

RESPONSES

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1 Introduction

I would like to begin by giving special thanks to Andrea Lozano (Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia), Carlota Salgado Ferreira (PUC, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), and Efraín Lazos (UNAM, México) for carefully reading my book and for offering such insightful comments. I am not only honored that such excellent Latin American scholars have participated in this symposium but I also take their commentaries as evidence that collaborative work is still possible in a discipline so marked by antagonistic practices. I believe this symposium is an example that Latin American philosophical scholarship has a significant role in changing the landscape of philosophy for the better.

I will refer to Lozano, Salgado Ferreira, and Lazos' commentaries in order since they deal with the topics of my book consecutively. Specifically, Andrea Lozano comments on Chapters 2 and 3, focusing on Ancient Academic Skepticism; Salgado Ferreira on Chapters 4 and 5, which are devoted to Hume's Academic Skepticism; and Lazos comments on Chapters 6 and 7 that deal with Kant's adoption of the Academic skeptical method. Without further ado, I will offer my responses and reflections.

2 Response to Andrea Lozano

Andrea Lozano begins by accurately summarizing the thesis of my book, namely that Cicero, Kant and Hume used skeptical strategies from Ancient Academic Skepticism to examine and, in some cases, accept religious beliefs on moral grounds, even if such beliefs failed to pass the most rigorous theoretical tests. In this way, my book shows how, for this type of skepticism, an agent can sustain certain religious principles both autonomously and non-dogmatically. After sketching the general purpose of my book, Lozano highlights some interesting considerations on the second and third chapters, to which I will turn now.

First, Lozano comments that my interpretation of Cicero not only as a historical source for Hellenistic doctrines but also as providing original philosophical arguments is refreshing. In fact, historians of philosophy rarely take Cicero seriously as a philosopher, but rather see him merely as a minor rhetorical or literary source. Additionally, she welcomes the fact that my interpretation of Cicero's skepticism relies heavily on his rhetorical argumentation, particularly in the *Tusculan Disputations*. However, Lozano does take issue with my view that Cicero maintains an Academic stance even in texts, such as *De natura Deorum* and *Tusculan Disputations*, where his views are traditionally seen as aligned with stoicism.

In response to this comment, let me begin by saying that I am happy to be part of a new generation of philosophers (including Lozano herself) that interprets

Cicero's texts as rigorous sources of philosophical thought and rejects disparaging rhetoric as somehow inferior to philosophy; in other words, that understands that philosophy is an enterprise that does not inherently conflict with rhetoric. Still, in contrast to Lozano's view, I resist interpreting Cicero as an eclectic philosopher because I believe this portrayal comes from a misunderstanding about the nature of Academic skepticism. Even if I do recognize that some of Cicero's works, such as *De Officiis*, are heavily stoic, I do not think his dialogues can be similarly characterized, since a central feature of the genre of dialogue is precisely presenting various points of view about a specific issue, which reflects typical skeptical methodologies. As a result, I maintain that we should take Cicero's dialogues as a reflection of his Academic alliances while acknowledging that other treatises can be seen as representing stoicism.

Lozano's second critical comment has to do with my interpretation of the distinction between Sextus' and the Academics' answers to the *apraxia* problem. In particular, she seems to be questioning the distinction I make between "psychological conditions" and "epistemic considerations." So, allow me to elaborate a bit more on this point.

I think that Carneades's answer to the *apraxia* objection involves important epistemic considerations, since only "persuasive," "tested," and "irreversible" impressions can serve as the basis for beliefs. By contrast, Arcesilaus and Sextus respond to the objection with more psychological language. For example, in response to the claim that honey is sweet, both Arcesilaus and Sextus would suspend judgment and act on subjective representations of sweetness, whereas Carneades would consider the claim in accordance with epistemic and intersubjective criteria, like how persuasive it is for more than one person. In other words, the Pyrrhonists would merely yield to their impressions (which I identify as heteronomy), whereas the New Academics would voluntarily, but non-dogmatically, maintain the belief that, in this case, honey is sweet (which I identify as autonomy).

Before leaving Lozano's comments, I want to note that she does correctly see my interpretation of Academic autonomy as an antecedent to Kantian critique. In fact, my argument is based on the association of the Academic answer to the *apraxia* problem with modern autonomy and of the Pyrrhonian answer with heteronomy. Given this, I appreciate her suggestion to explore in the future the connections between this kind of autonomy and Kant's arguments in the third *Critique* about morality and taste. I think this is an interesting avenue to pursue.

3 Response to Carlota Ferreira

Carlota Salgado Ferreira's critical suggestions are very illuminating insofar as they support my analysis in ways I had previously not recognized. I particularly appreciate how she weaves different aspects of Hume's epistemology into my account, constructing in the process a more integral and cohesive justification for my theses. Her comments on my chapters about Hume's Academic Skepticism focus on three crucial issues: (1) the psychological effects of Pyrrhonian, radical doubt – mainly, melancholy – that according to various scholars, including ourselves, led Hume to avoid Pyrrhonism and embrace Academic Skepticism; (2) the role of Hume's rules for causal inferences in deciding whether he adopted Academic Skepticism early or late in his philosophical development; and (3) my view that Hume's/Philo's stance regarding the existence and nature of God in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* can be described as "non-dogmatic, anti-religious deism."

Ferreira's first argument rightly points to the sections in the *Treatise* concerning the passion of curiosity (T 2.3.10.1) and "skepticism with regard to the senses" (T 1.4.2.37), where Hume develops the idea that doubt caused by sensible or conceptual contradictions produces uneasiness, while representations that agree with our natural mental inclinations bring about a feeling of pleasure. She also suggests interpreting this epistemic discomfort in relation to Hume's notion of habit or custom in his account of the process of belief formation. In particular, Ferreira notes that since the ease with which we pass from one idea to another, through the mechanisms of association, is grounded in habit, we feel a sort of displeasure when such habit is interrupted by an unexpected opposition of ideas or impressions (T1.3.8.10). Consequently, she argues, doubt, emerging in situations where the formation of belief is thus interrupted, is a source of distress and, eventually, melancholy. I think these suggestions are very fruitful, because they both bolster my claim and inspire future paths of reflection. In the spirit of continuing the conversation, then, I would like to pose questions to Ferreira regarding her opinion on Hume's seemingly ignoring or overlooking the Pyrrhonian account of suspension of belief. In particular, I am wondering, given that *epoché* was, for Sextus Empiricus, a solution to the discomfort of doubt, since it produced a balanced state of mind (*ataraxia*), why does Hume's account of Pyrrhonian doubt forget this original aspect? Is it possible that Hume derived his account from Bayle's and other modern skeptics or rather from anti-skeptics' attacks, like Jean Pierre de Crousaz's?

Her second suggestion is that, given the prominence that the rules for judging causes and effects enjoy in the first book of the *Treatise*, I should refrain from holding that Hume does not wholeheartedly embrace Academic Skepticism in his early work. Perhaps I was excessively cautious when I affirmed that:

Since the most essential aspects of Hume's academic normativity are developed in the *Treatise*, his theory of belief seems to involve an unconscious mixture of naturalism and Academic skepticism; a precarious balance, or better, a conflict, that only in the *Enquiry* becomes a conscious endorsement of Academic skepticism (p. 109).

Ferreira sees this cautiousness as unnecessary insofar as the normative aspects of Hume's theory of belief are clearly spelled out in the *Treatise*. I accept her suggestion, yet I still wonder why Hume did not speak openly about Academic skepticism in the *Treatise* as he did in the *Enquiry*. While I think it is possible that in the earlier work he was already convinced of Academic Skepticism but did not openly express his position to avoid censure, I still prefer to be cautious about this particular interpretation. Primarily, because, in my view, the *Treatise*'s argumentative strategy is more dialectical, with both dogmatic and skeptical treatments of specific issues, so it seems to me more difficult to attribute an unambiguous endorsement of Academic skepticism to the young Hume. However, I accept that he was already familiar with Cicero's account of Carneades' probabilism and used it to produce his own normative theory of belief.

Ferreira's last comment concerns chapter five, where I claim that Hume's position in the *Dialogues*, expressed by Philo, can be described as a sort of "non-dogmatic, anti-religious deism." She criticizes my position here based on Hume's distinction in the *Treatise* between adequate and relative ideas, the former of which constitute knowledge, and the latter only conjecture or belief. Specifically, Ferreira suggests that the idea of God accepted by Philo at the end of the *Dialogues* is merely relative since it does not have an empirical source (no impression of God is available to ground it) but is the result from the argument from the design of the universe. Given that relative ideas do not provide rational justification for a claim, that is,

they do not fulfill the semantic condition for knowledge, Ferreira argues that my assertion that this belief in God is *rationally justified* does not hold, and hence, Hume does not sustain a form of deism.

I agree with Salgado Ferreira's analysis of the distinction between relative and adequate ideas, the latter of which is a semantic condition for knowledge. Moreover, I agree with her that, from Hume's point of view, the idea of God is merely relative and does not entail knowledge. Once again, I thank her for showing me further textual support for my thesis that this belief is neither a "natural belief" nor a "proof," but rather, a mere "probability." However, I think her reservations with my thesis are unnecessary since I do not hold that every *rationally justified claim* is, for Hume, knowledge. Given that only relations of ideas, that is, demonstrative propositions, constitute "knowledge," neither empirical proofs nor probabilities, among matters of fact are, strictly speaking, knowledge. This does not mean, however, that proofs and probabilities are not *rationally justified beliefs*. In the case of proofs, the justification is as strong as it can be for matters of fact, while it varies in strength in probabilities. Yet in both cases, we can have rationally justified *beliefs*.

For this reason, I claim that Hume's deism is *non-dogmatic*: he does not hold, as other famous deists, such as Collins and Toland, that the argument from design provides *sufficient rational proof* of God's existence, that is, knowledge. I believe that at the end of the *Dialogues* Philo is merely asserting that the inference that there may be a God, creator of the universe, who has a very remote similarity with the human mind, is *rationally justified*, yet only as a very weak, probable *belief*. That Hume's deism is non-dogmatic is also shown in his allowing for further doubt and skeptical examination. The conclusion of the *Dialogues* is only provisional and valid for (anti-religious) practical purposes, but, as an Academic skeptic, Hume knows that it is not conclusive. Perhaps the difficulty resides in thinking that knowledge, in general, can be defined as *rationally justified belief*. But I don't believe Hume's view on knowledge is this. Still, to clarify my view, I would suggest that the belief in God Hume approves is *rationally justified* but not *sufficiently rationally justified* and thus cannot be considered knowledge.

4 Response to Efraín Lazos

Efraín Lazos offers an extensive, thoughtful, and sharp commentary on my two final chapters about Kant's adoption of Academic Skepticism via Hume. Before responding, I want to note how very appreciative I am for the way he engages with both my historiographical and systematic accounts of Kant's skeptical method. In my opinion, very few Kant scholars can skillfully move from one register to the other, and I am thankful from his questions from both points of view, which have always opened important venues of exploration as well as provided great topics of conversation.

I will now turn to Lazos' critical comments. Principally, he takes issue with two important aspects of my argument: i). my claim that Kant's skeptical method involves a final verdict, which, following the metaphor of the judge, solves the antinomical problems from a practical point of view, and ii). the related assertion that Kant introduces this practical verdict to avoid the problem of *apraxia* that would naturally ensue from the merely theoretical solution of the antinomies.

I will begin with Lazos' analysis of my use of Kant's metaphor of the judge. He points to additional textual evidence where Kant re-creates the metaphor exchanging the figure of the "judge" for those of the "wise legislator" (A424/B452) and the "impartial referees" (A423/B451). Based on the commonalities of the three

characters, he claims that the essential function of the judge/referee/legislator is to provide an *impartial* account of the dispute, that is, to show how the conflict does not have a solid basis, rather than giving a final, practical verdict. In his view, Kant's skeptical method is applied to the cosmological problems only to show how the antinomical disputes are ungrounded. In this way, his solution to the antinomies would be, following metaphor of the judge, a sort of "dismissal of the case." He further affirms that I might have understood such a dismissal as a practical verdict, but if I did, I would be misled: "González Quintero might respond that that, namely, dismissing a case (or rejecting a dilemma) is also a solution from the practical point of view. Quite independently of the difference in the consequences for the plaintiffs, this answer is unsatisfactory."

Lazos' analysis is partially correct insofar as I do claim that the judge's or critical philosopher's point of view ought to be impartial and aim at showing how the antinomical conflict is, in fact, illusory or ungrounded. However, I do not think this is the critical philosopher's only task. In other words, I do not believe that "dismissing the case" is the only result of Kant's analysis of the antinomies. Allow me to elaborate. First, I think we can say, in agreement with Lazos, that Kant's theoretical solution to the antinomies is a way to "dismiss the case," since it shows the illusory character of reason's natural dialectic. But, as Lazos himself argues later in his commentary, this theoretical solution is not just a dismissal of the case, since it also involves a positive philosophical answer, namely changing the metaphysical framework that grounds the conflict for Transcendental Idealism. Second, I believe that Kant not only gives such a significant theoretical solution to the antinomies, but also offers a *practical solution*, which is constituted by: i). his cosmological regulative principles, put forth at the end of the first *Critique*, and ii). his practical proof of freedom and postulates of God and the immortal soul elaborated in the second *Critique*.

I think it is difficult to appreciate this last feature of Kant's skeptical method because we tend to interpret said method as a device strictly limited to theoretical examinations, to the exclusion of practical ones or those with practical underpinnings. But this is a very contemporary view of skepticism—namely, the idea that it concerns only theoretical claims. And in fact, Kant scholars usually restrict their analysis of his skeptical method to the first *Critique's* Transcendental Dialectic. But, following the teachings of the ancient skeptics, for whom skepticism was primarily seen as a way of life and not an abstract epistemic position, I prefer to make a more unitary reading of Kant's critiques to appreciate his overarching analysis of traditional metaphysics better.

Lazos' second concern – namely my view that Kant's practical verdict aims at avoiding the problem of *apraxia* that would naturally arise from the merely theoretical solution of the antinomies – touches on various points. The first one concerns my affirmation that Kant's theoretical solution to the third antinomy involves a sort of "perspectivism." To explain why it should not be interpreted as perspectivism, Lazos introduces the distinction between two sorts of compatibilism: coexistence compatibilism and modal compatibilism. He sees the thesis of the third antinomy –that *there is both* natural causality and freedom in the world– as coexistence compatibilism and the solution of the antinomy –that both the thesis and the antithesis of the antinomy can be true because freedom is "possible for a subset of appearances in space and time, namely, those events that are the actions of persons"– as modal compatibilism. I thank Lazos for his suggestion to distinguish the thesis and the solution to the antinomy in terms of these two forms of compatibilism and I agree with his overall description. However, I do not understand the sense in which accepting modal compatibilism necessarily entails rejecting a sort of perspectivism. Lazos argues that this is the case because

perspectivism involves coexistence compatibilism, which refers to “perspectives on one and the same object in the same logical space.” In contrast, modal compatibilism more appropriately describes Transcendental Idealism, which accepts that “both types of legality are compatible because there is no contradiction between the lawfulness of natural causality (as a principle upheld by the understanding), and the possibility of a lawfulness of freedom (as a transcendental idea of reason).” However, it is still unclear why perspectivism necessarily involves speaking of two observable or empirical aspects of the same object and not of one actual and one possible metaphysical principle acting in the same world. Perhaps one source of our disagreement here is the fact that my view of perspectivism is tied to Sextus Empiricus’ skeptical system. Let’s remember that he recommended opposing “appearances to appearances, theoretical considerations to theoretical considerations, or appearances to theoretical considerations” (PH, I, 9), and he saw all of these as possible perspectives on the issue examined. I believe that Sextus’ skepticism can be regarded as one ancient source of perspectivism, and if so, I am justified in claiming that Kant’s theoretical solution to the antinomy of freedom consists in accepting two perspectives on the world, namely, one based on “appearances” (the principle of natural causality) and, one on “theoretical considerations” (the metaphysical possibility of freedom). But since I did not explain this in my chapter and Lazos probably has in mind a different sort of perspectivism, I accept his criticism, and would welcome further conversation on the matter.

The second point of his concern relates to my interpretation of Transcendental Idealism. Lazos claims that I may be basing my understanding of it on H. Allison’s deflationary reading –a reading that, according to him, aligns well with perspectivism– and not on the metaphysical, non-deflationary view of Langton, Allais, and others. Since my allegiance to Allison’s account is not overt, he asks me for an elaboration on my perspective on the distinction between phenomena and noumena, and warns me that accepting Allison’s view would commit me to dismiss our ignorance of things in themselves.

As Lazos correctly perceived, I accept Allison’s deflationary reading of Transcendental Idealism. However, I do not see why adhering to this interpretation implies dismissing our ignorance of things in themselves. On the contrary, I tend to find the metaphysical readings of the distinction – particularly Langton’s – as violating the very principle of “humility” they stand for. Of course, I cannot delve into my interpretation of these metaphysical readings here, but the very definitions of the noumenon as referring to “intrinsic properties of things” and freedom as one such intrinsic property do not strike me as very respectful of our ignorance of things in themselves. Furthermore, the view that Allison’s interpretation is tautological because it only states that “without epistemic conditions, there is no cognition of objects” seems rather (unjustifiably) disparaging, since his interpretation says much more than this. I believe Allison’s view does not merely state that we cannot know what we cannot know, but it rightly interprets Kant as saying that we cannot know certain things *that we think we know* and that only by getting to know our cognitive conditions well can we *know for sure that that we cannot know them*. This interpretation is both deflationary – in the sense that it does not posit metaphysical entities such as intrinsic properties of things– and respectful of our ignorance of things in themselves.

Lazo’s final point concerns my claim that the theoretical solution to the antinomies is vulnerable to the *apraxia* objection since it does not provide sufficient practical guidance. In opposition to my characterization, he argues that the theoretical solution to the third antinomy, in particular, is “no small achievement but has momentous philosophical consequences” given that “the mere possibility of freedom enables the imputation of spatial and temporal events to natural creatures

such as humans.” And thus, he sees the possibility of freedom as giving a response that is enough to guide action.

I could not agree more with Lazos’ evaluation of the philosophical importance of Kant’s theoretical solution to the third antinomy. However, to our dismay, philosophical consequences are usually not the same as practical ones. In other words, while I do believe that the possibility of freedom is a necessary condition of the imputation of actions and moral responsibility to human beings, I do not think it is a sufficient one. A helpful way to see it is to consider whether it would be enough for us to believe that we are *possibly* free to claim that we are responsible for our actions. Following this rationale, if I were to defend myself from a crime in front of a judge, I could argue that I may be free and thus responsible for this act but also may not be free and therefore not responsible, and, consequently, the judge would have no sufficient grounds to blame or exonerate me from the action. For this reason, I do not believe that the mere possibility of our freedom provides sufficient grounds to assign responsibility. In my view, this is why Kant has to provide, in addition to his theoretical solution to the antinomy, a practical definition of freedom and a proof of such freedom in the second *Critique*: we need to affirm that we *are* free in the restricted sense that we can obey reason and disobey natural inclinations to make actual moral judgments, and, as a result, rightfully attribute moral responsibility.

For this reason, I claim that, *practically* speaking, the mere affirmation of the possibility of freedom amounts to suspension of belief. However, I want to be clear that I am suggesting that the practical solution is identifiable with suspension of judgment *solely in the practical sense*, that is, only to act or judge actions morally. From the theoretical point of view, of course, affirming the possibility of something is very different from suspending belief in the matter.

Still, maybe my rhetorical inclinations took me too far in establishing the analogy between the solution and suspension of belief—I might need to curb my penchant for such rhetorical moves in the future! But I certainly believe that it is necessary to go from the mere possibility of freedom to the affirmation of its practical reality to be able to attribute responsibility; that is, we need to believe that we are free, even if only from a practical point of view, to claim that we acted rightly or wrongly. And, if this interpretation is correct, I ask Lazos, is the antinomy’s balance indeed so substantial from a practical point of view?

5 Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I want to again thank these exceptional scholars and wonderful colleagues for engaging my work with such care. I look forward to continue the discussion not only with them but also with many other experts on skepticism. As I said at the beginning of these remarks, I am happy to be part of a community of Latin American scholars that studies the history of skepticism in both rigorous and innovative ways. I hope my book helps to open future venues of exploration into the legacy of Academic Skepticism to Modern philosophy.