Sceptical Paths

Studies and Texts in Scepticism

Edited on behalf of
the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies
by Giuseppe Veltri

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Volume 6

Sceptical Paths

Enquiry and Doubt from Antiquity to the Present

Edited by
Giuseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva,
Stephan Schmid, and Emidio Spinelli

DE GRUYTER

The series Studies and Texts in Scepticism is published on behalf of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies

ISBN 978-3-11-058960-3
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-059104-0
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-059111-8
ISSN 2568-9614

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Control Number: 2019947115

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2019 Giuseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva, Stephan Schmid, Emidio Spinelli, published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Cover image: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Ms Cod. Levy 115, fol. 158r: Maimonides, More Nevukhim, Beginn von Teil III.
Printing & binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

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Introduction

The following book of collected essays is the main result of the First International Conference on Scepticism held from 8 to 11 May 2017 at Universität Hamburg and organised by the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies (MCAS) in close cooperation with the Department of Philosophy at the Sapienza University of Rome. It addresses the main elements, strategies, and definitions of scepticism. The book is divided according to a historical framework with special foci on ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophy: Emidio Spinelli (the Sapienza University of Rome) was responsible for the ancient period, Racheli Haliva (MCAS, Universität Hamburg) was responsible for the Middle Ages, and Stephan Schmid (MCAS, Universität Hamburg) was responsible for the early modern period. The redaction of the book was undertaken by Yoav Meyrav (MCAS, Universität Hamburg), and the following contains an overview of all the essays included in the present volume, looking into the topics discussed in the conference and elaborated upon for publication.

In his paper "Philo of Alexandria vs. Descartes: An Ignored Jewish Premonitory Critic of the *Cogito*," Carlos Lévy argues that Philo of Alexandria foresaw and refuted the Cartesian cogito as the solution to the problem of absolute knowledge. After locating the main tenets of Philo's attitude to the Pyrrhonian tradition, which is illuminated by a comparison with Cicero's respective attitude, Lévy shows how Philo's attitude to knowledge precludes the possibility of Descartes's cogito. Philo would probably have dismissed Descartes's cogito as absurd, as it involves an artificial disconnection between the human self and its metaphysical rootedness in God, only to re-establish it later. For Philo, as for Augustine after him, the problem of knowledge is intertwined with the ethical question of the relationship between God and the human being, at which the human being arrives through grasping the shortcoming of reason and the priority of faith.

In "Sextus Empiricus's use of *dunamis*," Stéphane Marchand embarks upon a terminological exploration of the word *dunamis* in Sextus's corpus. Although not frequent in Sextus's writings, *dunamis* is explicitly connected to the sceptical praxis and its application is telling regarding Sextus's understanding of sceptical discourse, which avoids the dogmatic meaning of *dunamis* as found, for example, in the Aristotelian tradition. Through a careful examination of the instances of *dunamis* in Sextus's corpus, Marchand shows that it can express sceptics' observable ability to carry out their activity, and also function as a lexical tool to uncover semantic equivalence or logical entailment, which may mask weaknesses in dogmatic arguments. Finally, Marchand argues that whenever one finds an instance of *dunamis* that can be understood as if its employment reflects a certain theory, this is in fact part of Sextus's strategy of arguing according to the usage norms of the field within which he argues, without committing to the theory behind this usage.

In his paper "Does Pyrrhonism Have Practical or Epistemic Value?", Diego Machuca examines the Pyrrhonian notions of suspension and undisturbedness and

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110591040-001

asks whether they are in fact valuable with regard to morality and knowledge. In other words, can these notions really contribute to behaviour that is morally right or wrong, and can they really allow one to attain truth and avoid error? It seems that if this is not the case, then Pyrrhonism is fundamentally useless and perhaps even harmful. In the course of his argument, Machuca argues against this negative assessment, most notably responding to Martha Nussbaum's critique and exhibiting its shortcomings. Machuca argues in favour of Pyrrhonism's value according to the basic Pyrrhonian principle of appearance: it is sufficient to show that Pyrrhonism appears valuable to the Pyrrhonist in order to defend its value.

In "*endoxa* and the *Theology of Aristotle* in Avicenna's 'Flying Man': Contexts for Similarities with Sceptical and Cartesian Arguments in Avicenna," Heidrun Eichner offers a fresh analysis of Avicenna's famous "flying man" thought experiment, which is frequently compared to Descartes's argument for the existence of the metaphysical cogito. Eichner argues that instead of a single argument, in Avicenna we find a cluster of "flying man" arguments, which, when discussed side by side, reflect a continuous development in Avicenna's philosophy. This development consists of two contributing factors: Avicenna's attitude towards *endoxa* type arguments and the legacy of arguments for the immortality of the soul which stem from the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* (in reality a medieval Arabic adaptation of Plotinus's *Enneads*). Equipped with these fresh analytical tools, Eichner shows that Avicenna's "flying man" can be understood as a logical inversion of Descartes's cogito; for Avicenna, thinking correctly about a "flying man" is enough to secure his existence as a distinct mental entity.

In "The Problem of Many Gods in al-Ghazālī, Averroes, Maimonides, Crescas, and Sforno," Warren Zev Harvey uncovers a narrative of argumentation and counter-argumentation regarding reason's ability to defend monotheism. In the Muslim tradition, Averroes employed an Aristotelian argument based on the claim that the universe is a unified whole to counter al-Ghazālī's sceptical claim that reason alone cannot prevent the possibility of a plurality of Gods and hence is an insufficient foundation for the theological principle of God's unity. Harvey shows that subsequent argumentations in the Jewish tradition—here reflected in Maimonides, Moses Narboni, Hasdai Crescas, and Obadiah Sforno—are variations on this theme, which is refined, enriched, and opens avenues for philosophical and theological novelties.

In "What is Maimonidean Scepticism?", Josef Stern delves into one of the most heated scholarly debates surrounding Maimonides's philosophy; namely, the place of scepticism in his thought. Stern argues that there are two ways in which Maimonides can in fact be regarded as a sceptic: first, his argumentative method is similar to the Pyrrhonian method for generating equipollence, and second, he finds a practical value in the suspension of judgment. Regarding the first way, Stern shows that Maimonides thinks that the mere possibility of doubt is insufficient to challenge a knowledge claim; Maimonides prefers to present, in many contexts, two opposing arguments of equal strength between which there is no criterion to decide. Regarding the second way, Stern shows that in Maimonides, suspension of judgment can lead to

a state of tranquillity, a kind of happiness, and/or awe and dazzlement that is akin to the kind of divine worship that the dogmatist holds can be achieved through the acquisition of positive knowledge about God.

In "Medieval Scepticism and Divine Deception," Henrik Lagerlund outlines the Greek and Latin sources of scepticism available in medieval times, tracing the roots of an original form of sceptical argumentation in the Latin tradition; namely, divine deception. Even though there were some influences from earlier forms of scepticism during this time, Lagerlund shows that scepticism was largely reinvented in the Middle Ages according to a new set of considerations that are independent of the ancient tradition. Unlike the Pyrrhonian view, which aims at the suspension of judgment and tranquillity, and is therefore a practical consideration, medieval sceptical arguments revolve around epistemological debates. In other words, it was in medieval philosophy that scepticism became intertwined with epistemology, as it is to this day.

In his paper "Spinoza on Global Doubt," José María Sánchez de León Serrano proposes a reassessment of Spinoza's strategy against the radical scepticism adopted by Descartes in his *Meditations*. Whereas scholars tend to see Spinoza's monism as his main defence against the sceptical threat, Sánchez de León Serrano argues that monism is in fact liable to generate scepticism. Spinoza can only resolve this internal difficulty by showing how the finite human mind can adequately grasp the whole of Nature that contains it.

In "Scepticism in Early Modern Times," Sébastien Charles challenges the attempt to reduce the phenomenon of scepticism in the early modern period to an appropriation of Sextus Empiricus's version of Pyrrhonism. Arguing against the univocal meaning of scepticism in early modernity, Charles discusses three authors whose respective forms of scepticism differ from each other with respect to motivation, employment, and argumentation. First, Pierre-Daniel Huet—who is often the subject of debates as to whether he was a Pyrrhonian or an Academic sceptic—is primarily a Christian philosopher who uses sceptical strategies as part of his apologetic project to safeguard the Christian religion from attacks from early modern rationalism. Second, Simon Foucher actually opposes Pyrrhonism, which he interprets as a form of negative dogmatism. Instead, he adopts what he believes to be the Academic sceptical approach; scientific progress is possible as long as it is granted that scientific claims are revocable and that they are not apodictic truths. Finally, despite being usually regarded as a radical sceptic, Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville conceived scepticism primarily in a propaedeutic role, as a foundation for the natural philosophy of its time.

In "Three Varieties of Early Modern Scepticism," Stephen Schmid also argues against understanding early modern scepticism as a species of Pyrrhonism. Instead, Schmid proposes a distinction between Pyrrhonian, Cartesian, and Humean scepticism, which represent different stages in the historical development of sceptical ideas. Each stage differs from the others in extent and scope, constructing an argumentative succession which increases in gravity. The object of Pyrrhonian scepticism

is the ability to know the nature of things, leaving the question of the fact of their existence untouched; Cartesian scepticism is directed against the very existence of things outside us, but leaves untouched the question of whether we have thoughts with a determinate content in the first place; Humean scepticism takes up this final problem, doubting not only the truth of our thoughts, but also whether what we take to be thoughts about certain things are proper thoughts about these things at all.

In "Narrowing of 'Know' as a Contextualist Strategy against Cartesian Sceptical Conclusions," Nancy Abigail Nuñez Hernandez tackles epistemic contextualism, a contemporary response to scepticism. Epistemic contextualism claims that Cartesian-style sceptical arguments set extremely high standards for knowledge that we do not have to meet in ordinary or scientific contexts. Nuñez Hernandez develops an original proposal to address the main criticisms of this position, arguing that in Cartesian-style sceptical arguments, the meaning of "know" is narrowed down to such an extent that it does not apply to the vast majority of the instances to which "knowledge" is actually attributed.

My thanks go to all my colleagues for their cooperation, to the MCAS team, and primarily to Yoav Meyrav for his professional redaction of every article and his help in summarising the content of the contributions. Special thanks are due to Rachel Aumiller for her involvement in the early stages of the preparation of this volume. Thanks are also due to Maria Wazinski and Mikheil Kakabadze for their valuable editorial help. This is also the appropriate place to thank the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) for the generous financial support that made the creation of the Maimonides Centre and the open access of this publication possible.

Hamburg, May 2019 Giuseppe Veltri

Carlos Lévy

Philo of Alexandria vs. Descartes: An Ignored Jewish Premonitory Critic of the *Cogito*

The starting-point of this paper is a double statement of fact. First, in the transmission of the sorts of tablets of the sceptic law that are the tropes of Aenesidemus, our initial witness is neither a philosopher in the narrow sense, nor a doxographer, nor an encyclopaedist, but someone who was and remains an atypical character in the world of philosophy: a Jew born in Alexandria, raised in the *paideia*, who never abandoned the principles of his faith. Philo thought that there could exist a kind of complex compatibility between the Jewish Torah and Greek philosophy. Nowadays, scholars generally dismiss the Philonian version of the tropes.[1] In my opinion—but it seems that I am almost the only one to think so currently—it is an error, since Philo was, from a chronological, geographical, historical, and linguistic point of view, the closest to Aenesidemus. H. von Arnim expressed the same opinion at the beginning of the twentieth century that was, but it was shaken by Janáček's (to my mind) unconvincing criticism, whose authority played an important role in devaluing Philo's version of the tropes.[2] Certainly there would be much to say about this question, but the main fact is that Philo, who lived in a city brimming with philosophers, quickly identified Aenesidemus's tropes as something very important to his own reflections on Jewish law.

On this matter, there is a sharp contrast between the attitudes of Cicero and Philo. Cicero was himself a disciple of the sceptic Academy and a good friend of Tubero, to whom Aenesidemus dedicated his Pyrrhonian books, yet Cicero never mentions Aenesidemus.[3] In his opinion the tradition of doubt was represented by the Academy of Arcesilaus and Carneades. Scepticism, a term that had no precise equivalent in his vocabulary, was for Cicero essentially an aspect of Platonism. Unlike Ae-

1 On this question, see Carlos Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie est-il inutilisable pour connaître Énésidème? Étude méthodologique," *Philosophie antique* 15 (2015): 7–26.

2 Hans von Arnim, *Quellenstudien zu Philo von Alexandria* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1889); Karel Janáček, "Philon von Alexandreia und skeptische Tropen," *Eirene* (1982): 83–97.

3 Photius says that Aenesidemus's book was dedicated to Lucius Tubero, who was his *sunairesiōtē*s ("classmate") in the Academy. This Tubero is commonly identified with Lucius Aelius Tubero, who was a legate of Quintus Cicero during his pro-consulate in Asia from 63 to 58 BCE. On Tubero, see John Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 118. On the debate about the Academic identity of Aenesidemus, see the contradictory positions of Fernanda Decleva Caizzi, "Aenesidemus and the Academy," *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992): 176–89, who denies that Aenesidemus was a student in the Academy, and Jaap Mansfeld, "Aenesidemus and the Academics," in *The passionate intellect. Essays on the transformation of Classical Literature,* ed. Lewis Ayres (New Brunswick-London: Transactions, 1996), 235–48, who affirms that he was.

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110591040-002

nesidemus, he never intended to remove scepticism from the family of the Socratic doctrines. For him Pyrrho was a dogmatic indifferentist.[4]

Further in this paper, in a comparative perspective, we shall deal with Augustine's intellectual and spiritual itinerary. It is well-known that, after a very long and complex evolution, he had an illumination in the garden of Milan, in July 386. It was a crucial moment for his conversion.[5] One could think that, at this time of his life, he would have isolated himself in order to write some fresh theological meditation. But it was not the case. He retired with his mother and some friends in Cassiciacum, in order to tackle a great number of philosophical themes, the first of which was the refutation of the New Academy. This seems even stranger as in *Confessions* 5.25,[6] when he speaks about his own sceptical crisis (in 384–85), he seems to consider it as a minor episode, in the context of his liberation from a long-lasting Manichaean influence.

In the case of Augustine, as in that of Philo, dealing with scepticism seems to have been more than an intellectual challenge, but an actual kind of emergency. Here again, the contrast with Cicero is telling. Cicero wrote his *Academica* when he was sixty, an age roughly equivalent to today's eighty, given differences in life expectancy. One would perhaps object that the link between Philo and Augustine is mere coincidence. But the paradoxical relation between faith and scepticism is a line which runs through the history of Western thought. The names of Montaigne and Pascal can be mentioned here, among so many others, as carefully studied by Charles Schmitt.[7] The presence of this relation, however, does not mean that it would be unidimensional. By exploring the cases of Philo and Augustine, we will try to determine what, if anything, they have in common.

In principle, things look quite simple; Philo adopts and adapts the tropes of Aenesidemus, while Augustine wants to triumph over the scepticism of the New Academy. In fact, this contrast between the former, who seems to feel some attraction towards scepticism, and the latter, who treats it as an adversary, is fallacious. In both

4 See Carlos Lévy, "Un problème doxographique chez Cicéron, les indifférentistes," *Revue des Études Latines* 58 (1980): 238–51.

5 On the Augustinian intellectual and spiritual itinerary, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

6 Augustine, *Confessions* 5.25: "Accordingly, after the manner of the Academics, as popularly understood, I doubted everything, and in the fluctuating state of total suspense of judgement I decided I must leave the Manichees, thinking at that period of my scepticism that I should not remain a member of a sect to which I was now preferring certain philosophers. But to these philosophers, who were without Christ's saving name, I altogether refused to entrust the healing of my soul's sickness" (*itaque Academicorum more, sicut existimantur, dubitans de omnibus atque inter omnia fluctuans, manichaeos quidem relinquendos esse decrevi, non arbitrans eo ipso tempore dubitationis meae in illa secta mihi permanendum esse cui iam nonnullos philosophos praeponebam. quibus tamen philosophis, quod sine salutari nomine Christi essent, curationem languoris animae meae committere omnino recusabam*). Henry Chadwick, trans., *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

7 Charles B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

cases, things are far more complex. In the background of both cases is a question to which Descartes gave an answer he considered to be definitive: is there something that I can know with absolute certainty? I will try to demonstrate that Philo had foreseen and refuted the Cartesian solution, while Augustine in a certain sense anticipated it.

1 Prolegomena

Before dealing with Philo, I will say something about the pagan attitude towards religion, and more specifically that of the Hellenistic schools. In the Pyrrhonian tradition, passive observance of the religious tradition of the city is recommended in order to avoid the disturbance of religious dissension.[8] We find something quite opposite to this indifferentism in Cicero's treatise *On the Nature of the Gods* (*De natura deorum*). The main purpose of this treatise, in the tradition of the New Academy, is to demonstrate that the dogmatic explanations of the nature of the gods offered by Stoics and Epicureans were disappointing and contradictory. I shall not insist on the arguments used by Cotta against his dogmatic adversaries, since they have been explored at length.[9] Here I prefer to evoke a passage of the third book, rarely analysed in commentaries on this treatise. At sections 11–12 of the third book, Cotta, the exponent of the Academic refutation of Stoicism, refuses to grant that gods or dead heroes could appear among mortals and be seen in some exceptional occasions, let us say in miracles. He adds that he prefers to believe something more probable, namely that the souls of the great men are divine and immortal.[10] In the case of Cotta, the

8 See Carlos Lévy, "La question du pouvoir dans le pyrrhonisme," in *Fondements et crises du pouvoir*, eds. Sylvie Franchet d'Esperey, Valérie Fromentin, Sophie Gotteland, and Jean-Michel Roddaz (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2003), 47–56; Richard Bett, *Pyrrho: his Antecedents and his Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. chap. 2; Emidio Spinelli, "Sextus Empiricus, l'expérience sceptique et l'horizon de l'éthique," *Cahiers philosophiques* 115, no. 3 (2008): 29–45.

9 See Daniel Babut, *La religion des philosophes grecs*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2019); Jean-Louis Girard, "Probabilisme, théologie et religion: le catalogue des dieux homonymes dans le *De natura deorum* de Cicéron (3, 42 et 53–60)," in *Hommages à R. Schilling*, eds. Hubert Zehnacker and Gustave Hentz (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1983), 117–26; Jaap Mansfeld, "Aspects of Epicurean Theology," *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993): 172–210; Jordi Pia, "De la *Nature des dieux* de Cicéron à l'abrégé de Cornutus: une nouvelle représentation des élites dans la réflexion théologique," *Camenae* 10 (February 2012), http://saprat.ephe.sorbonne.fr/media/282f1da6517e2ba6025880dd887c8682/camenae-10-varia-jordi-pia-derniere.pdf.

10 Cicero, *De Natura deorum* 3.12: "Would you not prefer to believe the perfectly credible doctrine that the souls of famous men, like the sons of Tyndareus you speak of, are divine and live for ever, rather than that men who had been once for all burnt on a funeral pyre could ride and fight in a battle ; and if you maintain that this was possible, then you have got to explain how it was possible, and not merely bring forward old wives' tales" (*nonne mavis illud credere, quod probari potest, animos praeclarorum hominum, quales isti Tyndaridae fuerunt, divinos esse et aeternos, quam eos qui semel cremati essent equitare et in acie pugnare potuisse; aut si hoc fieri potuisse dicis, doceas oportet*

Academic argumentation has a double function: first, to demonstrate that human reason is incapable of elaborating a non-contradictory doctrine about the gods; and second, to consider the possibility of a less naïve, more persuasive, and more intellectual discourse about them. There is a kind of subtle connexion between Cotta's critical attitude and a form of transcendence. His critique aims at demonstrating that the inability of reason to find what is absolutely *true* does not necessarily imply its incapacity to detect what is *false* or to have an intuition of what is *probable*. Cotta, as an Academic, is essentially an evaluator. He advances arguments in order to demonstrate that the theory of the immortality of the best human souls is more plausible than the naïve belief of the visible presence of gods. Implicitly, it is an extension of the *The Dream of Scipio* (*Somnium Scipionis*, from book 6 *of De republica*) written by Cicero ten years before. It is quite difficult to decide if this connexion between the Academic *contra omnia dicere* and a transcendent perspective had antecedents in the school of Arcesilaus and Carneades or if it was Cicero's innovation.[11] At no moment, however, does he presume to understand what could be the nature of this *ego* who, though not pretending to reach truth, thinks that it is qualified to express a qualified opinion on opposite propositions. It can be asserted that, even when he deals with philosophical themes, Cotta is unable to define his subjectivity otherwise than through his own position in the Roman tradition.[12]

2 The Main Features of Philo's Scepticism

I will not enter into details regarding Philo's version of the tropes. It must be noted that Philo's sceptical aspects are not limited to the tropes that we find in his *On Drunkenness* (*De ebrietate*). There are many other places where he uses sceptic arguments in different ways.[13] My purpose is to try to provide an answer to these two questions: why Philo and why scepticism? Why does Philo frequently use sceptic items, while he considers the sceptics themselves to be sophists? Here my method will be to revisit some concepts of the confrontation between sceptics and Stoics, trying to see what they become when they are used by Philo.

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quo modo, nec fabellas aniles proferas). Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods. Academics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1933.

11 On the relation between the New Academy and the Platonic legacy, see Carlos Lévy, "La Nouvelle Académie a-t-elle été antiplatonicienne?", in *Contre Platon I. Le platonisme dévoilé*, ed. Monique Dixsaut (Paris: Vrin, 1993), 139–56.

12 Cicero, *De Natura deorum* 3.9: "For my part a single argument would have sufficed, namely that it has beed handed down to us by our forefathers" (*mihi enim unum sat erat, ita nobis maiores nostros tradidisse*).

13 On this point see Carlos Lévy, "La conversion du scepticisme chez Philon d'Alexandrie," in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, ed. Francesca Alesse (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 103–20.

2.1 Philo and Stoic Epistemological Concepts

First *sunkatathesis* (assent), *katalēpsis* (perception of reality), and *epochē* (suspension of assent). Briefly, since for the Stoics *logos*-nature is both God and Providence, it generously offers true representations of the world to human beings. They are said to be free to accept or to refuse them, since assent depends on us. They can also suspend this assent. At the core of the confrontation between Stoics and sceptics is the fact that for the former, it is normal to give assent to natural representations, while for the latter no representation is adequately clear and unambiguous to be believed. Both schools agree, however, that the relation (or the absence of relation) between representations and assent is the central concern of the philosophy of knowledge.

Philo's originality was chiefly due to his refusal to admit even the terms of the problem. Within his corpus, only twice does he use *sunkatathesis*, a term which was specifically Stoic, since it was coined from an electoral metaphor by Zeno, the founder of the school.[14] For the Stoics, human life is a kind of permanent electoral process, in which representations are the candidates and the subject a tireless voter. Sensory representations are almost sure to be elected, since most of them are *phantasiai katalēptikai* ("cognitive representations"), whereas intellectual propositions need a more accurate examination. In Philo's huge corpus, the near-absence of one of the main concepts of Stoic vocabulary—and more generally of the philosophic *lingua franca* of this time—can hardly be considered a mere coincidence. It would be tempting to provide a stylistic explanation, since Philo generally avoids neologisms and non-classical concepts too narrowly connected to a precise philosophical context. But, at the same time, he often uses *katalēpsis*, another central concept of Stoic epistemology. In Stoic doctrine, *katalēpsis* is a kataleptic, i.e., naturally evident representation, to which assent has been given.[15] We know that Philo was familiar with these kinds of scholastic definitions, since in the *De congressu*, he gives several Stoic definitions with great accuracy, among them the concept of *katalēpsis* which he includes in the more general concept of science, *epistēmē*.[16] It is true that Philo's vocabulary is often much more exegetical than philosophical and generally not particularly inclined towards terminological innovations. At the same time, it is quite probable that he did not want to accept a concept so clearly belonging to the Stoic system, which expressed the autonomy of the human subject inside a perfectly

14 See Carlos Lévy, "Breaking the Stoic Language: Philo's Attitude towards Assent (*sunkatathesis)* and Comprehension (*katalêpsis*)," *Henoch* 32 (2010): 33–44.

15 Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* (*Adversus mathematicos*) 8.396 (= *SVF* 2.91).

16 Philo, *On the Preliminary Studies* (*De Congressu eruditionis gratia*) 141: "Knowledge on the other hand is defined as a sure and certain apprehension which cannot be shaken by argument" (ἐπιστήμης δέ· κατάληψις ἀσφαλὴς καὶ βέβαιος, ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου). Philo, *On the Preliminary Studies*, in *On the Confusion of Tongues. On the Migration of Abraham. Who Is the Heir of Divine Things? On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* (Philo vol. 4), trans. F.H. Colson, G.H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1932.

determined nature. By contrast, *katalēpsis* had Platonic and Aristotelian antecedents.[17]

I hope that the process of Philo's terminological preferences will become clearer by examining one of the two occurrences of *sunkatathesis* in his corpus. *On the Life of Moses* (*De vita Mosis*) shows Moses in a state of great perplexity about the date of Passover, a very complex religious problem.[18] On one hand, the date of the festival was set at the fourteenth day of the first month, but on the other hand, certain members of the group were plunged into mourning by the death of relatives. Due to their ensuing state of ritual impurity, they could not attend the ceremonies of Passover and were quite disappointed. For this reason, they asked the prophet to change the date. Philo reports that Moses was torn between contradictory sentiments, between admitting or rejecting these protests. The inclination of a Stoic philosopher probably would have been to reject them, since grief was one of the four fundamental negative passions. An Academic belonging to the Carneadean tradition would have suspended his assent, while trying to see which of the two solutions would be the most persuasive. A Pyrrhonian would have said that they were perfectly equivalent. But when Moses does not know what to do, he asks God to give him a solution. Subsequently, God emits an oracle preserving both the Law and loyalty to family. We suggest, therefore, that Philo refused to use the concept of *sunkatathesis* because it was a self-sufficient concept, namely a concept without any opening to transcendence. The Stoic conception of assent was the most elaborate expression of confidence in the sovereignty of the reason, both individual and universal, a doctrine that Philo could not accept. That is why he prefers to use the term *boulē* (deliberation and decision), much less connected to an immanentist context.

2.2 The transcendent *epochē*

The decision to forego the term *sunkatathesis* may be thought to imply the same attitude towards *epochē*, defined as suspension of assent. However, things are perhaps a little more complex. Actually, *epochē* is used only once in the whole of Philon's corpus.[19] This seems to create an almost perfect symmetry with the treatment of *sunkatathesis*. At the same time, it is worth noting that in the abstract of Aenesidemus's book *Pyrrhoneioi logoi*, written by the Patriarch Photius, the term *epochē*, which

17 Plato, *Gorgias*, 445c; *Republic* 526d; *Laws* 830c; Aristotle, *Sleep and Waking* (*De somno et vigilia)* 458a29; Pseudo-Aristotle, *De spiritu* 484b33.

18 Philo, *On the Life of Moses* (*De vita Mosis*) 2.225–32.

19 Philo, *On Flight and Finding* (*De fuga et invetione*) 136: "For the best offering is quietness and suspense of judgement, in matters that absolutely lack proofs" (ἄριστον γὰρ ἱερεῖον ἡσυχία καὶ ἐποχὴ περὶ ὧν πάντως οὔκ εἰσι πίστεις). Philo, *On Flight and Finding*, in *On Flight and Finding. On the Change of Names. On Dreams* (Philo vol. 5), trans. F.H. Colson, G.H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1934.

will become so frequent in Neopyrrhonist philosophy, especially in Sextus Empiricus, is never used.[20] Like Philo, Aenesidemus (at least in Photius's report), frequently uses *katalēpsis*, *katalēptos*, *akatalēptos*, but he carefully avoids *sunkatathesis*. Instead of *epochē*, he prefers to use *aporia*. Of course, Photius's report is too brief to allow for a perfectly clear conclusion. The reliability of a report written so many centuries after the book in question can be contested. But it cannot be excluded that one of the characteristics of Aenesidemus's innovations would have been to relinquish the traditional problematic *sunkatatheis*/*epochē* and emphasise instead the Pyrrhonian idea of *isostheneia*, the equal strength of opposite realities, leading to *aporia*.[21] Therefore, it is not impossible that what we see in the Philonian corpus, namely the almost complete rejection of the terms s*unkatathesis* and *epochē*, originated in Aenesidemus himself.

When Sextus gives his own version of Pyrrhonian modes, he says in his introduction that "the usual tradition amongst the older sceptics is that the 'modes' by which suspension (*epochē*) is supposed to be brought about are ten in number."[22] In Philo's version of these modes, we find the verb *epechein* three times. The use of the term *epochē* expressed something stronger than the verb *epechein*. The verb had a functional meaning, while the noun had become the keystone, the motto of Academic thought, from which Aenesidemus tried to depart.

In any case, the only Philonian occurrence of *epochē* deserves consideration. It refers to one of the most famous episodes in the Bible, the sacrifice of Isaac. When Isaac asks his father where the lamb for the holocaust is, Abraham answers that God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering. In his allegorical commentary, Philo explains that the victim is the suspension of our judgement on points where evidence cannot be found.[23] God accepts the *epochē* as the sacrificial offering, in the place of Isaac. *epochē* is not only the recognition of the limits of the human mind, but also the expression of the Patriarch's faith in the infinite capacities of God Almighty, able to surpass the limits of nature, for example by bringing up *ex nihilo* a lamb in a desert. In Philo's exegesis, the lamb is both a historical reality, since he never excluded the literal sense of the sacred word, and the metaphor of the *epochē*, which in his perspective is meaningless if not referred to God.

20 Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212.

21 On these concepts, see Jacques Brunschwig, "L'aphasie pyrrhonienne," in *Dire l'évidence*, eds. Carlos Lévy and Laurent Pernot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 297–320; Bett, *Pyrrho*, 14–59; Harold Thorsrud, "Arcesilaus and Carneades," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 58–81.

22 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R.G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1.14.

23 Philo, *On Flight and Finding* 136.

If we exclude the dubious testimony of Epiphanius,[24] no pagan Sceptic had suggested this kind of interpretation. For a Sceptic or a Stoic, the understanding of the meaning of *epochē* needed a thorough comprehension of main intellectual processes. For Philo, it was necessarily based on the hermeneutic of the divine Word, in a passage apparently without relation to the suspension of judgement.

Here we must stress a crucial point. The main difference between Pyrrhonian and Academic philosophers was that for the former all presentations and opinions were basically equivalent, while for the latter the impossibility of reaching certain truth did not prevent the world from offering some semblance of plausibility. For Arcesilaus, the first scholarch of the New Academy, the *eulogon*, though produced by a fallible reason, was the best mean to act in a non-undifferentiated way. For Carneades, his most brilliant successor, the *pithanon*, the impression of plausibility produced by certain representations, allowed limited progress in knowledge and action.[25] Usually Philo shows great hostility towards the *pithanon*, perhaps because in his Platonic culture it had too many sophistic associations. He has a somewhat more nuanced attitude towards *eulogon*, but also some negative views. In *Allegorical Interpretation* (*Legum allegoriae*) 3.229, he says that it is unreasonable to believe in *logismois pithanois*, an expression which means here something like sophisms.[26] At 3.233 it is said that the *pithanon* involves no firm knowledge with regard to the truth.

We find one of the most eloquent instances of this rejection in *On the Life of Moses* 1.174. When the prophet saw that the Hebrews hesitated to follow him and to fight the Egyptian army, he asked them: "why do you trust in the specious and plausible and that only?" (τί μόνοις τοῖς εὐλόγοις καὶ πιθανοῖς προπιστεύετε;). At the same time, in *On the Special Laws* (*De specialibus legibus*) 1.36–38 he develops the hierarchy in which the *eulogon* and the *pithanon* can find a sense different from the one they had in Arcesilaus's or Carneades's philosophies. Even if it is not possible to have perfect knowledge of the truth of God, Philo says, the research in itself is a source of joy: "For nothing is better than to search for the true God, even if the discovery of Him eludes human capacity, since the very wish to learn, if earnestly entertained, produces untold joys." Actually, even if God is unknowable, it is possible to act "like the athlete who strives for the second prize since he has been disappointed of the first. Now second to the true vision stands conjecture and theorising and all that can be brought into the category of the reasonable."

24 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, *De fide* 9.33–34; fragment 132 in Simone Vezzoli, Arcesilao di Pitane (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

25 On these concepts see the opposite interpretations of Pierre Couissin, "Le stoïcisme de la Nouvelle Académie," *Revue d'Histoire de la Philosophie* 3 (1929): 241–76; Anna Maria Ioppolo, *Opinione e Scienza* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1986), esp. 121–217.

26 In Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* (*Legum allegoriae*) 3.41, *pithanotēs* is evoked within the *logoi sophistikoi*.

Like the Academics and the followers of Aenesidemus, Philo emphasises the continuity of research. For example, just before describing the sceptic modes at *On Drunkenness* 162, he says that the worse kind of ignorance is that which accentuates the lack of science, the belief of having reached science. The best way to avoid this kind of ignorance is to indefatigably pursue inquiry, a point on which Philo agrees with all the sceptics. There is, however, an essential and paradoxical difference. In his case, the research is not the pursuit of a wholly or almost wholly unknown truth, but of the one that God Himself revealed to human beings.

2.3 The Status of Scepticism in Philo: The Essential Role of Decency and Shame

How, then, to explain the rather heavy presence of scepticism in Philo's corpus? Is his aim to merely dissipate the false illusion of knowledge, in order to make the path towards the revealed truth easier? In my opinion, there is a much deeper connexion between theology and philosophy. To understand it, let us go back to the primitive scene, i.e., the meeting of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, a scene for which Philo gives two interpretations.

In the *On the Creation of the World* (*De opificio mundi*) Philo takes some distance with respect to the biblical verse. He stresses *aidōs* (respect, decency), a transcendental virtue in his axiology, since it is the only one that is mentioned in the Paradise. The version is somewhat different in the *Allegorical Interpretation* where he gives his own interpretation of the biblical "and they were not ashamed." There he distinguishes three concepts: *anaischuntia*, shamelessness, which is the sign of evil; *aidōs*, decency, characteristic of virtuous people; and the lack both of decency and of shamelessness.[27] The sage is here characterised by his *aidōs*, an idea which is absent from our Stoic testimonies. Of course, in Stoicism *aidōs* is a subdivision of *eulabeia*, one of the three *eupatheiai* (positive passions), but Stoics never stressed *aidōs* as a fundamental virtue of the sage.[28] As if he felt himself how surprising

27 Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.65: "The words suggest three points for consideration: shameless, and shamefastness, and absence of both shamelessness and shamefastness. Shamelessness, then is peculiar to the worthless man, shamefastness to the man of worth, to feel neither shamefastness nor shamelessness to the man who is incapable of right apprehension and of due assent thereto and this is at this moment the prophet's subject. For he who has not yet attained to the apprehension of good and evil can not possibly be either shameless or shamefast" (τρία κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐστίν· ἀναισχυντία, αἰδώς, τὸ μήτε ἀναισχυντεῖν μήτε αἰδεῖσθαι·ἀναισχυντία μὲν οὖν ἴδιον φαύλου, αἰδὼς δὲ σπουδαίου, τὸ δὲ μήτε αἰδεῖσθαι μήτε ἀναισχυντεῖν τοῦ ἀκαταλήπτως ἔχοντος καὶ ἀσυγκαταθέτως, περὶ οὗ νῦν ἐστιν ὁ λόγος· ὁ γὰρ μηδέπω κατάληψιν ἀγαθοῦ ἢ κακοῦ λαβὼν οὔτε ἀναισχυντεῖν οὔτε αἰδεῖσθαι δύναται).

28 Diogenes Laertius 7.116: "And accordingly, as under the primary passions are classed certain others subordinate to them, so too is it with the primary eupathies or good emotional states. Thus under wishing they bring well-wishing or benevolence, friendliness, respect, affection; under caution, reverence

this promotion of decency was, as an essential virtue, and of shamelessness as the strongest expression of evil, Philo asks:

> Why then, seeing that results of wickedness are many, has he mentioned only one, that which attends on conduct that is disgraceful, saying "they were not shamed," but not saying "they did not commit injustice," or "they did not sin" or "they did not err"? The reason is not far to seek. *By the only true God, I deem nothing so shameful as supposing that I think and that I feel. My own mind the author of its exertion? How can it be?* (μὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ μόνον θεὸν οὐδὲν οὕτως αἰσχρὸν ἡγοῦμαι ὡς τὸ ὑπολαμβάνειν ὅτι νοῶ ἢ ὅτι αἰσθάνομαι. ὁ ἐμὸς νοῦς αἴτιος τοῦ νοεῖν; πόθεν;) Does it know as to itself, what it is or how it came into existence? Sense-perception the origin of perceiving by sense? How could it be said to be so, seeing that it is beyond the ken either of itself or of the mind? Do you not observe that the mind which thinks that it exercises itself is often found to be without mental power, in scenes of gluttony, drunkenness, folly? Where does the exercise of mind show itself then? And is not perceptive sense often robbed of the power of perceiving?[29]

This text is in my opinion essential to understand Philo's attitude towards scepticism. We must first notice the extreme solemnity of the affirmation, since he swears by God: "By the only true God." The most shameful thing one can imagine is to think that one is the subject of one's thoughts and sensations.

In the most common perception of the history of philosophy, the *cogito* is the one assertion that even the most radical sceptic cannot ruin. Philo seems to have anticipated the Cartesian response to scepticism and to have *avant la lettre* elaborated an objection which is much more ethical than epistemological. To affirm that it is me who thinks is to discard the only virtue evoked about human beings in Paradise, the virtue of decency, to ignore and to betray the content of Revelation. But it also raises a problem of philosophical methodology: what kind of truth can we access by isolating knowledge from ethics? In so many Philonian texts, *aidōs* is the capacity to control the desire for absolute independence and superiority. For Philo, the *cogito* is not the solution of the problem of knowledge, but the supreme fallacy, since it artificially separates knowledge from ethics and metaphysics. More exactly, it supposes that the problem of truth is only epistemological.

In Philo, as, many centuries later in another Jewish thinker, Emmanuel Levinas, the main route to transcendence is ethics, not epistemology. What is essential is my relation to others, not my relation to the representations of the world. Sceptical arguments display the permanent fallibility of the human mind and sensations, but in Philo's thought epistemological arguments are only means to assert something far more essential: the impossibility of considering a human being as the autonomous

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and modesty; under joy, delight, mirth, cheerfulness" (καθάπερ οὖν ὑπὸ τὰ πρῶτα πάθη πίπτει τινά, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ὑπὸ τὰς πρώτας εὐπαθείας· καὶ ὑπὸ μὲν τὴν βούλησιν εὔνοιαν, εὐμένειαν, ἀσπασμόν, ἀγάπησιν· ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν εὐλάβειαναἰδῶ, ἁγνείαν· ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν χαρὰν τέρψιν, εὐφροσύνην, εὐθυμίαν). Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Volume II: Books 6–10*, trans. R.D. Hicks, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925.

29 Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.68–69, emphasis added.

subject of his or her thoughts. Philo's position is exactly the contrary of Descartes's. Descartes's refutation of the sceptic arguments provides him access to the *cogito*. God is then called upon for help, in order to reconnect the thinking subject with the world. Philo's itinerary is exactly the reverse. He first absolutely rejects the *cogito* as an absurd pretension that ignores the metaphysical situation of the human being. It is precisely this rejection that legitimatises the use of the sceptic tropes. Philo would have probably considered Descartes's method as an artificial manipulation. To disconnect the human mind from intersubjectivity and from a relation to God was, for him, simply impossible.

2.4 From the Negation of the Self to an Ethic of Responsibility

This transfer of the problem from knowledge to ethics and metaphysics implies a difficulty. If I am not the author of my thoughts, how could I be considered responsible for my acts? This is something close to the objection expressed by the Stoics in order to refute their sceptic adversaries. How could I be responsible for my actions if I do not give my assent? Philo's solution to this difficulty is ingenious and original. When God tells him to go and see the Pharaoh, Moses, the most perfect man in Philo's opinion, initially tries to evade this obligation. He pretends that he is not gifted in speech and he suggests that God could choose somebody else. But God, who however understands the process of Moses's *aidōs*, answers:

> Dost thou not know who it is that gave man a mouth, and formed his tongue and throat and all the organism of reasonable speech? It is I Myself (*autos eimi egō*): therefore, fear not, for at a sign from Me all will become articulate and be brought over to method and order, so that none can hinder the stream of words from flowing easily and smoothly from a fountain undefiled. And, if thou shouldst have need of an interpreter, thou wilt have in thy brother a mouth to assist thy service, to report to the people thy words, as thou reportest those of God to him.[30]

Philo wants to make clear that *aidōs*, of which in his opinion scepticism is but a shadowy and perverse figure, cannot be an argument to avoid responsibilities. The human being is not the subject of his or her thoughts and actions, but he or she *is* responsible for them. That is the central paradox of Philo's thought, something close to what will be expressed by Levinas through the expression *difficile liberté*.

A final remark on Philo. If it is an error to think that the human being is the real subject of his or her thoughts, the logical consequence is that the sceptic, in order to be coherent with himself, must disappear as author of his scepticism. In an entirely different philosophical context, it is the conclusion at which Pyrrho arrived, though

30 Philo, *On the Life of Moses*, in *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses* (Philo vol. 6), trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1.84.

he could not prevent his main disciple Timon from creating a fervent cult of personality.[31] Philo never mentions the philosophers or the rabbis whose work he followed. He rarely quotes philosophers, and those he does cite are not always those you might expect. But he is especially harsh with sceptics, whom he faults for their arrogance and aggressiveness. In *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (*Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin*) 3.33 they are compared to professional warriors, for they believe that philosophy is a permanent attack against other doctrines, without having any idea of the causes and consequences of these fights. His main explanation of that aggressiveness is that it gives them real pleasure. Ismael is both a sceptic and a sophist in his allegorical explanation, since it is said about him in Genesis 16.12 that "'His hands shall be against all men, and all men's hands against him'; for this is just the Sophist's way, with his pretence of excessive open-mindedness, and his love of arguing for the sake of arguing. This character aims his arrows at all the representatives of the sciences, opposing each individually and in common. He is also their common target since they naturally fight back, as though in defence of their own offspring, that is, of the doctrines to which their soul has given birth." Neither is the function of scepticism to allow intellectual victories through a systematic critical attitude. In Philo's opinion, if it is used correctly, i.e., in a way quite different from that of the sceptics themselves, its main aim is to lead one toward metaphysical humility, of which the first and definitive expression must be found in Genesis.

3 From Philo to Augustine

3.1 The Problem of the Self in the *Contra Academicos*

Is it legitimate to say that Philo opened the way to a monotheistic refutation of the *cogito*, an attitude founded on the idea of the impossibility of isolating knowledge from ethics and transcendence? It would be arrogant to presume to provide a complete answer to such a complex question, but it can be of some interest to examine if the transition from Judaism to Christianity entailed a deep modification of Philo's intuition. Here we will tackle only one case, but a very weighty one, that of Augustine, a choice that can seem somewhat paradoxical, since he did not know enough Greek to read Philo and probably felt little empathy for Philo's exegetical method. On the other hand, he could not ignore his existence, since he certainly heard his master Ambrose speak about a thinker whom he plagiarised so frequently. For all these reasons, the confrontation between Augustine and Philo can perhaps help to differentiate what is structural in the monotheistic relation to scepticism and what depends on the cultural and the personal characteristics of the different thinkers.

31 See Diogenes Laertius 9.64; fragment 60 in Fernanda Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone. Testimonianze* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1981).

It is impossible here to enter into the very complex details of these three books of dialogue. Our aim is rather to try to understand how Augustine himself presented this strange anti-sceptic emergency, apparently more philosophical than theological, that led him from Milan to Cassiciacum. Actually, Augustine evolved in his successive presentations of the *Contra Academicos*. His first letter to Hermogenianus offers many explanations in a quite surprising and somewhat confused way. He says nothing about his conversion, but he uses many philosophical items. Like Cicero who, in a letter to Atticus paradoxically recognised that his refutation of the Stoic gnoseological doctrine was less persuasive than the defence of that doctrine proposed by Antiochus,[32] he admits that he was unable to succeed in overcoming doubt.[33] At the same time, he seems proud of having acted against the New Academy, since he says that in the search for truth, people were paralysed by the idea that a man as subtle as Carneades had been unable to locate it. Last but not least, he again expresses his theory of an esoteric teaching of a dogmatic Platonism in the Academy. He recognises that there was no certainty there, but asserts that it was riskier to let people think that the philosophers of the New Academy were really sceptics, a belief that he presents as a cause for philosophical apathy. He says that to affirm that the Academics were secretly dogmatists was a way, perhaps not entirely convincing, to create a desire to seek out the truth.[34] In this letter, scepticism has an ambiguous status. It is an adversary but also an object of admiration and even of imitation. *Imitatus sum*, he says, since like them he reacted to a situation: they tried to fight naturalist dogmatisms, while he wanted to break the intellectual inertia of his contemporaries.

Fighting scepticism is presented by Augustine as an unavoidable mission if he had any hope of inciting the *inquisitio veri* in them again. It must be noted that for him scepticism is also represented by the Academy, and in fact, solely by the Academy. The easiest explanation of the omission of neo-Pyrrhonism would be to say that Cicero, his main source, had himself ignored Aenesidemus and his followers. But it can be objected that Aulus Gellius, Favorinus, and probably many others had tackled the neo-Pyrrhonist innovations. That Augustine never heard about them is rather improbable. It seems more plausible that he limited himself to the New Academy because he was interested less in scepticism itself than in the strange connection between transcendentalist Platonism and Academic philosophy that he presents as

32 Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 13.19.5: *sunt enim vehementer* πιθανὰ *Antiochia* ("For the views of Antiochus are strongly persuasive"; my translation).

33 Augustine, *Letters* 1.3: "my chief delight is not your having said—with more affection than truth—that I have outdone the Academics, but the fact that I have broken a most hateful bond by which I was held back from tasting the sweetness of philosophy by despair of attaining to truth. And truth is the food of the soul" (*non tam me delectat, ut scribis, quod Academicos uicerim, scribis enim hoc amantius forte quam verius, quam quod mihi abruperim odiosissimum retinaculum, quo a philosophiae ubere desperatione ueri, quod est enim animi pabulum refrenabar*). Augustine, *Letters: Volume 1 (1–82)*, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1951).

34 On the Augustinian myth of the secret dogmatism of Arcesilas, see Carlos Lévy, "Scepticisme et dogmatisme dans l'Académie: 'l'ésotérisme' d'Arcésilas," *Revue des Études Latines* 56 (1978): 335–48.

the expression of the *desperatio ueri* that created a distance between himself and philosophy.

Many elements here differ from what we found in Philo. First of all, Augustine is really concerned by the problem of the *auctoritas* of the Platonic school, a problem that for Philo is meaningless. This major Latin concept is present from the beginning of the letter, where Augustine expresses his reverence towards the Platonic school, without excluding the sceptic Academy. But it is also interesting to notice that for him these philosophers were not people in permanent search of truth but people who discouraged others from finding it. On this point Augustine at least unconsciously agrees with neo-Pyrrhonists, who accused the philosophers of the New Academy of practising a negative dogmatism while themselves pretended to be seekers of truth. But Augustine, as the great reader of the Ciceronian *Academica* that he was, could not ignore that Cicero had refuted this charge in advance in the *Lucullus* 109–10. Antipater the Stoic said that "Carneades should at least allow that this principle itself is apprehended, that the wise person holds that nothing is apprehensible." And the Ciceronian answer is: "but just as he holds those as persuasive rather than apprehended principles, so with this one, that nothing is apprehensible."[35] There was no negative dogmatism in the Academy, at least in his Ciceronian version. In order however to fight his own *desperatio ueri*, Augustine needs to counterbalance the negative dogmatism he attributes to the Academics by his assertion of an esoteric dogmatism. Augustine presents himself both as someone who wants to make the most of philosophy and someone who feels responsible for the fate of philosophy among his contemporaries. It was a sort of pastoral function inside the field of philosophy before the religious pastoral functions. Here we are very far from Philo. The similarity between the two thinkers is, however, that in a different way, both hold that the sceptics were not really people in search of the truth.

3.2 From Augustine to Philo?

Things become still more divergent in the *Enchiridion*, written in 422. There is no mention of this kind of pastoral function. Now Augustine essentially speaks about himself. Retrospectively, the *Contra Academicos* becomes the means for fighting the doubts which assailed him, at the moment when he was, he says, *tamquam in ostio*, hesitating in embracing faith. There is no more mention of an uncertain hypothesis about the sceptical Academy, but he stresses the obligation of removing the *desperatio veri*, of which the Academics are said to have been the champions, by all means (*utique*). The strength of this word proves that he passed the stage

35 Cicero, *Lucullus* 110: *sed ut illa habet probabilia non percepta, sic hoc ipsum nihil posse percipi. nam si in hoc haberet cognitionis notam, eadem uteretur in ceteris.* Cicero, *On Academic Scepticism*, trans. Charles Brittain (Indianapolis/Cambrige: Hackett, 2006).