The Inevitability of Skepticism.

A Study on the Problem of the Criterion

by

Krister Talvinen

University of Turku

Finland

SERIES EDITORS:

Olli Koistinen

Juha Räikkä

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Knowledge and Skepticism

It seems to be an obvious fact about human life that we know things. Each one of us knows various things about ourselves and our surroundings. I can tell with ease, and I also claim to know, for example, my name, address, home country, education, and the color of the clothes I am wearing today. In addition to facts about myself, I am able to tell, and again I claim to know, that we humans have inhabited the Earth for ten thousands of years, that the Earth is located in the Milky Way in the infinite space, and that the distant heavenly bodies are not the souls of the deceased but physically real material entities. As I am aware that I know many things, I also recognize the fact that there are many things that I simply do not know at the moment, and maybe never will. For example, it seems to be a distant dream that some day I could understand and know the basics of genetic engineering. I also acknowledge that I am fallible; various times in my life I have come to notice that the things I have claimed to know have turned out to be false. This liability to error has taught me certain humbleness and care regarding my ability to attain knowledge. In sum, three main features characterize our position towards knowledge: we take ourselves to know various things, knowledge of each individual in separate seems to be rather limited, and we are liable to error.

We take ourselves to know, but do we? We tend to think that our beliefs are true or sufficiently accurate representations of the world around us, but is that so? Namely, we also acknowledge that things are not always as they appear. Sometimes we mistakenly believe that inanimate objects are living beings; for example, when we erroneously think that a crooked twig on the ground is a snake. Or sometimes we erroneously believe that a total stranger, seen from distance, is a good friend of ours. Or what about dreams? In dreams we see all sorts of things, we interact with the persons and objects of that world, and we carry on our lives as usual, but suddenly – at the moment of awakening – we realize that nothing of it was real. On the other hand, modern science tells us that the reality consists of tiny particles such as quarks, but then it seems that the world is not as we perceive it; i.e. filled for example with middle-sized objects such as tables, chairs, and rocks.

Of course, we think that it is easy to distinguish between the states of being awake and dreaming, but exactly how can we tell the difference? At this very moment I think that I am typing in front of my computer, but I am also aware that this is only a belief my brain has formed of the surrounding reality. It would be desirable that our brains presented the world around us as it is, but it is quite

problematic to try to check whether the beliefs we have of the external world actually correspond with the reality. We must rely on our perceptions of the external world, but are they accurate representations of the reality or not? It is certainly possible that our beliefs match with the reality itself, but is also possible that they are blatantly misguided. It could be that we are living in a sort of dream; that our beliefs about the external world had no connection whatsoever to the reality. And if that is the case, we certainly know far less than we suppose we do. René Descartes, the French philosopher, once famously claimed to search for something absolutely certain, infallible beliefs. Certainly our beliefs about the external world can be mistaken, due to the fact that, for example, we are dreaming right now. Descartes even postulated the existence of a deceiving and malevolent demon, who could lead us astray in everything.

Now, the question arises, how seriously should we take the possibility of an evil demon, dreaming or similar *skeptical scenarios*? Skeptical scenarios challenge our claims that we have knowledge. The skeptical argument proceeds to show that in order to know, for example that I have two hands, I must be able to exclude the existence of a deceiving and omnipotent demon. However, arguably, no one is able to exclude such possibilities, and thus no one knows that one has two hands. The same argument can be replicated with respect to each of our beliefs, and thus it could be concluded that we do know nothing at all. Or almost nothing, for, if we follow Descartes, I can be certain at least of my own existence, evil demons notwithstanding. But beyond my own existence, it is unsure whether I could be certain of anything else. However, it is noteworthy that the structure of the argument could also be reversed to defend the view that we have knowledge. For example, it could be claimed that if I know, say, that I have two hands, then I know that I am not deceived by an evil demon. And clearly I know that I have two hands, thus I also know that I am not deceived by a malicious demon.

Skeptical arguments purport to show the plausibility of *skepticism*. However, skepticism comes in many forms. For example, skeptical arguments can propagate skepticism about the external world; i.e. that our senses do not provide us with knowledge of the external world. Skepticism can be also narrowed, for example, to religious beliefs or moral values. In this manner, it is claimed that we cannot have knowledge of God or other things supernatural in character, or that ethical statements such as "Killing is wrong" do not have truth-values and thus we cannot have knowledge of them. Skepticism can also be *global* in scope, and thus it is claimed that we do not know anything. In addition to differences in scope, various skeptical arguments also differ with respect to the strength of the skeptical conclusions they promote. For example, a skeptical argument can be so radical that

it is advanced to show that the area of knowledge in question is *impossible*. A more moderate skeptical argument is advanced to show that we do not know anything though knowledge is possible. We, as knowers, should be able to defeat the skeptical argument and establish that we actually know, or otherwise skepticism holds. In this study I defend a moderate view of skepticism that is almost global in scope. In specifically, I claim that, in the end, we have no reasons to deem our beliefs justified or true, and, therefore, we cannot say that we know anything. Maybe we can be certain, after Descartes, of our own existence, but that is cold comfort if we have to give up everything else we have held as knowledge. Again, it is perfectly possible that we actually do know most of the things that we think that we know, but also that we actually do not. What is crucial is that we cannot tell apart, or so I will argue, which state of affairs prevails – that we have knowledge or that we have not – and therefore we cannot say that we know.

Those who promote skepticism are, obviously enough, *skeptics*. To repeat, skeptics claim, roughly put, that we do not have knowledge, in contrast to the claims of the anti-skeptics, i.e. people who think that we have knowledge. How can we resolve the conflict between the skeptics and their opponents? Or is there any real controversy at all? Maybe we can just disregard the claims of the skeptics similarly as we disregard the claims of madmen, who claim, for example, that moon is made of cheese and that the universe is controlled by astral dolphins. Is it not indicative of the skeptic's foolishness that she *argues* that we do not know anything? But if we really do not know anything, there is nothing to argue about and more to the point, there is nothing *on the basis of* which to claim anything. Briefly, the skeptic is refuting herself and that is a sufficient reason to ignore her words.

A quick glance at epistemological books shows that skepticism has been taken seriously over and over again. No one dares to say that to get rid of skepticism it is enough to shrug one's shoulders nonchalantly. Even if ordinary people do not care much about the skeptic's charges, epistemologists tend to be really worried about them. Indeed, skepticism seems to be solely the problem of epistemologists; and it could even be said that it is a problem they have made for themselves! Epistemologists do not conduct surveys by asking laypeople whether they think that skepticism is a plausible view.[1] Skepticism would not be refuted even if the majority of people thought that it is false. Amongst the epistemologists, in turn, there is a real controversy about the plausibility of skepticism. Most, or even all, of them recognize skepticism as a problem that must be solved. And it is tempting to think that a satisfactory solution is not found yet, or why else skepticism continues to be a focus of a lively debate? The overall situation is rather bizarre: to have knowledge is most

unproblematic while living our ordinary lives, but immediately after engaging in the realm of epistemology we seem to lose all knowledge. As David Lewis has aptly said: "[I]t will be inevitable that epistemology must destroy knowledge. That is how knowledge is elusive. Examine it, and straightway it vanishes."[2]

1.2. Skepticism and the Ideal of an Objective Viewpoint

In this section I will show that the problem of skepticism is, in a sense, inevitable. The leading idea is borrowed from Nagel's aptly named book, *The View from Nowhere.* According to Nagel, the problem of skepticism is created when we try to attain an external view with respect to our cognitive enterprise. An external view is not restricted by any particular, subjective viewpoints – a sort of view from nowhere. Clearly, such a viewpoint is unattainable, since every view is *someone's* view. The idea of a completely objective viewpoint – possible perhaps for a being like an omnipotent God – is somehow conceivable although not possible for cognitive beings like us. Nevertheless, such a viewpoint seems desirable, telling us for good the way the world really is, how we and our subjective viewpoints relate to the world, and, most importantly, what we in fact know. In other words, the completely objective viewpoint would let us see ourselves and our cognitive relation to the alleged external world from the outside of our restricting, subjective perspectives. Furthermore, Nagel argues that several other philosophical problems – for example, those pertaining to free will, mind-body relation, and the existence of objective moral values – are created similarly from the tension between our particular, subjective viewpoints and the ideal of totally general and objective viewpoint.[3]

The problem of skepticism follows when we are reflecting whether we know anything. Namely, it is a platitude that not all of our beliefs can count as knowledge, for sometimes we err. Or perhaps there is not any cognitive error on our part, but still we can be led to think that something is real when it is not. Consider, for example, the unavoidability and relative easiness of color appearances although they do not necessarily correspond to anything real. And as soon as we propose the distinction between appearances and the reality, the skeptic is having her prime time. The skeptic drives a wedge between appearances and the reality, claiming, in effect, that we have no way of deciding which appearances conform to the reality. However, it is hard to avoid making the distinction, for it is another platitude that things are not always as they appear. As John Greco puts it, "any minimally plausible ontology must recognize a distinction between appearance and reality"[4]. This inevitable distinction between appearances and the reality – and not so much, for

instance, the quest for certainty and necessary truths – seems to be responsible for bringing about the problem of skepticism.[5] In any case, we seem to need a *criterion* to distinguish between those appearances that have a truth-conferring connection with the reality and those that do not. But as I will show in this study, it is not easy to decide which criteria are genuine and which are not.

Of course, the alleged gap between appearances and the reality could be tried to be bridged simply by appealing to things we think that we know. For example, having heard that skeptics doubt the existence of external, material objects, I execute several times the test of looking down at my hands, closing my eyes, and looking at my hands again. And surprisingly, every time I open my eyes, I see without doubt my two hands. Thus, I have refuted skepticism and shown that external things exist. Or alternatively, I could go to a library and read books of history, biology, and other sciences. I would learn several facts of mankind's past, the biological and chemical constitution of species, and general laws of mechanics. Accordingly, I would infer that there certainly are, and have been, external objects and they interact with each other in accordance with the laws of nature. But have I thereby refuted skepticism? No. It seems to be a ridiculous strategy of answering the skeptic's challenge by appealing to things we think we know. None of my beliefs is privileged as being exempt from the skeptic's doubts, and thus none of them *as such* can be used to answer those doubts. As Barry Stroud explains:

> We recognize that when I ask in that detached philosophical way whether I know that there are external things, I am not supposed to be allowed to appeal to other things I think I know about external things in order to help me settle the question. *All* of my knowledge of the external world is supposed to have been brought into question at one fell swoop; no particular piece of it is to be available as unquestioned knowledge to help me decide whether or not another particular candidate is true. I am to focus on my relation to the whole body of beliefs which I take to be knowledge of the external world and to ask, from 'outside' it as it were, not simply whether it is true but whether and how I know it even if it is in fact true. It is no longer simply a question about what to believe, but whether and how any of the things I admittedly do believe are things that I know or can have any reason to believe.[6]

On the other hand, if the skeptic's challenge calls into question *all* of my empirical beliefs, it is hard to see how I could ever dissolve those doubts; namely, the existence of the external world is, arguably, a contingent matter, and if I cannot appeal to any of my beliefs pertaining to contingent matters, it is hard to see how I could decide over the existence of the external world purely on *a priori* grounds. And clearly, it is impossible to get outside of ourselves, but, still, this seems to be what the challenge of skepticism amounts to. We aspire "to get outside of ourselves, and view the

world from nowhere within it"[7]. The desire to get outside of ourselves is created when we realize – via skeptical arguments, for example – that our subjective viewpoints, including all the experiences, appearances, and beliefs within it, could remain the same although there were no connection whatsoever to the underlying reality. If my beliefs do not conform to the reality, I clearly cannot have knowledge either. If my belief that "Kilimanjaro lies in Tanzania and it is the highest mountain in Africa" is true, it must also be true from an objective point of view. Similarly, if there have ever been dinosaurs, it is an objective fact that remains true, despite whatever I happen to believe about dinosaurs. Now, the desire to get outside of ourselves amounts to an external check that would unfold the objective facts and how the world really is.

Thus, the problem of skepticism seems to be inevitable. But is skepticism also inevitable; i.e. has skepticism no solution? That is the question I will concentrate on in this study. More specifically, I study whether a skeptical argument known as *the problem of the criterion* could be solved.

1.3. The Problem of the Criterion

Let us suppose that we should distinguish between good and bad apples; we start picking up the apples and throw the bad apples to one basket, and the good ones to another. Now, if we are asked how we knew which apples are good and which bad, we could refer to some set of characteristics on the basis of which we recognize the good apples. We could tell that, for example, good apples look, taste, feel, and smell different from bad apples. But now the skeptical twist comes: how could we tell the difference between good and bad *beliefs*, that is, between true and false beliefs? Of course we *can* divide our beliefs on the basis of some characteristics of beliefs, but how can we know that our chosen characteristics really mark out true beliefs, in contrast to false beliefs? These problematics lead to the ancient paradox, the problem of the criterion, also known as *the diallelus*. The structure of the problem is relatively simple, and it proceeds in the following way:

In order to know, we should be able to distinguish between true and false beliefs. Thus, it seems that we need a way to distinguish true from false beliefs. Obviously, this way equals to a standard or *criterion* of true beliefs. The problem arises when we propose a criterion for true beliefs, for then it can be further asked, how do we know that our chosen criterion holds good? Now, we can try to *justify* the initial criterion with some supporting reasons, but then, it seems, we should justify these new reasons too. Obviously, this path leads to an *infinite regress* of reasons. And it seems that if knowledge requires infinite reasons then knowledge is impossible, at least for us mortals.

Alternatively, we can try to avoid the regress by appealing to a preceding reason in our chain of reasons. Unfortunately, supporting one's claim by appealing to an already stated reason equals to *circular reasoning*. And circular arguments are not too convincing in general. Finally, we can refuse to justify the alleged criterion and only insist that it holds good, or we can try to justify the criterion with reasons, but at some point refuse to appeal to any new reason and merely insist that the previous reason holds good. However, mere *assumption* does not seem to be too convincing either. Therefore, it seems that we have only three options in justifying an alleged criterion of true beliefs: either to give infinite reasons, argue circularly, or dogmatically assume that the alleged criterion holds good. Now, the skeptic claims, obviously enough, that none of these three options is acceptable, and that therefore we cannot distinguish between true and false beliefs. Furthermore, the skeptic argues that since we cannot give an acceptable and justified criterion for true beliefs, we cannot know anything. Thus, the problem of the criterion entails skepticism. To clarify, the *problem* in the problem of the criterion concerns our attempts to *justify* an alleged criterion of true beliefs, and then it is stated that none of the possible ways to justify the criterion is acceptable, hence skepticism follows.

The diallelus can be formulated differently than I have done here. My formulation is meant to be just a sketch, a rough initial description of the problem that is somewhat faithful to the original formulation given by Sextus Empiricus. Different formulations of the diallelus result, obviously, in different accounts of the problem. Thus, we should advance with great care when formulating the problem. The question of uttermost importance is what is the extent of the problem of the criterion? The way in which we define the extent of the diallelus determines how we see both the whole problem and the possible solutions to it. On the other hand, it should be asked whether the different versions of the problem, i.e. versions with differing extents, really are separate problems, or do they basically present the same problem? And if the all, say, three versions present the same problem, what is *the* problem? Is it a fourth formulation of the diallelus, or is it one of the three versions? How should we exactly formulate the problem of the criterion and whose accounts of it should we pay attention to?

There are surprisingly few explicit treatments of the problem of the criterion in philosophical literature. Clearly the most influential ones are the original formulation found in the writings of Sextus Empiricus[8] and Roderick Chisholm's modern version of it[9]. Also a noteworthy discussion is Robert Fogelin's comprehensive study on the problem of the criterion with respect to the theories of epistemic justification.[10] Fogelin's treatment comes close to the problem known as 'the regress

problem' that is, in turn, widely discussed in epistemology. If the problem were taken narrowly enough, it would suffice to concentrate only on, for example, Sextus' account of the problem. On the other hand, if the problem were taken broadly enough, almost any remark on global skepticism would be relevant; namely, the problem of the criterion can be construed as so general that it equals to the problem of skepticism, and therefore any theory of knowledge can be seen as an attempt to answer to the problem of the criterion[11]. It would clearly be too vast a task to study all epistemologies and all treatments of skepticism in one book. Therefore I aim for the moderate position between being too narrow or too broad a treatment on the problem of the criterion.

The problem of the criterion constitutes a powerful and plausible argument for skepticism. But there are also various other skeptical arguments in the ballpark, so what makes the problem of the criterion so special? First of all, the problem of the criterion is extremely "economical" as a skeptical argument; we need not postulate malicious demons or other weird possibilities in order to present the argument. Quite the contrary, the real beauty of the problem of the criterion is that it demands only the minimal assumptions that we know something and our claims to knowledge should be supported by good reasons. A related point is that, in the problem, it is not assumed that we should be able to convince some hypothetical global skeptic who denies everything we say. Instead, it only states that if we are to rationally hold that we have knowledge of some proposition *p*, we should be able to show our reasons for thinking that *p* is, indeed, true or justified. Moreover, this is *our own* assumption: we think that in order for arguments to be plausible and convincing, they must be supported by good reasons. In short, the problem of the criterion is economical and it constitutes of plausible premises that we all accept.

1.4. The Aims of the Study

The fundamentality and neglected status of the problem of the criterion is neatly summarized by Andrew Cling, in his words:

> Although it has been largely neglected in contemporary philosophy, the problem of the criterion raises questions which must be addressed by any complete account of knowledge. But the problem of the criterion suffers not only from neglect but also from the lack of a clear, comprehensive, and complete statement of the problem itself. As a result, it has been unclear what must be done to solve it.[12]

In this study I meet the above concerns by giving a clear and comprehensive treatment of the problem of the criterion. I begin in chapter 2 examining Chisholm's influential formulation of the problem and arguing that Chisholm's formulation is misguided. In chapter 3, I study the ancient account of the problem that is derived from the writings of Sextus Empiricus. I argue that the ancient account is superior to Chisholm's account and it provides us with a real skeptical paradox.[13] Then, in chapters 4 and 5, it is shown that the problem of the criterion manifests itself also as the regress problem and as the problem of validating our cognitive faculties. The problem of the criterion is a general and deep problem. One of my aims in this study is to show that the problem of the criterion is an uttermost cognitive worry, the solving of which should be in every epistemologist's interest.

Obviously enough, various solutions have been proposed to skepticism and the problem of the criterion. My purpose is to study the most notable different solutions in detail and answer the question of whether any of them succeeds in solving the problem of the criterion. It should be noted that different solutions depend on the particular understanding of the problem, i.e. its formulation. Therefore, examining the different formulations and solutions of the problem of the criterion is an interrelated task. It is also possible to claim that we do not *have* to solve the diallelus, for the simple reason that it is an unintelligible problem. The skeptic's challenge is like asking one to draw a rounded square – impossible in principle. We do not have to care about the skeptic's claims, for she is refuting herself and thus she cannot have any claims to begin with. There are also other difficulties concerning the viability of the skeptical position, but despite them, I will show that the skeptic's challenge is intelligible. Then the only complaint against the skeptic is that her position is highly unintuitive. So, in the end, I should say something about our intuitions concerning knowledge, which I will briefly do in the end of chapter 5.

In sum, in this study I will answer to the following pair of questions:
(i) What is the problem of the criterion? What kinds of different formulations of the problem are there and how should the problem be formulated?
(ii) How has the problem of the criterion been tried to solve? What are the pros and cons of each solution? Could the problem of the criterion be refuted on the basis of its unintelligibility?

1.5. Some Preliminary Remarks

Before the kick-off, something should be said about the study's central concepts such as knowledge, justification, belief, proposition, and truth. First and foremost, the notion of criterion should be clarified.

1.5.1. The Notion of Criterion

It could be roughly said that, in general, criteria specify some conditions that must be fulfilled in order for some A to be B. For example, if I make a judgment that "This apple is sweet", there are some specific features that form the basis of my judgment. Those features can be said to be the criteria of my judgment, and if any other object fulfills the criteria, my judgment should be the same. It is another question whether my criteria are true or universally valid; if they were, I could formulate the sufficient and necessary conditions, i.e. criteria, for the sweetness of apples. Similarly with respect to the notion of knowledge, we could say that criteria of knowledge specify the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. Now, we are not interested in the *definition* of knowledge, which can be agreed upon as justified true belief. The problem of the criterion is about finding a touchstone for distinguishing true beliefs from false ones. In other words, what we are looking for is *a criterion of truth*. A criterion of truth should be again distinguished from a definition of truth; namely, if we define truth as correspondence between the propositional content of beliefs and facts, it does not yet give us a criterion with the help of which we can distinguish true from false beliefs. As Cling illuminatingly writes:

> The criteria at stake … [in the problem of the criterion] are criteria of truth. An ideal criterion would express a reliable and complete touchstone of truth: a mark or sign by which we could distinguish true from false propositions on any topic. Having such a criterion is not the same as grasping the meaning of 'true', for we might understand what it would be for a proposition to be true without being able to tell the true from the false.[14]

Cling's characterization of the notion of criterion is quite demanding, for he speaks of a *complete* touchstone of truth that would distinguish true from false propositions *on any topic*. However, as Cling notes, we can relax this ideal insofar as we have *some* way to distinguish between true and false propositions or beliefs. Cling continues the characterization of the criterion of truth as follows:

> To have a criterion of truth is to grasp that some detectable property other than the property of being true would correctly distinguish true from false propositions. Thus we may think of an ideal criterion of truth as a principle according to which a specified property *C* is such that *C* is not part of the meaning of 'true', but a proposition *P* would have *C* (in the appropriate circumstances) if, and only if, *P* were true. Ideally, then a criterion of truth would provide us with a perfectly reliable indicator of truth and of falsehood. We may relax this ideal and count principles as criteria of truth even though they specify only sufficient conditions, only necessary conditions, or only probabilistic necessary or sufficient conditions for truth. Descartes' [sic] rule of clear and distinct perception – "everything I clearly and distinctly perceive is true" – is intended to be a criterion of truth.[15]

To repeat, the problem of the criterion challenges us to find a criterion of truth. And the *problem* in the diallelus concerns our attempts to *justify* the proposed criteria.

That said, it is time to complicate things a little by noting that it is also possible to formulate the problem of the criterion as concerning the criteria of *justified* belief. In principle, the problem of the criterion challenges us to find, first and foremost, *a criterion of truth* in order for us to distinguish true from false beliefs. In practice, however, the problem extends to apply to epistemic justification and criteria of justified belief as well. Accordingly, we are searching for criteria of justified beliefs in order to distinguish between justified and unjustified beliefs. Of course, truth and justification are, or at least should be, connected, for with the help of the correct criteria of justification we would be able to distinguish justified from unjustified beliefs, and justified beliefs are likely to be *true*.

If the problem of the criterion is applied to concern epistemic justification, we are dealing with the regress problem that will be studied in detail in chapter 4. Furthermore, the problem of the criterion can also be understood as a demand for truth-conferring *sources* of knowledge. As Chisholm writes: "[o]ne approach to the question 'How are we to decide, in any particular case, *whether* we know?' is to refer to the sources of our knowledge and to say that an ostensible item of knowledge is genuine if, and only if, it is the product of a properly accredited source."[16] Now, we are again searching for a criterion of truth, but this time we are asking which of our cognitive faculties are reliable in general. If we knew which faculties *are* reliable, we could easily solve the problem of the criterion by pointing out that particular faculties mostly produce true beliefs. The question about the reliability of cognitive faculties creates a problem of its own, known as epistemic circularity, the topic of chapter 5. What is crucial for present purposes, however, is to note that the problem of the

criterion can take different forms depending on whether we are asking which beliefs are true, which beliefs are justified, or which faculties are reliable.

1.5.2. The Analysis of Knowledge

Because the skeptic challenges our ability to attain knowledge, it should be spelled out what we mean by the notion of knowledge. According to the traditional analysis, the origin of which is in Plato's *Theaetetus* dialogue[17], knowledge is justified true belief. The analysis is formally presented as follows:

S knows that *p* if and only if

> (i) *p* is true;
> (ii) S believes that *p*;
> (iii) S is justified in believing that *p*.

"S" refers to the knowing subject, often called also as 'an epistemic agent', and "*p*" refers to the proposition being known. The first condition of the above analysis should be obvious enough: what is false cannot be known. The second condition is almost as compelling as the first one: if I claim that I know *p*, I certainly will believe that *p* too. The plausibility of the second condition depends on how we define 'justification', the third condition of the analysis. Maybe it is in some sense possible to know that *p* without believing that *p*. For example, I might be able to answer some trivia questions correctly although I do not believe my answers, for they just popped into my head. Now one could claim that I knew the answers after all, even if I was not able to recall consciously the evidence for my answers.[18] Unbeknownst to me, my cognitive faculties were processing the information I had previously gathered, which resulted in the correct answers. I had knowledge although I did not know that I knew. Even though I sympathize with the view that knowledge entails belief, the issue remains controversial. Moreover, if it is maintained that in order to know we do not have to be aware of the reasons of our knowledge claims, we might be able to break out of the skeptic's grip. The infinite regress of reasons is not a threat anymore if we can know without reasons.

The third condition, or rather its proper content, of the analysis of knowledge is the most controversial one. The obvious function of the justification condition is to prevent lucky guesses

from being knowledge; namely, merely true belief is not enough for knowledge.[19] Otherwise we should say that I know in cases where my beliefs just happen to be true due to lucky guesses. Knowledge, then, is something added to a true belief, and traditionally that something else is held to be justification. Now, recall the example of the trivia quiz where I answered correctly without having any reasons for my answer. Let us change the example a little and suppose that I also believe my answer, say, the claim that Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603. Is my belief justified and does it count as knowledge? The so-called *externalists* about epistemic justification would say "Yes" to both questions. If my belief is a product of a reliable cognitive process, and my belief is true, then it is also knowledge. In this account, then, justification amounts to reliable workings of cognitive faculties. I do not have to, even if I somehow could, be aware of the way my cognitive faculties function, for all that matters for justification of my beliefs, is that my cognitive faculties work reliably, i.e. produce true beliefs with high frequency. However, it is likely that the opponents of externalists, the so-called *internalists*, would deny both that I have a justified belief and that I know in the example given above. Internalists emphasize the importance of subject's reasons or evidence for her beliefs. I should have some recognized reasons for my beliefs in order to them to be justified, and that is what excludes lucky guesses from being justified in the first place. Of course not just any kinds of reasons are acceptable, for they should evidentially support the belief based on them.

1.5.3. The Notion of Justification

Depending on whose side, externalists' or internalists', we are in the debate about epistemic justification, the meaning of knowledge alters drastically. It is worth asking whether the opposing parties even talk about the same issue. On the other hand, the two views are often mixed, and thus it might be hard to tell whether a considered theory exemplifies internalism or externalism. Even more curiously, it is not so clear what is at stake with these different accounts. As Richard Fumerton writes: "While the internalism/externalism debate in epistemology has moved to center stage, I believe that there remains enormous confusion concerning what precisely is *fundamentally* at issue between proponents of the respective views."[20] Supposedly, justification was meant to be the device with the help of which we could distinguish mere true beliefs from knowledge. Unfortunately, it is possible, as was famously shown by Edmund Gettier, to construct cases of justified true belief that are *not* cases of knowledge[21]. Therefore, the question arises whether justification has any role whatsoever in epistemology, for it does not succeed in its initial task of distinguishing mere true beliefs from knowledge. If there is any role for justification, it definitely is

the role of enhancing the likelihood of our beliefs being true. In other words, justification is the good with the help of which we can gain true beliefs. In Laurence BonJour's words: "It is only if we have some reason for thinking that epistemic justification constitutes a path to truth that we as cognitive beings have any motive for preferring epistemically justified beliefs to epistemically unjustified ones."[22]

If we insist on too strong a connection between justification and truth, then we will come close to the view that justification entails truth. This view is highly problematic, for it would imply that we do not have justified false beliefs. However, it seems intuitively plausible that a good few of our beliefs, if, for example, formed in responsible and careful manner, can be justified even if they are not true. Secondly, the truth condition of the analysis of knowledge would become redundant and knowledge could be defined as (strongly) justified belief. In short, justification would be all too demanding a concept. On the other hand, if we do not require any conceptual connection between truth and justification, we cannot avoid problems that way either; namely, justification would be then a kind of subjective notion and it could be possible that all of our justified beliefs would turn out to be false. Justification would not constitute a path to truth and, therefore, it would become a redundant concept.[23] Maybe we should aim for a moderate conception of justification, as one not being too strong or weak, but it is far from obvious how this should be done.

Justification seems to be a tricky concept to define. It is easy to find different distinctions, but it is not so easy to see what we can benefit from them. Furthermore, it is not so clear whether justification is an all or nothing issue. Namely, it could be claimed that justification comes in degrees and there is some definable amount of it that is sufficient for knowledge.[24] It has also been claimed that there is a difference between a justified belief and *justifying* beliefs, and that the latter, i.e. the act of giving reasons for one's beliefs, is not in any way necessary for epistemic justification of beliefs.[25] It would be possible to introduce more specifications and isms on justification, but the bottom line of this discussion is that justification indeed is a messy playground in epistemology.

1.5.4. The Notion of Belief

We have assumed that the objects of justification are beliefs, rather than propositions. Of course we could say that *S* has justification for a proposition that *p*, without implying that *S* really believes that *p*. In epistemology we are interested in the justification of beliefs and evidential relations obtaining between them. Naturally, our beliefs should have a propositional content in order to be justified or

unjustified. For example, my belief that "I have ten fingers" could be considered justified, for my perceptual evidence for the proposition that I have ten fingers is overwhelming. Beliefs in which we are interested can be called propositional attitudes; we take an attitude of belief towards a proposition, we believe *that* something is the case. The propositional content of a belief is the way the belief represents things as being.

It is surely possible that the source of a belief's justification is itself nondoxastic. It could be claimed, for example, that the source of the justification of our perceptual beliefs is in unconceptualized sense experience. That way we might be able to block effectively the infinite regress of justified beliefs. Still, the presumption favored in this work is that epistemic justification is doxastic in character. Another specification concerns the strength of beliefs that may be strong or weak. For example, it could be argued that my belief that I exist is far stronger than my belief that Calgary Flames will win the Stanley Cup this year – I am strongly convinced of the former, but not so of the latter. It could be suggested that the strength of a belief should be proportional to justification of a belief.[26] Accordingly, my belief that I exist is more justified than my belief that Calgary Flames will win the Stanley Cup this year. However, if my belief that *p* is significantly weak, it is questionable whether I believe that *p* at all. If I believe that *p* is only marginally more probable than its negation, then it might be claimed that I should suspend judgment about *p*. For instance, if I happened to consider, for some strange reason, that it is slightly more probable that the number of stars is even than odd, I should still suspend my judgment about the matter altogether.[27]

1.5.5. The Notion of Truth

Finally, a few words on the notion of truth. As said above, beliefs represent things as being some way or other. And if our beliefs represent the reality correctly and accurately, we are willing to say that our beliefs are *true*. Truth is at least as tricky definiendum as justification. As I am not going into detail on the concept of truth in this study, which is just the opposite case in contrast to the concept of justification, I should briefly say what kind of theory of truth is presupposed in this study. I understand truth along the lines of correspondence theory of truth, in which truth is the relation obtaining between states of affairs (or facts) and beliefs (or propositions). If there is a corresponding fact for my belief "Elizabeth I died in 1603", it is true, otherwise it is false. To quote Aristotle: "To say that that which is is not or that which is not is, is a falsehood; and to say that that which is is and that which is not is not, is true."[28] We can ponder over whether Aristotle's words are so informative, but I think that the gist of his message is easily grasped because of its intuitiveness.

It is intuitive and even commonsensical to claim that a proposition or a belief is true if it represents things as they are.

It is another thing whether the facts to which our beliefs should correspond are mind-independent. One can endorse the view that truth consists in correspondence with facts and also hold that facts are mind-dependent entities. I am not willing to go along with this strand of thought, so I am inclined to concede the existence of a mind-independent reality. Truth is understood, then, in this study as correspondence between our beliefs (or propositions) and mind-independent facts. It is of course highly problematic what kinds of facts correspond with, for instance, mathematical propositions. Furthermore, propositions *about* minds are made true by virtue of their relation to mind-dependent states of affairs. However, at least with beliefs based on sense perception it is easy to understand the claim that there is a mind-independent empirical reality that makes my perceptual beliefs true due to the correspondence between my beliefs and empirical facts. Of course, the problem of skepticism seems to be evident and inevitable as soon as we propose the existence of a mind-independent reality; namely, we should be able to tell how and when our beliefs match with the facts of the external, mind-independent world. Now, the skeptic can be seen as attacking precisely this point; claiming, in effect, that we cannot bridge the gap between our beliefs and the external facts, and, thus, we cannot know whether any of our beliefs is true and, therefore, skepticism holds. So maybe we could avoid the whole problem of skepticism by changing our presuppositions, moving from the realistic metaphysics to anti-realistic one. For example, the coherence theory of truth is often accompanied with an anti-realistic metaphysics, making the mind-dependent reality the only reality there is. In the coherence theory of truth, truth is defined solely on the basis of the internal relations obtaining between beliefs. However, I am interested in studying the problem of skepticism, and, sure, anti-realistic metaphysics is one way to deal with skepticism, but then the whole problem ceases to be. Which, in my opinion, is too easy a way out.

With these preliminary remarks at hand we can face the skeptic's beloved tool, the problem of the criterion. Although our initial definitions of knowledge, justification, and truth were exposed as problematic, the problems should not be too insurmountable. As a preliminary sketch it is suggested that in order to know that *p*, one's belief that *p* must be true and, according to the internalists, it should be based on adequate reasons, or, according to the alternative, externalist view, it should be a product of a reliable cognitive process.

1.6. The Structure of the Study

The study consists of four main chapters. The study starts off by examining Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion, which is the topic of chapter 2. Chisholm provides a neat and simple formulation of the problem, thus it is a perfect starting point for the study. I examine Chisholm's formulation of the problem and the alternative possible solutions he sees in answering it. In fact, Chisholm sees only two possible alternatives to skepticism with respect to the problem of the criterion – either we proceed from instances of knowledge to criteria of knowledge or vice versa. I consider the plausibility of these two solutions as well as two other possible solutions that are not discussed by Chisholm. The first one of these suggests that since criteria of knowledge and instances of knowledge are dependent on each other, we can work them out into a coherent whole – the resulting theory is a sort of coherentism. The second approach tries to "dissolve" the problem altogether: it is claimed that the problem of the criterion is not intelligible at all. In the end, all the suggested solutions are found faulty. However, I also find out that Chisholm's formulation turns out to be ultimately misguided and, thus, it is not a genuine skeptical paradox.

Chapter 3 studies the ancient account of the problem of the criterion, the skepticism of Pyrrhonists and the writings of their representative, Sextus Empiricus. It is shown that the ancient Pyrrhonist account is superior to Chisholm's account and it provides us with a genuine skeptical paradox. In fact, Pyrrhonists intend to find the truth, but as they are unable to produce uncontroversial criterion of truth, they suspend judgment about everything. Pyrrhonists are also willing to cure others of their dogmatism – i.e. they have claims to knowledge – and thus the Pyrrhonists have invented skeptical techniques with the help of which anyone can achieve a global suspension of judgment. The most powerful of these skeptical techniques, derivative of the so-called Five Modes, presents the ancient account of the problem of the criterion. The chapter is closed by examining some accusations against skepticism – e.g. the claim that skepticism refutes itself.

In effect, the Five Modes call into question the reasons we have for our beliefs. Thus, the Five Modes can be seen as presenting the so-called regress problem, the topic of chapter 4. The examination of the regress problem leads us quickly in touch with differing theories of epistemic justification, for each theory can be seen as proposing a solution to the regress problem. Theories that can be seen as following directly from the structure of the regress problem are foundationalism, coherentism, and infinitism – each one of these theories rejects a different premise in the regress problem, which contributes to the resulting conception of epistemic justification that each

respective theory draws. The aforementioned theories are usually representatives of internalism, as opposed to externalism, both of whose general features are also studied in the chapter. An epistemic justification theory known as contextualism offers still another unique way to deal with the regress problem and the problem of skepticism. Briefly, contextualists hold that the standards of knowledge are different in different contexts. Accordingly, we can know that *p* in one context, but if the context changes, it could happen that we do not know that *p* anymore. Of course, it is trivially obvious that indexicals and comparative terms can make the truth-value of propositions context-dependent, but it is implausible to suggest that this holds of all propositions. Contextualism as well as the aforementioned internalist theories is found faulty and unable to solve the regress problem. The chapter is closed by considering the externalist approach to epistemology and its respective solution of skepticism. We conclude that while internalist theories are unable to provide a plausible solution to the regress problem, their externalist counterparts seem to ignore the problem altogether as well as the problem of skepticism in general.

Externalist theories try to eliminate the demand for justifying reasons – which creates, in effect, the regress problem – by holding that it suffices for knowledge if our beliefs are true and, in fact, products of reliable cognitive faculties. This raises, however, the problem of how we know that our faculties are reliable. This problem is discussed under the topic of epistemic circularity in chapter 5. This time a version of the problem of the criterion concerns the alleged knowledge of the reliability of our faculties. The chapter begins with examining William Alston's influential discussion on epistemic circularity. After that I show that the problem inherent in epistemic circularity *is* a version of the diallelus, in which Chisholm's formulation of the problem proves to be useful. I analyze three suggested solutions to the problem, two of which are remarkably similar with the ones already discussed with respect to Chisholm's account of the problem. Consequently, similar criticisms can be applied here again. Only the third examined solution is novel, and its crucial idea is that we should distinguish between two levels or kinds of knowledge. Accordingly, we work our unreflective, spontaneous knowledge into reflective knowledge and are thus, arguably, able to break out of the grip of the diallelus. However, this suggested solution is found implausible, as are the other solutions examined in the chapter. In the end, the examination of epistemic circularity shows how deep and serious the problem of the criterion is. For we *must* take for granted the reliability of at least some of our faculties if we are to examine anything at all. This inevitable epistemic circularity gives the skeptic such a strong hold that, as Thomas Reid puts it, "he must even be left to enjoy his skepticism"[29]. The chapter also includes a brief discussion on our epistemic intuitions. Intuitions are an important part of skepticism, since the more plausible a skeptical argument is, the

more *intuitive* its premises are. On the other hand, it is intuitively obvious that we have knowledge. So should we rely on this initial intuition of ours (that we have knowledge) or on the skeptical argument consisting of intuitive premises? Could we evaluate our different epistemic intuitions and decide which of them are the most important? More questions are raised than answered about the status of intuitions, but since intuitions are fundamental part of skepticism, future discussions on skepticism should focus more on our epistemic intuitions.

Finally, chapter 6 sums up the results and conclusions of the study.

2. RODERICK CHISHOLM AND THE PROBLEM OF THE CRITERION

In this chapter I focus on Roderick Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. I could have chosen differently regarding the beginning of my study, but I defend my preference via the following words of Andrew Cling: "Discussions of the problem of the criterion rightly begin with the work of Roderick Chisholm for he is virtually the only major contemporary epistemologist who has given sustained attention to this ancient skeptical paradox".[30]

This chapter has two main purposes. Firstly, I examine Chisholm's formulation of the diallelus, and secondly, I consider the different solutions provided to the problem. After completing these two tasks, I also pay attention to the notion of dependence found in Chisholm's formulation, which leads me to conclude that the formulation is misguided, after all.

2.1. Chisholm on the Problem of the Criterion

In what follows, I will bring out, firstly, how Chisholm approaches the problem of the criterion, secondly, how he eventually formulates the problem, and thirdly, what he sees as possible answers to it and which one he takes to be the most plausible one.

2.1.1. Approaching the Problem

One of Chisholm's earliest formulations of the problem of the criterion can be found in his *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, published in 1957.[31] A modified account is found in his *Theory of Knowledge*[32], originally published in 1966. Chisholm's Aquinas lecture, published in 1973, provides his most extensive treatment of the subject; the lecture was aptly named as "The Problem of the Criterion".[33] I will mainly follow the Aquinas lecture as the definitive guide to Chisholm's views on the problem of the criterion.

Chisholm starts off his lecture by confessing the problem of the criterion "to be one of the most important and one of the most difficult of all the problems of philosophy".[34] Chisholm's first characterization of the problem is a paraphrase of Montaigne, and it proceeds as follows:

> To know whether things really are as they seem to be, we must have a *procedure* for distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. But to know whether our procedures [*sic*] is a

good procedure, we have to know whether it really *succeeds* in distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. And we cannot know whether it does really succeed unless we already know which appearances are *true* and which ones are false. And so we are caught in a circle.[35]

Chisholm seems to take it for granted that there are different appearances. Indeed, this is a plausible assumption, for our lives are filled with myriad spectra of appearances. It is not necessary that appearances should be limited to perceptual beliefs, for just as it appears to me that I see a computer in front of me, just as well it could be said that it appears to me that two plus two equals four. The latter appearance is indeed a lucid and indisputable one. However, the crucial question is, despite the vividness or clarity of some of our appearances, is there something out there that properly corresponds to them? Briefly, are our appearances true? Even if my belief that two plus two equals four appears to me as certain, indubitable, and true, *is* it true? Certainty does not seem to be a satisfactory criterion of truth, for all kinds of madmen and bigots are dead certain about their absurd beliefs although all the others, the sane, can easily tell how nonsensical and false the fools' beliefs are. Surely we know things, but how can we exactly distinguish the good and true beliefs from the bad and false ones? In my opinion, Chisholm is here dealing with the most fundamental questions of philosophy. Somehow we should be able to show both that the fanatics and madmen claim to know too much, and that we can know far more than the skeptic claims[36].

Chisholm states the problem yet in a different way, speaking now of beliefs instead of appearances. He writes:

> The question we started with was: How *are* we to tell the good ones [beliefs] from the bad ones [beliefs]? In other words, we were asking: What is the proper method for deciding which are the good beliefs and which are the bad ones – which beliefs are genuine cases of knowledge and which beliefs are not?
>
> And now, you see, we are on the wheel. First, we want to find out which are the good beliefs and which are the bad ones. To find this out we have to have some way – some method – of deciding which are the good ones and which are the bad ones. But there are good and bad methods – good and bad ways – of sorting out the good beliefs from the bad ones. And so we have a new problem: How are we to decide which are the good methods and which are the bad ones?
>
> If we could fix on a good method for distinguishing between good and bad methods, we might be all set. But this, of course, just moves the problem to a different level. How are we to distinguish between a good method [and a bad method] for choosing good methods? If we continue in this way, of course, we are led to an infinite regress and we will never have the answer to our original question.[37]

The problem Chisholm poses seems to be relatively simple, that is, to understand, not to solve. First, we wonder whether any of our beliefs are true. Then, we realize that we need a method – that is, a criterion of truth – for distinguishing true belies from false ones. Finally, we wonder whether our chosen method is a good one. The threat of an infinite regress seems inevitable. Let us see Chisholm's final formulation of the problem.

2.1.2. Chisholm's Formulation of the Problem

Chisholm decides to formulate the problem of the criterion with the help of the following two pairs of questions:

> A) "*What* do we know? What is the *extent* of our knowledge?"
> B) "How are we to decide *whether* we know? What are the *criteria* of knowledge?"[38]

Interestingly, Chisholm notes that the above pairs of questions are relevant with respect to "some of the philosophical issues that are involved here"[39]. This raises the questions of whether there are also some additional philosophical issues involved, and what are their respective contents. Maybe Chisholm just wants to remark that his initial characterization of the problem is rather broad, and on the basis of it one could drift to consider theories of perception, theories of truth, metaphysical theories of realism and idealism, and whatnot. The questions at hand, however, are not ambiguous, for here we clearly are dealing with the criteria and the extent of knowledge. At first glance, it seems that answering either question presupposes an answer to the other question. It seems that I just cannot start listing instances of knowledge – that is, to give an answer to the questions stated in A – if I have no clue how to distinguish between true and false instances of knowledge. In other words, I need a criterion in order that I could tell what I know. Thus, I should have an answer to the questions stated in B in order to answer the questions stated in A, and vice versa.[40] A skeptical conclusion seems to close in on us. As Chisholm puts it:

> And so we can formulate the position of *the skeptic* on these matters. He will say: "You cannot answer question A until you have answered question B. And you cannot answer question B until you have answered question A. Therefore you cannot answer either question. You cannot know what, if anything, you know, and there is no possible way for you to decide in any particular case." Is there any reply to this?[41]

On the basis of the above quotation, Chisholm sees that the problem of the criterion culminates in the following *skeptical argument*:

Question A: What do we know?

Question B: How are we to decide whether we know?

1. You cannot answer question A until you have answered question B.

2. You cannot answer question B until you have answered question A.

3. Therefore, you cannot answer either question.

According to Chisholm, there are three possible reactions to this argument. The first is the position of the skeptic, who, obviously, accepts the argument and states that there is no possible way for us to decide whether we know anything in any particular case. The other two views refute the skeptical conclusion. The so-called *particularists* reject the first premise of the skeptical argument, and they claim that we can determine the criterion of knowledge on the basis of our chosen sample of good beliefs. Particularists think that they have an answer to A and on the basis of it they work out their answer to B; "From instances of knowledge to criteria of knowledge" seems to be their motto. In other words, we are able to pick out true beliefs prior to a usage of any criterion. The last camp, the so-called *methodists*, proceeds the other way around. Methodists reject the second premise of the skeptical argument and they claim that we can determine the goodness of beliefs on the basis of our pre-chosen criterion. Methodists think that they have an answer to B on the basis of which they figure out their answer to A – "From criteria of knowledge to instances of knowledge" could be their respective motto. Thus, methodists think that we can pick out the criterion of knowledge prior to any instance of good belief.[42]

In sum, Chisholm understands the problem of the criterion as interrelated questions concerning the criteria and instances of knowledge. According to Chisholm, there are three possible answers or positions with respect to the problem of the criterion. Skeptics claim that we "cannot answer either question without presupposing an answer to the other, and therefore the questions cannot be answered at all"[43]. Particularists presuppose instances of knowledge and proceed from them to criteria, whereas methodists progress in reverse order.

2.1.3. Methodism, Particularism, and Skepticism

Chisholm objects to methodism – the view that we can proceed from criteria of knowledge to instances of knowledge – in two respects.[44] He cites empiricism – rather curiously, I think – as an example of methodism[45], and it amounts to the view that genuine items of knowledge must be derived from sense experience. Chisholm mentions John Locke and David Hume as examples of empiricist philosophers.[46] According to the first objection that applies to all forms of methodism, no matter which criterion methodists happen to choose as their guide to knowledge, the criterion is "very broad and far-reaching and at the same time completely arbitrary"[47]. Chisholm wonders how anyone could begin with such a broad generalization, and he finds it particularly odd that the empiricists who favor sense experience start out with such a broad generalization.[48] The choice of criterion is also arbitrary, for the methodist "leaves us completely in the dark so far as concerns what *reasons* he may have for adopting this particular criterion rather than some other"[49]. The second objection applies particularly to empiricism that implies that all we can know is our present sensations. We cannot know the existence of any physical things such as trees, houses, and bodies. Furthermore, I cannot even know that there is an 'I' who recollects and unifies the sensations I am having. Thus, I cannot know that I am having sensations, or that there have been any sensations in the past, for all there is, is the present flow of sensations.[50]

Chisholm characterizes methodism in a rather grim tone, and he even blatantly states that "I'm inclined to think that the 'methodists' are wrong"[51]. His description of particularism is, in contrast, more positive in tone. Chisholm interprets Thomas Reid and G. E. Moore as particularists, who proceed from instances of knowledge to criteria of knowledge. Particularists take it for granted that many beliefs of ours are consonant with common sense. Accordingly, we know things such as that we have bodies, that there are external objects, that there are other persons, and that the Earth has existed for billions of years. How, then, would particularists answer the objections made by the skeptics, or methodists, who claim that we cannot know anything beyond our current sensations?[52] Here Chisholm imagines Moore raising his hand and uttering the following words: "I know very well that this is a hand, and so do you. If you come across some philosophical theory that implies that you and I cannot know that this is a hand, then so much worse for the theory"[53]. Particularists refute the need for criteria of knowledge in the first place; we can know with ease things such as that we have hands without applying some criterion.[54]

As Chisholm takes particularism to be the most reasonable choice compared to its rivals, methodism and skepticism, it is natural enough that he tries to flesh out the first-mentioned theory. He thinks that, in a particularist framework, we should regard senses as innocent until proven guilty. This means that most of the time we can trust in the deliverances of our senses. Although we acknowledge that our senses sometimes deceive us, it is not a sufficient reason to dismiss senses altogether. If, however, we have on a particular occasion a good reason to suspect our senses, then we should on that occasion doubt the beliefs produced by our senses. If there is nothing particularly alarming in a given situation, we can safely take the reports of our senses at face value.[55] Chisholm sums up particularism as follows: "We have then a kind of answer to the puzzle about the diallelus. We start with particular cases of knowledge and then from those we generalize and formulate criteria of goodness – criteria telling us what it is for a belief to be epistemically respectable."[56]

Chisholm has his own suggestions for correct epistemic criteria and principles that both are derived from our instances of knowledge.[57] The details of Chisholm's theory of epistemic principles, however, are not important in the present context;[58] instead, we should concentrate on his remarks on the third alternative, skepticism. The proper place to begin is to consider Chisholm's following closing words of his lecture on the problem of the criterion:

> But in all of this I have presupposed the approach I have called "particularism." The "methodist" and the "skeptic" will tell us that we have started in the wrong place. If now we try to reason with them, then, I am afraid, we will be back on the wheel.
>
> What few philosophers have had the courage to recognize is this: we can deal with the problem only by begging the question. It seems to me that, if we do recognize this fact, as we should, then it is unseemly for us to try to pretend that it isn't so.
>
> One may object: "Doesn't this mean, then, that the skeptic is right after all?" I would answer: "Not at all. His view is only one of the three possibilities and in itself has no more to recommend it than the others do. And in favor of our approach there is the fact that we *do* know many things, after all."[59]

The above quotation from Chisholm is, in a word, perplexing, and it shows, in my opinion, how puzzled he is about the plausibility of particularism. On the one hand, he seems to take particularism as the most reasonable option,[60] a kind of answer,[61] and a solution[62] to the problem of the criterion. On the other hand, Chisholm admits that each possible solution to the problem is unappealing,[63] and that "we can deal with the problem only by begging the question"[64]. Moreover, on another occasion he claims that "the problem of the criterion *has* no solution"[65]. Although the

problem is "insoluble"[66], it does not prevent Chisholm from trying to formulate a kind of answer that *seems* to him to be on the right track[67].

To sum up, Chisholm openly admits that we cannot solve the problem of the criterion. If, however, we are not willing to be skeptics, we should aim for particularism, for methodism is not, Chisholm claims, a viable alternative. It is noteworthy that Chisholm takes the diallelus as a general problem, for he interprets philosophies of, e.g., Locke, Hume, Reid, and Moore as responses to the problem of the criterion. Even though the aforementioned philosophers do not consider the diallelus in the same terms as Chisholm does, if they are concerned with it at all, they still are, Chisholm seems to think, entangled with this ancient problem. One lesson of Chisholm's discussion on the problem of the criterion is this: when you engage in the business of epistemology, you are, like it or not, dealing with the problem of the criterion.

Two points strike me as salient about Chisholm's discussion on the problem of the criterion. Firstly, I wonder the nature of his suggested solution, particularism, to the problem: how can we just casually state that "in favor of our approach there is the fact that we *do* know many things"[68]? The problem of the criterion, and skepticism in general, is supposed to challenge our conviction that we have knowledge, and therefore it seems to be clearly insufficient to answer this challenge just by repeating the initial assumption that we do have knowledge. This cannot be an acceptable way to solve philosophical problems. Otherwise we could resolve other enigmas of philosophy in a similar manner; for example, we could unravel the mystery of free will just by saying that "In favor of our approach there is the fact that we can and *do* choose our deeds". As Laurence BonJour aptly writes, "Chisholm's position [i.e. particularism] rules out the possibility of skepticism in what seems to me an objectionably question-begging way"[69]. Secondly, Chisholm seems to draw a distorted picture of methodism, and one wonders could this view not be depicted more sympathetically than Chisholm does. Moreover, Chisholm openly admits that his preferred position, particularism, begs the question against skepticism. Are not, then, both views, particularism and methodism, on a par, at least with respect to skepticism? As Robert Amico points out, "if begging the question is 'dealing' with the problem, then the methodist has the same recourse open to him"[70].

Next I will examine commentaries and remarks pertaining to Chisholm's formulation on the problem of the criterion. First, many commentators deem Chisholm's formulation of the problem as *meta-epistemological*, i.e. it is directed towards our knowledge about knowledge, rather than our first-order knowledge. Thus, I must discuss on which level, so to speak, Chisholm's problem

operates, or at least can be seen as operating. Second, I will examine critical remarks pertaining to Chisholm's accounts of methodism and particularism. Third, I will consider the question of whether Chisholm's list of different answers to the problem is exhaustive. In fact, many commentators think that Chisholm has omitted a relevant fourth alternative, a sort of coherentism. Fourth, I will examine Amico's solution – or "dissolution", as he calls it – to the problem of the criterion. Fifth, I will examine the nature of dependence between criteria and instances, which will show a serious flaw in Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. Finally, all the results of the chapter are brought together in a brief summary.

2.2. Levels of Knowledge

It is not so clear whether Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion is directed towards our knowledge or our knowledge about knowledge. Many commentators interpret Chisholm in the latter way, taking his account of the problem as meta-epistemological. For example, Ernest Sosa writes as follows:

> Particularism and methodism are meta-epistemological positions, for they tell us which justifies which of two sorts of *epistemic* knowledge. They tell us whether our knowledge of certain epistemic principles is based on our knowledge that we have bits of knowledge of a certain related kind (e.g., of the external world, that I have two hands), or whether, conversely, our knowledge that we have bits of knowledge of a particular kind rests on our knowledge of certain related epistemic principles.[71]

And another commentator, Mark Nelson, writes:

> It is worth noting that what Chisholm calls scepticism in the Problem of the Criterion is a second order scepticism, and does not entail first-order scepticism. That is, unless, some sort of "high access" principle is true, not knowing the criteria of knowledge is compatible with knowing lots of things about the external world, the past, other minds, etc.[72]

If the problem of the criterion is taken as a meta-epistemological problem, it will change drastically our understanding of the problem and its possible solutions. In particular, the skeptic challenges our second-order knowledge and not directly our first-order knowledge. Accordingly, we can know even if we cannot know that we know. I admit that I do not even properly understand such a strand of skepticism, according to which we can know various things, but we cannot know that we know. Such a view implies that my belief, say, "A pair of scissors is on the table" could be true and

justified and hence I would have knowledge, *but* I could not know that my belief "A pair of scissors is on the table" is knowledge.[73] As I see the matter, if I know that *p*, I can also know that I know that *p* et cetera, and vice versa; if I cannot know that I know that *p*, I cannot know that *p* either. Thus, I think that the problem of the criterion concerns equally all levels of knowledge. Hence, I see the whole question about on which level of knowledge the problem of the criterion operates totally irrelevant.[74] Although the problem of the criterion concerns, arguably, equally all levels of knowledge, for simplicity's sake, I focus in this study mainly on the first-order knowledge. Therefore, we are dealing with the questions whether we know anything and if we do, consequently, what we know.

However, I acknowledge the fact that many epistemologists, especially the so-called externalists, do not see any contradiction in holding that we can have knowledge, even though we cannot know that we have knowledge. Knowledge about knowledge would require a criterion for distinguishing bad from good beliefs, but even if we have not such a criterion, we can have knowledge. According to a rough and ready description of externalism, a belief counts as knowledge if it is true and produced by a reliable cognitive process. We do not have to be aware of the reliability of our cognitive processes, for it is enough for knowledge that our beliefs are in fact true and reliably produced. I do not see an externalist answer to skepticism as satisfactory; in fact, I think that externalism does not provide an answer at all. For example, the skeptic can grant the externalist that "[o]ne *may* have knowledge without knowing or understanding what having knowledge amounts to. In fact, one *may* have knowledge even when one thinks one does not have knowledge"[75] and that "[w]e *may* have knowledge that we cannot prove we have"[76]. The crucial question is, however, do we know? It does not help at all to solemnly state that we may or may not have knowledge, for this much the skeptic can grant as well.[77] The problem of the criterion is a problem about finding a correct procedure or criterion for distinguishing true beliefs from false ones, and if we cannot find such a criterion – as it is argued in the problem – then we do not know anything. But, to repeat, externalists hold that such a criterion is not necessary for knowledge, which view I simply find implausible. The externalist conception of knowledge will be discussed in more detail in forthcoming chapters, but, as it is becoming clear from here, the issue between the externalists and internalists ultimately boils down to differing epistemic intuitions. Furthermore, if a debate has proceeded so far that, instead of arguments, we are only left with differing and contrary intuitions, it is practically useless to continue the debate. Differing and contrary arguments can be rationally evaluated, but a rational evaluation of differing intuitions is much harder, since intuitions are not based on premises or

evidence that could be evaluated. In the end, then, it seems that we have two different and incomparable conceptions of knowledge – one externalist and the other internalist.

The fundamental assumption guiding this study is that to know anything we should be able to distinguish between true and false beliefs; hence the demand for a criterion of truth. If this intial assumption already presupposes an internalist conception of knowledge, then this study is biased in favor of internalism, I admit. However, I simply cannot accept the view that we can disregard altogether the demand for a criterion of truth by holding that knowledge does not require such a criterion. If that view amounts to externalism, then I wholeheartedly reject externalism. However, you, my dear reader, do not have to take merely my word on it, for further arguments for and against externalism – as well as for and against internalism – are advanced in this study. Still, as already pointed out, further arguments may be useless, since the debate boils down to differing intuitions between the internalists and the externalists.

2.3. What Is Wrong and What Is Right with Particularism and Methodism?

Chisholm thinks that particularism – the view that we can derive criteria from instances of knowledge – is consonant with common sense. Moreover, he argues that methodism – the view that we derive the instances of knowledge from correct criteria – has, at least as with respect to empiricism as an instance of methodism, skeptical implications. But is it really that simple?

2.3.1. Particularism

It is not clear at all that particularism *must* be consonant with common sense. For example, we can construct multiple forms of particularism, and all of them do not seem to coincide with common sense. In fact, all forms of particularism are possible, for according to the central tenet of particularism, we just *presuppose* instances of knowledge prior to any criteria. For example, one could adhere to "Lunatics' Particularism", according to which it is perfectly acceptable to take propositions such as "The Moon is made of green cheese", "The universe is created by the Great Orange, a benevolent and fruity god" and "Politicians are mischievous demons in disguise" for granted. Of course, an obvious objection against such Lunatics is that their samples of knowledge are utterly implausible. However, it seems that such an objection presupposes that we have a criterion of (epistemic) plausibility for beliefs in our use. And that way we are back on the skeptical wheel again, for we should justify our chosen criterion with a further criterion, and so on. It is

precisely the point of particularism that we just choose our instances of knowledge prior to *any* criteria.

Particularists try to avoid the problem of the diallelus by claiming that we simply know the correct instances of knowledge. The problem with particularism seems to be that we can construct various forms of it, and adherents of each respective form could claim that they simply know that their chosen instances of knowledge are correct. Thus, it is also possible to adhere, for example, to "Cartesian Particularism" according to which we can know only things pertaining to our existence and current mental states in addition to some simple logical truths[78]. It seems that both camps, Lunatics and Cartesians, have it wrong: the former seem to have too large, whereas the latter seem to have too narrow, a pool of samples of knowledge. How could we reasonably exclude these extreme possibilities? Chisholm, arguably, sticks to his favorite, call it "Common Sense Particularism"[79], but how could we justify his choice?

It could be argued that a particularist's choices for instances of knowledge are in an important sense *arbitrary*. With respect to Common Sense Particularism, for instance, it could be pointed out that what was in line with common sense a thousand years ago is not so any more[80]. For example, we do not think nowadays that the Earth is flat and the center of the universe, or that different natural phenomena, as well as many of our bodily diseases, are due to the workings of spirits. Moreover, our commonsensical beliefs about middle-sized physical objects seem to be plainly false in the light of current evidence acquired within quantum physics. Roughly speaking, in the context of science our commonsensical beliefs are the first to go, for often "common sense" just amounts to dogmatic presuppositions. So it seems that some of our commonsensical beliefs can be false. But this is bad news for the particularist, for to confess that one's exemplars of knowledge are fallible amounts to saying that one does not know after all. In other words, the alleged instances of knowledge were meant to be just that, viz. *instances of knowledge* that are exempt from the skeptic's doubts. However, if we admit that our chosen samples of knowledge are dubious as representatives of knowledge, we are again vulnerable to the skeptic's attack, and we should justify our alleged instances of knowledge with new reasons, and these with new reasons, and *ad infinitum*. This is all too familiar a problem of foundationalism: which beliefs should we choose as the foundations of our edifice of knowledge? Foundationalists have differed and differ with respect to what they accept as so-called basic beliefs, i.e. beliefs that are justified independently of any further justifying beliefs. On the face of it, it is an arbitrary decision which kind of foundationalism or particularism we happen to choose[81]. Cartesian, Lunatic, or Common Sense Particularists can only insist that their

view on the instances of knowledge is the correct one, but dogmatic insistence does not remove the fact that their favored form, or any other form for that matter, of particularism cannot solve the problem of the criterion. Incidentally, as Chisholm charges methodism of arbitrariness, the same charge also applies to particularism.

2.3.2. Methodism

If it is possible to construct a version of particularism that is consonant with common sense, what prevents us from doing the same thing with methodism? Amico, for example, thinks that "[t]here is nothing about methodism that precludes the possibility of its coinciding with our common sense beliefs"[82]. Noah Lemos agrees with Amico that it is, indeed, *logically* possible for us to know general epistemic criteria or principles from which we could derive common sense beliefs[83]. However, Lemos argues that in other respects Amico misses the point[84]. The problem with methodism is, according to Lemos, that if we are ignorant of relevant epistemic principles, then we are also ignorant of propositions such as "I know that I was alive five minutes ago"[85]. However, according to common sense, we know propositions such as "(I know that) I was alive five minutes ago" *even if* we are ignorant of general or specific epistemic principles. Thus, methodism *does* conflict with common sense.[86] If we have knowledge, it is reasonable to assume that we can know things independently of epistemic principles. Otherwise we should say that young children, and all the people who are not sophisticated enough to understand or believe general epistemic principles, do not know things such as that they have hands, that they were alive five minutes ago, or that there is an external world. And that, if anything, flies in the face of common sense.[87] This criticism of methodism seems to be externalist in character, but even though we did not accept the externalist conception of knowledge, there would remain further problems for the methodist.

It is a real problem for the methodist that we can construct countless criteria consistent with our alleged instances of knowledge. In other words, for any given judgment, we can construct myriad criteria that are consistent with it. For instance, my belief that "There is a computer in front of me" satisfies the criteria, say "Beliefs formed about computers are true", "Beliefs formed on Wednesdays are true", and "If 2+2=4, then my perceptual beliefs are reliable". Now, the question arises as to how we could ever pick out the correct criteria, and *not* to revise them according to our instances of knowledge.[88] Moreover, all of this seems to highlight the fact that, in general, we fix our criteria according to instances and not vice versa. In other words, if a given criterion suggests

that we do not know a proposition that we think that we know, we reject the criterion and not the proposition, the alleged instance of knowledge.[89]

Lastly, there is a further problem concerning the status of these criteria, namely the criteria of true beliefs are both general and contingent. A methodist's proposed criterion, say, "Beliefs produced by sense perception are likely to be true", is general, since it states, in effect, that *all* beliefs produced by sense perception have a sufficiently high likelihood to be true. However, the criterion is also contingent, since it is not a necessary truth like proposition "Every triangle has three angles", arguably, is. But how could anyone immediately see the correct general and contingent criteria? Necessary and general truths as well as contingent and not general propositions such as "There is a computer in front of me" and "I am now conscious" are good candidates for propositions that we can immediately accept as true, but it is harder to find good candidates for general and contingent propositions that we can immediately accept as true. The criterion "Beliefs produced by sense perception are likely to be true" may have some initial plausibility, but it calls for further justifying reasons and it seems not be a proposition of which truth could be said to be immediately seen. Since the methodist's proposed criteria are general and contingent, it is simply implausible to suggest, as the methodist does, that we can immediately see the correct criteria.[90] Particularists, in turn, do not have this kind of a problem, since their alleged instances of knowledge are only contingent and not general.

As we recall, Chisholm accuses methodism of arbitrariness, and above I tried to justify this accusation. The more one thinks about it, the more inconceivable the idea behind methodism seems to be, for it is hard to see how anyone could work out her way from criteria to instances of knowledge. The idea behind particularism, instead, seems to be much more conceivable. At least we can imagine what it would be to derive the correct epistemic criteria from the alleged instances, but the reverse procedure is almost unimaginable. It seems to be a fact of epistemology that, if we are not willing to be skeptics, we start from the alleged instances of knowledge and basing on that we formulate general epistemic principles. It is also possible that we try to figure out the edifice of our knowledge on the basis of both instances and criteria. This view seems to fall somewhere between particularism and methodism, and it is discussed next, after a brief summarizing discussion.

2.3.3. Discussion

Now we are in a position to summarize the pros and cons of methodism and particularism. To start with methodism, Chisholm seems to be correct after all when he claims that methodism is not a plausible view.[91] The foremost reason I find compelling in rejecting methodism is that it seems to be a theory of knowledge not applicable to humans at all. Maybe some other kinds of creatures could perceive directly general epistemic criteria and on that basis derive particular instances of knowledge. Thus, if methodism is not an acceptable option, and we are inclined to reject skepticism, we are left with particularism. Particularists think that we can gain knowledge easily by trusting our particular judgments. Of course not all kinds of judgments count as knowledge, but certainly the intuitive and commonsensical ones do. One has not to be an epistemologist in order to have knowledge, for fairly young children and even animals can have knowledge. Knowledge is a common good, particularists claim. However, the question arises how the particularists know all this. The reply is that they just do. Particularism is in principle anti-skeptical; particularists just presuppose that skepticism is false[92]. But why should we follow particularists and presuppose with them that their chosen samples of beliefs are, indeed, true and instances of knowledge? As Paul Moser writes:

> Intuitive judgments and common-sense judgments can, and sometimes do, result from special, even biased, linguistic training. Why then should we regard such judgments as automatically epistemically privileged? Intuitive judgments and common-sense judgments certainly can be false, as a little reflection illustrates. Such judgments, furthermore, seem not always to be supported by best available evidence. Consider, for instance, how various judgments of "common sense" are at odds with our best available evidence from the sciences or even from careful ordinary perception. It is unclear, then, why we should regard intuitive judgments or common-sense judgments as the basis of our standards for justification.[93]

Briefly, particularism does not seem to fare any better than methodism does; both of them fail to offer a warranted starting point for an anti-skeptical epistemology. We have the following dilemma on our hands: "particularism seems dogmatic – when we are trying to clear up doubt about particular cases, we cannot presume that our judgment in particular cases is correct. On the other hand, methodism appears arbitrary – how do we select one set of criteria among many others if we cannot test them against known particular cases?"[94] In fact, both methodism and particularism can be said to be arbitrary and dogmatic. To explicate, both methodism and particularism are arbitrary insofar as they blatantly state, without any justifying reasons, that their chosen criteria or instances of knowledge are the correct ones. Furthermore, the dialectic built-in to Chisholm's formulation of

the problem of the criterion *implies* that neither methodists nor particularists can justify their proposed criteria or instances. According to Chisholm's formulation of the problem, both methodists and particularists must propose some beliefs concerning either criteria or instances *as basic*, in order to prevent the infinite regress of reasons from rising. However, exactly for the reason because the both camps are committed to the postulation of basic beliefs, we can accuse both of them of arbitrariness. Therefore, both the methodist and the particularist leave "us completely in the dark so far as concerns what *reasons* he may have for adopting this particular criterion [or instance] rather than some other"[95]. Furthermore, both the methodist and the particularist are guilty of dogmatism, since they do not – *cannot* – justify their chosen basic beliefs. We will see the force of this objection more clearly when considering the ancient formulation of the problem of the criterion and especially the so-called mode of hypothesis.

My treatment of methodism and particularism has been rather brief, and as such it is not intended to be conclusive. However, my purpose has been to point out that both methodism and particularism are, as solutions to the problem of the criterion, infected with serious flaws. It may well be that, in the end, either methodism or particularism turns out be a correct epistemological theory, but, for now, we should be aware of their serious flaws. Furthermore, substantial epistemological theories are discussed in more detail in chapter 4. The current chapter is merely an overview of Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion, and not a survey of all possible anti-skeptical epistemologies. With regard to Chisholm's formulation of the problem, our choices are not necessarily limited to particularism, methodism, and skepticism.

2.4. The Fourth Alternative

2.4.1. From Coherence to the Method of Wide Reflective Equilibrium

Our anti-skeptical alternatives are not necessarily restricted to particularism and methodism, for "[o]ther positions on the Problem of the Criterion may be possible, including a sort of coherentism, according to which one begins with both substantial and methodological commitments, and then works to bring these into reflective equilibrium"[96]. Indeed, coherentism seems to be an option ignored by Chisholm.[97] Coherentists deny the idea of epistemic priority built in the problem of the criterion. It is assumed in the problem that either our criteria are prior to instances or vice versa.[98] Coherentists simply reject this assumption and they claim, in turn, that we work out criteria *and* instances together into a coherent whole. We should balance criteria against instances and instances

against criteria until we have a consistent and mutually supporting system of beliefs. Coherentists agree with the skeptic to the extent that we cannot have instances of knowledge or criteria of knowledge independently of each other, but coherentists assert that we can acquire them through their mutual interdependence. [99]

In the present context, coherentism is also closely linked to John Rawls' idea of 'the method of wide reflective equilibrium'.[100] For example, Lemos thinks that we should understand the common sense tradition through the method of wide reflective equilibrium, in which "one begins with (1) one's particular considered judgments, (2) one's beliefs in general principles, and (3) general background theories. One then seeks to achieve a coherent balance or 'equilibrium' between these various elements"[101].[102] We need not to get stuck to some particular judgments or criteria, instead we can abandon or revise our particular judgments in favor of criteria, or vice versa. Whether we abandon or revise particular judgments, general principles, or background theories in favor of something else in each particular occasion, depends on which option "seems, on reflection, more reasonable"[103]. The method is *wide*, indeed:

> [I]n wide reflective equilibrium, one does not restrict oneself to beliefs within a given domain. One seeks a wider harmony between one's particular judgments and general principles and *whatever other considerations* might seem relevant. So, conceptions of the person and the functioning of social institutions as well as principles of economic theory might be brought to bear on particular moral judgments and general principles. What favors the method of wide reflective equilibrium is that nothing that seems relevant is excluded.[104]

Also Nicholas Rescher relies heavily on the idea of coherence in his alleged solution to the problem of the criterion. Rescher understands the problem, among his many other characterizations of it, as "[a] problem how reason can legitimately sit in judgment on itself and validate its own deliverances. Or, to look at the issue from a somewhat different angle, how can one possibly provide a systematic noncircular validation for the system of our beliefs as a whole?"[105] Rescher cites also Chisholm, among others such as the ancient skeptics, as a figure giving considerable attention to the problem, thus, it should be warranted to take Rescher as considering the same problem as Chisholm does.[106] Although Rescher acknowledges that the problem of the criterion is a powerful argument for global skepticism, he thinks that it "can be met – and overcome – by sufficiently careful countermoves"[107]. However, it is not an easy task to track down Rescher's exact solution to the problem from his series of books. Thus, I have decided to focus on Amico's interpretation of Rescher's alleged solution.[108]

An important part of Rescher's solution is his endeavor to link pragmatic success with truth.[109] Resher proceeds by discussing certain metaphysical theses that must be taken for granted if we are to explain "why pragmatic success should count as *truth*-indicative"[110]. For example, "it must be presupposed that the world operates in a way that is at bottom *nonconspiratorial*, in both the positive and the negative directions. That is, one must hold nature to be indifferent to our cognitive endeavors: neither *angelic* in systematically crowning our wholly unmerited and rationally unwarranted successes, nor *demonic* in systematically frustrating the deserved successes of even our most shrewd and rationally warranted efforts. Again, nature must be in some degree *responsive* to human intervention, for clearly, if our actions never made an impact upon it, the success or failure of these efforts would fail to reveal anything about its workings."[111] With the help of these and other metaphysical assumptions we are in a position to conclude that "it is effectively impossible that success should crown the products of *systematically* error-producing cognitive procedures"[112].

Another crucial part of Rescher's account is his stress on the relevance of "systematic coherence throughout the cognitive enterprise"[113]. What is at play here are the interconnected notions of pragmatic success and cognitive coherence that both are included in the evaluation and revision process of our theoretical and pragmatic presumptions. Rescher admits that, as an answer to the skeptic, his approach to epistemology is circular, but it is not viciously so[114]. In his rather metaphorical language, Rescher describes his overall system as follows: "What is at issue is thus a pair of distinct but connected cycles (the *theoretical* cycle of cognitive coherence and the *pragmatic* cycle of apparent effectiveness) which both move upwards in interlocked coordination – a pair of interlocked ascending spirals. The present approach to epistemic validation finds a 'double helix' configuration to lie at the core of human cognition even as it lies at the core of human life itself."[115]

Despite the fact that Rescher and Lemos depict their respective theories differently, the theories seem to share a common feature that makes them closely related. In other words, both theories are in a sense hybrids of particularism and methodism. Neither Rescher nor Lemos emphasize the epistemic priority of particular judgments or general criteria, instead, they seem to think that all kinds of facts, judgments, theories, considerations, and so on might be relevant and should be taken into account when answering the skeptical challenge posed by the problem of the criterion.

2.4.2. Objections against the Fourth Alternative

Rescher and Lemos' shared view, a kind of wide coherentism, invokes two general objections that concern, firstly, the possibility of equally coherent alternative systems and, secondly, vicious circularity comprised in coherentism. Both objections are familiar from criticisms raised against coherentist theories of justification.[116]

The point of the first objection is to note that the coherence of one's belief system does not necessarily have anything to do with truth. All kinds of conspiracy theories or fairy tales can be perfectly coherent although they are plainly false. We can easily construct two coherent systems of propositions, the only difference being that the first system consists of the negations of the propositions comprised in the second system. Because the two systems are contradictory, they both cannot be true, but we cannot prefer one over another on the basis of coherence alone. Thus, coherence seems to be insufficient criterion or condition to link our beliefs with truth. Consequently, we have lost our reason to think that coherence attained through the mutual interdependence between our particular judgments and criteria leads to truth, and, therefore, we are back on the skeptic's wheel again.

Lemos disagrees with the first objection, for he stresses that in the method of wide reflective equilibrium "we need not treat all coherent bodies [of belief] as being epistemically on a par. Even if we allow that coherence provides some boost to the epistemic status of beliefs, there are other factors relevant as well."[117] I think that Lemos is not, unfortunately, successful in his attempt to refute the criticism of the possibility of coherent alternative systems. It seems that we have only three relevant anti-skeptical solutions to the problem of the criterion.[118] If one does not want to give, as Lemos does not, epistemic priority to particular judgments over general criteria, nor vice versa, one is *committed to* a kind of coherentism. It is, of course, possible that Lemos wants to be a particularist or a methodist after all, but these views have problems of their own. If, however, as his words strongly indicate, he is committed to the coherentist response to the problem of the criterion, then his view falls prey to criticisms of coherentist theories. And as Amico points out in his criticism of Rescher's system, on the basis of coherence we can justify just about anything. No matter which proposition one takes, it is possible to make up a magnificent and coherent story to support it.[119]

According to the second objection, coherentist theories are circular in an unsatisfactorily way, and, therefore, they cannot be viable solutions to the problem of the criterion. In other words, it is a circular procedure to justify our particular judgments and criteria by appealing to our belief system's coherence or the method of wide reflective equilibrium that both are justified, in turn, by appealing to our particular judgments and criteria. This way we are only back in square one, for one starts to wonder what justifies the method of wide reflective equilibrium or coherence in the first place.[120]

To start with Rescher, he tries to shake off the charges of circularity by claiming that his system's overall justification is not based on coherence alone. For the consequences of our actions constitute the decisive factor when validating our epistemological theory. As a result, we cannot be content with coherence attained in the realm of ideas and theories only, for what is absent, is the element of pragmatic success.[121] Pragmatic considerations bind us to the external world and block "the prospect of a futile spinning around in reality-detached cycles of purely theoretical gyrations"[122]. Rescher seems to think that because the external world and the pragmatic success of our actions are crucial elements in his theory of knowledge, it prevents the problem of circularity to be worrisome for his overall system. Although he describes the justification of his epistemological theory in terms of "connected cycles"[123] and "a pair of interlocked ascending spirals"[124], it, Rescher seems to think, does not render his system circular, not at least in a vicious way, for our beliefs must "encounter the harsh realities of the external world"[125]. Briefly, our beliefs couple with the reality.[126]

With regard to Lemos, in turn, he tries to answer the charge of circularity in a similar way as he answered the first objection about the possibility of coherent alternative systems. Specifically, we need not hold that all coherent systems are epistemically on a par.[127] Lemos seems to think that some coherent systems can, indeed, be viciously circular and unreliable in general. However, it does not imply that we should treat all coherent systems of belief as epistemically deficient.[128] Moreover, there is a kind of circularity we all are necessarily entangled with, for, in a way, we are forced to assume the reliability of, say, sense perception in order to find out whether sense perception is reliable.[129] By the same token, we cannot help but assume the reliability of reason if we are to study the question of whether the deliverances of reason are reliable. We cannot check the reliability of our cognitive faculties by any external means, so we have no choice but let them be the judge of their own products, i.e. beliefs. And *this* kind of circularity is perfectly acceptable in addition to its unavoidability.[130] However, Lemos admits that the proponent of the method of wide reflective

equilibrium should take critical considerations, including the criticisms discussed above, into account, for "[t]he method is, after all, wide. Nothing that seems relevant need be excluded."[131]

Another kind of defense of the method of wide reflective equilibrium is brought up by Markus Lammenranta, who claims that it is "literally a method"[132] and not as such a competing theory of knowledge or epistemic justification.[133] By using the method we can arrive at the correct theory of knowledge, but we can also fail: the method of wide reflective equilibrium is initially neutral with respect to skepticism.[134] When we use the method, we, of course, expect that the resulting theory of knowledge is justified, but the starting point, i.e. the method of wide reflective equilibrium, need not be the source of justification of our believing that resulting theory.[135]

However, if the method of wide reflective equilibrium is literally only a method, the question arises as to what makes us adopt it in the first place?[136] If we do not provide any reasons for its usage, the method amounts to an arbitrary assumption and, it is, therefore, an unsuccessful and question-begging attempt to answer the skeptic. It seems as if we acknowledge that providing reasons for our procedure throws us back into the wheel, and, therefore, we refuse to give reasons for our favored method. However, you cannot refute the skeptic just by turning a deaf ear to her. Moreover, neither Lemos nor Rescher seem to be able to refute the charges of circularity against their respective theories. In the first place, Rescher is blatantly dogmatic when he claims that our beliefs couple with the external world. If it is really so, the problem of the skepticism is solved. But skepticism would not be *a problem* at all if it could be refuted just by claiming that we have knowledge and our pragmatic success indicates that our beliefs are truthful. On the other hand, if our theory of knowledge is grounded in the consequences of our actions, and our beliefs are validated by pragmatic considerations, we seem to be committed to a particularist theory, not coherentist. If, however, we want to preserve coherence as the most crucial feature of our theory, then the charge of circularity is immediately warranted. Circularity seems to be that kind of an epistemic vice to which one just cannot turn a blind eye.

Nevertheless, we can forget the charge of circularity, for the most pressing objection against Lemos' and Rescher's respective systems is yet to be presented; namely, we can grant Rescher and Lemos all that they want, viz. that coherence is not the only relevant criterion and all other kinds of considerations should be taken into account. However, now the problem is that our conception of knowledge or justified belief seems to be too demanding. Specifically, how can we know when our beliefs, experiences, and other relevant considerations are in the state of wide reflective

equilibrium? If mere coherence is not enough, the question arises as to what is, and more to the point, how can we know when the desirable state has been reached? In other words, the problem of the criterion rises again: we seem to need a criterion that tells us what the relevant features of the wide reflective equilibrium are. Only if we were equipped with the correct criterion, we could distinguish between belief systems that are in the state of wide reflective equilibrium and those that are not.

On the other hand, if all kinds of considerations are to be taken into account in order for us to reach the state of wide reflective equilibrium, then what precludes the problem of the skepticism from being one of these relevant considerations? If skepticism is ruled out in advance, it needs to be asked on what grounds we can make such a move. What other theories, propositions, views, or opinions should be ruled out in advance? Moreover, how are we to decide what kinds of things should be precluded from the wide reflective equilibrium? The problem with the method of wide reflective equilibrium is that it seems to be overwhelmingly difficult to tell when our belief system is in that epistemically preferable state. Besides, it seems to be far too wide a starting point if *everything*, including skepticism, is taken into account. It is hard to see how we could proceed anywhere if we happened to consider – as the method of wide reflective equilibrium seems to suggest – every possible proposition and their negations even if the set of propositions were rather limited.

In sum, the fourth alternative, whether it is understood as coherence or the method of wide reflective equilibrium, fails to solve the problem of the criterion. In a way, it was an expected result. If, as it has been argued, particularism is unacceptably dogmatic and methodism is arbitrary and almost impossible to carry out in practice, do we, then, expect that we could erase all the problems by combining the two views into a sort of coherentism? Maybe the specific problems of particularism and methodism are not pressing anymore, but the coherentist method creates problems of its own. The charge of circularity seems to remain untouched even after the proponents of the coherentist method have presented their defense. It is hard to deny the fact that coherence implies a kind of circularity, which, in turn, raises the worry that even if our belief system were perfectly coherent, it would not necessarily have anything to do with truth. We would happily live in a bubble that was coherent, indeed, but nothing short of a ridiculously false fantasy.

2.5. Amico's Dissolution of the Problem

An interesting, and certainly unique, approach to the problem of the criterion is provided by Amico, who suggests that the problem of the criterion can be solved, or rather "dissolved", for his solution is based on the idea that there is no real problem at all.[137] The problem of the criterion is not intelligible, for its demands amount to that of squaring a circle.[138] The problem is unintelligible and, therefore, impossible to solve. We need not answer the global doubt invoked by the problem of the criterion, instead, we can simply dispel our doubts by noting that the problem is not a real threat to our cognitive enterprise. Thus, "[t]here is no longer any problem. The problem has been *dissolved*."[139]

Moreover, we should note, as Amico proposes, that Chisholm formulates the problem in such a way that it is, in principle, impossible to provide an answer to it. To repeat, Chisholm states the problem with the help of a pair of questions A ("What do we know?") and B ("How are we to decide whether we know?"), but answering the question A presupposes answering *first* the question B, and answering the question B presupposes answering *first* the question A. Therefore, answering either question is impossible, since we cannot both answer A before B and B before A. Thus, it should come as no surprise to us that the problem of the criterion cannot be solved. Furthermore, it is not rational to try to provide an answer to a problem that is, in principle, impossible to solve. Thus, we should not bother ourselves about the problem of the criterion, for its demands need not be taken seriously.[140]

As a general analysis of the concept of 'problem', Amico suggests that problems can be always stated as questions, but not all questions are problems. Some questions are meaningless or trivial, but only those questions that raise doubt, can be said to be problems.[141] For example, "if someone were perplexed about how to 'solve' the 'problem' of how one squares a circle, it would be sufficient to demonstrate to that individual that the question asks us to do what is, in principle, impossible to do; and thus there is nothing puzzling about our inability to square a circle. The problem dissolves once one sees that the question involves no rational doubt. And so too with the modern problem of the criterion; when the question is fully understood, the apparent problem dissolves."[142] These kinds of problems that are, in principle, impossible to solve, can be regarded as "pseudoproblems".[143] However, these pseudoproblems should be distinguished from logical paradoxes, such as the liar paradox, that seem to be impossible to solve too.[144] With regard to a proper solution of a particular problem, the solution must be true and remove the doubt that was

invoked by the problem in the first place.[145] Accordingly, Amico does not provide a solution to the problem of the criterion, but rather a "dissolution" that removes the doubt by showing that there never was a problem that requires solving.[146]

What about Amico's dissolution of the problem of the criterion? Specifically, does it seem plausible? Personally, I'm inclined to answer "No". To start with, it must be recalled that, in the first place, it was *the skeptic* who claimed that it is impossible to provide an answer to either question, A or B. So it should be asked, what differentiates Amico's dissolution from the skeptic's position, for, after all, also Amico claims, along with the skeptic, that it is impossible to provide a satisfactory answer to the problem of the criterion.[147] The difference is, as Amico himself notes, that the skeptic claims, and particularists, methodists, and coherentists all agree to some extent, that the problem of the criterion poses a *real* threat for us, whereas Amico claims that there is *no* problem.[148] If Amico really were right here, then we could consign the problem of the criterion and skepticism to oblivion. But I cannot get rid of the feeling that something is lacking here, for, as one commentator says, Amico's view "may not be enough to persuade those epistemologists who take skepticism seriously".[149] In my view, Amico's dissolution of the problem amounts just to its neglect. Surely we can choose to ignore the problem of the criterion, but that does not imply that the problem is solved, or "dissolved", for that matter.

What is exactly wrong with Amico's dissolution of the problem? For one thing, it seems to be too strong an argument, for it has, arguably, devastating and unwanted consequences. If we accept Amico's solution of the problem of the criterion, we should, by the same token, reject other problems of the same kind as unintelligible. For example, mathematical and logical paradoxes would cease to be problems and they should be treated as pseudoproblems, and, thus, they would not deserve our serious attention. It is true that Amico tries to distinguish between pseudoproblems and logical problems, but by his own lights he should treat them equally. Moreover, he blurs the distinction himself by explicitly saying that "if a paradox is, in principle, impossible to solve, then it is a pseudoproblem"[150]. Amico's solution implies that we should reject, in addition to mathematical and logical paradoxes, many philosophical problems too. Many philosophical problems are such that all proposed solutions to them have been disputed, so maybe we should then conclude, following Amico, that the problems are impossible to solve and thus we should not even attempt to solve them. For instance, the problem of free will seems to be impossible to solve too, and, thus, it could be dismissed as a pseudoproblem. Again, the tension between norms and facts seems to be impossible to resolve, and, therefore, the whole distinction could be ignored as unintelligible. And

the same seems to hold good for the question concerning the existence of moral values; it seems to be impossible to prove that there are such things as values, therefore, the initial question could be dismissed as uninteresting. The examples could be multiplied, but the moral of the story is that a number of philosophical problems could be consigned to oblivion outright.

However, many of us, at least as far as philosophers are concerned, are not willing to treat a number of philosophical problems as pseudoproblems, or not at least on the basis of Amico's arguments. It may be a tenet of common sense to reject problems that seem to be impossible to solve, but it certainly is not the tenet of philosophy. Philosophers are not, of course, enthusiastic about studying whatever problems on condition that they seem to be impossible to solve. Amico's example suits to prove the point. Put simply, the analogy between squaring a circle and the problem of the criterion does not work. The former seems to be an impossible but uninteresting problem, whereas the latter is interesting and it challenges us, as epistemic agents, to try to solve it although at the same time the problem seems to be impossible to solve. The difference between the two problems might be the fact that in a way we seem to be committed to the premises that form the problem of the criterion, whereas we are not committed to the claim that we can square a circle. It strikes us as evident that we do have knowledge, but the problem of the criterion challenges this conviction. And in order to hold on to our conviction that we have knowledge, we should be able to show that the problem of the criterion goes amiss.[151] The situation is certainly different with respect to the task of squaring a circle, for a very few of us, if any, have a strong conviction that we can square a circle.

Still, Amico's treatment of the problem of the criterion highlights an important point; namely, Amico construes the dependence between instances and criteria as *temporal* in character. If that is a correct reading of the problem, then it seems that the problem is, after all, impossible to solve. However, even if it turned out that Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion is flawed, that would not show that skepticism in general is unintelligible. Moreover, it is still possible that we could replace Chisholm's formulation with a better one. Next, I will examine the nature of the dependence between criteria and instances in Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion.

2.6. Priority in the Problem of the Criterion

As we stated, Chisholm understands the problem of the criterion in terms of the following skeptical argument:

Question A: What do we know?

Question B: How are we to decide whether we know?

1. You cannot answer question A until you have answered question B.

2. You cannot answer question B until you have answered question A.

3. Therefore, you cannot answer either question.

The above argument relies heavily on the notion of priority, or dependence, between instances and criteria. The problem of the criterion is created, since we should have both criteria prior to instances and instances prior to criteria. Thus, we can reformulate the above argument as follows:

1. Criteria are prior to instances.

2. Instances are prior to criteria.

3. Therefore, both criteria and instances are unattainable.

Now, the central question is how we should understand the notion of priority in the argument. *Temporal* reading of priority is at least quite obvious; priority in Chisholm's skeptical argument means nothing more than that criteria are temporally prior to instances, and that instances are temporally prior to criteria. As mentioned above, Amico understands the dependence between criteria and instances as temporal, and then he proceeds to argue that Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion is, in principle, insoluble, and thus it should be simply ignored. Indeed, Chisholm's language strongly suggests that the temporal understanding is faithful to Chisholm's original text. For example, he states the skeptical paradox in temporal terms − we cannot answer question A *until* we have answered question B, and we cannot answer question B *until* we have answered question A.[152]

However, there are at least two problems with the temporal reading. Firstly, temporal reading precludes the *possibility* of coherentism as a solution to the problem of the criterion. As we have seen, coherentists argue that there is a mutual interdependence between instances and criteria. However, such interdependence is not possible if the priority between instances and criteria is temporal in character. In temporal reading, coherentism would amount to the impossible view that *both* instances are temporally prior to criteria *and* criteria are temporally prior to instances. Thus, in order to make coherentism even a possible solution, we should not understand priority as temporal. Incidentally, if Chisholm really intended that the dependence between criteria and instances should be understood as temporal, it explains why he does not consider coherentism at all. For, in temporal

reading, coherentism is not a possible view and hence it can be properly ignored. Secondly, we can call into question the whole idea of temporal priority between criteria and instances. In the first place, why should we accept the skeptic's claim that criteria are temporally prior to criteria, and vice versa? It can be admitted that there might be some sort of dependence between criteria and instances, but it is not temporal in character. For instance, it could be claimed that the truth of instances depends upon the truth of some specific criterion; thus, the criterion is epistemically prior to instances. Now, in this kind of understanding of priority, the question about the temporal order of instances and criteria is wholly irrelevant. According to this kind of *atemporal* understanding of priority, Chisholm's skeptical argument should be formulated as follows:

1. Criteria are epistemically dependent upon instances.
2. Instances are epistemically dependent upon criteria.
3. Therefore, both criteria and instances are unattainable.

However, the above argument is clearly invalid. If criteria are dependent upon instances and vice versa, it does not prevent us from acquiring both. For example, coherentists accept both premises 1 and 2, but they also hold that we can attain knowledge due to the mutual interdependence between instances and criteria. The conclusion follows from the premises only if epistemic interdependence between criteria and instances is forbidden. Accordingly, the dependence between criteria and instances should be defined as *asymmetric*, i.e. it should be claimed both that (i) criteria are epistemically dependent upon instances, and instances do not depend upon criteria, and that (ii) instances are epistemically dependent upon criteria, and criteria do not depend upon instances. This is also the argument Cling formulates as a restatement of Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion. Cling holds that, in a plausible version of the problem of the criterion, priority between criteria and instances should be understood both as an atemporal and asymmetric relation. However, he does not provide any argument for this.[153]

The implausibility of Chisholm's skeptical argument, whether the priority between instances and criteria is understood as temporal or atemporal and asymmetric relation, is becoming visible. In other words, the premises of his skeptical argument are questionable. First of all, why should we accept the skeptic's claim that criteria and instances are *temporally* dependent on each other? On the other hand, if the dependence is understood as an atemporal relation, the additional demand of asymmetry between criteria and instances seems to be unjustified. In fact, the whole idea that the dependence between criteria and instances presents us a serious skeptical problem begins to seem

implausible, even ridiculously so. Why cannot we admit that criteria depend, somehow, on instances, and vice versa, but we can still attain both? Where is the big skeptical problem supposed to be? In conclusion, Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion is flawed. Chisholm's skeptical argument is not a paradox he intended it to be. Paradoxes are arguments that consist of plausible and intuitively acceptable premises, yet end up with unintuitive conclusions. As we have seen, the premises of Chisholm's skeptical argument are not plausible. It does not matter whether Chisholm intended the dependence between criteria and instances to be read as a temporal or atemporal relation, for, as shown above, both ways are faulty. What we need is a better formulation of the problem of the criterion. The next main chapter will show that such a formulation can be found from the texts of the ancient Pyrrhonists.

2.7. Summary

Chisholm formulates the problem of the criterion with the help of the questions A, "What do we know?", and B, "How are we to decide whether we know?" The skeptic claims that we cannot answer either question without dogmatically presupposing an answer to the other question, and, therefore, we do not know anything. Particularists presuppose an answer to A, on the basis of which they formulate general criteria, and methodists, in turn, proceed the other way around. Chisholm favors the particularist approach to the problem of the criterion, even though he admits that the problem has no answer.

None of the solutions offered to the problem proved to be successful. To start with methodism, it is hard to see how anyone could pick out the correct epistemic principles just out of the blue prior to having any instances. The particularist approach – starting from alleged instances of knowledge – seems to be more plausible than methodism, but the crucial problem is that how we could determine which beliefs belong to the pool of knowledge. Representatives of different forms of particularism can only insist on their chosen samples amounting to knowledge, but dogmatic insistence cannot solve anything, least the fundamental problem of the criterion. The hybrid form of methodism and particularism, a sort of coherentism, cannot escape from the charge of circularity, and, furthermore, coherence or the state of wide reflective equilibrium seem to be too demanding conceptions of knowledge. The problem is that it is hard to tell when we have reached the celestial sanctuary, our belief system's being in the state of wide reflective equilibrium. And yet, even perfect coherence is not truth-conferring.

Amico tried to solve the puzzle of the diallelus by claiming that it is a pseudoproblem, like the task of squaring a circle. However, Amico's dissolution fails, since it implies that various other philosophical problems should also be dismissed as pseudoproblems. Moreover, skepticism is a serious philosophical problem that certainly cannot be treated as a pseudoproblem. Nevertheless, Amico's discussion raised an important point about the nature of the dependence between criteria and instances in Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. A closer look at the notion of dependence revealed that Chisholm's account is seriously flawed. A temporal reading of the dependence precludes the possibility of coherentism and is implausible also in other respects. An atemporal reading, in turn, renders the skeptical argument considerably weak, since now the argument contains the questionable assumption that epistemic dependence is asymmetric. Asymmetricalness could be defended with further arguments, but, arguably, they could not make the skeptical argument as intuitive as it should be in order to be a skeptical paradox. Put simply, Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion has become too weak to be an interesting and challenging skeptical argument. However, that does not imply that skepticism is defeated, for skeptics have other toils in their stock.

3. THE PYRRHONIAN PROBLEM

In this chapter, I study the ancient formulation of the problem of the criterion. Before going into the details of this skeptical argument – i.e. the diallelus – I will describe at some length Pyrrhonism and its central features. Although I could have isolated the ancient account of the diallelus from its general Pyrrhonian context, I see it useful to shed light over the context too. Consequently, we are able to get some kind of picture of skepticism in general, which, I think, is needed, especially because Chisholm does not discuss the features of skepticism at all. My main source in understanding Pyrrhonian skepticism is Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, comprising three books and written sometime in the late second century[154]. I start by describing the Pyrrhonian system in general, including the Ten Modes, an ancient collection of skeptical arguments. Being familiar with the Ten Modes, it is easier to penetrate into the Five Modes, the heart of Pyrrhonism. By considering the Five Modes we are finally able to formulate and comprehend the ancient version of the problem of the criterion. With an understanding of the ancient version I can compare it with Chisholm's version of the problem, bringing out the affinities and differences. The chapter is closed by considering some problems gnawing at skepticism.

3.1. A General Introduction to Pyrrhonism

3.1.1. The Historical Background

The ancient Greece has given birth to two main strands of skepticism, one originating from and named after Pyrrho of Elis (*ca.*360 BC-*ca.*270 BC) and the other developed under Plato's Academy.[155] Pyrrho of Elis is considered to be the first genuine skeptic, and Sextus writes that "Pyrrho appears to us to have attached himself to scepticism more systematically and conspicuously than anyone before him"[156]. Pyrrho wrote nothing that we know of and little is known of him. For the present context, however, it suffices to note that he is the founder and eponym of Pyrrhonian skepticism.[157] Modern understanding of Pyrrhonian skepticism is mainly dependent on the works of Sextus Empiricus – who lived in the second century AD – for the simple reason that he is the only Pyrrhonian whose works still exist today.[158] Three works of Sextus have survived to the present day; the aforementioned *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and two other, distinct works – compiled from five and six books – yet with the identical title, *Against the Mathematicians*. It is worth mentioning that Sextus was mostly a copyist; he was concerned to assemble and rearrange skeptical and Pyrrhonian material available to him. Sextus' practice was common among ancient scholars, thus partly

explaining his habit of relying on the skeptical tradition and copying from earlier sources.[159] However, Sextus' works compile and sum up the arguments of the skeptical tradition of some five hundred years. It is an admirable achievement, to say the least.[160]

The most important figures behind Sextus are Aenesidemus and Agrippa. The former lived in the first half of the first century BC, started his philosophical career in Plato's Academy, but resigned. Aenesidemus was, however, determined to resurrect skepticism under the name of Pyrrho. Aenesidemus wrote *Pyrrhonian Discources* that unfortunately have not survived to the present day. However, *Discources* are a direct antecedent of Sextus' *Outlines*, and Aenesidemus can be credited with being the author, or the compiler, of the Ten Modes that dominate the first book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism.*[161] The other prominent figure, Agrippa, flourished after Aenesidemus approximately in the beginning of the Common Era. It is a widely shared assumption among the scholars that Agrippa is the author, or the compiler, of the most powerful skeptical weaponry to be found in the *Outlines*, the Five Modes. Although only minimal space is devoted to the description of the Five Modes, especially when compared to that of the Ten, as for their philosophical significance the Five Modes have no rival.[162]

As Sextus draws on several sources, it affects the coherence of the *Outlines*, namely, the work contains various inconsistencies. Some of them may be only apparent and can be explained away. However, the common danger in interpreting historical works or compendia such as the *Outlines* is to try to see coherence where is none. Thus, we should bear in mind that if a passage in the *Outlines* does not make sense, the fault is not necessarily in our understanding but in the original text. Moreover, it is hard to say whether modern interpretations of Pyrrhonism are accurate reconstructions of the original, for the simple reason that ancient Pyrrhonism changed its form and content from author to author and from time to time. Sextus had his own conception of Pyrrhonism, Pyrrho himself had another kind, and modern interpreters form still another kind. Exegesis of ancient texts has its own problems, and maybe some of them can be bypassed by concentrating on a specific part of a text, at least that is what I will do by focusing on the Five Modes of Agrippa. Next I characterize the general features of Pyrrhonian skepticism, but before that I wish to quote Jonathan Barnes on the significance of the Agrippan forms, i.e. the Five Modes:

> But I claim three things for my circumscribed subject. First, and exegetically: that the forms and structures [i.e. the Five Modes] I discuss were among the most important aspects of Pyrrhonism, so that to study them is to study the soul of ancient scepticism. Secondly, and historically: that these same forms

and structures have had a unique influence on the subsequent history of sceptical enquiry, and hence, more generally, on the history of epistemology or the enquiry into the nature and scope of human knowledge: the Agrippan forms lie at the heart of the western philosophical tradition. Thirdly, and philosophically: that these forms and structures remain today among the central issues in the theory of knowledge; that every modern epistemologist must take notice of them; and that they still provide the subject of epistemology with some of its most cunning and most obdurate problems.[163]

In my study I leave Barnes' first claim as it is; if the claim is true, all the better for my study, and if false, it does not have an effect on the central claims of my study. As far as Barnes' second and third claim are concerned, in turn, I hope that my study provides strong evidence in favor of their truth.

3.1.2. The Accounts Constitutive of Pyrrhonian Skepticism

The following passage from Sextus nicely summarizes the chief features of Pyrrhonian skepticism:

> For Sceptics began to do philosophy in order to decide among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which false, so as to become tranquil; but they came upon equipollent dispute, and being unable to decide this they suspended judgment. And when they suspended judgement, tranquillity in matters of opinion followed fortuitously.[164]

The passage reveals the ultimate aim of Pyrrhonists, viz. tranquility. And that does not sound a very epistemological goal, to say the least. However, Pyrrhonists are driven by "the hope of becoming tranquil"[165]. So the question arises as to how peace of mind or tranquility and the search for truth are connected to each other? The logic behind this line of thought seems to be that attaining truth calms the mind; if we are uncertain whether certain statement or argument is true or false, this puzzles the mind, but truth, in contrast, has the power to calm down our perplexed souls.[166] Now, Pyrrhonists conclude that we cannot determine which appearances are true and which false, which result, fortunately though, leads to the original goal of tranquility. The ideal of tranquility, i.e. *ataraxia*, is said to have been championed by Pyrrho, who achieved this freedom from disquiet with his total lack of commitment and, thus, by living without beliefs.[167]

Tranquility is said to follow from suspension of judgment, i.e. *epoché*. 'Suspension of judgment' is a central concept for skeptics, defined by Sextus as "a standstill of the intellect, owing to which we neither reject nor posit anything"[168]. Everyone suspends judgment about something; for example, I

suspend judgment about the matter of whether the number of stars is even or odd. Pyrrhonian skeptics, however, suspend judgment about *everything*. This also distinguishes them from the so-called Dogmatists and Academian skeptics. According to Sextus, Dogmatists claim that they have discovered truth, whereas Academian skeptics claim that truth cannot be attained, but the real skeptics, that is, the Pyrrhonists, have not yet formed opinion about the matter and, thus, they end up in a global suspension of judgment[169]. Academian skeptics are dogmatic when they claim that we do not know anything, and, first of all, how could they possibly know such a thing? Pyrrhonists are skeptics in the true meaning of the word, for they open-mindedly continue the search for truth[170], just as the Greek word for 'skeptic' suggests, being a cognate with the word 'inquirer'[171].

It is understandable, and even advisably rational, to suspend judgment about, for instance, the number of stars, but why suppose, as the skeptics[172] seem to do, that *epoché* is the preferable option in every issue? As stated in the opening passage[173] of this section, suspension of judgment follows from the situation of *equipollence* that manifests the inability to decide which appearances are true and which false. Now the idea is that we are faced with equipollent dispute every time we try to discover the truth of a matter; the reasons for and against are of equal weight, and, thus, we cannot decide on the matter. Sextus defines equipollence as "equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing"[174]. Suspension of judgment occurs through opposing of things[175] that forms the basis of the following *chief principle of skepticism*:

> The chief constitutive principle of scepticism is the claim that to every account an equal account is opposed; for it is from this, we think, that we come to hold no beliefs.[176]

The obvious problem with this chief principle is that it strikes me as simply false. I cannot see how to my beliefs, for example, that "Two plus two equals four", "The sky appears as blue to me", and "Something exists" *equal* accounts are opposed. Someone could definitely disagree with me and claim that my beliefs are false, but it is harder to see how she could provide me with opposing claims that would have equal evidential strength as my initial beliefs. The mistake here is, according to some authors, that we are interpreting Pyrrhonists as epistemologists, as theorists who adopt *epoché* out of rational caution.[177] However, it could be argued that the Pyrrhonian skeptics end up in suspension of judgment because of their psychological disposition to be unable to settle the truth of any issue.[178] Moreover, the skeptics are skilled in such a way that, to any presented account, they are always able to find an opposing account, which situation equals to equipollence

and, thus, induces suspension of judgment and afterwards tranquility. As Sextus writes, summarizing skepticism as follows:

> Scepticism is an ability to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment and afterwards to tranquility.[179]

So far we have got a rather curious, even mystical, picture of the ancient skepticism of a Pyrrhonian sect: right from the start, they aim for the divine state of tranquility that is obtained through a special ability to see oppositions everywhere, thus, being unable to settle the truth of any issue. We can grant the sacred quest for tranquility for Pyrrhonists and their followers, but, epistemologically speaking, their account of skepticism seems to be rather uninteresting and trivial if it can be labeled as "skepticism" at all anymore. Moreover, their philosophy seems to be dogmatic, as they claim that to *every* account there is an opposed account, thus, a global suspension of belief follows.[180] Sextus even has an "ingenious" back-up move, should it happen that a countering argument were not available at the time. It is after all always *possible* that a countering argument for the presented view exists even if it is not yet apparent to us. Because of the possibility of a counter-argument, we should not assent to now seemingly powerful argument.[181] This strategy removes the bother of presenting an actual counter-argument, for it suffices to appeal to the claim that "Possibly, to every argument an opposing argument exists; hence, I suspend judgment about the present matter".

However, as Barnes points out[182], Sextus mentions in several places that the suspension of judgment is valid only *up to now*[183]. Thus, nothing excludes, in principle, the attainment of knowledge and rebuttal of skepticism in the future. Moreover, to make Pyrrhonism philosophically more interesting, we should treat equipollence as an epistemic term, and not just as a psychological disposition that enables one to see opposing accounts everywhere. Understood epistemically, equipollence amounts to a principle of rational reasoning; if there are equally convincing reasons for and against some proposition *p*, then we should suspend judgment about the truth of *p*. An obvious application of equipollence is a *disagreement* between persons over some proposition, and it will be discussed more closely in section 3.2.2.

In a nutshell, the skeptics claim to be open-minded inquirers willing to find the truth of matters. Having not yet found the truth of any issue, they suspend judgment, which, by a lucky coincidence, makes them tranquil. The suspension of judgment is acquired through equipollence, the situation of

equally convincing but opposing reasons. Nevertheless, if *we* cannot attain equipollence with respect to any and every account – that is, if we lack the ability to set out oppositions among things – the skeptics have other means to induce us to suspend judgment too.[184] The most powerful ones are the Five Modes of Agrippa. Before turning to them, we must consider their kin of lesser power, the Ten Modes.

3.2. The Ten Modes

The Ten Modes, also known as the Ten Tropes, are a collection of arguments that are thought to induce us to suspend judgment. Thus, the Ten Modes work as general skeptical strategies. The arguments the modes deliver differ with respect to their plausibility, but they share some common features. In my opinion, the most striking feature shared by the modes is the alleged gap between our appearances and the reality in itself. The Pyrrhonists "investigate whether existing things are such as they appear"[185]. We can say how things *appear* to us, but not what kind of entities they really *are*. For example, honey appears sweet, but we should suspend judgment about whether it actually *is* sweet.[186] The Ten Modes try to establish through various examples that, indeed, the real nature of things is unknown to us. We can only say how things appear to us, but merely basing on the appearances we cannot tell how things really are. Thus, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between appearances and the reality. In my view, the Ten Modes challenge primarily our alleged empirical knowledge that is based on the reports, i.e. appearances, of our senses. It is only after we have considered the Five Modes that we begin to see the global character of Pyrrhonian skepticism. However, the distinction between appearances and reality is important and it is not restricted to senses alone. Arguably, the distinction is perfectly general and it applies to everything. For example, also an argument can appear valid, but we cannot tell whether it really is valid. Furthermore, the Pyrrhonists are not committed to postulate some kinds of mediating entities between observers and observed objects.[187]

The Ten Modes consist of, as the label suggests, ten arguments and each argument contains varying examples aimed to establish some specific conclusion. The arguments have different subject matters – for example, the first mode concerns the variation among the sense organs of animals, whereas the fourth mode concerns the effect different circumstances have on a perceiver's appearances – and each one of them concludes that we should suspend judgment about the subject matter. The modes originate from the ancient skeptics, and it is most likely that the ten arguments listed in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* are the most important arguments used by the ancient skeptics prior to the time of

Agrippa and the introduction of the skeptical compound argument known as the Five Modes. Usually the Ten Modes are ascribed to Aenesidemus, but it is controversial whether his list of arguments was the same in number and in content as Sextus'.[188] As Gisela Striker suggests, it is probable that at those times there were many lists of skeptical arguments available and most of them contained ten arguments, but the exact number of arguments and especially their order can be considered to be irrelevant[189]. Also Sextus notes, with typical Pyrrhonian caution, that there may be more modes than those he describes, and the ones given may be unsound[190].

Next I will examine the general features of the modes. First, I discuss the modes as establishing suspension of judgment on the basis of the variety of appearances among different perceivers. Then, it is shown that on the basis of the variety of appearances we can formulate a specific argument establishing also suspension of judgment; the variety of appearances leads to disagreement, i.e. undecided dispute, which is sufficient to establish *epoché*. Finally, I separately consider the eighth mode that is based on relativity.

3.2.1. The Variety of Appearances

To repeat, the Ten Modes are meant to induce us to suspend judgment, but *how* this should exactly happen, is not fully explicated. In other words, Sextus does not provide us with a specific argument that shows how the modes lead to *epoché*.[191] Thus, when we are offering such arguments on behalf of Sextus within our interpretations, we should bear in mind that our arguments, as neat and coherent they can be, are not necessarily faithful reconstructions of the original text and its intended meanings.

Most of the Ten Modes rely on the thought that different species' different appearances of the same object conflict with the veridicality of the appearances; since the appearances are often contradicting each other, all of them cannot be true. However, appearances are our only evidence of the nature of the external objects, but if we cannot rely on the evidence of our senses, then we should remain silent about the real nature of the external objects.

In the first mode, Sextus describes how different animals receive, supposedly, differing and even opposing appearances depending on the different constitutions of the animals' bodies and sense organs.[192] For example, those animals with nocturnal sight have certainly different appearances from those we have at night.[193] In the second mode, Sextus turns to consider the differences among

humans.[194] Some of us find, for example, wine pleasant while others do not, and some of us are not harmed by insects fatal to others.[195] And what comes to our intellect, there are, among the Dogmatists, myriad disputes about infinitely many issues.[196] In the third mode that will be examined in more detail than the previous two, Sextus considers the differences our senses produce of objects.[197] Different senses produce differing appearances of the same object, and it is hard to say whether the object in question really has all or none of those qualities our senses ascribe to it. As Sextus writes:

> Each of the objects of perception which appears to us seems to impress us in a variety of ways – for example, an apple is smooth, fragrant, sweet, and yellow. It is unclear, then, whether in reality it has these qualities alone, or has only one quality but appears different depending on the different constitution of sense-organs, or actually has more qualities than those which are apparent, some of them not making an impression on us.[198]

Senses report the same object in different ways, and even though the reports of the senses are not logically exclusive, the point is that "the senses *disagree* with one another"[199]. It is certainly possible that our senses report truthfully the qualities of external objects, but it is also possible that there is no correspondence whatsoever between our appearances and the reality.[200] Again, a skeptical conclusion closes in on us:

> So if it is possible that only those qualities exist in the apple which we think we grasp, and that there are more than them, and again that there are not even those which make an impression on us, then it will be unclear to us what the apple is like.
>
> The same argument applies to the other objects of perception too. But if the senses do not apprehend external objects, the intellect is not able to apprehend them either (since its guides fail it), so by means of this argument too we shall be thought to conclude to suspension of judgement about external existing objects.[201]

Thus, Sextus has attacked our alleged empirical knowledge. Accordingly, senses provide us only with appearances that can be misleading, and even reason must remain silent, for it does not perceive the external world and it is, therefore, dependent on the evidence of the senses. We can summarize the general form of the Ten Modes through the following Argument from the Variety of Appearances:

(1) The same things produce differing appearances in us (and, arguably, in animals too).

(2) We cannot tell which appearances, if any, are true.

Therefore,

(3) We can tell how things appear to us, but we must suspend judgment about their real nature.[202]

Sextus' discussion of the Ten Modes is mostly devoted to establishing the first premise of the above argument. Various examples are given, all in order to show that "contraries appear to hold of the same thing"[203]. The first premise can be accepted as it stands, for certainly the same object can produce different appearances due to, for example, changing circumstances. Thus, it is the second premise that is crucial with regard to the plausibility of the skeptical conclusion. First of all, it is important to note that it is assumed in the second premise that not all of the conflicting appearances can be true together. Otherwise, as Sextus writes, we would be "attempting the impossible and accepting opposed views"[204]. As the principle of contradiction states, propositions p and $\sim p$ cannot be both true at the same time. Another assumption seems to be that the alleged real nature of things applies to them, more or less, permanently. Otherwise the changing appearances could be explained away by assuming respective changes in the nature of the things.[205]

However, the second premise is problematic for the reason that it seems to be too dogmatic; it is biased in favor of the skeptic right from the start. As it stands now, the second premise seems to suggest that it is even *in principle* impossible to tell whether particular appearance is true. It is as if the dispute about the veridicality of our appearances is determined to be in principle undecidable. This would be quite a strong interpretation of Pyrrhonism, making it almost a form of Academian skepticism, in which it was commonplace to make claims about the unknowability of things. And, indeed, there are, as Barnes points out, passages in Sextus that support this kind of strong interpretation[206]. However, Barnes argues, and I will follow him, that the key term here, *anepikritos diaphōnia*, should be understood as an *undecided dispute*, implying, thus, that the dispute in question – for example, about the veridicality of appearances – might be resolved in the future[207]. Therefore, the second premise of our argument should be modified with the following revised second premise:

(2*) The dispute about the veridicality of appearances is, up to now, undecided.

3.2.2. The Argument from Disagreement

The Ten Modes, save the eighth mode that concerns relativity, can be said to fundamentally concern the question of whether we can say how things really are.[208] Then, various examples are offered in

order to show that our appearances of things differ. Now, it could be claimed that due to the different appearances of the same things we cannot decide what the real nature of things is. That was the skeptical strategy set forth as the Argument from The Variety of Appearances. Alternatively, it could also be claimed that since there are different appearances of the same things, there is a *disagreement* over the real nature of things. Moreover, it is claimed that we cannot, up to now, solve the disagreement, for the different views pertaining to the dispute are just as convincing, i.e. they are of equal strength. In other words, the situation equals to that of *equipollence* and, hence, suspension of judgment should follow. In a nutshell, the modes are meant to induce suspension of judgment through equipollence of reasons that is achieved by showing that the disagreement over the matter in question cannot be decided, since opposing views are equally convincing.[209] This skeptical strategy based on disagreement or undecided dispute, can also be stated as the following Argument from Disagreement:

(1) In a debate, if the contrary views of the disputants are equally convincing, they should suspend judgment about the debated matter.

(2a) S_1 claims that p with respect to the matter in question.

(2b) S_2 claims that $\sim p$ with respect to the matter in question.

(3) Both views, p and $\sim p$, are equally convincing and both of them cannot be true.

Therefore,

(4) S_1 and S_2 should suspend judgment about p.

The above argument formalizes the simplest possible situation of controversy, that of only two disputants who hold contrary views. The mode from disagreement could also be applied to a situation of several competing claims. The mode works similarly with respect to several disputants as with respect to just two disputants; it is stated that all of the competing claims are equally convincing, and all of them cannot be simultaneously true, thus, through the equipollent situation the disputants should end up with suspension of judgment with respect to the matter in question.

Barnes suggests that a genuine disagreement is obtained when we have competing opinions that consist of meaningful and incompatible propositions. The logical relation of incompatibility between competing propositions forms the heart of a disagreement, but the requirement that a disagreement is a relation between *opinions*, implies that the controversy is an actual dispute between two or more persons. Two contrary propositions are not explicitly in disagreement until they are brought up as rival opinions as parts of a same debate.[210] However, I think that it is not

necessary to have two persons to bring about a disagreement. Competing propositions can conflict, so to say, within a single person. Actually, it is quite an ordinary situation when I have contrary claims over an issue, and if I find the claims equally convincing, I suspend judgment about the issue. Arguably most of the modes work in the same way; Sextus describes how there are differing opinions or appearances of some issue or object, and it is on that basis *we*, the unbiased observers of the disagreement, should suspend judgment. In other words, the equipollence of reasons is established by us who weigh up the competing accounts and find them equal.

Finally, a word of caution is in place. To specify, there is a danger to over-intellectualize the Ten Modes if we interpret them as fundamentally reflecting the above two arguments, Argument from the Variety of Appearances and Argument from Disagreement. Especially as far as the latter argument is concerned, I am not sure at all whether we should interpret all of the examples in the Ten Modes as meant to induce suspension of judgment *through* equipollence of reasons. Many examples in the modes are quite simple and even naive, and it may be too far-fetched to claim that the examples share the structure of the Argument from Disagreement, or even the structure of the Argument from the Variety of Appearances. The most that can be safely said is that the examples satisfy the first premise of the Argument from the Variety of Appearances, reading "The same things produce differing appearances in us". Of course we *can* interpret the examples as following the form of the Argument from Disagreement, but I want to point out that the text in itself does not explicitly determine how we ought to arrive at suspension of judgment from the variety of appearances that is established in the examples. Sure, pointing to the equipollence of reasons is one possible answer, but I am inclined to think that the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* contains variety of methods meant to induce us to suspend judgment. Just stating naive examples of differing appearances of the same object can convince some of us to end up in *epoché*, yet others need to be convinced by showing that the reasons for and against the subject matter are equally convincing, thus, equipollence of reasons is manifested. The Ten Modes contain variety of skeptical strategies – even the most powerful weaponry of the Modes of Agrippa is appealed to here and there[211]. One of the various skeptical strategies is the mode of relativity that will be considered next.

3.2.3. Relativity

The eighth of the Ten Modes concerns relativity, and the following passage quotes the crucial parts of it:

> The eighth mode is the one deriving from relativity, by which we conclude that, since everything is relative, we shall suspend judgement as to what things are independently and in their nature. It should be recognized that here, as elsewhere, we use 'is' loosely, in the sense of 'appears', implicitly saying 'Everything appears relative'.
>
> But this has two senses: first, relative to the subject judging (for the external existing object which is judged appears relative to the subject judging), and second, relative to the things observed together with it (as right is relative to left).[212] [...]
>
> So, since we have established in this way that everything is relative, it is clear that we shall not be able to say what each existing object is like in its own nature and purely, but only what it appears to be like relative to something. It follows that we must suspend judgement about the nature of objects.[213]

It is noteworthy that right from the start of the eighth mode Sextus points out that the skeptics should not be confused with relativists. Relativists claim that everything *is* relative, whereas the skeptics only refer to their respective *appearance* of everything's relativity.[214] Sextus refers to relativity also elsewhere in the Ten Modes[215], and it certainly is a different method from the method based on disagreement, both of which are, however, meant to induce *epoché*. The mode of relativity works almost like the Argument from the Variety of Appearances; this time the variety among appearances leads us to say that everything appears as it appears relative to something or someone. Furthermore, if appearances are always relative to the subject perceiving, we cannot say how things really are in their nature, since there is no shared, universal, and objective point of view.

In addition to relativity with respect to the unavoidable subjectivity of each individual's viewpoint, Sextus speaks of relativity with respect to attributes of things. For example, something is big or small depending on the point of comparison. Moreover, relational attributes do not tell us anything about the things in themselves, for the relational attributes are ascribed to things by virtue of their relations to other things. Relational attributes can change without a change in the thing itself. For instance, my hand is big in comparison to an ant's leg, but small with respect to a whale's fin; altogether, there is a change in an attribute ascribed to my hand without a change in my hand. Now we can formulate the following Argument from Relativity:

(1) Everything perceived or apprehended is so with respect to (a) someone – which highlights the subjectivity of viewpoints – or to (b) something – which highlights the relativity of attributes ascribed to things.

(2a) Appearances and judgments are always *someone's* appearances or judgments, and, thus, they do not belong to the real nature of things.

(2b) Relational attributes do not belong to things in themselves.

Therefore,

(3) We can tell how things appear relative to us or relative to something, but we must suspend judgment about their real nature.[216]

In his general introduction to the Ten Modes, Sextus claims that relativity is the most general mode.[217] This is, however, puzzling, since Sextus also holds that equipollence is the most prominent skeptical strategy. Striker suggests that equipollence – manifested, for example, in the Argument from Disagreement – is the most important skeptical strategy in the Ten Modes, and that the mode of relativity is included in Sextus' writings merely because it was a prevalent skeptical strategy, used even before the times of Pyrrho. Furthermore, the mode of disagreement is clearly more promising and better skeptical argument than that of relativity. The mode of relativity threatens to be dogmatic, since from the relativity of appearances it is straightforwardly concluded that we cannot know the real nature of things. The mode of disagreement seems to be more neutral, stating, in effect, that *if* there is a controversy over some matter and opposing views are equally plausible, then we should suspend judgment. Moreover, the mode of disagreement applies not only to the appearances of senses, but to conflicting theoretical views or arguments too, unlike the mode of relativity, witnessing to the better feasibility of the former skeptical strategy.[218]

The burning question now is whether the modes of disagreement and relativity set forth plausible skeptical arguments. Objections seem pressing, for, firstly, normally we are not convinced that a disagreement is a mark of undecided dispute that should lead us to suspend judgment about the issue under discussion. Quite the contrary, usually we are convinced that one of the disputing parties is wrong, and we are ready to argue for the view we see as the most plausible or true. For example, we would not accept at face value Sextus' argument that since senses disagree with each other, we cannot have knowledge of the external world. We could argue, for instance, that generally perception is a reliable source of information about the external world, and, furthermore, reason is capable of correcting the possible misleading information senses can provide. Secondly, we can grant for Sextus his view that everything *appears* relative, for we can oppose his view simply by saying that the world appears quite differently to us, namely it seems to be a fact about the world that everything is not relative, that we know various things, and that the Ten Modes of skepticism seem to be quite ridiculous. For us, skeptics about the power of skepticism, Sextus has more potent drugs to cure us from the serious dogmatism we are infected with[219]. The most powerful of them is the Five Modes.

3.3. The Five Modes

The Five Modes are meant, just as the Ten Modes, to induce us to suspend judgment. Furthermore, these modes are perfectly general, for, as Sextus writes, "every object of investigation can be referred to these modes"[220]. As said before, Agrippa is presumably the author, or the compiler, of these modes and thus they are often referred to as the Agrippan Modes.[221] The modes include those of disagreement or dispute, infinite regress, relativity, hypothesis or arbitrary assumption, and circularity or reciprocity. Sextus describes them as follows:

> According to [1] the mode deriving from dispute, we find that undecidable dissension about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgement. In [2] the mode deriving from infinite regress, we say that what is brought forward as a source of conviction for the matter proposed itself needs another such source, which itself needs another, and so *ad infinitum*, so that we have no point from which to begin to establish anything, and suspension of judgement follows. In [3] the mode deriving from relativity, as we said above, the existing object appears to be such-and-such relative to the subject judging and to the things observed together with it, but we suspend judgement on what it is like in its nature. We have [4] the mode from hypothesis when the Dogmatists, being thrown back *ad infinitum*, begin from something which they do not establish but claim to assume simply and without proof in virtue of a concession. [5] The reciprocal mode occurs when what ought to be confirmatory of the object under investigation needs to be made convincing by the object under investigation; then, being unable to take either in order to establish the other, we suspend judgement about both.[222]

Arguably, the order of the modes is not relevant.[223] It is common to think that they form a compound argument intended to establish a *global* suspension of judgment. Yet many commentators argue that not all of the modes are equally relevant. For example, Barnes refers to the mode of relativity as "a strange beast"[224], a skeptical problem interesting in itself, but not related to the rest of the modes. Furthermore, Barnes sees the heart of the Agrippan problem as consisting in the modes of hypothesis, circularity, and infinite regress.[225] And he is not alone, for many scholars reduce the Five Modes to three and the modes of relativity and disagreement are left out as irrelevant.[226] Each of the Five Modes can be seen as independent argument-forms although, as many commentators see the matter, the aforementioned three of them together form *the* ultimate skeptical argument lying at the core of Pyrrhonian skepticism. Although the modes of relativity and disagreement are clearly represented already in the Ten Modes – thus, possibly justifying commentators habit of neglecting them when considering the Agrippan problem[227] – it should be noted that also the other modes occur here and there in the Ten Modes. Thus, strictly speaking, none

of the modes introduced in the Five Modes are novel. However, the Five Modes are special and unique, since they introduce the most powerful skeptical argument of Pyrrhonism, the compound argument of the Five Modes, that is. Furthermore, in the second and the third book of the *Outlines*, Sextus utilizes the Five Modes – never all of them at once, but some conjunctions of the quintet – far more frequently than the Ten Modes. And that is no wonder, since, "[a]s for their philosophical power and significance, there is no comparison: the Ten are puerile, the Five profound"[228].

Next I will consider each of the modes of the Five Modes in turn. First, I discuss briefly the modes of disagreement and relativity, i.e. the so-called challenging modes, and then I move on to discuss the remaining three modes.

3.3.1. The Challenging Modes

Jonathan Fogelin suggests that the modes of disagreement and relativity challenge us to give grounds to our claims, opinions, or arguments.[229] These challenging modes, as Fogelin calls them, "trigger a demand for justification by revealing that there are competing claims concerning the nature of the world we perceive"[230]. After the demand for justification is made, the other three modes enter the skeptical play by showing that all attempts to justify claims lead either to an infinite regress, a circular reasoning, or an arbitrary assumption.[231] Thus, the challenging modes seem to be, after all, unnecessary, for the skeptical problem can be presented exclusively with the help of the three modes alone.[232] Also Ernest Sosa understands the Five Modes of Agrippa as posing the problem of threefold choice of a beliefs' justification basing on infinitely regressive reasoning, circular reasoning, or fundamental basic beliefs justified in themselves[233]. If this is the correct way to understand the Agrippan Modes, it is strikingly similar to the so-called regress problem. Without doubt, there is a connection between the Five – or three, to be precise – Modes of Agrippa and the regress problem, but a discussion of that relation should be postponed to the next main chapter. Now, however, we are interested in the problem of the criterion, and we should carefully consider whether the Five Modes straightforwardly lead to the regress problem or to some other kind of problem.

To repeat, most of the Ten Modes deal with the mode of disagreement based on the variety of appearances that leads to the situation of equipollence. Arguably, it is exactly the same mode at hand here as Sextus describes the first of the Five Modes:

> According to the mode deriving from dispute, we find that undecidable dissension about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgement.[234]

Disagreement alone can induce *epoché*, but it clearly is not a necessary condition of it. In other words, it is surely possible to end up in suspension of judgment about some issue even if there is no opposing account available at that time. For example, if I read somewhere that the oldest of the three wise men who visited Jesus Christ was 45 years of age, I may still suspend judgment about the claim even though I have no opposing evidence available. It is only that I consider the available evidence in favor of the claim's truth as remarkably weak, and, thus, suspension of judgment seems to be a rational cognitive act. However, disagreement is sufficient for *epoché*, since it is based on the situation of equipollence, i.e. there are equally convincing reasons for and against the truth of the matter in consideration. It is irrational to believe that *p* (or ~*p*) if one understands that the reasons for and against the truth of *p* are of equal strength.[235]

Although the mode of disagreement invoked in the Ten Modes mainly with not so plausible examples, Sextus has, however, one interesting argument meant to invoke global skepticism with the mode of disagreement.[236] Since there is a dispute over the criterion of truth, all of our opinions are called into question. In order to know some proposition, we should be able to distinguish between false and true propositions in general. In other words, we should be able to determine the criterion of truth. However, the undecided dispute about the correct criterion of truth should lead us to suspend judgment about the criterion, and, therefore, *about everything*.[237] Of course, we could claim that in order to know, it is not necessary to know the criterion of true beliefs. This view would amount to particularism, and when considering the criticism of particularism we noticed that it is arbitrary and dogmatic to claim that we are able to pick out the samples of knowledge without use of any criteria.[238] But pointing to flaws of particularism calls for additional and independent arguments, and, thus, it seems that mere disagreement over the criterion of truth does not suffice for invoking a global suspension of judgment. Nevertheless, the mode of disagreement has some power as a general skeptical strategy and it challenges us to justify any claim we make. The general moral of the mode of disagreement seems to be that we should take nothing for granted, for "doubts *might* be raised because doubts *have* been raised"[239].

Although the core of the skeptical problem found in the Five Modes can, arguably, be presented without the mode of disagreement, it is, historically speaking, noteworthy that the compiler of the

Five Modes wanted to integrate both the mode of disagreement and the mode of relativity from the Ten Modes to the Five Modes. This speaks in favor of the prevalence and importance of these two modes among the ancient skeptics.[240] Even though the ancient version of the problem of the criterion can be stated without these two modes, it does not change the fact that the modes of disagreement and relativity are independent and important ways of attaining *epoché*.

The mode of relativity appears in the middle of the Five Modes, as the third in order, and is described by Sextus as follows:

> In the mode deriving from relativity, as we said above, the existing object appears to be such-and-such relative to the subject judging and to the things observed together with it, but we suspend judgement on what it is like in its nature.[241]

The remark "as we said above" refers straightly to the eighth mode of the Ten Modes, and, thus, we can safely assume that the mode of relativity found here in the Five Modes is the same as the one found in the Ten Modes. There is very little to be said about the mode of relativity with respect to the rest of the Five Modes, for commentators consider it as an odd chimera that just does not fit among the Five Modes[242]. But if the mode of relativity really is such an oddity, it is surprising that Sextus or Agrippa did not notice its peculiar nature but gullibly included it in the Five Modes. On the other hand, the mode of relativity is *not* included in Sextus' discussion on the problem of finding the standard or criterion of truth[243], suggesting, thus, that the mode of relativity was less crucial than the rest of the Five Modes for the ancient skeptics. Be that as it may, it is still odd that some scholars lump together the modes of relativity and disagreement – as kinds of "challenging modes" – considering the fact that they are most likely two separate skeptical strategies. Giving a common denominator for these modes, i.e. their being the challenging modes, does not remove the fact that scholars are still at a loss as to how to explain the relation between the two and the other three modes. It is common just to discard the two, not to mention them anymore, and to focus on, arguably, the more important modes of hypothesis, circularity, and infinite regress.

3.3.2. The Mode of Infinite Regress

The idea behind the mode of infinite regress is relatively simple: if someone claims to know that *p*, she should be able, then, to provide reasons for her claim that *p*. If she gives us a reason, say, *q*, that warrants her claim that *p*, she should also be able to provide reasons for her new claim *q*. We can

easily see that this procedure leads to an infinite regress of reasons, and given that no human can keep infinitely many reasons simultaneously in mind, the demand of justification leads to the conclusion that no one knows anything. Sextus describes the mode from infinite regress as follows:

> In the mode deriving from infinite regress, we say that what is brought forward as a source of conviction for the matter proposed itself needs another such source, which itself needs another, and so *ad infinitum*, so that we have no point from which to begin to establish anything, and suspension of judgement follows.[244]

Barnes credits this mode as "the most celebrated of all sceptical manoeuvres"[245], and, indeed, it seems that this mode from infinite regress is the progenitor of the famous regress problem discussed in length in contemporary epistemology.[246] It is likely that Sextus did not intend that the mode of infinite regress would be in itself sufficient for inducing *epoché*. Rather, it is more plausible to assume that Sextus meant that we should suspend judgment about a given claim *if* it is based on an infinite regress of reasons. It is easy to see what is wrong with infinite regresses, namely no human can ever check all the elements of an infinite sequence of reasons. Thus, even if there were a proof for a given claim constituting of infinitely many reasons, it just would not be humanly possible to decide whether the proof is valid and sound. Therefore, it seems reasonable that infinite regress of reasons is not considered to be an acceptable way of defending one's claims.[247] However, the so-called infinitists disagree and they hold that beliefs can be justified via infinite regresses of reasons. Infinitism will be discussed more closely in section 4.4.

It may seem somewhat odd that Sextus writes of the infinite regress that "we have no point from which to begin establish anything", for it seems to be trivially clear that we start from our initial claim, i.e. the claim we try to defend through reasons. Thus, the problem seems to be rather that we have no point at which to stop.[248] Usually the mode from infinite regress occurs in the *Outlines* as one among the team of other modes, witnessing to the compound nature of the Five Modes[249]. It should also be noted that the mode from infinite regress occurs already in the Ten Modes, where its inevitable conclusion is neatly put as follows: "it is impossible to establish infinitely many proofs"[250].

3.3.3. The Mode of Circularity

It is widely held that circular arguments are bad arguments, and as it is already clear from the earlier discussion of coherentist solutions to the problem of the criterion[251], circularly justified belief systems are not epistemically good either. The mode of circularity is already appealed to in the Ten Modes[252], and in the Five Modes Sextus describes it as follows:

> The reciprocal mode occurs when what ought to be confirmatory of the object under investigation needs to be made convincing by the object under investigation; then, being unable to take either in order to establish the other, we suspend judgement about both.[253]

In order to see what is exactly wrong with circular arguments[254], let us consider an example. Suppose that I believe that UFOs are alien aircrafts and, when asked to state reasons for my belief, I answer that I have read from my own notebook that UFOs are alien aircrafts. Therefore, I believe that UFOs are alien aircrafts. My answer is, in a word, unsatisfactory. It is unsatisfactory because it is circular, for, in effect, I justify my belief with an appeal to itself. It could be said that circular arguments are not arguments at all, for a circular argument does not provide any reasons in favor of its conclusion's truth and, thus, the argument proves nothing. The conclusion of a circular argument is supported by an appeal to itself, which is question-begging to the highest degree. Just repeating one's claim – although through a circular argument – certainly cannot be an acceptable way of defending one's claim.[255]

It seems that circular arguments are objectionable, and similarly with respect to the mode of infinite regress, because they are *bad* arguments. If someone provides a circular argument to support one's claim that *p*, circularity is not in itself a sufficient reason to suspend judgment about the claim, but if the circular argument is the *only* reason offered for the claim that *p*, then we should suspend judgment about it. Both circular reasoning and infinite regression of reasons are rejected, because they represent, arguably, bad argumentation. Thus, the skeptic has definitely the upper hand if her opponent, when defending one's claim, is heading into a circular reasoning or an infinite regress of reasons.[256] However, coherentists naturally claim that a belief system can be justified circularly. Coherentism will be discussed again in section 4.2.2.

The mode of circularity can be a very powerful skeptical strategy, as illustrated in chapter 5 in which the problem of epistemic circularity is shown to be an extension of the mode of circularity. In

a nutshell, epistemic circularity comes down to the claim that the justification of the reliability of our cognitive faculties, such as sense perception or reasoning, is inevitably and viciously circular, for we cannot prove their reliability without assuming their reliability while using them. Epistemic circularity is one possible way of formulating the problem of the criterion, as concerning the validation of the reliability of our cognitive faculties. It is interesting to note that two of the Five Modes, the mode from infinite regress of reasons and the mode from circular reasoning, give impetus to two distinct and serious skeptical problems, the regress problem and epistemic circularity, respectively. In the *Outlines*, usually neither of the modes stands alone as an initiator of a skeptical onslaught, but they work as one among other modes, forming a team of a skeptical attack.[257] The most powerful skeptical compound argument, the Agrippan trilemma, can be considered once we have examined the remaining member of the trio, the mode of hypothesis.

3.3.4. The Mode of Hypothesis

The central idea behind the mode from hypothesis appears already in the fifth of the Ten Modes, where Sextus considers the question of whether anyone is able to prefer some appearances over others.[258] Mere statement of one's preference is not enough, for, and now the mode from hypothesis emerges, "[i]f he makes his assertion simply and without proof, he will not be convincing"[259]. Thus, the mode from hypothesis concerns the contrast between a bare assertion and offering an argument for one's claim; the latter can be plausible, but the former is, in principle, seriously defective. In the Five Modes the mode from hypothesis is described as follows:

> We have the mode from hypothesis when the Dogmatists, being thrown back *ad infinitum*, begin from something which they do not establish but claim to assume simply and without proof in virtue of a concession.[260] [...]
>
> If to avoid this [i.e. falling prey to the Five modes] our interlocutor claims to assume something by way of concession and without proof in order to prove what comes next, then the hypothetical mode is brought in, and there is no way out. For if he is convincing when he makes his hypothesis, *we will keep hypothesizing the opposite* and will be no more unconvincing. and [sic] if he hypothesizes something true, he makes it suspect by taking it as a hypothesis rather than establishing it; while if it is false, the foundation of what he is trying to establish will be rotten.[261]

Firstly, it seems that Sextus is claiming, in his brief description of the mode, that the mode of hypothesis arises only when we are already caught in the mode of infinite regress of reasons. However, in several other occasions Sextus uses the mode from hypothesis independently of the

mode from infinite regress of reasons, and, thus, it should be justified to treat the former both as an independent mode meant to induce *epoché* and as a team-member of the skeptical trilemma.[262] Secondly, and more importantly, hypotheses are epistemically useless, since we can equally hypothesize their opposites. If one makes the assumption that *p*, it is just as warranted to assume that ~*p*. Both assumptions cannot be true at the same time because they are contradictory. Thus, we have equally convincing but opposing accounts, and, therefore, we should suspend judgment about *p*.[263]

It is also interesting that in the above passage Sextus uses the metaphor of 'foundation', for the mode of hypothesis offers us a powerful weapon against foundationalist theories of knowledge. Roughly put, foundationalists claim that some of our beliefs enjoy the status of 'being basic', meaning that they are justified in themselves and they do not require any further justification from other beliefs, and in addition, they form the basis, epistemic bedrock, so to say, of our belief system. Now, we can invoke the mode of hypothesis and assume just the opposite 'basic beliefs' than the foundationalists have assumed. As basic beliefs do not need any justification, neither do our alternative set of basic beliefs. But now we have opposite sets of basic beliefs and, thus, we should suspend judgment about (which one is the correct set of) basic beliefs. If the proponent of foundationalism eats her words and claims that some basic beliefs are more justified than others, then she is offering reasons for her favorite basic beliefs, and, thus, it seems as if the basic beliefs need justification after all – which speaks against their being basic. Therefore, foundationalists face the dilemma of either falling prey to the mode of hypothesis or betraying their ideal of basic beliefs.[264] As it became clear from the earlier discussion of Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion, both particularists and methodists propose basic beliefs in order to avoid the infinite regress of reasons. However, as I have already noted, both parties are guilty of arbitrariness, since they do not propose any reasons for their set of basics beliefs, and, therefore, any other set of basic beliefs is just as justified (or unjustified). Here, in this objection against particularism and methodism, we have the ancient mode of hypothesis effectively at work.[265] Let it also be noted that I do not assume that the sketched objection here is decisive against foundationalist theories, but I think that it is, basically, a good objection. Foundationalism will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.1.

If we compare the mode of hypothesis with its fellows, the modes of circularity and infinite regress of reasons, we notice that the first mentioned mode is more closely connected to the goal of *epoché* than the other two. To repeat, infinite regresses and circular arguments lead to suspension of

judgment on the assumption that they represent *bad* arguments, whereas the mode from hypothesis does not depend on such an assumption. The mode from hypothesis works as the mode from disagreement, inducing suspension of judgment by a situation of *equipollence*. Competing hypotheses surely are equally strong, for they are just that, *hypotheses*, and, thus, they have no supporting arguments to back them up.[266] With respect to the mode of disagreement it can be controversial whether the competing claims really are of equal strength, but it seems that with respect to the mode of hypothesis equipollence follows without question. It could be said that the mode of hypothesis, as it does not depend on even mildly questionable assumptions, is the most convincing one of the introduced skeptical modes. Moreover, the skeptical strategy of equipollence is prevalent and important also here in the Five Modes, as it is with respect to the Ten Modes.

3.3.5. The Core of the Five Modes: The Agrippan Trilemma

The philosophical core of the Five Modes is commonly thought to consist in the modes of hypothesis, circularity, and infinite regress of reasons. It is controversial whether this kind of understanding of the Five Modes does justice to the ancient Pyrrhonism, but it should be noted that the Five Modes occur in their original form[267] nowhere in the *Outlines*, save the passage introducing them. Sometimes the modes are invoked independently of one another, but usually Sextus uses them in combinations, from pairs to quartets. When interpreting the Five Modes, contemporary epistemologists usually drop the modes of disagreement and relativity as unnecessary, and the remaining modes are thought to form a powerful argument for global skepticism. I interpret the skeptical trilemma as challenging first and foremost our claims to *knowledge* although the argument can be formulated also as concerning justified belief.

The skeptical argument is purported to show that each and every one of our claims to knowledge falls prey either to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons, and, thus, we should suspend judgment about everything. This view equals to global skepticism. The skeptical argument, call it as *the Agrippan Argument*, is thought to work as follows:

(1) If S knows that *p*, then S has good reasons for *p*.
(2a) If S just assumes that *p* without supporting reasons, then the mode of hypothesis applies. Accordingly, it is just as justified to assume that ~*p*, and, thus, one has equal but opposing accounts, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.

(2b) If S proposes reasons for *p*, then either the mode of infinite regress of reasons, the mode of circularity, or the mode of hypothesis applies.

> (2b$_i$) If S supports *p* with reasons, and these with new reasons, and so on, then one is being led into an infinite regress of reasons, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.
>
> (2b$_{ii}$) If S, instead, somewhere along the way in the chain of reasons, appeals to an already stated reason, then one is arguing in a circle, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.
>
> (2b$_{iii}$) If S supports *p* with a mere assumption, then the mode of hypothesis applies, and, again, S should suspend judgment about *p*.

(3) S does not have good reasons for *p*, since every attempt to justify it falls prey either to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons.

Therefore,

(4a) S does not know that *p*.

(4b) S should suspend judgment about *p*.[268]

Although the above argument or some argument closely similar to it, consisting of the three specific modes, does not occur anywhere in the *Outlines*, one passage bears a close resemblance[269]. Under the heading "Is there a standard of truth?" Sextus discusses the problem of finding a criterion of truth; the passage's crucial part goes as follows:

> Again, in order for the *dispute* that has arisen about standards [of truth[270]] to be decided, we must possess an agreed standard through which we can judge it; and in order for us to possess an agreed standard, the dispute about standards must already have been decided. Thus the argument falls into the *reciprocal mode* and the discovery of a standard is blocked – for we do not allow them to assume a standard by *hypothesis*, and if they want to judge the standard by a standard we throw them into an *infinite regress*.
>
> Again, since a proof needs a standard which has been proved and a standard needs a proof which has been judged, they are thrown into the reciprocal mode.[271]

As the italicized words are meant to highlight, the passage utilizes four modes – those of disagreement, circularity, hypothesis, and infinite regress. However, what is of the uttermost importance, here we have, in the above passage, *the ancient formulation of the problem of the criterion*[272]. Here Sextus clearly considers the question of how to establish the criterion of truth. If we have knowledge, then we must possess the correct criterion of truth. The problem is that it seems to be impossible to show that we have the correct criterion of truth, for any proposed

criterion is challenged by the skeptical trilemma constituting of the modes of circularity, hypothesis, and infinite regress. In other words, it seems to be impossible to *justify* any criterion of truth we propose. Since we cannot establish the criterion of truth, it seems that we cannot attain knowledge either. Thus, again, we end up with a global suspension of judgment. However, it is important to note that Sextus should not be taken to be claiming that the correct criterion of truth *cannot* be found, for that would be dogmatic. As Sextus writes:

> You must realize that it is not our intention to assert that standards of truth are unreal (that would be dogmatic); rather, since the Dogmatists seem plausibly to have established that there is a standard of truth, we have set up plausible-seeming arguments in opposition to them, affirming neither that they are true nor that they are more plausible than those on the contrary side, but concluding to suspension of judgment because of the apparently equal plausibility of these arguments and those produced by the Dogmatists.[273]

We should proceed with great care here in interpreting Sextus' account of the problem of the criterion, for there is one specifically puzzling and unanswered question, namely it should be asked whether the Agrippan Argument and the passage about establishing the criterion of truth present the same problem or two distinct problems. I am inclined to think that we have in our hands the same problem so that the Agrippan Argument is the most general formulation of the problem of the criterion, and the passage concerning the finding of the criterion of truth is an instance of the Agrippan Argument. The Five Modes – or its restatement as the Agrippan Argument – challenge us to *justify* any proposition that p we claim to know. Now, the above passage concerning the establishment of the criterion of truth – *PH* II 20 – challenges us to justify any criterion of truth C we claim to know. Furthermore, it is assumed, similarly as in Chisholm's account of the problem, that in order to know, we must have a criterion of truth. In order to distinguish true from false beliefs, we should have a standard or criterion of truth. In any case, the Agrippan Argument works as well with respect to particular propositions as to general criteria of truth. The Agrippan Argument works similarly, notwithstanding whether the target of justification is a particular claim such as "I have two hands" or a general criterion of truth such as "Clearly and distinctly perceived propositions are true". Even though this may be little trivial and unnecessary, let us restate the Agrippan Argument as concerning specifically the criterion of truth:

(1) If S knows that p, then S has a criterion of truth C.

(2) If S has a criterion of truth C, then S has good reasons for C.

(3a) If S just assumes the criterion *C* without supporting reasons, then the mode of hypothesis applies. Accordingly, it is just as justified to assume that ~*C*, and, thus, one has equal but opposing accounts, and S should suspend judgment about *C*.

(3b) If S proposes reasons for the criterion *C*, then either the mode of infinite regress of reasons, the mode of circularity, or the mode of hypothesis applies.

> (3b$_i$) If S supports the criterion *C* with reasons, and these with new reasons, and so on, then one is being led into an infinite regress of reasons, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *C*.

> (3b$_{ii}$) If S, instead, somewhere along the way in the chain of reasons, appeals to an already stated reason, then one is arguing in a circle, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *C*.

> (3b$_{iii}$) If S supports the criterion *C* with a mere assumption, then the mode of hypothesis applies, and, again, S should suspend judgment about *C*.

(4) S does not have good reasons for a criterion of truth *C*, since every attempt to justify it falls prey either to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons.

Therefore,

(5a) S does not have a criterion of truth *C*.

(5b) S does not know that *p*.

(5c) S should suspend judgment about *C*.

The above argument, call it as *the Criterion Argument*, is meant to capture the crux of Sextus' passage concerning the finding of a criterion of truth, *PH* II 20. Only the mode of disagreement is left out as unnecessary from the above restatement of Sextus' passage.[274] The Criterion Argument is, in effect, the same as the Agrippan Argument, apart from the assumption about the necessity of the criterion of truth for attainment of knowledge that is made explicit in the second premise. Although the argument's conclusion is dogmatic – it states that we *do not* have knowledge – the Pyrrhonists would presumably defend themselves against the accusation of dogmatism in the following way: the Criterion Argument is meant to oppose the Dogmatists' claims or arguments to the effect that we have knowledge and that we have a proper criterion of truth. As a result we have opposing arguments about the existence of a criterion of truth, and since they seem to be equally plausible, they cancel each other out and we should end up with a global suspension of judgment. Thus, the mode of disagreement is invoked again and the strategy of establishing equipollence manifests itself.

However, although the above defense may be historically faithful to Pyrrhonism[275], I think that there is a more feasible defense available for the skeptics against the accusation of dogmatism. It could be said that the skeptics do not make claims of their own, for they argue purely *ad hominem*[276]; that is, the arguments of the skeptics are meant to be reconstructions of the assumptions the *Dogmatists* accept and are committed to. The ingenious twist of the skeptical arguments is that they consist of intuitive and perfectly acceptable premises yet end up with unacceptable conclusions. The arguments are *paradoxes*, for short. Thus, the denial of knowledge set forth in a skeptical paradox is a problem for us, the Dogmatists, who are inclined to accept the premises of the skeptical paradox, yet hold on to the view that we have knowledge.[277] For example, the Criterion Argument starts from the Dogmatists' – i.e. the anti-skeptics – commitment that if we have knowledge, we must possess some means to distinguish true from false beliefs. In other words, we must possess a criterion of truth. Then, it is supposed that if we have such a criterion, we should be able to justify it. However, the third premise that captures the crux of the skeptic's argument proceeds to show that we cannot justify any criterion. Thus, we end up with a conclusion that we do not have knowledge, and we have a paradox in our hands. This is the way in which the skeptics refute, without making assumptions of their own, the Dogmatists purely *ad hominem*.

In sum, the ancient formulation of the problem of the criterion, the Criterion Argument, challenges us to establish the criterion of truth. The problem is that all our attempts to establish the criterion seem to be doomed to the skeptical trilemma constituting of the modes of hypothesis, infinite regress of reasons, and circular reasoning. But how this ancient version of the problem compares to the modern, Chisholm's version?

3.4. Comparing the Criterion Argument with Chisholm's Problem of the Criterion

To repeat, Chisholm formulates the problem of the criterion with the help of the following pairs of questions:

A) What do we know? What is the extent of our knowledge?
B) How are we to decide whether we know? What are the criteria of knowledge?[278]

Chisholm's formulation is, I admit, quite different from the passage in the *Outlines* concerning the criterion of truth, or our reconstruction of it, the Criterion Argument. Yet there is something similar in the two formulations. Do we have here one or two formulations of the problem of the criterion?

Firstly, it should be asked whether Chisholm himself thought that his discussion of the problem is related to the ancient formulation of it. There is some textual evidence that he did. In his seminal paper on the problem of the criterion, Chisholm writes as follows: "What is the problem, then? It is the *ancient* problem of 'the diallelus' – the problem of 'the wheel' or 'the vicious circle'"[279]. The quotation reveals that Chisholm thinks that he is dealing with an ancient problem. And what else could this ancient source be than Sextus? At least Chisholm is aware of Sextus' writings, for in another context he points out that "Sextus Empiricus discussed the problem of 'the criterion' in bks. I and II of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*[280]". Moreover, Chisholm approves Montaigne's formulation of the problem[281], and Montaigne, in turn, was accused of plagiarizing Sextus' account of the problem[282]. Thus, we can conclude that there is an intended link between the ancient problem and Chisholm's formulation of it.

However, the fact that the two accounts of the problem are related does not imply that they present the *same* problem. Nonetheless, at least Paul Moser explicates the ancient problem with the help of Chisholm's formulation, for he writes as follows:

> In Book II of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus Empiricus presents the problem of the criterion by raising two general questions: (a) what do we know and (b) how do we know anything? Question (a) asks about the extent of our knowledge, whereas question (b) asks about the criteria for our knowledge. These simple questions generate the problem that without an answer to (a) we apparently cannot answer (b), and without an answer to (b) we apparently cannot answer (a).[283]

It is rather strange that Moser does not mention Chisholm at all, for clearly the above passage employs Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion to clarify Sextus' respective account. If we follow Moser and identify Sextus' account of the problem with Chisholm's formulation of it, something seems to go amiss, namely, Chisholm formulates the problem of the criterion as a dilemma, rather than a trilemma that the ancient account is. More specifically, for Chisholm the problem amounts to the dilemma that we should have criteria prior to instances and instances prior to criteria, whereas the ancient account amounts to threefold choice of basing knowledge on an infinite regress, a circular reasoning, or an unwarranted assumption. Moreover, as our discussion unfolded, the notion of *priority* in Chisholm's formulation is highly problematic, and, in the end, I concluded that Chisholm's formulation is flawed. However, there is in the *Outlines* a similar formulation of the problem of the criterion as Chisholm's account of the problem. The passage concerning the criterion of truth involves, at its end, a part that I have not commented

yet and that seems to be different from the part employing the skeptical trilemma. The yet ignored part goes as follows:

> Again, since a proof needs a standard which has been proved and a standard needs a proof which has been judged, they are thrown into the reciprocal mode.[284]

I think that the above passage is outstandingly similar to Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. The structure is the same in both accounts. In the Pyrrhonian version, proofs depend on standards, and vice versa, and in Chisholm's version criteria depend on instances, and vice versa. Furthermore, it seems that *Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion*, especially the way he characterizes the skeptic's position, *equals to the mode of circularity* of the Five Modes. For Chisholm, the problem of the criterion amounts to the dilemma that we should have criteria before instances and instances before criteria. The dilemma shares the structure of the mode of circularity, for witness in Barnes' words: "[i]n general, reciprocal proof requires you to do A before B and also to do B before A"[285].

Even though it could be argued that the ancient account of the problem of the criterion, i.e. the Criterion Argument, is more complete than Chisholm's formulation of it, I do not think that the two formulations are still *that* different. Specifically, Chisholm wants to find a method with the help of which we could sort out true beliefs from false ones[286]. Thus, in my view, the two accounts, the ancient and the modern one, of the problem of the criterion pose the same question – namely, "How are we to distinguish true beliefs from false ones?" – but in the end they formulate the problem differently. Although Chisholm's formulation of the problem strongly resembles the mode of circularity, it does not mean that we can solve Chisholm's problem just by assuming a criterion of truth or by appealing to an infinite regress of reasons. In other words, even though Chisholm omits from his formulation of the problem the modes of hypothesis and infinite regress of reasons, he seems to be implicitly assuming that neither of these modes can provide a solution to the problem. In fact, Chisholm mentions in passing that an infinite regress can never provide a deciding method for distinguishing true from false beliefs[287]. Secondly, his criticism of methodism resembles the mode of hypothesis, for Chisholm accuses methodists of that their choice of criterion is arbitrary, and, thus, they leave us "completely in the dark"[288] as to why they have chosen the criterion they have and not some other.

I conclude that the Criterion Argument is a better and more complete formulation of the problem of the criterion than Chisholm's formulation.[289] Chisholm's account is flawed, since the notion of priority involved in Chisholm's formulation is problematic, which weakens Chisholm's skeptical argument so that it is not a genuine paradox. The Criterion Argument, in turn, is, or at least seems to be, a genuine skeptical paradox. It starts from intuitively acceptable premises, yet ends up with an unintuitive conclusion (and the argument is valid).

In sum, Chisholm's formulation of the problem equals to the mode of circularity found in the *Outlines*. However, the other modes of infinite regress and hypothesis are, arguably, implicitly assumed in Chisholm's account too. Thus, the two accounts, the modern and the ancient one, are yet quite similar. Chisholm's definitive formulation of the problem – constituting of two pairs of questions – is relatively simple and, thus, it is maybe easier to comprehend than the more complex ancient account. It has now become clear that the ancient account involves a wide area of issues and in order to understand the passage in the *Outlines* concerning the criterion of truth[290] we must already have a general grasp of the Five and the Ten Modes, and of the key concepts 'equipollence', 'suspension of judgment', and 'tranquility'. Although it may be easier, as it were, to understand the problem of the criterion as opening from the metaphor of circle, it cannot be denied that the ancient account of the problem is more comprehensive than Chisholm's account that presents the problem in the form of a circular dilemma.

3.5. Solving the Criterion Argument

The Pyrrhonian skeptic is concerned with whatsoever claims the Dogmatist proposes.[291] For, arguably, the skeptic is interested in finding truth, and, thus, she is also interested in whether the Dogmatist can provide truth-conferring grounds for her claim that something is the case. But as soon as the Dogmatist gives reasons for her claim, the skeptical trilemma steps into the picture. This is unfortunate both for the Dogmatist and the skeptic, for the former, presumably, is not able to escape from the trilemma and, thus, she should suspend judgment about the claim she proposed, and the latter must still continue her desperate search for truth.

Now the crucial question is can we, the non-skeptics, escape from the horns of the skeptical trilemma? It seems that escaping amounts to biting the bullet, that is, we must choose one of the horns of the skeptical trilemma, and insist on that it does not present such a defective line of reasoning as the skeptic seems to assume. To be honest, none of the three available alternatives

appears promising enough as a possible solution either to the Criterion Argument or the Agrippan Argument. It strikes me as extremely implausible to claim that we know, since (i) the criterion of truth (or any claim to knowledge) can be just assumed and supporting reasons are not needed; or (ii) criterion of truth (or any claim whatsoever) can be provided through an infinite regress of supporting reasons; or (iii) criterion of truth (or any claim whatsoever) can be provided within a circular system of reasons.

If we compare the above list of anti-skeptical options to the solutions discussed with respect to Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion, we see that option (i) amounts to the methodist or the particularist solution and option (iii) amounts to the coherentist solution. All in all, it seems that all of the solutions discussed with respect to Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion can also be applied to the ancient account of the problem. It should also be clear that as none of the solutions was found successful in solving Chisholm's formulation of the problem, the same holds of the ancient account. Thus, it is not necessary to repeat the problems and defects of the alleged solutions here. Only the option (ii), the "infinitist" solution, is not yet considered in our discussion of the solutions to Chisholm's formulation of the problem. The examination of the infinitist solution will be postponed to the next main chapter, where the regress problem is studied.

The distinction between the instances of knowledge, on the one hand, and the criteria of knowledge, on the other hand, is crucial for Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. However, the ancient account does not rely on that distinction, but on the idea that trying to justify any claim leads inevitably to the skeptical trilemma. Of course, the ancient account works similarly with respect to particular knowledge claims and general criteria of truth. The Agrippan Argument challenges instances of knowledge as well as criteria of it. I formulated a specific argument – the Criterion Argument – as an instance of the Agrippan Argument as concerning specifically the criteria of truth, but as already said, the Criterion Argument is a trivial application of the most fundamental skeptical argument, the Agrippan Argument.

When examining the possible solutions to Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion, we found the whole idea of methodism almost inconceivable, for it is hard to see how we could grasp general epistemic principles *prior to* any instances. However, I think that the examination of the ancient version of the problem sheds some light over Chisholm's formulation too, for we have now come to see all the horns of the problem of the criterion. To repeat, Chisholm's formulation of the problem is misguided, for he presents the problem as a dilemma of a circular form, and the

modes of hypothesis and infinite regress are just assumed, but not stated explicitly. But the ancient version, the Agrippan Argument, helps us to see the complete structure of the problem of the criterion. The problem inherent in the diallelus is that, whether we start from an alleged instance of knowledge or an alleged criterion of knowledge, we fall prey to the skeptical trilemma constituting of the modes of hypothesis, infinite regress, and circularity. Chisholm happens to call those who start from instances as *particularists* and those who start from criteria as *methodists*, but now we are able to see that both parties face the same skeptical trilemma, namely, whether we claim to have a true belief or a criterion of true beliefs, we should justify our claim and thus we face the threefold choice of basing it on an infinite regress, a circular reasoning, or an unwarranted assumption. If we accept the skeptic's argument, it seems that we cannot escape from it, for our choices are limited to biting the bullet and trying to defend the view that we have knowledge by arguing against one of the horns of the skeptical trilemma. But why should we accept the skeptic's argument in the first place?

3.6. The Problems of Skepticism

In the two following sections, the standard criticisms of skepticism are discussed. According to the first standard criticism of skepticism, skeptics cannot argue anything, for arguing presupposes the validity of certain rules of logic and warrant transmission. But, the critical interlocutor notes, skeptics do not accept that rules of logic are true, and hence they cannot really argue for anything. According to the second standard criticism of skepticism, it is practically impossible to live up to skepticism and, hence, we should not bother about such a silly view that is not even realizable in practice.

3.6.1. Skepticism, Argumentation, and Logic

We have interpreted Pyrrhonism as a variant of global skepticism. However, global skeptics face the following dilemma: if they claim something, they refute themselves, and if they do not claim anything, skepticism does not present any problem for us, the non-skeptics. The charge of self-refutation is as old as skepticism itself, and it states, in all its simplicity, that skeptics cannot claim anything, for if they do, they refute themselves since they claim (to know) that no one can know anything. Thus, if we cannot know anything, then we cannot even know that we cannot know. Therefore, we have pointed out that the skeptic's thesis is contradictory, and we should not be worried about contradictory accounts.[292]

Two points can be brought up in skeptics' defense. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, the skeptics argue purely *ad hominem*, that is, they do not assume anything, but merely show from the Dogmatists' own commitments that the Dogmatists should suspend judgment about everything. Although the skeptic cannot accept her argument, e.g. the Agrippan Argument, as true, *we* can, and actually we should pay attention to the skeptic's arguments and try to refute them. As the skeptic does not accept anything as true, she does not have any beliefs, and, thus, maybe she does not even understand her own words – but that does not hinder her from uttering words. Words and arguments that, again, *we* understand. Thus, skeptical arguments are our problems, not the skeptic's.[293] Secondly, Pyrrhonian skeptics try to avoid all kinds of dogmatism and, accordingly, they do not claim that knowledge is unattainable in principle. Instead, the skeptics see that there are plausible-seeming arguments both to the effect that we do not have knowledge and to the effect that we have knowledge; the situation is one of equipollence and, thus, the skeptics suspend judgment about whether we have knowledge. Moreover, the skeptics only report how things appear to them and they purport to say nothing about how things *really* are. This is also reflected in the so-called 'skeptical phrases' that do not manifest opinions but the skeptics' feelings about how things appear to them[294]. For example, Sextus writes of the phrase "I determine nothing" as follows:

> About 'I determine nothing' we have this to say. Determining we deem to be not merely saying something but making an utterance about an unclear object and assenting to it. For in this sense Sceptics will perhaps be found to determine nothing – not even 'I determine nothing' itself. For this is not a dogmatic supposition (i.e. assent to something unclear) but a phrase which shows our feeling. Thus when Sceptics say 'I determine nothing', what they say is this: 'I now feel in such a way as neither to posit dogmatically nor to reject any of the things falling under this investigation'. When they say this they are saying what is apparent to them about the subject proposed – not dogmatically making a confident assertion, but describing and reporting how they feel.[295]

However, if the skeptics just report their feelings about how things appear to them, why should we care about skepticism? In other words, Pyrrhonian skeptics are sliding towards the second horn of the dilemma presented above. In order to present an epistemic challenge for us, the skeptic should set forth *arguments*, and not just utter her inner feelings.[296] But as soon as the skeptic argues something, she contradicts her skepticism, according to which all arguments and claims are epistemically equal, that is, worthless. Thus, if the skeptic proposes something, she is dogmatic and refutes herself, and if she does not propose anything, then skepticism equals rather to a strange cult than to something we should take into serious consideration. Nevertheless, I suggest that we should, as epistemologists, interpret Pyrrhonists as proposing some interesting skeptical arguments, instead

of seeing them as only reporting their feelings. The most interesting and the most powerful skeptical argument the Pyrrhonists have set forth is the Five Modes. We refined the Five Modes into a specific and general argument, the Agrippan Argument, as an instance of which the Criterion Argument was formulated. To clarify, it may do justice to the ancient Pyrrhonists to depict them as relying fundamentally on the strategy of equipollence; opposing every account with a contrary account of equal strength. However, from the viewpoint of epistemology, the most interesting part of their philosophy is the Agrippan trilemma, the core of the Five Modes, and, basically, it is the plausibility of this trilemma with which I am concerned in this study.

Thus, if we are interested in skepticism as proposing challenging skeptical arguments, it is clear that as arguments they must rely on logic. For example, the Pyrrhonian mode of equipollence of reasons presupposes that equally convincing and opposing arguments, evidence, or reasons *defeat* each other. In other words, there is a principle of justification at play saying, in effect, that if we have both supporting evidence E and undermining evidence $\sim E$ for a proposition that p, and both samples of evidence are of equal strength, then it is rational to suspend judgment about the proposition that p. Clearly, then, plausible skeptical arguments presuppose general rules of inference as well as conditions of warrant transmission and defeat. That is not to say, however, that skeptics, or those whoever present the skeptical arguments, must accept those rules as true. Although rules of inference and conditions on warrant transmission are necessary in order for any argument to be presented, it does not entail that those rules are true. At least I think that a skeptic can maintain thoroughly consistently that she must *assume* the rules of inference, but must not *accept* them.

On the other hand, it could be maintained that, metaphorically speaking, skeptical arguments destroy everything, including the skeptical arguments themselves[297]. All that matters is the global suspension of judgment that fortunately leads to tranquility. Dogmatism is a disease that should be cured, and it can be cured via skeptical arguments. After the global suspension of judgment is achieved, the skeptical arguments are not needed anymore. Thoroughgoing *epoché* can be attained by various means; some of us may be able to see opposing accounts everywhere, others may need to contemplate the Five Modes, yet others can be convinced of the necessity of the global suspension of judgment right from the start. The means does not matter, the end itself does, as Sextus himself writes:

> Sceptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument, as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists. Just as doctors for bodily affections have remedies which differ in potency, and apply

severe remedies to patients who are severely afflicted and milder remedies to those mildly afflicted, so Sceptics propound arguments which differ in strength – they employ weighty arguments, capable of vigorously rebutting the dogmatic affliction of conceit, against those who are distressed by a severe rashness, and they employ milder arguments against those who are afflicted by a conceit which is superficial and easily cured and which can be rebutted by a milder degree of plausibility.

> This is why those with a Sceptical impulse do not hesitate sometimes to propound arguments which are sometimes weighty in their plausibility, and sometimes apparently rather weak. They do this deliberately, since often a weaker argument is sufficient for them *to achieve their purpose.*[298]

The skeptics want to *convert* us to Pyrrhonism, and that does not sound very undogmatic, to say the least. The problem is that the skeptics cannot establish that we *do not* know anything, for skeptics cannot establish anything. But neither can we, the non-skeptics, show that we *do* know, for we are not able to break out from the Agrippan Argument. Then it seems that we should suspend judgment about whether we know, and we end up being skeptics, after all.

3.6.2. Skepticism and Ordinary Life

Second standard criticism of skepticism states that it is practically impossible to live up to skepticism. In other words, no one can live without beliefs. Beliefs are the medium through which we can program ourselves to act so as to fulfill our needs and desires. For example, if I am hungry, by forming a belief "If I go to a grocery, I can buy some food to eat" I am able to execute the actions required to fulfill my desire to eat. However, if I had no beliefs, I would have no reason to prefer bread to broken glass. Accordingly, survival would come to a matter of chance, and, presumably, even good luck would end fatally one day.[299] Sextus is familiar with this objection and he answers it as follows:

> Thus, attending to what is apparent, we live in accordance with everyday observances, without holding opinions – for we are not able to be utterly inactive. These everyday observances seem to be fourfold, and to consist in guidance by nature, necessitation by feelings, handing down of laws and customs, and teaching of kinds of expertise. By nature's guidance we are naturally capable of perceiving and thinking. By the necessitation of feelings, hunger conducts us to food and thirst to drink. By the handing down of customs and laws, we accept, from an everyday point of view, that piety is good and impiety bad. By teaching of kinds of expertise we are not inactive in those which we accept.
>
> And we say all this without holding any opinions.[300]

Thus, it seems that Pyrrhonists allow themselves beliefs of a sort, but not of a dogmatic sort. So it seems that Pyrrhonian skeptics can act and behave in ordinary ways, and they have beliefs forced upon them by passive everyday observances and appearances. This does not preclude them, however, from objecting to the *dogmas* of others, for it is another thing to live in accordance with appearances than claiming that something is *really* this or that. This kind of interpretation of Pyrrhonism may be historically plausible, indeed, and it has its advocates[301]. Thus, the second criticism against skepticism is not valid anymore, for skeptics can act and live normally. However, this kind of mitigating of skepticism threatens to vitiate the plausibility of skepticism. If the skeptics can act and believe like everybody else, then it seems that nothing distinguishes anymore the skeptics from the non-skeptics. And this seems to water down the significance of skepticism altogether. Furthermore, it seems that the skeptics should possess some kind of an *epistemic* criterion to distinguish dogmatic beliefs from the "allowed", non-dogmatic beliefs. If they make epistemic distinctions – between forbidden and allowed beliefs – then the skeptics accept something as true, namely the criterion that is the basis of distinctions. Moreover, it is also hard to see how the skeptics could have non-dogmatic beliefs, for believing entails accepting something as true. Speaking about living in accordance with appearances instead of beliefs does not change the fact at all that the skeptics *must* accept something as true in order to act in the world on the basis of decisions to bring about this rather than that.[302] This should be obvious. For example, I cannot even leave my house, luck notwithstanding, if I have no beliefs about the whereabouts of the door, my current position in relation to that door etc.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the objection – that no one can live up to her skepticism – does not engage into argumentation about the possible argumentative flaws in skeptical arguments. Instead, it blatantly states, on the basis of practical consequences of skepticism, that skepticism is unacceptable. Thus, it could be said to be a *pragmatic* objection. As such it misses its target, for I see the purpose of skeptical argument as challenging our conceptions pertaining to knowledge, justification, and evidence. Skeptical arguments try to show that knowledge is not so easy to attain as we often think it is. We should show, in turn, that skeptical arguments go amiss and that we have a viable theory of knowledge and justification that is immune to skeptical arguments. Thus, it is quite vulgar to "answer" skeptical arguments just by stating that no one can be a skeptic, for skepticism is an unliveable doctrine. Furthermore, it could be claimed that pragmatic objections are usually irrelevant in philosophy. For example, we do not solve the problem of free will by observing that most people think that they have free will and act accordingly. Or in the field of

metaphysics, idealistic systems are not refuted simply by stating that most of us believe that external and material objects exist.

Still, although forming of beliefs seems to be unavoidable, it does not imply in any way that some of them, or even any, are true or justified. Granted, living without beliefs is impossible, but so what? I do not see how this observation counts against skepticism in general. Moreover, it could be claimed that the objection – that no one can live up to her skepticism – just assumes the falsity of skepticism. In other words, we cannot infer anything about the ordinary behavior and actions of people. For example, if we think that the behavior of people establishes that we have beliefs about our surroundings for the reason that external objects exist, we have merely assumed the falsity of skepticism, not provided an objection to it. For, according to skeptical arguments, the behavior and actions of people are delivered to us as *appearances*, and as such they can be as deceiving as anything else we encounter via our senses. Now, we can clearly see that the considered objection fails miserably. To wit, the statement "It *appears* to me that people act in various ways as reacting to the external objects of the world" does not even slightly support the conclusion that skepticism is false.

In sum, skepticism cannot be dismissed simply by stating that it is either an unliveable doctrine or it refutes itself by relying on logic. We must take skepticism seriously. Or more precisely, we must take *significant* skeptical arguments seriously. We should not bother about such skeptics who counter every assertion of ours with a mere insistence to the effect "Everything you claim is false" or "You could have been mistaken" or "No way". However, the thesis defended in this book is that the problem of the criterion is such a skeptical argument that must be taken seriously and addressed properly.

3.7. Summary

Pyrrhonian skeptics seek truth and they try to find a yardstick, an epistemic criterion, to decide among appearances which are true and which false. However, up to now, they have not found means to establish a proper criterion, and, therefore, they suspend judgment about the matter. Being unable to determine the criterion of true beliefs, they are unable to decide any matter. Thus, a global suspension of judgment follows, which, luckily for the skeptics, leads to their original goal of tranquility.

The skeptics are also willing to cure others of dogmatism, and, thus, they introduce two general skeptical systems of arguments, the Ten Modes and the Five Modes, that are meant to induce a suspension of judgment in the Dogmatists. The Ten Modes challenge primarily our alleged empirical knowledge, whereas the Five Modes are global in their scope. The two systems of skeptical arguments are interrelated, for all the modes of the Five Modes occur already in the Ten Modes. Furthermore, the strategy of establishing equipollence of reasons is prevalent in the Ten Modes and it is invoked also in two modes of the Five Modes, namely in the mode of disagreement and in the mode of hypothesis. However, contemporary scholars think that only three of the modes of the Five Modes are relevant for the formulation of the most powerful skeptical argument of the ancient skeptics. Thus, the modes of hypothesis, circularity, and infinite regress of reasons alone are thought to constitute the heart of Pyrrhonian skepticism, the Agrippan trilemma.

We formulated the skeptical trilemma into a specific argument, the Agrippan Argument, as an instance of which we formulated the Criterion Argument that concerns specifically the justification of a criterion of truth. When comparing the ancient account of the diallelus – i.e. the Criterion Argument – to Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion, we found that the latter comes down to the mode of circularity of the former. Chisholm's account of the problem is a neat and simple way to present the difficult and complex problem of the criterion, captured fully and comprehensively in the ancient account. Although the two accounts of the problem are different, they pose the same question, namely, "How are we to distinguish true beliefs from false ones?" Furthermore, at least at first glance, it seems that there is no easy way out of the Pyrrhonian problem. The Agrippan Argument consists of intuitively plausible premises that *we*, the non-skeptics accept. Thus, the problem of the criterion is precisely *our* problem, and therefore it is futile to object to skepticism by noting that no one can be a skeptic or that skeptical arguments must refute themselves. The problem of the criterion, and specifically the ancient account of it, is a genuine skeptical paradox.

4. THE REGRESS PROBLEM AND EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

In this chapter the regress problem is studied. First, I explicate the problem and its relations to the Five Modes of Agrippa and the problem of the criterion. After that, differing theories of epistemic justification are examined in order to reveal whether any of them succeeds in solving the regress problem. Finally, the externalist approach to epistemology is examined in order to see in what respects it differs from the internalist approach and how it succeeds in addressing the regress problem and the problem of skepticism in general.

4.1. The Regress Problem and Agrippa's Five Modes

As suggested in the previous chapter, the Five Modes of Agrippa and the so-called epistemic regress problem, also known as 'the regress argument' or the 'infinite regress argument', are intimately related to each other. It is common to think that the two are identical with each other; that is, the problem presented by the Five Modes *is* the regress problem. What is the regress problem, then? There are various depictions of the problem, but the one Scott Aikin provides is simple and neat enough to be used to illustrate the problem here:

> Insofar as we strive to be rational, we strive to believe on the basis of good reasons. For those reasons to be good, they must not only support our first belief, but they themselves must also be believed for good reasons. This is where we begin to see a disturbing pattern. If that first belief is to be held on the basis of good reasons, it seems we are in need of a very long chain of reasons. This is a rough and ready picture of the regress problem. It seems endemic to the project of believing on the basis of reasons. And thereby, it seems endemic to the very project of being rational.
>
> This problem is *old*. Aristotle made it famous when he used it to show the necessity for first principles (*A. Post.* 72b 6-15). Agrippa and Sextus Empiricus made it infamous when they used it to show the inescapability of skepticism (DL II 88-90 and PH I 164-177). And the problem is not just old, it is *deep*. Children, when they understand the game of giving and asking for reasons, see its protean ability to manifest itself anywhere, and they easily exploit it by continuously asking "why?" And it is not just deep, it is *obvious*.[303]

Our epistemic goal is to attain truth, and even if good reasons do not guarantee the truth of our beliefs, good reasons, arguably, make the truth of our beliefs more likely than their falsehood. Thus, it seems to be an intuitively plausible and rational demand that propositions should be believed on the basis of good reasons. And if the justifying reasons seem to be good enough, the initial proposition or belief could be deemed justified as well. But the problem is that the chain of

justifying reasons threatens to be infinitely long. So how could we simultaneously hold that the regress of beliefs is *not* infinite and that some of our beliefs are still justified? That is the challenge of the regress problem. To repeat, the regress problem challenges us to provide an account of a justified or warranted belief that is able to cut the demand of infinite chain of reasons. As stated in the previous chapter, the Five Modes represent us a skeptical trilemma, according to which we do not have knowledge, since each and every one of our claims to knowledge falls prey to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons. Whatever we claim to know, we cannot avoid the trilemma. Now, the Pyrrhonian trilemma works similarly with epistemic justification as it does with knowledge. Accordingly, we do not have justified beliefs, since each candidate for a justified belief falls prey to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons. Whatever we deem as justified, we cannot avoid the trilemma.

In the previous chapter we interpreted the Five Modes as concerning especially *knowledge*. Thus, to make the ancient and the modern problem concordant with each other, we must reformulate the Agrippan Argument so as that it concerns the epistemic justification of beliefs. Accordingly, we have the following argument, call it the Justification Argument:

(1) If S's belief that *p* is justified, then S has good reasons for *p*.

(2a) If S just assumes that *p* without supporting reasons, then the mode of hypothesis applies. Accordingly, it is just as justified to assume that ~*p*, and, thus, one has equal but opposing accounts, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.

(2b) If S proposes reasons for *p*, then either the mode of infinite regress of reasons, the mode of circularity, or the mode of hypothesis applies.

> (2b$_i$) If S supports *p* with reasons, and these with new reasons, and so on, then one is being led into an infinite regress of reasons, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.

> (2b$_{ii}$) If S, instead, somewhere along the way in the chain of reasons, appeals to an already stated reason, then one is arguing in a circle, which does not justify anything, and S should suspend judgment about *p*.

> (2b$_{iii}$) If S supports *p* with a mere assumption, then the mode of hypothesis applies, and, again, S should suspend judgment about *p*.

(3) S does not have good reasons for *p*, since every attempt to justify it falls prey either to the mode of hypothesis, circularity, or infinite regress of reasons.

Therefore,

(4a) S's belief that p is not justified.

(4b) S should suspend judgment about p.

Now, if we are not willing to be skeptics, either premise (2a) or (2b) must be refuted. And this is where the standard accounts of epistemic justification step into the picture. Accordingly, foundationalists deny either – depending on the variant of the foundationalism in question – the truth of premise (2a) or (2b$_{iii}$) and defend the claim that the potentially infinite regress of reasons stops at the basic beliefs that are justified in themselves without further justifying beliefs. Alternatively, coherentists deny the truth of premise (2b$_{ii}$) and they defend the claim that circular reasoning can be justification-conferring. Finally, infinitists deny the truth of premise (2b$_i$) and they hold that infinite regress of reasons can be justification-conferring. Clearly, theories of epistemic justification face the ancient Pyrrhonian problem, the Agrippan trilemma. To quote Robert Fogelin: "a philosophical theory of justification must simultaneously avoid involvement in a bad infinite regress, in a bad form of circularity, and in a bad appeal to unwarranted assumption. The Agrippa problem [i.e. the problem presented by the Five Modes] poses these challenges in an evenhanded way."[304] Accordingly, the theories of epistemic justification and the modes of Agrippa match up as presented in the following schema:[305]

A Theory of Epistemic Justification	**The Agrippan Argument**
(1) Foundationalism	The mode of hypothesis (2a) or (2b$_{iii}$)
(2) Coherentism	The mode of circularity (2b$_{ii}$)
(3) Infinitism	The mode of infinite regress of reasons (2b$_i$)

These three options are meant to be logically exhaustive, but it should be borne in mind that each theory comes in many forms. For example, as one variant of foundationalism, the so-called epistemic contextualists can be seen as committed to the view that at the foundation of justified beliefs lie unjustified beliefs[306]. Furthermore, the divide between internalism and externalism calls for discussion of its own to clarify how both parties respond to the regress problem and how the responses differ from each other. All in all, each and every study on epistemic justification of beliefs should be studied in detail to see how each respective theory succeeds in responding to the regress problem. Obviously, in this chapter, I cannot study every published response to the regress problem. Instead, I will discuss the main three responses, i.e. foundationalism, coherentism, and infinitism. After discussing the aforementioned theories, I will discuss also contextualism and

externalism, neither of which tries to refute a premise in the skeptical trilemma, but argue for some other fault in the skeptic's reasoning.

Foundationalism and coherentism will be examined only briefly, since their standard criticisms were already brought out in chapter 2. After discussing foundationalism and coherentism, in that order, I have devoted a separate discussion for the *a priori*. If we can be sure that some of our beliefs are necessarily true and justified immediately due to their indisputable truth, then these beliefs are certainly capable of cutting the threat of an infinite regress of justifying beliefs. However, as it will be shown in this chapter, even the *a priori* falls prey to the problem of the criterion.

Infinitism, in turn, is a rather recent theory and it will deserve a thorough treatment. However, a great deal more could be said with respect to every theory I discuss, but my foremost intention is to bring out the most haunting difficulties and objections with respect to each theory, which, I hope, warrants the conclusion that none of the theories succeeds in solving the regress problem. Fogelin, in his study on theories of epistemic justification, ends up with the same conclusion; the regress problem is not solved and "[t]hings are now largely as Sextus Empiricus left them almost two thousand years ago"[307]. In fact, what I do in this chapter, is virtually the same thing Fogelin has already done in his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. The point in which I differ from him is, firstly, that I study different theories, for Fogelin does not consider, for example, infinitism at all. Secondly, and more importantly, for me the regress problem is an instance of a more general problem, the problem of the criterion. The Five Modes represent us the skeptical challenge of the problem of the criterion. Thus, trying to cope with the regress problem amounts to, in effect, trying to cope with the problem of the criterion, as applied to epistemic justification[308]. Of course, the regress problem can be and it has been discussed with no concern for skepticism or the problem of the criterion[309]. In this study, I claim, however, that the regress problem is an instance of the problem of the criterion and, thus, when one studies the regress problem, properly understood, one cannot ignore skepticism.

4.2. Foundationalism and Coherentism as Solutions to the Regress Problem

Foundationalists about epistemic justification claim, roughly, that justification of beliefs derives from basic beliefs that are justified in themselves and the source of justification for other beliefs. Coherentists about epistemic justification, in turn, claim, again roughly, that justification of beliefs

is generated by the coherence of the overall belief system. Both camps, foundationalists and coherentists, need assure us as to why we should think that basic beliefs or coherence of the belief system is justification-creating in the first place.

4.2.1. Foundationalism

To begin with foundationalism, its proponents think that the potentially infinite regress of justified beliefs comes to halt at a special set of foundational beliefs. These foundational or basic beliefs are, epistemically speaking, so convincing that they immediately acquire the status of justified belief. Some propositions just strike us as obviously true, and there seems to be no question about their truth, thus, these propositions can be safely believed. Propositions such as "Something exists", "*p* iff *p*", and "Out of nothing comes nothing" seem to warrant their own truth and we are inclined to accept them as true. In fact, it seems that we cannot even choose *not* to believe these or similarly convincing propositions, for their truth strikes us as immediately obvious and we cannot but believe them. Maybe someone of us could resist the compelling inclination to believe the Principle of Excluded Middle (*p* or *~p*), but it would take exceptionally strong will power to execute such a mental exercise. However, if any beliefs are justified at all, beliefs directed at necessary truths seem to be our best candidates for the status of 'epistemically justified belief'. Moreover, it sounds as a plausible suggestion that these basic beliefs do not need any further justification to be deemed as justified. What other reasons could I even give for, for example, the Principle of Excluded Middle except that it just strikes me as most definitely true?

If we grant that beliefs that have as their contents necessary truths count as basic, it still seems that the set of basic beliefs is rather limited[310]. Particularly, the set is limited *in quality* as opposed to quantity. It is, arguably, impossible to infer empirical, contingent facts from necessary *a priori* truths. In other words, necessary truths cannot bridge the gap between the mind and the external world. It is hard to see how my belief that, for example, "I see a great orange before me" could receive its justification by way of its relation to the basic belief "*cogito, ergo sum*". Thus, we should include contingent, empirical beliefs among possible basic beliefs in order that foundationalism could be a viable theory of empirical knowledge too. Indeed, foundationalists since Descartes's times have constructed their respective epistemologies in such a way that the importance of sensory experience to empirical justification is taken into a serious consideration. In contemporary foundationalist theories, my belief about the great orange *is* basic and justified, so long as my senses provide me with relevant sensory experiences and certain circumstantial and other conditions are

satisfied (e.g. that the lighting is normal and I am not affected by drugs). Sensory experiences as the source of the contents of our beliefs are generally sufficient in themselves to render the beliefs as basic and justified, and no further justifying beliefs are needed. Of course, the basic beliefs can be defeated by an acquisition of contrary and convincing evidence, but usually our beliefs derived from sensory experience are deemed "innocent until proven guilty".

However, if foundationalism is moderated in the way described above, further problems arise. Firstly, by moving from certain and infallible basic beliefs to uncertain and fallible (empirical) basic beliefs, we also lose our fundamental motivation for being foundationalists in the first place. In other words, our selection of basic beliefs is meant to function as terminating the possibly infinite regress of justified beliefs to something certain. However, if we allow that the basic beliefs could be false, should we not give some reasons for thinking that the beliefs are more likely true than false? But if we give reasons for the alleged basic beliefs, then it seems that the regress continues, after all. Thus, as moderate foundationalists we face the dilemma of either willfully accepting something uncertain and ungrounded as the source of justification and knowledge or giving further reasons for our chosen basic beliefs. The first horn of the dilemma amounts to an arbitrary decision and unacceptable dogmatism and the second horn implies that the regress of reasons goes on again.

However, foundationalists can alternatively hold that the regress of reasons terminates at non-conceptual and non-judgmental perceptual states. The idea is that our (empirical) beliefs are grounded on our perceptual experiences that do not need any justification for themselves anymore. The perceptual experiences do not need further justifying reasons just because reasons need justifying reasons, but our perceptual experiences are not reasons; they just "ground" our beliefs. The problem for the foundationalist is to explain how something that is not itself a reason can confer justification upon reasons, i.e. our beliefs. Moreover, which ones of our perceptual states are such that they do justify our beliefs? In other words, all states cannot be justification-creating since, obviously, our perception can be misleading and false. A criterion for good states is called for. And now we face the good old Pyrrhonian question, viz. how could we decide which criteria are good? Furthermore, it can be pointed out, in the spirit of Sextus' Ten Modes, that different animals, arguably, have different appearances of the same objects[311]. Again, different people can have differing appearances of the objects, and as Sextus suggests, even the senses within a single person can disagree with each other. So, are all appearances justified? If not, which ones are and which are not, and how can we determine that our chosen criterion is a good one? Of course, we can stipulate that some of our perceptual appearances are justified, but now the skeptic is eager to ask whether

any of our appearances are true or likely to be true. In fact, it should also be in *our* interest to determine whether the appearances that, allegedly, justify our empirical beliefs have any connection whatsoever to the reality. On the other hand, this problem – whether our appearances are in concordance with the reality – haunts presumably all theories on epistemic justification, not just foundationalism. Thus, it may be a little unfair to criticize foundationalists by appealing to an objection that *no one* can answer. However, it also seems unacceptable and dogmatic simply to *assume* as the foundationalist does that our perceptual experiences are grounded in the reality and they properly justify our empirical beliefs. An explanation, that is, further *reasons*, should be given as to why we should think that some of our perceptual experiences justify our empirical beliefs and make their truth probable. All in all, I think that, compared to the view that there are basic *beliefs*, the foundationalist gains nothing by holding that the regress of reasons terminates at non-conceptual and non-judgmental perceptual states.[312]

As Peter Klein sees it, the basic problem with foundationalism is the following:

> [F]oundationalism is unacceptable because it advocates accepting an arbitrary reason at the base, that is, a reason for which there are no further reasons making it even slightly better to accept than any of its contraries.[313]

Michael Bergmann does not agree with Klein. According to Klein, we should always be able to give reasons for our beliefs, otherwise we are irrational[314]. Bergmann, in turn, claims that Klein is simply begging the question against the foundationalist, namely, foundationalists deny the assumption that we should always be able to give reasons for our beliefs in order for them to be justified. Specifically, foundationalists hold that basic beliefs are justified without further justifying reasons. Bergmann accuses Klein of just taking it for granted that foundationalists are mistaken in thinking that beliefs can be non-inferentially justified.[315] Bergmann admits that the foundationalist does not have a justifying *reason* for her basic belief *b*, but that does not imply that *b* is arbitrary. All beliefs with certain feature F count as basic and are, therefore, (non-inferentially) justified, even though they lack a justifying reason. Bergmann adds that the foundationalist can believe some proposition such as X that "*b* has some feature F such that beliefs having feature F are noninferentially justified"[316], but believing X *is not required* for the justification of *b*. X has no justificatory role whatsoever in the justification of basic belief *b*, thus, X does not count as a reason for *b*.[317]

Klein is not buying Bergmann's defense of foundationalism. Klein argues that unless the foundationalist thinks that *b*'s possession of feature F provides us with a reason to treat *b* as true or likely true, the foundationalist has not offered any reason whatsoever as to why anyone should believe *b*. Thus, *b* remains arbitrary unless the foundationalist is willing to offer some reason for the likelihood of the truth of *b* – for example, the proposition X – in which case the regress of reasons continues. Moreover, Bergmann contends that what matters is the *truth* of proposition X, not that one justifiably believes X[318]. But if that is so, is it not only fair to raise the question whether X is true. If X is true or highly likely to be true, then the foundationalist has an excellent reason for the basic belief *b*; namely, the truth or the sufficiently high likelihood of the truth of X. If X is, however, false or highly likely to be false, then the foundationalist has a reason for the falsity of *b*, and she should cease to believe *b*.[319] Bergmann, as I understand him, seems to argue that basic beliefs are justified *if* they are based on external facts, i.e. if the beliefs are properly connected with the external world. But, oddly enough, Bergmann seems to think that we should not care whether our beliefs are, in fact, grounded properly in external facts. If they are, our basic beliefs are justified and we know most of the things we think we know, and if they are not, then, well, we do not know. In my opinion, this is a very unsatisfactory response to the skeptic and to the regress problem. Granted, it is *possible* that some beliefs enjoy the status of being basic and are non-inferentially justified, but mere possibility and good epistemic faith do not convince us that this really *is* the case.[320] However, *externalists* side with Bergmann[321] and claim that a belief does not require justifying reasons in order to be justified. So it seems that what is at stake here is the differing intuitions of the internalists and externalists, which debate will be considered later in this chapter. For now, it suffices to point out that what we have, in effect, done here in criticizing foundationalism is just a matter of reheating the good old Pyrrhonian mode of hypothesis. As noted in the previous chapter, if we just assume a proposition without reason, we could as well, and equally convincingly, assume the opposite of the proposition. Thus, the basic beliefs the foundationalist offers are arbitrary – since they are not backed up with further reasons – or she must propose reasons for her favored beliefs, in which case the regress continues.[322] Hence, due to the ultimately arbitrary nature of the basic beliefs, our Pyrrhonian interlocutor advises us to suspend judgment about any alleged basic beliefs.

4.2.2. Coherentism

Proponents of coherentism hold that the regress of justified beliefs comes to an end due to the circular justification of a belief system. Circular reasoning alone cannot make beliefs justified,

coherentists tell us, but if our belief system is sufficiently *coherent*, then justification follows. No belief is secured as a foundation for all upcoming knowledge claims, and neither is any belief privileged as the source of justification for other beliefs. All that matters, with respect to epistemic justification, is the mutual coherence between all the members of a belief system. If a belief coheres with a person's belief system, it is justified, otherwise not. Coherentists hold that there are no Archimedean points, i.e. a foundationalist's basic beliefs, with the help of which we could build the edifice of knowledge as other beliefs were derived from the foundational ones. The second best choice, however, is, arguably, to aim for mutual coherence between beliefs. For, clearly, a coherent belief system is epistemically preferable to an incoherent one.

Coherentism as a theory of epistemic justification faces all kinds of problems. We have already considered some pressings objections against coherentism while discussing the so-called "fourth alternative" as a solution to Chisholm's formulation of the diallelus[323]. Some additional objections are still worth bringing forth. Moreover, it should be pointed out that coherentism should not be construed as a view according to which justification is created solely by circular reasoning, for such a view is clearly implausible. As pointed out with respect to the consideration of the mode of circularity in Pyrrhonian system, circular reasoning entails that a claim is supported by an appeal to itself.[324] Thus, if epistemic justification is circular in character, this implies that a belief *b* in the end justifies itself, via a circular detour through other beliefs. It is quite implausible to claim that initially non-justified belief acquires a justified status if it is just fitted into a coherent belief system, where it actually justifies itself.[325] In that kind of view epistemic justification seems to amount to a conjuring trick of sorts.

More plausible construal of coherentism proposes that members of a belief system are justified due to the overall coherence of the system. A belief is justified if it coheres with the rest of the beliefs in a given system. A central problem for this variety of coherentism is that even perfect coherence between a large number of beliefs does not make the truth of the beliefs even probable. All kinds of fantasies and fairy tales can be maximally coherent but still obviously false. The coherentist may just bite the bullet and admit the objection, but simultaneously point out that we have no choice but to rely on the possibility that a coherent set of beliefs containing scientifically approved propositions really *is* true, or approximately true. If we do epistemically our best to form beliefs according to the best available evidence, are sensitive to contrary evidence, and try to arrange all pieces of relevant information into a coherent whole, what else could reasonably be demanded of us as epistemic agents? If that is not enough for justification, what is, then? If we are prepared to

abandon even the seemingly most certain propositions if the overall coherence of our belief system demands so, we can look forward to our scientific theories, claims, and beliefs in general converging towards truth in the long run.

The skeptic, of course, objects and points out to the coherentist that hope for knowledge does not equal to knowledge. We can be 'in the long run' as dead wrong as when we started our quest for knowledge, despite the coherence of our belief system. Another problem for coherentism is that coherence seems to be too demanding a condition for justified belief or knowledge. In other words, *if* we have justified beliefs and knowledge, can we not then reasonably suppose that I can justifiably believe or know, for example, that I have two hands, that 2 plus 2 equals 4, and that I had breakfast in the morning even if my belief system is *not* even closely coherent. Why should we suppose that coherence between the beliefs of a given system is a necessary condition for justified belief and knowledge? Moreover, the coherentist is in trouble while trying to explain the nature of *a priori* beliefs. In fact, Laurence BonJour – once a prominent defender of coherence theory of epistemic justification, nowadays a solid foundationalist[326] – was guilty of such "an arbitrary partiality"[327] as he defended coherence theory with respect to justification, *except* with respect to justification of *a priori* beliefs. BonJour regarded the justification of *a priori* beliefs as basic[328], which, however, raises the pair of questions as (i) whether his overall theory (back then) could be characterized as "coherence theory of justification" once *a priori* beliefs are justified independently of coherence, and (ii) whether other kinds of beliefs than *a priori* could also be justified independently of coherence.

In sum, coherentist accounts of epistemic justification, as well as their foundationalist rivals, do not seem to succeed in solving the regress problem. Firstly, it is implausible to suggest that circular reasoning could be justification-creating[329], since that amounts just to repeating one's claim via a circular detour. Sure, we *can* argue in circles, but that does not make our beliefs justified nor does it give us any reason to think that the defended proposition is true. Hence, we cannot justify our claims via circles. Thus, the regress of reasons continues and skepticism threatens us again. Secondly, if coherence as such is proposed as the factor that makes the members of the belief system justified, the skeptic objects to and asks what makes us think that coherence enhances the probability of our beliefs being true? Again, we can stipulate that a coherent belief system is justified, but if coherence warrants the truth of our beliefs no more than their falsity, why should we hold that coherence is a valuable epistemic good? In fact, it can be seen quite straightforwardly that coherence of a belief system does not imply anything about its truthfulness. If so, sticking to

coherence as the criterion of epistemic justification is without any grounds, and, thus, the Pyrrhonian skeptic advises us to suspend judgment about coherence as a criterion of epistemic justification.

4.3. The *A Priori* Justification

In this section I will discuss the epistemic status and justification of the so-called *a priori* truths. Discussion of the *a priori* in this study is necessary, for if we have *a priori* knowledge, then at least some of our beliefs are not affected by skeptical arguments. More specifically, our alleged *a priori* beliefs are justified non-inferentially just in virtue of their being *a priori*. Thus, *a priori* beliefs do not need further justifying beliefs, and, therefore, the regress problem is answered once and for all. Traditionally, it is thought that those propositions that we know *a priori*, are transparent to reason and, thus, seeing their truth follows immediately upon understanding of them. But how is *a priori* knowledge acquired? With what our beliefs about the *a priori* should correspond in order for them to be true? Which propositions are genuine instances of *a priori* knowledge? To answer these questions, we need a full-fledged theory on the *a priori*. Luckily, Laurence BonJour has recently provided us with such a theory.

4.3.1. The *A Priori* Justification and BonJour's Moderate Rationalism

In his *In Defense of Pure Reason*, BonJour defends a moderate rationalist account of *a priori* justification and knowledge. It is "rationalist" because he holds that *a priori* justification genuinely exists and it is "moderate" since he holds that *a priori* insights are both fallible and corrigible in character.[330] According to BonJour, when we reflectively consider a putative *a priori* proposition, we are able "simply to see or grasp or apprehend that the proposition is *necessary*, that it must be true in any possible world or situation"[331]. The seeing or grasping of the truth of the proposition is immediate and direct, and does not depend on any sort of criterion. In the case of *a priori* knowledge, we see by way of *rational intuition* the necessary features of the *reality*. When we apprehend *a priori* propositions, we understand that the reality *must* be the way the propositions convey.[332] And what could be a better reason to accept a proposition as true, than seeing that "it reflects a necessary feature that reality could not fail to possess"[333]? Furthermore, there is nothing mysterious about or ability to apprehend *a priori* truths, for it consists simply in our general ability to understand and think.[334]

BonJour seems to make quite a concession to the skeptic as he holds that our *a priori* insights are *fallible*. Traditionally, the rationalists have held that our rational insights are certain, that is, they are infallible and cannot fail to be true. However, BonJour contends that the claim of infallibility with respect to *a priori* propositions is implausible and indefensible, for there are, in the history of philosophy, too many examples of alleged *a priori* truths that have turned out to be false.[335] William Alston agrees:

> As for rational intuition, one would be hard pressed to find a contemporary defender of its infallibility or incorrigibility, and for good reason. It can hardly lay claim to complete consistency of output. To some philosophers it has seemed self-evident that every event is causally determined; to others it has seemed self-evident that humans have free choice in a sense that is incompatible with the causal determinism of such choices. To some it has seemed self-evident that temporally backward causation is impossible; to others it has seemed self-evident that it is possible. And so it goes. If the deliverances of rational intuition contradict each other, it cannot be that they are all correct.[336]

Moreover, BonJour notes that the metaphysical theories of, for example, Plato, Spinoza, and Leibniz were all intended to be knowable *a priori*, but since they conflict with each other, they cannot all be true.[337] These remarks motivate us to revise our account of the *a priori* in such a way that reason provides us only with *apparent* rational insights. In other words, *a priori* justification is fallible in character just like empirical justification is. However, for a proposition to count even as an apparent rational insight, the person must consider the proposition with a reasonable degree of care and she must genuinely be aware of the necessity or apparent necessity of the proposition in question.[338] In addition to being fallible, rational insights are also corrigible. BonJour provides two "complementary ways"[339] with the help of which it is possible to detect and correct mistakes in apparent rational insights. First, mistakes can be internally correctable; further reflection is capable of revealing mistakes and replacing them with correct insights. For example, these kinds of internal corrections are usual in arithmetic calculations. Second, we may detect mistakes in apparent rational insights by seeing how well or badly they fit together. This method, effectively, amounts to an appeal to coherence among our rational insights. Of course, we should be able to decide which insights are more fundamental than others, so that in case of conflicting insights we could appeal to coherence and reject the epistemically weaker insights. Furthermore, these two methods of correction can often work together. For example, initial appeal to coherence can detect an inconsistency among insights, and further internal reflection reveals that an apparent rational insight is, indeed, mistaken and it is then replaced by a correct insight.[340]

The coherence method already revealed that, according to BonJour, justification of *a priori* propositions comes in degrees, that is, some insights are more justified than others. For example, BonJour holds that proposition "$2 + 2 = 4$" is more justified than proposition "$2^5 - 5 = 3^3$", although they both are justified *a priori*. Moreover, since *a priori* propositions are corrigible, they are defeasible, and thus *a priori* propositions are only *prima facie* justified.[341] An apparent, *prima facie* justified rational insight can be defeated by seeing a conflict of insights. If the other, opposing insight is stronger than the initial insight, the latter can be replaced by the former. In addition to conflicts among rational insights, also empirical considerations can be relevant to the justification of *a priori* propositions. In other words, empirical evidence can count *partially* against *a priori* proposition. But only partially, for other *a priori* insights are needed in order to see how empirical considerations are relevant with respect to the *a priori* proposition that is under revision.[342]

BonJour also emphasizes that the "seeing" involved in rational intuition is *non-propositional* in character. More specifically, we directly grasp that, for instance, *modus ponens* is a correct form of inference, and that "grasping" is, basically, non-propositional in character. Were it not, we should justify *modus ponens* with some more fundamental or equally fundamental logical rule, and thus the threat of an infinite regress is created.[343] Finally, BonJour admits that *a priori* justification has also externalist constraints, namely, the justification of an apparent rational insight can be undermined by factors of which the epistemic agent is unaware. For example, if a person suffers from severe cognitive malfunction, she can, even after careful reflection, mistakenly believe that a certain proposition is necessary and *a priori*, and due to her unfortunate condition, she is unable to internally correct her mistaken belief.[344] BonJour holds that such a person does not have even an apparent rational insight, since the person does not satisfy "a condition of cognitive sanity"[345]. In summary, Bonjour holds that *a priori* justification is fallible, corrigible, varies in degrees, can be defeated by internal, empirical, or externalist considerations, and is non-propositional in character.

4.3.2. The *A Priori* Justification and the Regress Problem

As noted above, BonJour's account of *a priori* justification as fallible makes his view vulnerable to the skeptic's attack. In sum, if rational insight is fallible, it seems that we need a criterion to distinguish between genuine and apparent insights – however, the criterion calls for a further justifying criterion and thus the threat of an *infinite regress* is inevitable. BonJour acknowledges this objection too:

> If rational insight is indeed fallible, then it is natural to think that some further, epistemically prior criterion is needed in order to distinguish genuine rational insights from merely apparent ones, with any epistemic justification that results from such insight depending essentially on the fact that this criterion is satisfied. … [T]he need to appeal to such a criterion would deprive *a priori* insight of most or all of its cognitive value. But, at a deeper level, such an approach is in any case inherently futile: any such criterion or standard would itself have to be somehow justified; and only a little reflection will show that there is no possible way in which it could be justified without either impugning the *a priori* status of the claims that are justified by appeal to it (if it is justified empirically) or else being guilty of obvious circularity (if it is justified *a priori*).[346]

Now we can see more clearly why BonJour refuses to call the two methods of insight correction – internal reflection and an appeal to coherence – as criteria or standards. Instead, he speaks of "complementary ways" or "re-examination"[347], and tries thereby to avoid the problem described above, the problem amounting, obviously, to the problem of the criterion and more specifically, to the regress problem. If *a priori* beliefs need be justified by further beliefs, the threat of an infinite regress of justifying beliefs is inevitable. However, BonJour holds that patently mistaken candidates for rational insights – results of, for example, bias or dogmatism – can be detected as such via further reflection, and no appeal to any external criterion is needed. Of course, it is possible that one is *so* biased that she is not able to detect the obvious mistake, but that does not imply that her mistaken belief becomes an apparent rational insight. In other words, it is a *background condition* for rational insights that "one's reason not be irreparably clouded by bias or dogmatism or both, that one be capable of attending in an unbiased and non-dogmatic way to the rational credentials of the claim (or inference) in question"[348]. Thus, reflection, additional care, and scrutiny are of utmost importance with respect to rational insights. However, the questions arise as to how much reflection is enough and how do we know that our internal corrections hit the mark?

BonJour notes that the method of internal correction is frequently at work also with respect to sense perception. For example, my judgment that a nearby tree is a pine may be altered, due to more careful visual perception, to the judgment that it is a spruce.[349] The example is telling, for now the skeptic can remark that we have only traded off an appearance for another, but the problem whether our appearances correspond with anything real remains. Obviously, similar skeptical remarks can be made against BonJour's account on *a priori*. How do we know that our internal corrections with respect to rational insights are apt? Moreover, is it not possible that, due to a further reflection and scrutiny, we replace a genuine insight with a false insight? How do we know that any of our apparent rational insights are true at all? BonJour tries to suppress the doubts by holding that, with

respect to rational insights, mistakes are "extremely rare"[350] and they "represent an extremely tiny fraction of cases"[351]. Furthermore, BonJour contends that cases of conflicting insights are similarly extremely rare. [352]

At this point of discussion, one starts to wonder whether mistakes and genuine disagreements with respect to *a priori* insights really are as rare as BonJour apparently wants us to think that they are. Does not the mere existence of philosophical debates prove that disagreements – and consequently, mistakes – are more like a rule than an exception?[353] Moreover, philosophical controversies and disparities of insight are commonly based on *a priori*, rather than empirical grounds. Thus, one wonders on what grounds BonJour claims that mistakes are rare and that the methods of internal correction are reliable? And furthermore, how does Bonjour know, as he confidently proposes, that *a priori* justification is fallible, corrigible, varies in degrees, can be defeated by internal, empirical, or externalist considerations, and is non-propositional in character?

The most crucial problem concerns, however, BonJour's view that *a priori* justification is fallible. As already pointed out in our discussion on foundationalism[354], if it could be shown that we have infallible basic beliefs, the threat of an infinite regress of reasons could be effectively eliminated. But if it is admitted that our basic beliefs or *a priori* insights are fallible, we should be able to give reasons for thinking that they are, nonetheless, likely to be true, i.e. justified. These reasons amount to criteria and, thus, the threat of regress is unavoidable. For example, it is hard not to think that the conditions BonJour proposes – such as reasonable degree of care, genuine awareness of the necessity of the proposition in question, further reflection, an appeal to coherence, and cognitive sanity – are nothing more than necessary criteria that an apparent rational insight must satisfy in order to be justified. Yet, even though the conditions were satisfied, the insight can still fail to be true. And the skeptic, of course, demands us to justify these further criteria; thus the inescapable regress.

All in all, BonJour's account on the *a priori* fails, since his account devastatingly falls prey to the problem of the criterion. On the one hand, the fallibility of the *a priori* seems to imply that we need criteria to distinguish apparent from genuine insights, and thus the diallelus applies as well to *a priori* insights as empirical claims. On the other hand, BonJour can deny the need for criteria, but since we have here pointed out various reasons on the basis of which to doubt the truth of apparent insights, denial to give further criteria amounts to dogmatism and accepting unwarranted assumptions as *a priori* insights. BonJour even admits that we can still "doubt whether accepting

apparent rational insights is indeed conducive to arriving at the truth"[355], and that skepticism about *a priori* "remains dialectically tenable"[356]. Finally, appearing to be boxed in, BonJour concedes that although fallible rational insight "may not be all that we could ask for, [it] is almost certainly all that we can ever hope to have"[357]. In the end, the sound of reason has diminished to cautious hope, and the case about the *a priori* seems to be decided in the skeptic's favor.

4.4. Infinitism as a Solution to the Regress Problem

According to infinitism, justification of a belief *requires* an infinite regress of reasons. Thus, the regress problem is not a problem at all, since infinite regress of beliefs can be justification-creating. If foundationalism and coherentism as theories of epistemic justification are at least initially plausible accounts, the same cannot be said of infinitism. To explicate, it strikes as counter-intuitive to claim that justification and knowledge of any belief depends on an infinite regress of justifying beliefs.

4.4.1. A Characterization of Infinitism

Infinitism[358] is an unlikely philosophical position in the sense that proposing a view that the justification chain of beliefs is never-ending is rather surprising. Sextus, for one, thinks that the mode of infinite regress leads without a question to the conclusion that "it is impossible to establish infinitely many proofs[359]". Fogelin, in turn, does not even bother to consider the infinitist theory of justification, for, as he sees it, "[s]ince we are concerned with human knowledge, it is hard to see how the mode of infinite regress can be made innocent of skeptical consequences[360]". However, recently the ungrateful commission has been fulfilled as Peter Klein has taken up the bold task of giving a full-fledged defense of infinitism[361]. Thus, it may be proper to start characterizing infinitism by quoting Klein himself:

> Infinitism is the view that the answer to the regress problem is that the regress never properly ends. There is always another reason, one that has not already been employed, that can legitimately be required for each reason that is given for a belief. Only if there is an infinite set of non-repeating reasons available for a belief is it fully justifiable.[362]

At this point an obvious objection is raised, namely, suppose that the justification of my initial belief, A, depends on the justification of a further belief, B, whose justification depends on a still

further belief, C, and similarly all the way *ad infinitum*. Now, since justification of any belief is dependent on the justification of other beliefs, all justification is conditional in character. Thus, A is justified only if B and C are justified. We cannot show that any belief is non-conditionally justified, for since the regress of justifying beliefs is infinite, justification of any belief is conditional upon other beliefs.[363]

Klein accepts the above objection. Accordingly, he modifies his proposal of infinitism to the effect that beliefs can be at most conditionally – or "provisionally", the term Klein prefers[364] – justified. Klein goes on to propose that, in fact, this is an advantage for infinitism. We must only first abandon the assumption that reasoning can and must *settle* issues for good. Every issue remains open to further reasons, pro or con, to emerge. There is no epistemic bedrock on which we could ultimately rely as a basis for all knowledge. Every proposition and epistemic judgment is open to revision, but that is merely in concordance with a true Pyrrhonian spirit, for, we are, after all, "still investigating"[365] the truth of matters while avoiding all kinds of dogmatism. Our epistemic situations can change and we ought to recognize that it is never settled whether any proposition *p* is true. It can be, however, more reasonable to believe *p* than to deny *p*, depending on the reasons we have for or against *p*. [366]

Does infinitism imply that we must have infinitely many beliefs? The answer is yes, it does. However, an infinitist is not committed to the implausible view that we should be able to consciously and simultaneously entertain infinitely many beliefs. That would be an absurd demand. Instead of beliefs we should concentrate on our *dispositions to believe*. Arguably, we have dispositions to assert infinitely many propositions although we have never consciously entertained but a small fraction of those propositions. For example, most of us would assert the propositions "Pears do not normally grow on apple trees", "61+346=407", and "Chicago is east of every city in California". Similarly, we can formulate examples of infinitely many propositions that most of us would believe. In other words, we are disposed to form infinitely many beliefs. Moreover, we are able to produce new reasons for our beliefs. For example, for quantum physics, evolutionary theory, psychological explanations of human behavior, and scientific theories in general there have been temporary stopping points in the past with respect to the reasons available for explaining phenomena respective to each discipline. However, as time has passed, we have been able to produce new reasons, along with novel scientific concepts, and our conceptions of phenomena have expanded respectively. Thus, the infinitist holds that there are and will be no permanent stopping

points, or 'basic beliefs' in foundationalists' terms, in the regress of reasons. Instead, the chain of reasons continues indefinitely.[367]

I think that Klein's theory, infinitism, is clearly motivated by the will to give an adequate response to the skeptic so that we accept the skeptic's central claims, but do not accept *skepticism*. Specifically, Klein seems to accept the regress problem at face value and accept that we have only three options in responding to it: postulating basic beliefs, endorsing circular reasoning, or endorsing infinite regresses of reasons. Then, Klein sides with the skeptic and holds that the foundationalist or coherentist ways out of the regress problem are simply unacceptable. Thus, we are left with infinite regresses of reasons if we are to hold on to our conviction that we have knowledge. Infinitism's rival accounts, coherentism and foundationalism, fail since the former advocates a form of begging the question due to its acceptance of circular reasoning, and the latter advocates accepting, at the base, arbitrary reasons for which no further reasons *cannot* be provided. Both views are unacceptable. Infinitism, in contrast, does not promote accepting circular reasoning or arbitrary reasons, for an infinitist can always seek for further reasons. And history suggests that new reasons are always available or forthcoming.[368] As Klein sums up infinitism:

> No belief is ever fully justified for any person. The process of justifying a proposition is never completed. That is a consequence of infinitism. But that is not because there is no infinite set of propositions available that could serve as good reasons for our beliefs. Rather, no belief is fully justified because at no point in time will we have completed the process of justifying our beliefs. All justification is provisional.[369]

Before we turn to consider objections to infinitism, its central tenets should be expressed more clearly and precisely. Klein provides us with two specific principles that imply infinitism. These two principles "are meant to characterize (significant) necessary but not sufficient conditions for justification"[370]. The first principle is called the "Principle of Avoiding Circularity" (PAC):

(PAC)   For all x, if a person, S has a justification for x, then for all y, if y is in the evidential ancestry of x for S, then x is not in the evidential ancestry of y for S.[371]

Klein thinks that PAC expresses simply a principle of good reasoning. Accordingly, PAC bans circular reasoning. The second principle, the "Principle of Avoiding Arbitrariness" (PAA) goes as follows:

(PAA)   For all x, if a person, S, has a justification for x, then there is some reason, r_1, available to S for x; and there is some reason, r_2, available to S for r_1, etc., and there is no last reason in the series.[372]

PAA is meant to capture two central ideas of infinitism. Firstly, justification of beliefs is dependent upon *reasons* for beliefs, as opposed to something else like the reliability of the cognitive mechanisms causing the belief. Secondly, every reason is in need of another reason and, thus, the chain of reasons cannot terminate at a reason for which there are no further reasons. This amounts to banning of arbitrary reasons.[373] An acceptance of proposition is considered to be arbitrary if the proposition is accepted even if there are no better reasons for accepting it than denying it. Thus, a foundationalist's basic beliefs are considered to be arbitrary, since they – or at least Klein argues so – are accepted without any reason for thinking that they are more likely to be true than false. An infinitist, in turn, can neither *give* indefinitely many reasons for her beliefs, but that does not imply that the last reason given must be an arbitrary one. In other words, the infinitist can have better reasons for believing the last proposition than denying it although she has not yet *given* those reasons.[374]

Klein thinks that since the principles PAC and PAA are intuitively appealing, a plausible account of epistemic justification must be so formulated that the reasons supporting a justified belief must be infinite and non-repeating.[375] Klein does not give an explicit formulation of an infinitist account of a justified belief. However, the conjunction of PAC and PAA imply the following principle that can be called as "Klein's regress condition" (K):

(K)   For all r, if a person, S, has a justification for r_1, then r_1 is the first member in an infinite sequence of distinct reasons σ $\{r_1, r_2, ...\}$ such that every member r_n of σ is such that its successor r_{n+1} is available to S as a reason for r_n.[376]

As Andrew Cling notes, an infinitist needs additional conditions of epistemic justification, for, according to the regress condition K, any proposition whatsoever can be justified[377]. Klein admits that not just any proposition can be a reason for beliefs. Reasons must be epistemically *good* in the sense that they have a sufficient probability of being true. Infinitism is compatible with various accounts of what makes a reason epistemically good. K is meant to capture just one necessary condition of justification, and there are other conditions a belief must satisfy in order to be justified.[378]

4.4.2. Objections against Infinitism

Usually the first, and also the most obvious, objection presented against the idea of an infinite regress of justification appeals to our cognitive finitude. Ernest Sosa puts the objection as follows: "It [the endless regress of justification] is incompatible with human limitations. No human subject could harbor the required infinity of beliefs."[379] However, as stated, Klein's version of infinitism requires only that we are in some sense able, or *disposed*, to form the relevant beliefs. It should be trivially clear that we are, in principle, able to form infinitely many propositions. For example, most of us are able to calculate infinitely many mathematical propositions by a mastery of finite number of mathematical principles such as the rules concerning addition, subtraction, and multiplication. Therefore, an infinite set of beliefs is at least possible, and, for the same reasons, we should think that an infinite regress of justified beliefs is possible. For example, *if* my belief that "2 plus 2 equals 4" is justified, then also my belief that "My belief that 2 plus 2 equals 4 is justified" is justified, and so forth. Thus, we should conclude that with respect to *every* theory of epistemic justification, it trivially follows that some infinite regresses of beliefs can be justified. An infinitist only thinks that *all* beliefs are justified by infinite regress. It is useful to quote Cling here, who neatly sums up Klein's view on a justified belief:

> In effect, Klein thinks of a justified occurrent belief as the tip of an iceberg, supported ultimately by dispositional beliefs beneath the surface of occurrent awareness which are themselves supported by the limitless ocean of reasons to which a finite number of second-order dispositions gives us access.[380]

I find that the objection is not successful or conclusive against Klein's version of infinitism. A more serious objection is that an infinitist cannot distinguish between justified and unjustified infinite regresses[381]. I follow mainly Moser's presentation of the objection. Moser proceeds to show that infinite regress cannot be necessary or sufficient for justification. He claims that we can find out whether an infinite regress is justified only by appealing to some additional information that is *external* to the regress in question. Thus, infinite regress is not necessary for justification, for a member of an infinite regress is justified *if* its successors are, in fact, justified. But why should we think, independently of any external information, that any member of an infinite regress *is* justified? Moser concludes that unless the infinitist can answer the preceding question, we should refrain from thinking that infinite regress can justify its terminal member.[382] Infinite regress is not sufficient for justification, for, clearly, not all infinite regresses are justified. But nor it is necessary, for any reason given for thinking that the members of an infinite regress are, in fact, justified, undermines

the need for the regress condition itself. Klein admits that Moser's objection would be fatal for infinitism if it were not relying on the assumption that the external information that explains the justification of the infinite regress must be some additional justified *belief*.[383] That is not necessary, however. As Klein clarifies, an infinitist needs only to hold that "[T]here are some facts in virtue of which a belief is a reason. These facts are not part of the chain of reasoning"[384].

I find Klein's defense highly dubious when he claims that *facts* determine whether a belief is a reason. This is, in effect, the same claim Bergmann gave, in our discussion of foundationalism[385], to the effect that basic beliefs are justified because they are grounded in external facts. This is an externalist maneuver and if external facts determine whether our beliefs are justified, where do we need the regress condition anymore? The regress condition has become simply superfluous.

4.4.3. Discussion

It is interesting to note that, in fact, infinitism is quite close to the Pyrrhonian skepticism, namely, it seems that the regress problem, or its Pyrrhonian counterpart, the Agrippan Argument (or more precisely, the Justification Argument), presupposes principles closely similar to Klein's PAA and PAC. The regress problem's central demand seems to be, in effect, that we should be able to give reasons for our beliefs. If we refuse or are unable to propose reasons for our alleged knowledge claim, then the claim is deemed as arbitrary – which is, in effect, the crux of the Pyrrhonian mode of hypothesis *and* Klein's PAA. If we justify our alleged knowledge claim via an already stated reason, we are arguing in a circle, which is unacceptable; this is, in turn, the crux of the Pyrrhonian mode of circularity *and* Klein's PAC. Now, both parties accept same premises (PAA and PAC), but the Pyrrhonist concludes to skepticism, whereas Klein ends up with infinitism. There is something curios about the situation; if both parties have the same premises, how could they end up with different conclusions? To repeat, Klein thinks that since the principles PAC and PAA are intuitively appealing, a plausible account of epistemic justification must be formulated so that the reasons supporting a justified belief must be infinite and non-repeating. But we could just as well say that the Pyrrhonist thinks that since the principles PAC and PAA are intuitively appealing, there is *not* a plausible account of epistemic justification. In my view, Klein has only reformulated the Pyrrhonist's regress problem, and, moreover, his reasons for preferring the infinitist solution are not satisfactory. Hence, skepticism remains the only response and outcome to the regress problem. Even Klein admits that in an infinitist framework "the possibility of skepticism is a serious one"[386].

Klein's reason for thinking that our search for truth may end up with skepticism is that "[p]erhaps, our capacities to form new dispositions and concepts will reach a limit"[387]. I think that we should not wait that long for rejecting infinitism, for other reasons are more pressing. Infinitism faces real trouble in explaining how we can distinguish justified infinite regresses from unjustified. It could be that the endless chain of beliefs we are, in a particular occasion, examining is, in fact, justified, but it could also be that it is not. And it is hard to see how we could show which one is the case. But infinitism does not aim for *showing* that something is the case, for, as infinitists claim, reasoning cannot settle matters and our beliefs are at best provisionally justified. However, I think that we do not need infinitism for saying that our beliefs are provisionally justified, for that amounts to saying that our beliefs are justified if they, in fact, are justified. That much has been clear right from the start, for even the skeptic admits that either we have knowledge or we do not. But the crucial question is, do we?

Before we are able to fully assess the plausibility of the regress problem or the Justification Argument, we should take a closer look at the contextualist approach to justification. Contextualists argue, in effect, that justification of a proposition depends on a context – the same belief can be justified in one context, and unjustified in another. After we have examined the contextualist account and are familiar with the features characteristic to internalist and externalist theories alike, we have a comprehensive picture of the relevant answers to the regress problem.

4.5. Contextualism as a Solution to the Regress Problem

Contextualism as an epistemological theory can be understood in various ways, for, during the history of modern epistemology, contextualism has taken many forms. In order to understand better how contextualism is relevant to the regress problem, we should take look at the different main forms of contextualism. First, I will concentrate on the so-called relevant alternatives theory, an early precursor of contextualism. The relevant alternatives theory gave rise to the nowadays standard version of contextualism that is usually referred to as 'semantic contextualism', yet the two forms of contextualism are quite different. It is only the third version of contextualism, provided to us by Michael Williams, that is directly relevant to the consideration of the regress problem. Thus, it might seem unnecessary to discuss also the two other forms of contextualism, the relevant alternatives theory and semantic contextualism. However, as this work is not only a study on the regress problem, but on skepticism in more generally, I find it useful to discuss the other types of

contextualists' responses to skepticism as well. Moreover, I think that it is also easier to understand Williams' strand of contextualism after the other two versions are briefly introduced.

4.5.1. The Relevant Alternatives Theory

Contextualism is motivated first and foremost by defending our ability to know and explaining the initial intuitiveness of the skeptic's challenge. Contextualists, in general, can be taken to hold *both* that skeptical arguments are plausible *and* that we do know most of the things we usually take ourselves to know. At first sight, such a combination of skepticism and anti-skepticism appears to be contradictory. Contextualists, of course, claim that the apparent contradiction is not real. In other words, there is no contradiction between knowing many ordinarily made claims, such as "I have two hands" and "The world has existed more than just five minutes", and *not* knowing that I am not deceived by a malevolent demon who makes me constantly go astray in all kinds of matters. How could all this be true? Firstly, it should be noted that we are dealing here explicitly with Cartesian or 'indiscernability' skepticism, as distinct from 'regress' skepticism that is stated in various formulations of the problem of the criterion, one of which is the regress problem[388]. Regress skepticism challenges us to propose reasons for our alleged instances or criteria of knowledge, whereas the idea peculiar to indiscernability skepticism is that our beliefs and perceptual states are the same whether we are deceived by a malevolent demon or not. The skeptic's next step is, of course, to argue that in order to know any (empirical) proposition, one must be able to exclude skeptical possibilities. The skeptic's argument can be formulated as follows:

(S1) I do not know not-SH.
(S2) If I do not know not-SH, then I do not know O.
(S3) I do not know O.[389]

In the above argument, 'SH' refers to a suitable and radical skeptical hypothesis, such as that one is being led astray by a malevolent demon, and 'O' refers to some "ordinary" proposition that we take ourselves to know, such as that "I have two hands". An obvious anti-skeptical counter-move with respect to the above argument would be to reformulate it in such a way that from the fact that I have two hands, together with the inferential principle, I can conclude that I am not deceived by a demon[390]. This anti-skeptical strategy, made famous by G. E. Moore[391], will not be considered in this study, for it amounts effectively to the particularist approach that has already been criticized in the earlier chapter[392]. The other strategy is to deny the premise S2 of the above argument.

Accordingly, it is argued that the truth or falsity of skeptical hypotheses is not relevant to knowledge of "ordinary" propositions. This idea forms the crux of the so-called *relevant alternatives* theories. As Fred Dretske, often cited as the inventor of the relevant alternatives approach, explicates it:

> What I am suggesting is that we simply admit that we do *not* know that some of these contrasting "skeptical alternatives" are *not* the case, but refuse to admit that we do not know what we originally said we knew. My knowing that the wall is red certainly entails that the wall is red; it also entails that the wall is not white and, in particular, it entails that the wall is not white cleverly illuminated to look red. But it does not follow from the fact that I know that the wall is red that I *know* that it is not white cleverly illuminated to look red. Nor does it follow from the fact that I know that those animals are zebras that I know that they are not mules cleverly disguised to look like zebras.[393]

In effect, Dretske argues that skeptical alternatives are not relevant in everyday contexts. I can know, for example, that I am sitting now, and from this I can infer and know that I am not standing, but still I cannot infer and know that I am not deceived by a malevolent demon. Thus, the skeptic is wrong in arguing that ordinary knowledge requires the exclusion of skeptical possibilities.[394] Dretske characterizes this view as a sort of contextualism, namely, knowledge depends on circumstances of context that are beyond an epistemic agent's ken. Usually, my visual perception of an apple tree is enough to eliminate the possibility of an orange tree disguised to look like an apple tree or the possibility of a deceiving demon. However, change the circumstances to an actual case of cunning deception, and I do not know that I see an apple tree. Thus, whether I know depends on circumstances of the context of which I am totally ignorant.[395] Anyway, *if* we know, we do not have to know that skeptical possibilities do not obtain. It seems absurd to claim that in order for me to know anything – no matter how trivial and "mundane" thing, such as that I see an apple tree at my grandmother's backyard – I must be able to know that my appearances are not misleading due to some bizarre and thorough fraud. And how could we possibly know such things? A global deception is possible but not relevant with respect to ordinary knowledge claims.[396]

4.5.2. Semantic Contextualism

The relevant alternatives approach implies a bold move: a denial of the so-called principle of closure.[397] The principle of closure says, in effect, that if I know that p implies q, and I know that p, then I also know that q. As noted above, Dretske explicitly denies the principle, for, according to Dretske, in order for me to know that I have two hands I do not have to know that I am not deceived

by a demon. For many, if not most, epistemologists, the denial of the closure principle is a sufficient reason to reject the relevant alternatives approach. Keith DeRose, for one, thinks that we should retain the principle of closure, for otherwise we are led to "abominable" conjunctions such as that I do not know that I am not a bodiless (and handless) soul deceived by a demon, but still I know that I have hands[398].

DeRose, however, favors another kind of contextualism. This other version concerns the usage of the term 'knowledge' and, hence, it can be labeled as *semantic* contextualism. Semantic contextualism is the most dominant form of contextualist theories of today. In contrast with relevant alternatives approach, semantic contextualists preserve the principle of closure. The trick of semantic contextualism is to argue that *both* the skeptic and the anti-skeptic are right in making their respective claims. It is argued, in effect, that the standards for knowing change according to the conversational context in which the knowledge claim is made. Accordingly, in a context where skeptical hypotheses are entertained, the standards are extremely high, whereas in an everyday context with ordinary knowledge claims, the standards are respectively much lower.[399] Incidentally, in Dretske's version of contextualism, one can consistently hold that standards for knowing *do* not change even if one is forced to abandon the principle of closure. Semantic contextualists are able to retain the principle of closure just because they hold that the standards for knowing *do* change. And as will be shown, in section 4.5.4., it is not a small price to pay for retaining the principle of closure.

Let us apply the present contextualist view to the skeptic's argument considered above. As a result, the contextualist's verdict regarding the premise S2 (If I do not know not-SH, then I do not know O) is that it is true irrespective of the context and epistemic standards affiliated with it. However, the truth values of the premises S1 (I do not know not-SH) and S3 (I do not know O) depend on the epistemic standards of the context in question. The premise S1 – saying, in effect, that we do not know that no skeptical hypothesis obtains – is true only at unusually high standards conducive to skepticism. Otherwise, and in ordinary contexts, the premise S1 is simply false and respectively the negation of S3 is true; that is, I know, for example, that I have hands. Thus, at low standards conducive to every day contexts we know that we are not deceived by a demon.[400] According to the present contextualist view, we are able to explain the initial plausibility of skeptical hypotheses without conceding to skepticism or giving up the intuitively plausible principle of closure. In other words, when we contemplate skeptical hypotheses, the standards for knowing rise drastically, and a skeptical conclusion seems inevitable. However, we can still plausibly hold that we know most of

the things we claim to know, for in everyday contexts we do not entertain skeptical hypotheses, and respectively the standards for knowing are considerably lower.[401] As DeRose explains:

> Even while we're in a context governed by high standards at which we don't count as knowing that O, we at the same time realize that as soon as we find ourselves in more ordinary conversational contexts, it will not only be true for us to claim to know these very Os that the skeptic now denies we know, but it will also be wrong for us to deny that we know these things.[402]
>
> For the fact that the skeptic can invoke very high standards that we don't live up to has no tendency to show that we don't satisfy the more relaxed standards that are in place in more ordinary conversations and debates [or that] (...) our ordinary claims to know are in any way defective.[403]

The central view of semantic contextualism can be clarified by an analogy. To begin with, it is noted that some terms are context-sensitive. For example, I may describe the table in front of me as flat, but somebody else, say, a scrupulous physicist, could deny that it is flat. The physicist would have more stringent standards for calling something flat. Thus, according to my standards, it is true that the table in front of me is flat, but according to the physicist's standards, it is false. Now, or so the analogy goes, 'knowledge' is similarly a context-sensitive term as 'flat'; the conversational context and its respective standards determine what counts as knowledge in a certain situation.[404]

4.5.3. Contextualism and Skepticism *about* Epistemology

The last form of contextualism considered here starts, roughly, from the idea that there is something seriously wrong with epistemologists' way of phrasing skeptical questions. In other words, skeptical doubts are not at all so intuitive, intelligible, and compelling as most epistemologists tend to think. The semantic contextualists considered above suggest that skeptical doubts are intelligible with respect to high standards conducive to skepticism, whereas the proponents of current version of contextualism suggest that skepticism is not intelligible at all. Accordingly, we should call into question, or be skeptical about, the skeptic's project of wholly unrestricted, general doubt. By doing epistemology in such an unrestricted manner, we will surely succumb to global skepticism, but that happens only if we accept the skeptic's assumption that *everything* is open to doubt. But what if it is not intelligible at all to put everything under generic skeptical doubt? These ideas can be interpreted as getting impetus from certain thoughts on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. The following passage is exemplary:

> [T]he *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.
>
> That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.
>
> But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.[405]

Thus, as Wittgenstein suggests, some propositions are exempt from doubt, not because they are not usually doubted, but rather that it does not make sense to doubt them. Moreover, Wittgenstein holds that we cannot give grounds for all of our beliefs; some beliefs are, and legitimately so, unsupported by further evidence. So Wittgenstein provides a kind of answer to the regress problem, for "[a]t the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded"[406]. In other words, the regress of beliefs stops at unjustified belief(s). To be sure, we can justify our beliefs and distinguish between warranted and unwarranted propositions[407]. However, justifying cannot continue indefinitely, and it is not that the end points – or "foundations," so to say – of justificatory chains are indubitable or necessarily true. Ceasing to give grounds for beliefs is just a kind of necessary pragmatic presumption on our part.[408] Propositions such as "I have two hands" and "The Earth has existed long before my birth" are not known, for they are just taken for granted or assumed in ordinary circumstances, and nor are those propositions open to doubt. Such propositions are just assumed, although they are not, strictly speaking, grounded at all. We, as philosophers or epistemologists, have better get used to the idea of "groundlessness of our believing"[409].

A form of contextualism developed by Michael Williams can be seen as a further elaboration of Wittgenstein's thoughts. In effect, Williams proceeds to show that the skeptic does not so much raise the standards for knowing as changes the subject. Williams thinks that semantic contextualists are too concessive, for they admit that the skeptic *is* right although only within the context of high standards pertaining to philosophical reflection. However, such a concession gives the skeptic all she ever asked for; that is, the skeptic triumphs, after all. Nothing prevents the skeptic from agreeing with the contextualist that the standards for knowing change along with the context. What the skeptic wants to emphasize, however, is that the skeptical conclusion acquired within the context of philosophical reflection is applicable to *all* contexts, including everyday circumstances. Of course, we do not entertain skeptical hypotheses while engaging in everyday affairs, and, thus, the standards for knowledge in place are definitely different from those used in a state-of-the-art epistemology. However, the skeptic argues that philosophical reflection reveals that, in fact, we do

not know, although we are willing to *think* that we do know a great number of things in ordinary circumstances.[410]

The contextualist is committed to the view that ordinary epistemic contexts are in a way continuous with skeptical scenarios, the crucial difference being that the latter consider such possibilities that are too remote to be taken seriously in ordinary contexts. However, Williams argues that the initial plausibility of skeptical scenarios cannot be explained by appealing to a function of their remoteness and respective high standards. Consider the following example. I am going to a museum and I have a guidebook that tells the opening hours of the museum. Do I *know* when the museum opens? Suppose, then, that I am faced with the following skeptical defeaters[411], from "pressing" to "hyper-remote", that can undermine my knowledge:

> *Pressing*. The guidebook was published several years ago and is likely to contain information that is out of date.
>
> *Remote*. Although the guidebook is up to date, in a fit of pique the museum director has deliberately forwarded false information to the publisher.
>
> *Very Remote*. Companies publishing guidebooks have been infiltrated by members of an underground group bent on undermining the world economy. Part of their plan to disrupt tourism, the world's number one industry, involves corrupting the information in popular guidebooks. As a result, most recently published guidebooks contain substantial inaccuracies.
>
> *Hyper-remote*. There is no guidebook; there is no museum: I'm a brain in a vat.[412]

Now, according to contextualists, the more remote the skeptical possibility introduced, the more severe the standards involved. If this were the case, less remote possibilities would be more worrisome, since they are easier to be taken seriously. However, as Williams points out, this is dubious. The conspiracy case (referred to as "Very Remote") seems just silly, whereas the classic brain-in-a-vat case ("Hyper-remote") can be seen as a serious and relevant defeater to our empirical knowledge. Thus, the peculiarity of skeptical scenarios has not necessarily anything to do with their seeming remoteness. On the other hand, I could implement very high epistemic standards without even coming close to entertaining skeptical scenarios. For example, in my research concerning history I could be really critical of my sources, but if I paused to wonder whether the world has ever existed more than five minutes, would that amount to just one more increase in my epistemic standards? Williams is inclined to answer in the negative, for, according to him, I have stopped doing history and started doing (skeptical) epistemology instead. Thus, what has happened is that the subject has changed and not that the standards have been raised.[413]

Skepticism is, according to Williams, a fishy enterprise due to its unusual and questionable *generality*. As soon as we undertake the general questions concerning knowledge, we are caught in the skeptic's net. But why should we think that we could ask, not to mention answering, such general questions? The skeptic's enterprise is dubious, since it assumes totally general and unbiased perspective, a sort of "view from nowhere", which is not possible, not at least for humans. Skeptical doubts are unlike any other we confront in our epistemic affairs, and they are radically discontinuous with ordinary epistemic practices. Williams suggests, following Wittgenstein, that we cannot even understand general skepticism: Doubt requires and presupposes some basis that is not doubted and from which doubting is advanced. If we tried to doubt everything, we could not get as far as doubting anything.[414] Williams is quite pessimistic about the viability of skepticism in general, he even tersely states that skepticism "is not a well thought-out theoretical enterprise. To give it up would be no loss"[415]. Thus, the only sort of skepticism we should endorse is skepticism about philosophy[416], or more specifically, skepticism about "the traditional epistemological project"[417].

4.5.4. Objections I: Contextualism and Skepticism

There is a mass of serious objections to contextualism, and together they quite conclusively warrant the claim that none of the many forms of contextualism provides us with even an approximate solution to skepticism or the regress problem. In this section, I examine how the relevant alternatives theory and semantic contextualism succeed in responding to the problem of skepticism. In the following section, I examine how contextualism – Williams' strand of it, in particular – succeeds in responding to the regress problem.

To begin with the relevant alternatives approach, the most serious problem, as stated already above, concerns its rejection of the principle of closure[418]. Right, *if* we reject the principle of closure we are able to respond to skepticism: I know that I have two hands, and I do not know that I am not deceived by a malevolent demon, but there is no contradiction between the two known propositions. The crucial question is this: are we willing to let go of the principle of closure? I am inclined to answer in the negative. If I really *know* that, at this very moment, I am sitting at my office in Turku, I most definitely also know that I am *not* on a distant planet far from the Earth being deceived by evil alien scientists, whose experiments cause me to have all these vivid appearances I currently happen to have. Nevertheless, according to the relevant alternatives theorists, I do not know the latter proposition. I find their view simply unacceptable; the principle of closure is intuitively

extremely plausible, and the relevant alternative theorists have not provided us with sufficient reasons or arguments in favor of giving up the principle. Sure, defeating skepticism is quite an achievement, but the price is too high: abandoning the principle of closure leads to too many unwanted and unintuitive consequences. Finally, even if the relevant alternatives approach manages to deal with the Cartesian or 'indiscernability' skepticism, it does not provide us with a successful answer to the regress skepticism. Even if we reject the principle of closure, how does that help us to answer to the regress problem? In no way, I think.

Moreover, the relevant alternatives theorist should be able to justify her claim to the effect that skeptical scenarios are not relevant in ordinary epistemic contexts. How does she know all this? It seems that we need a criterion for distinguishing irrelevant epistemic defeaters from the relevant ones. Why, in a zoo-context, is not the possibility of cleverly disguised mule in a zoo relevant but it is that, in general, I am able to tell mules apart from zebras? What if I really were in a "Mule Park" that contains only cleverly disguised mules to look like other species? Surely, then, the possibility of a painted mule looking like a zebra would be relevant.[419]

The semantic contextualism approach, in turn, commits us to many implausible views. To begin with, it is unintuitive to claim that the epistemic status of belief can change according to the conversational context. My belief that "Dinosaurs have inhabited the Earth" counts as knowledge if it is true and my grounds for believing it are sufficient for making the belief justified. Either I know that "Dinosaurs have inhabited the Earth" or I do not, but my knowing this cannot be a matter of a conversational context. Moreover, according to contextualists, as I understand them, in some contexts I know that dinosaurs have existed, but in some contexts I know that dinosaurs have not existed. For example, in the current Western context which I inhabit, my belief that dinosaurs have existed counts as justified and knowledge. However, in another context, with a different culture and different epistemic standards, my belief that there have not been dinosaurs could count as justified and knowledge. I find this puzzling. And I am not content with the contextualist's witty rejoinder to the effect that I know in both contexts, since the respective epistemic standards are different in each context. Finally, how do we decide whether one is simply mistaken or her belief is justified according to her context's epistemic standards? This is not always so clear-cut. For example, in the past I once believed that dinosaurs became extinct because at some point there was not enough food for them to digest. However, I formed my belief according to the epistemic standards of my context, so my belief should count as justified and knowledge. Nevertheless later on I found various theories about the causes of the mass extinction of the dinosaurs, and I came to realize that I was clearly

mistaken about the reasons why dinosaurs ceased to exist. Granted, I accept that I can have *justified* beliefs in both situations (or 'contexts'), but, clearly, I cannot know in both cases.[420]

We can grant to the contextualist that some people are willing to ascribe to themselves knowledge far more easily and loosely than others who use the term 'justification' more stringently. But that was never in doubt, people can use language freely and think that their beliefs are justified or count as knowledge. The question is, *do* we have justified beliefs or knowledge? Indeed, many of us use epistemic concepts loosely, but what if the skeptic is right and we have never had knowledge, be the context-dependent standards whatever they may. Thus, the complaint is that semantic contextualism is simply irrelevant with respect to epistemological concerns.[421]

As we recall, the main motivation for developing a contextualist theory of knowledge was to provide us with an answer to the skeptic's challenge. However, an answer to the effect that both the skeptic and the anti-skeptic are right, is intellectually unsatisfactory. The skeptic and the anti-skeptic have a genuine disagreement, and it seems that the contextualist's account does not leave us any better off than before her entrance into the epistemological playground. In fact, the situation has changed for the worse, for I have hard times to understand how two camps, with contrary claims, can both be right. Does that not lead to a repugnant view that "anything goes"? Although the contextualist could say in response that there are context-dependent rules and criteria for determining what counts as justified belief or knowledge in particular context, does it not only raise a new question, namely "Does not any context go?"[422] In hope of understanding the contextualist's claims, I can still comprehend the claim that *justification* is context-dependent, but what I cannot comprehend, is how *knowledge* could possibly be context-dependent? A dilemma for the contextualist threatens. If all contexts are epistemically on a par, then it seems that everything could be known. In effect, everyone can know everything, since justification and knowledge are matters of conversational context. If, on the other hand, some contexts are epistemically inferior, it means that we need a universal, i.e. not context-dependent, criterion for distinguishing bad contexts from good ones. In other words, we need a universal, context-independent criterion for distinguishing justified from unjustified propositions and the motivation for a contextualist epistemology immediately vanishes. In sum, a contextualist account amounts just to an *ad hoc* explanation of skepticism at the price of making everything knowledge.

Semantic contextualism seems to fall into a form of relativism, treating numerous and contrary contexts as epistemically on a par. On the other hand, it is not so clear what contextualists mean by

the term 'context'. Do epistemologists belong to one context and non-epistemologists to other? And presumably, as the above discussion indicates, the context of epistemologists divides at least into two separate camps: that of anti-skeptics and that of skeptics. Can I belong to several contexts at the same time, and can one person form her own, independent context? These are tricky questions, and I would like to add, they are ones that are not worth pursuing. If we aim to answer to the problem of skepticism, it appears that the contextualist approach just multiplies our problems and does not even give a successful answer to the original problem.

4.5.5. Objections II: Contextualism and the Regress Problem

What kind of solution do contextualists have to offer to the regress problem? Although the so-called semantic contextualists do not direct their energies to deal with the regress problem, proponents of the last considered form of contextualism are explicitly interested in solving the regress problem.

Williams admits that the form of contextualism he favors is, formally at least, a variant of foundationalism. In every context there are various background presuppositions that are exempt from doubt. However, these context-dependent "basic beliefs" are not certain or maximally warranted as, in contrast, the foundationalist's chosen beliefs are supposed to be. Williams claims that this contextualist approach has profound implications for solving the regress problem.[423] He writes:

> [I]n practice, the threat of regress, or even of an extended sequence of claims and challenges, is slight to nonexistent. Faced with renewed grounds, we soon find ourselves with nothing very specific to add. Asked to "justify" some crashingly obvious claim, we are likely to say something like "I can just see what's happening" or "It stands to reason."[424]

The important moral is that our inability or unwillingness to give reasons for each of our beliefs does not lead to skepticism, but rather to skepticism about epistemology. How plausible or helpful are these Williams' views about skepticism, which Dretske unsympathetically labels as "Wittgensteinian hocus pocus"?[425] Even though we do not, *in practice*, entertain skeptical doubts about the external world, does this in itself indicate in any way that our beliefs about the external world are likely to be true? The contextualist openly admits that context-dependent basic beliefs are not justified at all. But how could *unjustified* beliefs terminate the regress of beliefs? If we acknowledge that some of our beliefs are arbitrary, it means that we do not have any reasons for

thinking that those beliefs are true. The Pyrrhonian mode of hypothesis enters into the picture, and we should suspend judgment about those propositions revealed to be arbitrary, rather than be skeptical about epistemology![426]

Moreover, one could wonder how ignorance of epistemology or skeptical possibilities could establish our knowledge, as many contextualists see the matter. David Lewis, for one, thinks that we know if we are just able to ignore the skeptical possibilities[427]. Fogelin, for other, also calmly states that, for the most part, we *do not* let skeptical possibilities worry us[428]. Thus, ignorance is a cognitive bliss, but epistemologists and other reflective wretches are doomed to the vortex of skepticism where nothing is known. I object. It is a shameful result for epistemology if knowledge is gained via ignorance – well, of relevant skeptical possibilities – but intellectual reflection leads to a cognitive demise.

It should be noted that, trivially, knowledge and justification of some propositions is context-dependent. For example, the proposition "I am heavier than 83 kilograms" is, arguably, justified and knowledge for me, Krister Talvinen, today, on the 16th of October 2006, but not so for someone else who does not weight over 83 kilograms. Moreover, in the case of context-dependent propositions I can affirm a proposition and you can deny it, but still both of us can be right, for we do not have a genuine disagreement. Indexicals and comparative terms can make justification and knowledge of propositions context-dependent, which should not present a problem for epistemology. However, it is extremely implausible to suggest, as contextualists do, that justification and knowledge of *all* propositions is context-dependent. There *are* genuine disagreements *across* different contexts, and if a particular epistemology tends to dispel them, so much worse for the theory.[429] Moreover, if it is hold, as contextualists do, that knowledge of a particular proposition depends on the context, what kind of theory of truth are we assuming? I suppose that not even contextualists are willing to say that *truth* of propositions depends on the context, but if that is so, I would be curious to know what kind of, *non-relativist*, theory of truth makes it possible to hold that knowledge of propositions depends on the context.

So far I have discussed various internalist theories of justification as responses to the regress problem. And honestly said, neither foundationalism, coherentism, infinitism nor contextualism has succeeded in addressing the problem. Next I turn to consider the externalist approach in epistemology. First, in section 4.6., I briefly characterize externalism. Then, in the following two sections, I discuss whether externalism in general addresses that kind of questions I think

epistemology *should* address. Obviously, the main focus will be the problem of skepticism and how externalists and internalists alike try to respond to it. Finally, in section 4.6.3., I discuss how externalist theory of knowledge and justification succeeds in addressing the regress problem.

4.6. Externalism in Epistemology

What is so difficult about knowing anyway? Why should we always be able to propose reasons for our beliefs in order for them be justified or knowledge? If only those beliefs count as justified that are inferred from some sort of basic propositions, as the story is told by the foundationalists, it seems that a very few of us have justified beliefs. Is it not quite implausible to suggest that only epistemologists – and yet of the internalist kind – can have justified beliefs? What about children, animals, and other not so reflective kinds of creatures? All of them can have knowledge, the externalists say. The natural functions of a being's cognitive faculties, rather than intellectual reflection on the part of the being, determine whether one has knowledge. The externalists suggest that if our cognitive faculties function the way they should, they produce reliable information about our surroundings and this information we convert into knowledge. For example, if my perceptual faculty functions properly, my belief "I see a computer in front of me" is true and justified, and therefore counts as knowledge. Moreover, according to the externalists, we have no reason to deny children's or animals' ability to have knowledge. Why could it not be claimed that, say, a wolf in the woods in some sense *knows* things such as that it is hungry, that there is a tree in front of it, and that it has pain in the left hind limb?

Externalists do not deny the fact that, occasionally, we infer propositions from other propositions and, thus, we can have inferential knowledge. However, what externalists *do* deny is that we must have some kind of access – reflective or otherwise – to the justificatory factors of our beliefs in order for us to have knowledge. And it is exactly here where the intuitions of the epistemologists clash, for internalists hold that we *must* have some kind of access – reflective or otherwise – to the justificatory factors of our beliefs in order for us to have knowledge.[430] According to the externalists, knowing is as simple as being related in a proper way to the external world. As Cling explains the externalist account:

> According to such an external account, there is no sense in which a person's having a reason for *P* need be less mechanical or more self-reflectively satisfying than a supermarket door's "knowing" that someone is approaching. Whether or not I have a genuine reason for a belief is not a matter of how I

> conduct my doxastic affairs with respect to that belief but is a matter of whether or not my affairs are attuned to my environment in the right sort of way.[431]

In other words, beliefs are justified in virtue of their relationship to some external facts that are outside of the epistemic agent's cognitive perspective. Thus, as pointed out in Cling's quotation above, externalists hold that justification of beliefs depends on externally grounded reasons to which we do not have to have access.

Internalists demur. According to them, knowing requires having some kind of access (reflective or otherwise) to the reasons that justify a true belief. Moreover, internalists may determine that the access to the justifying factors of beliefs must be merely "potential" in character; that is, we do not have to be actually aware of the justifying factors, but we must always be able to specify the justifying factors if so required, in order for our beliefs to count as justified or known. Internalists hold that if no access to justifying factors is required, then all kinds of true beliefs that just come "out of the blue" could qualify as knowledge. Keith Lehrer's famous example of Mr. Truetemp is intended to clarify this internalist intuition, viz. that the mere possession of correct information does not suffice for knowledge. As Lehrer tells the story, Mr. Truetemp has a "tempucomp" implanted in his head. The tempucomp is a very accurate thermometer that transmits information about the outside temperature to Mr. Truetemp's brain so that he unreflectively forms true beliefs about the temperature. But does he know what the temperature is?[432] "Surely not"[433], answers Lehrer. And externalists, of course, disagree. Externalists could point out that if the tempucomp is a reliable belief forming process – i.e. it has a sufficiently high truth ratio – and Mr. Tempucomp learns to rely on its outcomes (beliefs about temperature), why could we not say that his beliefs *are* justified or known? Moreover, is our relation to our *other* cognitive processes that different from Truetemp's relation to the tempucomp? In other words, it could be claimed that we do not have any access to the workings of, for instance, sense perception either and therefore we should evaluate similarly the outcomes of sense perception and the tempucomp. If we hold that the tempucomp is not an acceptable belief forming process, then the same should hold of sense perception, and vice versa.

It seems that internalists and externalists have simply different intuitions about knowledge. Internalists' epistemic intuition is that knowledge requires access to the justifying factors, while externalists' intuition is exactly the opposite. To spell out in more detail the internalist position, consider the following, rather lengthy, passage from BonJour:

> When viewed from the general standpoint of the Western epistemological tradition, externalism represents a quite substantial departure. It seems safe to say that until very recent times, no serious philosopher of knowledge would have dreamed of suggesting that a person's beliefs might be epistemically justified merely in virtue of facts or relations that are external to his subjective conception. Descartes, for example, would surely have been quite unimpressed by the suggestion that his problematic beliefs about the external world were justified if only they were in fact reliably caused, whether or not he had any reason for thinking this to be so. Clearly his conception, and that of generations of philosophers who followed, was that such a relation could play a justificatory role only if the believer himself possessed adequate reasons for thinking that the relation obtained. Thus the suggestion embodied in externalism would have been regarded as simply irrelevant to the main epistemological issue, so much so that the philosopher who suggested it would have been taken either to be hopelessly confused or to be simply changing the subject (...).[434]

In sum, BonJour holds that externalism is an uninteresting or irrelevant theory of knowledge. But is it? What is really at stake here in the debate between internalists and externalists? How could we resolve this conflict between the two camps? These are very good and important questions, indeed. To repeat, I think that, fundamentally, the conflict between externalists and internalists boils down to their different epistemic intuitions. And it is a tricky question how to resolve a conflict between intuitions, since intuitions are just intuitions and as such something non-argumentative. We have some kind of an idea of how to resolve a conflict between *arguments*, but intuitions seem to be categorically different entities. However, for now, let us try to flesh out the internalist intuitions against externalism and formulate some specific arguments as to why externalism is thought to be, by internalists, such a faulty theory of knowledge.

4.6.1. Conditional Analyses of Knowledge

A quite recent complaint against externalism is that the approach merely reduces epistemology to a conditional analysis of knowledge. A prominent example of an externalist theory of knowledge is reliabilism, according to which a belief is justified if it is a product of a properly functioning, reliable belief forming mechanism. Hence, knowledge amounts to a true belief that is a product of a reliable belief forming mechanism. To repeat, an epistemic agent need not be aware of the "external" (from the agent's point of view) and justifying factors that causally produce and sustain her beliefs. In order for me to know that "There is a table in front of me", the corresponding true belief must be a product of a properly functioning perceptual faculty, and not, say, a product of wishful thinking. BonJour, once again, objects to the externalist enterprise:

> No matter how much work may be done in delineating externalist conceptions of knowledge or justification or reliability and in investigating how those apply to various kinds of beliefs or areas of investigation, there is a way in which all such results are merely *hypothetical* and insecure as long as they cannot be arrived at from the resources available within a first-person perspective. If, for example, an epistemologist claims that a certain belief or set of beliefs, whether his or her own or someone else's, has been arrived at in a reliable way, but says this on the basis of cognitive processes of his or her own whose reliability is merely for him or her an external fact to which he or she has no first-person access, then the proper conclusion is merely that the belief or beliefs originally in question are reliably arrived at (and perhaps thereby are justified or constitute knowledge in externalist senses) *if* the epistemologist's own cognitive processes are reliable in the way he or she believes them to be. ... But the only apparent way to arrive at result that is not ultimately hypothetical in this way is for the reliability of at least some processes to be establishable on the basis of what the epistemologist can know directly or immediately from his or her first-person epistemic perspective.[435]

Thus, according to BonJour's criticism, externalist theories of knowledge – reliabilism, for instance – make knowledge hypothetical or conditional: we have knowledge *if* our beliefs are products of reliable belief forming mechanisms. A similar complaint against externalist theories is made by Richard Fumerton:

> It is *tempting* to think that externalist analyses of knowledge and justified belief simply remove one *level* the traditional problems of skepticism. ... Perception, memory, and induction *may* be reliable processes (...) and thus ... we *may* be justified in having the beliefs they produce but, the skeptic can argue, we have no reason to believe that these processes *are* reliable and thus even if we accept reliabilism, we have no reason to think that the beliefs they produce are justified.[436]

Fumerton's complaint seems to be, in effect, that due to the conditional character of externalist theories they do not provide us with any answer whatsoever to the problem of skepticism. Hilary Kornblith, whose sympathies lie within the externalist camp, agrees that if the considered kind of criticism against externalism is correct, then externalism is, indeed, in deep trouble. Kornblith proceeds to show that reliabilism, as a representative theory of externalism, does not make knowledge merely conditional. He argues that reliabilism explains and shows how knowledge is possible, whereas internalism seems to lead inexorably to skepticism and, thus, makes knowledge impossible.[437] Moreover, reliabilism explains how we are in possession of a great deal of knowledge, for "[s]urely our world is a world containing creatures many of whose beliefs are both true and reliably produced, and surely we are among those creatures"[438]. Incidentally, one starts to wonder how Kornblith knows such things, even to the extent that he is *sure* about them.

Kornblith's answer to the alleged problem of externalism is quite simple. He contends that if there is a problem about the conditional character of reliabilism, then the same problem applies to all theories of knowledge. But is there a problem for reliabilism? According to reliabilism, a person S knows that *p* if and only if her belief that *p* is true and reliably produced. What is exactly lacking here? Is it supposed to be a problem for reliabilism that according to its analysis of knowledge a person knows if and only if she knows? Nor is a higher level knowledge a problem for a reliabilism, according to which a person knows that she knows that *p* if and only if her belief that she knows that *p* is both true and reliably produced. Internalists, of course, proclaim that "a first-person access" to the justifying reasons for a belief is required, but externalists simply reject such a requirement for knowledge. So is the complaint that externalist theories do not fulfill internalist constraints for knowledge? A quite unfair objection thus. If the complaint is that the truth of a belief is external to the epistemic agent, then this "problem" clearly applies to all theories of knowledge. The truth of a person's belief is external from her "first-person perspective" as is the reliability of the belief forming mechanism in question. But, of course, the truth of a belief is external to the epistemic agent also with respect to the internalist account.[439]

I am not convinced of Kornblith's answer to the conditionality objection to externalism. But maybe my inability to see the force of Kornblith's arguments is affected by my slightly biased thinking, for, I admit, my epistemic intuitions are a kind of internalist rather than externalist. However, despite my bias, I try to show why Kornblith's answer is not convincing. Firstly, it is not true that internalism makes knowledge impossible while externalism makes it possible – not at least if *logical* possibility is concerned. Obviously, internalists do not hold that knowledge is logically impossible any more than externalists do. Nor does internalism entail the logical impossibility of knowledge. If epistemic possibility, in turn, is concerned, then it may well be that internalism leads to skepticism, but so does externalism, or so I will argue in chapter 5.

Secondly, I do not agree that all theories of knowledge are conditional in character. True, all theories define some conditions that must be satisfied in order for a belief to count as justified or known, but that does not mean that all theories are conditional in the same sense as externalism is. Let me explain. According to, say, an internalist foundationalist, my belief is justified if it is based on a (justified) basic belief. Therefore, I can see via reflection whether my belief is thus based. If it is, the answer to the question whether my belief is justified is "Yes", otherwise "No". But an externalist, in contrast, cannot provide us with a similar test, since my belief is justified *if* it is a product of a reliable process. Are sense perception or reasoning reliable belief forming processes? If

the externalist answers in the affirmative, we would like to see her reasons for so saying. But as soon as the externalist tries to *show* that our cognitive faculties are reliable, skeptical problems emerge. This will be shown in chapter 5, in which the topic of epistemic circularity is discussed. Therefore, externalism either leads to skepticism or it is incurably conditional in character. An incurably conditional theory of knowledge is not a true option at all, since it amounts only to a pathetic attempt to bypass the problem of skepticism and not to a sincere treatment of the problem. As soon as the externalist is forced to abandon the false haven of conditionality, she is unable to address properly the problem of skepticism.

Finally, Kornblith appeals to the fact that truth, at least, is as external to the internalist as it is to the externalist. Despite the danger of being overly harsh, my initial response to Kornblith's claim is "So what?" In the first place, we were dealing with question of whether knowledge is conditional in the externalist account, and the notion of truth was not even mentioned. Yes, I agree that truth *is* as external to the internalist as it is to the externalist, but *justification* is not. An internalist can see upon reflection whether her belief satisfies the condition of being justified, but the externalist only insists that a belief is justified *if* the belief forming process is reliable. In sum, I find that Kornblith's answers to the conditionality objection to externalism are unconvincing. Moreover, I find that the objection is plausible and, later on, I will appeal to it in many places in this work. The conditionality objection to externalism is almost suspiciously simple and maybe it is wise to have some reservations about the objection. Thus, I do not hold that the conditionality objection is conclusive against externalism although it is a very good objection. My hesitancy to deem the objection definitive is due to the fact that the issue boils down to the contrary intuitions of the internalists and externalists. I happen to have rather internalist epistemic intuitions and I find the conditionality objection, well, intuitively plausible. But someone, like Kornblith for one, with more externalist epistemic intuitions holds that the conditionality objection is not convincing and, furthermore, the externalist conception of knowledge is very intuitive.[440] Debates that take place at the level of intuitions are problematic, but prior to discussing intuitions in chapter 5, I will raise some serious, *argumentative* objections to externalism in the same chapter.

4.6.2. Knowledge: Easy or Impossible?

Arguably, there is something intellectually unsatisfactory about the externalist approach to epistemology, according to which we know if our cognitive apparatus is properly attuned to external facts. It seems that, in the externalist account, knowledge comes too *easy*. After all,

skepticism – either the Pyrrhonian variety invoking the diallelus or the Cartesian variety invoking malevolent demons or other similar skeptical scenarios – strikes as a thoroughgoing, deep, and serious problem. The externalist explanation makes us feel that something is still missing. But what is that we are craving for in epistemology in general?

We can try to clarify what is missing in the externalist account by concentrating on Barry Stroud's writings. Stroud has emphasized the importance of *understanding* our knowledge[441], and this view can be used to illustrate what the externalists supposedly miss in their account of knowledge. However, it should be noted that the debate between Stroud and his externalist opponents boils down to differing intuitions, again. Thus, it is hard to decide who is right, after all, since one's initial epistemic intuitions settle the issue beforehand!

Stroud holds that, in epistemology, we are not merely searching for a list of facts we think we know, but, instead, we want to understand *how* we come to know the things we know, if any. We are searching for a general and philosophical explanation of our alleged knowledge, and as such the enterprise of epistemology clearly differs from empirical sciences. In botany, for example, we simply can take the reliability of perception for granted and on this basis we can list the features characteristic of, say, spurge. With the help of the determined criteria we are able to distinguish spurge from other flora. However, it is hard to see how similar procedure could work within epistemology. If I start listing things I think I know, it does not yet amount to epistemology, but only to a list of things I, arguably, know. Epistemology begins when I pause to wonder whether I really know all those things in my list and on what grounds I assume so. More specifically, Stroud explains the role of epistemology as follows:

> What we seek in the philosophical theory of knowledge is an account that is completely general in several respects. We want to understand how any knowledge at all is possible – how anything we currently accept amounts to knowledge. Or, less ambitiously, we want to understand with complete generality how we come to know anything at all in a certain specified domain.[442]

In other words, we want to have an account of knowledge that explains in a satisfactory way how we are able to know anything at all. Similarly, the philosophical problem of other minds cannot be solved by asking someone what are her current thoughts and feelings. Even if the statement, say, "I am happy", pronounced by the interviewed person were in fact true, that would contribute nothing with respect to the problem of other minds. We want to understand *how* anyone can know whether

someone else is in a mental state in which one claims to be.[443] Similarly for perceptual knowledge, as Stroud illustrates:

> One way I can know that my neighbour is at home is by seeing her car in front of her house, where she parks it when and only when she is at home. That is a perfectly good explanation of how I know that fact about one of the things around me. It is a different way of knowing where my neighbour is from seeing her through the window or hearing her characteristic fumblings on the piano. But it could not satisfy us as an explanation of how I know anything at all about objects around me. It explains how I know something about one object around me – my neighbour – by knowing something about another object around me – her car. It could not answer the philosophical question as to how I know anything about any objects around me at all.[444]

The point here is that the externalist approach to epistemology just amounts to listing alleged instances of knowledge as in the example about the neighbor's car considered above[445]. Even if we had a complete externalist account of knowledge that would explain in perfect details, for example, the neurophysiological facts responsible for my belief "There is a computer in front of me", something would be missing.[446] Stroud tries to show what is wrong with externalism with another example that considers "divine" externalist epistemology. Suppose that we have an epistemologist who argues that knowledge amounts to reliable workings of our cognitive faculties whose truth-conduciveness is guaranteed by a benevolent God. Suppose further that the epistemologist does not try to provide us with proof showing that there is, indeed, a benevolent God who vouches for the reliability of our cognitive faculties. Instead, she concentrates on filling the details of her theory, drawing heavily on the studies of leading neurophysiologists. Finally, suppose that the epistemologist is in fact correct; her theory represents a true description of human knowledge acquisition. However, the question arises has the epistemologist provided us with a satisfactory account of whether we have knowledge? Stroud is inclined to answer in the negative.[447]

According to Stroud, externalist theories in general do not give us a sufficient reason to believe the theories themselves.[448] Reliabilism, with or without invoking the truth-conferring God, may be true but is it? If the externalist tried to prove her theory, we could critically examine the demonstration on the basis of which we could then determine whether to accept the theory. Suppose that Descartes and the externalist agree to the extent that we have knowledge if our cognitive faculties work properly. However, the two differ in the respect that Descartes tries to prove that our faculties, in fact, work properly and produce true beliefs, whereas the externalist offers us no proof, only repeats her mantra "We have knowledge if our cognitive faculties are reliable". Now, there is something

very odd about the situation as to where Descartes is blamed for the circularity of his alleged proof of reliability of reason, the externalist gets away with giving no proof at all, and is even praised for her account of knowledge in some circles. How can reluctance to prove one's account be a virtue in epistemology?

Commenting on Stroud's criticism of externalism, Sosa points out that Stroud's conception of knowledge is a far too demanding. Sosa asks us to consider such a situation in which our cognitive faculties are reliable, the externalist description we have given of the mechanisms of our cognitive faculties is accurate and true, and we believe that our cognitive faculties are reliable, and that belief is also a product of a reliable cognitive process.[449] Now, Sosa asks, "What could possibly be missing? How could we possibly improve our epistemic situation?"[450] These are very good questions, indeed. However, Stroud emphasizes that the *problem* with externalism is that it is always possible to construct a competing externalist theory of knowledge that can yield seemingly strange beliefs as justified or known. For example, one could claim and believe that crystal ball gazing is a reliable belief forming mechanism, and if it, in fact, were reliable, the externalist account – of crystal ball gazing, to be specific – would be as good as it can get.[451] Sosa acknowledges this problem of externalism and is forced to conclude that "it is discomfort we must learn to tolerate"[452]. Our attempts to formulate a comprehensive theory of knowledge will always suffer from a form of circularity, for we must suppose the truth of that very theory when formulating it[453]. It is another question whether this kind of circularity – *epistemic* circularity, as it has become to be known, the topic of the next main chapter – is necessarily vicious. However, if circularity is the inevitable outcome of our epistemological enterprise, as Sosa seems to think, then the skeptic seems to have the upper hand, after all. We have to wait and see whether the examination of the topic of epistemic circularity gives us the means to defeat the skeptic.

But even if externalists are in trouble with defending their account of knowledge, it is neither easy to see what Stroud is exactly after in stressing the importance of *understanding* in epistemology. What does it even mean to achieve a *general* understanding of human knowledge? Maybe we are trying to attain something that is in principle beyond our reach. Perhaps Stroud is right in claiming that externalist accounts of knowledge can never be fully satisfactory, but it seems that the same applies to all theories of knowledge, externalist or internalist in character – at least if we accept Stroud's ideal of knowledge. The following passage from Stroud reveals how unattainable the goal of epistemology is:

> The philosophical problem of knowledge of the [external] world might well be an expression of an aspiration we can all appreciate and sympathize with: a desire to understand ourselves in a certain way, to get into a certain position with respect to human knowledge and perhaps the human condition generally. It takes the form of a desire to get outside that knowledge and that condition, as it were, while somehow retaining all the resources needed to see them as they are. Who can say what illumination might be gained into human beings and human reflection by understanding better how and why such a detached position can seem so tempting while remaining forever unavailable to us?[454]

Of course we can simply refuse to accept Stroud's view about the goal of epistemology. But then it seems that we come close to the externalist approach to epistemology: that we have knowledge is simply a matter of fulfilling certain nomological conditions pertaining to the workings of our cognitive faculties and their relation to the external world. But are those conditions fulfilled? The externalist's brief rejoinder is that the conditions are fulfilled and we can know that they are if our cognitive mechanisms work properly. Is the externalist answer satisfactory? Stroud denies that it is. But if we want something more from epistemology than externalism is able to provide, we soon find ourselves in the unbearable situation to which Stroud constantly refers to: we are trying to attain something that, as a matter of human condition, cannot, even in principle, be reached. If this alternative way of thinking about epistemology amounts to internalism, as I am inclined to think, then we face the dilemma of choosing between externalism and internalism, where the former tends to make knowledge too easy and the latter impossible[455]. The skeptic, of course, suspends judgment about both views and, well, about everything.

4.6.3. Externalism, Internalism, and the Regress Problem

At first sight, it seems that the externalist approach is effective against the regress problem[456]. As stated, the regress problem arises when we are asked to provide epistemically good reasons for our beliefs. And once the regress of reasons starts off, it is extremely difficult to block in a satisfactory way. Circular reasoning or proposing some "basic" beliefs that somehow – abracadabra! – are not in need of further justification just seem implausible solutions to the Pyrrhonian skeptic's challenge. However, externalists simply reject the assumption that all beliefs should be grounded by further reasons. If we accept the externalist proposal, it seems that the regress problem is nullified. It is enough for knowledge that our beliefs are, in fact, formed in accordance with the externalist norm of reliability, and are, thus, true representations of the external world. For example, my unreflectively formed belief "There is a computer in front of me" amounts to knowledge and there is no question about the regress of reasons.

Now, of course, the crucial question is whether we accept the externalist proposal as a satisfactory answer to the problem of skepticism. Here discordant notes arise; some accept and some reject the externalist way out of skepticism. I am inclined to think that externalism is not a successful solution to skepticism or to the problem of the criterion. This will be shown in more detail in the next main chapter. For now, it suffices to quote Fogelin who writes as follows: "the externalist *seems to change the subject* by saying that the possession of good reasons is not a necessary condition for knowing something"[457]. In other words, when we wonder how we could avoid the horns of arbitrary assumption, circular reasoning, and infinite regress while providing reasons for our beliefs, the externalist seems to suggest that we can simply dismiss the regress problem altogether. Surely we *can* choose to ignore the problem, but then it is hard to resist the feeling that we have not addressed the problem properly.

Internalists reject the externalist account and hold that justification *is* a matter of having access to the justificatory factors of our beliefs. Numerous variations of internalism have been proposed, and some of them hold that a belief is justified only if a person actually has access to the justifying reasons, whereas others hold that justification requires that the justifying reasons are somehow, *in principle*, accessible to the person. But as soon as we admit that justification demands some kind of subjective awareness of the justifying reasons for a belief, the threat of regress is inevitable. In fact, none of the discussed internalist theories – foundationalism, coherentism, and infinitism – succeeds in solving the regress problem. Each of the mentioned three theories grabs one of the horns of the Pyrrhonian trilemma and tries to fight against the skeptical outcome of that particular horn. Their efforts are in vain, I think. Furthermore, it seems that internalists are committed to an unrealistic assumption of the transparency of mind and justification-conferring properties. Alvin Plantinga characterizes this internalist "motif", as he likes to call it, as follows:

> In a large, important and basic class of epistemic cases a properly functioning human being *can simply see* (cannot make nonculpable mistake about) whether a proposition has the property that confers justification upon it for her.[458]

Thus, internalists tend to assume that we *can simply see* whether a belief is justified and what makes it justified. This is quite a heavy assumption, namely, it seems to be obvious that we can err in what we think makes beliefs justified. That is precisely what the externalists are eager to point out, viz. there is no necessary connection between truth and internalist standards for justification.[459] In the end, it appears that internalists and externalists have played themselves to the skeptic's hands, for

the former have given us good reasons to reject externalism, and the latter have given us good reasons to reject internalism. Thus, skepticism remains at the top of the game. Not all see the situation as hopeless, for, for example, Williams argues that the Pyrrhonian skeptic's argument – be it the Agrippan Argument or the Justification Argument – "establishes at most that there are limits to our capacity to *give reasons or cite evidence*"[460]. So true, but that is all the skeptic ever wanted to show. In other words, it is quite severe limitation with respect to our cognitive enterprise to realize that we are not able to justify properly any of our beliefs. This amounts to saying that we have no reason to think that any of our beliefs is true. It is hard to imagine what could be more severe blow for our precious intuition that we have knowledge.

4.7. Summary

The regress problem is effectively the same problem as the one presented by Agrippa's Five Modes that calls into question the reasons we have for our beliefs. The threat of infinite regress can be tried to be neutralized by the foundationalist maneuver of proposing justification-terminating basic beliefs or by the coherentist maneuver of adhering to circular justification. Both approaches were found wanting as well as the view that some of our beliefs are justified *a priori*, independently of any empirical evidence. The third approach, infinitism, suggests, somewhat surprisingly, that the potentially infinite regress of beliefs does not lead to skepticism, but, instead, is the source of justification for beliefs. Infinitism as a theory of epistemic justification is both an unintuitive account and in several other respects implausible. Thus, none of the three mentioned theories succeeds in solving the regress problem, that is, the Agrippan Argument as applied to concern the epistemic justification of beliefs.

Still, a fourth proposal of epistemic justification, viz. contextualism, was examined. Contextualism has taken different forms, but, in effect, contextualists claim that skeptical alternatives or skepticism altogether can be simply dismissed in ordinary epistemic contexts. Contextualists tend to think that, in the end, our beliefs rest on unjustified context-dependent assumptions that are not open to doubt. However, if it is admitted that our beliefs rest on an unjustified basis, it entails that there is no source of justification in the first place. And that, if anything, is conceding to skepticism. Moreover, some contextualists argue that, in a way, both the skeptic and the anti-skeptic are right. However, it is hard to understand such a truth-relativizing view, and it is almost a worse option than skepticism.

The regress problem seems to arise from an internalist conception of knowledge that demands that we are somehow aware of the reasons for our beliefs. However, the alternative, externalist conception of knowledge states that being aware of reasons is not necessary for knowledge. Instead, we have knowledge if our cognitive faculties are properly attuned to the external world. If we accept the externalist approach to epistemology, it seems that the regress problem is solved and skepticism is not a threat any more. But the critics of externalism claim that the externalist approach simply begs the question against skepticism and it tends to make knowledge too easy to attain. At this stage of study, it seems that the skeptic has the upper hand, for internalism is unable to show that we have knowledge, whereas externalism simply begs the question against skepticism.

5. EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

In this chapter, the topic of epistemic circularity is studied. Briefly, epistemic circularity concerns the inevitable circularity we face when trying to justify the reliability of our cognitive faculties. Thus, the *problem* in epistemic circularity is, obviously, the (epistemic) *circularity* within our enterprise of *justifying* our belief sources. We think that we have knowledge through belief sources such as memory and sense perception, but when we are asked to show whether we really have such knowledge, we encounter, as Stewart Cohen notes, "a version of the problem of the criterion"[461]. Epistemic circularity highlights the epistemic problem with the *sources* of our alleged knowledge: in a sense, we cannot investigate the reliability of certain cognitive sources without taking for granted their reliability. Thus, our epistemic enterprise is flawed with a vicious kind of circularity and skepticism threatens, again. In a recent article, Baron Reed depicts epistemic circularity as follows:

> No customer would ever ask a used car salesman if he is honest. An affirmative answer would obviously be worthless: the need one had to ask about the salesman's honesty in the first place would arise for the answer as well. (Of course, a negative answer would be even worse, as it would lead us right into a paradox.) The problem with believing the salesman to be honest just on his say-so is typically thought to derive from the *epistemic circularity* of the belief. Epistemic circularity occurs when a subject comes to believe that a particular source of knowledge is reliable through the use of that very source.[462]

Of course, we could check the salesman's reliability by relying on some external and independent evidence relevant to his reliability. But, as the above parable illuminates, when the question is about the reliability of our cognitive faculties, we quickly run short of any external and independent checks and we must rely on those very faculties whose reliability is questioned. Thus, it seems that the sort of circularity in question is, epistemically speaking, serious and deep. In this chapter, my first task is to clarify the definitive nature of epistemic circularity and examine whether and how it is related to the problem of the criterion. Not all epistemologists see epistemic circularity as a problem, and that is the second task – to examine whether epistemic circularity can plausibly be held as a benign kind of circularity, or could the skeptical consequences be otherwise avoided. Finally, I briefly discuss the role of intuitions in epistemology.

5.1. Alston on Epistemic Circularity

5.1.1. Alston's Characterization of Epistemic Circularity

As far as I can tell, William Alston is the inventor of the term 'epistemic circularity'. And even if he had not been the first to introduce the concept, his discussion in the article "Epistemic Circularity"[463] certainly is most influential with respect to the topic of epistemic circularity. Thus, it is apt to begin the discussion on epistemic circularity by concentrating on what Alston means by the term.

The issue before us, Alston tells us, is whether we are rational in trusting our basic sources of belief such as perception, introspection, memory, testimony, and reasoning. Instead of sources of belief, we could also speak of belief forming dispositions, habits, or mechanisms. Whatever the labels, the idea is that we respond to certain psychological "inputs" – they are either experiential or doxastic in character – with corresponding "outputs", i.e. beliefs. Of course, what we want to know is whether the beliefs that are the outcomes of our various psychological processes are true. It seems that if the psychological processes responsible for our beliefs are *reliable*, then many of our beliefs are true. Accordingly, to take an example, perceptual beliefs would provide us with accurate information about our surroundings. The processes need not be infallible, for although they were reliable, misrepresentations and errors would occur. However, if the processes are reliable, it implies that, under normal conditions, the beliefs generated as the outputs of those processes would generally be true.[464] For the sake of concreteness, Alston pauses to ponder over the following general reliability claim:

(I) Sense experience is a reliable source of perceptual beliefs.[465]

Now, what kind of evidence could be used in favor of or against the truth of (I)? Firstly, it could be claimed that (I) is self-evident. However, Alston rejects that suggestion as implausible, for (I) simply does not seem to be a kind of proposition that cannot be believed without its being true or justified. Certainly, most of us are strongly inclined to accept (I), but that does not render it self-evident. Thus, it seems that we need adequate *reasons* for being epistemically justified in accepting (I).[466] As Alston notes, pragmatic arguments for the reliability of sense perception are popular. According to these arguments, we are able to predict and control various events in nature, since sense perception *is* reliable. Moreover, most scientific experiments are repeatable and the resulting

observations are in relevant respects the same. Again, our survival as a species evidences the point that our cognitive faculties are reliable to the effect that they have provided us with useful and accurate enough information about our surroundings. What is wrong with these kinds of pragmatic arguments? For one thing, they are blatantly circular, that is, all kinds of scientific experiments take the reliability of sense perception for granted. We cannot rely on any observations unless we assume that sense perception is, in general, reliable. Thus, particular observations support the conclusion that sense perception is reliable only if it is, in fact, reliable.[467]

The bottom line is that we cannot help but being involved with a kind circularity with respect to some of our faculties. For example, with respect to sense perception, it seems that we cannot present any cogent argument for the reliability of sense perception without presupposing its reliability in the premises of the argument. The situation is similar with respect to other *basic* sources of belief. Alston suggests that memory, introspection, and deductive and inductive reasoning are such basic sources of belief. They are basic, since any argument purported to show their reliability must rely on the premises drawn from those very sources.[468] Alston proceeds to suggest that we can, after all, support (I) with the alleged record of success of sense perception. In other words, we can present a sufficiently large, carefully chosen selection of perceptual beliefs and report in each case that the respective belief is true, which inductively supports the reliability of sense perception.[469] As a result, we have the following 'track record argument', as Alston calls it:

(TR)   1. At $t1$, S formed the perceptual belief that p, and p.

2. At $t2$, S formed the perceptual belief that q, and q.

. . . . . .

Therefore, sense experience is a reliable source of belief.[470]

Alston argues that the circularity involved in argument (TR) is not logical in character. In other words, an argument is logically circular if the conclusion of the argument already appears in the premises, and that is not the case with the argument (TR). So, what is wrong with it, then? Well, clearly, knowledge of the conclusion of the argument (TR) is presupposed in knowing the premises. I must assume that I know the reliability of sense perception in order to be entitled to assert any of the premises of the argument (TR). I have no reason think that any of my perceptual beliefs is true unless I, implicitly at least, presuppose that sense perception is reliable.[471] As Alston puts it: "I proceed *as if* (I) is true. I manifest an acceptance of it in my practice."[472] A related point is that if one doubts whether sense perception is reliable, the argument (TR) cannot rationally convince her

of the reliability of sense perception. The premises of the argument (TR) have no justificatory force unless it is already assumed that the conclusion of the argument (TR) is true. Alston sums up the preceding discussion as follows:

> What all this comes down to is that in using or taking this argument to establish (I), one is already, implicitly or explicitly, taking (I) to be true. In this way we might say that the argument "presupposes" the truth of the conclusion, although the conclusion does not itself appear among the premises. Note that the necessity of this presupposition does not stem from the logical form of the argument, or from the meaning of the premises. It is not a syntactical or a semantic presupposition. *It stems rather from our epistemic situation as human beings*. Beings of another sort might have some nonsensory way of ascertaining these premises, but we do not. Thus the presupposition falls into the large basket called "pragmatic". More specifically, we might call it an "epistemic" presupposition, since it depends on our epistemic situation vis-à-vis singular propositions concerning middle-sized physical objects in one's immediate environment. In parallel fashion we might term the kind of circularity involved "*epistemic circularity*".[473]

Thus, epistemic circularity seems to amount to a skeptical problem. The form of the problem appears to be familiar, for epistemic circularity states, in effect, that we should know that our faculties are reliable before we can trust in their deliverances, but, on the other hand, we should know that some of the deliverances are true before we can trust in the faculties that produce them. In short, this is the form of the problem of the criterion as stated by Chisholm. Moreover, track record arguments such as the argument (TR) seem to be totally ineffective against skepticism. However, Alston does not think that epistemic circularity necessarily leads to skepticism. Let us see why he thinks so.

5.1.2. Alston's Way Out of Epistemic Circularity

Alston claims that a track record argument such as the argument (TR) *can* confer justification upon the conclusion that the source of knowledge in question is reliable. In other words, if, for example, sense perception *is* reliable, particular instances of its reliable functioning, as manifested in the track record argument (TR), inductively support and justify the conclusion that sense perception is reliable.[474] Again, one who doubts the reliability of sense perception, cannot be convinced of its reliability by the track record argument (TR). However, that does not prevent the track record argument (TR) from being justification-affording for those who already accept the reliability of sense perception.[475] This kind of an answer to the problem posed by epistemic circularity resembles

the externalist maneuver studied in the previous main chapter[476]. As noted, externalists emphasize that it suffices for knowledge if our cognitive faculties are, in fact, reliable, and thus the threat of regress of reasons, with which internalist theories are infected, is not a problem for externalism.

I can shed more light on Alston solution by briefly summarizing James van Cleve's discussion on epistemic circularity, for also he defends the view that epistemic circularity does not pose a problem for externalist theories.[477] Van Cleve holds that an argument is viciously circular for knowledge acquisition only if knowledge of the conclusion is a precondition for knowing the premises. However, according to externalist theories such as reliabilism, we need not know that our cognitive faculties are reliable in order to know some of their deliverances. It suffices that the faculties *are*, in fact, reliable and no knowledge of the reliability is required. Accordingly, epistemically circular arguments are not viciously circular for knowledge acquisition on externalist views. Thus, track record arguments are perfectly adequate ways of acquiring knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties.[478] I think that van Cleve's solution to the problem in epistemic circularity is remarkably similar to Alston's. Both of them seem to think that what matters is the *actual* reliability of our cognitive faculties, not whether we can somehow show their reliability.

However, Alston acknowledges that if one is unsure about the reliability of, for example, sense perception, it does not help at all to state that we can use track record arguments to establish its reliability *if* sense perception is, in fact, reliable. Furthermore, we can use track record arguments to establish the reliability of almost any belief forming practice. For example, we could claim that crystal ball gazing is a reliable way of forming beliefs, and to silence doubts, we could formulate an epistemically circular track record argument to establish the reliability of crystal ball gazing. And *if* crystal ball gazing is, in fact, reliable way of forming beliefs, the epistemically circular track record argument is perfectly adequate way of showing its reliability, at least according to externalists' lights. Alston affirms that this cannot be right. We are interested in distinguishing reliable ways of forming beliefs from unreliable, and, clearly, epistemically circular arguments fail to make such a discrimination.[479]

Nevertheless, we must take *something* for granted to have a starting point for doing epistemology. If we critically reflect on our beliefs and our reasons for them and exempt no belief from our critical scrutiny, we end up with skepticism. For, every reason for any belief should be supported by further justifying reasons, and these reasons, in turn, with further reasons. To cut off the threatening infinite regress we must either argue in a circle or appeal to an unjustified base assumption, both of which

are unacceptable ways of justifying beliefs in the enterprise of critical reflection.[480] The problem is that our epistemological reflection is *too* thoroughgoing, for "[a]ll is well so long as we rely on justification that obtains in fact and do not insist on demonstrating it"[481].

However, even if we cannot establish the reliability of any belief forming practice without conceding to epistemic circularity, it could be claimed that it is *practically rational* to continue to engage in some belief forming practices. Alston suggests that it is (practically) rational to employ those belief forming practices that are firmly socially established.[482] In other words, we have to start from where we are. Alston holds that "there is no alternative (practically rational or otherwise) to using in an investigation what we accept at that point as reliable belief forming practices and probably true beliefs, remembering again that any one of them can be critically evaluated as long as we continue to employ some doxastic practices and take some beliefs as at least probably true"[483]. To argue against Alston, an obvious alternative to his suggested approach is skepticism. If we cannot defeat skepticism, and, thus, cannot show that we have knowledge, should it not mean a victory for the skeptic? At least it is harder to see how this, epistemically speaking, miserable situation should lead, instead of skepticism, to Alston's suggested form of anti-skepticism, according to which "we should stick to what we have".

5.1.3. Problems with Alston's Way Out

It seems that Alston has pointed out a deep problem in epistemology, and it also appears that his suggested solution to it simply does not work. Definitely, the problem of establishing the reliability of our cognitive faculties – that is, the problem of epistemic circularity – is a serious problem, for, as Alston himself admits, in the end we are not able to distinguish reliable from unreliable belief forming practices. This result in itself suggests that skepticism is the inevitable outcome of the challenge posed to us by epistemic circularity. However, as we saw, Alston tries to wriggle out of that unfortunate outcome.

Alvin Plantinga has strongly criticized Alston's thought that it is practically rational to continue to engage in those belief forming practices in which we in fact do. Plantinga maintains that Alston's suggested solution is trivial and, thus, epistemologically uninteresting. In other words, of course we consider it (practically) rational to form beliefs according to, for example, sense perception, *because* we happen to consider it a reliable belief forming practice. But if we happened to judge some other doxastic practices as rational, we would think that *those* practices are rational instead. The crucial

question, clearly, is *which* practices are, whether actual or not, reliable, and thus, rational to engage in.[484] Furthermore, as Ernest Sosa notes, and Alston accepts[485], appealing to practical rationality is as guilty of circularity as are track record arguments meant to establish the reliability of certain belief forming practices. It is practically rational to engage in certain belief forming practices *if* it is, in fact, rational to engage in those practices. When we are gathering evidence for the rationality of those practices, we are tacitly assuming their rationality.[486] Hence, there is no escape from circularity.

Let us move on to consider Alston's claim to the effect that we have no alternative but to rely on those doxastic practices we, in fact, do. To begin with, the meaning of Alston's term 'doxastic practice' is far from obvious. Alston clarifies the notion as follows:

> We engage in plurality of doxastic practices, each with its own sources of belief, its own conditions of justification, its own fundamental beliefs, and, in some cases, its own subject matter, its own conceptual framework, and its own repertoire of possible "overriders." There is no one unique source of justification or knowledge, such as Descartes and many others have dreamed of. … What is natural to count as distinct doxastic practices are by no means wholly independent. We have to rely on the output of memory and reasoning for the overriders of perceptual beliefs. Apart from what is stored in memory, and used in reasoning, concerning the physical world and our perceptual interactions therewith, we would have nothing to go on in determining when sensory deliverances are and are not to be trusted. Reasoning [in turn] is beholden to other belief-forming practices for its premises.[487]

The above passage reveals Alston's pluralistic approach to epistemic justification. Accordingly, Alston thinks that a viable epistemology should count various 'epistemic desiderata' – externalist and internalist alike – as possible sources of justification. Furthermore, different epistemic desiderata are salient in different contexts, which should be borne in mind when evaluating the epistemic status of beliefs.[488] However, what is pressing here, is that Alston admits that there are affinities between his epistemological theory and contextualism, "for the views are at one in denying the need to validate modes of belief formation before using them"[489]. Alston's theory's resemblance to contextualism is brought up here for the reason that now we can raise the standard criticism of the latter towards the former too, namely, if we need not validate the belief forming practices we use, there is the danger that "anything goes"[490].

As the objection goes, we should be able to somehow exclude lunatics' and such ones' doxastic practices. However, such an exclusion seems to amount to the use of a double standard.

Specifically, we cannot show without epistemic circularity that our practice of appealing to reason is reliable, and surely madmen can give a similar circular argument for their belief forming practices. Because of epistemic circularity involved, we should treat the two doxastic practices similarly: whether we condemn or approve them, we should do the same to both. In fact, Alston uses similar argument to argue for the reliability of the doxastic practice of perceiving *God*[491]. Clearly, something has gone amiss, namely, if we open the gate for, in principle, the reliability of Christian doxastic practice, how could we prevent the followers of other religions, sects, and cults from doing the same? In fact, we cannot and the gate is open for anything. Therefore, our original question about the *right* and reliable belief forming practices remains unanswered.

Speaking of gods, it is interesting to note that Plantinga contends that even an omnipotent and omniscient God cannot escape from epistemic circularity. For God cannot give a noncircular argument for the reliability of his doxastic practices, whatever they are. God's ideas or beliefs constituting the premises of the argument, purported to show that his belief forming mechanism are reliable, would be formed by those very ways whose reliability is in question. Hence, epistemic circularity prevails.[492] As Plantinga puts it, "God himself is trapped inside the circle of his own ideas"[493]. However, the moral of the story is, according to Plantinga, that we should not be worried about epistemic circularity, since not even an omniscient being can avoid it. Every doxastic agent is necessarily infected with epistemic circularity, for no one can give a good, noncircular argument for the reliability of one's doxastic faculties.[494] In sum, Plantinga argues that epistemic circularity is not only unavoidable but also uninteresting. Therefore, skepticism is not a problem, and we have knowledge as long as our cognitive faculties function as they should (and as long as we believe in a benevolent Christian God, Plantinga would add[495]).

However, although Barry Stroud also entertains the thought that skeptical problems (the problem of epistemic circularity among others) apply to all kinds of creatures, from this he concludes just the opposite than Plantinga. Stroud holds that although we cannot know that we are not being deceived by a malevolent demon, neither can the possible deceiving demon.[496] We, whether humans or cognitively superior deities, cannot get outside our ideas to check whether they correspond to something real and sufficiently isomorphic with our ideas. Neither is it easy to imagine what would be such a creature that *could* perform such a reality check. However, Stroud concludes, *pace* Plantinga, that although epistemic circularity is unavoidable, it is also deeply troubling. We should be able to show that our cognitive faculties are reliable – although it seems to be impossible – otherwise skepticism threatens. In other words, Stroud encourages us to address the skeptical

problem properly, not to dismiss it as uninteresting.[497] However, it should certainly give us an impetus to have a second thought about the plausibility of skepticism if it seems to be an insoluble problem even if we had among us an omniscient being to report how things really are. Or more precisely, if *we* happened to be omniscient, skepticism would still remain undefeated. On the other hand, Plantinga's solution – i.e. since also God is vulnerable to the problem of epistemic circularity, we can dismiss the problem altogether – is unsatisfactory, since it makes knowledge too easy and it does not address the problem of skepticism at all.

5.2. Epistemic Circularity and the Problem of the Criterion

Clearly, the problem highlighted by epistemic circularity *is* a version of the problem of the criterion. Also Chisholm pointed out that the problem of the criterion can be understood as concerning the proper *sources* of knowledge[498]. If thus understood, we are dealing with the problem posed by epistemic circularity, viz. that in order to know that our cognitive faculties are reliable, we must rely on those very faculties whose reliability is in question. As shown, Alston, among many other authors, argues that epistemic circularity can be a perfectly acceptable form of reasoning. In order to evaluate whether epistemic circularity can be acceptable, we should be able to formulate precisely the skeptical *problem* inherent in epistemic circularity. I have already stated that the problem posed by epistemic circularity comes down to the dilemma that, on the one hand, we should know that a particular cognitive faculty is reliable in order to have knowledge of its deliverances, and, on the other hand, we should know that most of the deliverances of that particular faculty are true in order to have knowledge of its reliability. This dilemma is strikingly similar in form to Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion which is the reason why we will utilize the form of Chisholm's account here. Of course, if we so wanted, we could also utilize the Agrippan Argument – the Pyrrhonian account of the problem of the criterion, derived from the Five Modes – for as shown in chapter 3,[499] Chisholm's account and the Pyrrhonian account are closely related. Specifically, Chisholm's account of the diallelus comes down to the form of the mode of circularity of the Pyrrhonian account; and the other modes of infinite regress and hypothesis are also implicitly assumed in Chisholm's account.

According to Chisholm, knowledge of instances depends upon knowledge of a criterion of truth, and knowledge of a criterion of truth depends upon knowledge of instances. Moreover, the dependence between instances and criteria is *asymmetric* in character. This means, again, that (i) criteria are epistemically dependent upon instances, and instances do not depend upon criteria, and

that (ii) instances are epistemically dependent upon criteria, and criteria do not depend upon instances.[500] Here we have a reformulation of Chisholm's skeptical argument:

(1) We know a proposition only if we have knowledge of a criterion of truth. But

(2) we know a criterion of truth only if we have knowledge of some proposition. Therefore,

(3a) we do not know any proposition and

(3b) we do not know any criterion of truth.[501]

Now, we can reformulate the above argument so as to concern the sources of knowledge, i.e. our cognitive faculties. As a result, we have a version of the problem of the criterion, the following argument – call it the *Epistemic Circularity Argument*:

(1) We know that a deliverance of cognitive faculty F is true only if we know that F is reliable. But

(2) we know that a cognitive faculty F is reliable only if we know that some sufficient amount of the deliverances of F are true.[502]

Therefore,

(3a) we do not know that a deliverance of F is true and

(3b) we do not know that F is reliable.[503]

The above argument is meant to capture the problem of epistemically circular arguments, and as can be easily seen, according to the above argument, all epistemically circular arguments are logically circular too. As my consideration of Chisholm's account of the diallelus made clear, the possible and at least initially plausible solutions to the problem are particularism, methodism, and a kind of combination of the aforementioned two, a sort of coherentism. Supposedly, the three alternatives are also available with respect to the current version of the problem that concerns knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties. Accordingly, particularists hold that knowledge of the reliability of a certain cognitive faculty can be derived from particular, true deliverances of that faculty. That is exactly how Alston thinks we could have knowledge of the reliability of, say, sense perception: we can formulate a track record argument, and although the argument is epistemically circular, it *can* provide us with knowledge of the reliability of the cognitive faculty in question, and without logical circularity. Methodists, in turn, hold that we can have knowledge of the reliability of a cognitive faculty independently of knowledge of its deliverances' truth. Most of them think that we just know, self-evidently and non-inferentially, the reliability of our cognitive faculties.

Followers of this strand of thought often mention Thomas Reid as their inspirer, who writes about first principles, i.e. a kind of *a priori* truths, as follows:

> Another first principle is, that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious.[504]

Again, it is still possible to hold that we know the reliability of our cognitive faculties and the deliverances' truth due to their mutual interdependence. According to this coherentist or holistic view, knowledge of the reliability of a cognitive faculty is not prior to knowledge of its deliverances' truth, nor vice versa. Instead, knowledge of deliverances' truth and knowledge of the reliability of a cognitive faculty are mutually supported by each other, so that they attain the status of knowledge together.

All of the three approaches – particularism, methodism, and coherentism – were already criticized in the two preceding main chapters. Thus, it is not necessary to repeat the criticism here. As we saw when considering the regress argument, the criticism against particularism and coherentism could also be applied to epistemic justification theories, foundationalism and coherentism, respectively. However, we also witnessed that foundationalism and coherentism as theories of epistemic justification invite criticism of their own. Moreover, we found that consideration of such theories as infinitism, contextualism and epistemological externalism in general proved to be relevant with respect to the regress problem, although they were not seen as relevant with respect to Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion. Similarly, the topic of establishing the reliability of our cognitive faculties creates alternative solutions peculiar to the topic, although we are, still and again, considering a version of the diallelus. In what follows, I will, first, study what is wrong with the view that we can acquire knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties via track record arguments. Arguably, such a view creates a tricky case to handle, the so-called 'problem of easy knowledge'. After examining that problem, I move on to consider other possible solutions to the problem posed by epistemic circularity.

5.3. Coping with Epistemic Circularity

5.3.1. Roxanne, Bootstrapping, and the Problem of Easy Knowledge

Jonathan Vogel has given an example that poses, he thinks, a problem for reliabilist epistemologies. Actually, as will be shown next, it poses a problem virtually for all kinds of epistemologies. What is the problem, then? Basically, the problem is about using track record arguments to establish the reliability of one's cognitive faculties. Vogel proceeds to show that epistemically circular arguments make knowledge of the reliability of one's cognitive faculties too easy. As an example, Vogel asks us to imagine a car driver, Roxanne, who has a reliable gas gauge and believes, implicitly, what the gauge says without knowing that it is reliable. However, Roxanne undertakes the procedure of looking at the gauge often and forming a belief about how much gas there is in the tank. In addition to that, Roxanne also forms a belief about the state of the gauge itself. For example, when the gauge reads 'F', she believes both that the tank is full, *F*, and that the gauge reads 'F'. Thus, Roxanne believes the proposition that

(1) On this occasion, the gauge reads 'F', and *F*.

Vogel holds that Roxanne's belief in (1) is a result of reliable processes, and, thus, according to reliabilism, Roxanne knows the proposition (1). From (1), Roxanne deduces the following proposition:

(2) On this occasion, the gauge is reading accurately.

If Roxanne is credited with knowledge of (1), it seems that we must credit her also with knowledge of (2), since deduction certainly is a reliable process.[505] Now, Roxanne repeats this procedure over and over again, and on these various occasions she comes to know that the gauge is reading accurately. Then, Roxanne puts together her knowledge regarding the gauge, and concludes by induction that

(3) The gauge reads accurately all the time.

Reliabilists generally hold that induction is a reliable process, and, accordingly, Roxanne knows the proposition (3). From (3), Roxanne further deduces that

(4) The gauge is reliable.

Therefore, Roxanne has arrived at knowledge of the reliability of the gauge. Furthermore, she can practice a little more the art of deduction and come to know that her *belief forming practice* in question is reliable. In short, Roxanne has used a reliable process to acquire knowledge of the reliability of the very same process.[506] So, what is the moral of the story? Let Vogel himself tell us:

> This extraordinary procedure, which I shall call *bootstrapping*, seems to allow one to promote many, if not all, of one's beliefs that were formed by reliable processes into *knowledge* that those beliefs were formed by reliable processes. I assume that bootstrapping is illegitimate. Roxanne cannot establish that her gas gauge is reliable by the peculiar reasoning I have just described. … On the face of things, it [reliabilism] does improperly ratify bootstrapping as a way of gaining knowledge.[507]

Vogel suggests that Roxanne misses proper reasons or *justification* for her knowledge of the reliability of the gauge. If we endorse the view that justification is necessary for knowledge, bootstrapping fails to be knowledge-generating.[508] However, bootstrapping, or epistemically circular track record arguments, is not a problem only for externalist epistemologies, but also internalist epistemologies are committed to this fallacy, namely, any internalist must permit that there are sources of justification whose reliability or truth-conferring character need not be known, or otherwise an infinite regress threatens[509]. It is exactly here where we enter the problem of easy knowledge. Cohen states that the problem is generated for any epistemology that *denies* the following principle (KR):

(KR) A potential knowledge source K can yield knowledge for a subject S only if S knows K is reliable.[510]

In other words, theories denying the principle (KR) imply that some knowledge (of particular instances, not general epistemic principles concerning the reliability of cognitive faculties) is basic, that is, they hold that a belief source can deliver knowledge prior to (i.e. independently of) one's knowing that the source is reliable.[511] For example, Roxanne establishes on the basis of her basic knowledge that the gas gauge is reliable. However, Cohen holds that once we allow basic knowledge, we can come to know the reliability of our cognitive faculties far too easily, thus the rubric "the problem of easy knowledge".[512] Moreover, this challenges our initial assumption that we had the basic knowledge in the first place.[513] If we, instead, do accept the principle (KR), we end up

with a version of the problem of the criterion[514], as shown above with the Epistemic Circularity Argument. To make it all clear, those who allow the existence of basic knowledge deny the premise (1) of the Epistemic Circularity Argument and could thus be called as *particularists*, to use Chisholm's terminology.

Incidentally, I am not so sure whether Vogel's example about Roxanne adds anything new when compared to Alston's discussion of epistemic circularity and, especially, formulation of a track record argument. In other words, already Alston's discussion made it perfectly clear that it is problematic to infer from the alleged truth of certain outputs (i.e. beliefs) of a particular belief forming mechanism that the mechanism in question is reliable. Thus, I think that Vogel's example about Roxanne merely highlights the point, already made by Alston, that bootstrapping (or using track record arguments to establish the reliability of a cognitive faculty) is highly problematic. And the real moral of the story about Roxanne is this: Roxanne's faulty reasoning about the reliability of the gas gauge is analogous to our reasoning about the reliability of our cognitive faculties.

5.3.2. Basic Knowledge: For and Against

Peter Markie argues that theories that allow basic knowledge do not face any problem; that is, the problem of easy knowledge is not a problem at all. In a nutshell, Markie's solution is that epistemically circular arguments can provide us with knowledge even though we cannot help begging the question against the skeptic. We cannot convince the doubters, but, nonetheless, we can still have (basic) knowledge with the help of which we can establish the reliability of our cognitive faculties.[515] This is, in effect, the same answer Alston provides with respect to epistemic circularity. What is new is that Markie suggests that it is perfectly acceptable to beg the question against the skeptic. Let Markie explain:

> It is quite possible to give an argument in which we know the premises and as a result know the conclusion, but also beg the question against someone who doubts whether the conclusion is true. Our reasoning begs the question by, first, involving a premise the other party doubts, and, second, failing to provide the other party with a reason to believe that premise. How can we fail to provide the other party with a reason to believe our premise if we ourselves know it? One way this can happen is if the premise is an instance of basic knowledge so that we know it through an experience the other person either lacks or does not acknowledge as a basis for belief.[516]

If we think about Roxanne again, Markie seems to suggest that her reasoning is perfectly acceptable and, furthermore, provides her with knowledge of the reliability of the gas gauge. Roxanne can have knowledge even though the skeptic doubts the premises of her argument, and consequently, the conclusion. Bootstrapping or the usage of epistemically circular track record arguments is a way to proceed from justified premises to a warranted conclusion, and if the premises are actually true, bootstrapping has provided us with knowledge. The only shortcoming is, according to Markie, that we "just need to remember that easy knowledge does not enable us to address the skeptic's concerns"[517].

Also Frederick Schmitt contends that bootstrapping need not be a problem. In other words, if I lack a legitimate doubt about the reliability of a given belief source, epistemically circular arguments can provide me with knowledge of the reliability of the belief source in question. For example, arguably, no one would be convinced of the reliability of crystal ball gazing if presented with an epistemically circular argument for the conclusion that crystal ball gazing is reliable. We would have a legitimate doubt about the reliability of crystal ball gazing and, thus, the premises of the epistemically circular track record argument would be undermined.[518] However, if we are concerned with the reliability of, for example, sense perception, we have, Schmitt declares, "no good reason to suspect the reliability of the source"[519]. So, bootstrapping is allowed with respect to those belief sources whose reliability we do not have any good reason to doubt, and bootstrapping is of no use with respect to those belief sources whose reliability we have good reasons to doubt.

Cohen has explicitly answered Markie's objections, and the answers can be applied to Schmitt's arguments as well. Cohen's answer is simple but, I think, effective, namely, the problem is not that the skeptic does not accept our epistemically circular reasoning, but the point is rather that bootstrapping should bother *us*. Does an epistemically circular track record argument strike *us* as a piece of cogent reasoning? No. And that is precisely the problem. If we accepted bootstrapping as a form of good reasoning, we would have a cogent argument for the reliability of, for example, sense perception. This, of course, could be used effectively against the skeptic. But in order for our arguments to have any force against the skeptic, the arguments should strike us as plausible. In other words, we are not primarily interested in whether we can convince the skeptic of the reliability of our cognitive faculties, but whether *we* have any epistemically good reason to think that our cognitive faculties are reliable.[520] Now, it seems that at least bootstrapping does not provide us with a good reason to think that our cognitive faculties are reliable. Consequently, the skeptic has the upper hand in claiming that we do not know whether our cognitive faculties are reliable or

unreliable, and, thus, we should suspend judgment about their reliability and the truth of any deliverances of our faculties. So we should seek for other plausible arguments for the reliability of our cognitive faculties.

Furthermore, as a comment pertaining to Schmitt's arguments, even if we do not have a good reason to doubt the reliability of a particular cognitive faculty, it does not imply that we have a reason to think that the faculty is reliable. To repeat, we should be able to give a good argument for the reliability of our faculties to warrant the claim that we can have and do have knowledge. We can, of course, refuse to doubt the reliability of our cognitive faculties, but, as already noted with respect to our discussion on contextualism[521], reluctance to doubt that we have knowledge does not imply that we have knowledge. Moreover, I think that it is simply false to claim, as Schmitt does, that we do not have any good reason to suspect the reliability of sense perception. Firstly, we have learned from experience that sometimes our judgments based on sense impressions are mistaken. For example, what seems to be a snake at first glance turns out to be a crooked twig. Thus, we have a reason to doubt the general reliability of sense perception. Secondly, many skeptical arguments – like the ones Sextus discusses in the Ten Modes[522]– try to establish that there is a gap between our appearances and the reality. These arguments give us a reason to doubt the veridicality of our sense experiences; that is, whether they correspond to anything real in the external world. As we are aware of these two general considerations – and more could be generated with ease – it would be desirable if we could dispel the doubts with a good argument establishing the reliability of, for example, sense perception. So far we have only managed to produce epistemically circular arguments for the reliability of our cognitive faculties. This gives us a third reason to be worried about the truth of our beliefs.

As already pointed out in our discussion concerning Alston[523], the fundamental problem with epistemically circular arguments is that they fail to discriminate between reliable and unreliable ways of forming beliefs. Thus, bootstrapping via track record arguments is epistemically worthless which explains our spontaneous reaction that, at least at first glance, epistemically circular arguments seem to be totally unconvincing. We have already conceded that epistemic circularity is a problem not only for externalist epistemologies, but also for internalist epistemologies. However, it certainly is an *obvious* problem for externalist epistemologies. As soon as the externalist proposes that the epistemic status of a belief is a function of the reliability of cognitive faculties that have produced it, it is only natural to ask how we know that our cognitive processes *are* reliable. As Richard Fumerton puts the matter, in a form of objection[524] against reliabilism:

But *how*, the skeptic asks, would one justify one's belief that, say, perception is a reliable process? The answer, of course, is that *if* reliabilism is true, and *if* perception is reliable, we could *perceive* various facts about our sense organs and the way in which they respond to the external world. How could we justify our belief that memory is reliable? Well, again, *if* reliabilism is true, and if memory is reliable, we could use memory, in part, to justify our belief that memory is reliable. And so for the other traditional skeptical problems […].

All this will, of course, drive the skeptic crazy. You can't *use* perception to justify the reliability of perception! You can't *use* memory to justify the reliability of memory! You can't *use* induction to justify the reliability of induction! Such attempts to respond to the skeptic's concerns involve blatant, indeed pathetic, circularity.[525]

To repeat, the problem is not merely that the skeptic is driven crazy by our epistemically circular arguments, but that *we* are not convinced of those arguments either. We should look for other ways than bootstrapping to argue for the reliability of our cognitive faculties.

5.3.3. Bergmann: The Reidian Way Out of Epistemic Circularity

The previously formulated argument, the Epistemic Circularity argument, highlights the fact that there are three immediately available solutions to the problem posed by epistemic circularity. Those who espouse bootstrapping are the so-called particularists whose views were found wanting above. Alternatively, we could stick to the methodist strategy and deny the premise (2) of the Epistemic Circularity Argument by holding that we can know the reliability of our cognitive faculties independently of any arguments[526]. That is precisely the position of Michael Bergmann which will be examined next.

As Bergmann notes, the problem of epistemic circularity is not removed simply by forming a belief about the reliability of one's cognitive faculties *without* an argument. For example, if I form the non-inferential belief that reasoning is a reliable way of forming beliefs, the formation of that belief is dependent upon my usage of reason, i.e. reasoning. Therefore, I am still infected with epistemic circularity.[527] However, Bergmann argues that epistemic circularity is not *necessarily* a bad thing, for epistemically circular beliefs *can* be justified. We must distinguish between malignant and benign contexts; in the former epistemic circularity is vicious, whereas in the latter it is perfectly acceptable.[528]

In malignant contexts a person has a good reason to doubt the reliability of her cognitive faculties. For example, skeptical arguments can persuade a person that sense perception is not reliable cognitive faculty. Now, if the person considers an epistemically circular track record argument for the reliability of sense perception, she can see that the argument is absolutely of no help at all. Since the context in question is malignant, the person has a reason to doubt the truth of deliverances of sense perception, and thus, epistemically circular arguments cannot restore her lost confidence in sense perception. However, not all contexts are malignant. Bergmann contends that if a person has no doubts about the reliability of, for instance, sense perception, the context is benign. The person can justifiable believe that sense perception is reliable, and even if she comes to see that her belief about the reliability of sense perception is infected with epistemic circularity, it need not bother her. Specifically, epistemic circularity does not undermine her justified belief that sense perception is reliable. Thus, epistemic circularity involved in this unquestioned context is benign in character.[529]

Are epistemically circular track record arguments, then, acceptable in unquestioned or benign contexts? Surprisingly, Bergmann answers in the negative, for two reasons. Firstly, he contends that epistemically circular reasoning or bootstrapping is totally unconvincing. Typically, a good argument is convincing, that is, if there were any doubters, the argument would be effective at persuading those who doubted the argument's conclusion. In that respect, epistemically circular track record arguments are, in a word, pathetic.[530] And clearly, as Bergmann concludes, "it is difficult to imagine a context in which it would be a good thing to depend upon a pathetic argument"[531]. Secondly, Bergmann argues that actually most people do not believe that their cognitive faculties are reliable on the basis of *arguments*. Instead, most of us just take it for granted, without any arguments or inferences, that our cognitive faculties are reliable. Thus, even in benign contexts, the status of epistemically circular track record arguments is severely diminished, for almost no one relies on such arguments – and that is not surprising, considering that such arguments are so pathetic that they should not be relied on any context whatsoever.[532]

Bergmann's solution to the problem of epistemic circularity is that we can have justified beliefs about the reliability of our cognitive faculties by believing non-inferentially and without arguments that our sources of belief are trustworthy. Bergmann notes that Reid is the source of inspiration for his proposed solution.[533] According to Reid, we can know non-inferentially that our faculties are reliable[534]. Just as, for example, some foundationalists propose that beliefs formed via sense perception are justified immediately without further justifying beliefs, so similarly for our beliefs about the reliability of our cognitive faculties. We know the trustworthiness of our faculties, and

other such 'first principles', via the faculty of 'common sense', as Reid calls it. The faculty of common sense is akin to the faculty of *a priori* intuition, for also the former delivers us knowledge of necessary truths; for example, of mathematical and logical truths such as that 2+2=4 and that modus ponens is a valid mode of inference. However, in addition to necessary truths, via the faculty of common sense we can come to know also some contingent truths. The reliability of cognitive faculties is such a contingent truth, as are, for example, the propositions that I have some degree of control of my actions and that the thoughts I am conscious of are my thoughts.[535]

According to Reid, then, we can come to know, for example, the reliability of sense perception via the faculty of common sense. Thus, the reliability of sense perception is established *without* circular dependence on sense perception. However, what comes to the faculty of common sense, knowledge of its reliability is delivered to us via the faculty itself. Therefore, our alleged knowledge of the reliability of the faculty of common sense is epistemically circular, and, thus, our knowledge of the reliability of sense perception – gained via common sense – is infected with epistemic circularity in the end. However, Bergmann holds that as long as one does not have any doubts about the reliability of common sense, the context is unquestioned and, thus, epistemic circularity involved with respect to our belief that common sense is reliable, is benign in character.[536]

Bergmann argues that his suggested "Reidian" solution to the problem of epistemic circularity is an improvement over the track record argument or bootstrapping approach for two reasons. Firstly, Bergmann thinks that his account is more realistic than the bootstrapping approach for the reason that we do not seem to believe that our faculties are reliable on the basis of arguments, as the bootstrapping approach suggests. Rather, we just seem to take it for granted that our faculties are reliable.[537] Secondly, the Reidian solution is neatly concordant with the fact that bootstrapping strikes us as a piece of poor argumentation. However, even if we tend to think poorly of track record arguments, it does not prevent us from justifiably believing, *without arguments*, that our faculties are reliable.[538]

5.3.4. Against the Reidian Account

Baron Reed criticizes Bergmann's solution to the problem of epistemic circularity. Firstly, Reed points out that Bergmann's distinction between malignant and benign contexts is irrelevant, for what matters is the doubts we *ought* to have, not the doubts we actually happen to have. Thus, even if we do not actually doubt the reliability of, for example, sense perception, we *ought* to be aware of

the skeptical doubts pertaining to sense perception. Reed holds that a belief's justification can be defeated by actual contrary beliefs or actual doubts, or by *normative defeaters*, that is, beliefs or doubts one should have. Furthermore, we have normative defeaters for most of our beliefs, including the belief that our cognitive faculties are reliable. Thus, in Bergmann's terms, we are in a questioned or malignant context and we have a good reason to doubt the reliability of our faculties. In sum, Reed holds that we should have skeptical doubts and that a benign kind of epistemic circularity is a pipe dream.[539]

Secondly, Reed emphasizes that appeals to first principles – alleged general truths, known non-inferentially – should be exposed to a critical scrutiny. Similarly as Reid holds that we know as a first principle that our faculties are trustworthy, one could claim that we know as a first principle that telepathy or crystal ball gazing is a reliable source of belief. Thus, once again, we should have a criterion with the help of which we could distinguish genuine first principles from spurious first principles. Nevertheless, even if a plausible criterion could be provided, a question about the criterion's trustworthiness would be raised, and so on. Moreover, many of the first principles Reid mentions are so complex or have so complex truth conditions that it is extremely implausible to suppose that we could know such truths non-inferentially.[540] As Reed puts the objection:

> Consider, for example, the first principle that our faculties are reliable: its truth conditions would include facts about human psychology and physiology, principles of logic, the physics of light and sound, etc. It is simply incredible that human mind could be noninferentially related to all of these facts in a way that would make it self-evident that our faculties are reliable. This would be just as absolutely mysterious as the charlatan magician's purported ability to "see" into the minds of others.[541]

Reed ends his criticism of Bergmann by pointing out that the Reidian maneuver of appealing to first principles opens the door to every breed of dogmatism, for, on pain of consistency, alleged knowledge of the reliability of "strange" faculties cannot be excluded.[542] As a response, Bergmann argues that we can still distinguish between malignant and benign contexts; in the former we doubt or should doubt the reliability of our faculties, and in the latter we do not doubt or should not doubt the reliability of our cognitive faculties. Again, Bergmann holds, *contra* Reed, that we can justifiably believe that our faculties are reliable. In other words, it is *possible* that we are, with respect to epistemic circularity, in a benign context where we do not entertain nor should entertain any doubts about the reliability of our cognitive faculties.[543] If Reed were right, then it would never be acceptable to *not* have serious doubts about the reliability of one's belief sources. This view,

Bergmann holds, is implausible. Furthermore, it seems that Reed's criticism stems from internalist commitments, for it is the internalists who emphasize the importance of epistemic obligations, i.e. what we should and should not believe. Externalists, in turn, think that satisfaction of certain externalist conditions is sufficient for justification and knowledge. Thus, Reed seems to take the falsity of externalism for granted and, hence, his criticism against the Reidian position could be said to rest on a biased and unfair basis.[544] Thus, the controversy between Reed and Bergmann seems to boil down, once again, to differing intuitions of externalists and internalists. However, I do not agree with Bergmann that from Reed's views it follows that it would never be acceptable to not have serious skeptical doubts. Quite the contrary; if we had a convincing argument to the effect that we have knowledge and our cognitive faculties are reliable, then we would have a good reason to cease entertaining skeptical doubts. However, so far such an argument has not been found, and thus skeptical doubts are perfectly legitimate.

The criticism of the Reidian approach, discussed above, resembles criticism pointed towards methodism, according to which it is simply implausible to suppose that we could know general epistemic principles prior to particular instances of knowledge[545]. Also Bergmann acknowledges that not all are willing to accept the claim that we can immediately know, without arguments, the reliability of our faculties[546]. Answering to the skeptic's challenge would be a great deal easier if the reliability of our faculties really were so obviously true. But, however, it is far from obviously true, and claims to contrary just seem to amount to sheer dogmatism. But do we have a choice? We should examine in detail what would follow were we to accept the Reidian view that we can non-inferentially know the reliability of our faculties.

5.3.5. Epistemic Circularity and a Leap of Faith

Epistemic circularity poses a challenge that seems to be impossible to solve. On the one hand, if we accept that reason is our most fundamental faculty – one that is able to correct and complete the deliverances of other faculties – it seems obvious that it is impossible to *show* that reason itself is reliable. The premises of each argument depend on the reliability of reasoning. As Laurence BonJour puts the matter: "obviously, no *argument* can be used to show that reasoning is trustworthy without implicitly begging the question"[547]. Thus, in so far as we rely on reason, we cannot avoid epistemic circularity involved within. On the other hand, if we refuse to give arguments and still continue relying on reason, does this not amount to sheer faith for our part, and to the skeptic's

triumph in the end? Let us see what Reid thinks of these matters; of proving the reliability of reason and other cognitive faculties, and of the skeptic's position:

> Another first principle is, that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious. If any man should demand a proof of this, it is impossible to satisfy him. For suppose it should be mathematically demonstrated, this would signify nothing in this case; because, to judge of a demonstration, a man must trust his faculties, and take for granted the very thing in question.
>
> If a man's honesty were called in question, it would be ridiculous to refer to the man's own word, whether he be honest or not. The same absurdity there is in attempting to prove, by any kind of reasoning, probable or demonstrative, that our reason is not fallacious, since the very point in question is, whether reasoning may be trusted.
>
> If a skeptic should build his skepticism upon this foundation, that all our reasoning, and judging powers are fallacious in their nature, or should resolve at least to withhold assent until it be proved that they are not; it would be impossible by argument to beat him out of this strong hold, and he must even be left to enjoy his skepticism.[548]

In the above quotation, the first two paragraphs show the pointlessness of trying to prove, through an argument, the reliability of reason. The third paragraph, in turn, seems to make strong concessions towards skepticism. It seems as if Reid is suggesting that we cannot defeat skepticism by arguments.[549] However, instead of giving arguments, we must simply *trust* in reason. By appealing to trust in reason, we can also dodge the skeptic's charges: we do not have to give arguments for our view, because we *cannot* give non-question-begging arguments, as pointed out above. Bergmann agrees, for he states that we cannot convince the skeptic of the falsity of skepticism, but that is as it should be, for also "Reid is clear that philosophy, arguments and logic are of no use in delivering someone … from her skepticism"[550]. But if arguments are of no use against skepticism, are we epistemically any better off if we execute a sort of leap of faith by trusting in reason independently of any arguments or evidence?

René Descartes is widely known of his attempt to *prove* the reliability of reason. His epistemology culminates in the proof of the existence of a benevolent God who vouches for the reliability of reason.[551] Again, ever since Descartes's times it has been brought out that his strategy is viciously circular – Descartes must assume the reliability of reason, or specifically, the truth of clear and distinct perceptions, in his proof. Thus, Descartes's proof relies on the knowledge of the proof's conclusion, and hence, vicious circularity follows.[552] Nowadays epistemologists are aware of the circular reasoning Descartes is found guilty of, and supposedly no one is willing to repeat his mistakes. For example, Plantinga in his externalist epistemology – that rests also on the assumption

that a benevolent God guarantees the reliability of reason – tries to avoid the Cartesian fallacy, and with approval of Reid refuses to give any argument for the reliability of reason.[553] Instead of giving arguments, Plantinga reasons as follows:

> Suppose, therefore, you find yourself with the doubt that our cognitive faculties produce truth: you can't quell that doubt by producing an argument about God and his veracity, or indeed, any argument at all; for the argument, of course, will be under as much suspicion as its source. Here no argument will help you; here salvation will have to be by grace, not by works.[554]

Here we are leaving the fields of epistemology and entering into the supernatural realm of *faith*. The implications of this move are grave. If arguments are useless, then what prevents us from accepting, as a matter of faith, telepathy or crystal ball gazing as reliable faculties? If it is acceptable to rely on reason by faith, why not other – no matter how silly – faculties? In fact, Plantinga goes on to propose that we have a special faculty, *sensus divinitatis*, with the help of which we can know the truth of Christian belief[555]. Now, if *that* is an acceptable move, as Plantinga clearly thinks it is, could we not, by the same token, propose the existence of *any kind* of reliable cognitive faculty? Just pick your favorite god and assume the existence of respective mystical cognitive faculty. Plantinga even admits, reluctantly though, that, in principle, followers of "Judaism, Islam, some forms of Hinduism, some forms of Buddhism, [and] some forms of American Indian religion"[556] could defend their respective creeds through the "externalist" move of assuming the existence of a mystical faculty. Bergmann agrees:

> It's true that permitting noninferentially justified beliefs in the reliability of our faculties – in the way externalists do if such a belief satisfies their proposed conditions on justification – makes it difficult to prevent clever defenders of silly and strange beliefs (such as telepathic beliefs or belief in the Great Pumpkin) from offering parallel externalist defenses of their positions.[557]

The externalist seems to be in stalemate. In answering to the above objection, Plantinga just insists that the weird beliefs of the practitioners of voodooism or the followers of the Great Pumpkin are simply false, while Christian belief is not[558]. Also Sosa makes a similar move when considering the objection that his externalist epistemology allows postulating crystal ball gazing as a reliable cognitive process[559]. Sosa compares the alleged reliability of sense perception and crystal ball gazing as follows: "[T]he crystal gazers differ from the perceivers in that gazing is not reliable while perceiving is. … So the perceivers have a good source or basis for their knowledge, but the gazers, lacking any such source or basis, lack knowledge."[560] To start with, this kind of answer does

not seem to be an answer at all, it is rather dogged insistence on the alleged truth of one's own preferred view. Furthermore, the dogmatic response of the externalists throws us back to square one, for we are left to wonder how the externalist knows that her proposed reliable cognitive faculties or processes *are* reliable. Presumably, the externalist is forced to epistemically circular reasoning, and she can either appeal to track record arguments or insist that she knows the reliability of the proposed faculties immediately, independently of further justifying arguments. But that kind of defense is also available to the "voodoo epistemologist" and suchlike. Thus, the practitioners of voodoism and the followers of the Great Pumpkin can defense the reliability of their mystical beliefs and occult faculties similarly as Plantinga defends the reliability of Christian belief and the special faculty *sensus divinitatis*[561].

Bergmann still tries to save his fellow externalists from the above criticism. Or, more precisely, he advances to point out that the consequences of the above objection need not be as severe as they seem at first blush. Firstly, Bergmann notes that the same objection can be raised against internalist accounts too. In other words, whatever our cherished internalist conditions of justification happen to be, it could always be claimed that the crazy beliefs of all kinds of cultists can satisfy the proposed conditions. The cultist's occult beliefs can, for example, cohere with the rest of her beliefs, or be indubitable and immediate basic truths for her, or fit neatly with all available evidence she has for her beliefs. Thus, Bergmann concludes, internalists are not any better off than externalists.[562] Secondly, if we take the externalist path in defending the reliability of our faculties and, on pain of consistency, we must admit the application of a similar move for defenders of occult faculties, it does not follow that we must deem their views as respectable and sensible. We should not expect that we could resolve serious religious disagreements – for example, between theists and atheists – just by referring to the conditions of justification in our favored epistemological account. We can still think that the practitioners of voodoism are badly mistaken in their views although we cannot specify exactly what is, philosophically or epistemologically speaking, wrong with their views, save the apparent falsity.[563]

In my opinion, the two above responses of Bergmann just amount to biting the bullet and a refusal to see the failure of externalism. First, we were considering the plausibility of *externalism*, not internalism; and thus it does not help at all to point out, as Bergmann does, that internalists "are no better off than externalists"[564]. Secondly, if a particular epistemology entails that all kinds of crazy and occult beliefs are justified, it is a sufficient reason to think about a serious revision of that epistemology. In a nutshell, it is quite clear that the considered Reidian account with respect to

epistemic circularity fails. It is simply too implausible to claim that we could know *a priori* the general reliability of our faculties. This is, in effect, the same worry we raised with respect to methodism when considering Chisholm's account of the diallelus[565]. Moreover, our excursion in voodoo and Great Pumpkinian epistemology was meant to highlight that the price is too high were we to accept the methodist solution with respect to establishing the reliability of our cognitive faculties. In other words, if we can just assume without any arguments that our faculties are reliable, then, as a consequence, we fail to discriminate between reliable and unreliable cognitive processes. And again, the skeptic has the upper hand.

As far as Bergmann's suggestion is concerned that epistemic circularity is not *necessarily* a bad thing, this much the skeptic can also accept. For, what Bergmann means comes down to the claim that *if* we have knowledge, then epistemic circularity is "benign", as Bergmann likes to call it, in character. But, again, *do* we have knowledge? It is possible that we have knowledge, and, consequently, it is possible that epistemic circularity is not always malignant in character, but in so far as we do not know what the actual case is, it is preferable to suspend judgment about the reliability of our faculties. So far I have examined the particularist and the methodist approach to the problem posed by epistemic circularity. I have found both accounts faulty, for both of them imply that, in the end, we cannot distinguish between reliable and unreliable belief forming practices without begging the question.

5.3.6. The Two-levels Solution to Epistemic Circularity

In addition to the particularist and methodist solutions to epistemic circularity, it could also be hold that the problem of epistemic circularity is solved due to the mutual interdependence between knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties and knowledge of their deliverances' truth. This coherentist view is endorsed, for example, by Keith Lehrer, who suggests that we should begin the doing of epistemology with the following principle (*A*):

(*A*) I am trustworthy in what I accept.[566]

The principle (*A*) is not a foundation, but rather a "keystone" that provides support for our coherent set of beliefs and is supported by them in return. The principle (*A*) within our coherent system of beliefs gives us a reasonable starting point to dump the doubts of the skeptic.[567] Also Noah Lemos suggests that we should defend the reliability of our faculties in a coherentist manner, or more

precisely, through the method of wide reflective equilibrium. Incidentally, Lemos' solution to epistemic circularity relies heavily – as does Lehrer's[568] – on Reid's views.

The coherentist account has already been criticized in two previous chapters, and the criticism is not repeated here[569]. However, introducing the coherentist account serves as a jumping-off point to our last alleged solution to the problem of epistemic circularity, namely the "two-levels solution"[570]. To clarify the nature of the two-levels solutions I must repeat the premises of the Epistemic Circularity Argument, the argument purported to show the problem inherent in epistemic circularity:

(1) We know that a deliverance of cognitive faculty F is true only if we know that F is reliable. But (2) we know that a cognitive faculty F is reliable only if we know that some sufficient amount of the deliverances of F are true.

Now, an assumption shared by the above premises is that the term 'know' is used univocally throughout the both premises. The two-levels solution attacks precisely that assumption and advances to distinguish between two kinds or levels of knowledge. The epistemology Sosa has developed features such a bi-level structure of knowledge. Sosa distinguishes between unreflective and spontaneous "animal knowledge" and a kind of self-aware "reflective knowledge". Animal knowledge amounts, roughly put, to reliable true belief that unreflective beasts could be said to have. Reflective knowledge, in turn, amounts to awareness of how one knows. If a person has reflective knowledge of a proposition *p*, then the subject also knows that the source of her belief in *p* is reliable. However, as Sosa notes, "[n]o human blessed with reason has *merely* animal knowledge"[571]. That is, reason is always checking the deliverances of our faculties, not so that we were always conscious of the workings of the reason, as reason's very silence also contributes to the outcomes of our cognitive faculties. Now, we can break the vicious circle of the Epistemic Circularity Argument by holding that we work our animal knowledge into reflective knowledge. We can have unreflective animal knowledge of the reliability of our faculties, which is, together with the animal knowledge of the truth of the faculties' deliverances, converted into reflective knowledge of the reliability of the faculties and their deliverances' truth. Thus, Sosa can hold that both premises of the Epistemic Circularity Argument are true, but the required epistemically *prior* knowledge in both of them is animal knowledge in character. Thus, in Sosa's account, the premises are as follows:

(1) We know (i.e. reflective knowledge) that a deliverance of cognitive faculty F is true only if we know (i.e. animal knowledge) that F is reliable. But

(2) we know (i.e. reflective knowledge) that a cognitive faculty F is reliable only if we know (i.e. animal knowledge) that some sufficient amount of the deliverances of F are true.

However, Sosa holds that the above premises do not pose a problem for his theory, since we have animal knowledge that is asked for in both premises. In sum, Sosa's account is that reflective knowledge is compounded of animal knowledge which enables us to break out of the problem of epistemic circularity and the diallelus in general.[572]

I must admit that I am not sure whether I understand the two-levels solution at all. It strikes me as a conjuring trick of sorts. In the first place, what kind of knowledge is animal knowledge anyway? If it amounts to reliable true belief, cannot we doubt that we have it? What does exclude animal knowledge from the skeptic's doubts? Again, *if* we have animal knowledge, then all the better for us, but should we not show that we actually have it? If it is legitimate to stipulate that animal knowledge is exempt from the skeptic's doubts, why cannot we then, by the same token, stipulate that knowledge and our beliefs in general are exempt from the skeptic's doubts? Secondly, I do not understand how our knowledge *shifts from* being animal knowledge to being reflective knowledge. Finally, if my knowledge of a proposition that *p* happens to be that reflective sort of knowledge, how does it then avoid the problem of epistemic circularity? Do my reasons for the proposition that *p* not also attain the status of being reflective knowledge, and if so, a little more reflection reveals that epistemic circularity devastatingly haunts my knowledge of the proposition that *p*. In other words, reflection would reveal that my knowledge of the truth of the proposition *p* is dependent on the reliability of my cognitive faculties, and that the reliability of the faculties is dependent on the truth-ratio of their deliverances. Or maybe the point of the two-levels "solution" is rather that after I have attained reflective knowledge, I should not reflect the reasons of my knowledge, otherwise I lose it. Thus, reflective knowledge seems to paradoxically perish under reflection.

On the other hand, Cohen argues that on Sosa's two-levels account the problem of easy knowledge remains[573]. We are again able to convert our (animal) knowledge too easily to (reflective) knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties. If we think that Vogel's gas gauge example poses a problem for externalism, then it does the same also for the two-levels account. Recall the story of Roxanne and modify it according to two-levels solution – now Roxanne acquires at first animal knowledge of the gauge's readings and its reliability until at some magical point Roxanne's

knowledge converts to reflective knowledge. While we considered the original Roxanne's bootstrapping as an illegitimate method of gaining knowledge, does the revised, two-levels bootstrapping strike us as acceptable? No, it does not.[574] The stories of the two Roxannes are virtually identical, the two-levels account only adds a further layer of complexity to the story. As often in philosophy, additional complexities create additional problems. For starters, we could ask how we know *when* our animal knowledge is converted to reflective knowledge. Or how could I distinguish animal knowledge of a proposition *p* from reflective knowledge of the same proposition that *p*? Again, how do we know that knowledge is constituted of these two kinds, animal and reflective knowledge? Are there further levels of knowledge? Briefly, I am not sure whether the two-levels account solves any problems, but it certainly creates more of them.

5.3.7. Closing the Circle

My study on epistemic circularity is coming to close. All the examined solutions were found unsatisfactory and unable to solve the version of the diallelus posed by epistemic circularity. Of course our cognitive faculties *can* be, in fact, reliable, and thus track record arguments could be acceptable ways of establishing it. However, from our perspective, it seems to be only a matter of luck whether our faculties are reliable or not. Our epistemic situation is worrisome, as illustrated by the following simile of Sextus:

> Let us imagine that some people are looking for gold in a dark room full of treasures. It will happen that each will grasp one of the things lying in the room and think that he has got hold of the gold. But none of them will be persuaded that he has hit upon the gold even if he *has* in fact hit upon it. In the same way, the crowd of philosophers has come into the world, as in a vast house, in search of truth. But it is reasonable that the man who grasps the truth should doubt whether he has been successful.[575]

Now, it is tempting to say that externalists are like those searchers of gold who insist that they have found gold – regardless of the fact that they cannot establish it.[576] To be clear, there is nothing inconsistent as such to hold, as most externalists do, that knowledge amounts to true and reliably produced belief. However, the externalist conception of knowledge strikes me as intellectually unsatisfactory. According to externalism, our actual possession of knowledge is, in a sense, just a matter of pure luck, which I cannot accept as a satisfactory or plausible account of knowledge. Internalist accounts try to exclude the possibility that possession of knowledge is – again, *from our perspective* – in the end just a matter of luck, but they fall prey to the problem of the criterion and

thus succumb to skepticism. Although the internalist approach to epistemology fails to deal satisfactorily with the problem of skepticism, I find it philosophically more interesting and plausible than its externalist counterpart. For one thing, internalists try to address fairly and openly the problem of skepticism, solving of which I see as the foremost and main goal of epistemology in general. Externalists, in turn, seem to bypass the problem of skepticism altogether, which constitutes my chief reason in rejecting the externalist conception of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, the skeptics can grant for the externalists their conception of knowledge and approach to epistemology to the effect that we *may* have knowledge, i.e. reliably produced, true beliefs. However, what the skeptics want to press is that from our perspective it seems to be just a matter of luck whether we have knowledge or not.[577] Whilst seeking for gold in the dark and hitting something hard, it does not console much if you are told that you may have found gold although it is also as possible that you have not. Similarly, whilst pondering whether any of your beliefs are true, the externalist "solution" just seems to amount to worthless sophism. The skeptical challenge as highlighted, for example, by the Agrippan trilemma is to provide reasons for thinking that some of our beliefs are, in fact, true, and in this task the externalist account does not help a bit. We should be able to show, so to say, that we are not completely in the dark with respect to our search for truth.

5.4. Skepticism and Intuitions

In this study, I have shown that the problem of the criterion is a plausible skeptical argument that must be taken seriously. We have seen that none of the studied solutions is successful in solving the problem of the criterion. Thus, it strongly seems that skepticism is an inevitable outcome of the problem of the criterion. But we still cannot get rid of our intuition that we have knowledge and that, thus, skepticism is false. Most of us, particularly non-philosophers, take it for granted, for instance, that external objects exist and that we perceive them more or less reliably, that future events will resemble past events, and that natural sciences provide us with reliable information about the world and its law-like regularities. In short, it is obvious that we have knowledge. However, have the skeptical arguments not just established that our ineradicable intuition that we have knowledge amounts to nothing more than an unwarranted assumption that we have no reason to take as true? Personally, I am inclined to answer "Yes". And, obviously enough, many disagree. For example, John Greco thinks that our pre-theoretical intuitions should form the basis on which to build a viable theory of knowledge[578]. Thus, if a particular "theory runs up against our intuition that

we know that objects in the world exist, then that counts strongly against the theory in question"[579]. Greco admits that maybe a skeptical theory could also provide an explanation of our intuitions and of why we think that we know. However, Greco continues as follows:

> But still, it seems to me that a non-skeptical theory that explains our intuitions remains overwhelmingly preferable [to a skeptical theory], other things being equal. This is because a non-skeptical theory accounts for our common sense intuitions about what we know by showing that they are for the most part *true*. A skeptical theory accounts for those intuitions only by showing that they are false, and by adding an explanation about why we do not normally realize that they are false. Only a non-skeptical theory, therefore, explains the majority of our intuitions in a sense that *preserves* them. But if such a theory is preferable, then the methodological assumption that radical skepticism is false is warranted.[580]

As Greco openly acknowledges, this is an utterly particularist method of doing epistemology[581]. And if it, indeed, is the correct way, then skepticism ceases to be a problem and, actually, it has never been one. However, there is something appealing about the thought that our pre-theoretical intuitions should have some importance in philosophical debates. This is pressing particularly with respect to skepticism, for no matter how convincing an argument for skepticism is presented, we are still inclined to retain our intuition that we have knowledge. As Greco points out, "there are no real skeptics"[582] and "there is no one who actually lives out the skeptical position, or who even believes it outside the study or classroom"[583].

We simply cannot let go of our conviction that we have knowledge. This is reflected in the opinions of even those philosophers who hold that no epistemological theory has succeeded in solving the problem of skepticism, or who hold that skepticism is the most plausible view in epistemology. In other words, even those sympathetic to skepticism are inclined to propose that still, in a way, we *do* know.[584] For example, Robert Fogelin holds that no theory of epistemic justification has succeeded in solving the regress problem highlighted by, for example, Agrippa's Five Modes. Is Fogelin, then, a skeptic? No, for he holds that philosophical reflection raises our level of scrutiny and "we will be disinclined to think we know things or are justified in believing things that we normally accept without hesitation"[585], but "[w]hen we return to practical affairs of life, our standards will return to their normal moderate level and this disinclination will fade"[586]. Similarly, Thomas Nagel holds that our search for knowledge "is inescapably subject to skepticism and cannot refute it but must proceed under its shadow"[587]. This sounds quite, so to say, skeptical, but still Nagel refuses to accept skepticism.

However, it seems contradictory to hold simultaneously that skepticism is correct on the one hand, and that we know things on the other. And if not inconsistent as such, at least we are sliding into the repugnant pit of contextualism[588]. What must be realized is that our pre-theoretical intuitions can be blatantly false even though we *cannot* so much as abandon them. Why should we think, as Greco seems to do[589], that we should preserve most of our pre-theoretical intuitions? What if the intuitions result merely from our doxastic carelessness and laziness, or from cultural prejudices, bias, and dogmatism? Of course, we *think* that we have knowledge, since in the rush and buzz of the ordinary life we could not care less whether our beliefs are true or supported by epistemically good reasons. It is only after a philosophical analysis that we come to realize that most of our "pre-theoretical intuitions" amount to not much more than arbitrary hunches.[590]

What seems obvious – even *intuitive*, for that matter – to me is that we cannot solve the problem of skepticism simply by appealing to our pre-theoretical intuition *that we have knowledge*. That kind of strategy just strikes me as utterly unacceptable. Similarly, we do not solve the problem of free will by appealing to our pre-theoretical intuition *that we have free will*. Nor is the problem of induction solved by appealing to our intuition *that future events will resemble past events*. Or as far as the problem of continuity of personal identity over time is concerned, I cannot solve it by appealing to my ineradicable intuition *that I have been the same person throughout my existence*. In short, our pre-theoretical intuitions do not have a great deal of epistemic value in solving philosophical problems.

But here comes the final twist, viz. most plausible skeptical arguments consist themselves of intuitions. Exactly for that reason skeptical arguments are so challenging to refute: they are based on intuitive premises but end up with unintuitive conclusions. Thus, the whole problem of skepticism – as well as the problem of the criterion – culminates to a conflict between different epistemic intuitions. Specifically, the problem of the criterion is created, in effect, on the basis of the intuition that our beliefs and claims should be supported by good reasons. Then, in the skeptical argument it is further specified what does not count as a good reason; viz. circular reasoning, infinite regression of reasons, or dogmatic assumptions are not accepted as good epistemic reasons that could justify our beliefs. These premises in the skeptical argument are also intuitively plausible. But, as we have seen, foundationalists, coherentists, and infinitists demur and hold that some of the premises in the skeptical argument are not so intuitive after all. Contextualists, in turn, try to solve the skeptical argument by holding that there is not actually a conflict between our intuition that we do have knowledge and the skeptical argument's – consisting of intuitively plausible premises –

conclusion that we do not. Finally, externalists have a different tale to tell. But is skepticism inevitable, then? I think that it is; skepticism is the inevitable outcome of the problem of the criterion. However, the problem of the criterion as a skeptical argument consists of intuitive premises. But why we should prefer exactly these intuitions and not some others that could include, e.g., the foundationalist intuition among them and then the skeptical conclusion would not follow anymore. I hope that, in this study, I have shown via plausible arguments why we should not accept the aforementioned anti-skeptical theories. And if no anti-skeptical theory succeeds in solving the skeptical argument – the Agrippan Argument is the one I have foremost in my mind – then we are left only with skepticism, and there should be no quarrel about that. However, a further study on the epistemic status of our intuitions and on how to resolve conflicts between them could prove to be useful in building an anti-skeptical theory of knowledge. A study on intuitions could show us a way to break the skeptical argument consisting of intuitively plausible premises. Of course, that study will be a matter of another book.

5.5. Summary

In closing, my discussion on epistemic circularity repeats the conclusions of the previous three chapters: viz. that the problem of the criterion is an intelligible problem, that it remains unsolved, and that, thus, thoroughgoing skepticism seems unavoidable.

The chapter began with an examination of Alston's characterization of epistemic circularity and what is problematic about it. Epistemic circularity concerns, in effect, the justification of our doxastic faculties and the inevitable circularity involved with it.

I claimed that epistemic circularity poses a version of the problem of the criterion, which was shown by formulating a specific argument, the Epistemic Circularity Argument. After that, three alternative solutions to the problem were considered. The advocates of the first option – reminiscent of Chisholm's particularism – suggest that we can come to know the reliability of our faculties on the basis of the so-called track record arguments. The advocates of the second option – reminiscent of Chisholm's methodism – hold that we can come to know the reliability of our faculties immediately, without any arguments. Still, the advocates of the third option postulate a specific theory of two levels or kinds of knowledge in order to solve the problem of epistemic circularity. However, all three suggested solutions were found faulty, and I concluded that there is no escape from the circularity involved in justifying our cognitive faculties.

Epistemic circularity seems to be a part of our human condition, for we cannot get outside ourselves in justifying our cognitive faculties. Thus, we must proceed from within, which, however, reveals our miserable epistemic situation – namely, the truth of our beliefs and the reliability of our faculties seem to be just a matter of sheer luck in the end.

6. CONCLUSION

In the introduction of this work, the following pair of questions was set forth:

(i) What is the problem of the criterion? What kinds of different formulations of the problem are there and how should the problem be formulated?

(ii) How has the problem of the criterion been tried to solve? What are the pros and cons of each solution? Could the problem of the criterion be refuted on the basis of its unintelligibility?

Now, it is time to summarize the answers to these questions. In chapter 2 I examined Roderick Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion. Chisholm formulates the problem as consisting of the questions A "What do we know?" and B "How are we to decide whether we know?" However, it is argued that we cannot answer either of the questions without dogmatically presupposing an answer to the other question – a view which also amounts to the skeptical position. Particularists object to the skeptical position and hold that we can presuppose an answer to A, on the basis of which we can determine general criteria of true beliefs. Methodists, in turn, hold that we can presuppose an answer to B, on the basis of which we can then determine the instances of knowledge. Both the particularist and methodist approach were found unacceptable, since it is implausible that we could simply *assume* either instances or general criteria of knowledge. I also examined a hybrid form of methodism and particularism, a sort of coherentism, according to which there is a mutual interdependence between instances and criteria; however, this theory was found to unacceptably circular and unable to distinguish between good and bad systems of belief. Finally, I studied the notion of dependence between instances and criteria, and I found that Chisholm's account is not a genuine skeptical paradox.

The examination of the ancient account of the problem of the criterion, which was undertaken in chapter 3, proved to be useful in understanding the complete structure of the problem and in formulating an argument that is a genuine skeptical paradox. The heart of the problem of the criterion consists in the so-called Agrippan trilemma. The trilemma states, in effect, that we cannot show that any our beliefs is likely to be true, since every attempt to justify our beliefs leads either to an infinite regress of reasons, circular reasoning, or an unwarranted, dogmatic assumption. Since we have no reason to deem any of our beliefs true, we should suspend judgment about everything. Moreover, the Agrippan trilemma works similarly with respect to particular claims such as the proposition "I have two hands" and general criteria of truth such as "Clearly and distinctly

perceived propositions are true". The trilemma was also given a form of a specific argument, the Agrippan Argument. The Agrippan Argument consists of intuitively plausible premises that *we*, the non-skeptics accept. Thus, the problem of the criterion is precisely *our* problem, and therefore it is pointless to object to skepticism by noting that no one can be a skeptic or that skeptical arguments must refute themselves. The problem of the criterion, and specifically the ancient account of it, represents a genuine skeptical paradox to us.

The Agrippan Argument can also be applied to concern specifically epistemic justification of beliefs, and not merely knowledge. Accordingly, we are dealing with the regress problem, the topic of chapter 4. The structure of the regress problem suggests immediately three alternative answers to it; viz. foundationalism, coherentism, and infinitism. However, all three theories were found burdened with serious difficulties and thus are unable to provide a solution to the regress problem. I also examined the contextualist solution to the regress problem, but contextualism was deemed, due to its truth-relativizing character, to be an even worse option than skepticism. Nevertheless, the externalist approach to epistemology seems to be effective against the regress problem. Externalists propose, roughly, that we have justified beliefs if our cognitive faculties are properly attuned to the external world. Thus, the problem of regress of reasons does not even arise. However, even if it could be concluded that externalism is effective against the regress problem, the externalist approach would not solve the problem of the criterion, which was shown particularly in chapter 5.

The regress problem seems to arise from an internalist conception of knowledge that demands that we are somehow aware of the reasons for our beliefs. However, the alternative, an externalist conception of knowledge states that being aware of reasons is not necessary for knowledge. Instead, we have knowledge if our cognitive faculties are properly attuned to the external world. But which of our faculties are attuned in such a way; in other words, which faculties are reliable? Answering this question is challenging, since we must take the reliability of at least some faculties for granted in order for us to examine the reliability of our cognitive faculties – a condition that is known as epistemic circularity, the topic of chapter 5. Epistemic circularity of our faculties is most obvious with respect to reason; we cannot question the validity of reason without assuming it. I examined various ways of dealing with epistemic circularity, but none was found to be successful in solving this particular form of the problem of the criterion. In the end, if we are not willing to be skeptics, we can only provide circular track-record arguments, also known as "bootstrapping", for the reliability of our faculties, or we can execute a sort of leap of faith and merely trust that our faculties are reliable. The problem is that now all kinds of faculties – say, clairvoyance or

perception of God – can be warranted similarly via a leap of faith or via bootstrapping. Furthermore, the externalist approach to epistemology is especially vulnerable to the problem of epistemic circularity. In other words, as soon as the externalist proposes that the epistemic status of a belief is the function of the reliability of cognitive faculties that have produced it, it is only natural to ask how we know that our cognitive processes *are* reliable. Externalists cannot provide an answer to that question without vicious circularity, but neither can the internalists, for that matter. Thus, chapters 4 and 5 together warrant the conclusion that the problem of the criterion is a plausible skeptical argument and no one, up to now, has provided a successful refutation of it.

I finished the study by briefly considering the status of intuitions in epistemology. The skeptical argument – the Agrippan Argument, specifically – consists of intuitively plausible premises that we, the non-skeptics, accept. However, why should we prefer exactly these intuitions instead of some others that do not lead to a skeptical conclusion? In this study, I have shown via *arguments* why none of the studied anti-skeptical epistemologies is successful and why, therefore, the respective epistemic intuitions supporting these theories are not acceptable. However, it was suggested that a further study on *intuitions* could provide us with a proper solution to skepticism. But until that study is completed, I conclude that skepticism is the inevitable outcome of the problem of the criterion.

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Notes

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1. INTRODUCTION

[1] Nichols, Stich & Weinberg (2003), however, try to capture the relevance of different epistemological intuitions by asking ordinary people's opinions about, e.g., Gettier cases.

[2] Lewis (1996), 560. It must be noticed that Lewis does not endorse skepticism, instead he offers a contextualist solution to it. However, as Fogelin (2003) points out, Lewis' account is, nonetheless, quite close to skepticism.

[3] Cf. Nagel (1986).

[4] Greco (2000), 83.

[5] Cf. ibid., 67, 83, 86; Nagel (1997), 81, 94.

[6] Stroud (1984), 117-118, emphasis in original.

[7] Nagel (1986), 67.

[8] Sextus considers the problem on several occasions, and the most extensive treatment is given in the so-called *Five Modes*, see *PH* I 164-177. "*PH*" is the standard abbreviation used to refer to Sextus Empiricus' book *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, followed by the volume number (I, II, or III) and the section number.

[9] See Chisholm (1982).

[10] See Fogelin (1994).

[11] For example, James van Cleve (1979, 55) points out that the infamous Cartesian Circle is an instance of the problem of the criterion. Furthermore, the structure of the problem of the criterion is so general that it can be applied to various philosophical issues, as Michael Steup (1992, 380) notes: "[t]he problem of the criterion is not restricted to epistemic justification and knowledge but is posed by any attempt to formulate general principles of philosophy or logic".

[12] Cling (1994), 261.

[13] In this study, I understand paradoxes as arguments that consist of plausible and intuitively acceptable premises, yet ending up with unintuitive conclusions.

[14] Cling (1997), 110-111.

[15] Ibid., 111.

[16] Chisholm (1966), 57, emphasis in original.

[17] Cf. Plato (1961), *Theaetetus*, 200d-201d.

[18] The argument is developed, for instance in Radford (1966). See also Lehrer (1990), chapter 2.

[19] However, Crispin Sartwell (1992) defends the view that knowledge is merely true belief. See also Stephen Hetherington's (2001) recent book, where he defends the theses that mere true beliefs can count as minimal knowledge and that we can distinguish between degrees of knowledge as well as "good" and "bad" forms of knowledge.

[20] Fumerton (1998a), 905, emphasis in original.

[21] Cf. Gettier (1963). For discussion on the general structure of Gettier examples and different solutions of the problem, see Hetherington (2006).

[22] BonJour (1985), 8.

[23] For the standard reference pertaining to the connection between justification and truth, see Cohen (1984).

[24] For example, Alvin Plantinga espouses the view that justification, or *warrant* as he calls it, comes in degrees. Plantinga (1993a, 4) writes: "Finally, warrant comes in degrees. Some of my beliefs have more by way of that quantity

for me than other. Thus my belief that I live in Indiana has more by way of warrant, for me, than my belief that Shakespeare wrote the plays commonly attributed to him ... warrant is a normative, possibly complex quantity that comes in degrees, enough of which is what distinguishes knowledge from true belief."

[25] Cf. Alston (1989a).

[26] Again, this view is endorsed by Plantinga. See, for instance, Plantinga (1993b), 9.

[27] For a discussion on relevant features of beliefs, including discussion on the strength of belief, see Swinburne (2001), chapter 2.

[28] Aristotle (1984), *Metaphysics* 1011b26.

[29] Reid (1969), 631.

2. RODERICK CHISHOLM AND THE PROBLEM OF THE CRITERION

[30] Cling (1994), 261.

[31] Chisholm (1957), see chapter 3.

[32] Chisholm (1966), see chapter 4. See also the third edition of *Theory of Knowledge*, where Chisholm briefly discusses the problem of the criterion (Chisholm 1989, 6-7).

[33] Chisholm (1982). For the specific dates pertaining to the temporal order of Chisholm's formulations of the problem of the criterion, see Amico (1993), 73.

[34] Chisholm (1982), 61.

[35] Ibid., 62, emphasis in original.

[36] Cf. ibid.

[37] Ibid., 64, emphasis in original.

[38] Ibid., 65, emphasis in original.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Cf. ibid., 65-66.

[41] Ibid., 66, emphasis in original.

[42] Cf. ibid.

[43] Ibid., 69.

[44] Incidentally, it has been claimed that methodism is neutral with respect to skepticism: see, for example, Sosa (1980a), 558 and Lammenranta (1996), 115. The idea is that methodists just state the criteria of knowledge and our beliefs may or may not satisfy the criteria, thus, methodism is consistent with skepticism. I cannot agree with this view, for methodists presuppose that they *know* some criteria of truth and are, therefore, anti-skeptical in principle in a similar way as particularists are. As Cling writes: "Chisholm thinks that there are only two possible *anti-skeptical* responses to the problem of the criterion: particularism and methodism" (Cling (1994), 272, my emphasis). To press the point, methodists think that they can solve the dilemma presented by the skeptic – "You cannot know the instances without knowing the criteria, and you cannot know the criteria without knowing the instances, thus you cannot know at all" – by proceeding from criteria to instances, and, therefore, they *deny* the skeptic's claim that we cannot know the criteria without knowing the instances.

[45] It should be noted that, clearly, empiricists are not compelled to be methodists, as Chisholm seems to think. For empiricists might as well be particularists and claim that their favored criterion – for example, that sense experience is a reliable method for acquiring true beliefs – is validated by and derived from particular (empirical) beliefs; cf. Cling (1994), 284-285.

[46] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 66-67.

[47] Ibid., 67.

[48] Cf. ibid.

[49] Ibid., emphasis in original.

[50] Cf. ibid., 67-68.

[51] Ibid., 69.

[52] Cf. ibid., 68.

[53] Ibid., 69.

[54] Cf. ibid.

[55] Cf. ibid., 69-70.

[56] Ibid., 70.

[57] Cf. ibid., 70-75.

[58] Chisholm's full-blown epistemological theory is presented, for example in his *Theory of Knowledge* (1966).

[59] Chisholm (1982), 75, emphasis in original.

[60] Cf. ibid., 69.

[61] Cf. ibid., 70.

[62] Cf. ibid., 61.

[63] Cf. ibid.

[64] Ibid., 75.

[65] Chisholm (1988), 234, emphasis in original.

[66] Ibid., 232.

[67] Cf. ibid.

[68] Chisholm (1982), 75, emphasis in original.

[69] BonJour (1985), 13.

[70] Amico (1993), 83.

[71] Sosa (1980a), 558, emphasis in original.

[72] Nelson (2003), 74n27. Also Robert Amico interprets Chisholm's problem as meta-epistemological, cf. Amico (1993), 87-88.

[73] See also Moran (2001).

[74] However, see Cling's paper (1994), in which he discusses in detail the question about the level on which Chisholm's account of the problem of the criterion operates.

[75] Landesman (2002), 59, my emphasis.

[76] Ibid., 202, my emphasis.

[77] The externalist responses to skepticism will be dealt in detail, for instance, in section 4.6. "Externalism in Epistemology".

[78] The example of "Cartesian Particularism" is borrowed from Lemos (1998), 83.

[79] Again, the term "Common Sense Particularism" is borrowed from Lemos (1998), 82.

[80] Cf. Amico (1993), 83.

[81] Foundationalists are most naturally interpreted as representatives of particularism.

[82] Amico (1993), 84.

[83] Cf. Lemos (1998), 88.

[84] Cf. ibid.

[85] Cf. ibid., 88-89. It should be noted that Lemos interprets particularism and methodism as meta-epistemological positions, i.e. they concern knowledge about knowledge (see, for example, Lemos (1998), 81). However, as I pointed out in section 2.2., we can understand Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion as challenging directly our ability to know, rather than our ability to know that we know. Accordingly, particularism and methodism are theories – or so I will assume throughout this study – concerning what we know, rather than theories concerning what we know about what we know.

[86] Cf. Lemos (1998), 89.

[87] Cf. ibid., 84. See also Rosen (1968), 413.

[88] Cf. Steup (1992), 379-380. This criticism of methodism resembles the so-called generality problem of reliabilism. A reliabilist must identify the relevant reliable processes that lead to true beliefs. However, the problem is that there seems to be indefinitely many reliable processes, and it is problematic to state which processes are the *correct* ones. With respect to methodism, in turn, the problem is that epistemic criteria seem to be useless, as for any given proposition we can construct countless criteria that are consistent with the proposition in question. For more on the generality problem for reliabilism, see Conee & Feldman (1998).

[89] Cf. Rosen (1968), 415.

[90] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 50-51.

[91] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 69.

[92] Cf. Lammenranta (1996), 115.

[93] Moser (1998), 364.

[94] Shogenji (2000), 506.

[95] Chisholm (1982), 67, emphasis in original.

[96] Nelson (2003), 74n26.

[97] For example, Michael DePaul (1988) argues for the view that methodism and particularism do not exhaust the field of non-skeptical alternatives to the problem of the criterion. DePaul goes on to defend coherentism as the most plausible starting point. Although he is mainly concerned with theory construction in ethics, his points can be applied to epistemology as well.

[98] Here the dependence between instances and criteria is understood as an epistemic and not temporal relation. However, both the epistemic and temporal understandings of dependence are rife with problems, as will be shown in more detail in section 2.6.

[99] Cf. Cling (1994), 270, 274.

[100] See Rawls (1971).

[101] Lemos (2004), 9. According to Lemos, at least Thomas Reid, G.E. Moore and Chisholm are adherents of the common sense tradition. Lemos (2004, xii) understands the common sense tradition, roughly, as the view "that we may take as data for philosophical inquiry many of the things we ordinarily think we know". In Chisholm's terms, this seems

to be a tenet of particularists, but Lemos (2004, 9) wants to suggest that "the common sense tradition is compatible with the method of reflective equilibrium".

[102] Also Paul Moser (1989, 261-265) has suggested that the problem of the criterion could be solved by applying the method of wide reflective equilibrium.

[103] Lemos (2004), 9.

[104] Ibid., my emphasis.

[105] Rescher (1980), 12-13.

[106] Cf. Rescher (1977), 17-18n6.

[107] Rescher (1980), 13. However, it should be pointed out that Rescher's alleged solution to the problem of the criterion is *pragmatic* in character. Thus, he could still consistently think that the problem has no epistemically acceptable solution if knowledge is understood without practical and pragmatic considerations. Rescher seems to think that we should not limit our conception of knowledge to a purely theoretical notion, for also practical and pragmatic factors should bear relevance on it. Cf. Rescher (1977), 94-97. See also Amico (1993), chapter 3, where Amico discusses Rescher's approach with respect to the problem of the criterion.

[108] Amico's interpretation of Rescher is found in Amico (1993), chapter 3, "Nicholas Rescher's Systems-Theoretic Approach". It is controversial, whether *coherence* is, as Amico thinks, the most crucial notion of Rescher's overall epistemology. I follow Amico's interpretation, for it seems to be a plausible way to understand Rescher's strand of thought.

[109] See Rescher (1977), chapter VI, "Why Relate Success and Truthfulness?"

[110] Rescher (1977), 83, emphasis in original.

[111] Ibid., 88, emphasis in original.

[112] Ibid., 90, emphasis in original.

[113] Ibid., 102. See also ibid., 125.

[114] Cf. ibid., 121-122.

[115] Ibid., 122, emphasis in original.

[116] These and other objections to coherentism are told with rather entertaining examples in Plantinga (1993a), 80-84.

[117] Lemos (2004), 164.

[118] Cling claims that there are actually six or eight – depending on how we count, "broadly" or "narrowly," – anti-skeptical responses to the problem of the criterion. However, he does not discuss in any detail other responses than particularism, methodism, and coherentism. Therefore, I assume that the aforementioned three are the only *relevant* responses to the problem, and specifically with respect to *Chisholm's* account of the problem. See Cling (1994), 274-275.

[119] Cf. Amico (1993), 66.

[120] Cf. ibid., 67.

[121] Cf. Rescher (1977), 107-108.

[122] Ibid., 109.

[123] Ibid, 122.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 108.

[126] Cf. Amico (1993), 67-68.

[127] Cf. Lemos (2004), 165.

[128] Cf. ibid., 164-166.

[129] These problematics have become to be known under the rubric of "epistemic circularity" that is discussed in chapter 5. For now, see, e.g., Alston (1986a).

[130] Cf. Lemos (2004), 166. See also ibid., 36-47, where Lemos discusses the problem of epistemic circularity.

[131] Ibid., 169.

[132] Lammenranta (1996), 119.

[133] It should be noted that Lammenranta (1996) discusses the problem of the criterion with respect to epistemic justification, not knowledge. I believe, however, that his points pertaining to the method of wide reflective equilibrium are also relevant in the present context, in which the problem of the criterion is interpreted as focusing on knowledge. Lammenranta's (1996) general project is to apply the method of wide reflective equilibrium to a reliabilist theory of justification.

[134] Cf. Lammenranta (1996), 119-120.

[135] Cf. ibid., 120.

[136] Lammenranta (ibid., 119-120) acknowledges this objection and he tries to provide a kind of answer to it (ibid., 120-123).

[137] Cf. Amico (1993), 106.

[138] Cf. ibid., 110.

[139] Ibid., emphasis in original.

[140] Cf. ibid., 111-113.

[141] Cf. ibid., 7-9.

[142] Ibid., 113. When Amico speaks of the *modern* problem of the criterion, he refers to Chisholm's formulation, in contrast to the *ancient* problem that refers to Sextus' formulation. Also, in the passage quoted Amico uses the term "rational doubt" that he defines as follows:

> RD: S has rational doubt about P = def. S is more justified in withholding belief in P than in accepting P or rejecting P. (Amico 1993, 9.)

[143] Cf. ibid., 8.

[144] Cf. ibid., 10. Amico (ibid.), however, claims that logical paradoxes actually are pseudoproblems if they, indeed, are impossible to solve. Thus, one could claim that Amico's account of pseudoproblem implies that logical paradoxes cease to be problems. This, however, seems to be highly unintuitive, for one could be seriously puzzled about a logical paradox, while acknowledging that it seems to be impossible to solve.

[145] Cf. ibid., 11.

[146] Cf. ibid., 13, 106.

[147] This criticism is also noted by Amico (1993, 113) himself who credits Sharon Ryan for pointing out this counter-argument for him at a conference (cf. ibid., 117n45).

[148] Cf. ibid., 113-114.

[149] Mattey (1997), 229.

[150] Amico (1993), 10.

[151] Amico also holds that the ancient account of the problem of the criterion can be dissolved as a pseudoproblem (see Amico 1993, especially chapter 5). However, it seems that thereafter he has changed his mind about the successfulness of his proposed solution, for in another occasion, he writes: "[a] thoroughgoing Pyrrhonian sceptic *makes no presuppositions whatsoever* about what is or is not the case. The Pyrrhonian sceptic uses the presuppositions of others to criticize their views, to issue challenges, but never to make assertions or presuppositions about what is." (Amico 2000, 714, emphasis in original.) Thus, Amico thinks that, after all, the ancient account of the problem of the criterion cannot be ignored as a pseudoproblem.

[152] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 66.

[153] See Cling (1994), especially 266-269. See also the so-called *knowledge argument* in Cling (1997), 112.

3. THE PYRRHONIAN PROBLEM

[154] As suggested by, for example, J. Annas and J. Barnes in their introduction to Sextus' work (Sextus Empiricus 2000, xii). It should also be noted that Annas and Barnes have decided to translate the title of Sextus' work as *Outlines of Scepticism*, although the more accurate translation from the Greek title would be *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. They defend their decision by saying that the word "Pyrrhonism" in the title could be misunderstood, hence the substitution with 'Scepticism' seems to be justified (cf. Sextus Empiricus 2000, xxxiv, footnote 1).

[155] Cf. Barnes (1990a), vii. See also Gisela Striker's (1990) useful paper on the ancient Greek epistemology.

[156] *PH* I 7.

[157] Cf. Sextus Empiricus (2000), xvii.

[158] Cf. Barnes (1990a), vii.

[159] Cf. Sextus Empiricus (2000), xv.

[160] Cf. Burnyeat (1983), 2.

[161] Cf. Sextus Empiricus (2000), xviii.

[162] Cf. ibid., xviii-xix.

[163] Barnes (1990a), ix.

[164] *PH* I 26.

[165] *PH* I 12.

[166] Cf. ibid.

[167] Cf. Sedley (1983), 15 and Striker (2004), 15.

[168] *PH* I 10.

[169] Cf. *PH* I 2-3.

[170] Cf. *PH* I 3.

[171] Cf. Sextus Empiricus (2000), xx.

[172] Hereafter, in this chapter, I use the word "skeptic" for referring specifically to Pyrrhonian skeptics, i.e. Pyrrhonists. If Academian or other sorts of skeptics are referred to, clarifying qualifications will be added.

[173] *PH* I 26.

[174] *PH* I 10.

[175] Cf. *PH* I 31.

[176] *PH* I 12.

[177] Cf. Striker (2004), 16. See also Williams (1988).

[178] Of this psychological interpretation of Pyrrhonism and of its criticism, see Lammenranta (2008), especially section 2, "The Practical Problem".

[179] *PH* I 8, my emphasis.

[180] Cf. Sedley (1983), 21.

[181] Cf. *PH* I 34.

[182] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 10.

[183] See, e.g., *PH* I 25, 200, 201. For a more comprehensive list of references, see Barnes (1990a), 10n11.

[184] Cf. Striker (2004), 16.

[185] *PH* I 19.

[186] Cf. *PH* I 20.

[187] Cf. Striker (1983), 99-100, 104; Lammenranta (2008); and Annas (2000), 274.

[188] Cf. Striker (1983), 95-97.

[189] Cf. ibid., 97.

[190] Cf. *PH* I 35.

[191] Cf. Striker (1983), 99.

[192] Cf. *PH* I 40-78.

[193] Cf. *PH* I 45.

[194] Cf. *PH* I 79-90.

[195] Cf. *PH* I 81-84.

[196] Cf. *PH* I 85.

[197] Cf. *PH* I 91-99.

[198] *PH* I 94.

[199] *PH* I 91, my emphasis.

[200] Sextus does not speak of an alleged *correspondence* between our appearances and the reality, but, in my view, the notion of correspondence fits well to the general picture Sextus draws of the workings of our sense faculties. Our senses provide appearances, and if we take them as true, they, thus, form the basis of our *beliefs* about the external world. As Sextus (*PH* I 14) writes, "if you hold beliefs, then you posit as real the things you are said to hold beliefs about". If the beliefs are true, then we have knowledge; and Sextus could perfectly consistently agree on this point. The crucial question is, however, whether our beliefs *are* true, and, moreover, how we could know it.

[201] *PH* I 99.

[202] Cf. Striker (1983), 100. See also Hankinson (1998), 156.

[203] *PH* I 210.

[204] *PH* I 88.

[205] Cf. Striker (1983), 100.

[206] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 18. The passages Barnes (1990a, 18n21) mentions are the following: *PH* I 26, 29, 59, 178; II 85, 113, 116, 181; III 54.

[207] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 19. For relevant references to Sextus, see Barnes (1990a), 19n22.

[208] Cf. Striker (1983), 105.

[209] Cf. ibid., 101; cf. Barnes (1990a), 108.

[210] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 12-15. Barnes (1990a, 14-15) also suggests that we should understand disagreement as a situation of conflicting *attitudes*, to allow the skeptical *epoché* to be one of the parties of a disagreement. I bypass this further complexity, for I am not sure whether suspension of judgment could be said to be genuinely a part of a disagreement. Instead, it seems as if a person who suspends judgment about some matter willingly opts out of the debate.

[211] Cf. *PH* I 60-61, 114-117, 121-123.

[212] *PH* I 135.

[213] *PH* I 140.

[214] See also *PH* I 216-219.

[215] Cf. *PH* I 103, 132.

[216] Cf. Striker (1983), 105-110.

[217] Cf. *PH* I 39.

[218] Cf. Striker (1983), 111-113.

[219] Cf. *PH* III 280.

[220] *PH* I 169.

[221] It should be noted that Aristotle's discussion on *Posterior Analytics* A3 is strikingly similar to Agrippa's Five Modes. Barnes (1990a, 122) even claims that "Agrippa's modes – or their central philosophical core – will have derived historically from the *Posterior Analytics*". See also Barnes (1990a, 120-122) for a brief discussion about the similarities between Agrippa's modes and *APst* A3. Furthermore, also Plato's Meno is an important figure whose skeptical arguments bear a close resemblance to the Pyrrhonian skeptics' diallelus, see *Meno* dialogue in Plato (1985).

[222] *PH* I 165-169.

[223] Cf. Barnes (1990b), 205.

[224] Barnes (1990a), 113.

[225] Cf. ibid., 119.

[226] See, for example, Fogelin (1994), 116-117 and Klein (2003a), 80-81.

[227] Cf. Klein (2003a), 81.

[228] Sextus Empiricus (2000), xviii.

[229] Cf. Fogelin (1994), 116.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Cf. ibid.

[232] See Lammenranta (2008). Lammenranta (ibid.) argues, however, that the neglect of the challenging modes miscontrues Agrippa's problem as its dialectical nature is therefore missed.

[233] Cf. Sosa (1997a), 229.

[234] *PH* I 165.

[235] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 16, 22-23.

[236] See *PH* I 178.

[237] Cf. Barnes (1990b), 219-220.

[238] See, for instance, sections 2.3.1. and 2.3.3. of the present work.

[239] Barnes (1990a), 116, emphasis in original.

[240] Cf. Striker (1983), 111-112.

[241] *PH* I 167.

[242] See, e.g., Lammenranta (2008), n21 and Striker (1983), 112.

[243] Cf. *PH* II 20.

[244] *PH* I 166.

[245] Barnes (1990b), 209.

[246] Cf. ibid.

[247] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 42 and Hankinson (1998), 188.

[248] Cf. Barnes (1990b), 209.

[249] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 43.

[250] *PH* I 122. In addition to the fifth mode of the Ten Modes, the mode from infinite regress is also appealed to in the fourth mode of the Ten Modes, *PH* I 114-117, although Sextus claims that the mode working here is that of circularity. However, Barnes (1990a, 62-63) convincingly argues that the mode in work here is that of infinite regress, not of circularity.

[251] See section 2.4.2.

[252] The mode of circularity is at least hinted at in *PH* I 61. See also note 250 above.

[253] *PH* I 169.

[254] To be precise, Sextus attacks reciprocal arguments, that is, cases of circular reasoning that involve *pairs* of arguments. As Barnes (1990a, 60) explains the notion, "you argue reciprocally when you use the conclusion of one argument as a premise in a second argument which itself is supposed to establish one of the premises of the first argument". However, as Barnes suggests (1990a, 64), we must suppose that Sextus opposes not only reciprocal arguments – that are special cases of circular reasoning – but all circular reasoning. See Barnes' excellent discussion on the reciprocal mode; Barnes (1990a), chapter 3.

[255] Cf. Johnson (1978), 228, 237.

[256] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 43, 65-66.

[257] Cf. ibid., 66.

[258] In the Ten Modes, the mode from hypothesis occurs also, e.g., in *PH* I 114.

[259] *PH* I 122.

[260] *PH* I 168.

[261] *PH* I 173, my emphasis.

[262] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 98.

[263] Cf. Barnes (1990b), 211.

[264] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 109.

[265] See section 2.3.3.

[266] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 108-109.

[267] At *PH* I 164-169, where they are introduced for the first time.

[268] Cf. Barnes (1990a), 119.

[269] Cf. ibid., 115.

[270] See *PH* II 14, where it is explicitly said that the standards to be discussed are those of *truth*.

[271] *PH* II 20, my emphasis.

[272] It could be always questioned whether the considered passage, *PH* II 20, *really* presents the definitive formulation of the problem of the criterion to be found in the *Outlines*. I am inclined to claim that it *is* the definitive passage, and scholars such as Popkin (1979, 3-4), Amico (1993, 17), and Floridi (1993, 207) agree. Moreover, even though Barnes does not use the term "problem of the criterion", he (Barnes 1990a, 119) finds "the philosophical core of Agrippan scepticism" to be presented exactly in *PH* II 20. However, Barnes (1990a, 116) thinks that the mode of disagreement, found in *PH* II 20, is unnecessary for the presentation of the philosophical core of ancient skepticism.

[273] *PH* II 79.

[274] Furthermore, as Barnes (1990a, 115) notes, the mode of circularity appealed to in the passage concerning the criterion of truth, that is *PH* II 20, is not a genuine case of circularity but that of infinite regress of reasons. Thus, the argument is modified so that the mode of circularity really concerns circularity.

[275] See *PH* II 79.

[276] As Walton (2004) points out, two types of *ad hominem* arguments can be distinguished. The one is a fallacy that charges the opponent on the basis of her personal characteristics. The other form of *ad hominem* argument charges the opponent on the basis of her inconsistent commitment. The scheme of this latter type can be presented as follows (cf. Walton 2004, 365):

Argument from Inconsistent Commitment

(1) S is committed to proposition *p*.
(2) S is committed to proposition ~*p* that is the conclusion of the argument S presently advocates.
Therefore,
(3) S's argument should not be accepted.

Obviously, it is this latter type of *ad hominem* that the skeptics utilize.

[277] Cf. Annas (2000) 279; Lammenranta (2008); and Sextus Empiricus (2000), xxix.

[278] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 65.

[279] Ibid., 61, my emphasis.

[280] Chisholm (1957), 32n2.

[281] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 61-62.

[282] Cf. Amico (1993), 39.

[283] Moser (1989), 260.

[284] *PH* II 20.

[285] Barnes (1990a), 74.

[286] Cf. Chisholm (1982), 64.

[287] Cf. ibid.

[288] Ibid., 67.

[289] Cf. Floridi (1993), 213-214.

[290] See *PH* II 20.

[291] In section 2.2., it was pointed out that as far as Chisholm's formulation of the problem of the criterion is concerned, it can be questioned whether he presents the problem as epistemological or meta-epistemological. With respect to the

ancient version of the problem, in turn, I think that this question does not even arise. In my view, it is just obvious that the problem of the criterion presented in the *Outlines* challenges our knowledge directly, not through a detour as challenging our knowledge about knowledge. Barnes (1990a, 142, emphasis in original) agrees as he writes that "the Pyrrhonian is not concerned with whether the Dogmatists *knows* that he knows that P". Instead, the Pyrrhonist is concerned whether the Dogmatist knows that *p*.

[292] Cf. Foley (2003), 62.

[293] Cf. Priest (2000), 193.

[294] Cf. *PH* I 14-15, 187.

[295] *PH* I 197.

[296] Cf. Landesman (2002), 66.

[297] Cf. *PH* I 206.

[298] *PH* III 280-281, my emphasis.

[299] Cf. Priest (2000), 193.

[300] *PH* I 23-24.

[301] See, for example, Fogelin (1994) for one who defends a reading of Pyrrhonism according to which "Pyrrhonists did not call for the suspension of belief in all areas, but targeted only dogmatic philosophy and other theoretical activities akin to dogmatic philosophy" (Fogelin (1997a), 395). For criticism of Fogelin's interpretation, see, for example, Dretske (1997) and Stroud (2004).

[302] Cf. Priest (2000), 193-194. See also Burnyeat (1980).

4. THE REGRESS PROBLEM AND EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

[303] Aikin (2005), 191, emphasis in original. The abbreviation "DL II" in the quotation refers to Diogenes, L. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. II.

[304] Fogelin (1994), 114.

[305] Cf. ibid., 117.

[306] Cf. Moser (1985), 29.

[307] Fogelin (1994), 11.

[308] Also Floridi (1997, 408) makes similar claim:

> [T]he problem discussed by Fogelin [i.e. the Agrippan problem as presented in the Five Modes] has three complex roots in the history of epistemology: (a) the contemporary debate within the German tradition, e.g., Albert's 'Münchhausen Trilemma', which can be traced through its Kantian origins (Hegel's 'Scholasticus' absurd resolution') to the neo-Kantian and Popperian discussion of 'Fries's trilemma'; (b) the debate within the English-speaking tradition (Chisholm's *problem of the criterion*), which has Cartesian and sceptical origins in the discussion of the 'Cartesian circle' (e.g., in Gassendi) and Montaigne's *rouet*; and (c) Sextus Empiricus' *diallelus*, to which both traditions are to be connected.

[309] For instance, the regress problem can be seen as concerning the overall justificatory *structure* of belief system. Moreover, as Alvin Goldman (1986, 386n21) suggests, the structure of epistemic justification can be investigated with little or no concern for skepticism. However, Moser (1985, 25) complains that usually the skeptical option is unwarrantedly neglected with respect to the regress problem. To repeat, I agree with Moser that skepticism cannot be simply dismissed while considering the regress problem – a variant of the problem of the criterion.

[310] The epistemic status of necessary truths is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.

[311] See section 3.2.1. of the current work.

[312] However, see the excellent discussion in Heck (2000).

[313] Klein (1999), 297.

[314] Cf. Klein (2000), 17.

[315] Cf. Bergmann (2004a), 163.

[316] Ibid., 164.

[317] Ibid., 163-164.

[318] Ibid., 164.

[319] Cf. Klein (2004), 170.

[320] Cf. ibid., 169-171.

[321] Bergmann himself defends an externalist theory of justification and knowledge in his (2006a) *Justification without Awareness*.

[322] See also BonJour's (1985, 30-33) influential formulation of this objection against foundationalism.

[323] See section 2.4.2. "Objections against the Fourth Alternative".

[324] See section 3.3.3. "The Mode of Circularity".

[325] Cf. Plantinga (1986), 124-125.

[326] See BonJour (1999), where he gives a defense of a foundationalist account of empirical justification.

[327] Plantinga (1993a), 99.

[328] Cf. BonJour (1985), 102-103.

[329] But it can be justification-affording, argues Cling (2002).

[330] Cf. BonJour (2001b), 625.

[331] BonJour (1998), 106, emphasis in original.

[332] Cf. ibid., 106-107.

[333] Ibid., 107.

[334] Cf. ibid., 108-109.

[335] Cf. ibid., 110-111.

[336] Alston (1993), 128.

[337] Cf. BonJour (1998), 112.

[338] Cf. ibid., 113-114.

[339] Ibid., 116.

[340] Cf. ibid., 116-119.

[341] Cf. ibid., 118-119.

[342] Cf. ibid., 120-124; BonJour (2001b), 629; and BonJour (2005), 99.

[343] Cf. BonJour (2005), 100; and BonJour (2001c), 675-679. BonJour added this characterization of *a priori* justification as non-propositional in character after Paul Boghossian's (2001) criticism. The criticism is closely related to Lewis Carroll's classic article, cf. Carroll (1895). Virtually the same criticism as Boghossian (2001) made against BonJour's account on the *a priori* can also be found in an earlier article by Miscevic (1998).

[344] Cf. Bonjour (1998), 127-128.

[345] Ibid., 128.

[346] Ibid., 115-116.

[347] Ibid., 136.

[348] Ibid., 137.

[349] Cf. ibid., 116.

[350] Ibid., 111.

[351] Ibid., 119.

[352] Cf. ibid., 140, 142.

[353] BonJour disagrees, cf. ibid., 142n7.

[354] See section 4.2.1.

[355] BonJour (1998), 148.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid., 149. See also BonJour's discussion about the "metajustification" of the *a priori*, cf. ibid. 142-147.

[358] Klein (1999, 317n1) attributes the term "infinitism" to Paul Moser (1984).

[359] *PH* I 122.

[360] Fogelin (1994), 121.

[361] Klein is not the first defender of infinitism, for, as Scott Aikin points out (2005, 192), also some writings of Karl Popper and Charles Peirce can be interpreted as sympathetic to infinitism. However, as BonJour (1985, 132n10) notes, it is controversial whether Peirce's views apply to the issue of the epistemic justification. Be that as it may, so far Klein is the one who has given us the most comprehensive defense of infinitism.

[362] Klein (2003a), 86.

[363] The objection is stated in Dancy (1985), 55-56.

[364] Klein (1999, 324n53) writes: "I use the term 'provisional' justification rather than 'conditional' justification (as used by Dancy) because the term 'provisional' more clearly underscores the fact that the reasons in the chains are replaceable."

[365] See *PH* I 1-3.

[366] Cf. Klein (1999), 312-313; Klein (2003a), 86.

[367] Cf. Klein (1999), 309; Klein (2003a), 88.

[368] Cf. Klein (1999), 297-298; Klein (2003a), 86, 88.

[369] Klein (2003a), 88.

[370] Klein (2003b), 726n15.

[371] Klein (1999), 298.

[372] Klein (2003b), 726. The presented principle is actually a revised version of PAA. The original one is as follows:

(PAA)   For all x, if a person, S, has a justification for x, then there is some reason, r_1, available to S for x; and there is some reason, r_2, available to S for r_1, etc. (Klein 1999, 299.)

The revised version with the added clause "and there is no last series in the series" is meant to preclude "Infinistic Foundationalism" – a view that there are an infinite number of non-repeating propositions between any given proposition and the foundational one – and "Infinistic Coherentism" – a view that the set of coherent propositions is infinite. (Cf. Klein 2003b, 726.)

[373] Cf. Klein (1999), 299.

[374] Cf. Klein (2003a), 83, 93n16, 93n17.

[375] Cf. Klein (1999), 299.

[376] The label "Klein's regress condition" is taken from Cling who formulates, however, the principle in question somewhat differently than I do. See Cling (2004, 103). Differences between the two formulations are trivial, though.

[377] Cf. Cling (2004), 103.

[378] Cf. Klein (1999), 299-300, 318n8, 319-320n10.

[379] Sosa (1980b), 10.

[380] Cling (2004), 108.

[381] Cf. Aikin (2005), 198-202.

[382] Cf. Moser (1985), 108-112.

[383] Cf. Klein (1999), 324n51. See also Cling (2004), 109-110. See also Cling's complex argument to the effect that any viable truth-conducive condition of justification (for infinitism) undermines the regress condition; Cling (2004), 110-120.

[384] Klein (1999), 324n51.

[385] See section 4.2.1.

[386] Klein (1999), 316.

[387] Ibid.

[388] Cf. Luper (2003), xii.

[389] Cf. Pritchard (2002), 217-218.

[390] Accordingly;

        (M1) I know O.

        (M2) If I know O, then I know not-SH.

        (M3) I know not-SH.

[391] It should be noted, however, that Moore is not *so* anti-skeptical as many contemporary philosophers tend to think. For example, he acknowledges the weaknesses of his alleged refutation of skepticism and makes some – quite strong, I think – concessions to the skeptic, see Moore (1959a), 44-45; and Moore (1959b), 148-149.

[392] See section 2.3.1. "Particularism".

[393] Dretske (1970), 1016, emphasis in original.

[394] Cf. Pritchard (2002), 220.

[395] Cf. Dretske (2003), 107.

[396] Ibid., 111-112.

[397] The relevant alternatives approach, together with the denial of the closure principle, was famously elaborated further by Nozick (1981).

[398] Cf. DeRose (1995), 28.

[399] Cf. Pritchard (2002), 224; Kornblith 2000, 24.

[400] Cf. DeRose (1995), 39.

[401] Cf. ibid., 40.

[402] Ibid., 41.

[403] Ibid., 5-6.

[404] Cf. ibid., 8. See also Pritchard (2002), 227.

[405] Wittgenstein (1969), §§ 341-343, emphasis in original.

[406] Ibid., § 253, cf. § 471.

[407] Cf. ibid., § 192.

[408] Cf. ibid., § 204.

[409] Ibid., § 166.

[410] Cf. Williams (2004a). See also Williams (1991).

[411] What is a defeater? Albert Casullo (2003, 139) provides us with a useful characterization: "There is general agreement among epistemologists that there are two important classes of defeaters for S's justified belief that *p*: overriding defeaters, which provide evidence that *p* is false, and undermining defeaters, which provide evidence that S's justification is defective."

[412] Williams (2004a), 470.

[413] Cf. ibid., 469-471.

[414] Cf. ibid., 472; Williams (2004b), 138-144. Cf. Wittgenstein (1969), § 115.

[415] Williams (2004a), 472.

[416] Cf. Williams (2004b), 138, 144.

[417] Williams (2004a), 472.

[418] See, for example, Vogel (1990).

[419] Cf. Pritchard (2002), 222-224.

[420] Cf. ibid., 228-230. See also Feldman (1999) and (2001).

[421] Cf. Kornblith (2000).

[422] Cf. Fogelin (1999), 169.

[423] Cf. Williams (2004b), 139.

[424] Ibid., 139-140.

[425] Dretske (1997), 409.

[426] Cf. Klein (2003a), 83. See also Moser (1985), 53-56.

[427] See Lewis (1996), especially, 561.

[428] Cf. Fogelin (1997b), 423.

[429] Cf. Feldman (2001), 73-74.

[430] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 45-46.

[431] Cling (2004), 120-121.

[432] Cf. Lehrer (1990), 163-164.

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[433] Ibid., 104.

[434] BonJour (1985), 36-37.

[435] BonJour (2001a), 63-64, emphasis in original, apart from the word "hypothetical" emphasized by me.

[436] Fumerton (1990), 63, emphasis in original.

[437] Cf. Kornblith (2004), 186-187.

[438] Ibid., 187.

[439] Cf. ibid., especially 189-190, 196-197.

[440] See the discussion between BonJour (2006) and Kornblith (2006). In sum, BonJour (2006) claims that the externalist theory of knowledge is unsatisfactory and *unintuitive* while Kornblith (2006) denies this.

[441] See Stroud (1984), (1989), (1994), and (1996).

[442] Stroud (1989), 32.

[443] Cf. ibid., 32-33.

[444] Ibid., 33-34.

[445] Incidentally, the considered passage from Stroud has, in my opinion, a strong contextualist flavor to it. On the one hand, Stroud claims that he knows that his neighbor is at home, but, on the other, Stroud claims that his knowledge is questionable when considering the *philosophical* question whether we know anything at all. But, as I argued in section 4.5., the contextualist conception of knowledge is not viable. Hence, Stroud should say that either he knows in both cases or in neither case. Ribeiro (2004) also accuses Stroud of both accepting and rejecting skepticism.

[446] Cf. Stroud (1989), especially 41.

[447] Cf. Stroud (1994), 301-302. I have slightly changed Stroud's example.

[448] Cf. Stroud (1989), 43.

[449] Cf. Sosa (1994a), 282.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Cf. Stroud (1994), 305-307.

[452] Sosa (1994a), 284.

[453] Cf. ibid., 289.

[454] Stroud (1996), 358.

[455] See van Cleve's (2003) aptly named paper, "Is Knowledge Easy – or Impossible? Externalism as the Only Alternative to Skepticism".

[456] As claimed, for example, by Luper (2003), xx; and Williams (2001), 7.

[457] Fogelin (2004), 167, my emphasis.

[458] Plantinga (1993a), 22, my emphasis. See also Plantinga's (1993a, chapters 1, 2, and 3) excellent discussion on the features characteristic to internalism.

[459] Cf. ibid., 22, 45-46.

[460] Williams (2004b), 130, emphasis in original.

5. EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

[461] Cohen (2002), 309.

[462] Reed (2006), emphasis in original.

[463] Alston (1986a).

[464] Cf. ibid., 1-2.

[465] Cf. ibid., 4.

[466] Cf. ibid., 4-5.

[467] Cf. ibid., 4, 6-7.

[468] Cf. ibid., 7-8.

[469] Cf. ibid., 5-6, 8.

[470] Cf. ibid., 9. I have formulated the argument to some extent differently than Alston in his (1986a). The current formulation is similar to James van Cleve's formulation of Alston's argument, see van Cleve (2003), 47.

[471] Cf. Alston (1986a), 8-9.

[472] Ibid., 9, my emphasis. It should also be noted that Alston's principle "(I)" refers to a different principle as that to which I refer as "(I)", see Alston (1986a), 2. Alston's (1986a, 2, 4) original principles are as follows:

> (I) We and the world about us are so constituted that beliefs about the immediate physical environment, that are based on sense experience in the way such beliefs generally are, and that are formed in the kinds of situations in which we typically find ourselves, are or would be generally true.
> (II) Sense experience is a reliable source of perceptual beliefs.

However, Alston (1986a, 4) thinks that the principle (II) is only an abbreviated version of the principle (I). Thus, no harm is done if I refer to the principle (II) as the principle (I), since the two are interchangeable.

[473] Alston (1989b), 328-329, my emphasis.

[474] Cf. Alston (1986a), 11-14.

[475] Cf. ibid., 15-17.

[476] See section 4.6. "Externalism in Epistemology".

[477] See van Cleve (1979), where he, among other things, defends the idea that "we may obtain knowledge of the reliability of our cognitive faculties by using those very faculties" (van Cleve 2003, 45).

[478] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 47.

[479] Cf. Alston (2005), 203-204.

[480] Cf. Alston (1986a), 23-25, 27.

[481] Ibid., 24.

[482] See Alston (1993), especially chapter 5.

[483] Alston (2005), 221.

[484] Cf. Plantinga (2000), 124-125.

[485] Cf. Alston (2005), 221.

[486] Cf. Sosa (1994a), 278-279.

[487] Alston (1989c), 5-6.

[488] See, e.g., Alston (1989c) and Alston (2005) for further details of his epistemological theory.

[489] Alston (2005), 241.

[490] See section 4.5.4. for similar criticism against contextualist theories.

[491] See Alston (1986b).

[492] Cf. Plantinga (2000), 125.

[493] Ibid.

[494] Cf. ibid., 125n16.

[495] Plantinga's general epistemology is presented in his (1993a) and (1993b), the Christian icing on his epistemology is revealed to its full in extension in the monumental *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000).

[496] See Stroud (1984), especially 270-272.

[497] Cf. ibid., 273-274.

[498] Cf. Chisholm (1966), 57.

[499] See section 3.4.

[500] As we saw in section 2.6., the demand of asymmetry was unjustified with respect to Chisholm's formulation of the diallelus. So is it not unjustified also here? Short answer is, no. First, we *could* formulate the problem without using the structure Chisholm used, and thus we could also avoid the problem created by the demand of asymmetry (that immediately follows if the problem is formulated as a dilemma). Second, the problem of epistemic circularity is in itself such that the presentation of the problem as a dilemma (à la Chisholm) suits it extremely well: we must take for granted *either* the truth of a faculty's deliverances *or* the reliability of the faculty in order to solve the problem posed by epistemic circularity. Actually the coherentist solution to the problem of epistemic circularity seems to be the least plausible; the problem just is such that you cannot have it both ways. Third, if Chisholm's original problem is understood as a problem of validating our cognitive faculties, then the formulation of the problem in a form of dilemma is justified. In other words, in section 2.6. Chisholm was criticized that the demand of asymmetry in the problem is unjustified; however, if the problem is understood as that of epistemic circularity, then the demand is justified.

[501] This formulation of Chisholm's argument is almost a replica of Andrew Cling's respective reformulation of Chisholm's skeptical argument, see Cling (1997), 112. See also Cling (1994), especially 266-269.

[502] The qualifier "some sufficient amount" is needed, for, clearly, we can know that a particular faculty is reliable only if we know that a sufficiently large amount of its deliverances are true in contrast with false deliverances. In other words, the faculty in question should have a high enough truth-ratio in order to be reliable. However, the exact truth-ratio value is not relevant for the purposes of our argument.

[503] For a somewhat different formulation of the argument, see van Cleve (2003), 50.

[504] Reid (1969), 630.

[505] Cf. Vogel (2000), 613.

[506] Cf. ibid., 614.

[507] Ibid., 614-615, emphasis in original.

[508] Cf. ibid., 621-622.

[509] As Richard Fumerton (1990, 60) sees the matter, the classic skeptical arguments rely on the following Principle of Inferential Justification:

> To be justified in believing one proposition *P* on the basis of another *E* one must be 1) justified in believing *E* and 2) justified in believing that *E* makes probable *P*.

Now, in order to avoid an infinite regress, we should be non-inferentially justified in believing that some instances of *E* make *P* probable. However, according to internalist theories of justification, it is extremely implausible to suppose that we could be justified in believing a proposition on the basis of another proposition *without* being required to be somehow, internally, aware of the entailment between the propositions. Externalists, in turn, just assume that the mere fact that *E* makes *P* probable is sufficient for justification, which, however, creates the problem of easy knowledge and allows bootstrapping. But also internalists are, at some level, forced to endorse bootstrapping in order to satisfy the clause 2) of the Principle of Inferential Justification. See Fumerton (1990) and (1995), see also the discussion between Cohen (1998) and Fumerton (1998b).

[510] Cf. Cohen (2002), 309. See also Van Cleve's (2003) somewhat different treatment of the same principle (KR).

[511] As Jessica Brown shows, the existence of basic knowledge does not follow from the assumption that some justification is non-inferential, namely, non-inferential knowledge may also be non-basic. For example, I can non-inferentially know the proposition that *p* through source S, and I have knowledge of the reliability of the source S prior to knowing the proposition that *p*. See Brown (2004) for further details.

[512] Cohen (2002, 2005) has also his own proposal for the solving of the problem of the easy knowledge. However, Cohen's solution is a contextualist epistemology (see, for example, Cohen (2005), 423), and as I have already criticized the contextualist approach in sections 4.5.4. and 4.5.5, the criticisms need not be repeated here. Moreover, in his solution, Cohen appeals to Sosa's distinction between animal and reflective knowledge, which is discussed in section 5.3.6.

[513] Cf. Cohen (2005), 417.

[514] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 50.

[515] Cf. Markie (2005), 409-415.

[516] Ibid., 409.

[517] Ibid., 416.

[518] Cf. Schmitt (2004), 395-396.

[519] Ibid., 396.

[520] Cf. Cohen (2005), 419-420, 422.

[521] See section 4.5.5.

[522] See section 3.2.1. "The Variety of Appearances".

[523] See section 5.1.2. above.

[524] Fumerton's objection is, in effect, the conditionality objection against externalism that we discussed in section 4.6.1.

[525] Fumerton (1990), 64, emphasis in original; except in the original the word "induction" was emphasized and not the word "use" as now – I changed the emphasis from "induction" to "use", as I believe that this the author's intention too, since the previous sentences in the quoted part are emphasized similarly.

[526] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 50-52.

[527] Cf. Bergmann (2004b), 710-711.

[528] Cf. Bergmann (2006a), 206; Bergmann (2004b).

[529] Cf. Bergmann (2004b), 717-719.

[530] Cf. ibid., 720.

[531] Ibid.

[532] Cf. ibid., 720-721.

[533] Cf. ibid., 721.

[534] "Another first principle is, that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious" (Reid 1969, 630).

[535] Cf. Bergmann (2004b), 722, 722n29; Bergmann (2006a), 206-208.

[536] Cf. Bergmann (2006a), 207-209.

[537] I agree with Bergmann that most of us take the reliability of our cognitive faculties for granted. Similarly, most of us take it for granted that we have free will and we can choose our actions. However, if one takes, for example, the reliability of sense perception for granted, it does not imply that one also entertains an *actual belief* about the reliability of sense perception. I suspect that most people do not have any beliefs about the reliability of cognitive faculties. If they were asked whether they think that their cognitive faculties are reliable, maybe most of them would answer in the affirmative. But if they were further asked why they think so, maybe most of them would list particular instances (i.e. beliefs) of their faculties' reliable working. However, such lists would amount to *track record arguments*, which makes suspectible Bergmann's claim that his Reidian solution is more realistic than the bootstrapping approach. Of course, above I have only speculated about people's beliefs about their cognitive faculties, but I have not seen any references to empirical surveys in Bergmann's papers either. Briefly, it is questionable whether the Reidian solution is more realistic than the bootstrapping approach, as Bergmann holds.

[538] Cf. ibid., 209; Bergmann (2004b), 723-724.

[539] Cf. Reed (2006).

[540] Cf. ibid.

[541] Ibid.

[542] Cf. ibid.

[543] Cf. Bergmann (2006b). See also Bergmann (2006a), 198-200, 202-206.

[544] Cf. Bergmann (2006a), 204-205; Bergmann (2006b).

[545] See sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3.

[546] Cf. Bergmann (2002), 89.

[547] BonJour (1985), 195, emphasis in original.

[548] Reid (1969), 630-631.

[549] See also Wolterstorff's (2001, 206-212) discussion of the same quotation by Reid.

[550] Bergmann (2004b), 724. Bergmann cites Reid (1969), 30-31 as a reference.

[551] Cf. Descartes (1984, 1985).

[552] For example, Antoine Arnauld is one of Descartes's contemporaries who accused Descartes of circularity. See "the Fourth set of Objections" in Descartes (1984, 1985), vol. 2, 150.

[553] To read more about the affinities and differences between Descartes's and Plantinga's respective epistemologies, see Talvinen & Kajamies (2005).

[554] Plantinga (1993b), 237.

[555] Cf. Plantinga (2000), 240, 241.

[556] Ibid., 350.

[557] Bergmann (2006b).

[558] Plantinga discusses this "Great Pumpkin Objection", as it has become to be known, in his (2000), 342-353.

[559] See Sosa's discussion on the issue in his (1997b), 424-430.

[560] Sosa (1997b), 427.

[561] As Keith DeRose convincingly argues in his "Voodoo Epistemology"(unpublished manuscript).

[562] Cf. Bergmann (2006a), 218-225.

[563] Cf. ibid., 231-233.

[564] Ibid., 225.

[565] See section 2.3.2.

[566] Cf. Lehrer (1999), 136.

[567] Cf. ibid. See also Lehrer's (1997).

[568] Cf. Lehrer (1997), 6.

[569] See sections 2.4.2. and 4.2.2.

[570] I follow van Cleve in calling the considered solution to epistemic circularity the "two-levels solution", see van Cleve (2002) and (2003).

[571] Sosa (1994b), 30, emphasis in original.

[572] Naturally, Sosa's general epistemology is far more complicated and detailed than the bare sketch I have just given. For Sosa's views with respect to epistemic circularity, see his (1997a) and (1997b). For a comprehensive account on Sosa's epistemology see his (1991) and the discussion pertaining to it in Foley (1994), Fumerton (1994), and Sosa (1994b). See also van Cleve's excellent summaries on Sosa's views, see van Cleve (2002), 105-111 and (2003), 53-55.

[573] Cf. Cohen (2002), 326.

[574] Cf. van Cleve (2003), 57.

[575] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 52. The translation is taken from Barnes (1990a), 138-139, emphasis in original.

[576] To read more about the aptness of Sextus' simile with respect to externalism, see Barnes (1990a), 138-144; Sosa (1997a), 231-232, 241-243; Lammenranta (2008), section 9; Greco (2006); and Pritchard (2006).

[577] See Duncan Pritchard's (2005) book *Epistemic Luck* that discusses, among other things, varieties of epistemic luck, some of which undermine knowledge possession and some do not.

[578] Cf. Greco (2000), 15.

[579] Ibid., 21.

[580] Ibid., 117, emphasis in original.

[581] Cf. ibid., 20-22, 116.

[582] Ibid., 22.

[583] Ibid.

[584] Cf. Ribeiro (2004).

[585] Fogelin (1994), 94.

[586] Ibid.

[587] Nagel (1986), 71.

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[588] Fogelin explicitly denies that he adheres to contextualism, cf. Fogelin (1997b), 422. However, Fred Dretske (1997) is suspicious about this – and I think, justifiably so. See also Fogelin's (1997b) answers to Dretske's concerns, as well as Fogelin's discussion of his theory's relation to contextualism, cf. Fogelin (1994), 95-98.

[589] See the above quotation of Greco (2000), 117. See also some of Greco's other reasons for thinking that preserving our pre-theoretical intuitions is preferable in epistemology, cf. ibid., 17, 23-24.

[590] Cf. Ribeiro (2004), 721-725.