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## Φαινόμενα *contra* Νοούμενα: Sextus Empiricus, the Notion of Place and the Pyrrhonian Strategy at Work

### 1

The main goal of this paper is clear: I wish to examine the prickly question of the philosophical notion of place (τόπος), as it is presented and discussed by Sextus Empiricus, especially in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (=PH 3 119–135).<sup>1</sup> Let me point out in advance, however, that I will not enter into any kind of minute philological discussion; and in addition, that I will not focus on the parallel passages about τόπος in Sextus' *Against the Physicists* (=M 10).<sup>2</sup>

Right from the beginning I wish to stress that the passage about place in PH (and especially the initial and final paragraphs on which I will be exclusively focusing my attention) can be deemed a clear case-study of Sextus' polemical attitude and at the same time of his genuine Pyrrhonian point of view. Accordingly, in this paper I will endeavour only to outline the general 'doxographical' trustworthiness of Sextus' reconstruction, while especially concentrating both on

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<sup>1</sup> For a first (useful and thoughtful) survey of the different concepts of space in Classical and Hellenistic philosophy, see Algra 1995.

<sup>2</sup> This would be indeed a vain effort, or rather a mere repetition, after the lucid, careful and detailed analysis offered by Keimpe Algra in his paper "Sextus Empiricus and Greek Theories of Place. On M X, 1–36" at the XI. Symposium Hellenisticum (= Algra 2014). I had the privilege to be there and hear the first version of Algra's contribution; and some time ago he also sent me the final, revised text; I have made and continue to make the most of it and shall use some of his conclusions in the present paper as well. Therefore, I would like to thank him; and I would like to do so also for another reason. I know that the question of the chronological order of composition of Sextus' works is a topic that maybe no more than four or five people around the world find exciting. But although "in principle the gestation of the two works may have taken place in at least partly overlapping periods and the differences could be due to the different purposes of the two works, perhaps even to different intended readerships" (Algra 2014, 1 n. 2 [pagination of the revised typewritten version]; see also Blank 1998, xvi n. 14) and although one cannot exclude the use of different sources in PH and in M 10, I must confess that I find extremely helpful the following conclusions which Algra has clearly stated after very carefully comparing the two passages: "if we have to venture an opinion on the relation between the two accounts in terms of chronological priority, I would say that it is more likely that the account in M 10 is the later one, since it is so clearly more complete and more elaborated" (Algra 2014, 11; see also Burnyeat 1997, 105 n. 18).

the main features of his specific dialectical strategy and on his final approach to a possible and coherent sceptical outlook (with the ethical consequences this entails).

## 2

Without entering suddenly *in medias res*, I deem it necessary, if we wish to correctly understand the proper framework of Sextus' philosophical effort in *PH*, to begin with the most important presentation of what he seems to consider a sort of 'basic definition' of the authentic 'nature' of his ἀγωγή:

Scepticism is an ability (δύναμις) to set out oppositions among things which appear (τὰ φαινόμενα) and are thought of (τὰ νοούμενα) in any way at all (καθ'οιονδήποτε τρόπον), an ability by which, because of the equipollence (ἰσοσθένεια) in the opposed objects (πράγματα) and accounts (λόγοι), we come first to suspension of judgement (ἐποχή) and afterwards to tranquillity (ἀταραξία).<sup>3</sup>

This description, which seems to offer a peculiar form of philosophical 'know-how', while adopting a method possibly familiar to Aenesidemus as well (cf. D.L. 9, 78) and offering a functional *résumé* of some sceptical features clearly listed at *PH* 1, 7,<sup>4</sup> is so decisive for Sextus that in the following paragraph (*PH* 1, 9) he immediately explains the exact meaning he wants to attribute to each of its parts.

First of all, although he is clearly aware of the multifarious semantic value of the term δύναμις, he does not want to stress any of its philosophical (and therefore inevitably subtle or even fancy) meanings; he rather uses it in its simple occurrence as a sort of handy linguistic substitute for the 'neutral' verbal expression "to be able to". Thanks to this initial caveat we are immediately informed of a more general trait of Sextus' attitude, i.e. his conscious choice of resorting – as far as possible – to utterances and wordings reflecting a common everyday linguistic habit or συνήθεια.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> S.E. *PH* 1, 8 (all translations from *PH* are by Annas / Barnes 2000); cf. also *PH* 1, 31–33 and more generally Corti 2009, 16–18 as well as Morison 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Namely: the investigative feature, the aporetic, and the suspensive; on the different nuances of this sceptical 'nomenclature' see especially Decleva Caizzi 1992, 293–313 and now also Grgić 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Sextus' 'reductive' semantic choice is signalled by the use of ἀπλῶς, an adverb synonymous with κοινῶς; cf. e.g. *PH* 1, 198 and 202. This expression is significantly set in contrast, in *PH* 1, 9, to the formula κατὰ τὸ περίεργον, which, like all its cognates, is always used by Sextus to

As concerns φαινόμενα, Sextus seems to be equally precise. “At present/now” they are intended simply as “objects of perception”. The presence of νῦν not only indicates a chronological restriction but also alludes to the fact that the same term can be (and indeed is) used by Sextus in another way in different contexts.<sup>6</sup>

The linguistic freedom adopted by Sextus in order to avoid any strictly dogmatic, semantic or syntactic, correspondence is surely at work also in the case of the formula “in any way at all” (καθ’οἶονδῆποτε τρόπον), since this can be applied – according to a widespread technique of loose usage or even καταχρηστικῶς in Sextus’ jargon (see below, pp. 162–163) – to more elements of the ‘basic definition’ we are examining: not only to the word δύναμις for reinforcing its plain meaning, but also and perhaps especially to the continuous discovery (or even invention) of multiple cross-oppositions. This last remark opens the way to any kind of antithesis between φαινόμενα and φαινόμενα, or νοούμενα and νοούμενα, or indeed – a possibility particularly interesting for our purposes and relevant to *PH* 3, 119–135, as we shall see – between φαινόμενα and νοούμενα. But it also enables the Sceptic to take a further step: he can apply that formula directly to the objects of any opposition (whether φαινόμενα and/or νοούμενα) and therefore accept them once again simply or loosely, without any additional question about their epistemological or ontological status.<sup>7</sup>

### 3

All these elements of Sextus’ overall strategic definition of the effective nature and structure of his scepticism are the background against which we can also test his polemical analysis of many aspects of the so-called εἰδικὸς λόγος, explicitly dedicated to “each of the parts of what they call philosophy” (cf. *PH* 1, 5–6). Apart from his attacks against dogmatic logic (in *PH* 2) and ethics (in *PH* 3, 168ff.), this seems to be particularly true in the case of the section on physics

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describe the kind of over-subtle arguments adopted by the Dogmatists, and by some of them in particular (namely, the Stoics): see, for instance, *PH* 2, 246.

<sup>6</sup> See too Pappenheim 1881, 4. It is also most likely that Sextus was in this case employing and reinterpreting arguments first brought forth by Aenesidemus, as is suggested by a comparison with *M* 8, 216.

<sup>7</sup> Sextus’ strategy when it comes to the role of τὰ φαινόμενα is at any rate much more subtle and complicated, since he admits that a genuine Sceptic can even argue against them, but *disserendi causa*, if he has to fight against προπέτεια, the most dangerous dogmatic disease: cf. therefore *PH* 1, 20 and below, pp. 167–168.

of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (PH 3, 1–167). Sextus opens it by recalling another feature of his method: the main target of any sceptical critique will be the demolition of the more general theses and accounts put forward by dogmatic schools, without wasting any time on the more specific characteristics of their doctrine.<sup>8</sup> Such a method will also impose on Sextus the additional duty of selecting for each topic discussed the most relevant and significant positions, in order to ensure that he will be presenting to his reader the most comprehensive reconstruction of any argument he might be debating.

One can attempt to test the coherence of Sextus' methodology not only by analysing the chapters he immediately devotes to many central topics of the dogmatic approach to physics,<sup>9</sup> but – as stated at the beginning of this paper – also and especially, in my opinion, by insisting on the compact section he writes about the notion of place/τόπος.

As a general and introductory remark, also useful for expressing a careful (and in no way naïve) judgement on Sextus' doxographical richness or even faithfulness, one should subscribe to Keimpe Algra's conclusion. By selecting in PH 3, 119–135 two basic dogmatic doctrines (the Stoic and the Peripatetic), "Sextus' accounts on place basically cover all there was to cover for someone writing in the early Imperial period".<sup>10</sup> Before selecting any philosophical definition of τόπος, however, Sextus applies here one of the caveats clearly expressed and employed in other passages from his works.<sup>11</sup> He distinguishes two senses in which one can speak of place (PH 3, 119): 'strictly' (κυρίως) and 'loosely' (καταχρηστικῶς).<sup>12</sup> The first sense indicates what encloses something in a proper way (e.g. the air that surrounds me);<sup>13</sup> the second must be intended

<sup>8</sup> Cf. PH 3, 1, a passage that can surely further be illuminated by other Sextan references: see below, p. 169 and n. 41.

<sup>9</sup> They are dedicated to the following notions: active principles, God, causes, material principles, bodies, blending, motion, increase and decrease, subtraction and addition, transposition, whole and part, natural change, generation and destruction, rest, place, time, and number.

<sup>10</sup> Algra 2014, 8.

<sup>11</sup> With regards to the specific question of place, see therefore PH 3, 75; M 10, 95 and 108.

<sup>12</sup> For a first survey on the meaning of this adverb (and its cognates) see Burnyeat 1997, 104–106 and now also Corti 2009, esp. 130–134 (who proposes the following translation: 'de façon non-centrale').

<sup>13</sup> And (cf. Arist. *Phys.* 4, 4 212a5–6) this is "a conception of place which is familiar from Aristotle: place as the immediate container of a body. Your place, on this idea of it, is the innermost boundary of the body (of air or other material) surrounding you, the boundary which encloses you and nothing else" (Burnyeat 1997, 102; see too Annas 1992, 217–218).

‘intuitively’<sup>14</sup> or according to ‘the sloppy usage’,<sup>15</sup> as when one very simply says something like “the city is my place”.

Sextus explicitly states that he will concentrate his attacks only on the first point. What does this exclusion of the second sense mean? Although one can speculate about his decision, the special occurrence here of the adverb *καταχρηστικῶς* seems to be clear enough, since “Sextus presumably allows that things have places in the loose sense, a sense accepted by common sense and not invented by the Dogmatists”.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, each time we find the semantic family linked to *κατάχρησις* in Sextan works, this is in relation to everyday life and its usages/habits; and in addition we are told that all those aspects are not called into question by the Sceptic, but rather are a basic feature of his global attitude for facing the world and acting<sup>17</sup> within it. Also in the case of the existence of place, therefore, what Sextus would like to stress is the fact that *regardless* of the fancy disagreements due to the clash of dogmatic doctrines, any genuine Sceptic could not deny the evidence of his being located somewhere, in a place.<sup>18</sup> *If and only if* we decide to play the game of abstract philosophical disputes, we are then invited to turn our back on the real world and enter into a dangerous, parallel universe. Here plenty of strange theories are available, even for speculating against τὰ φαινόμενα. This is the only ‘Matrix-dimension’ where even Sextus admits – to return to a passage quoted before – that “if we do propound arguments directly against what is apparent, it is not because we want to reject what is apparent that we set them out, but rather to display the rashness of the Dogmatists” (*PH* 1, 20).

We can thus understand and explain not only why the discussion will be restricted to the first sense of place alone, but also and above all why one of the conflicting, but not definitively overwhelming parties will propose its conclusions exactly on the basis of that evidence/ἐνάργεια, which should be sufficient

<sup>14</sup> See again Annas 1992, 217.

<sup>15</sup> Burnyeat 1997, 104.

<sup>16</sup> Annas / Barnes 2000, 175 n. 150.

<sup>17</sup> Or perhaps for ‘being active’? For a very subtle distinction between *to act* (“in the robust sense of the Dogmatist’s theory of human action”) and *to be active* (in the sense that Sextus’ sceptic “goes *through the motions* of an ordinary life”), see Vogt 2010, 171–172.

<sup>18</sup> Algra 2012, 22 stresses this fact, also thanks to the comparison with a parallel passage in *M* 10: “it is only the use of the *broad* concept of place (as in ‘Aristotle is in Athen’) which is presented as unobjectionable and accepted between dogmatists and sceptics (ὁμόλογον, *M* 10, 15), presumably in a non-theoretical context”.

for the Sceptic not involved in the philosophical enterprise, but consciously confined to the needs of βιωτική τήρησις and κοινὸς βίος.<sup>19</sup>

Given such a qualified inclusion of τὰ φαινόμενα too among the possible elements proper to a philosophical διαφωνία, Sextus can accordingly quote three fixed positions representative of all the alternatives available about place strictly speaking:

- a. some admitted it;
- b. some ruled it out;
- c. others suspended judgement about it.

First of all and from a textual point of view, Sextus' use here of the past tense (ἔθεσαν..., ἀνεῖλον..., ἐπέσχον...) seems very significant to me: it means that he wants to describe three actual/historical positions and therefore to give more force both to the διαφωνία and to the precision of his doxographical report.

Secondly, it must be noted that:

- the alternative (a) can be supported by an appeal (a more or less direct one, as we shall see) to the force of ἐνάργεια (cf. *PH* 3, 120–121), as well as by elaborate philosophical arguments put forward either by the Stoics (cf. *PH* 3, 124) or the Peripatetics (cf. *PH* 3, 131);
- behind both the counter-arguments against (a) in all its aspects (*contra* evidence: *PH* 3, 122–123; *contra* Stoics: *PH* 3, 125–130; *contra* Peripatetics: *PH* 3, 131–133; more generally *contra* some definitional features of place: *PH* 3, 134) and the final appeal to ἐποχή (cf. *PH* 3, 135) it is possible perhaps to detect the active presence of a sceptical enterprise, in its negative and positive features.

Let me remark in advance that the defence of the real existence (or ὕπαρξις) of place is based on some allegedly evident and hence undeniable facts,<sup>20</sup> which seem to echo at least some of the ἔνδοξα already quoted by Aristotle in his *Physics*. Apart from the presence of parts of place (right/left, up/down, in front/

<sup>19</sup> For further observations on these terms and their interpretation/translation see below, pp. 175–178.

<sup>20</sup> We cannot perhaps speak of 'arguments' *stricto sensu*, but only ... καταχρηστικῶς! Rather, what we have here are "quasi-arguments, from ἐνάργεια", since "even the Aristotelian examples from ἐνάργεια, in so far as they make use of phrases like 'the same place' or introduce a concept like natural motion, use place in what is no longer a completely non-theoretical context or an uncontroversial (because vague) sense" (Algra 2014, resp. 7 and 23). For the conclusion that "Sextus' position is an uncomplicated one" see Bailey 2002, 207.

behind),<sup>21</sup> Sextus alludes also to the well-known phenomenon of changing place at different/successive times (or ἀντιμετάστασις),<sup>22</sup> while adding as an example a personal experience: “where my teacher used to talk there I now talk”.<sup>23</sup> The dependence from Aristotelian material seems to become certain not only when Sextus presents as a fact what is rather a precise philosophical theory strongly defended by Aristotle (i.e. the different place which light and heavy things occupy *by nature*/φύσει),<sup>24</sup> but also when he invokes the *auctoritas* of Hesiod’s poetic stress on the role of χάος<sup>25</sup> (although he also adds some terminological speculations on its etymology). The final argument *pro* the existence of place perhaps also shows (at least partially) a similar Aristotelian flavour and seems to be immediately based on facts, although it is presented as a sort of double *modus ponens*:

- “if there is body, there is place”<sup>26</sup> and “if there are things by which and things from which, there are also things in which”, namely places (cf. *PH* 3, 121);<sup>27</sup>
- but the first, then the second.<sup>28</sup>

The battery of Sextus’ objections against the ‘party of evidence’, however, reveals his distance from any Aristotelian method, since he does not want to use facts in order to produce a more refined and comprehensive theory.<sup>29</sup> He simply aims to oppose not only the denial of any force to poetry for the discussion of philosophical topics, but also some negative counter-arguments, maybe of Pyrrhonian

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Arist. *Phys.* 4, 1, 208b12–27.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Arist. *Phys.* 4, 1, 208b1–8.

<sup>23</sup> *PH* 3, 120. This is one of the rare autobiographical references in all of Sextus’ corpus and it has been the object of some speculation: since his teacher, possibly Herodotus of Tarsus, had been active in Rome, the allusion should be read in the sense that Sextus too was or had been at some time in Rome (see especially Goedeckemeyer 1905, 266). For another (maybe even more speculative?) hypothesis, according to which this passage might derive “aus mündlichen Vorträgen”, see also Pappenheim 1881, 208.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. again Arist. *Phys.* 4, 1 208b8–27.

<sup>25</sup> Hes. *Theog.* 118; cf. also Arist. *Phys.* 4, 1, 208b29–33. For further, useful references about this verse see Annas / Barnes 2000, 176, n. 153.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Arist. *Phys.* 4, 1, 208a29. In addition: should we see a reference here to Epicurean physical principles? See Annas / Barnes 2000, 176 n. 155 and accordingly Epic. *Ep. Hdt.* 39–40, along with Francesco Verde’s commentary in Verde 2010, esp. 89–98.

<sup>27</sup> One should remember that in *M* 10, 10, besides the expressions τὸ ἐξ οὗ and τὸ ὑφ’ οὗ, we also find τὸ δι’ οὗ: on this question see again Algra 2014, 14.

<sup>28</sup> For this abbreviated formula of the implication, cf. also *PH* 2, 142.

<sup>29</sup> On this question see especially Annas 1992, 218 and Algra 2014, 23–24.



origin<sup>30</sup> and based explicitly on the charge of circularity or of *petitio principii*. However, these do not always appear cogent and convincing, so that Sextus himself decides to give more force – or better a more systematic variety (ἤδη καὶ ποικιλώτερον, *PH* 3, 123) – to his *pars destruens* through a chameleon-like attack against the more powerful dogmatic stances/στάσεις available ‘on the market’ at that time.

## 4

I do not wish here to provide any in-depth analysis of the paragraphs of *PH* 3, 123–133 in which Sextus reports and at the same time criticises first Stoic theories and then Aristotle’s (and/or Peripatetic) positions. As I already mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the job has already been done – very well – by Keimpe Algra, not least through a close engagement with the parallel passage in *M* 10, 1–36.<sup>31</sup>

All questions of *Quellenforschung* aside, what I am pursuing is a different goal. For I here wish to focus on the last two paragraphs of *PH* 3, devoted to the concept of place, since they effectively enable us to appreciate at least two elements:

- a general feature of the kind of polemics Sextus resorts to against the Dogmatists, namely his establishment of a sort of ‘network’ of mutually interrelated concepts that are all equally unsustainable and indefensible (in § 134);<sup>32</sup>
- the real ‘moral of the story’ which Sextus wishes to draw from his treatment of the notion of place; this concerns both the choice of a specific method for

<sup>30</sup> See also Bailey 2002, 206 and Algra 2014, 4.

<sup>31</sup> In his analysis Algra has not only emphasised the underlying features of Sextus’ doxographical method, but also attempted to identify the sources the philosopher drew upon. In this respect, I believe Algra is right when, particularly with regard to the anti-Aristotelian polemical section, he suggests that Sextus “did not use the original text, but that the information he provides is derived from a handbook or ἐπιτομή. If this is the case, his ultimate source would most likely have been a Peripatetic handbook, used either directly or through a sceptical intermediary source” (Algra 2014, 18); see also Gottschalk 1987, 1139. For a slightly different conclusion see however Annas 1992, 220 (and n. 43), 229–230. As to the doxographical source maybe used by Sextus also with regard to Stoic material see Algra 2014, 4.

<sup>32</sup> As Algra 2012, 4 rightly emphasises, “it contains more general arguments, independent of any particular concept of place one opts for; the arguments rather turn on the fact that any definition of place will have to use other problematic concepts, or treat place as co-relative to other items that are disputed”.



his anti-Dogmatic attack and the final outcome of every philosophical endeavour on the part of the real Pyrrhonist (this is in § 135).

#### 4.1

So let us start from *PH* 3, 134. First of all, it is worth noting that the objections raised in this paragraph are labelled in a very specific way by Sextus himself: for they are formulated ‘in a more general manner’, i.e. κοινότερον. In particular, it is worth analysing the function which Sextus would appear to be assigning this term. On other occasions too, he uses it for significant points in his argument, apparently for the same purposes. One may refer to several passages in Sextus’ writings,<sup>33</sup> starting from the *locus difficilis* (or indeed *terribilis*, as far as conflicting interpretations go) *PH* 1, 13. But I cannot and do not wish to focus on it here.<sup>34</sup>

In support of my overall analysis, just to provide an example, I might refer to at least three passages from Sextus’ *corpus* in which the presentation of more general arguments (or rather of arguments with a more generally philosophical tone, and which are also regarded as the most important or at any rate most effective ones on a polemical level, possibly on account of their genuine sceptical origin) is connected – in a direct and intentional way, I believe – to the Pyrrhonist’s aim of achieving a correct ethical condition.

First off, let us consider a very important section in *PH* 2, 251–252, devoted to an attack against sophisms, “that lead not only to falsity but also to other absurdities”. Without going into the details of the complex structure of this specific polemic raised by Sextus,<sup>35</sup> we should note that in one of the turning points in his argument he claims that there are two alternatives to each reasoning: this will lead to a conclusion that is either inadmissible or to be necessarily accepted. In the latter case, in the face of necessity, the Pyrrhonian will have to grant his assent, with no further problems. In the former case, by contrast, if the conclusion suggested turns out to be absurd, even if it is presented in highly plausible terms, we should not yield to προπέτεια/rashness, which is a typically dogmatic vice. In other words, we must not assent to this absurd conclusion, but rather demand it

<sup>33</sup> Cf. e.g. *PH* 1, 13; 3, 13 (and 134, obviously); *M* 3, 60; *M* 7, 314; *M* 8, 14 and 272; *M* 9, 258. 358 and 414.

<sup>34</sup> As a seminal starting-point for an analysis of this passage and its controversial interpretations, see the ‘famous’ papers by Barnes, Burnyeat and Frede now collected in Burnyeat / Frede 1997.

<sup>35</sup> At any rate, on some ethical consequences of Sextus’ attack against sophisms see Spinelli 2009; see also Grgić 2011, esp. 84–86.

be put aside, if we are really striving for the truth and wish to avoid engaging in childish drivel. In order to strengthen this stance, Sextus draws upon an example (which had possibly already been used by Chrysippus, albeit in a different context, namely a discussion on sorites).<sup>36</sup> Sextus also refers to elements that presuppose the concept of space (as well as that of motion), without questioning their existence or theoretical legitimacy. The text (*PH* 2, 252) reads as follows:

If a road is leading us to a precipice, we do not drive ourselves over the precipice because there is a road leading to it; rather, we leave the road because of the precipice: similarly, if there is an argument leading us to something agreed to be absurd, we do not assent to the absurdity because of the argument – rather, we abandon the argument because of the absurdity.

The outcome of this ‘supplementary enquiry’ and of this rejection of rash assent can only be a cautious suspension of judgement, which is even presented here as a kind of conscious and expanded extension of a requirement upheld by Chrysippus himself and his followers, “when the sorites is being propounded”.<sup>37</sup>

The second passage in which arguments presented “in a more general manner” prove philosophically compelling while having what is almost certainly a familiar Pyrrhonian air is the conclusion of the ethical section of *PH* 3, which contains a radical attack against all possible forms of education. Here, in § 270, Sextus sets out to criticise the specific idea of an art of living and the alleged possibility of teaching it. Before doing so, however, he applies the adverb κοινότερον to the range of arguments he has developed so far against the subsistence and ‘conceivability’ of the fundamental elements constituting the educational process (namely what is taught, teachers, learners and the way of learning). No further explanations are provided as to what value should be assigned to this term. Luckily, however, the topics discussed in these closing paragraphs of *PH* are also explored in two other sections of Sextus’ *corpus*: at the end of *M* 11 and at the beginning of *M* 1. Without wishing to overlook or downplay the differences between these parallel treatments, it will be useful for our purposes to take note of one detail. The anti-educational arguments which are succinctly presented as being of a more general sort in *PH* 3, 270 are labelled in the same way not just in the parallel passage *M* 11, 243, but also and most significantly in *M* 11, 217, since they reflect a selection drawn by Sextus from among his most important arguments (τὰ κυριώτατα). The latter, in turn, are described in *M* 1, 7 as “the effective arguments” (τὰ πραγματικῶς λεγόμενα): a different and significant ex-

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Cic. *Ac.* 2, 94, quoted by Annas / Barnes 2000 137, n. 352.

<sup>37</sup> *PH* 2, 253 and, for other references, Annas / Barnes 2000, 138 n. 353.

pression which is nonetheless used once again to emphasise the polemical effectiveness of attacks carried out κοινότερον.<sup>38</sup>

Finally a third passage is worth mentioning, *M* 1, 270. Here Sextus claims that the criticism he has levelled so far may be taken to suggest that even “the part of grammar concerning poets and prose-writers” has been potentially destroyed. But he then adds:

none the less, we shall attempt to examine what can be said on a general level (κοινότερον) in this part too, especially because the grammarians have so much confidence in it that they dare to use it to make grammar’s usefulness for life and necessity for happiness plausible.<sup>39</sup>

Leaving aside the developments of Sextus’ subsequent criticism of poets and prose-writers, and taking the explicit and confirmed ethical relevance of this polemic against the grammarians as a given, in this case too – as in those previously examined – it seems to me that Sextus’ use of more general arguments (κοινότερον) “is a remainder of his overall method of attacking the most important, most fundamental tenets of his opponents, rather than the details”.<sup>40</sup>

Thanks to the three passages just discussed, we have, in sum, strategically relevant examples, in which Sextus insists on the special character of sceptical attacks. Often described elsewhere by means of images taken from the military world, as for example that of the siege, and distinguished from the polemical practices of, for example, the sceptical Academy,<sup>41</sup> such attacks aim not so much to insist on matters of detail or those peripheral to this or that dogmatic theory, but rather to demolish its fundamental principles and essential elements. This then becomes the target of Sextus’ critiques: according to an Ockham-like principle of economy, one needs to concentrate the fire of one’s polemic against the foundations of the dogmatic edifice, since only by totally knocking them down will the collapse of all the other theoretical aspects that depend on them also be guaranteed.

If we return to the passage from *PH* 3, 134 we are concerned with, then, we can now better appreciate its value and significance. The text reads:

More generally, the following points can also be made. If there is such a thing as a place, it is either a body or incorporeal. But each of these is at an impasse, as we have suggested. Place too, then, is at an impasse. A place is thought of in relation to the body whose place it

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<sup>38</sup> See also Blank 1998, 84.

<sup>39</sup> *M* 1, 270, tr. Blank 1998, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Blank 1998, 281.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. esp. *M* 9, 1–3; *PH* 2, 84; 3, 1; *M* 8, 337a; 11, 257.

is. But the account of the reality of bodies is at an impasse. So too, therefore, is the account of place. The place of anything is not eternal. But if it is said to come into being, it is found to be non-subsistent since generation is not real.

This paragraph too deploys more general arguments against the concept of place. The latter, however, is understood in its specific sense – as we have seen – stripped of its simple communicative and pragmatic value ('this is my city'), so as to justify its use in more sophisticated terms or at any rate according to what is regarded as a unique definition.<sup>42</sup> In his attack in *PH* 3, 134, Sextus draws upon the most significant and general notions employed by his opponents, with the added corollary that all these notions are presented as being mutually interconnected: either they all stand or they all fall.

In this case, Sextus chooses to base his polemic on the highest genus in Stoic ontology (τὸ τί), under which we should count both bodies and what is incorporeal. Consistently with this, he poses a dilemma: if place is 'something', then (according to those dogmatist theories which Sextus draws upon and at the same time fights the most) it can only be either a body or an incorporeal.

Without recalling in any detail the objections raised just a few paragraphs earlier, but with the advantage of being able to easily bring his readers' minds back to them, Sextus unambiguously rules out both alternatives. Both bodies and incorporeals, he notes, have been subjected to ἀπορία and their non-subsistence has clearly been demonstrated in *PH* 3, 38–55. This ἀπορία and the impossibility it entails of affirming the existence of place extend – almost as if by transitive property – to place itself, which apparently cannot be accounted for in any legitimate and valid way.

After this first attack, Sextus' argument changes its focus, while preserving its general character and indissolubly linking the two concepts of place and body. It would be difficult to deny that thinking of place means thinking of it as the place of a body, as the place in which a body *de facto* finds itself or might potentially find itself; but if this is the case, and if the aforementioned objections raised against the body remain valid, then along with bodies place too must prove non-subsistent.

The last argument which deserves the label of 'more general' sets off from yet another consideration. Possibly building upon a previous objection raised against the Peripatetic stance, it would appear to assume that the place each thing occupies cannot be eternal. If this is the case, then, one must admit that the place in question had an origin, a γένεσις. Here too, without going into any details, through a kind of effective cross-referencing Sextus simply refers

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<sup>42</sup> See also Burnyeat 1997, 106.

to the objections he raised against generation (and at the same time against corruption) not just a little earlier, in *PH* 3, 132–133,<sup>43</sup> but also in a more extensive way in *PH* 3, 109–114.

It seems clear to me that these arguments of Sextus in *PH* 3, 134 suitably fit within the framework of the general strategy we have just discussed. They target the basic points or concepts – not details – upheld by Sextus' opponents by resorting to a range of weapons typical of the Pyrrhonian arsenal: from hypothetical dilemmas to the correlated demolition of two objectives, while significantly latching on to the sceptical polemical approach which has already been established and presented to the reader in the previous sections targeting dogmatic physics.

## 4.2

The fact that Sextus' aim at this point is to make his own polemic both as succinct and as effective as possible is shown by the very opening sentence of *PH* 3, 135. Let us read the full passage:

It is possible to make many other points too; but, in order not to lengthen our account, we should infer that the Sceptics are confounded by the arguments (λόγοι) and discountenanced by the evident impressions (ἐνάργεια); hence we subscribe to neither side, so far as what is said by the Dogmatists goes, but suspend judgement about place.

Among the sceptical objections against the philosophical and dogmatic view of place, which had possibly been developed in a sweeping and systematic way ever since Aenesidemus,<sup>44</sup> it would be possible to find many other arguments intended to stress the aporetic character of this notion. Yet this is not the method Sextus adopts. Rather, he wishes to embrace the criterion of economy in exposition as a guiding thread consistently running throughout *PH*. For this reason, Sextus draws his analysis of place to a close by explicitly and unambiguously stating that he does not wish 'to lengthen' his argument/λόγος. The verb used here (μηκύνω) is a sort of *terminus technicus*. Sextus employs it in those cases in which he seeks to programmatically express his desire not to over-extend his anti-dogmatic polemic through the method of attack which – as already mentioned – was considered as typical of the sceptical Academy.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> On this passage see also Algra 2014, 6.

<sup>44</sup> See therefore Bett's contribution in this volume.

<sup>45</sup> See above, p. 169 n. 41.

Sextus, then, regards his discussion up until this point as being perfectly adequate for justifying the aim he has set himself, as far as the level of philosophical λόγος is concerned. Sextus' discussion should be seen as confirming the need to ultimately embrace the cautious Pyrrhonian idea of a healthy suspension of judgement on the matter of the conceivability and subsistence (or ὑπαρξίς) of place.<sup>46</sup>

So what has this discussion revealed? Sextus sums up the opposition (μάχη, according to his technical terminology) which has characterised his analysis (like many others developed on the level of a clash between different but equally plausible δόξαι) by using two particularly significant verbs and making one crucial clarification.

Sextus argues that on the one hand the λόγοι of dogmatic philosophers have proven compelling, to the point of confusing even the Sceptics.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, however, what has elicited bewilderment and confusion (again among the Sceptics) has been the evidence invoked, or to be more precise the evidence used as part of the philosophical argument (or even included in initial claims of an already Aristotelian bent).<sup>48</sup>

Sextus ultimately provides a crucial and in my view perfectly uncontroversial clarification regarding the consequences of the equipollence of νοούμενα and φαινόμενα. This certainly leads to ἐποχή – as indeed it must – because there is no way of choosing between opposite theses not in an absolute sense, but rather in a qualified and circumscribed way, which is to say only with regard to the arguments upheld by the Dogmatists (“so far as what is said by the Dog-

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<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding its ‘anaretic’ and apparently negative conclusion, a similar strategy (namely following the correct path towards a coherent ἐποχή) is at work also in the parallel section of *M* 10, 1–36. It is true that here (*M* 10, 36) Sextus concludes “we have abolished place”; but “that we should not simply interpret it as meaning that ‘we have established that place does not exist’ is strongly suggested by the way in which Sextus introduces his programme at the beginning of his account, in *M* 10, 6, viz. as ‘to expound the arguments on both sides and to achieve suspension of judgement on that basis’” (Algra 2014, 19); see also Burnyeat 1997, 100–101 and more generally, with further textual and bibliographical references, Spinelli 2010, 256–258. Maybe Sextus’ preliminary and programmatic explanations about his method and intention must *always* be kept in mind, respected and applied (even in the case of his attack *Against the Ethicists*? cf. therefore *M* 11, 17–20).

<sup>47</sup> And note that the verb used here, ἐντρέπω, is a *hapax* in Sextus’ corpus.

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that the verb employed here, δυσωπῶ, occurs in two different contexts in Sextus’ corpus: in *PH*, to indicate the confusion engendered by the evidence both among the Sceptics – as in our passage – and among the Dogmatists (*PH* 3, 66); and in *M*, to acknowledge that the Dogmatists with their *logoi* confound the aporetic philosophers (*M* 10, 66) or, vice versa, that the Sceptics through their counter-arguments confuse Dogmatists, such as for instance analogist grammarians (*M* 1, 216 and 309) and astrologists (*M* 5, 95).



matists goes”).<sup>49</sup> Yet in life – in the real, common and eventful life of our everyday experiences – this might not be the only available option.

## 5

Might a different scenario be envisaged then? In a way, yes. Taking a careful and honest look at the conclusion reached by *PH* 3, 135, we might sum it up by saying that even the discussion of place presented in *PH* may undoubtedly and consistently be described as an opposition and theoretical clash between φαινόμενα and νοούμενα. Perhaps, then, the most correct and legitimate way to read and interpret this conclusion – without embarking on some bold speculation – would be in the light of the text we have set off from: *PH* 1, 8 (see above, p. 160). For this is where Sextus expounds – in a direct and highly programmatic manner – the fundamental premises for measuring the consistency of the Pyrrhonian ‘essence’. Without yielding to the temptation of diving into the complex debate on the alleged need for ‘insulation’ and without all too easily levelling a charge of self-contradiction against Pyrrhonism, which always seems to be forced on the defensive and to be brushed to the side as philosophically inconsistent, it might be worth examining Sextus’ discussion about τόπος within the framework of the methodological guidelines he claims to be following right from the start and which he constantly applies in his pursuit of happiness. It is on this level that many of the analyses made of the passage in question so far would appear to have overlooked an important, or indeed decisive, factor. Let me explain what I mean by this.

First of all, we should ask ourselves about the nature of this conflict of stances concerning the notion of place which I have sought to reconstruct, at least in its essential outline. This question may adequately be addressed by considering those paragraphs in which Sextus clearly describes – by drawing a distinction all too often ignored by his interpreters – not *the* aim of Pyrrhonian philosophers but rather the *double* aim that characterises their ethical choices and lives (cf. *PH* 1, 25–30). It is difficult to deny that at one level the aim of Pyrrhonism is pursued by engaging with opposite δόξαι, or rather, to use Sextus’ terminology, that it exclusively applies “in matters of opinion” (ἐν τοῖς δοξαστοῖς). Lest we ignore, and hence betray, the premises of Sextus’ genuine stance, we should also bear in mind, however, that within this interpretative framework Sceptics can reasona-

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<sup>49</sup> On this important formula see at least Brunschwig 1990; useful observations also in Algra 2014, 20–21.



bly strive to attain the specific, albeit not sole and all-embracing, goal of ἀταραξία – tranquillity or imperturbability. As is clearly shown by the opening passage of *PH* 1, 8, ἀταραξία stems from the suspension of judgement.<sup>50</sup> This imperturbability is in turn determined by the equal force of λόγοι on the one hand (*stricto sensu* philosophical λόγοι or at any rate ones that are also philosophically conditioned by an appeal to ἐνάργεια, as is usually the case with mere men, or simple men, or – to use a more cogent expression – οἱ ἰδιῶται) and of πράγματα on the other, which is to say something which may even have to do with all that concerns the crude and concrete conduct of our lives.

All this will hold and prove compelling for a Sceptic *if and only if* it is set against the dogmatist claim to be able to ascertain the truth or falsehood of our statements concerning what surrounds us. Do I wish to know, beyond the slightest doubt, *that I am in a place*, rather than merely accept that I *appear* to be in a place? Indeed, do I also wish to ascertain, in a strong epistemic sense, just *what* this place essentially is and what justifications I can or ought to adduce in order to be able to both envisage it and declare it to be ontologically existent? In this difficulty lies the origin of the genuinely sceptical approach in the philosophical field:

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 judgement. And when they suspended judgement, tranquillity in matters of opinion followed fortuitously.<sup>51</sup>

## 6

Yet, is it possible to live exclusively κατὰ τὸν φιλόσοφον λόγον? I might be intellectually paralysed if I decide to apply a philosophical λόγος more or less backed by some evidence or based on mere speculation to the question: is Anacapri the place of the conference I will be attending? Or again: how can I reach my place of departure, the railway station, given that the very concept of place is unthinkable, non-subsistent and subject to ἀπορία?

But if I then receive a telephone call and one of the organisers reminds me that my ferry will be leaving from the port on Thursday morning at twelve, or that

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<sup>50</sup> I cannot here explore in any detail the way in which Pyrrhonian *ataraxia* is attained, although it would appear to be linked to a kind of instantaneous and at the same time almost necessary automatism: cf. *PH* 1, 28–29.

<sup>51</sup> *PH* 1, 26; cf. also *PH* 1, 12 and *M* 1, 6.

my hotel is on Anacapri and that the conference session will be taking place in ‘Villa Orlandi’, since I have given my (wholly pragmatic and – I should add – not very philosophical and by now rather compelling) adherence to this event, can I still afford to be paralysed? In other words, to quote Sextus, if I switch from the level in which I am simply caught “in matters of opinion” to the one he strikingly describes as being marked by necessity (be it natural or cultural – in other words, when dealing with “matters forced upon us”, when we ‘fall’ ἐν τοῖς κατηναγκασμένοις),<sup>52</sup> I can no longer pursue the utter lack of perturbation as my aim. Rather, I will be pursuing a different goal: μετριοπάθεια, or ‘moderation of feeling’, since

We do not, however, take Sceptics to be undisturbed in every way – we say that they are disturbed by things which are forced upon them; for we agree that at times they shiver and are thirsty and have other feelings of that kind. (30) But in these cases ordinary people (οἱ μὲν ἰδιῶται) are afflicted by two sets of circumstances: by the feelings themselves, and no less by believing that these circumstances are bad by nature. Sceptics, who shed the additional opinion that each of these things is bad in its nature, come off more moderately even in these cases.<sup>53</sup>

What guides me in this context cannot be the abstract force of philosophical arguments. If I accept the presence of a place or rather the fact that I can speak of place in broad or even ‘inaccurate’ terms (“the city is my place”, as *PH* 1, 119 states), and turn it into a non-contradictory pragmatic suggestion, this is because I can regulate my life on the basis of what everyday experience has offered me in the past and continues to offer me today. This is what Sextus means when, against the charge of ἀπραξία, he claims that the Pyrrhonist can act (be active)<sup>54</sup>

“according to the non-philosophical observance” (κατὰ τὴν ἀφιλόσοφον τήρησιν, *M* 11, 165). This is what he wishes to stress again in *PH* 1, 23–24. Sextus rejects the charge of inactiveness (ἀνενεργησία), after having passively and unwittingly accepted τὸ φαινόμενον as a criterion for action explicitly removed from any further form of ζήτησις (cf. *PH* 1, 22); he rejects it by stating – ἀδόξαστως, i.e. without any wish to turn his claim into a dogmatic assertion – that he leads his life κατὰ τὴν βιωτικὴν τήρησιν: “according to the observance of everyday life”. This might not be a very flowing or charming translation,<sup>55</sup> but it avoids inappropriately introducing the notion of ‘ordinary’ in the descrip-

<sup>52</sup> On this question see too Vogt 2010, 174.

<sup>53</sup> *PH* 1, 29–30. Cf. also *PH* 3, 235–236 and especially *M* 11, 141–167.

<sup>54</sup> See above, p. 163 n. 17.

<sup>55</sup> If we wish to stress the real meaning of βιωτικός, should we rather translate ‘in accordance with the needs of life’ (Burnyeat 1997, 105 n. 17)?

tion of one's dependence on βίος. The latter is not a field for abstract speculation, since it has to do with "matters forced upon us" and thus imposes a series of inevitable points of reference, on a natural level (given that as human beings we cannot avoid perceiving, thinking and experiencing emotions and affections) as much as on a cultural level (given that we are not living on Mars but in the *here and now* – in both a geographical and historical sense – and are constantly conditioned by our education, by the rules of the community to which we belong and by the technical know-how which all around us seeks to put experience to the service of our own needs).<sup>56</sup>

## 7

By drawing upon what is so clearly stated in *PH* 1, 23–24 for our own purposes, we can therefore provide a different reading of the acceptability in Sextus' eyes of a plain and straightforward notion of τόπος:

- if I exercise the natural functions connected to my own capacity to perceive and think, I cannot but feel and claim – in plain, simple, broad or even 'inaccurate' terms – that I will find myself in a certain place, such as for instance my own city, prior to moving to a different place, such as Anacapri, moderately putting up with any consequence which might derive from the fact that I find myself here or there;
- if I yield to the needs of a nature that perfectly ignores laws (which is to say explicative dogmatic hypotheses that go beyond mere appearance, aiming for τὰ ἄδηλα) – which is in fact what I am bound to do given my condition as a human being (who "is not born from an oak of ancient legend, nor from a rock/but was of the race of men"<sup>57</sup>) – I will then inevitably be led to satisfy my own hunger or thirst, naturally by visiting a specific place, possibly a good restaurant, even experiencing moderate suffering, should I not find the food to my liking;
- if the acceptance of the laws and customs according to which I have been educated and raised represents the only, yet non-dogmatic, assumption by virtue of which on each occasion I fittingly regulate my own behaviour, to the point of agreeing with the idea that "piety is good and impiety bad", it will be normal and not at all a problem for me to choose a place for wor-

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<sup>56</sup> On the "quite ingenious" notion of "forced assent" and the related proposal of a special kind of "undogmatic assent" (both understood as anti-Stoic attitudes) see Vogt 2010, esp. 174–175.

<sup>57</sup> For the quotation of this Homeric verse (*Od.* 19.163) cf. *M* 11, 161, trans. Bett 1997, 27.

- shipping the gods: a nice temple, possibly a solid Neo-classical one, if available; and if I should ever have to perform a tough and challenging ceremony, I will accept to do so in a spirit of moderation;
- finally, if the sum of repeated and organised experiences has turned into a kind of τέχνη for me, devoid of any solid philosophical foundations yet sustained by general principles or even θεωρήματα founded on τήρησις and weakly cogent inferential processes, to the point of even potentially becoming an object of “teaching”, then by standing aboard a ship and skilfully resorting to my knowledge of astronomy and meteorology, which is exclusively based on φαινόμενα,<sup>58</sup> I will be able to direct its prow towards whatever place I choose – possibly a quiet island like Capri – without having to subject myself or other members of the crew to any abstract discussion on the admissibility and very existence of this small tourist paradise, and indeed without too much fuss, in a spirit filled with moderation, should the sea happen to be a bit rough.

I do believe that this strategy represents the real core of the Pyrrhonian approach to life.<sup>59</sup> In the eyes of the Pyrrhonist, too much theory, an over-abundance of philosophical λόγος and the clash of beliefs claiming to be absolutely true represent a disease to be fought in different ways, by administering drugs of various strength at dosages that vary from case to case, depending on what dogmatist intoxication lies behind the disease.<sup>60</sup> If even the simple determination of the place in which we find ourselves or act falls within this framework, then we must deploy sceptical δύναμις. In such a way, we will be able to neutralise opposite and conflicting theses, reach equipollence, and attain the neutral and at the same time cautious outcome of ἐποχή, thus achieving imperturbability – at least (or rather *only*) “in matters of opinion”, including with regard to the concept of place and its subsistence.

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**58** For Sextus’ appreciation of such a kind of (practical and useful) ‘astro-meteorology’ cf. *M* 5, 1–2 and, for further observations, Spinelli 2000, 19–20.

**59** See however Burnyeat’s qualification, who in a footnote affirms: “I do not deny that insulation by subject-matter, between the theoretical and the ordinary, is to be found in antiquity also: the obvious example is the Empirical school of medicine [...]. But Sextus firmly repudiates the suggestion that the sceptic could consistently be an Empiric (*PH* 1, 236)” (Burnyeat 1997, 110 n. 26). Although I shall propose a different solution and interpret the final section of *PH* 1 (236–241) *consistently* with a specific/special empirical attitude defended by Sextus (see therefore Spinelli 2014), let me ask: if he accepts (or could accept) the general, theoretically feeble framework of ancient medical empiricism, why cannot (could not) he ‘practice’ *also* a coherent form of ‘insulation’?

**60** See therefore Sextus’ ‘therapeutic’ conclusion in *PH* 3, 280–281.

If instead we wish to leave the bar in which we find ourselves (a place) and head for our cousin Harry's house (another place), since the two of us have planned to go to the stadium (yet another place), we can do so without having to subject to ἀπορία either the whole of our previous experiences, by virtue of which we have grown acquainted with these places, or the linguistic habits (according to the empirical τέχνη of γραμματιστική, accepted even by Sextus!) by which we refer to them, simply for the purpose of communicating effectively – calling 'bar' the bar, 'house' the house and 'stadium' the stadium.<sup>61</sup> The Pyrrhonist will not waste time fighting over words: φωνομαχεῖν is something quite foreign to him (cf. *PH* 1, 195 and 206). Nor, we should add, will he fight against the standard points of reference in everyday life, those sustained and upheld by συνήθεια. So he will not be engaging in any 'τοποσμαχεῖν' either, if I may use a fanciful and perhaps inappropriate neologism – one employed καταχρηστικῶς, no doubt, yet useful to counter the all too stifling tyranny of philosophical λόγος, be it that of the professional (and almost parochial) sort or that which has by now crystallised in the opinions of the ἰδιῶται.

## 8

In order to understand this Pyrrhonian acceptance of the elements which regulate common life, all we need to do, perhaps, is suppose that behind Sextus' pragmatically effective solution (which was probably influenced by the position of ancient medical Empiricism) we find the acceptance of a form of empirical generalisation.<sup>62</sup> This seems to be valid *if and only if* we reject the dogmatic tendency to establish firm, stark and necessary inferential connections; indeed, we have to limit ourselves to the acceptance of just those connections guaranteed by repeated and constant empirical observation, by that 'everyday observance' that can offer us a useful, even attractive, model of life, possibly because it can help

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<sup>61</sup> See Grgić 2011, 87: "Genuine common sense propositions are those that are immune to skeptical attack or to any kind of philosophical refutation, but not because they have some special epistemic feature, for example, because they are evident. The property of being evident is ascribed to them only after philosophical intervention in them, whether dogmatic or sceptical. Rather, they are immune to sceptical attack simply because they are useful for human life, as opposed to propositions that occur in philosophical arguments"; see also Algra 2014, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Although I cannot enter here in any kind of discussion about this very interesting question, see at least Sextus' acceptance of the so-called 'commemorative signs': *PH* 2, 97–103 and *M* 8, 141–160.

us avoid any strong (but also rash and therefore dangerous) commitment to strictly dogmatic, even absolute, concepts and values.

Provided we do not arrogantly expect to pass judgement on every aspect of reality according to the philosophical λόγος; and provided we refuse to make a rash claim to truth, whether in the form of an absolute positive dogmatism or in that of a rigid negative one, we can perhaps not only cherish the hope of attaining an open and ever-searching intellectual condition (cf. *PH* 1, 1–3), but also – and most importantly – let ourselves go and accept our own *Gegebenheit* (or better *Vorgegebenheit*), ordering some of its aspects through a mild empiricist approach and living – in a full and straightforward sense – even *without* philosophy.

Thus, well before Wittgenstein, Sextus reached the following conclusion:

just as it is not impossible for the person who has climbed to a high place by a ladder to knock over the ladder with his foot after his climb, so it is not unlikely that the sceptic too, having got to the accomplishment of his task by a sort of step-ladder – the argument showing that there is not demonstration – should do away with this argument,<sup>63</sup>

as well as with any other argument. Beyond the philosophical (and instrumental) ladder, perhaps, there may actually be a high (and at the same time very ‘ordinary’) place, namely: life – the uncontroversial, even customary or conventional life common to all of us in its simplest (natural and cultural) forms and in its most immediate approach.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *M* 8, 481, trans. Bett 2005, 183; for Wittgenstein’s appropriation of Sextus’ metaphor see his *Tractatus*, 6, 54.

<sup>64</sup> This paper was written as part of the wider research project PRIN MIUR 2009 (“Le filosofie post-ellenistiche da Antioco a Plotino”).