), specifically, the belief that our opinions are absolutely true: "Those countless human beings who sacrificed themselves for their convictions believed that they were doing it for the absolute truth." Nietzsche claims that "someone with convictions is not a person of scientific thought (*wissenshaftlichen Denkens*); he stands before us at the age of theoretical innocence and is a child, however grown-up he may be

in other respects." And he argues that

> if all those who thought so highly of their convictions, made all kinds of sacrifices to them, and spared neither honor, nor body, nor life in their service had devoted merely half of their strength to investigating by what right they adhered to this or that conviction or the way in which they had come to it: how peaceful human history would then appear! How much more knowledge there would be! We would have been spared all the cruel scenes resulting from the persecution of every sort of heretic, for two reasons: first, because the inquisitors would have inquired above all into themselves and would have gotten beyond the presumption that they were defending the absolute truth; and then, because the heretics themselves would not have given any further credence to propositions as badly grounded as the propositions of all religious sectarians and "true believers" are, once they had investigated them. (Nietzsche 1995, 296–7, §630)

Much later, having just referred back to his earlier writings, he says that "[c]onvictions are prisons." That one has escaped the prison of convictions, Nietzsche writes, "*proves* itself through scepticism" (Nietzsche 2005, 54; *The Anti-Christ*, §54), by which he means (what I'm calling) Pyrrhonism.[21] It is this kind of attitude—this modest, undogmatic, 'unopinionated' attitude toward one's own first-order beliefs (what Sextus refers to as living *adoxastōs*)—that I take to be the bearing that the failure of the traditional-philosophical project ought to have on our everyday epistemic attitudes.

It should be noted in addition that even if Pyrrhonism does not in fact lead to this outcome—even if it doesn't loosen the grip of everyday dogmatism—it seems clear that the outcome itself is perfectly intelligible, as it would not be if the idea of 'everyday dogmatism' were a contradiction in terms or otherwise made no sense. It might be argued that the freedom from dogmatism that is supposed to result from the Pyrrhonian philosophical therapy is simply freedom from *philosophical* dogmas. The *Theaetetus* can be read this way. On that sort of

[21] For present purposes, all I mean to imply by claiming that the skepticism Nietzsche refers to in *Anti-Christ*, §54 is (what I'm calling) Pyrrhonism is that this skepticism, like (what I'm calling) Pyrrhonism, is characterized by freedom from dogmatism (convictions)—including dogmatic skepticism.

reading, Socrates is saying merely that, in the future, Theaetetus will not think that he knows *philosophical* truths when he doesn't know them. But what Socrates actually says is more general: Theaetetus will not think that he knows what he doesn't know. I see no compelling reason to read this as extending only to beliefs regarding matters of philosophical inquiry narrowly construed. For one thing, any such narrow construal of the purview of philosophy seems quite alien to Plato's Socrates, who seems to have considered everything (or nearly everything) as open to philosophical inquiry. The passage from Nietzsche illustrates how using philosophy to undermine our confidence in our ability to know that we've ever grasped the "absolute truth" can be thought to lead to a general epistemic modesty, one that extends far beyond strictly 'philosophical' considerations. His example in *Human, All Too Human* (i.e., religious extremism) is also used by William James: "When... one remembers that the most striking practical application to life of the doctrine of objective certitude has been the conscientious labors of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, one feels less tempted than ever to lend the doctrine a respectful ear" (James 1867, 16–7). Three centuries earlier, we find Montaigne writing, at a time when people in his country were routinely burned at the stake for heresy, that "it is putting a very high price on one's conjectures to have a man roasted alive because of them" (Montaigne 1958, 790).

In conclusion, it seems to me that even if Pyrrhonians are mistaken in thinking that suspension of judgment can have the salutary chastening effect I've described (if salutary it is), it should be uncontroversial that there is something in us to be chastened. That something is *widespread everyday dogmatism*—what Michael Williams refers to in passing as "ordinary dogmatic certainty" (UD, 173). Dissolutionism may free us from 'antiquated' philosophical dogmas; but it leaves everyday dogmatism untouched and, moreover, seems to achieve its

dissolution by means of *other* philosophical dogmas.

2. Pyrrhonians, then, differ from plain men in being undogmatic. They neither accept everyday epistemic practices as in order nor reject them on account of their philosophical groundlessness. Their immersion in the world, together with the common world-sense they share with plain men, brings them to a recognition of everyday life's inherent authority, but this authority is seen not as *epistemic*, but as *practical*. By this I mean that they do not think that the *truth* or *truth-aptness* of our everyday epistemic practices has been vindicated, only that Pyrrhonians do not see a way in which those practices could be shown to be *false* in the sense of not truth-apt. The plain is, as Clarke argues, "secure against outside undermining" (LS, 767, ¶51)—but since the contest between philosophy and everyday life is not a zero-sum game, that is not enough to show that K_{pl} is "genuine" knowing (NTE, 248).

This manner of 'practically' justifying everyday life is well-described by Kant, who distinguishes between two kinds of proof or justification: the first is *cat′ anthrōpon* (according to human beings); the second is *cat′ alēthian* (according to the truth). I understand this to distinguish proofs or justification in terms of *appearances* (particularly in Sextus's sense of that which serves as the guide to everyday life) from those in terms of *reality* (the 'in-itself'). Kant writes that

> when reason has to deal not with the verdict of a judge, but with the claims of a fellow-citizen... [it needs] only to act in self-defence. For since these are intended to be just as dogmatic in denial as its own are in affirmation, it is able to justify itself *cat′ anthrōpon*, in a manner which ensures it against all interference, and provides it with a title to secure possession that need fear no outside claims, although *cat′ alēthian* the title cannot itself be conclusively proved. (Kant 1929, 593, A739/B767)[22]

[22] Kant continues: "By the polemical employment of pure reason I mean the defence of its propositions as against the dogmatic counter-propositions through which they are denied. Here the contention is not that its own assertions may not, perhaps, be false, but only that no one can assert the opposite with apodeictic certainty, or even, indeed,

Everyday life is able to justify itself *cat′ anthrōpon*, Kant argues, because it will "always have in reserve the subjective maxim of reason, which is necessarily lacking to our opponent, and under its protection [we] can look upon all his vain attacks with a tranquil indifference" (Kant 1929, 596, A742–3/B770–1). For present purposes—of which Kant exegesis is not one—I want to understand "the subjective maxim of reason" in terms of accepting appearances, as in Hume's "general maxims of the world" (Hume 2007a, 175).

Sextus endorses the same sort of justificatory strategy: "it is perhaps sufficient to oppose (*antitithenae*) to these [sophistical] arguments what is self-evident (*enargian*) in order to shatter their [i.e., the dogmatists'] positive affirmation with the equipollent disconfirmation given by what appears" (PH, 2.244).[23] When faced with "an argument leading us to something agreed to be absurd," Sextus tells us, Pyrrhonians will "suspend judgment over each proposition; and then... introduce what seems to us to be the case (*docounta epaxomen*)" (PH, 2.253). In this way, Pyrrhonians "set out undogmatically from the observances of everyday life," whereas "the dogmatists... are obliged to judge dogmatically" and therefore cannot appeal to appearances in order to settle disputes or dispel absurdities (PH, 2.254). Everyday epistemic practices are inherently authoritative not in the sense they are known to be (in the main, fallibly) *truth-apt*, but

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with a greater degree of likelihood. We do not here hold our possessions upon sufferance; for although our title to them may not be satisfactory, it is yet quite certain that no one can ever be in a position to prove the illegality of the title" (Kant 1929, 593–4, A739–40/B767–8). On the distinction between justification *cat′ anthrōpon* and *cat′ alēthian*, see also Kant 2000, 327, 5:462–3.

[23] There is reason to think that Kant himself associated this justificatory strategy with Pyrrhonism. In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* I've been quoting, he writes: "As against our opponent, who must not be considered here as a critic only, we are equipped with our *non liquet* [it is not clear], which cannot fail to disconcert him" (Kant 1929, 596, A742–3/B770–1). In the *Blomberg Logic*, Kant writes, referring to Pyrrho, that "[t]o anyone who maintained his propositions with the greatest and most settled gravity he shouted out in opposition, *Non liquet*, It is not settled, and then he began to expound his speech against it." Kant calls this "[a] skilled and learned way of humbling some proud dogmatist and of showing his weak side. This [i.e., *Non liquet*] is a certain motto for every pure reason" (Kant 1992, 213).

because they have a hold on us that philosophy cannot dislodge on purely rational grounds, if at all. They have an overriding *practical* authority with which abstract philosophizing cannot hope to compete.

7.3.4 Continuing the Inquiry

I've argued that where Clarke leaves us at the end of LS is best understood on the Fredean model of classical skepticism: it leaves us in a state of suspension of judgment regarding both the plain and the philosophical. As we saw in Chapter 6, Sextus claims that suspension of judgment goes together with, or at least allows for, the continuation of philosophical inquiry. This can take any number of forms. Pyrrhonians might, as on some readings of Hume,[24] continue to inquire in a more or less traditional-philosophical way, should they find themselves "naturally *inclin'd*" to do so (Hume 2007a, 176). Or they might conclude that they must continue the inquiry in a Clarkean way, where philosophy is reoriented around the problem of characterizing the plain.[25] (I would include certain varieties of phenomenological inquiry here.) As we've seen, suspending judgment on (as opposed to dissolving) the philosophical appearance–reality distinction means leaving open the possibility of radical error. Pyrrhonians live, Frede says, with an awareness that "what one said one knew could be radically otherwise... that the whole practice of using the verb 'to know' the way we ordinarily do might be radically mistaken" with reference to true (really real) reality (Frede 1984, 212). The worry of radical but plain error is, on the Pyrrhonian Reading of Clarke, the "philosophical problem of the greatest

[24] E.g., Popkin 1951.

[25] Hume can be read in this way as well. See, e.g., Letwin 1975.

magnitude" with which dogmatic skepticism leaves us (NTE, 242). Yes, dogmatic Cartesian skepticism "frees us from... itself" (LS, 769, ¶63), but not in the way envisaged by the Dissolutionist Reading—it does not free us from generalized skeptical doubts.

This point can be made using the image of Neurath's boat, whose planks make up the conceptual scheme that keeps our inquiries afloat. The global skeptic needn't be an outsider attacking the boat from some independent, external standpoint; rather, he can himself be a passenger intent on sabotaging the craft from within. As Stroud puts it,

> Certainly there is no guarantee against such sabotage merely in the thought that the saboteur must be aboard ship from the beginning of the journey, or even that he would have to stand with at least one foot on that huge, dispensable portion in order to cut it loose from the ship of knowledge in the first place. (SPS, 234)

In keeping with his Cartesian understanding of the skeptical problematic, Stroud speaks of the skeptic "sawing all around the meagre portion of the ship that represents our sensory data, and setting the rest of it adrift" (SPS, 234). As we've seen, however, thoroughgoing skeptics will not assume that "our sensory data" enjoy any privileged immunity from the depredations of philosophical theorizing.[26] The plain skeptic does not leave us clinging to the wreckage of mere sense data (or whatever). Rather, he confronts us with possibilities whose actuality would leave us both with *more* than that (they would leave us with the entirety of the everyday empirical world of appearances) and with *less* than that (they would cut us off entirely from objective 'reality,' even so-called 'inner' reality).

Finally, Pyrrhonians are sure to recommend philosophizing as a means of expelling dogmatism. Indeed, if the struggle against dogmatism is an ongoing thing, not something accomplished once and for all, then they are likely to find themselves coming back to philosophy

[26] On this topic, see Carruthers 2011, Schwitzgebel 2011, and Bakker 2017.

again and again.

In conclusion, I end this exploration of Clarke's supposedly "new" and most assuredly "challenging" problem on a (classical) skeptical note. Perhaps Clarke's problem will never be conclusively resolved. Perhaps the inquiry will never reach completion; perhaps the conclusions of post-skeptical (i.e., post-traditional-philosophical) elucidation must remain forever tentative, indexed to the individuals, cultures, and epochs that give them voice and life. Indeed, perhaps the problem of the plain is, ultimately, not one of *discovery*, but of *invention*, as in Nietzsche's vision of the philosophers of the future. Perhaps 'the plain' is not a stable thing to be explained once and for all, but something to be forged—something we all forge, day in and day out, with our words and how we live them. Either way, if the problem of the plain does not admit of a once-and-for-all solution, then Clarke has left us at the end of LS in a permanent, not a merely temporary, state of Pyrrhonian suspension of judgment. In such a state, equanimity (*ataraxia*) is achieved by embracing the mysterious rather than by attempting to level (to 'plane') it off, as dissolutionists do. Pyrrhonians live, to borrow a phrase from Michelle Zerba, "in searching accord with appearances" (Zerba 2012, 86). This involves, to use Platonic imagery, resting content in the Cave of *Republic* VII—what Clarke would call the plain. Unwittingly capturing what I take to be an important dimension of Hume's Pyrrhonism, Shirley Robin Letwin writes that

> When [Hume] tells us—dwellers of the cave—that we must be content with the cave, that we cannot hope for a brighter or steadier light than that of the fire we have kindled and that we must keep the fire going unaided, he does not mean that the fire is worthless or unreal or that we should turn our backs on it... [T]he philosopher, as Hume sees him... can live... with mystery. He refuses to speak about anything but the cave and feels certain that escape is impossible, yet he would never presume to say that nothing lies beyond it. He knows that how anyone ever came to kindle the fire, or why it should give light and warmth, remains beyond his comprehension. The inmates of the cave have survived and

> flourished; what they think appears then to correspond somehow to the constitution of the cave. But how this correspondence came into being, what maintains it and how exact it is he does not pretend to know. He admits freely that the power to create and to order ideas remains an enigma. But he does not in the least doubt, disdain or deprecate all that it has created. (Letwin 1975, 155–6)

For a Pyrrhonian Clarke, what lies on the near-side of the 'mental plane' separating appearance from really-real reality—i.e., the plain from the philosophical—is "not... worthless or unreal." It is not a mere dream or illusion. A Pyrrhonian Clarke will, as Letwin puts it, "[feel] certain that escape" from the plain "is impossible, yet he would never presume to say that nothing lies beyond it." Regarding such matters he will suspend judgment. Moreover, the denizens of the plain have, to all appearances, "survived and flourished" despite the unavailability of the philosophical. As a result, "what they think appears... to correspond somehow to the constitution of" the plain. Contrary to the standard model, the human-conceptual constitution appears to be "parasitic on, inextricably and dependently interwoven with... our practices... whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain... elemental parts of our human nature" (LS, 760–1, ¶21). Even so, we should not "pretend to know" "how this correspondence"—this intertwining of appearances and the human—"came into being, what maintains it and how exact it is." Perhaps stable, satisfactory answers to these questions will emerge one day; but in the meantime, we are free to "[rest] content at home... inside the plain" (LS, 759, ¶15)—not because the plain is all there is, but because the plain is, to all appearances, all we *have* and all we *need*.

"It is true," Nietzsche wrote, "there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it can hardly be contested. We see all things through the human head and cannot cut this head off; and yet the question remains as to what part of the world would still be there if one had in fact cut it off." Even so, we

cannot... allow happiness, salvation, and life to hang from the spider threads of such a possibility... Even if the existence of such a world were to be proven ever so well, any knowledge of it would certainly still be the most irrelevant of all knowledge [with respect, I take it, to happiness, salvation, and life]: even more irrelevant than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to a sailor endangered by storm. (Nietzsche 1995, 20–1, §9)

Appendix

"The Legacy of Skepticism," by Thompson Clarke*

[§0 INTRODUCTION][1]

§0.1 Clarke's Twofold Question

[754] 1. The question I intend to explore, much too briefly, is twofold. What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage? And what do his reflections, properly construed, reveal?

§0.2 Hume's Compelling Thought

The one thing I most regret is that I have not sufficient space to examine certain deservedly renowned doctrines which bear on these questions.

2. I may best begin with Hume's compelling thought, that the skeptic is calling in question whether we can know the most fundamental kinds of things that "outside our studies" we believe without question.

[§1] MOORE: THE INVETERATE PLAIN MAN

§1.1 Questioning Moore

3. The intriguing question, whether Moore's Defence and Proof,[2] standing pat, can be rational and effectual, or, unless heavily reinforced, are to be adjudged impotently dogmatic, must be broached by inquiring what "general propositions of Common Sense" Moore sets out to uphold.

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* "The Legacy of Skepticism" originally appeared in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 69, No. 20 (1972): 754–769. It appears here in its entirety with the permission of the publisher. All footnotes are my own, not Clarke's. I have inserted subsectional divisions; the divisions and their titles are of my own invention. The paragraph numbers are also not present in Clarke's text.

[1] This section heading is not present in Clarke's text.

[2] Here, Clarke cites Moore's "A Defence of Common Sense" and "Proof an External World," from Moore's *Philosophical Papers* (Moore 1959).

§1.2 Clarkean Meta-CS

4a. A salient fact is that there is a large, important domain of questions, claims, and the like, ideal for Moore, where a "proof" like his *is* a proving, where knowing stands in need of no argued defense because the epistemic is immune (oversimplifying slightly) from skeptical assault. The domain, of course, is the everyday, the particular questions, claims, *et al.,* occurring within specific, elaborate, contexts of everyday life, instances *par excellence* of what I **[755]** shall call "plain" questions, etc. The skeptic's doubts notoriously fare badly if "implained," that is, *if* raised *inside* these contexts, without "changing the subject," *directly* against the epistemic, to show such claims unequivocally wrong. To remove the oversimplification, it is skeptical doubts so raised, with this intention, from which the plain is immune, for these implained doubts are ignorable—either absurd, irrelevant, or out of place.

§1.3 Two Moores: Lilliputian and Life-Sized

4b. An appealing daydream for a Moorean would be Moore as a Lilliputian philosopher, his logical horizon encompassing only this plain, his sole opponent a Lilliputian implained skeptic. How well off would be a Moore in such a land! Sadly, life-size Moore, cognizant of their existence, wishes to champion the *very general* propositions of Common Sense (henceforth abbreviated, 'CS'). Nevertheless, under a certain conception of CS, reality exceeds this daydream. CS, as conceived, is "meta": its propositions are summings up of how things go with the relatively particular plain, the sole concern of a Lilliputian Moore. Of course things do go well, because it is part of this conception also that the skeptic, and his doubts, are implained. But Moore, this defender of a meta-CS, is a Moore redesigned.

§1.4 Moore's Propositions

5. Moore is not observing us talking in particular contexts, not making general records of the results (meta-CS); he's not, as it were, a botanist studying and recording how we plants fare in contexts varying in soil and climate. Moore's general propositions wear their logical type on their face. This is true of his proposition, "I know there are material objects," in general logical type like the assertion, made in an everyday circumstance, "I know there are two bottles of milk on my neighbor's doorstep"; it is not really, in disguised form, the thesis that there are certain particular contexts in everyday life within which we can know, but a first-order proposition directly about material objects, the public world.

§1.5 Context and Meaning

6. Moore would, nevertheless, be quite reasonable in his own terms if *his* (first-order) propositions were plain, *even though* very general and context-free. It is, seemingly, "the meaning" of the relatively particular plain that is responsible for its immunity from implained skeptical assault. This "meaning," however, is not to be identified with the meaning of words, alone or in combination, but with "meaning" in a different dimension, with what *we* mean, say,

or imply, *in* uttering the words (with their meanings). Could Moore's general propositions, as meant by him, have the same meaning in this dimension as the relatively particular plain of everyday circumstances?

§1.6 Verbal Twins and the Dimensions of the Plain

[756] 7. Our question is, then, how broad may be the dimensions of the circle of the plain. Each CS proposition has a verbal twin which, figuring in one or another general context, *is* plain. To illustrate:

> Suppose a physiologist lecturing on mental abnormalities observes: *Each of us who is normal knows that he is now awake, not dreaming or hallucinating, that there is a real public world outside his mind which he is now perceiving, that in this world there are three-dimentional animate and inanimate bodies of many shapes and sizes...* In contrast, individuals suffering from certain mental abnormalities each believes that what we know to be the real, public world is his imaginative creation.

Intuitively speaking, these (italicized) twins of CS propositions are plain: each has the right kind of plain meaning; each is immune from implained skeptical assault.

§1.7 A Groundless Argument Against Moore, and A Rule of Thumb

8. But the ultimate logical sin, in the eyes of certain philosophers, is "propositions" outside contextual wedlock. The purported result, "language on a holiday," is language on a very poor holiday, a shell of itself, limp, ersatz. Moore's CS propositions—unless recast as meta-figures, one motive for so doing—are guilty of this alleged sin. But this renowned condemnation of Moore has never been grounded on anything but sand. There is, in its background, a valuable rule of thumb. The segments of language preoccupying epistemologists can be absolutely secure when inside elaborate everyday circumstances, especially if used to request or convey information. Language can with impunity travel farther afield but, as a rule of thumb, such excursions, ventured by philosophers, should be endeavored with bankerish caution. Moore, though, has been victimized, for this practical guide has sometimes created a myopic fixation with one "use" of language, and has insidiously been converted into a narrow dictum about conditions of meaningfulness, with Moore as target. What sense, *if any,* Moore could make is investigated by seeing how he fares when the more particular versions of his affirmations are taken as intended, in certain contexts, to convey novel information—the myopic fixation—the conclusion drawn being that the legitimacy of Moore's propositions is, regarded charitably, *most* suspect, a conclusion, incidentally, conflating oddity of assertorial performance with meaninglessness of what's asserted, a mistake long since buried by Grice.[3] Moore is not intending a magnanimous enrichment of our stock of knowl- **[757]** edge, but to be drawing up a compendium of the basic kinds of things we know: there is nothing assertorially odd in his performance. But still, in a different way, Moore's performance can seem peculiar, i.e., oddly

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[3] Here, Clarke cites Grice's *Logic and Conversation*, a set of lectures that were eventually published as Part I of Grice 1989.

dogmatic, unless what he's saying can legitimately be understood as plain, even though his propositions are bastard, conceived out of context. Thus, it might seem, this large issue remains. But without its underpinnings, viz., the fallacies just considered, the issue ceases to look like an *issue*. For the suggestion that Moore's contextless propositions probably lack full meaning, if not to be taken as the rule of thumb raising a cautionary finger, is a doctrine plausible only because of its power to explain why Moore's propositions seem illegitimate; but *that* conclusion, itself the product of two fallacies, is best ignored. On the other hand, if the suggestion is counseling by the rule of thumb, it can be humbly ignored, for all the signs point in the opposite direction.

§1.8 The Compiler of Human Knowledge

9. Imagine individual *I* compiling a record of human knowledge, because, alas, humans have to abandon earth, but wish to leave behind, in a time capsule, complete records of human knowledge, for who knows what strange eyes. *I's* list must include, among innumerable others, the physiologist's (italicized) plain propositions. Now what if *I* drew up his list not against a purposive backdrop of human tragedy, but *purely for its own sake*? Are we to suppose that the propositions on *this* list are unable to enjoy the same legitimate, plain meaning as when spoken by the physiologist, unless *this* list is taken and used for the original funereal purposes of the first? But Moore is *I,* drawing up his compendium, primarily for its own sake.

§1.9 The Role and Importance of Contextual Features

10. There *is* a truth lurking here requiring acknowledgment. Contextual features, their presence or absence, do matter, but not in the way envisaged by Moore's opponents. Such features exercise control, on us and on how the language segments within the context are to be understood. The fewer the contextual features, the more option we have, the larger the role of our decision and resolve. Moore's propositions on his list are virtually, perhaps entirely, context-free; this is the reason it is open to us either to understand his propositions as "philosophical" (discussed later), Moore seeming blatantly dogmatic as a consequence, or to understand them as plain, which Moore does effortlessly, automatically, almost as though he had had a philosophical lobotomy.

§1.10 Plain Common Sense

11. There is (I see no reason now to forbear saying it) a *plain* species of Common Sense (CS_{pl}). Moore rightly sees his Defence and Proof as deserving full marks, *if* the only Common Sense there is is **[758]** plain Common Sense and *if* the skeptic is really impounded within the plain—nonexistent "if"s" for Moore, the inveterate plain man, for whom there *is* nothing outside the circle of the plain.

12. Moore is especially illuminating because he is not a philosopher's philosopher, but a philosopher's plain man: he drags us down from our ivory towers, we reflective, ethereal beings, back to our earthly selves, and confronts us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain

men.

[§2] BEYOND THE PLAIN

§2.1 Everyday vs. Philosophical Questions

13. Yet there must be more than just the plain. Witness the questions of perennial philosophical concern that could not otherwise even be asked. True, their plain versions could be, but, plain, would be wrongly asked. What are these questions?

14a. One favorite, "Are there material objects?" could be asked (indulging a fancy) by an immaterial being born and bred in a nonmaterial portion of the universe; but this is not what we ask "inside our studies," using these words. It is not a plain question like "Are there really trees?" asked by a child born and raised on the moon, a question to be settled by going and looking, not the question as understood by Moore, which, because plain, is amenable to his proof. What *are* we (philosophers) asking? Our special interest, it might be suggested, is whether we can *know* that there are material objects, and this question is philosophical when asked in the light of our peculiarly philosophical worry about dreaming and hallucinating. The question we really want to ask, the underlying issue, is, Can we *ever know* that we're not dreaming? Yet even this question, uniquely philosophical if any are, is equivocal. Consider this example:

> Suppose a scientist is experimenting with soporifics, himself the guinea-pig. He is in a small room. He keeps careful records. Experiment #1. "1:00 P.M. Taking *x* dose of drug Z orally... 1:15 P.M. Beginning to feel drowsy. I am not focusing clearly on... 6:15 P.M. I've been asleep but am wide awake now, rested and feeling normal. *I know,* of course, *that I'm not dreaming now,* but I remember, while asleep, actually thinking I was really awake, not dreaming. I dreamt I was a boy living with my parents (dead now for two years). The "experience" seemed very real. At first, as I was gradually waking up, I could hardly believe that I had been dreaming."

14b. The general question can be so understood that it is to be answered in the affirmative, simply on the basis of the experimenter's (plain) knowing. And that, obviously, is *not* our intended philosophical question. Note, incidentally, that *Moore* (we) can say *now* **[759]** what the experimenter says (italicized), meaning what he means, if we so decide. The general *plain* question can even, therefore, be asked of ourselves in the present.

§2.2 The Importance of Philosophy

15. What, then, are philosophical questions? How do they differ from plain questions? Differ they do, and significantly, for the philosophical questions satisfy a deep intellectual need, unfulfilled by their plain versions. How frustrating if we could ask only what the immaterial being asked concerning material objects or only what we asked a moment ago (the plain question) about dreaming! Something important would be denied us, which "inside our studies"

we seek, not questioning its availability. But what? A philosophical question and its plain analogue are not just *verbal* twins, but in one sense *meaning* twins also, for the words used have the same meanings in each version. Could it plausibly be otherwise? Which words, with what different meanings, might be responsible for the two versions of "Are there material objects?"? To rephrase the issue, what is *philosophical* Common Sense (CS_{ph}), those general propositions which answer general philosophical questions affirmatively? And what is the source of CS_{ph}'s intellectual grip? Why have so many cared so much, passionately desiring either to defend or to repudiate CS_{ph}—for it is this which the *real* skeptic cross-examines directly—instead of resting content at home like Moore, inside the plain, and, if inclined to a little defending or crossexamining, concentrating on *plain* knowing? What is the siren call of whatever lies outside the circle of the plain?

[§3] PHILOSOPHIZING: ITS CHARACTER AND PURPOSE

§3.1 The Airplane-Spotters

16a. Studying the skeptic, I hope to show, can pay large dividends, *partly* because of his large nonskeptical side. I begin by describing a state of affairs that illuminates, by analogy, certain conceptions explicit, or adumbrated, in the skeptic's position:

> Pilots are being taught to identify enemy aircraft. Ten kinds of enemy aircraft, *A, B, ... J,* are characterized in terms of their capabilities and mutually distinguishing features. The pilots are instructed to identify *any* enemy aircraft by running through a provided checklist of features. It is recognized that this may result in misidentifications: there are types of enemy aircraft, antiquated, rarely used, intentionally not covered by the checklist, which specifies features sufficient for distinguishing the ten types one from another but none from *X, Y, Z,* the antiquated types which the pilots are instructed to ignore. This procedure is adopted for certain overriding practical advantages.

16b. For later argumentation we will picture this state of affairs as the **[760]** significant part of a small, independent universe of humanoids, who never dream or hallucinate, whose senses are unerring, and, most important, who have only the concepts presented, plus any others needed for what the humanoids do, ask, and say in this state of affairs.

17. These creatures, obviously, are not in a skeptical position. They can know several kinds of objective empirical facts, including even, if they ignore the restrictions of the identification procedure, the real type of an aircraft; for types *X*, *Y, Z,* too, are "defined" in terms of distinguishing features.

§3.2 The Everyday—According to the Skeptic

18. *The plain.* The plain man's practice, the skeptic tells us, is like the humanoid's *hors de combat*: for practical purposes he consistently ignores certain kinds of remote possibilities. What he asks and says is the product of meanings, bridled by this nonsemantical practice. The

humanoid's identifications and epistemic claims, made in accordance with the identification procedure laid down, are "restricted." In identifying an aircraft as of type *A,* he is saying, meaning, implying, committing himself to *less* than would his words *per se,* if untrammeled by the practice prescribed by the identification procedure. In the eyes of the skeptic, plainness is restrictedness.

§3.3 Philosophy

19. *Philosophizing.* To philosophize, to step outside the circle of the plain, is to step outside the nonsemantical practice, then, speaking simple English, ask, affirm, assess, but, as a consequence, in unrestricted, untrammeled fashion. The peculiarly philosophical character of questions and propositions is their "purity." What *we* ask, or affirm, is what the words with their meanings do *per se.* Our commitments, implications, are dictated solely by meanings.

§3.4 The Standard Conceptual-Human Constitution (SCHC)

20. That the philosophical is the pure—a truth—implicitly involves much more than has yet been said. To step back, outside the circle of the plain, and, speaking English, ask and affirm, is fully legitimate; the resulting pure questions and propositions are full-bodied in meaning, only if, speaking in general terms, our conceptual-human constitution is of a "standard" type, the same type as the humanoids'—provided their setup is genuinely conceivable.

21. The pure results are full-fledged only if (1) each concept is a self-sufficient unit or retains its independent identity within a conceptual scheme that in its entirety is the self-sufficient unit; i.e., either each concept itself or the conceptual scheme is capable of standing alone, apart, on its own two feet, and is not parasitic on, **[761]** inextricably and dependently interwoven with, other factors. Each concept or the conceptual scheme must be divorceable intact from our practices, from whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain, from elemental parts of our human nature.

22. In stepping back, asking pure questions, etc., one represents that (2) there are, fully separate from concepts, one or more domains of "items." Included among the concepts may be Dream, Hallucination, or others "having reference" to aspects of one's self, these then being "items."

23. One also represents one's self as in a certain role: (3) We, apart from "creating" concepts and providing their mental upkeep, are outsiders, standing back detached from concepts and items alike (even when items are aspects of ourselves), purely ascertaining observers who, usually by means of our senses, ascertain, when possible, whether items fulfill the conditions legislated by concepts.

§3.5 Philosophy and the SCHC

24. We *can* philosophize legitimately if (1) and (2) are true and if we can validly be in the position and role described in (3), if, in short, our conceptual-human constitution is of the *standard* type. We *are* philosophizing, contingent on this, asking philosophical questions, *et al.,*

when any extraneous factors, especially inhibiting procedures, are debarred.

25. I rest my case that philosophizing is as characterized on this example: In asking "Are we awake now, or dreaming?" as a philosophical question, are we not standing back detached from our experiencing (the "item"), as observer and ascertainer—as would, I imagine, the Martian, upon whose brain had just been grafted that portion making visual experiencing, veridical and nonveridical, possible—asking a pure question, the question, Under which of two independent, competing concepts, on a par, is our experiencing to be subsumed?

26. Our humanoids can philosophize legitimately, apparently. Can we? Why do we care? What *is* the wellspring of philosophizing?

§3.6 The Philosophical-Intellectual Quest

27. *The Intellectual Quest*. Imagine we were certain humanoids, confined forever within the circle of the restricted, asking and answering only restricted questions. We should be intellectually frustrated just because prohibited access to the *objective*. We could ask "What type is this aircraft?," but we wouldn't thereby be managing to inquire what the objective fact really was, to raise an issue to be settled solely by the concepts and the item. Nor could we assess our epistemological position *objectively.* We could ask, "Could we *ever* be in a position to *know* of what type an **[762]** aircraft is?", but, again, not so intended that the only creatures on stage were features sense-able, and concepts, their requirements. The limiting eyeglasses of the restricted would prevent us from seeing, even trying to see, things and ourselves as they and we really are.

28. The truth is, I think, that this simple quest for absolute objectivity drives us beyond the plain, moving us to philosophize. Unfortunately, that this is our motive is not so self-evident as that it is the humanoids'; for what would make it completely obvious, viz., our plain being the same as the humanoids' restricted, is, I am about to argue (by implication) not the case, and in this paper I put nothing positive in its place to make the point equally evident. But what *is* frustrating about Moore's plain questions is, it does seem, their not enabling us to ask how things *really* are objectively. Certain intuitive philosophers I respect say that in philosophizing we stand back and treat the world in its entirety as an object apart from us, whereas as plain men we are "inside the world." I hope I have expressed less poetically, if less appealingly, the first half of the contrast drawn; and the other does put a finger on what seems to be a visible fact, that the objectivity attainable within the plain is only skin-deep, *relative.* We want to know not how things are *inside* the world, but how things are, absolutely. And the world itself is one of these things.

[§4] CROSS-EXAMINING COMMON SENSE$_{ph}$

§4.1 What the Skeptic's Reflections Reveal

29. Both CS$_{ph}$ and its skeptical denial are a spurious fiction if our conceptual-human constitution is not standard. The skeptic intends to show up CS$_{ph}$ as nothing more than a mountebank, but his skeptical doubts, properly construed, reveal that CS$_{ph}$ *and* its skeptical denial should both be erased from the books.

§4.2 The Skeptic's Reflections

30a. In an important way the skeptic has been regularly maligned when depicted as using 'know' in a special sense (way), as requiring of knowing much more than is appropriate for empirical knowledge, and, for this reason, denying that we *can* know what CS_{ph} maintains. Condescending, desultory speculation abounds about what could possibly have led the skeptic down this garden path—an obsession with mathematics as the model of knowledge? The truth is, ironically, that the skeptic is innocent, without an independent thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave to CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement. For within a constitution of the standard type, when extraneous factors, especially restrictive procedures, are debarred, *knowing* does require *invulnerability.*

§4.3 What Knowing Requires

30b. What is required **[763]** for knowing is a function of two factors: the invariant meaning of 'know', and the type of structure within which 'know' is being used. 'Know', its meaning, requires that to know ___ we be able to "rule out" any counterpossibility to ___, any possibility which, if it were realized, would falsify ___. But what '___' implies *per se* may be more extensive than what we imply in saying ___, and 'know' will focus on whichever of the two dimensions of meaning and implication is relevant in the setup. This is illustrated by the pure and restricted versions of '___' in the humanoids' universe. Within a standard constitution *'a* is *M'* is unbridled in implication. Hence, knowing that *a* is *M* requires that we have sensed features of *a* incompatible with *any C* "applying" to *a,* if *C* is among the concepts in that constitution and incompatible with M—the requirement guiding the skeptic.

31. In short, CS_{ph} is as vulnerable to the skeptic's doubts, properly interpreted, as plain knowing is to certain everyday doubts.

§4.4 Plain and Philosophical Skeptical Doubts

32. That much is simple, but the details of the skeptic's cross-examination are not. A major complication is that skeptical doubts, too, are equivocal, plain and philosophical, a fact to be reckoned with only at some cost.

§4.5 Airplane-Spotters Philosophize

33. It will be best first to draw up a map by looking at the relatively clear humanoids' situation (759/60 above). There possibilities, too, can be pure or restricted. To illustrate. Possibility$_1$ (P_1): "But that aircraft *x* with features ___ could turn out to be of type *J. If further inspection revealed that it had feature f, it would be a J.*" (*J* is one of the ten types to be considered within the restricted practice. Antiquated type *X* also has all the features alluded to, including *f.*) For a possibility to be pure or restricted is for its content to be so understood. Possibility$_1$, understood as pure, is unacceptable, involving a falsehood; for the aircraft *x* might

equally well be an *X.* But, understood as restricted, possibility$_1$ is genuine. Suppose the humanoids are "philosophizing," inquiring into the pure question, "Can we ever be in a position to know that an aircraft is really of a certain type?" The point of importance later is this: restricted P_1, though genuine, cannot be cited (raised) within the pure inquiry as a counterpossibility. Suppose, concretely, that individual *K,* intending to settle the pure inquiry, says (the dunderhead!) on the basis of aircraft *x* having features ___, "I know that *x* is an *A*," (understood as pure). Restricted P_1 cannot be raised against *K's* claim, even though no practical harm ensued—only an underkilling—because a pure (legitimate) possibility, that the aircraft *x* could be a *J* or an *X,* is **[764]** lurking about, ready to finish *K* off. But in other setups this would not be true, the best pure counterpossibility to be found being like illegitimate pure P_1. Irrespective of whether practical harm ensued, to cite, admit, accept, restricted P_1 within the pure inquiry is to mix unmixable types. It would be, in effect, to raise the pure question, "Would an aircraft with features ___ *f* be a *J*?" and allow an affirmative settlement by restricted P_1. It is confusing the stakes, to pay off a debt of a million dollars with a million lire.

34. Suppose a humanoid *H,* philosophizing, did cite restricted P_1 against K's pure claim, caught himself out, queried P_1 pointedly, asking, "But couldn't aircraft *x* with features ___ *f* be an X?", and, because it could, threw P_1 away. *Which* P_1? What *H* is doing in his querying of restricted P_1 is to treat its ingredients as pure, thereby *converting* it into pure P_1, and simultaneously determining whether pure P_1 stands up, thus, finally, rectifying the error of his ways. Restricted P_1 if treated properly, is not discarded but de-cited, allowed to return intact to its rightful home within the restricted.

35. The skeptic doesn't blunder crudely as my remarks might imply. But certain questions, suggested, provide a useful map, a means of orienting ourselves, while following the lines of his assessment of CS_{ph}. (The questions, by way of anticipation, take a certain amount for granted.) Which version of a skeptical possibility, plain or philosophical, do we, with the skeptic, initially find conceivable? Which version is cited initially, then finally, against CS_{ph}? How does the philosophical version legitimately citable against CS_{ph} fare? What is the fate and import of the plain skeptical possibilities?

§4.6 The Skeptic's Initial Philosophizing: The Epistemic Possibility

36. *The skeptic's epistemic possibility* (P_e): All this now might turn out to be a dream: I might wake up later in different surroundings, remembering what had really happened in the past, and *discover* I had just been dreaming.

37. What am I envisaging? I picture myself, the actor in the imagined scene, a plain man, operating (thinking and speaking) within the circle of the plain. What the experimenter with soporifics (758 above) thinks and says, I think and say; the meaning of what we both say is the same, *plain*. My waking up, my knowing I'm awake, my discovering I had been dreaming, all as envisaged is plain, like the experimenter's knowing. P_e as initially conceived is plain!

[765] 38. I think plain P_e genuine. It is of the utmost significance, an important legacy of skepticism—but is in grave danger of getting lost in a shuffle. Let's watch carefully what happens.

39. The skeptic cites plain P_e against Common Sense$_{ph}$, in particular, against the philosophical proposition that we can know we're awake, not dreaming. Then, catching himself out, he turns on P_e and asks (pointedly) how, therefore, we could *know later* that we were awake

then, not just dreaming. Finally he throws P_e in the trash can.

40. What exactly, though, has been thrown away, and why?

41. The skeptic, like humanoid *H*, rectifies his mis-citing through his querying of plain P_e, which converts it into philosophical P_e, revealing that, thus understood, it falls short. Philosophical P_e collapses because, in brief, the overriding epistemological characteristic of a constitution of the standard type is that knowing requires invulnerability. Philosophical P_e, therefore, of necessity, calls in question (negates) the very knowing it presupposes.

42. But what of *plain* P_e? Is the fate of philosophical P_e its fate as well? (a) Plain P_e is to be queried in the skeptic's fashion only if mis-cited, and then only to convert it into philosophical P_e, in effect, to de-cite it. Otherwise its ingredient, the presupposed *plain* knowing (that we're not dreaming) is no more to be directly subjected to the skeptic's querying than is the experimenter's plain knowing (758). Descartes should not, as though a colleague, enter into the experiment on soporifics, asking *philosophically,* "But *how can* you *know* that you're not dreaming now? Mightn't it be that...?", and conclude that the experimenter's records were erroneous. The experimenter's records are not to be assessed in this way: Descartes's querying is out of place, a changing of the subject. Neither, then, should plain P_e's knowing be so queried: it stands as securely as the experimenter's knowing. (How securely, I discuss later.) (b) But does plain P_e (like its philosophical version) undo itself, calling in question (negating) the very *plain* knowing *it* presupposes? It might look as though it does, but appearances can deceive; whether it really does depends on the (yet unknown) structure of the plain. How it fares there will be well worth investigating, a delicate matter, but, in the meantime, we have no reason for rejecting it.

43. Plain P_e**,** the possibility originally found conceivable, still waits in the wings, so far intact.

44. The skeptic has had one foot within the philosophical, the **[766]** other within the plain. His inquisition of CS_{ph} is philosophical, but the possibility he puts to imaginative test is drawn from the well of the plain.

§4.7 The Skeptic's Final Philosophizing: The Nonepistemic Possibility

45. Cognizant of P_e's shortcoming and of its source, the epistemic presupposition, the skeptic puts his chips on a possibility distilled from P_e.

46. *The nonepistemic possibility* (P_{ne}): It might be that we're now asleep, dreaming.... There is no implication, pro or con, that we could (ever) find out.

47. I can imagine, it seems, that I might be asleep now, dreaming, really in surroundings very different from these. But the moment I am conscious that there will be *real* surroundings, I realize I'm taking for granted that these environs could be observed, known to be real, by outsiders, if any, in appropriate positions. What I am doing now, I recognize, in discovering P_{ne} to be conceivable, is the same thing I did earlier, in determining P_e to be so: drawing on ordinary, everyday possibilities and judging that they could have unusual application. Just as I found (P_e) that what could happen to the experimenter, awaking, finding a vivid "experience" a dream, could likewise happen to me *apropos of the present*; so, in finding P_{ne} conceivable, I am finding this parallelism imaginable again. Just as the experimenter could be asleep, dreaming, even never to waken, so could I now, it seems to me: and part of what I'm imagining in so finding it is

that, just as the experimenter's true environs could be known to be real, so could mine.

48. P_{ne}, as I conceive it, is, of course, plain: the knowability by outsiders of what's real is quite obviously so. It is reasonable to think that we all conceive of P_{ne} this way, Descartes's Evil Demon, the arch outsider, is so natural-seeming because he fills the shoes built into our conception: he knows in fact what must, as I suggest we conceive of P_{ne}, be *knowable.* Could a leaner possibility P_x that lacked this epistemic condition be genuine, outside knowability irrelevant? We have no satisfactory techniques for handling a question like this objectively: we are forced winetasters of the conceivable. Acknowledging this, I feel confident, nevertheless, that it is inconceivable that I could now be asleep, dreaming, *if* no outsider could know my real environs because in the same boat, for the same reason, because he, too, could not know he was not asleep, dreaming. Does Descartes's possibility even *seem* to make sense, if we ask ourselves how the Evil Demon, or God, could know that he, too, wasn't dreaming—and allow that neither could?

[767] 49. Skeptics reveal their true conception by the character of the examples endlessly manufacturered to reinforce P_{ne}. To mention one, we are asked whether we cannot easily imagine that a physiologist using advanced neurological techniques might, by appropriate cortical stimulation, have put us to sleep and produced this very real-like nonveridical "experience" in us. P_{ne}, as I conceive it, is *this* possibility without the *actual* (active) outsider (an updated Evil Demon) and, because readily imaginable, does serve to reinforce P_{ne}. But could it (be intended to) reinforce P_x? Doesn't the skeptic's use of this example reveal how he and we are conceiving P_{ne}, for if our thoughts were not within the grooves of plain P_{ne}, as described, how could the skeptic or we fail to undo his example by asking how the physiologist could know he was not in the same fix as his patient?

50. I maintain, then, that P_{ne} is, as initially conceived, plain, with a covert but unavoidable epistemic requirement. Hence the story of P_{ne} is, in detail, the tale told for P_e. Plain P_e now has a companion in the wings; philosophical P_e has a companion in the trash can.

§4.8 The Security of Plain Knowing

51. It is time to rectify a misimpression, one though, if what I've been saying is correct, which no longer matters. I emphasized that the skeptic assaults CS_{ph} directly, not the plain. If successful, however, he indirectly and partially undermines the plain also. He would have revealed, if successful, the plain to be at best like the humanoids' restricted. Plain knowing would then be, viewed from an *absolutely objective* perspective, "knowing" in a manner of speaking only. But with the skeptic disarmed, plain knowing, including that presupposed by *plain* P_e and P_{ne}, is secure against outside undermining; hence plain knowing and *plain* skeptical possibilities need to fear only these *plain* skeptical possibilities themselves.

[§5] THE FATE OF CS_{ph}

§5.1 The Felt Presence of Philosophical-Skeptical Doubts

52. The skeptic fails, if this is correct, to show CS_{ph} as given to excessive claims. (That the

possibilities centering on hallucinating fare like those focused on dreaming is obvious.) Does CS_{ph}, therefore, stand intact? Is the skeptic, in his assault, really empty-handed? Possibilities in the trash can are not yet in the incinerator, and can make their presence felt.

53. How *is* the philosophical question, (Q_1) "Can we ever know we're awake, not dreaming?" to be answered: affirmatively or negatively?

[768] 54. Philosophical P_e or P_{ne} *is* genuine if its epistemic requirement can be met. (a) Suppose Q_1 is answered affirmatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are genuine, since their epistemic requirements are satisfied. But if those philosophical possibilities are genuine, Q_1 is to be answered negatively. (b) Suppose, then, Q_1 *is* answered negatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are not genuine, for their epistemic requirements cannot be met. But, then, Q_1 is to be answered affirmatively, for there are no genuine philosophical contravening possibilities. But, then, back to (a) again....

55. Hence Q_1 can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively. The "proposition" of CS_{ph}, that we can know we're not dreaming, can be neither affirmed nor denied.

§5.2 'Dream' and the Standard Conception of Concepts

56. What underlies this argument, as we shall see, is that our concept Dream (Hallucination) cannot be fitted into a conceptual-human constitution of the standard type.

57. In the development of this thought I now bring the *plain* skeptical possibilities onto center stage, and assume them to be genuine. It seems almost beyond question that what plain P_e and P_{ne} suggest could happen, *could,* indeed, just possibly. Hence one leading question in the study of the plain, shaping our approach, is, What must the structure of the plain be that it can accommodate these possibilities? Now, with these scanty words of justification, let me put these possibilities to use.

58. (1) Descartes discovers that there are no features of his experiencing, no marks, incompatible with his being asleep, dreaming. Plain P_e and P_{ne} support Descartes in this, signifying that there aren't any such, hence by implication that our concept Dream (Hallucination) is not designed along the lines of "marks-and-features" concepts.

59. (2) The epistemic requirement of plain P_{ne} signifies that Dream can conceivably be true of an *x* only if the real environs of *x* are *knowable* (plain) as real, not just part of a dream, though not necessarily in fact known. Thus it is integral to Dream's being a concept that its antithesis, the real or portions of the real, be knowable (plain) as real, not just part of a dream. For our concept Dream, if not conceivably true of any *x*, would be bankrupt.

60. But, therefore, Dream (Hallucination) being incorporable within a constitution of the standard type is an impossible dream. For then the epistemic requirement integral to the concept (2) would have to be satisfied by what is allowable as knowing within this type, viz., a knowing requiring invulnerability. But such knowing would require what is denied by the concept's design (1).

[769] 61. The philosophical question Q_1 begged the question, the question whether it could be a question, in supposing that 'dream' could figure in the question itself. Answering Q_1 affirmatively is incompatible with (1), negatively with (2), for the knowing must be philosophical.

62. One thing revealed by the *plain* skeptical possibilities is, then, that our conceptual-human constitution can't be of the standard type; for, if it were, it would be seriously concept-

impoverished. CS_{ph} and its denial represent, or presuppose, our constitution as being of this kind, and hence are illegitimate.

[§6] THE LEGACY OF SKEPTICISM

63. Skepticism frees us from antiquated problems, including itself, offering us a new, challenging problem. In his practice Moore was, in one sense, the compleat philosopher: outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed. Skepticism leaves us the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative "non-objectivity," and one major tool for unlocking its secrets, the plain skeptical possibilities. How radically that structure must differ from the standard type, if capable of permitting concepts with the characteristics of Dream to be concepts, and the plain skeptical possibilities to be possibilities, is evident enough.

64. It's a pleasant surprise when skepticism, which has always given us plenty to think about, gives us something new to ponder.

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