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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>

This thesis is a defense of pyrrhonian skepticism. Given this, we might do well to ask what exactly pyrrhonian skepticism is. This is a contentious issue in itself, and will be taken up in more detail in the first chapter, but we can give a few general points of characterization. First, and perhaps most obviously, pyrrhonian skepticism is a school of skepticism originating with Pyrrho of Elis, an ancient Greek philosopher who lived sometime between 360 and 270 BCE. More substantively, we can broadly say that a pyrrhonian skeptic is one who thinks we ought to suspend judgment on all of our beliefs, no matter what. We can distinguish pyrrhonian skepticism from its better-known cousin, "external world" or "cartesian" skepticism. Cartesian skepticism is a skepticism focused on knowledge, and more specifically about our knowledge of the external world: the cartesian skeptic argues that we cannot be sure of the knowledge we take ourselves to have about the external world, and thus ought to suspend judgment on it instead. The pyrrhonian skeptic is broader in both senses: their skepticism is a skepticism focused on belief rather than just knowledge, and it applies across the board, to all beliefs rather than just beliefs about the external world. It should be noted that throughout the thesis, I will often use the terms "skepticism," "skeptical," and variants to mean "pyrrhonian skepticism," "pyrrhonian," etc.

I said that this thesis was a defense of pyrrhonian skepticism, and indeed, skepticism could probably use a defender. Calling oneself a skeptic, especially a pyrrhonian skeptic, has not been a particularly popular position in philosophy since at least late antiquity (Frede 1984, 273), and has only continued to wane in popularity since then. Since the time of Sextus Empiricus, the last great skeptical author that we know of (and the only pyrrhonian from whom we have enough work to form a real opinion of), skepticism has transformed from a real position held by real philosophers into a strawman position to be constantly set up and defeated in order to clear the way for non-

skeptical philosophy. As Myles Burnyeat puts it, 'the skeptic' has become "the name of something internal to the philosopher's own thinking, [their] alter ego as it were" (Burnyeat 2012, 344). Even among those few who have recently identified as skeptics in at least a broadly pyrrhonian sense, the question of what implications that position would have for the avowed skeptic's form of life has not been posed. Such modern skeptics, like Robert Fogelin and Peter Unger, prefer to focus on the ways that the skeptical position interacts with received philosophical views such as those on knowledge (Unger 1975, Fogelin 1994).

Really, this makes quite a lot of sense. Why would we want to give up our beliefs? Beliefs are important to us, so the fact that philosophers don't take the idea of giving them up seriously isn't overly surprising. But, as we have stated, this was not always the case. In antiquity, pyrrhonian skepticism was put forth and defended as both a philosophical position and a way of life. From Pyrrho himself up through Sextus, there was a lineage of thinkers who took pyrrhonian skepticism not as an obstacle to be overcome, but as a position to defend or a goal to be achieved. This lineage of pyrrhonian thinkers had a rich history and would undoubtably be a bountiful source of competing viewpoints on what it would mean to lead a pyrrhonian life – indeed, modern scholarship almost universally suggests that Pyrrho and his followers' skepticism differed greatly from the later "pyrrhonian" skepticism of Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus (c.f. Bett 2000 and Vogt et al. 2015). Unfortunately, the vast majority of that tradition has been lost, leaving us with only a few fragments from various pyrrhonists (most importantly Timon, a pupil of Pyrrho's); a number of second- and third-hand accounts of pyrrhonists (including some describing Pyrrho himself); and only two complete major works of pyrrhonism, both by the same author: the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Academicians* of Sextus Empiricus.

Accordingly, I will use Sextus' *Outlines* as a jumping-off point for my own argument. Chapter 1 will examine the question of what it would mean to live as a skeptic through an examination of the interpretive scholarship surrounding Sextus' characterization of the pyrrhonist life (as well as a consideration of Pyrrho's own life). It will examine the two major sides in that debate (the "rustic" and "urbane" interpreters) before introducing the contemporary concept of "alief" in order to argue that there is not as much separating the two camps as is traditionally assumed. Ultimately, I will argue that the skeptical life can be defined as one lived with all aliefs and no beliefs (in the technical sense of those terms that we will make clear).

With the characterization of the skeptical life we developed in the first chapter in mind, Chapter 2 will provide an argument for why we should want to be skeptics. This argument will focus on instances of "norm-discordant aliefs" as problem cases that can motivate the skeptical life. I will argue that the pyrrhonian form of life is uniquely qualified to deal with cases of conflict between epistemic commitments (such as norm-discordant alief) due to the adjustability of aliefs.

Finally, Chapter 3 will address an objection to the case for pyrrhonian skepticism laid out in Chapter 2. Specifically, the objection, adapted from David Hume and P.F. Strawson's anti-skeptical arguments, will be that some aliefs are *not* adjustable. Against this, I will argue that while there are some aliefs that may not be changeable on an individual level, all aliefs are changeable on at least a historical level.

Currently, skepticism is not taken very seriously as a philosophical position in its own right. Hopefully this thesis will provide some reason to take it more seriously – as a position with actual defenders who have some good reasons for defending it rather than simply a philosophical error to be overcome.

Chapter 1: What Does it Mean to Live as a Skeptic?

The goal of this chapter is to survey the literature on the question of what it would mean to live the life of a pyrrhonian skeptic. As discussed in the introduction, there is little firsthand evidence for what the skeptics took themselves to be doing besides the work of Sextus Empiricus. Sextus, then, is the pyrrhonist from whom we have the most to work with, and considerations of pyrrhonian skepticism thus generally focus on his particular brand of it. In one sense, this is disappointing: it would, of course, be preferable to have a fuller picture of the debate in which Sextus was engaged. From another perspective, though, things aren't so bad. Sextus' philosophy is rich, and there has been a robust interpretive debate over what exactly his proposed skeptical form of life would look like. Historians of philosophy have mainly split into two interpretive camps in this debate: the so-called "rustic" and "urbane" interpretations of Sextus. While these are the two traditional ways of viewing Sextus' skepticism, I will argue that, in fact, they have more in common than the traditional terms of the debate would suggest. This will be accomplished through the introduction of Tamar Gendler's notion of "alief" to characterize what a rustic interpreter might call a "feeling" or "seeming" and what an urbane interpreter would call a "non-dogmatic belief." Using the idea of an alief as a guide (along with a consideration of Diogenes Laertius's account of Pyrrho's life), I will then attempt to answer the question of what a skeptic's life might look like.

Preliminary Note on Defining Pyrrhonism and the Outlines of the Debate

If our guiding question is "what would it mean to lead a pyrrhonist life," it would be useful to have a definition of pyrrhonism. Of course, the debate we are about to enter is in many ways a debate over exactly this question – the different interpretations offered amount to different interpretations of what it means to be a pyrrhonist (or at least, to be a sextan pyrrhonist). Despite this, we can identify some broad guidelines that both interpretations will agree with. First, the

pyrrhonist, at the very least, holds no definite beliefs about reality or about the truth of any matter, instead suspending judgment on such questions. Sextus defines skepticism as "an ability to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgement and afterwards to tranquility" (Sextus I.8). This suspension of judgment, for him, leads the skeptic "to hold no beliefs" (Sextus I.12).

However, what Sextus means by "holding no beliefs" is called into question by a second point of agreement: the skeptic assents (or acquiesces) to appearances (or impressions). As Sextus puts it:

> When we say that Sceptics do not hold beliefs, we do not take 'belief' in the sense in which some say, quite generally, that belief is acquiescing in something; for Sceptics assent to the feelings forced upon them by appearances – for example, they would not say, when heated or chilled, 'I think I am not heated (or: chilled). Rather, we say that they do not hold beliefs in the sense in which some say that belief is assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences; for Pyrrhonists do not assent to anything unclear" (Sextus I.13).

This passage will be the focus of quite a bit of the scholarly debate surrounding Sextus' pyrrhonism, but among the different positions staked out on it, no one would deny that it is of extreme importance to his view. What exactly this assent or acquiescing consists in, though, along with what exactly constitutes an impression, will be two of the main axes along which interpretive differences in Sextus scholarship run.

Finally, all agree that Sextus' understanding of suspension of judgment does not close off inquiry on the matter being considered, but rather results in some sort of continued searching or

seeking regarding it.[1] Sextus draws a distinction between "Dogmatists" who "think that they have discovered the truth," "Academics"[2] who "have asserted that things cannot be apprehended," and "Sceptics" who "are still investigating" (Sextus I.3). We are not presently concerned with offering a more specific version of pyrrhonism to defend, and so for now, these general guidelines will suffice to guide us in our main question. The skeptic is someone who, for some reason or another, has decided to suspend judgment on at least these questions in this way. Our question is merely what consequences that decision would have for their life.

Sextus 1: The Urbane Skeptic

The first version of Sextus Empiricus we will examine is the so-called urbane skeptic. In his 1982 paper "The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist," which we will return to in the next section for its argumentative merits, Jonathan Barnes sets out a distinction that would become key to the debate over Sextus interpretation: the "urbane" vs. the "rustic" skeptic. For Barnes, "the urbane Pyrrhonist is happy to believe most of the things that ordinary people assent to in the course of events: he directs [suspension of judgment] towards a specific target – roughly speaking, towards philosophical and scientific matters." The rustic pyrrhonist, on the other hand, "has no beliefs whatsoever: he directs [suspension of judgement] towards every issue that may arise" (Barnes 3-4).

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[1] Consider the following passages from Frede, Burnyeat, and Barnes:
"The sceptic has no stake in the truth of the impression he is left with. He is ever ready to consider the matter further, to change his mind. He has no attachment to the impressions he is left with. He is not responsible for having them, he did not seek them out." – Frede 1984, 265
"The sceptic goes on seeking not in the sense that he has an active programme of research but in the sense – that he continues to regard it as an open question whether *p* or not-*p* is the case, at least for any first-level proposition concerning real existence." – Burnyeat 2012, 233
"A Pyrrhonist's researches do not end in discovery; nor yet do they conclude that discovery is impossible. For they do not terminate at all: the researches continue" – Barnes 1982, 1
[2] "Academics" refers here to the so-called skeptical phase of the ancient Academy (the same one founded by Plato). Sextus identifies the position of the academy with a sort of negative dogmatism in which we are definitively judged to be incapable of apprehending the truth, although there is some debate over how accurate that depiction is.

Michael Frede's 1979 paper "The Skeptic's Beliefs" could be seen as the starting point of the modern interpretive debate surrounding Sextus Empiricus, as well as the first expression of the urbane interpretation. In it, Frede argues against the historically received view of pyrrhonian skepticism, which is broadly rustic. Frede suggests, on the contrary, that the skeptic's skepticism is, in effect, limited. For Frede, "although there is a sense in which the skeptic has no beliefs about how things are – namely, he has no beliefs about how things *really* are – there is a perfectly good sense in which he does have beliefs about how things are – namely, to the extent that it seems to be the case that things are so or so" (Frede 1979, 186). Frede's position, then, is that the skeptic suspends their judgment on beliefs about the truth ("how things *really* are") but is perfectly happy to have beliefs about how things seem to them. For Frede, the skeptic is skeptical of claims about deeper reality, or the "true nature" of the world, but not at all doubtful of their own experiences. The key sextan concept of assenting to appearances is understood, on this interpretation, to consist in forming beliefs about one's own impressions.

But if assenting to appearances means forming beliefs about impressions while rejecting beliefs about reality, it is important to determine what exactly an impression is. For Frede, the distinction between these two sorts of beliefs (which he also calls "dogmatic" and "non-dogmatic" beliefs) is content-neutral. As he says: "it is not the content of theoretical views … that makes them dogmatic views; it is, rather, the attitude of the dogmatist who believes his rationalist science actually answers questions, actually gives him good reasons for believing his theoretical doctrines" (Frede 1979, 195). This means that any belief is open to both a dogmatic and a non-dogmatic interpretation. Sextus' famous example is honey being sweet: we might say either merely that some honey seems sweet to me (the non-dogmatic interpretation) or that, in some sense, it is *true* that the honey is sweet, independently of our impressions of it (the dogmatic interpretation). As Burnyeat will make clear (although Frede clearly implicitly agrees with the point), the category of impressions

here is not restricted to sense impressions. We might have the impression, for example, "that not every impression is true" (Burnyeat 2012, 217), or even that, "given [some] standards, nothing will pass [their] test and hence that nothing is, or even can be, known" (Frede 1984, 266). These are impressions not about the properties of some external object, but about internal mental content. Importantly, though, while a dogmatist would defend these positions absolutely, believing that the arguments that have led them to those conclusions are absolutely correct, the skeptic, if questioned about their position, would merely say that they believe in these positions because things seem to them to be so. The basic point here is that Frede believes that the skeptic can assent in a non-dogmatic way to all sorts of impressions, from the impression that something looks or smells a certain way to the impression that a certain argument is convincing, all without committing themselves to a belief about the *truth* of the matter. "Certain things just seem to [the skeptic] to be the case; the skeptic has no theory on how or why this is so" (Frede 1979, 192).

The urbane skeptic, then, can maintain almost any belief they started with, so long as they believe it merely as something that *seems* such-and-such way to them rather than as something that is *true*. If this is so, what are the implications for the skeptical form of life? In fact, on this interpretation, the skeptical life is not so different from a normal life. Frede identifies two ways that the skeptic differs from "the man on the street": Frede believes that the man on the street is most likely dogmatic about at least some beliefs, particularly moral or political ones, while the skeptic is non-dogmatic about all beliefs; and the skeptic is aware, in contrast to the man on the street, that "things might, in reality, be quite different from how they appear to be" (Frede 1979, 198). Of course, we will have to take "is aware" in the second point in a non-dogmatic manner: the skeptic merely has the impression that things may be different from how they seem to him.

These differences, though, are not enormous, and the urbane skeptic would not, in fact, have to make too many changes to their form of life. The skeptic could still be fully confident in their impressions of the world and act accordingly with just a slight tweak in wording – the skeptic, just like the dogmatist, might still seek honey and avoid flames, but because they believe that the honey *seems* sweet and that flames *seem* hot, not because they believe that honey *is* sweet or that flames *are* hot. The skeptic can even still engage in conversation and specifically might engage in conversation about their beliefs. Of course, while the person asking what the skeptic believes might understand the question along dogmatic lines, the skeptic will not, but this will not stop the conversation from occurring and being understood on both sides (Frede 1979, 197-198; Frede 1984, 277).

To sum up then, the urbane skeptic (as defended by Frede) has beliefs about how things seem to them, but no beliefs whatsoever about how things truly are. Despite this difference, the skeptic's life is not particularly distinct from our everyday lives – the skeptic acts on the basis of their non-dogmatic beliefs in much the same way that the "man on the street" acts on the basis of his dogmatic ones. The only major difference in the urbane skeptical form of life seems to be that the skeptic, in their non-dogmatic way, will be open to impressions that conflict with their past impressions. The urbane skeptic "has no stake in the truth of the impressions he is left with. He is ever ready to consider the matter further, to change his mind. He has no attachment to the impressions he is left with" (Frede 1984, 265).

<u>Sextus 2: The Rustic Skeptic</u>

The other major interpretation in the debate is the rustic interpretation, on which Sextus' skeptic is said to suspend judgment on every possible issue, going through life with no beliefs whatsoever. The first proponent of this interpretation in the modern history of philosophy literature is generally considered to be Myles Burnyeat, with his 1980 paper "Can the Sceptic Live His

Scepticism?" Despite its importance in shaping the debate we are concerned with, much of the argument in this paper is philological or historical in nature, so we will focus more on the second major defender of the rustic position: Jonathan Barnes.

For any rustic skeptic, the question of assent to appearances will be key. If the skeptic assents or acquiesces to appearances in some way, it is difficult to see how they could do so without adopting some Frede-like position in which they *believe* something about those appearances. The rustic, though, wants their skeptic to believe nothing at all. The key development that allows Barnes' rustic interpretation of Sextus to get past this problem is his introduction of the concept of "avowal." An avowal is a speech act much like a child's cry: "children cry when they are in pain: they thereby *express* their pain, but they do not *state that* they are in pain (they state nothing at all)" and similarly, "adults, when they are in pain, may utter the sentence 'I am in pain' (or some vulgar equivalent): they thereby *express* their pain, but they do not (according to Wittgenstein) *state that* they are in pain (they state nothing at all)" (Barnes 5). With avowals, there is a clear way in which the skeptic can acquiesce to an impression like pain or sweetness *without* thereby committing themselves to a belief about that impression. We can say that a *statement* is to a *belief* what an *avowal* is to a *seeming*.[3]

Barnes' skeptic, then, really does go through life without any beliefs. They do not *believe* anything, and so they make no *statements*, but they make plenty of *avowals* that *express* the way certain things *seem* to them (expressing being the operative verb here as a contrast to stating a fact about how things seem to them). With this new option of avowal open to them, a rustic skeptical life is now possible – the skeptic really can live with no beliefs whatsoever.

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[3] A "seeming" here is synonymous with "impression" as used above, although it seems a preferable choice of terminology for our purposes since it is easier to conceptualize the more abstract, mental impressions as "seemings" rather than "impressions," which is heavily associated with sense-impressions specifically.

So what does the avowal-driven skeptical life look like for Barnes? In fact, as in Frede, it looks fairly similar to normal life. It should be noted that this is more a function of Barnes' exegetical task than any philosophical position he holds. Following a passage from Sextus, Barnes' rustic skeptic is driven by four major forces: the necessity of affections, the teaching of arts, the tradition of custom and rules, and natural instruction (Sextus I.23-24). Barnes is less concerned with what a rustic skeptic's life *might* look like than with explaining how to square what Sextus says about what his life *does* look like with the rustic interpretation. He accomplishes this task by applying avowal to the four forces. For the necessity of affections, Barnes gives the example of hunger or thirst. The skeptic is driven to food and drink simply by the fact that they are (or that they feel) hungry and thirsty – there is no need to add on that they also *believe* themselves to be hungry and thirsty (Barnes 13). If the skeptic says "I am hungry," they are merely avowing a feeling, not stating a belief. They do not believe that they should eat, it merely seems to them that it would be good to do so. The other three forces are explained similarly. The skeptic may feel themselves to be simply "attempting to impart a *power* or skill to [someone else] … not trying to give him any *beliefs*" (Barnes 14). The skeptic follows customs not because they believe it is the right thing to do, or even because they believe it is the custom to do so, but simply "because that is the done thing" – as with the food and drink case, the skeptic simply feels inclined to do so (Barnes 15). Finally, natural necessity allows the skeptic the power of inference. The skeptic will avow "it looks like smoke" and will then naturally feel themselves inclined to subsequently avow "it looks like fire" – in this case, Barnes claims that the skeptic "makes no inference at all, strictly speaking; rather, as Sextus says, nature 'leads him' to the second [impression]" (Barnes 17). Barnes' rustic skeptic simply *feels* certain ways, and expresses those feelings in a manner that does not imply beliefs.

Bringing Together the Urbane and the Rustic

Most of the difference between the urbane and rustic interpretations of Sextus hinges on what exactly it means to "believe" something. Barnes makes a clear distinction between statements and affirmations of belief on the one hand and avowals of feelings or seemings on the other. For him, affirmation, and with it belief, depends on the possession of "a criterion of truth" (Barnes 11). Or, to put it into more modern language: to believe is to believe true. Of course, the skeptic does not have any such criterion of truth, and so they do not hold any beliefs at all.

Let's compare this with Frede's position on belief. Frede doesn't offer a definition of belief in general, but he is very clear on the distinction between the kind of belief he thinks the skeptic has and the kind that they don't have. What the urbane skeptic lacks is beliefs about "how things are in reality" or "how things really are" (Frede 191). However, Frede is quick to counter the objection that if the skeptic suspends judgment on all beliefs, then they must be left solely with mental states like "it seems to me that x… it seems to me that y…" On the contrary, he tells us, the skeptic "will not think that it only seems as if things were so and so; for that thought presupposes that he believes what the dogmatists believe, namely, that, in reality, things are quite different from the way they seem to be" (Frede 191). So the skeptic will not think things like "it seems to me that the honey is sweet," they will merely think "the honey is sweet." Importantly though, while they may be using the same words a dogmatist might, their meaning is vastly different when the skeptic speaks them. While they are describing how things *are* they do not take themselves to be describing how they *truly* are, or how they are *in reality* – as Frede puts it: "it does not follow that the skeptic has no beliefs about how things are just in virtue of his suspending judgment about how they are in reality" (Frede 192).

At first blush, these two positions seem basically opposed to each other: Barnes explicitly builds his position off of the premise that the skeptic's basic mental states are seemings and their

statements reports of those seemings, while Frede explicitly rejects seemings as a basis for skeptical mental states. But let's take a closer look. In fact, Frede's argument for why the skeptic's mental states are better described as beliefs than as seemings is fairly limited. Really, what he tells us is that the skeptic will not, in the suspended state, *take themselves* to be dealing with mere seemings. It is an argument for why a skeptic would think to themselves "the honey is sweet" rather than "it seems to me that the honey is sweet." This position, however, does not preclude the possibility that, viewed from a third-person perspective, those mental states might, in fact, seem to be best described as seemings. And if we go back and look at Frede's position with this in mind, it seems that this is exactly what is going on. Indeed, Frede ultimately tells us that "the skeptic will be content with whatever seems to him to be the case" (Frede 196).

This is key: even when Frede himself is looking at the urbane skeptic's mental states from a third-person perspective, he describes those states in the language of seemings. So Frede's skeptic, while not consciously realizing that their mental states are seemings, in fact seems to only have mental states which are seemings. Frede uses the word "belief" to describe these mental states because he believes it is truer to the phenomenological experience of being a skeptic – he thinks that because the content of the skeptic's thought is still "the honey is sweet" rather than "the honey seems sweet," it makes more sense to call that mental state a belief than a seeming or an impression. However, with this in mind, it is unclear that anything besides terminology separates his account of mental states under full skeptical suspension of judgement from Barnes' account. Both seem to leave us with a skeptic who has no beliefs about the truth of the situation around them, but plenty of seemings about it, which they express through avowals.

Both Barnes and Frede, then, ultimately agree on the main tenets of skeptical mental life: the skeptic accepts how things seem to them and their statements are reports on those seemings rather

than assertions having to do with anything about the reality beyond how things seem to them. Still though, we might wonder what exactly all this means. The notion of a "seeming" is vague at best and both authors seem unable to stick to one consistent way of characterizing the skeptic's mental state – jumping from "feelings" to "how things seem" to "how things are" etc. Perhaps a more modern perspective can help.

Skepticism and Alief

In order to better elucidate the concept of a "seeming" in Barnes (and, as we have just shown, in Frede, although he doesn't use the word), we will turn to Tamar Gendler's notion of "alief." Since alief is characterized at least in part by its relationship to belief, let's begin there. Gendler intentionally does not put many constraints on her definition of truth, but she does assert that "whatever belief is … it is normatively governed by the following constraint: belief aims to 'track truth' in the sense that belief is subject to immediate revision in the face of changes in our all-things-considered evidence" (Gendler 2008b, 565). So far, this seems to fit in quite nicely with our characterization of skepticism: beliefs (which the skeptic, of course, doesn't like) aim to track "how things really are," which doesn't seem too far off from aiming to "track truth."

So if Gendler shares a similar view of *belief* with the skeptic, what exactly is *alief*? Gendler tells us that "a paradigmatic alief is a mental state with associatively linked content that is representational, affective and behavioral, and that is activated—consciously or nonconsciously—by features of the subject's internal or ambient environment" (Gendler 2008a, 642). The fact that all aliefs have representational, affective, and behavioral content is particularly important to note. To illustrate the concept, let's use one of Gendler's examples. Suppose you are on one side of the Grand Canyon and you would like to get to the other side. In fact, this would be fairly easily done because there is a strong, sturdy bridge from one side to the other. There's one problem though: the

bridge is made out of transparent glass. All of the evidence you have points to the bridge being perfectly safe, but every time you approach to try and cross you find yourself paralyzed by fear. According to Gendler, what is happening here is a conflict between belief and alief. You believe on the basis of all the evidence, properly considered, that the bridge is safe to cross, and thus your belief suggests that you *should* cross the bridge given that you want to get to the other side. On the other hand, the moment you look down at the clear surface you're supposed to step onto and see nothing but the thousands-foot drop to the canyon below, you form an alief with roughly the content "Really high up, long long way down. Not a safe place to be! Get off!" (Gendler 2008a, 635). Note the representational ("[the space in front of me is] really high up, long long way down"), affective ("not a safe place to be!"), and behavioral ("get off!") content of this alief.

Importantly, while beliefs "change in response to changes in evidence," aliefs "change in response to changes in habit" (Gendler 2008b 566). Your evidence that the bridge is safe does not change the fact that it *seems* to you that it is dangerous. Of course, this is not immutably so. If you crossed the bridge every day, or perhaps worked your way up to it by crossing various transparent bridges suspended above ever-increasing heights, you might come back one day and find that your aliefs perfectly matched your beliefs as far as the advisability of crossing the bridge was concerned. The bridge would no longer *seem* dangerous to you.

With this in mind, we can say that aliefs are a good way to understand the vague notion of "seeming" that we found in Barnes and Frede. Barnes and Frede describe the skeptic's mental states as being concerned with how things *seem* to them rather than the *truth* of the matter. It is also important that the skeptic is different from the "man on the street" in that that seeming *could* change (even if neither Barnes or Frede think that it likely that that seeming *would* change). The language of alief allows us to understand why this is: a seeming, as alief, is concerned with affective content

rather than truth-tracking content, and so if one's affective relationship to the subject at hand changes (through a change in habit), so could the seeming.

But what benefit does understanding seemings through the lens of alief give us? Mainly, it allows us to identify the key difference between "seemings" (aliefs) and beliefs: their affective content. Beliefs, of course, have both representational and behavioral content (or at least, they always have representational content and often have behavioral content). For example, your belief that the bridge is safe represents the space in front of you as a safe surface to walk on and suggests that you should walk on it if you want to cross over to the others side of the canyon. In addition to this representational and behavioral content, though, your beliefs are also essentially tied to their ability to track the truth – they are only to be maintained so long as the evidence points to their truth. Aliefs, on the other hand, do not come with this constraint. What they have in its place is affective content: while our beliefs are (ideally) ultimately grounded in a more or less dispassionate review of the evidence, our aliefs are inextricably linked to our feelings regarding their subject matter. The skeptic's epistemic commitments, then, as aliefs, are not revisable on the basis of evidence suggesting the truth or falsity of their claims, but rather solely on the basis of the skeptic's feelings towards their content. The aliefs of a skeptic, then, seem potentially much more easily revisable than the beliefs of a dogmatist. Aliefs can be revised to the extent that one's feelings can change, while beliefs can only be revised to the extent that new evidence is acquired.

Pyrrhonist Life and Custom

With this new vocabulary of aliefs in mind, let's return to our guiding question: what does it mean to live as a pyrrhonist? In one sense, our answer is clear enough: as we've shown in the previous section, Barnes and Frede both agree that the pyrrhonist suspends judgment on all beliefs (that is, does away with their beliefs) while maintaining epistemic commitments in the form of aliefs.

Let's examine in some more detail, though, what Barnes and Frede say that this shift from belief to alief would look like in practice.

In fact, Barnes and Frede's ideas of what the skeptical life looks like are quite similar. This isn't quite so surprising when we consider (1) the ultimate similarity we found in their accounts of the skeptical state of mind in the preceding sections and (2) that Barnes and Frede's stated goal is just to explain *Sextus's* position, and so they are pulling their account of the skeptic's life from the same source material (the *Outlines*). Theirs and Sextus' description of the skeptics' life is characterized most strikingly by one thing: its similarity to the non-skeptical life. As we saw, Frede distinguishes the skeptic from the "man on the street" only by the skeptic's lack of belief that things *really* are the way they seem to them – that is, they do not think that their epistemic commitments track truth. Frede's skeptic differs from the man on the street in that their mental states are aliefs rather than beliefs, but the representational content of the skeptic's aliefs may be (and, as Frede presents it, seem almost entirely to be) exactly the same as the representational content of the man on the street's beliefs. Barnes' position is quite similar, with his fourfold demonstration of how the skeptic can, through seemings and avowals, eat and drink, teach skills to others, make judgments functionally identical to causal inferences, and even participate in the customs and habits of the day – in short, a demonstration that nothing need separate the skeptic's life from that of the "man on the street." Of course, one major difference we are glossing over is that the skeptic, having shifted their commitments from beliefs to aliefs, is supposed to have achieved a state of *ataraxia* – total tranquility and freedom from worry – that the man on the street lacks. But what is important for our purposes is that this difference in emotion will not manifest itself as a difference in action.

How can we explain this overlap in the skeptical life and the dogmatic one? Barnes gives us one response by saying that the skeptic continues to live like the non-skeptic simply because "it is

the done thing" – they are used to acting this way. However, while this may be a convincing argument for why the skeptic's life *could* look outwardly identical to the non-skeptic's, it does not give any particularly convincing reasons for why their life *must* look like that. Indeed, many other options are open to the pyrrhonist once judgment has been suspended on all beliefs – if a pyrrhonist is simply someone who renounces beliefs in favor of aliefs, they might have all sorts of different affective commitments, leading them to all sorts of aliefs and all sorts of different actions and avowals. Nothing, in principle, commits a pyrrhonist to the more or less normal life that Barnes and Frede describe.

Barnes and Frede's characterization of the skeptic's life as basically similar to the non-skeptic's, then, overlooks the possibility of a skeptical life that does *not* look similar to their pre-skeptical life. Indeed, it seems far more likely that a skeptic's epistemic commitments would change at least somewhat than that, upon completing their transition to a mental state with only aliefs, the skeptic would find that the representational content they are committed to and the actions that content leads them to are exactly the same as they were when they had beliefs. What is needed, then, is an account of skepticism that allows for a skeptical life different from the non-skeptical one.

Pyrrho and a Pyrrhonist Rejection of Custom

How, then, might we account for the possibility of a skeptic who does not follow custom, whose life is not similar to the non-skeptic's? In fact, we might derive at least the beginnings of an answer from perhaps the most important philosopher one might hope to have on their side in a debate over pyrrhonism: Pyrrho himself. Much of the material we have about Pyrrho suggests a man radically removed from custom by his suspension of judgment – the sort of man who would walk towards the edge of a cliff with the full intention to keep walking, with no regard for common conceptions like "you're going to fall off that cliff" or "if you fall off that cliff you'll die." Such a life

would certainly be a good resource to turn to in conceptualizing a skeptical life beyond custom and habit.

It is important to note right off the bat that we simply do not have much evidence at all pertaining to Pyrrho's philosophical positions or how he chose to live his life. Even the most careful considerations of that evidence (chief among them Richard Bett's 2000 work *Pyrrho: His Antecedents and His Legacy*) admit that there is simply no way to extract anything approaching a definitive statement of Pyrrho's philosophy from it.[4] There are, however, certain general characterizations of Pyrrho's life and thought that have come down to us, most famously Diogenes Laertius' account of Pyrrho in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. Using this text (which is suspect as a document of objective history for a number of reasons) as well as some more general considerations of the rest of the (meager) evidence we have about Pyrrho, we can construct, if not *the* historical Pyrrho, *a* Pyrrho – one who can point our analysis in a useful and productive direction. We will, in Michael Frede's words, be approaching Pyrrho "with a preconception of what [we expect] from [him,] determined by [our] own needs." This approach is, as Frede rightfully points out, "obviously … not conducive to an understanding of the history of philosophy" (Frede 276). But achieving such an understanding is not our goal here, and I think we will find that although this strategy may not be useful for the history of philosophy, it is quite conducive to philosophy proper.

With that in mind, let us consider what we can say about Pyrrho. First, we can begin with what we are *not* interested in. Much of the interpretive focus surrounding Pyrrho's skepticism has been placed on the question of whether he, like Sextus, suspended judgment even on the question of whether one ought to suspend judgment, or whether he held some sort of belief about the

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[4] Bett, who wrote an entire book defending an interpretation of Pyrrho's thought, admits at the very outset that "there is clearly no prospect of our being able to *establish* the correctness of any comprehensive interpretation of Pyrrho's philosophy" and that his aim is simply "to persuade the reader that [his] own interpretation is more probable than the alternatives" (Bett 2000, 12).

indeterminate nature of all things which he felt necessitated suspension of judgment on all matters (this latter view is the modern consensus – although, again, it should be noted that this consensus is merely the most probable interpretation of a very small amount of evidence, see Bett 2000 and Vogt et al. 2015). For our purposes, this question is of no importance whatsoever: we will take Pyrrho as merely one more skeptic who has decided, for some reason or another, to suspend judgment on (at least) propositions bearing on the truth. Consequently, we can take it that Pyrrho too desires to give up his beliefs for a life lived only with aliefs. Our focus will mostly be on Pyrrho's form of life, as demonstrated through biographical anecdotes.

Bett gives three general characteristic aspects of Pyrrho's thought: "his avoidance of opinions and theorizing, … his lack of susceptibility to passions and his disregard of convention" (Bett 80). The most interesting of these, and the one that most clearly responds to the problematic we set up for Barnes and Frede's interpretations of pyrrhonism, is Pyrrho's "disregard of convention." Diogenes gives us a number of stories pertaining to Pyrrho's eccentricities, which we might do well to list:

Pyrrho is said to have continued discussions even after his interlocutor departed (Diogenes Laertius 9.63)

Pyrrho is said to have passed undisturbed past his master who had fallen in a pond (Diogenes Laertius 9.63) (In some versions of this story the master falls into a ditch, but in all versions the master is quite pleased with Pyrrho for his detached attitude.)

Pyrrho is said to have walked undisturbed into oncoming traffic, towards the edges of cliffs, and in the direction of feral dogs, being saved only by friends who pulled him away from these threats (Diogenes Laertius 9.62)

These anecdotes paint a picture of a man who seems, at the very least, not *overly* concerned with the customs or habits of the day. But perhaps the most telling anecdote is one in which Pyrrho does conform to a habit we would expect to be followed in everyday life. We are told that once, when a dog attacked him, Pyrrho ran away (in some versions he climbs a tree to escape) and, "purportedly said to someone who reproached him that it is difficult to shake off humanity completely,[5] and that the point is to contend as much as possible with life's challenges[6], first through one's deeds and then, if that fails, with argument" (Diogenes Laertius 9.66).

What are we to make of this strange statement? First, we can see that the analysis of pyrrhonism as concerning itself mainly with aliefs maps quite nicely onto Pyrrho's stated concerns. The humanity that Pyrrho desires to shake off seems mainly to be, in this case, the disposition to run away from things that seem scary to him – that is, he desires to change a *habit* having to do with certain *affective content*. Second, and perhaps most strikingly, it seems that Pyrrho sees his task (and thus, the skeptical task) as one of ridding himself of his humanity. We will flesh out this suggestion in Chapter 3. Third, we see that Pyrrho acknowledges that this task, the full suspension of judgment, is a difficult one, and one that must be approached through both actions and arguments. We will examine the question of how to achieve the skeptical state in Chapter 2 and the conclusion. Above all, though, what it shows us is that for Pyrrho, the skeptical life has nothing to do with custom. It is clear that, whatever his reasons, he is disappointed in himself for having fled from the dog. This is quite a different sort of life than the skeptical life described by Barnes, Frede, or even Sextus himself. Pyrrho is radically unconcerned with custom and habit, using his universal suspension of judgment to chart a course so unmoored from the everyday that it seems incomprehensible and

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[5] What Vogt et al. translate as "shake off humanity" uses a verb that "typically describes the taking off of clothing" (Vogt et al. 55). Bett translates the passage as "strip off humanity" (Bett 2000, 66)

[6] What Vogt et al. translate as "challenges" "literally means 'things' or 'affairs,' often in the sense of the troublesome matters with which one must cope" (Vogt et al. 55).

even ridiculous to outside observers – Bett, for example, rejects the veracity of the stories we have been examining on the grounds that, if they were true, Pyrrho would have been "a lunatic" (Bett 67). But it is exactly this appearance of lunacy that is attractive for our version of Pyrrho – this Pyrrho's mode of life is so different from the everyday that it makes just as much sense to view it as insane as to see it as the practical expression of a very radical philosophy. The Pyrrho of Diogenes Laertius, then, gives us the model of a skeptic who rejects custom that we desired.

The Mental Life of the Skeptic

While Pyrrho provides us with a great example of a skeptical life led without regard for custom or habit, the picture the stories of his life provide does not yet give us a complete account of that skeptical life. In particular, while we have a good idea of how Pyrrho's attempts at suspending judgment manifested themselves in his actions, we do not have a good idea of the thought process behind those actions. What we need is an account of a skeptic's interiority.

For this discussion, it will be most useful to leave Pyrrho behind. This is not because Pyrrho is a bad model for an aspiring skeptic, but in fact just because he is the perfect model for the *aspiring* skeptic: the fleeing-from-the-dog episode outlined above shows clearly that Pyrrho had not fully achieved a complete state of suspended judgment (and, as we will spell out in the next chapter, it is unlikely that any individual could achieve such a state on their own at all). Rather, we will consider the interior state of mind of someone who has already fully suspended their judgment on all beliefs – that is, someone who has traded in their beliefs for aliefs.

More particularly, we will examine the point where the skeptic and the non-skeptic's mental lives will differ most: changes in epistemic commitment. We have said that the skeptic may, or perhaps is quite likely to, reject and modify their habits – but how does this happen? For someone with beliefs, their beliefs change when they think that the evidence available to them, in accordance

with what they take to be the best rational standards for determining the truth, points to some new belief being better connected to the truth. The customary belief is changed when the evidence suggests that it is no longer the best candidate to track the truth. What does this process look like for someone with only aliefs?

The easiest way to approach this question is to think about how the aliefs we currently have change. Returning to the glass bridge example, we said that the way to change the alief "Really high up, long long way down. Not a safe place to be! Get off!" into something a bit calmer would be to train yourself by walking across various other transparent and high-up bridges. With this training, you could change your habitual fear of such bridges into a habitual calmness.

Already here we have an important insight into changes in epistemic commitment in a skeptic's mind: the skeptical rejection of habit is not a rejection of all habit, but only of the particular habits that the skeptic starts out with. Indeed, such an initial habit is then replaced with a *second* habit – we go from habitual fear to habitual calm, for example. Importantly, though, this second habit is itself subject to revision as well. We might very well train ourselves to feel sad when we encounter glass bridges in the future, perhaps by playing sad music every time we walk across such a bridge.

But there is an important piece of information that the bridge scenario cannot tell us: why the skeptic would want to change their habits in the first place. In the bridge example, we wanted to change our aliefs about bridges because we had a belief that the bridge was not, in truth, something worthy of being afraid of. The alief was to be changed, then, to better align with the belief. The skeptic, though, has no beliefs, and this sort of motivation is thus unavailable to them. Without this conflict between the representational contents of simultaneously held beliefs and aliefs, what could push the skeptic to want to revise their epistemic commitments?

The answer is, in fact, fairly simple. Rather than changing because of a conflict between aliefs and beliefs, a skeptic would change their commitments because of conflicts between two or more aliefs. It isn't difficult to imagine scenarios in which two aliefs conflict. Consider a baker who, because of the great care she takes in her craft, can only make a very limited number of loaves of bread per day. One day, a homeless man enters her bakery and asks if she has any loaves of bread she can spare, as he's very hungry. The baker, being the good person she is, is struck with an alief of roughly the form "Person in need. Deserving of compassion. Give him some bread." However, when she looks down at one of her precious loaves, she is just as immediately struck by an alief like "One of my only loaves. Need to sell this to survive. Don't give it away for free." How can the baker resolve this tension? If the tension were between two beliefs, it would be resolved by measuring each option against the standard constitutive of belief: how well they track the truth. Since, instead, it is in this case a tension between two aliefs, it will be resolved by the standard constitutive of alief: affect. That is to say, whichever option the baker feels more strongly about will be the one she goes with. If she feels the affective pull of needing to sell her bread more strongly than that of helping the man, she will not give him the bread. If she feels more strongly about helping him than selling the bread, then she will give it to him.

Already we see one possible way that a skeptic might change their habits. Perhaps the baker has never been in a situation like the one we've just described before. While she is a good person who likes to help others in general, she has never specifically been put in a situation where that drive to help others has conflicted with her drive to sell her bread. If this is the case, then we might say that the introduction of this new element (the man who needs food) causes a change in her habits. Her affective commitment to selling her bread instead of giving it away and her affective commitment to helping others had never come into conflict before, but now that they do, one will give way to the greater affective force of the other. The baker's habitual commitments will be

changed – for example, from "One of my loaves. Need to sell this. Don't give it away" to something more like "One of my loaves. Usually need to sell this. Don't give it away unless someone really needs it." This change will not be immediate – at first, while such a situation is still relatively novel for our baker, she will have to consider her feelings each time. But as she gets more used to dealing with people asking her for bread, her response will become habitual, and she will form a new habit.

Let's say that the baker's drive to help the man wins out over her drive to sell the bread. In general, then, the baker, when placed into situations like the one described, will habitually give the man a loaf of bread. One day, though, she looks at her finances and sees that (it seems to her that) she is about to go broke and must sell a certain quantity of bread in order to keep her bakery afloat. She also sees that if she continues to give away bread to the needy at the rate she currently does, she will not be able to hit that target number. This may seem like a strange thing to say about someone who has no beliefs – wouldn't something like "if I don't sell enough bread my bakery won't be profitable" necessarily be a belief? However, let's remember that Barnes showed us how the skeptic could use seemings to have all sorts of abstract interior thoughts usually associated with beliefs (like inferring the presence of fire from the sight of smoke). In this case, then, it is not that the baker *believes* that not selling bread will lead to bankruptcy, it is that it *seems* to her that that would be the case. The key difference here is that she thinks that not selling bread will lead to bad consequences not because she believes what her financial documents tell her to be *true*, but because she *feels* a connection between the numbers on the documents and the prospect of her bakery closing.

This situation does not necessarily immediately boost the affective power of her drive to sell bread. Rather, what is more likely to happen is something like this: on the basis of this information, a related affective commitment – perhaps the desire to keep her business open – which previously had not factored into her affective deliberations in cases of bread-giving now exerts its force on the

situation. This added affective force may not cause the baker to change her ways immediately – indeed, she is in the habit of giving bread to those who need it – but if it is in general stronger than the affective force compelling her to give bread in the specific situations she is in, it may just give her the motivation to begin training herself out of that habit.

This change of heart for the baker, as we have set it up, happens entirely at the level of alief and affect. No beliefs need be involved for the scenario we have just laid out to happen. What this shows us is the general structure of how someone with only aliefs – that is, a skeptic – would go about changing their commitments. In the mind of someone whose epistemic commitments are only aliefs, those commitments would change due to changes in their affective state. If the affect behind certain representational and behavioral content waxes or wanes, then the commitment to that content will wax or wane along with it, alternately shutting out the possibility for alternate habits to arise or creating more space for them.

There is one final important note to make about the skeptic's mental state: the skeptic's changes in affect and alief will always be rooted in their starting point. We saw, for example, that what caused the baker to change her bread-giving habit was an affective commitment she already possessed, which was just boosted by her circumstances. Still though, the fact that changes in habit and alief will always be grounded in the general structure of affective commitments that the skeptic starts with does not mean that those commitments are set in stone. The skeptic's affective commitments are always open to change, so long as some other commitment comes to be more compelling than the original one. The reasons this might happen, though, are much broader than the reasons that one belief might come to seem more compelling than another. Beliefs compete against each other on the basis of their common goal of tracking the truth. Aliefs, on the other hand,

compete merely on the level of their affective power. There are as many reasons to change one's

aliefs as there are reasons to change one's feelings or shift one's mood.

Chapter 2: Why We Should Be Skeptics

In the previous chapter we drew out the distinction between beliefs and aliefs and saw how we could conceptualize the life of a pyrrhonian skeptic as being lived exclusively through alief. On such an interpretation, the skeptic suspends judgment on all beliefs, and thus does not hold any epistemic commitments related to the truth of any matter, but still has plenty of epistemic commitments unrelated to the truth in the form of affect-driven aliefs which they express through avowals. We also saw that, contrary to Barnes and Frede's positions, such an alief-driven understanding of skepticism would not necessarily commit the skeptic to a life lived in accordance with the habits and customs they already had in their pre-skeptical life. What the previous chapter has not shown, however, is why being in that alief-driven state of suspended judgment would be desirable. This is what this chapter will attempt to accomplish.

In this chapter, we will focus on a specific set of cases (cases of "norm-discordant alief") in order to motivate a commitment to the skeptical life as defined in Chapter 1. It is important to note that I do not think that the skeptical state of possessing only aliefs is preferable to our current state of holding both aliefs and beliefs at once in all cases. In fact, I think there is a rather large set of cases where it's not particularly problematic to have both beliefs and aliefs. When we are eating dinner, for example, or lying in bed, it doesn't matter all that much whether we are doing so with or without beliefs in our head. In those cases, no argument could be made one way or the other – it would be equally desirable to live them as a skeptic or as a non-skeptic. The cases of norm-discordant alief we examine, however, will serve as an example of a problem that arises for the belief-haver and does not arise for the skeptic. If I am successful in arguing that these cases cause substantial problems for those with beliefs, and that those problems could be solved by becoming a

pyrrhonian skeptic, then they should provide some good reason to want to get rid of our beliefs and become skeptics.

The Problem of Norm-Discordant Alief

Let's return to Gendler's bridge example from the previous chapter. As a refresher: you want to get across a canyon in front of you, but the bridge that would take you to the other side is made out of completely transparent glass. You have good reason to *be*lieve that the bridge is safe – perhaps you've seen others walk across it and know that people use it all the time – but you *a*lieve that it is dangerous and that you should not cross. Of course, in the end, you're going to have to do either one or the other – you cross or you don't. This poses a problem: when our aliefs and our beliefs contradict each other, how should we resolve this tension?

This problem is an example of what Gendler calls "norm-discordant alief," resulting from a conflict between the behavioral propensities activated by one's aliefs and the propensities activated by one's beliefs (Gendler 2008b, 570). While the bridge case provides a clear and simple example of a norm-discordant alief, there are plenty of other cases of conflict between alief and belief that are both more relevant to our lives and more important to resolve. Of all the examples Gendler discusses, one of the most relevant seems to be the case of what Gendler, following Jack Dovidio, calls "aversive racists." Aversive racists are "people who consciously endorse egalitarian values, but who have negative feelings towards the relevant racial group that are 'typically excluded from awareness'" (Gendler 2008b, 574). Or, in the language of alief, an aversive racist is someone who holds egalitarian beliefs but finds themselves with racist aliefs. As Gendler tells us, despite their best intentions, "the legacy of having lived in a society structured by hierarchical and hostile racial divisions retains its imprint" on the aversive racist. She also gives us a brief summary of some recent research regarding these issues, which is useful to see some of the real-world relevance of racist alief:

So, for example, White subjects primed with images of Black faces tend to be faster to identify an ambiguous image as a gun, and more likely to misidentify a (non-gun) tool as a gun (Payne, 2001.) Otherwise identical resumés bearing stereotypical black names (e.g. Jamal, Lakisha) are less likely to result in interviews than resumés bearing stereotypical White names (Emily, Greg) (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2003.) In both Black and White Americans, fMRI scanning shows greater amygdale activity — associated with detection of threat — in subjects presented with images of outgroup (different race) as opposed to in-group (same race) members (Amodio *et al.*, 2003.) And so on (Devine *et al.*, 2002; cf. also Payne, 2006). (ibid.)

The aversive racist case is only one example of norm-discordant alief. We can easily think of others, with consequences just as serious for ours and others' lives. Norm-discordant aliefs can be anything from biases that we would not endorse upon reflection to philosophical commitments that we feel we ought not be committed to. Here we might, for example, think of Moore's famous "here is one hand" example: if I am an external world skeptic, I may *be*lieve that I do not actually have hands, and yet when looking down, I cannot help but form the alief "here is a hand." What these examples show is that the norms our aliefs are discordant with are often extremely important, worldview-defining issues. Whether or not one is committed to external world skepticism or racist representational content will have an enormous effect on how one thinks and acts. These cases, then, show us in the clearest terms possible a conflict between belief and alief. In them, our beliefs tell us to think and act one way while our aliefs tell us to think and act in almost exactly the opposite way. It is quite clear, though, that since the questions involved are so fundamental to how we are to live in the world, these conflicts *must* be resolved in some way. The goal of this chapter is to show that pyrrhonian skepticism, a suspension of judgment leaving us with only alief, is uniquely positioned to satisfactorily resolve these conflicts.

For much of the discussion in this chapter, we will be focusing on the example of the aversive racist as a test case. I choose to focus on the racism example for two reasons. First, it is a clear example of a conflict between alief and belief whose resolution is highly relevant to our lives. It should not be particularly controversial to say that the tension between racist aliefs and anti-racist beliefs ought to be resolved. Second, it is perhaps the example where the case for the solution to conflicts between alief and belief in cases of norm-discordant alief that I most want to avoid (namely, that these conflicts should be mostly or entirely resolved in favor of beliefs) seems clearest. The case as presented seems like a clear example of a clash of alief and belief where the belief should win – of course we should do away with our racist aliefs. On the contrary, though, I will argue that the skeptical option of doing away with our beliefs in favor of a mental state composed only of aliefs (which is, it should be noted, quite distinct from simply keeping all of the aliefs we currently have with none of the beliefs) would be better for us in the long term, and even better for us in terms of achieving anti-racist goals. If I am able to make this case with this extremely difficult example, then hopefully it will speak to a certain strength of the argument in general.

Responding to Norm-Discordant Aliefs: Three Initial Options

Three possible responses to norm-discordant aliefs present themselves almost immediately. First, we could do nothing, leaving our beliefs and aliefs as they are and believing in certain propositions on reflection while remaining unable to fully commit ourselves to those beliefs intuitively. Second, we could somehow try to bring our aliefs to into accord with our beliefs. Third, we could attempt the reverse, bringing our beliefs into accord with our aliefs. While I will ultimately argue that all of these options fail to resolve the conflict satisfactorily, each of them deserves our attention as a potential solution to the problem of contradiction between belief and alief.

Response 1: Doing Nothing

The first possible response to conflicts between alief and belief is also the simplest: do nothing. This may seem like a very strange thing to suggest. As we have said, these situations demand a resolution of some sort to the conflict: we must either act in one way or act in the other. "Doing nothing" is, in this sense, not really an option – something must always be done. Indeed, if this response was suggesting that we "do nothing" in this sense then it would not even be worth discussing. But, a bit more charitably, we can see in this response not so much a call to inaction as a suggestion not to look for a larger solution to the messy problem of resolving tensions between what we have been calling beliefs and aliefs but which might just as well be called the head and the heart. Rather than attempting to definitively answer whether it is better to follow our aliefs or our beliefs, a proponent of this solution might tell us that there is nothing wrong with believing we should do something that, in the end, we cannot. Indeed, this might just be part of human nature.

Bart Streumer gives something close to a philosophical defense of this position in his *Unbelievable Errors*. In this book, Streumer argues for an error theory about normative judgments that he thinks is impossible to believe. Streumer finds it impossible to stop believing in the existence of normative judgments, and believes that this impossibility is shared by the rest of us as well. He argues that certain factors constitutive of belief require a commitment to the existence of normative properties of some sort, and thus that it is impossible to really commit ourselves to the truth of his error theory in the way he might like us to (Streumer 132-138). Looking at this description, we might reasonably say that what is being described is a conflict between belief and alief similar to the cases of norm-discordant alief we have been discussing. Streumer takes himself to have good reasons to be committed to the truth of the representational content "normative properties do not exist," but finds that he cannot shake his habitual commitment to the idea that they do.

Streumer believes that this conflict cannot be overcome, but he nevertheless believes that there is value in giving the arguments he gives for his error theory. More specifically, he believes that it is valuable to "come close to believing" the error theory, even if he cannot fully commit himself to it. While unable to believe the truth of his error theory, Streumer can believe that "there are sound arguments that together seem to show that the error theory is true," can believe in "different parts of the error theory at different times," and can thus form what he calls "a weak partial belief in the error theory" (Streumer 189). Streumer tells us that "coming close to believing the error theory has affected [his] confidence in [his] normative judgements" (190).

However, while this partial belief might affect Streumer's internal confidence, it doesn't affect much else. Streumer is clear that not only has coming close to believing the error theory "not made [him] give up any of [his] normative judgements," it hasn't even "affected *which* normative judgements [he makes], since it has affected his confidence in all possible normative judgements in the same way" (Streumer 190). Of course, this isn't particularly surprising. As we discussed, this solution does not actually attempt to solve the problem at hand at all, instead merely putting its stamp of approval on the conflict-ridden status quo.

Streumer believes that his arguments are valuable because merely knowing the truth is valuable, even if we cannot fully commit ourselves to acting in accord with it. There may be something to be said for this, but only if we are confident, as Streumer is, that there is no hope of changing the commitments involved in this conflict between alief and belief. It is quite clear that, were it possible, Streumer would very much like to change his aliefs to be in accord with his beliefs, fully committing himself to the truth of his error theory. It is clearly *desirable* to him that this tension be resolved. Thus we come to the major problem with the "do nothing" solution to the problem of norm-discordant aliefs: it only makes sense if we are convinced that no larger reconciliation between

the two registers is possible. If it *were* possible to change one's aliefs to match one's beliefs (or vice-versa), then it would not make much sense at all to content oneself with only a partial commitment to a belief (or alief) that one feels one should really be fully committed to.

Indeed, it seems quite clear that in many of the cases where we find contradiction between alief and belief, change *is* possible. Most straightforwardly, we can look back to the bridge case. It is quite easy to imagine that we could train ourselves out of the alief that the bridge is dangerous and ought to be avoided. If this is the case, why should we content ourselves with the paralyzing fear of the situation as it initially presents itself? Given the means to change our aliefs, it doesn't make sense not to do so. I will argue briefly in the next section on the alief changing strategy and in more depth in the next chapter that, in fact, there is *never* a case in which it is impossible to change a commitment of ours. If this is the case, then the "do nothing" option loses all attractiveness. But even without this more radical argument, the fact that there are plenty of examples of alief/belief contradiction where it is clearly possible to change our epistemic commitments one way or the other shows that we need a solution to those contradictions that gives us a little bit more than this one can offer.

Another Possible Defense of Doing Nothing

Before we move on from the "do nothing" response, we should also consider a point made by Gendler in "Alief in Action (and Reaction)." We rejected Streumer's case for doing nothing by appealing to the general preferability of resolving tensions between alief and belief if they are, in fact, resolvable. However, Gendler points out that there are some cases "where self-interest seems unharmed—even aided—and where freedom seems unimpeded—even enhanced—by the presence of norm-discordant alief." She lists "theater, cinema, novel-reading, video games, board games, poetry, metaphor, circumlocution, daydreaming, therapy, roller-coasters and bungee jumping" as

examples of activities where norm-discordant alief works to our benefit (Gendler 2008b, 571). While some of these examples do not seem like clear-cut cases of norm-discordant alief to me (for example, it is unclear to me how daydreaming isn't a case of imagination, which Gendler explicitly distinguishes from alief), others do. The rollercoaster case is one of these – the intense thrill of a rollercoaster is clearly caused by an alief like "Dropping dangerously fast! Scary! Do something!" (although since you're strapped in, there's not much you can do but scream). But we get on the rollercoaster in the first place because we *be*lieve that, in truth, it is completely safe to do so. The thrill that we are seeking on the rollercoaster stems from the representational content of an alief ("This is dangerous!") that is directly in conflict with one of our beliefs ("This is totally safe"). This seems to be a case, then, where a norm-discordant alief is desirable.

However, while it is true that the pleasure of activities like rollercoasters depends on norm-discordant aliefs in the status quo, it is not necessarily the case that it essentially relies on norm-discordant aliefs. In fact, it seems that a skeptic as we have described them – that is, someone possessing only aliefs – could easily have an experience analogous to our norm-discordant rollercoaster rider. This is because the alief activated by being on the ride ("Dropping dangerously fast! Scary! Do Something!") is quite different from the alief that would lead you to get on it in the first place (perhaps "This will be fun. Looks exciting! Let's go."). If our skeptic is self-aware enough, it might even activate an alief along the lines of "This will activate a reaction of fear that I'll find exhilarating. Looks exciting! Let's go!" The role played by belief in our normal rollercoaster rider's mind, then, can easily be replaced by an alief in that of a pyrrhonian amusement park-goer. This seems generalizable to the other cases Gendler discusses: the pleasure of reacting to the scenes we see in a movie, for example, need not rely on a belief that one is actually in a theater, but might instead be paired with a second alief to that effect. Since the two conflicting representational contents that make the norm-discordant alief exciting ("This ride is dangerous"/"This ride is safe"

and "A monster is attacking me"/"I'm in a theater") can be temporally separated (in the rollercoaster we can imagine the first when one is in the drop and the second when one is strapping into the ride, in the movie we can imagine the first as occurring in the moment of terror and the second while fearfully eyeing one's surroundings for an escape"), the excitement of the cases Gendler discusses can be easily preserved on the skeptical model.

Of course, nothing about the preceding argument would imply that the current model – in which we derive pleasure from a conflict between a belief and an alief – is any worse than the skeptical model just described. However, it does imply that, if we find that switching to the skeptical state would solve cases unlike the rollercoaster, theater, etc. cases described by Gendler (and perhaps more like the Streumer case or the aversive racist case), then the pleasure derived from these rollercoaster-like cases would not give us any reason at all to defend the mixed belief-alief model. Ultimately, then, the argument of this section depends on the argument of the last part of this chapter, which argues for the preferability of skepticism as a solution to cases of norm-discordant alief. As with the cases we discussed in the second paragraph of this chapter (eating lunch, lying in bed), these are cases where it does not matter whether or not we are skeptics. They do not provide any motivation one way or the other.

Response 2: The Alief Changing Strategy

Next, we have the alief changing strategy, in which we would attempt to change our aliefs to coincide with our beliefs. In the aversive racist example, this would entail changing the negative affective associations with the target racial group to a neutral reaction more in line with the aversive racist's anti-racist beliefs. At first, the prospects for the alief changing strategy may look grim. The aversive racist has already fully convinced themselves of the truth of their anti-racist beliefs – there is not more work to be done there, and yet they retain their racist aliefs. However, while no amount of

rational argument could persuade the aversive racist to change their aliefs (indeed, as we've discussed, this simply isn't how aliefs work), it might be possible that an anti-racist alief could be induced through other means.

Gendler's Proposal: Actual Rehearsal and Refocusing of Attention

Gendler discusses two possible ways to bring one's aliefs in line with one's beliefs. The first is "actual rehearsal," in which someone intentionally performs the behavior associated with the alief they want to have over and over again so as to habituate themselves into eventually actually having that alief. The second is "refocusing of attention," which is an attempt at habit formation similar to actual rehearsal, but this time focusing on intentionally thinking the thoughts associated with the alief over and over rather than the focus on action of actual rehearsal (Gendler 2008b, 572-3). In short, both of these strategies attempt to exploit the habitual nature of alief and forcibly instill a habit in order to instill the target alief. The thinking seems to be that if one can get the behavioral content (in the case of actual rehearsal) or the representational content (in the case of refocusing attention), or potentially both, to be habitual, then the affective content will follow.

There are two major problems for the actual rehearsal and refocusing of attention strategies for alief changing. First, there is the issue of the reliability of the evidence supporting these claims. Gendler appeals, for example, to a number of studies conducted by Kerry Kawakami *et al.* as evidence for the effectiveness of the actual rehearsal method. Broadly, Kawakami's studies consist in giving subjects a baseline test of some sort of affective association, exposing them to training in line with the actual rehearsal model, and then testing them on the same sort of test after the training has been completed. A subject may, for example, be asked to associate certain potentially stereotypically-charged words with faces of different races before and after training in which they were asked to associate positive terms with faces of races generally stereotyped negatively (Kawakami et al. 2005,

71-2). Gendler speaks as if the results of these studies unproblematically lend support to the actual rehearsal model, a claim we will problematize soon, but let's talk for now as if they really did show a definite reduction in negative affective association after training. There is still a problem here, for the way in which "negative affective association" is being tested is extremely specific, and quite removed from real world contexts. Indeed, we might say that the studies have shown without a doubt that this training can lead its subjects to better associate positive words with certain races when asked to do so in a word-matching game, but how confident can we be that this matching game proficiency will translate to real-world reductions in racist harms? How confident can we be, that is, that these experiments are actually changing racist aliefs and not just instilling a new habit having to do with a game? Perhaps we can't be very confident at all. As Kawakami 2005, explicitly tells us, subjects tested (this time for gender rather than race) not just with a matching game but with a more real-world scenario in which they were asked to choose the best candidate for a managerial position *still exhibited bias*:

> Nevertheless, the selection of male or female candidates for a managerial position revealed no difference between Nonstereotypic Association Training and No Training conditions, the same conditions in which Kawakami et al. (2000) did show a difference in stereotype activation. In the present study, although extensive debriefing confirmed our assumption that participants were indeed attempting to choose the best candidate overall, in these conditions there was an overall pattern of discrimination against women relative to men in recommended hiring for a managerial position. (Kawakami et al. 2005)

The results of these experiments, then, do not necessarily show as robust an effect on the aliefs we want to change as we might like. Indeed, it's not even the case that they show a robust effect even within the confines of the matching game: Kawakami et al. 2000 tell us that

The unexpected absence of stereotypic trait activation for the elderly in [this study] raises questions concerning the generalizability of the training effect. Although it remains unclear why the present studies provide evidence for the automatic activation of skinhead but not elderly stereotypes, it is possible that differences in the nature and structure of these stereotypes, or methodological factors in the present study may have influenced these findings. (Kawakami et al. 2000, 883).

Overall, then, it seems we have some reason to doubt that the studies cited by Gendler really show that mere repetition can change a biased alief. But even if they could, we run into the second major problem with these proposed alief-changing strategies. Namely, even in the best-case scenarios, they only ever work partially on an individual level. None of the studies Gendler cites claim that issues like racism and sexism can be solved simply by acting and thinking as if one weren't racist or sexist. As Gendler notes, these habits are "enormously deep-seated" and instilled almost from birth (Gendler 2008b, 575). At best, these studies show that techniques like actual rehearsal and refocusing of attention can lessen the harmful effects of norm-discordant alief. But this isn't what we set out trying to do. In this proposed solution to the problem of norm-discordant alief, we want to bring our aliefs fully into line with our beliefs, not just a bit closer to them. Actual rehearsal and refocusing of attention, then, do not seem able to get the job done.

Another Way to Change Aliefs: The Long Game

There may, however, be another possibility for the alief-changing strategy. How humans have thought about big picture, socially important issues – not least on the topic of race itself – has changed drastically over time. Social and cultural changes have contributed to changing opinions on all sorts of issues. Gendler herself notes that one of the reasons it is so difficult to combat racist aliefs is because they are instilled in us as children, and thus very deeply ingrained (ibid.). Given this, though, it seems quite likely that creating a community in which everyone is taught to be anti-racist from birth and brought up in such a manner that nothing in their experience contradicts those

teachings, would result in a population that has no issues with racist aliefs whatsoever. Indeed, it seems to me that even aliefs so deeply ingrained as to seem "biological" are open to being changed. That is to say, we should remember that "human biology" is by no means a static object and if we truly wished to change something fundamental about our biology, nothing would stop us from doing so in principle. That is, of course, an extremely abbreviated discussion of whether or not it is possible for us to change our most fundamental beliefs and aliefs, and it will be returned to in far more detail in the next chapter. For now, though, we will simply stipulate that any alief might be changed (in humanity at large, even if not necessarily in each particular individual) by some possible process, perhaps involving social or biological changes to the status quo. The brief discussion in this paragraph should serve to give some initial motivation for why this might be a plausible view.

Of course, even in the scenarios we've described, our original aversive racist – the one whose dissatisfaction with not being able to alieve in accordance with their anti-racist beliefs provided the impetus for our discussion of these larger scale changes in the first place – does not always get to fully change their own aliefs. This state of affairs, while not ideal, is still preferable to the status quo for the anti-racist though. First, making the society around them more concordant with their anti-racist beliefs may make it easier for the aversive racist to habituate themselves into less racist practices personally, thereby allowing them to shift their own aliefs at least somewhat. Second, we can probably assume that the aversive racist's desire to have anti-racist aliefs is not confined solely to their own aliefs – rather, they most likely believe that it would be better for people not to hold racist aliefs in general. If anyone, or any community of people, is convinced of the general preferability of holding some alief that they cannot currently hold, then it is at least slightly preferable that they work towards the goal of others in the future being able to have those aliefs.

<u>A Problem with the Alief Changing Strategy</u>

So far, we have discussed the motivation that an individual or community might have to bring their aliefs into agreement with their beliefs. However, there is a major practical issue that comes with that proposal. We have been speaking as if the alief we wish to change could be changed in isolation from other aliefs and as if the end state of the process of changing that alief would be one in which the sole difference would be a change in that one alief (for example from having a racist alief to not having one). There are a number of considerations, however, that complicate that picture.

First, we have shown that changing an alief like the one the aversive racist wants to change would require social, cultural, and/or biological change on a large scale. The process leading from the status quo intuitive alief in certain racist representational content to one with non-racist aliefs would be long and complicated. While on this long and complicated path, there is every possibility that we would pick up new aliefs and beliefs along the way. New problems and problematics might arise from various steps along the road to a situation in which non-racist aliefs become the norm, which would give rise to new epistemic commitments that are not held in the pluralistic status quo.

Second, the same processes that lead us to acquiring new epistemic commitments along the way to non-racist alief could also lead us to revise existing aliefs and beliefs. New problems and scenarios arising from the social, cultural, and biological changes necessary for changing the target belief could lead us to reevaluate beliefs and aliefs that had previously seemed unrelated to the target alief.

Finally, we might find while attempting to change some alief that that alief rests on other aliefs or beliefs which must themselves be changed in order to change the target alief. If we find that

our racist attitudes rest in some way on our belief that race is a meaningful biological category, for example, then we would have to revise our belief in that in order to revise our racist aliefs.

With all this in mind, we can see that after the immense amount of effort required to achieve intuitive anti-racist aliefs it's highly likely that we will end up with a set of epistemic commitments at least slightly and perhaps very different from the one we started out with, even beyond the target belief that we set out to change. This poses a problem for the alief changing model: with many of the surrounding epistemic commitments changed by the path taken to get to the new set of aliefs, there's a chance that the arguments that originally made the target alief so appealing would no longer be as convincing as they once were. That is, in our quest to get our aliefs to match with our beliefs, we may be led to revise the beliefs themselves. There are two possibilities for why this could be the case. First, and most obviously, it might be the case that belief in some premise of the argument for the original belief has been compromised somewhere along the line, and that what was originally convincing is no longer. But it's also possible that while all of the arguments for the original belief remain valid, our new set of epistemic commitments might give rise to new arguments that are even *more* convincing than those original arguments are. For example, while the anti-racist initially set out to convert their aliefs from having negative associations with certain races to not having them, they may find upon achieving that goal that they think a *better* goal would be to change their aliefs (and beliefs) such that race is no longer a meaningful category to them.

Of course, nothing in that scenario would stop us from changing our aliefs again. But doing that won't prevent exactly the same problem from arising yet again once we get to our new set of aliefs. There's no guarantee that we would ever find a set of beliefs and aliefs with which we are totally satisfied, even if they seem like they would be completely satisfying when we set out to attain them. As we noted, it took an enormous amount of effort just to get us from our original set of

epistemic commitments to the one in which we did not have racist aliefs. It would take a similar amount of effort to make any subsequent changes to our beliefs. While nothing would technically prevent us from pursuing this sort of solution to the problem of contradictions between what we believe and what we alieve, the harms of this approach seem to outweigh the benefits. In effect, it would require us to be prepared to launch an enormous, perhaps generations-long social project with no guarantee whatsoever that once we reach the original goal of that project we would be satisfied with the outcome. And, if we were not satisfied with the state of aliefs we had originally set out to achieve – as it seems there is a good chance we wouldn't be – then, in order to rectify the situation, we would have to immediately set out on another such project. This process could quite easily repeat itself ad infinitum.

Response 3: The Belief Changing Strategy

Last in this initial set of responses is the belief changing strategy, in which we would attempt to bring our beliefs in line with our aliefs. This is clearly the least appealing of the three, especially given the aversive racist case we are working with. More generally, though, it is unclear how this solution could possibly work practically. As we've discussed, our commitment to aliefs is based on affect, and it is thus possible to imagine that we might change our aliefs to better accord with our beliefs through some sort of habit-forming process. Commitment to beliefs, on the other hand, relies on how well we feel them to track the truth. Thus, if we wanted to change our beliefs to better accord with our aliefs, we would need to convince ourselves that the representational content of our aliefs in fact tracked the truth better than that of our beliefs. But if we could do this, then that content would have *already been* the content of our beliefs. We hold the beliefs we hold *because* we feel that they track the truth the best.

In the best-case scenario for this response, we might imagine certain situations in which someone felt for some emotional reasons that it would be best to somehow trick themselves into believing something they did not initially think to be the case in order to better conform with their aliefs. However, it is difficult to imagine how anyone could convince themselves of the general preferability of this sort of self-deceiving operation, in which one would systematically trick oneself into believing that everything one believes to be true is not true anytime a belief conflicted with an alief.

Finally, even if these considerations aren't enough to persuade one that the belief changing model is a bad solution to the problem of alief/belief contradiction, it runs into many of the same practical problems as the alief changing model does. Specifically, it seems quite likely that in the course of changing one's beliefs to better accord with one's aliefs, new beliefs and/or aliefs would arise that would also have to be dealt with; or that once the target beliefs are achieved, new aliefs and beliefs would seem preferable.

A Fourth Option: Skepticism

At this point it may seem that we will either have to endorse the alief changing model or, if its drawbacks seem too costly, stick with the status quo, with the contradiction between what we feel we should believe and what we do believe left unresolved (although a case like that of the aversive racist makes this second option far less attractive). However, there is one additional option open to us. It is, of course, the position of pyrrhonian skepticism: full suspension of judgment on all beliefs, regardless of whether they seem to connect to the initial or target beliefs, leaving only aliefs.

As with the alief changing solution, this would require an immense amount of effort to achieve, perhaps even more than for that option. A similar large-scale societal project would need to be launched, this time in order to suspend judgment on all beliefs rather than to change certain

aliefs. There would be a similar amount of unforeseen circumstances along the way as well, and once we reach the end of this process, we would not be left simply with all of the aliefs we had when we started, but with a radically changed set of aliefs.

However, once we have achieved this state, it comes with the greatest payoff of any of the solutions: the total dissolution of the problem of norm-discordant alief that we began with. Of course, in this state, there would be no beliefs for the skeptic's aliefs to be in discord with at all. What conflict there is would be easy to overcome: as we showed in the previous chapter, a skeptic with only aliefs can easily resolve contradictions between different aliefs on the basis of affect alone. We should also remember that, because they are tied essentially to affective commitment rather than truth-tracking, aliefs are far more open to revision than beliefs are.

Let's apply this to the case of the aversive racist. Our skeptic will begin with some set of aliefs that they are committed to. Let's assume that, similarly to the aversive racist, they are initially committed to aliefs connecting people they perceive to be of certain races to negative affective and representational content. (Although really it should be noted that it would be quite surprising if our skeptic actually had these aliefs, since the world as it would need to be in order to produce such a skeptic would look radically different from our own.) However, reflecting on some other aliefs they hold, perhaps about treating people equally or some such, the skeptic then comes to the conclusion that, in fact, it seems like it would be better if they had neutral rather than negative aliefs about people of different races. At this point we are in a roughly analogous place to when we were presented with convincing arguments for anti-racist *be*liefs. However, the skeptical anti-racist has significantly less trouble moving on from here than their believing counterpart. Indeed, the "change in feeling" created by the skeptic's new reflections could easily displace the old commitment to racist aliefs in favor of non-racist ones. The movement of the entire process of comparison onto the same

plane (of affect and aliefs) means that all conflicts are actually resolvable in favor of one or another option rather than locked into a stalemate caused by essentially different standards of judgment (affect vs. truth).

Therefore, if the skeptic feels they should be committed to some new alief, and if their commitment to the old alief is based only on affective commitment, then if the force of their feeling that the old alief ought to be replaced is greater than the feeling that it ought to be kept, the old alief will fall by the wayside in favor of the new alief implied by their feeling that they ought to feel differently. Less abstractly, if an alief in racist content is overcome by the feeling that anti-racist content would be preferable to be committed to, then there are no extra steps necessary in a shift of commitment from racist to non-racist aliefs. Of course, as we've discussed, it may take some practice before our new non-racist aliefs become habitual, but so long as the skeptic's anti-racist affect is stronger we can be assured that it will win out, whether it takes them a second to think about it or not.

Skepticism's Strengths

Given all this, the skeptical strategy seems to be the best option for solving the problem of contradiction we started with. In any case where we feel that one epistemic commitment is preferable to the commitment we hold in the status quo, changing that commitment is as simple as having the feeling that it would be better if we did. This is a massive improvement over the alief changing model, in which immense effort has to be expended every time it is decided that some commitment should be changed. Once the skeptical state is achieved (itself through a very difficult process to be sure), on the other hand, very little effort is required to switch commitments.

Because of the relative ease of switching commitments on the skeptical model, the possibility of a change in commitments along the way to its target commitment doesn't pose a problem for it.

While the alief changing model was hampered by the possibility of changes in surrounding commitments leaving us unsatisfied with the target alief once we've acquired it, the skeptical model can easily deal with an analogous change in surrounding aliefs. If something the skeptic used to think seemed the case no longer does, then their aliefs can easily shift to accommodate the way things now seem to them.

The skeptical strategy also holds another important advantage over the alief changing strategy. Given the immense effort involved in any change of epistemic commitment on the alief changing model, it seems unlikely that we would pursue any changes in alief which we do not feel extremely motivated to achieve. Scenarios in which we have only a weak preference for changing a commitment would not be worth the coordinated effort required to shift from one alief to another. For the skeptic, though, even the weakest preference in favor of one alief over another is sufficient motivation to change that alief. So long as the feeling that it would be best to be committed to the target alief even slightly outweighs the affective force of the initial commitment, the target alief is as good as committed to.

Finally, and most importantly, the skeptical strategy is preferable because it solves the problem of contradictory commitments generally. Our discussion of the alief changing model focused on an attempt to change one alief, for example changing a racist alief to a non-racist one. In practice, though, we hold many commitments that we feel we should change. Trying to change all of them on the alief changing model would be a quixotic effort, requiring the constant organization of large-scale alief-changing projects, the results of each of which would have unforeseen consequences for all the rest, requiring yet more projects to be organized, ad nauseum. Skeptical suspension of judgment on all beliefs, on the other hand, represents a clear goal state that solves the problems posed by contradictory commitments in general.

Chapter 3: Are All Aliefs Controllable?

In the previous chapter, a large part of the case for pyrrhonian skepticism was the idea that in a skeptical state of suspended judgment, with only aliefs, we could easily resolve conflicts between our epistemic commitments. The argument went that since aliefs are all ultimately answerable to affect, any conflicts between them could be settled on the basis of affect, in contrast to a system where commitments based in affect and commitments based in tracking truth were pitted against each other with no clear standard by which to compare them. However, in this chapter we will introduce a challenge to that argument. In "Alief in Action (and Reaction)" Gendler briefly mentions that she is "open to the possibility that there are distinct subspecies of alief: innate and habitual, perhaps—or controllable and uncontrollable" (Gendler 2008b, 570). This is a problematic possibility for our argument, since the existence of an uncontrollable alief would mean that there might be some conflicts between aliefs that we *cannot* resolve, and would ultimately be out of our hands. While Gendler doesn't expand much on this idea, it has been elaborated (in different terms) by other authors, notably David Hume and P.F. Strawson, both of whom argue for the existence of what we might call innate and uncontrollable aliefs. This chapter will examine their arguments for the existence of such aliefs and ultimately argue against them that while there may indeed be many aliefs that are innate, all aliefs are, in at least some sense, controllable.

Part 1: Hume and Strawson's Naturalistic Challenge to Pyrrhonism

There is a long tradition of responding to the challenge of pyrrhonism, or skepticism more generally, by denying that it is even possible – that is, by saying that there is something about the skeptical life that would make it impossible for a human to lead it. We might rephrase this challenge, too, from there being "something about the skeptical life that would make it impossible for a human to lead it" to "something about humanity that would make it impossible to live a skeptical life." With

this in mind, it becomes clear why P.F. Strawson chooses to give the name "naturalism" to this line of response to skepticism – it is the view that there is something about human *nature* would prevent us humans from leading a pyrrhonian life. In the language we've been using, we might say that this sort of naturalism argues for the existence of innate, uncontrollable aliefs. This section will examine two different expressions of the naturalist response: Strawson's own and David Hume's, from which Strawson draws heavy inspiration.

It is important to note that Hume and Strawson's naturalisms are both framed as defenses of "belief." However, on closer examination this difference seems more terminological than substantive. Hume, for example, tells us that "all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom; and … belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures" (Hume 1978, 183). This seems to fall under our criteria for alief fairly explicitly: the references to ultimately resting on "custom" is one tell, but the larger one is Hume's placement of belief in the "sensitive" rather than "cogitative" aspect of our nature. That description seems to track the distinction we made between representational content attached to affect (alief) and representational affect aimed at tracking the truth (belief) almost exactly. Indeed, this point is consistent with Hume's broader attack on skepticism: as we will see, Hume (translating into Gendler's terminology) roughly thinks that even though we might believe skeptical positions to be true, we will never be able to commit to them on the level of alief. In this respect, then, Hume is a bit like Bart Streumer.

Strawson's discussion of "undoubtable propositions" also seems to fit fairly well into the uncontrollable alief framework. Strawson tells us that Wittgenstein, from whom he adapts his argument,

distinguishes … between those propositions, or actual or potential elements in our belief-systems, which we treat as subject to empirical confirmation or falsification, which we consciously incorporate in our belief-system (when we do) for this or that *reason* or on the basis of this or that *experience*, or which we actually treat as matter for inquiry or doubt—and, on the other hand, those elements of our belief-system which have a quite different character, alluded to by the figures of scaffolding, framework, background, substratum, etc. (Strawson 16)

This certainly seems like a distinction between beliefs answerable to truth and beliefs of some other kind, which we might call alief. Support for this position is bolstered by the fact that Strawson sees this argument of Wittgenstein's as continuous with Hume's argument, which we have seen seemed to quite clearly place the non-truth-answerable beliefs in a position analogous with what we have been calling alief. Hume and Strawson, then, are both attempting to defend the existence of some sort of uncontrollable alief, not open to revision, questioning, or doubt of any kind.

Hume's Naturalism

The naturalist position is most famously defended by Hume[7], who, although often remembered as a skeptic, took great pains to argue against "the skeptical philosophy." Hume's challenge to pyrrhonism is quite simple, but no less powerful for that simplicity. Essentially, he contends that no would-be pyrrhonist could possibly overcome the force that nature exerts on us to be committed to certain representational and/or behavioral content. Taking the proposition that bodies exist, for example, Hume tells us that the skeptic, although "he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity," must nevertheless "assent" to that proposition because "nature has not left this to his choice" (Hume 1978, 187). Again, this sounds very much like

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[7] It is important to note that this use of the term naturalism is quite different from that normally referred to as "naturalism" in Hume scholarship. As Don Garrett puts it, Humean naturalism usually means "the program of providing causal explanations for mental or other phenomena" (Garrett 2004) whereas here it means the program of providing an account of human nature that includes an essential commitment to at least some beliefs.

Hume is telling us that while we may believe that there is no good reason to say that bodies exist, we have an innate propensity to alieve it. Importantly, Hume is not saying that anything about skeptical arguments fails in theory, but is rather making a point about practice. His goal is not to answer the question "should we be pyrrhonists?" in the negative, but to show that the question itself is "superfluous" – that whether or not we reason our way into thinking that we *should* suspend judgment universally, we simply *cannot* do so. For Hume, "nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge" (Hume 1978, 183). We could never really be skeptics, because we have certain commitments which "nature has antecedently implanted in the mind, and render'd unavoidable" (ibid.). On this response, whether or not the skeptic's arguments are correct doesn't matter at all – whether or not the arguments succeed, humans will go on alieving that bodies exist and that causality works, etc. Indeed, this argument applies even beyond the realm of belief: on this view, a potential skeptic could have all the affective motivation in the world to change their alief that bodies exist, but would never actually be able to overcome its innate nature. For Hume, the skeptical challenge to certain epistemological commitments is simply idle.

There is certainly something correct about Strawson's labelling of this Humean position as a "naturalism." Indeed, it is no accident that Hume's famous *Treatise* is a treatise of human nature specifically. The Humean contention is that there is something about some of our commitments that is so deeply ingrained in us as humans as to be unavoidable. If living as a pyrrhonist is impossible, it is because to do so would require us to act contrary to our human nature. For Hume, we simply *are* committed to the existence of bodies – we have a natural inclination to be so committed that no argument can overcome. Certain things are simply beyond the human power to doubt.

Indeed, it seems hard to dispute that there is something deeply correct about Hume's account. We can readily agree with him that any would-be pyrrhonist trying to suspend judgment,

"tho' he can find no error in the foregoing [skeptical] arguments, yet he still continues to believe, and think, and reason as usual" (Hume 1978, 184). Of course, Hume does not take this to be universally true of every proposition we happen to believe in at the moment (which would have the opposite effect as skepticism, leaving us with a totally static set of beliefs absolutely resistant to change). A more "moderate" skepticism, he tells us, "is a necessary preparative to the study of philosophy … preserving a proper impartiality in our judgments and weaning our mind from all those prejudices which we may have imbibed from education or rash opinion" (Hume 1955, 159). Nevertheless, there are certain "clear and self-evident principles" – like the existence of the body and the trustworthiness of inductive reasoning – that we must necessarily assent to, and from which all subsequent reasonings will start (ibid.). It is these principles that are, in Gendler's language, the innate and uncontrollable aliefs that would prevent a skeptic from resolving at least some potential conflicts of epistemic commitment.

Strawson's Social Naturalism

In his *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties*, P.F. Strawson adds to the Humean picture of human nature an expanded form of naturalism drawing inspiration from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. While Strawson broadly agrees with Hume's response to skepticism, he brings in Wittgenstein to add to the rigid Humean naturalism a more flexible form of naturalism that he calls "social naturalism" (Strawson 24). In contrast to Hume's naturalism, which argues that undoubtable propositions are those imbued in us by nature, Strawsonian social naturalism[8] focuses its attention on "the language-games we learn from childhood up, i.e. in a social context" (ibid.).

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[8] Strawson himself would undoubtably prefer the description "Wittgensteinian social naturalism," but it is not my goal here to wade into the depths of Wittgenstein scholarship.

But what does it mean to add this social dimension to the naturalist response to skepticism? Much like Humean naturalism, it will provide us with a certain set of aliefs not up for debate, on the basis of which the rest of our cognitive activity will proceed. Strawson musters a number of quotes from *On Certainty* to illustrate this function: the propositions provide a "frame of reference," a "'world picture' which is the "substratum of all my enquiring and asserting," the "scaffolding of our thoughts," or "the element in which arguments have their life" (Strawson 15). Unlike the Humean naturalist account, though, these propositions are an "inherited background" which "can be learned purely practically" (Strawson 15-16). On this picture, the propositions in question come not from some essential human nature, but from "our learning, from childhood up, an activity, a practice, a social practice – of making judgements, of forming beliefs." Importantly, these propositions are not explicitly learned or taught, "but rather reflect the general character of the practice itself, form a frame within which the judgments we actually make hang together in a more or less coherent way" (Strawson 19). This marks an important difference between Hume and Strawson: while both defend the existence of innate and uncontrollable alief, Hume seems to be concerned with the sort of innateness we might call "biological" – that applies to all humans over all time – while Strawson is concerned more with what is innate to a more specifically historically and socially situated individual.

Here we might remember our discussion of the aversive racist from the previous chapter. The aversive racist holds certain racist aliefs innately (in this second, more specific sense of innate), as a result of being raised in a racist society. Strawson might say that, in a sufficiently racist society, these racist beliefs could be so deeply-ingrained as to form an essential part of the framework of the aversive racist's thinking. No matter how hard they try to convince themselves otherwise, the aversive racist raised in this society would not be able to shake their racist aliefs because they form an essential part of who they are as a person and how they think. Perhaps something about how they have conceptualized the concept of "people" was, from birth, inextricably linked with the concept of

race. Wittgenstein tells us that in order to doubt something, we need to be able to conceive of what it would mean to be mistaken about it (OC 15, 32). Undoubtable propositions are those for which it is unclear what it would mean to be mistaken about them. If our aversive racist cannot conceptualize the concept "person" without racial identity, then what would it mean to them to say "I thought I saw a person who had a race, but I was wrong?" Wittgenstein seems to be saying that such a statement can have no meaning at all for them, that it would be nonsense, or at least, "a misfiring attempt to express what can't be expressed like that" (OC 37). Indeed, we might imagine that the aversive racist's conception of themselves as a subject – a person of some sort – and specifically as the subjects speaking the sentence "I thought I saw a person who had a race, but I was wrong" is a conception formed in part by practices that take for granted that selves are a kind of person and that people are always raced. The aversive racist's commitment to the universality of race, then, is undoubtable because it is assumed as a condition of the way they speak and think as a whole – it is a "grammatical" commitment undergirding all of their "language."

The important difference that opens up between the Humean naturalist and social naturalist accounts as a result of the different sorts of innateness that they are concerned with is that, on the social naturalist view, many of the undoubtable propositions may end up being doubtable and doubted for others down the line. The indubitability of these propositions is a result of our social inculcation in certain "language games" that take them as necessary conditions, and so a change in the language game could change what propositions are doubtable. While the aversive racist as we discussed them in the last paragraph was raised in a society where the concept of race was so deeply-ingrained that it became undoubtable to them, for example, we might imagine that their great-grandchild might conceivably be raised in a society different enough that the same is not the case for them. The assumptions that make up the background of our experience and reasoning thus evolve over time, and are imbued not by immutable human nature, but by social context and practice.

Strawson is quick to point out, though, that he does not take *every* proposition involved in the undoubtable scaffolding of our thought to be open to this kind of change, as Wittgenstein himself seems to. He proposes the introduction of "a principle of distinction, within this class" of undoubtable propositions (although he notes that such a principle is probably "contrary to [Wittgenstein's] inclinations") (Strawson 17). Here the Wittgensteinian and Humean pictures, as well as the two forms of innateness we have been discussing, come together for Strawson. This combined naturalism adds on the one hand a social contextualism to the Humean human nature picture, and on the other, a (fairly minimal) immutable human nature to the Wittgensteinian framework picture. As he puts it: "the human world-picture is of course subject to change. But it remains a *human world-picture*" (Strawson 27, emphasis original). As a brief outline of what the essentially human parts of this human world-picture are, Strawson suggests "a picture of a world of physical objects (bodies) in space and time including human observers capable of action and of acquiring and imparting knowledge (and error) both of themselves and each other and of whatever else is to be found in nature" (Strawson 27). Pulling from a quote of Wittgenstein's, he tells us that these aspects, like the hard rock at the bank of a river, are "subject to no alteration, or only to an imperceptible one" (Strawson 17, 27). The unalterable nature of at least some of the commitments in our cognitive framework is important to Strawson, for if there were no such commitments then "metaphysical truth would thus be relativized to historical periods," with commitments like "my body exists" having no more force than "all people are raced" (Strawson 26).

Part 2: A Response to Naturalism

Broadly, we have seen both Hume and Strawson argue for some form of "indubitability," understood as the uncontrollable, undoubtable nature of at least some aliefs. This section will examine two forms of indubitability proposed by the naturalists, and argue that both are necessary

on an individual level, but not a historical level. This will leave open the possibility for skepticism to be realized on that historical level, although not on the individual one (at least, not for any individuals presently alive).

For Strawson, it is idle to try to be a skeptic because there are some "propositions" which it is impossible to doubt. However, we need to distinguish between two ways in which it is impossible to doubt a proposition on the Strawsonian picture. First, there is the Wittgenstein-derived manner in which it is impossible to doubt any proposition that is part of the fundamental structure, or "grammar," of our thought. Importantly, this sort of indubitability does not apply across times or across people. That which forms an essential part of my grammar does not necessarily play the same role for you, or for someone who lived 300 years ago, or who will live 300 years from now. While I cannot doubt that proposition, that says nothing at all about the proposition itself, but only speaks to its role within *my* thought. Secondly, though, Strawson adds an impossibility of doubt that does apply universally. These are the propositions the belief in which is constitutive of humanity – the "solid rock" along the riverbanks. For Strawson, no matter what historical or cultural factors might change what seems to be fundamental and undoubtable in the first sense, nothing could change that which is undoubtable in the second sense.

This distinction is important for Strawson's account, and he is right to worry that if such a distinction is not available, the consequences for his broader philosophical project could be disastrous. As Strawson points out, this stronger indubitability protects us from having to relativize our commitments to certain propositions. For undoubtable propositions of the first kind, we have to say about them "they are undoubtable… for X person" or, more broadly, "they are undoubtable… given X set of cultural and historical factors." If those factors change, though, the propositions in question would no longer be undoubtable. The problem (for Strawson) of using only

this conception of indubitability goes beyond his stated worries about historical relativization. In fact, the issue with this first account of indubitability strikes directly at Strawson's response to skepticism. If all of our most fundamental commitments were undoubtable in only this first way, then there is a sense in which the skeptical state of fully suspended judgment becomes possible, and the question of its pursuit thus becomes not idle at all.

Let's spell out why this is the case. First, let's be clear on how this Wittgensteinian position still provides a certain rejoinder to skepticism. It is impossible, on this view, for any individual to doubt the propositions making up the framework or grammar of their thought/language. There is thus no way, on this conception, for an individual already implicated in the various language games constituting a form of life to doubt the propositions that those language games commit them to. However, the language games humans are raised with change over time. This is the Strawsonian worry about historical relativization – the indubitability of propositions that are undoubtable in this way must always be qualified with a reference to their historically-situated context. But if this is the case, and if every single one of our seemingly essential commitments were indubitable in only this way, then all of them would become open to doubt if the right set of historical factors intervened. Thus, although it might seem far-fetched or unlikely, it would nevertheless be *possible* for some set of historical developments to push humans towards a state in which any proposition would be open to doubt – in short, it would open up the possibility of a skeptical form of life. Even this more limited possibility of skepticism – skepticism as possible not on an individual level, but on a historical level – would suffice to show that all aliefs are in some sense doubtable. For we can all, even if only in a very limited capacity, do our best to affect history, and to push history towards the set of circumstances that would create the conditions necessary for a pyrrhonian form of life to emerge.

The second sort of indubitability, then, is an important bulwark for Strawson against the possibility of skepticism. If the indubitability of some commitments is not dependent on historical circumstance, then no historical development could make them doubtable. The possibility of a skeptical form of life would thus remain closed, with that set of *really* undoubtable aliefs serving as an impassable barrier that the would-be skeptic could never cross. If we wish to defend the possibility of skepticism, even the more limited sort of possibility suggested above, we will have to offer an argument against this second indubitability.

The first step in arguing against the second indubitability is understanding what exactly it is that distinguishes aliefs indubitable in this way from those indubitable in the first way. Strawson tells us that he is talking about the "aspects of our world picture, our frame of reference" to which "our human or natural commitment is so profound that they stand fast, and may be counted on to stand fast, through all revolutions of scientific thought or social development" (Strawson 27). The key phrase for understanding the nature of the second sort of indubitability is "human or natural commitment." First, there is a slight question of whether this "or" should be read as expressing an equivalence between "human commitment" and "natural commitment" or as suggesting that these two commitments differ but that either sort of commitment would fulfill the purposes of the indubitability he is setting up. I think the first reading, that of equivalence, makes the most sense here. First, Strawson does not suggest anywhere else that there are two ways in which these propositions can be undoubtable. Indeed, he tells us that he is giving "a [singular] principle of distinction, within this class" of indubitable propositions (Strawson 17). Secondly, it seems clear that Strawson means to say that this natural principle is one that is natural for humans specifically – that the propositions that are indubitable in this special way are distinctive in that they contribute to a specifically "*human world-picture*" (Strawson 27, emphasis original).

So, aliefs undoubtable in the second way are, for Strawson, undoubtable because they are natural to humans, essential to humanity. But what exactly does this mean? There are two possible explanations. First, Strawson may be saying that the mode of thought particular to the biological species known as humanity is characterized in some essential way by its commitments to these aliefs. Second, Strawson may be positing some principle of humanity above and beyond the biological – some sort of human soul, or a human nature beyond the simply biological description of *Homo sapiens*. The first interpretation seems immensely more plausible. Strawson says nothing to suggest that he believes humanity to have some special, extra-scientific status, or to suggest that the epistemic commitments constitutive of human nature stand in any sort of relationship to some immaterial human soul. If this is the case, then the second sort of indubitability described by Strawson is the same as Hume's indubitability. Both are grounded in a description of human nature that is itself grounded in a more or less scientific account of "nature." What is natural to humans is so insofar as it comes from nature. What is essential to humans is essential to them as a biological species. This similarity means that a rejection of the second case of indubitability in Strawson will also constitute a rejection of Hume's naturalistic response to skepticism.

So, with the explication of Strawson's second, stronger account of indubitability out of the way, it is time to provide the argument against that account. If the stronger Humean/Strawsonian naturalistic response to skepticism rests on a claim about what is natural for humans as a species, one major problem presents itself immediately. Humanity as a biological category is not transhistorical. The species *Homo sapiens* emerged historically, as a result of historical forces like evolution. It may be correct to characterize certain belief commitments as essential to the human mind, as Hume and Strawson do, but this leaves an essential question unanswered: why should humans be committed to maintaining their humanity? Human nature may be an immutably correct description of the human form of life, but humanity as a species-category existing in history is *not*

immutable. Just as proto-human species evolved into humans, picking up certain belief commitments along the way, humanity might evolve or change in a way that essentially changes its belief commitments.

Hume and Strawson simply do not consider the possibility of a post-human change in our belief commitments. This is quite understandable on Hume's part, living as he did before Darwin, but it is somewhat more surprising on Strawson's part. Strawson seems to simply assume that humanity in its current form is a sort of evolutionary stopping-point. If he did not make this assumption, then his naturalistic argument against skepticism would not be effective. In order to tell us that the question of skepticism is an idle one, the naturalistic argument needs to tell us that it is *impossible* that at least some commitments could *ever* be called into doubt. The fact that the manner in which we might doubt those beliefs would lead us to a form of life so radically different from our own that it might no longer be considered human is quite interesting, but it does not show that these doubts are actually impossible.

If we do not take humanity as we currently know it to be the unchangeable endpoint of the particular evolutionary chain that led to it, then, the naturalistic argument loses its force. If the "natural" aliefs described by Hume and Strawson are merely an accurate description of a particular species' mode of thought, we might think of many things we could do to change that species and how it thinks. This isn't to say that such a change would be easy or quick, of course. There are a number of ways to change biologically ingrained practices, and which methods would be most applicable for the purposes of the would-be pyrrhonist is a question that is worth exploring further. It is to say, though, that there is nothing in principle that would stop the species currently known as humanity from evolving in such a way as to make doubtable the commitments that it currently finds undoubtable. Thus, even with Hume and Strawson's stronger claims of indubitability, the weaker

possibility of skepticism (its possibility on the historical, rather than the individual, level) is maintained.

We have outlined two senses of indubitability by which the naturalist purports to respond to skepticism. First, on the more Wittgensteinian account, every individual is essentially committed by the language games through which they were formed to some grammatical framework which they can never call into doubt. However, the fact that languages and grammars can change over time left this sort of indubitability open to the possibility that some set of language games might eventually produce a form of life in which universal doubt were possible. On the second, stronger account, some commitments are natural in the sense that they are essential to human nature. But this account leaves open the possibility of a post-human evolution past these commitments. Neither account of indubitability, then, can deny the possibility of a skeptical form of life in principle.

There are two important upshots to this chapter: first, that it is possible, in principle, for conditions allowing for a pyrrhonian form of life in which all aliefs are changeable and controllable to arise. Second, that the would-be skeptics who might push to actualize those conditions would not be able to reap the fruits of their labor. As a consequence of both the first and second forms of indubitability, it is clear that no one alive now, and perhaps no one alive for a number of generations hence, even if totally committed to skepticism, will really be able to achieve a fully suspended state. The language games committing us to certain aliefs are too deeply ingrained, our humanity not so easy to shake off. Nevertheless, the goal is in principle possible, and we can strive to actualize it as much as we can for ourselves, and to do our utmost to create the conditions for its full realization in future generations.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In one of the early sections of the *Outlines*, Sextus Empiricus addresses the question of whether skeptics belong to a school. He tells us, unsurprisingly, that if belonging to a school is a matter of assenting to this or that set of beliefs then the skeptics certainly do not belong to any school. But interestingly, he goes on to say that the skeptics *do* belong to a school "if you count as a school a persuasion which, to all appearances, coheres with some account, the account showing how it is possible to live correctly" (Sextus I.17). Sextus follows this up by saying that the skeptics "coherently follow, to all appearances, an account which shows us a life in conformity with traditional customs and the law and persuasions and our own feelings" (ibid.). This is, as we've discussed, fairly different from our conception of the skeptical life, especially in regards to Sextus' deference to custom and law, but there is still an important point to be gleaned from his discussion here. What Sextus shows us here is that the guiding force behind skepticism, the thing that motivates it, is the idea that it will help us live correctly – that we are living, in some sense, in error, and that suspending judgment on our beliefs will correct that error.

The custom-breaking skeptical life that has emerged from the discussion in this thesis is a quite different sort of "correct life" than the one Sextus advocates for, but their motivation and their method remain fundamentally similar. Sextus found lack of knowledge about the world and conflict between opposing views on what that knowledge was a terrible problem for anyone attempting to live their life, and advocated suspension of judgment on all beliefs as a solution to that problem. In this thesis, I have argued that conflicts between belief and alief on big issue, worldview-affecting topics like racism are a terrible problem for us as we attempt to live our lives, and I have advocated suspension of judgment on all beliefs as a solution to that problem. Unlike Sextus, it is unclear to me what exactly a post-suspension of judgment skeptical life would look like, and indeed, a key part of

my account of the skeptical life is that it would not look like any one thing. The skeptic as I have described them is able to change their epistemic commitments much more easily than the dogmatist, and could swap between different worldviews that would seem impossibly far apart to us today.

The discussion of this thesis has ranged far beyond the scope of the historical skeptics. We have discussed, among other things, the interpretation of Sextus Empiricus, Tamar Gendler's work on alief, and anti-skeptical positions from Hume to Wittgenstein. Despite the breadth of the argumentation, though, it has all been rooted in the same impulse towards correct living that the ancient skeptics had. Pyrrho too seemed to share this impulse: Diogenes Laertius tells us that, when questioned about his strange behavior, Pyrrho replied that he was "practicing to be a man of worth" (Diogenes 19). Ultimately then, this thesis has been an attempt to defend pyrrhonian skepticism as a position and a form of life to be taken seriously.

In order to accomplish this goal, we pursued three smaller goals, one in each chapter, which when added up, constitute such a defense. First, we defined what it would mean to be a pyrrhonist, and more specifically what it would mean to live a pyrrhonist life. Drawing inspiration from both the interpretation of ancient sources on skepticism and Gendler's work on aliefs, we concluded that a pyrrhonist life would be one lived with only aliefs and no beliefs (those terms understood in the sense Gendler uses them), and that such a life would most likely be one lived contrary to the customary way we live our lives today. Second, we gave an argument for the preferability of the skeptical way of life over a dogmatic, more belief-driven way of life. This argument turned on the idea that the skeptical mindset is uniquely open to revision of epistemic commitments, and is thus best-equipped to deal with troubling cases of norm-discordant alief. Thirdly and finally, we defended the practical possibility of the skeptical life as we described it from the objection that at least some aliefs are not as revisable as the second chapter's argument would seem to demand. Against this

objection, we argued that all aliefs are in fact open to revision on at least a historical, if not an individual, scale.

Of course, even if every goal set out in this thesis was fully achieved, it would not represent a fully complete project. The most glaringly obvious absence is a discussion of what it would practically take to bring the skeptical project to fruition. The third chapter gave a rough idea of what this might look like with references to "large-scale societal change" and a "historical timeframe," but these vague concepts demand elaboration. A fuller discussion of the skeptical project would include a more detailed consideration of what it would actually take to change society in such a way that we might suspend judgment universally. Our discussion of Gendler and Strawson suggested that education might play a large role in such a system. Gendler specifically brought in Aristotle to note the importance of education to our epistemic commitments, and it seems likely that a broader consideration of Aristotelian virtue ethics and its project of training one's character to be virtuous would be useful for our purposes. Of course, education would not be the only thing needing to change, as the society surrounding whatever educational system was set up would need not to conflict radically with that education. This would seem, even minimally, to demand at least some consideration of social and political changes to our world if we are serious about getting the skeptical project off the ground. These are, of course, just broad suggestions for directions that future research in this area might take, but they should serve to show the places in which the analysis presented in this thesis could and should be expanded upon.

Despite the incompleteness of the project, if I have succeeded in accomplishing the three goals I set out for myself, then the case for pyrrhonism to be taken seriously would be well on its way to being made. Of course, it is unlikely that I have fully succeeded to the extent that, for example, everyone (or perhaps anyone) who reads this thesis will be fully convinced that they ought

to be a skeptic. Hopefully though, the arguments and positions set forth in these pages serve at the very least to make the idea of really advocating for pyrrhonian skepticism seem less ridiculous than it is often taken to be presently. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there have not been many people who called themselves skeptics since the heyday of the ancient skeptics, and today skepticism is usually treated more as a stage to be overcome than a tenable position in its own right. Hopefully this thesis has made that treatment of skepticism seem a bit unfair. And really, this would not be so surprising – who would deny that philosophers like Sextus Empiricus, Aenesidemus, or even Pyrrho were intelligent people, with positions worthy of being taken seriously? These ancient skeptics saw skepticism as a way of correct living, a practical method of solving philosophical problems. I hope that, in writing this thesis, I have at least sketched a convincing outline of another, similar set of reasons why the skeptical form of life ought to be taken seriously as a solution to certain philosophical problems.

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