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IN WHAT WAY IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE A SCEPTIC?

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ABSTRACT: The concern of this paper is to analyse what kind of replay to the problem of the philosophical scepticism we can expect from the so-called transcendental arguments. The general conclusion is that transcendental arguments are not able to neutralise the sceptical doubts considered as verbal formulations of logical possibilities. Now, provided that the sceptic cannot meaningfully present his doubts, it seems that he has only three options: to doubt with the aid of a mystical silence, to doubt using the words in a metaphorical or evocative sense, or to doubt using the words with literal sense, but being conscious that he is saying a nonsense. To sum up: the sceptical doubt can never have the value of a real doubt.

KEY WORDS: Doubt, Scepticism, Transcendental Arguments, Silence and Nonsense.

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es analizar qué tipo de respuesta al escepticismo filosófico podemos esperar de los llamados argumentos transcendentales. La conclusión general es que los argumentos transcendentales no son capaces de neutralizar las dudas escépticas en tanto que formulaciones verbales de posibilidades lógicas. Ahora bien, teniendo en cuenta que el escéptico no puede presentar sus dudas significativamente, parece que sólo tiene tres opciones: dudar con la ayuda de un silencio místico, dudar usando las palabras de una manera metafórica o evocativa, o dudar usando las palabras con sentido literal pero siendo consciente de estar diciendo algo sin sentido. En suma: la duda escéptica nunca puede tener el valor de una duda real.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Duda, Escepticismo, Argumentos transcendentales, Silencio, Sinsentido.

In spite of what is sometimes said, scepticism should not be viewed as a simple invention of some obsessive philosophers of foundationalist position. On the contrary, we ought to recognise that it has its roots in an anti-dogmatic attitude, well-established in common sense, based on the distrust of information received by the senses, tradition or the social environment. Moreover this attitude is usually companioned by the strenuous effort of looking for a better understanding of the world and ourselves, that is, it can be a useful incentive for our philosophical reflections. So, to be a sceptic, like Aristotle's admiration, would be a recurrent phenomenon of the human mind: in fact, it could be doubted that it is

possible to be a philosopher, or even human, without a dose of scepticism.

In the attitude of sceptical distrust we can distinguish a psychological element and a logical one. The former is the bewitchment of our thinking produced by considering that things are not just as they appear to us, that is to say, that our firmest beliefs can be false. Or saying the same thing with some well-known metaphors: it is possible that everything is a dream, or that we are brains in a vat connected to a computer -in this case we might not know even that everything is a dream or that we are brains in a vat. The second element of scepticism is the fact that this bewitchment goes hand-in-hand with the logical possibility that things are not just what they seem. And so, we can say that scepticism is a psychological attitude –a resistant attitude- that rests on a logical possibility.

Yet sometimes it is said that scepticism is an impossible position because it is self-refuting. Would not the sceptic presuppose what he tries to deny, that is, the very possibility of knowledge, when he claims: (i) *"I know that it is not possible to know anything"* (or *"I know that I do not know anything"*)? Now, this argument is not too convincing because accepting that the sceptic commits a contradiction in asserting (i), it does not imply that the statement (ii) *"It is not possible to know anything"* is a contradictory one -in fact, it is not so, just as neither are the claims that everything is a dream or that we are brains in a vat. In other words: one thing is to say that the sceptic cannot attempt to know what he attempts to know -that is (i)-, and another thing is to say that the sceptic already knows something -that it is not possible to know anything. In short: the contradiction does not lie in the supposition that we do not know anything, but only on the supposition that we are able to know that.

Secondly, instead of claiming (i), the sceptic might merely assert (iii): *"I believe (I have the impression, I am convinced, I cannot avoid the thought...) that it is not possible to know anything"*. And it is clear that if the sceptic presents his doubt in this way, then no contradictions will appear: to believe (or to have the impression…) that we do not know anything has a different epistemic strength than to know that we do not know anything. In this case our lack of knowledge does not prevent us to be able to have an epistemic attitude like these just mentioned. But this is not the final movement for the sceptic: he does not need to exhibit a specific epistemic attitude. On the contrary, he might present his doubt in a hypothetical form, and then his doubt would not be an act of doubt -in fact, he is not doubting

of anything-, but a rhetoric doubt. It would be, as Descartes showed, a hyperbolic or feigned doubt: (iv) *"And if we do not know anything"* or, if you wish, *"And if everything is a dream"*. And in this case, of course, neither will be possible to accuse the sceptic of having committed a logical contradiction.

In this stage the sceptic can attempt to use this logical non-contradictory character of his doubt as the criterion of knowledge: he can do it, although he is not compelled to do so. Now if he does it, then he will become a foundationalist sceptic. Let us examine this type of scepticism in some detail. According to the intensity of the doubt, it is usual to distinguish two types of scepticism: first, it is possible to challenge the notion of knowledge, without to impugn the notion of justified belief; and two: it is possible to challenge the notion of knowledge precisely because the notion of justified belief is impugned as well. As it is easy to see, whereas the first type of sceptic –call him academic- would only accept statements such as *"I am justified in believing that p"* but not statements as *"I know that p"*, the latter –call him pyrrhonian- would not accept any of these possibilities. In other words: the first might say that knowledge is not possible, despite our beliefs are properly justified according to human standards, since the truth systematically escapes us; in turn, the second goes further and even denies the possibility of a proper justification for our beliefs, since for any belief or its negation always would be possible to find adequate evidence.

For the pyrrhonian sceptic, a belief will be properly justified if, and only if, the possibility of error is put aside, that is, when it is a logical contradiction that the justification happens and at the same time the belief is false. In another way: knowledge can only be considered as such if it cannot with logical necessity be otherwise, that is, when we have an absolute or metaphysical certainty. However the problem for this sceptic is that this ideal is not attainable, and so there will be neither properly justified beliefs, nor knowledge. On the other hand, the attitude of the academic sceptic makes room for a more liberal position. As the pyrrhonian sceptic, he admits that only a justification in terms of absolute or metaphysical certainty would give us the right to speak of knowledge; likewise he accepts that this ideal is not attainable for us -either because it is unattainable in itself, or because once it is reached we will not able to know that we have reached it. In consequence, he also admits that we have no right in ascribing knowledge to us. Nonetheless, the fact that we do not have this right does not imply that we are not justified to say that our beliefs are more or less justified in a non-

absolute or metaphysical sense, that is, in a human sense –verisimilitude- as a function of the available evidence for us and the habits that have so far been successful.

However, just as it has been suggested before, these movements are not necessary and the sceptic can simply deny that the non-logical contradiction is the criterion of knowledge or the criterion of properly justified belief. So, it would be possible to be a sceptic and not accept that the concept of knowledge involves absolute or metaphysical certainty. In this case the sceptic will not mean that knowledge is impossible, but what is not possible is a particular conception -say a mythological conception- of knowledge. Thus the intention of this kind of sceptic is not to say that *"It is not possible to know anything"* or *"It is not possible to believe anything"*, since the fact that the denial of our beliefs does not imply a logical contradiction is not a reason for suspending the activity of judgement. Unlike this, the doubt will now only affect the possibility of founding these beliefs with absolute certainty. In short: this scepticism is about the foundations of knowledge, but not about the possibility of knowledge. For this reason, we should not view this type of scepticism –call it liberal scepticism- as a foundationalist scepticism –a liberal sceptic is not a foundationalist sceptic-, but rather as the outcome of denying the plausibility and necessity of any kind of foundationalism.

Now, is the non-involvement of a logical contradiction a definitive criterion to accept the sceptical doubt? Maybe the sceptical doubt has conditions as well, conditions over and above its mere logical possibility. And here we have several options. If the foundationalist sceptic only makes a methodological use of the doubt, then he will tend to dissociate the following two concepts: *"that whose negation would involve a logical contradiction"* and *"what cannot be otherwise"*. Thus, according to this methodological use of doubt, the foundations of knowledge will be an expression of what could not be otherwise, and not of that whose negation does not involve a logical contradiction. For this sceptic, to deny what cannot be otherwise would not be a logical contradiction, but a deeper one, let us say, a metaphysical contradiction, and for this reason it would not be possible to doubt the foundations of knowledge, although to deny them is not logically contradictory.

For instance, Descartes would not have accepted that saying *"I think but I do not exist"* is a logical contradiction, because the truth of the *cogito* is intuitive, and not demonstrative: to say *"I think so I exist"* is not to draw an inference from *"I think"* to *"I*

exist" in which "so" means "implies" and *"I think"* is the evidence for *"I exist"*. So, to say *"I think but I do not exist"* would be a contradiction of a different type: it is not possible that I think and at the same time I do not exist. And this fact -this metaphysical fact- is, according to Descartes, what is intuitively grasped with absolute certainty. Likewise, this intuition -to know by intuition and with absolute certainty the truth of *"I think so I exist"*- would also be another metaphysical fact, because it is not possible that I think (exist) and that I am not conscious of it: to deny it would involve a metaphysical contradiction, although not a logical contradiction. And the same would be sound for incorrigibility by which the mental contents are known by us. For Descartes, to have a mental content and to be unconscious of it is not a logical contradiction, but a metaphysical contradiction, since to have a mental content and to be conscious of it are the same fact, the same metaphysical fact. So, it is not odd that in this context Descartes speaks of absolute or metaphysical certainty[1].

Now, if the foundationalist sceptic is not using the doubt only in a mere methodological way –if the doubt is not a hyperbolic or feigned one-, he will tend to consider that the gap between *"that whose negation would involve a logical contradiction"* and *"what cannot be otherwise"* is an arbitrary device or a trick. In his opinion: one thing is to think that knowledge needs foundations and other thing to believe in an epistemological happy end in which our knowledge, in fact, has foundations and that these foundations will be in our hands after the exercise of a methodological doubt.

In turn, the sceptic about the foundations of knowledge –the liberal sceptic- will deny this assumption. For instance, from verificationist or pragmatist positions, he might claim that the foundationalist sceptical doubt lacks meaning or cognitive content, because what it proposes is not verifiable -it does not have theoretical consequences- or that sceptical doubt lacks practical consequences. Likewise he might state, as Hume, that the pressing need to act and know removes all doubts, and makes us attend to more pressing questions. In short: where reason does not reach, nature takes care of it. In the same way, following Quine, this liberal sceptic might say that sceptical doubts are attempts to reintroduce the old-fashioned idea of a first philosophy, whereas our concern should be to explain scientifically, and not

[1] Descartes, R.: *Discourse on the Method* (1637) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) in *The Philosophical Writings Of Descartes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

philosophically, how knowledge is produced from the stimulation of the sensorial surface of our bodies. Finally, from transcendental positions he also might assert that foundationalist sceptical arguments lack meaning because they violate the a priori conditions of possibility of language and knowledge.

All these varieties of the liberal scepticism tend to consider the foundationalist scepticism as irrefutable, if a refutation is to prove that the sceptic commits a logical contradiction. Besides, these options will also affirm that the criterion of non-logical contradiction does not have the last word about the legitimacy or meaningfulness of sceptical doubts. Finally, this liberal scepticism tends to also treat the foundationalist doubts as irrelevant or meaningless. However, it is not likely that the foundationalist sceptic accepts this diagnostic. He can always accuse his detractors of presupposing particular conceptions of knowledge and language, and say that these conceptions are not necessary. Indeed, this seems to be correct with regard to verificationist and pragmatist positions, as well as for the arguments that follow the paths of Hume and Quine. Now, does the same thing happen in relation to the transcendental refutations of scepticism?

Two clear examples of transcendental arguments are Kant's attempt to refute idealism and Strawson's refutation of the supposed priority of the private in relation to the public. Thus, for Kant, the immediate awareness of the existence of the external objects is a necessary condition of the awareness of whatever inner experience, that is, of those experiences that, as in the case of the hypothesis of dream or that of the brains in a vat, apparently might be used for doubting the existence of external objects. In other words: without perception and knowledge of things in a space independent of us, it would not be possible to have mental experiences[2]. In turn, Strawson considers that the existence of material objects -the existence of the external world- is guaranteed as long as the language of sense data is parasitical of the language of public objects in the sense that the second would be the condition of possibility of the former. Likewise, sceptical doubts on the existence of other minds would not be meaningful, since our capacity for self-assigning mental predicates would depend on our

[2] Kant. I.: *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781,1787), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, B274 -279 and A367-380.

capacity for assigning them to other people[3].

As we can see, transcendental arguments are very promising, since they try to demonstrate that sceptical doubts violate a priori conditions of possibility of knowledge. That is: transcendental arguments will have to be very powerful, and the sceptic should be convinced *eo ipso*. Or using a well-known Wittgenstein's metaphor: the sceptic would have to be cured of his conceptual illness. However the problem is that things adopt a different course: there are chronic illnesses that are incurable. And conceptual illnesses and specifically the illnesses of the sceptic would be a good example -let us say that the relapse is characteristic of scepticism. In other words: transcendental arguments are not very convincing -they do not produce a unanimous approval-, and this fact is very relevant, since, at least in theory, a transcendental argument would not find any opposition. But, why does this happen? Surely the reason is that the defender of transcendental arguments presupposes particular views about knowledge –not metaphysical facts- and so, only from these views, his arguments have persuasive force. Thus, only who shares the presuppositions of transcendental arguments will agree with its conclusions; but who does not share them, as surely is the case of the foundationalist sceptic, will shrug his shoulders.

Several authors -Stroud, Taylor or Grayling- have pointed out these difficulties[4]. For instance, Taylor says that transcendental arguments are paradoxical because they include two opposite tendencies in conflict: on the one hand, their starting point is what everybody accepts -apparently non-arguable facts about human experience-, and so their conclusions must also be necessary for everybody; on the other hand, they are still open to an endless debate about what is possible to conclude with them. The result of this conflict is that transcendental arguments do not solve philosophical questions, that is, they do not conclude anything about human nature, knowledge or reality, but something much weaker, something about our understanding of the type of beings we are. For example, to conclude with the aid of a transcendental argument that we are necessarily embodied agents cannot count at all as a statement about what in reality human beings are; on the contrary, what this argument would

[3] Strawson, P.F.: *Individuals. An Essay on Descriptive Metaphysics*, London, Methuen, 1959, Chapters I-IV.
[4] Stroud, B.: *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, Chapter IV; Taylor, Ch.: "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments" (1979), in *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 1995; Grayling, A.C.: "Transcendental Arguments", in Dancy, J. & Sosa, E. (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1992, pp. 506-509.

demonstrate is that from our current self-understanding we are embodied agents.

The reason is that transcendental arguments do not state that things cannot radically be different to what their conclusions state: in fact, our self-understanding might be mistaken, since the possibility of error is not eliminated. So, at best, a transcendental argument would only state conceptual impossibilities -that is, that some particular concepts are necessary for our conceptual system-, but not logical impossibilities. Therefore, although to follow these other possibilities might make us to pay the price of giving up our self-understanding, it would not, nevertheless, represent a logical contradiction. For instance, it might be pernicious or dreadful -as Taylor says, in relation to the use of mechanistic or dualistic categories for understanding human action-, but nothing else: only a change in our self-understanding or conceptual system. In short: as Stroud and Grayling stress, transcendental arguments, to be actually compelling, need the supplement of anti-relativistic arguments. In other words, they must not leave room for the pluralism of self-understandings or conceptual systems.

Of course, these remarks are not too hopeful, since the reach of transcendental arguments now seems to be very short: they are only convincing if we accept the particular understanding or conceptual system on which they depend. And this is just what is at the bottom of the debate, since although the starting point of the discussion –what human experience human is- might seem to be something accepted by everyone, this agreement in fact would only be a mirage: in reality, each team would interpret the starting point in a different sense depending on its presuppositions. In other words: human experience never self-interprets itself, but it always depends on some understanding of what we are, or what reality and knowledge are. In brief: from the beginning we are always inside some self-understanding. And just this fact would produce the paradox of transcendental arguments: their conclusions are necessary, but they are not compelling and are open to endless debate, since it is always possible to doubt whether our self-understanding is correct or if it is infected by presuppositions. To sum up: since the approval of a transcendental argument would depend on the philosophical commitments of his author, these arguments will be relative ones and have little effect on the sceptic.

However, the defender of transcendental arguments surely will not accept this relativism and pluralism: he does not see his philosophical presuppositions as such, but as the

philosophical truth. In his opinion, there is an understanding of human experience from which we cannot go further away, not even with the aid of the non-logical contradiction of sceptical doubts. And just for this reason, transcendental arguments, in bringing to light the a priori conditions of possibility of this non-overtaking understanding, would condemn the doubts of the sceptic as meaningless. From this point of view, since the sceptic is compelled to formulate his doubts in language, and language is expression of that non-overtaking understanding, his doubts at the same time would be using language and breaking its rules, that is, the sceptic would be using that non-overtaking understanding for overtaking just that non-overtaking understanding.

Now, although we grant all this to the defender of transcendental arguments, nevertheless, as we said just a moment ago, it seems that the problem will appear again: as long as these arguments cannot exclude logical possibilities, but only conceptual possibilities, we will have to admit once again the sceptical doubt, even in the case that these arguments bring to light the a priori conditions of knowledge and language and so conditions that every speaker, sceptics included, must respect. But, if all of this is correct, how could a sceptical doubt be formulated? In what sense can we now speak of sceptical doubts? In what way is it possible to be a sceptic? It sounds as whether sceptical doubt must only become in a metaphorical and evocative use of language, or a self-conscious nonsensical use of words; or, why not, a silent attitude.

In fact, as the case of the first Wittgenstein would show, the very defender of transcendental arguments against scepticism might be sensible to the attitude of distrust that gives life to sceptical doubts. So, in *Tractatus* #6.5 and #6.51 we can read:

When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words.
The *riddle* does not exist.
If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer it.
Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.
For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something *can be said* [5].

Here Wittgenstein would be trying two different movements. On the one hand, he

[5] Wittgenstein, L.: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.

advices us that scepticism is nonsensical because it violates the conditions of what we may say, think, doubt, ask and answer, namely, the conditions under which language, thinking and knowledge make sense. Thus, the sceptic goes further off where he can go -the limits of language-, and presents possibilities neither meaningful nor intelligible, possibilities that cannot be true or false. And for this reason, it will not be necessary to refute the sceptic, but only show that he cannot say legitimately what he says. But, on the other hand, Wittgenstein seems to point to something deeper: that scepticism might be a legitimate position if it were carried to the sphere of what can be shown but not said. But in what way shown? Well, following one of the most famous thesis of *Tractatus*, the response seems easy: with silence, with a silent doubt. This silence –this silent doubt- would be a non-propositional attitude, and for this reason it is not at the same level as knowledge, belief or empirical doubt, but it belongs to the sphere of the showing. In this sense the sceptic might also say: *"What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence"*.

According to *Tractatus*, logic is twofold transcendental: on the one hand, it sets up the conditions of linguistic meaningfulness; on the other, it establishes the requirements for the intelligibility of the world. All languages have necessarily an extensional structure, and this implies that all complex propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions, which, to be able to describe reality truly or falsely, have to be mere concatenations of names. In turn, all intelligible world must be built by objects linked in possible states of things. Now, this coincidence between conditions of linguistic meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world is a consequence of the fact that all intelligible world is always a spoken world. Besides, this coincidence cannot be a matter of speech –neither a matter of sceptical doubt-, but of something that only the use of language shows: we cannot abandon language in order to speak about the logic of language and the world.

Nevertheless, as silence would show, for Wittgenstein, it is possible in some sense to abandon the language. But, how far can we go without language? According to *Tractatus*, to say that the world is the spoken world does not mean that the world is only the spoken world: as Wittgenstein says in 6.371, this would be precisely part of the illusion of the modern conception of the world, *"the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena"*. No, to say that the world is always the spoken world is equivalent to show the limits of human condition: that we can only speak, think, believe, doubt and know

inside these limits. On the contrary, what exceeds these limits –the mystical- will not be knowable, describable or thinkable. Wittgenstein's advice is silence, not an ignorant silence, but the silence of those who have arrived to the limits of what is possible to say, think, believe, doubt and know, after being conscious of the a priori conditions of possibility of what can be said, thought, believed, doubted or known.

So, it seems as though it were possible to accept these limits, and at the same time to escape from them. Logic in *Tractatus* is a priori and transcendental, but to annul logic does not imply a logical contradiction. In other words: where there is no language, there is no logic. And so, to annul logic will merely leave room for silence, the acceptance of the mystery that surrounds language and world. It cannot be said, but only shown, for instance, by the attitude of metaphysical distrust to language and logic and specifically to the metaphysical realist claims, which give rise to the modern view of the world -scientism. In fact, for Wittgenstein, this would be the only chance for the sceptical attitude. And this is not little, since the silent scepticism –that is, the negation of the chauvinism of logic and whatever true-false use of language- involves, according to *Tractatus*, the proper understanding of the epistemic situation of human beings, and what knowledge is.

Now, the silence proposed by Wittgenstein, as he perfectly knew, is something impossible: it is an unreal silence, because it is not possible to stop speaking, to leave off thinking, or to give up saying philosophical nonsense -for instance, to write the *Tractatus* or to invent sceptical doubts. And so, we cannot expect that the foundationalist sceptic will approve the Wittgenstein's proposal. Furthermore he might accept the cogency of the transcendental arguments –the arguments of *Tractatus* or whatever ones- and, as we have seen before, to continue on his way. His doubts are metaphysical: an attempt of doubting the metaphysical validity of the a priori conditions of language and knowledge. But in this case, would the sceptic not be using the words freely, out of control, to transcend language and knowledge? And in this way, as long as he is violating the conditions of truth and assertion, is not the sceptic committing philosophical nonsense or, at the best, slipping in the sphere of evocation or allegory?

Obviously the foundationalist sceptic does not think that his doubts are nonsensical or metaphorical uses of language, but rather doubts absolutely meaningful. Now, that is not

guaranteed, and we can always reserve our right to ask for an explanation of the meaning of his doubts, that is, how it is possible to use words with a claim of truth which is not an empirical one, but a deeper truth -a claim of metaphysical truth. And here it seems that there is nothing the sceptic can do but recognise that he doubts about the usual meaning of the words -maybe the sceptic's aim is to introduce radical changes in language. In this case we would not be only in front of the possibility that our knowledge or our beliefs are false, but in front of the possibility that we are not able to know or believe justifiably anything because we cannot be sure of understanding the propositions we say to know or believe. In other words: just as we might not understand what we say, we can neither know whether it is true or false, or whether we justifiably believe it or not. For instance: *"We cannot know whether something is really a tree, or whether there really are trees, because we cannot be sure of knowing what does the word "tree" really means"*.

Scepticism, so understood, relies on the assumption that there is a radical gap between what is really to understand the meaning of a word and to be able to use it in everyday statements. Therefore it would be conceivable to have been using a word in current true-false statements and, nevertheless, do not know its real meaning. And here the sceptic does not mean the very sensible idea that there is a difference between to understand a proposition and to know if it is true or false. No, the sceptic means that there might be a deeper understanding of words, although unknown, different from our current understanding. For this reason, it would be possible to doubt of the current meaning of words, or that the things are as the words –even the true statements- say they are. For example: could trees not be very different objects, a type of objects not knowable to human beings?

Now, how can the sceptic know this? How will he explain that he understands the language better than us? Certainly, here the sceptical doubt depends on some restriction, because if the sceptic wants to doubt meaningfully, then he must accept that his words –the words in which he formulates his doubts- are totally in order, and always with the same meaning. But is this not an unjustifiable restriction? Why should we accept exceptions? And why could not be the meaning of words constantly changing? How can he know that he is using today his words with the same meaning as yesterday? The sceptic can decide where his doubts begin, but he cannot decide where they must finish: a coherent scepticism tends always to extend the scope of his doubts, and it is arbitrary to put barriers to them.

In short: the foundationalist sceptic thinks that the authentic knowledge of reality in itself is unattainable for human beings, leaving whatever human knowledge always relative to some human *hic et nunc*. In other words: the foundationalist scepticism is a pessimistic or defeatist –nihilist- variety of metaphysical realism, a philosophical position according to which the concepts "reality in itself" and "the authentic knowledge of reality in itself" are meaningful ones. Yet the problem is not only we are not compelled to accept these concepts, but that it is not true that the relativity of our languages, beliefs and knowledge necessarily imply any sceptical conclusion –only if you are a metaphysical realist, you will obtain this conclusion-, but the possibility of pluralism, that is, the plurality of languages and knowledge.

However, this plurality of languages, beliefs and knowledge, in spite of running against the possibility of transcendental arguments, would not run against the existence of limits for languages, beliefs and knowledge, that is, the existence of any *"and so react, speak, think, believe and know the human beings"* which it is not possible to go beyond with the doubts of foundationalist scepticism. Now, these limits would not be absolute and eternal, and so yet it would be possible to maintain a non-chauvinist attitude of distrust about languages, beliefs and knowledge: our self-understandings would not be the only possible ones, nor would it make sense to ask if they are metaphysically correct. Besides, radical changes in our natural reactions or in our forms of life might compel us to restructure our conceptual system, our self-understanding, or elaborate new conceptual systems. And this sceptical attitude is non-foundationalist but, as we have seen before, a liberal one, and it permits to elucidate the epistemic position of human beings, that is, to be aware of our limits[6].

[6] Strawson, P.F.: *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. And Wittgenstein, L.: *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, Part II, xii; and *On Certainty*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969. (For an interesting interpretation of Wittgenstein's position, although stressing possible religious consequences, Malcolm, N.: *Wittgenstein. A Religious Point of View?*, London: Routledge, 1993).

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