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***Epoché* as the Erotic Conversion of One into Two**

This philosophical essay interprets the *epoché* of ancient scepticism as the perpetual conversion of the love of one into the love of two. The process of one becoming two is represented in Plato's *Symposium* by Diotima's description of the second rung of 'the ladder,' by which one ascends to the highest form of philosophical devotion (Pl. *Sym.* 209e-210e). Diotima's ladder offers a vision of philosophy as a total conversion of both the lover and the object of love (or philosopher and object of knowledge). I suggest that scepticism, however, is found in the frustration of Platonic ascension, which results in a partial conversion. Because the process of conversion (from the love of one to the love of One) remains suspended midway, the sceptic's transformation is erotic—this is to say, driven by a desire that is characterised by a split (which may be identified between subject and object, between incompatible objects of desire or knowledge, or within the subject herself).

In contrast to the understanding of conversion as the transition from one (spiritual/intellectual/political/sexual) orientation to another, I consider how conversion operates as an *epoché* by splitting the timeline of an individual or community into two irresolvable, conflicting orientations. In an effort to achieve peace and unity, we may try to completely abandon the old for the new. However, remnants of our 'former' life tend to resurface disrupting our vision of a life that is unified by our professed beliefs. I suggest that the sceptic is one who embraces the failure of conversion to achieve unity. What would the life and philosophy of one who openly embraces such contradiction look like? I consider how both the content and form of Diogenes Laertius' specific depiction of Pyrrho offers us a picture of both a life and a text of a sceptic as an enactment of *epoché* as the erotic space of the in-between.

To further explore the paradox as *epoché* as a kind of transformation that occurs through suspension, I identify two kinds of Platonic conversion narratives: one dogmatic and one sceptical. The first model, represented by Augustine's *Confessions*, is the familiar portrayal of conversion as a transformative event in which one abandons a former way of being-in-the-world for a worthier pursuit. The exchange of objects of love/knowledge at first seems to result in a new ontological stance: the apparent death of the old gives birth to the new. However, Augustine's own struggles to adhere to his 'new being' call this dogmatic model of conversion into question. The second model of conversion, as depicted in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, is a tale of partial conversion, which leaves one suspended between two incompatible ways of being in the world. Both experiences introduce a crisis that conversion fails to overcome. And yet the sceptic's acceptance of her repeated failure to ascend results in the transformation of the crisis itself into something that is experienced with pleasure.

Overturing Diotima's Ladder

Conversion begins with a moment of crisis when my unquestioned devotion to one (philosophical/theological/political/ethical framework) is threatened by my unanticipated attraction to a second. My fundamental understanding of my relationship to the world is disrupted by a competitor in the form of an equally appealing framework that throws my relationship with my current beliefs into conflict. Crisis is overcome when my split attraction for two is mastered by a return to my devotion to one. Two becomes one either when I reject the temptation of the second or when I abandon my first (intellectual, spiritual, carnal) love, giving myself over to a second *beauty so old and so new*.

In the first movement of conversion one becomes two in the crisis of being-in-between. The moment of crisis splices an autobiographical narrative, introducing an alternative timeline. The splice between the first and second timeline becomes the crack that both holds together and separates two incompatible ways of grasping the world. I could once identify myself positively in my belief, but in the ec-static moment of the crisis I am nothing more than the crack between two. I become the negative space of indeterminacy.

In the last instance, the exhaustion of indecision or the exhaustion of resisting the seduction of the new drives me to make a decision. Two returns to one in the resolution of choosing one over the other. I destroy one side of conflict in the name of truth. The final decision, an arbitrary act for which I later provide myself many reasonable accounts, dissolves the tension of contradiction. I am of one mind again, standing firmly in my conviction.

Each rung of Diotima's ladder—leading from one love to another, from the love of many bodies to the love of many activities and customs, from the articulation of many ideas to One ineffable form—itself represents a kind of conversion. With each shift both the lover/philosopher and beloved/object of knowledge undergo transformation. Platonic ascent transforms one's childish and stubborn devotion to *this* particular one into the philosophical love of the One.

While other seekers of beauty or truth scramble to the top of the ladder, sceptics are content to dwell in the middle with a far-reaching view of many bodies, activities, customs and ideas. A peculiar trait of Pyrrho's sceptics, however, is their place at the second rung of Diotima's ladder. At the second rung, the sceptic is still in touch with the myth of an original one and thus the fantasy of an ultimate One. Other varieties of sceptics—such as the academics and their contemporary postmodern counterparts—no longer themselves experience the devastating dissolution of one or the tension between two, each of which claim to be *the* one. At the second rung, however, where one is still a possibility that is constantly overturned, the sceptic is touched by the perpetual conversion of conviction into crisis.

From the humble vantage point of the second rung, the sceptic has the impression that those who claim to gaze upon the One have perhaps never progressed past their love for their first one. It is possible that the dogmatist appears to confuse the

first rung for the top rung, declaring this particular one to be his One (and only). Perhaps he has never properly allowed himself to be seduced by another. Observing the comic effort of the dogmatist, who repeatedly seems to confuse his first one for the One, the sceptic contemplates how One is *no more* top than bottom, *no more* up than down. She considers the possibility of throwing away the ladder altogether (Sext. Emp. *M.* 8.481).

Epoché—the sceptic’s mode of suspension at the second rung—may be grasped as the perpetual conversion of one into two. With the introduction of ‘the second’—be it in the form of a tempting new companion or a tempting counter-proposal—desire itself is split into two. Desire is divided by the multiplication of its object. When desire is split into two its drive becomes erotic. The experience of the erotic space of the in-between disrupts the relatively good thing I had going on with ‘my first.’ The crisis of one becoming two is far from what most would identify as the good life. The second introduces complications.

There are various philosophical modes of resistance that shut down the second before it can cause any serious disturbance to my commitments to my first. The stoic, for example, may say ‘no’ to the second, dismissing it as a potential waste of his time. The epicurean might say ‘no’ based on his speculation that the complications of the second are likely to bring more headache than pleasure. The cynic says ‘no’ dismissing the strangeness of the new as pretentious or absurd. Ironically, the sceptic, who is marked by her refusal to assent to anything absolutely, is the most likely to say ‘yes’ to this other (at least for the sake of experimentation). Her refusal to commit to anything in particular allows her to be open to the equal consideration of everything that happens to come her way.

In her pedagogical role of the lover, the sceptic may be identified as the one who initiates crises in the lives of her interlocutors through her questions, refutations, and counter-proposals. Her dialectics introduces a seductive alternative both to her companion’s deepest commitments and to his seemingly simple observations. One becomes two either when the sceptic presents an equally compelling but competing account to what seems certain to her interlocutor or by guiding her interlocutor to the contradiction within his own accounts, showing that one was already two (continuity is constituted by paradox). In the active position of the lover, the sceptic may be seen either as the one who causes crisis or as the one who brings visibility to a crisis that certainty concealed.

In her involuntary role of the beloved, however, the sceptic undergoes her own conversion. She experiences herself as the site of crisis. But conversion for the sceptic is very different from the conversion of the dogmatist who abandons one path to happiness, virtue, or truth for an alternate timeline, which promises the same if the traveler abandons his original path. A dogmatic account of conversion is a relationship of simple negation in which one must renounce the gods of one’s childhood to serve a new god (in whatever form these gods may take). The sceptic however neither renounces nor declares devotion to any god in particular. She instead becomes the *dai-
monic* space in-between what some call sacred or profane (Pl. *Sym.* 202b-203a).

While traditional conversion involves the rejection of the old in the affirmation of the new, conversion as *epoché* is *no more* a ‘yes’ than a ‘no.’ Conversion is traditionally understood as the story of a moment of decision. Crisis is overcome when one is chosen over another and two returns to one. In taking up a new position, transformation occurs as one way of being-in-the-world is forsaken for a new ontological orientation. While traditional conversion narratives are about a transformation that occurs through a decisive turning point by which crisis is overcome, the sceptic’s transformation occurs through the sustained tension between two. Crisis itself is not overcome but transformed in the refusal to allow two to resolve back into one. *Epoché* is a mode of yea-saying: a saying yes to the new, for the sake of experimentation. However, *epoché* is also a mode of resistance: the resistance of giving oneself over to any one absolutely.

Diotima offers a picture of philosophy as the transformative movement of ascension: by fully assenting to a new object of desire, which appears more worthy than my former pursuits, I myself am transformed into a higher being. Scepticism, in contrast, pictures philosophy as the transformative practice of ‘stuckness.’ Transformation occurs through the suspension of movement in the paralysis of choice.

Being In-Between Two Ways of Being

Ancient scepticism is often described as a way of being in the world rather than a philosophical doctrine or theory. But perhaps we could further suggest that scepticism is not a way of being but instead the experience of being-stuck-in-between (at least) two ways of being in the world. To live a life in-between ways of being might be to live a life committing to nothing in particular but partaking in a bit of everything as it comes. This entails not only observing the appearance of contradiction in others’ experiences and accounts of the world, but also living a life that actively enacts such contradiction. Perhaps it is appropriate that *nothing more* remains of Pyrrho himself other than inconsistent second hand accounts. While Sextus’ effort to present a comprehensive philosophical account of Pyrrhonian scepticism is often treated as definitive, it is worth considering how ‘less coherent’ or ‘philosophical’ presentations of scepticism perhaps better lend themselves to depicting the life and philosophy of a sceptic as an enactment of contradiction. For example, Diogenes Laertius’ genre of historical fragments offers a depiction of scepticism through a playful collection of hearsay. Diogenes suggests that although everyone had something to say about Pyrrho, none of these things were consistent. To name a few of these inconsistencies:

According to Ascanius of Abdera, Pyrrho led a life consistent with his philosophical doctrine, while Aenesidemus insists that Pyrrho applied his sceptical method only to his philosophy without extending his theory to his own life (Diog. Laert. 62).

Antigonus of Carystus tells us that Pyrrho went out of his way for nothing, taking no precautions, but walked directly into any danger that came his way. His friends

had to constantly rescue him from trouble (62). Still others say that the sceptic does not fail to take precautions when it comes to his everyday life. A sceptic avoids trouble (106). This is evident from the fact that Pyrrho lived nearly to the age of ninety (62).

As Antigonus also tell us, Pyrrho withdrew from the world, committing himself to a life of solitude, showing himself only on rare occasion to a family member. He delivered his speeches in front empty audiences and was often caught talking to himself. But the same account presents a very different picture. The gregarious philosopher spent his time in the city and would find a walking companion in whomever he met by chance. He would engage his interlocutors in tireless debate and lecture at great length, attracting prestigious admirers such as the young Nausiphanes and Epicurus. He was a hero of the people who declared him not only a citizen of Athens and but also a high priest. (63)

Anaxarchus praises Pyrrho for his indifference toward society and the everyday life of others, even if this made him a rather odd fellow. He walked around talking to himself oblivious of everything. He neglected even his friends when they were in obvious need of help (for example, when Anaxarchus himself fell into a ditch) (63). And yet we often are told that the sceptic behaves according to what is customary (105).

Posidonius claims that Pyrrho was a man of great composure. He tells the tale of traveling with Pyrrho on a ship during a great storm. While the other travelers worried for their safety, Pyrrho modeled himself after the pig, who unperturbed by the storm, continued to calmly eat his slop. The wise person should mimic the unperturbed state of the little pig (69). And yet it is said that Pyrrho admitted that no person is above human weakness. Other accounts suggest that Pyrrho was easily rattled, as seen in his terrified response to a dog that chased after him (66). Likewise, his closest students miserably failed to keep their composure. His student Eurylochus, for example, when asked a tricky question in response to his lecture, allegedly panicked, stripped naked, and jumped into a river to swim away (68).

All of the small discrepancies in the fragmented accounts of Pyrrho's life add up to the underlying paradox of scepticism. Since Pyrrho did not put forth a doctrine one cannot be called a Pyrrhonian sceptic according to one's philosophical positions. As Theodosius puts it, 'If the movement of the mind in either direction is unattainable by us, we shall never know for certain what Pyrrho really intended, and without knowing that, we cannot be called Pyrrhonian.' Thus, since Pyrrho did not hold any positive tenets, a 'Pyrrhonian' can only be said to be the one whose manners and life resembled Pyrrho (70). And yet Diogenes' account, which is packed full of opposing anecdotes of Pyrrho's manners and life, indicates that modeling oneself after Pyrrho would be quite the impossible task, since his 'way of life' is as unattainable as his mindset.

On one level, Diogenes' text depicts Pyrrho's life as the enactment of contradiction. On another level, the text itself seems to self-consciously perform contradiction in every statement. Diogenes offers some explanation about this method. Many say that a sceptic refrains altogether from saying anything positive about the world; and

yet others point to the impossibility of staying silence, suggesting that the sceptic's philosophical speech must enact the failure of philosophical speech to grasp the world. As Diogenes explains in a passage that captures the playfulness at the core of scepticism:

The sceptics, then, were constantly engaged in overthrowing the dogma of all schools, but enunciated none themselves; and though they would go so far as to bring forward and expound the dogmas of the others, they themselves laid down nothing, not even the laying down of nothing. So much so they even refuted their laying down of nothing. (74)

In saying, 'we determine nothing,' the sceptic openly confesses to self-contradiction, since in professing to refrain from determining anything, one makes a positive statement about determining nothing. Scepticism testifies to the impossibility of remaining neutral, since even claims to neutrality fall into contradiction. The agnostic who claims allegiance to nothing, commits herself to nothing, and therefore exposes her positive allegiance to the nothing itself.

Even this statement (implying the negative of all determinations) contains its own antithesis, so that after destroying others it turns round and destroys itself, like a purge which drives the substance out and then in its turn is itself eliminated and destroyed. (76)

Sometimes the sceptic speaks to the impossibility of self-consistency by remaining silent. Other times she speaks in such a way that her words openly turn on themselves, demonstrating the way each concept already seems to contain its contrary. One is always already two. *Epoché* as the suspension of judgment does not pretend to remain impartial or neutral, offering a pure description of the phenomenal world. It instead is an act of constant self-defeat, a repeated grasp upon the world that slips through one's fingers. To borrow Sextus' famous imagery, the fire after consuming the wood turns around to consume itself. Silence can disguise itself as neutrality, but a sceptic's philosophy is a text that openly exposes its own inconsistencies—throwing itself and the reader into crisis. As Aenesidemus describes it in his introduction to *Pyrrhonics*, the sceptic's account 'is but a report on phenomena or on any kind of judgment, a report in which all things are brought to bear on one another and in the comparison are found to present much anomaly and confusion' (Diog. Laert. 78).

There seems to be a metaphysical stirring within the sceptic's professed attempt to avoid metaphysics. We find this metaphysical tickle within the suggestion that the content of all things—whether in the form of our experience or theory, the world or the self—is *no more* one thing than the other—*no more* than contradiction itself. The sceptic witnesses the way the crack (of subjectivity? of existence?) continually rises to the surface of every appearance, while the dogmatist frantically tries to mend the crack, restoring the illusion of oneness. Many experience anguish at the experience of the reappearance of the crack (within themselves or within their accounts of the

world). What allows the sceptic to experience the repeated crisis of one becoming two with a spirit of tranquility?

Conversion as Tragedy and Comedy

I turn to two conversion narratives of (late) antiquity, both products of the development of Platonism in Roman Africa: Apuleius' second-century *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass* and Augustine's fourth-century *Confessions*. Although the former presents itself as a fictional account of conversion, many readers have noted suspicious similarities between the author and his protagonist; and although the latter presents itself as autobiographical, many readers have noted the suspicious similarities between the author's account of his real life with the epic tales of fictitious characters (such as Aeneas). The sceptical reader might concede that neither conversion tale can be declared more fictional or autobiographical than the other. Both narratives begin with a protagonist who recklessly partakes in the messy delights of a little bit of everything the world has to offer. At the climax of each narrative the protagonist discovers 'the light' and dramatically turns from his love of the many to his love of the One. In other words, both tales are explicitly about the conversion of the sceptic into the dogmatist. And yet, the overall structure of Apuleius' narrative may nevertheless be read sceptically.

Both narrators of the two conversion stories recall the 'misplaced' desire of their younger selves who partake in many varieties of carnal and spiritual pleasures. Both figures move from venture to venture until their journeys lead them to a point of crisis. Their crisis is resolved when they undergo a conversion, committing themselves to a life-long religious vocation (Augustine turns to Christianity and Apuleius' narrator, Lucius, to the cult of the goddess Isis). Yet, despite these similarities, the attitude of the narrator of Apuleius' conversion story and that of Augustine's narrative are dramatically different. Augustine's conversion narrative takes the form of a confession, whereas Apuleius' narrative takes the form of a comedy. Augustine weeps over lingering remnants of his past life that do not fully die in his conversion. Lucius laughs over his own experience of self-contradiction. What is experienced as a crisis for the dogmatist is the pleasure of the sceptic.

The dramatic structure of comedy shares a close connection with the sceptic's transformation (which occurs without movement), while the dogmatist's conversion follows the structure of ancient tragedy. Both tragedy and comedy are composed of two sides, which are equally right according to their own logic but equally wrong according to the logic of the other. Tragic resolution aims to overcome its conflict between two incompatible positions through a return oneness. The side that is identified as introducing conflict must be destroyed in order for two to return to one. The myth of an original unity is momentarily restored until the same conflict resurfaces in the next generation. In the case of a dogmatic conversion story, an old way of life must die in order for a new life to be born. And yet, despite the appearance of the

victory of the new, remnants of the old inevitably resurface, reintroducing the struggle between two ways of being, which conversion had promised to overcome.

Structurally, tragedy and comedy may be said to be the same. However, while tragedy can only grasp itself from the perspective of one of the sides of its conflict, the comic perspective grasps itself from the (non)perspective of the crack itself. In the perpetual repetition of the same formal stage, an imperceptible shift in contents takes place. The anguish of tragedy is transformed into the laughter of comedy: the hiss between two positions that logically cannot coexist and yet nevertheless persist in contradiction. Likewise a conversion narrative—a story of two incompatible ways of being—is most often told from the perspective of one side of the transformative turning point (nearly always from the new self). The sceptic's story of conversion, however, is comic in the way it tells its narrative from the perspective of the splice between two ontological orientations that persist within the experience of a single subject.

The values that Augustine holds as a Christian bishop dominate the narration of the events that took place before his conversion. His post-conversion self hovers over his pre-conversion self as he laments what he wished he had known earlier. In this way, the narrator recalls his journey while self-consciously distancing himself from his former actions that are out of line with his current commitments. Augustine's post-conversion self attempts to suppress the sceptical appetite of his younger self, but is not always successful. This failure is most thematic in Augustine's early *Soliloquies*, an inner dialogue between Augustine's 'rational' and 'irrational' sides, which discuss the tension between his pre-conversion and post-conversion selves: the tragedy of the desire for unity told from the perspective of a fractured subject. Augustine repeatedly professes fidelity to his new object of devotion in an effort to convince himself, rather than his God, of his singular devotion to one: 'Now I love *only* you, I follow *only* you, I seek *only* you!' (Aug. *sol.* 1.5). While Augustine insists that he has entirely abandoned his former way of being, his lingering desire for his first loves (his longing for a wife, for example) puncture his current convictions. In the middle of trying to convince himself of his singular devotion to One, he drifts to sleep. His dreams about the companionship of a woman betray him (1.11.18). Augustine is split once again between his wakeful declarations and his unconscious fantasies. Augustine's rational voice is quick to catch him in his inconsistencies. He pushes himself on the issue of his split desire until the dogmatic side of himself—the side that desires fidelity, unity, truth—cracks: 'Silence, I beg you, silence! Why do you cause me so much trouble; why do you challenge me? Now I weep uncontrollably!' (1.14.25-26).

The final conclusion of the *Soliloquies* has a sceptical ring: reason exposes the quest for a unified way of being in the world—a unity that comes through a devotion to one true object of love/knowledge—as an irrational desire. The only thing reason has to offer is to point to the contradictions within itself. The text enacts a number of failures and contractions: the failure of reason to provide an adequate account of the self and the world, the failure to the dogmatist to honour that which he declares true,

the failure of self to correspond to itself (both over a lifetime and within the same moment). On a performative level, the text fails in that Augustine abandoned the work, which was never finished, testifying to the genuine frustration of the author's inability to transcend contradiction. Augustine's former interest in scepticism clearly peeks through this early work, and yet the dialogue—between his two selves—lacks the ease of a sceptic who takes strange delight in his own failure.

The tragic-comedy of the dogmatist's ascension to truth is that the resolution of his conversion comes full circle leading him back to the partial conversion of being stuck in-between.

In contrast to Augustine, who painfully revisits the events of his youth through the lens of his current failed commitments, Apuleius' narrator, Lucius, delights in re-telling old events as if he is experiencing the thrill of each old flame for the first time. Lucius seems to take genuine pleasure in recalling his life before his conversion and does not spare the reader a single seductive detail of his 'folly.' He admits that he is grateful for his curious nature that (literally) made an ass out of him (Apul. *Met.* 9.15). Augustine too expresses gratitude for the detours of his youth because he sees them as leading him to his current position in divine truth; Lucius, however, seems to find his youthful adventures valuable, or at least entertaining, for their own sake.

Apuleius himself was a devote follower of Plutarch, who might be attributed for making Eros thematic in his sceptical reading of the *Theaetetus*. Beyond his schooling in 'erotic scepticism,' Apuleius' own life resembles that of a sceptic in that he openly took up many opposing positions and participated in many opposing activities, devoting himself to the study of philosophy, poetry, geometry, and rhetoric. When accused of seducing his friend's widowed mother by means of dark magic, Apuleius does not exactly deny the charges. Instead, in the fashion of a true sceptic, he defends his commitment to nothing in particular by confessing his openness to everything: as he tells his accusers, if he had dabbled in things related to magic it was in relation to his many other pursuits: his interest in bodily hygiene (Apul. *Apol.* 7), his experiments with medical practice (27, 51), his investigation of natural science (27), his participation in religious rituals (26-27). (A defense, which evades guilt by confessing to more and more, running along the lines of: 'Well yes, it's true that I slept with your wife, but I also slept with your daughter and sister.')

Although Apuleius' diverse life and texts speak to his schooling in philosophical scepticism, he does not declare himself so. Likewise, his *Metamorphoses* makes no commitment to any one philosophical school, but instead takes the form of a comedy: an invitation for the reader to doubt what she believes to be certain and reconsider what strikes her as incredible. The protagonist espouses contrasting views and values at different points in the narrative. Up until his religious conversion in the final eleventh book of the novel, Lucius proudly declares himself to be one who is curious about everything (*curiosus alioquin*) (Apul. *Met.* 2.6). The narrator beckons the reader to follow him along a string of extraordinary tales ranging from romantic and silly to sexually graphic and grotesque to philosophical and religious. A reader who lacks a hearty appetite for curious matters has little motivation to commit her-

self to an ass' episodic tales about magical transformations, adulterous scandal, and sensational goddesses and witches. *The Metamorphoses* has a bit of something for every kind of reader but is ideal for someone who, like Lucius (not to mention Apuleius himself), takes interest in a little bit of everything.

One can read Apuleius' entire narrative from the pious perspective of Lucius at the end of the novel. In this case the rest of the novel's tantalizing adventures must be taken as a moralistic warning. Indeed many scholars of Apuleius choose this 'high road,' but a sceptic continues to question the indeterminacy between such moral highs and lows. A sceptical reading treats the prologue with equal weight as the conclusion, just as she treats the fantastic with equal weight as what appears realistic. While Apuleius' tale concludes dogmatically, it opens with an invitation to read the text sceptically, letting one's resistance to anything absolutely be an openness to a bit of everything.

The prologue opens with a direct debate of the merits of saying 'yes' or 'no' to the seduction of a second. The narrator on his way to Thessaly eavesdrops on two quibbling travelers. He recounts:

I saw two men trudging along together a short distance ahead of me, deep in conversation. I walked a little faster, curious to know what they were talking about, and just as I drew abreast one of them burst into a loud laugh and said to the other: 'Stop, stop! Not another word! I can't bear to hear any more of your absurd and monstrous lies.' (Apul. *Met.* 1.2)

The cynical travelers' protest against what he takes to be his friend's outrageous story immediately spikes Lucius' interest. He interrupts the conversation, encouraging the first traveler to retell his story from the beginning. Lucius promises not only to enjoy the tale but also to give every word serious consideration no matter how ridiculous it may initially seem. The sceptic overturns the cynic's 'no' with his insistent 'yes.' The prologue can be read as Apuleius' way of encouraging the reader to embrace the forthcoming series of stories, which will surely strike the reader as fantastical and obscene. Lucius' eagerness to hear the storyteller's tale precisely because it has been forbidden lures the reader into indulging in Apuleius' novel even when the presented values are contrary to the traditional values of its age. Apuleius invites his readers to go precisely where his contemporaries advise their readers not to go.

Lucius as the protagonist of *Metamorphoses* is divided between the sceptical persona in the introduction and the dogmatic persona of the conclusion. However, Lucius as the narrator of events experienced by 'both selves' seems to find equal value in both sides of a life split by radical conversion. Although the dogmatic commitments of 'post-conversion' Lucius would deny any legitimate value in his former lifestyle, the narrator continues to take equal pleasure in recounting all of his experiences. Conversion narratives, like tragedy and comedy, attempt to grapple with conflicting objects of desire, ethical frameworks and metaphysical systems held by one individual or community over a lifetime or within the same moment. A sceptical conversion (of the experience of conversion) is in the insight that when one is unable

to achieve unity, which perhaps no honest person can, one can wade in the pleasure of opposing attractions.

The content of scepticism appears empty both in terms of establishing any philosophical positions and in terms of offering us practical advice for our daily life. It turns out that scepticism is *no more* a way of life than it is a philosophical framework. Perhaps the only insight that we can take away from the contradictory lives and philosophical positions of figures like Socrates, Pyrrho, Apuleius, and even the young Augustine, is that the lives of sceptics are the very enactment of the contraction they identify in every philosophical statement. Both their texts and lives are *nothing more* than an enactment of the *nothing more*. The sceptic is not only one who identifies discrepancies in others' account of the world and therefore remains above such contradiction; by assenting to no position absolutely she instead commits herself to dwelling in the tension of contradiction. Scepticism is a resistance to a kind of dramatic resolution that comes too easily in the superficial reduction of two to One. The sceptic dwells in the space of crisis—in perpetual partial conversion—until the indecision that throws others into panic is transformed into something that she experiences as serene.

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