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This book offers an excellent and much needed introduction to the history of ancient Greek scepticism. It begins at a very simple level (Hankinson even explains what a fragment is [4n3]), but becomes quite sophisticated in discussing many of the theories. It includes a brief Glossary and Biographical Appendix in addition to the standard Index of Texts Cited and Bibliography. All Greek is transliterated.

Divided in half, book 1 covers scepticism pre-Sextus Empiricus, approached historically, and book 2 focuses on Sextian Scepticism, approached topically. There are 18 chapters, so considerable ground is covered. The introductory chapter on sources and transmission conveys a wealth of information on the sceptics, the conditions of their extant remains, and the history of the transmission of these texts. Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the nature of scepticism. Hankinson notes that ancient scepticism is more radical than modern in so far as belief itself is attacked, not just knowledge qua certain and indubitable truths. It is not merely a theoretical attack that can be left behind in the study, rather it provides a way of life and a route to happiness. But it is also less radical than modern in so far as it does not doubt the existence of the external world or other minds. Thus, Hankinson calls it 'Essential' as opposed to 'Existential' Scepticism (26).

Chapter 3 briefly discusses the sceptical aspects of the Presocratics. Chapter 4, on Pyrrho and the Socratic Tradition, first addresses figures associated with Pyrrho or relevant to the philosophical climate (Metrodorus the atemist, Antithenes the Cynic, Aristippus the Cyrenaic), then interprets Pyrrho's position giving separate attention to Timon. More than half the book is devoted to Pyrrhonian Scepticism, while only a brief section (58-65) addresses the sceptical theory of this school's namesake. One may think that such slight attention is warranted because there is only one brief text reporting Pyrrho's theory (from his pupil Timon, via Aristotle, 59-60, text 77). However, this is a very rich text, open to an astonishing variety of interpretations at which Hankinson's treatment merely hints. The interpretation of this text is also crucial to our understanding of the history of Pyrrhonian Scepticism, because, as Hankinson allows, Pyrrho's Pyrrhonism is very different from Sextus' 'Pyrrhonism'. There is an interesting story to be told about the development of this theory from Pyrrho to Sextus (on which I will comment below), but this cannot be done until scholars have a sufficient grasp of the former's theory. For these reasons, it is very unfortunate that Hankinson does not pay more attention to Pyrrho.

In the few brief pages devoted to Pyrrho's philosophy, Hankinson spends an inordinate amount of space on defending and refuting the interpretation of E. Flintoff (the title of Flintoff's paper, 'Pyrrho and India', is even the heading of this section). Flintoff argues that Pyrrhonian philosophy was directly influenced by Buddhism, specifically since Pyrrho modeled his claim that we should say about each thing that 'it no more is than is not, or <than> it both is and is not, or <than> it neither is nor is not' (60) after the Indian quadrilemma. Hankinson concludes with the same evaluation as nearly every other scholar on this issue: Flintoff makes an interesting case, but 'the hypothesis of a direct Indian influence on Pyrrho is unproved' (65) because there is, at home in the Greek philosophical environment, sufficient material to explain the origin of Pyrrho's views (e.g., the quadrilemma can be found in Plato and Aristotle and the latter's attack on scepticism shows that extreme sceptical views were already in the air, 64-65). Thus, it is curious and an apparent waste of precious space, that Hankinson uses as his primary interpretive angle on Pyrrho the approach which he and nearly all scholars reject as unjustified.

Hankinson follows Long and Sedley in reading Pyrrho's thesis that 'everything is indeterminate' as a dogmatic metaphysical claim about the structure of reality. The most critical lines of the Aristocles text read 'things are equally indifferent, unmeasurable, and undecidable; [for this reason] <since> neither our sensations nor our judgements tell us truths or falsehoods' (60). 'For this reason' translates διὰ τῶν of the received manuscripts, the reading Long and Sedley follow. Read thus, the inference goes: reality is in itself indeterminate, therefore our judgments are neither true nor false. This inference is perfectly valid; the only problem is in justifying the premise. Hankinson admits an alternative reading which I believe is both grammatically and logically unjustified. 'Since' translates διὰ τοῦ, an emendation proposed by E. Zeller for which he provides no philological reason and which has the effect of reversing the inference. Although Hankinson claims that this emendation 'has the grammatical advantage of removing the need for a missing particle here' (61a28), the received text: can stand as an 'asynthetic' sentence, which often expresses the result of or the reason for the preceding sentence. This emended reading is also unjustified logically, because the inference would then proceed: our judgments are neither true nor false, therefore reality is in itself indeterminate. This is flagrantly invalid: our mental incapacities have no metaphysical implications for reality. Yet Hankinson admits both readings of this text without even expressing a preference. Zeller's reading would yield a valid inference only if the conclusion were interpreted epistemically rather than metaphysically — i.e., if it meant that things are indeterminate to us—so that it is merely a claim about our epistemic abilities. But Hankinson does not address this interpretation, which had been standard until recently.

While Hankinson endorses the metaphysical interpretation, i.e., that Pyrrho dogmatically asserts reality to be indeterminate, he fails to raise the obvious and crucial question: how can a skeptic justify such a dogmatic assertion? If the world were intrinsically unknowable, the rest of the sceptical philosophy would follow

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1 See Smyth 1984, sec. 2167. This point is argued in Sakeles 1993, 80n5.
2 I criticize it as indefensible, Sakeles 1993, 79-83.
quite nicely; it is this first premise that is the weak link in Pyrrho’s theory and thus it demands attention. However, Hankinson does not even acknowledge this gap.3

Hankinson’s endorsement of the metaphysical interpretation makes Pyrrho’s scepticism restricted rather than radical, since it allows ‘a meta-level of true judgements’ (61). It is this dogmatic aspect of Pyrrho’s philosophy that distinguishes him from Aenesidemus and Sextus, and Hankinson asks why such a figure would be universally accepted as the originator of Scepticism (68). After noting the paucity of Sextan references to Pyrrho, he says ‘the inescapable conclusion is that either Sextus knew nothing of Pyrrho’s actual positions or that if he did he suspected they did not as a matter of fact embody scepticism in the manner he wished to present it’ (68). This conclusion is quite plausible and raises the interesting question of the development of ‘Pyrrhonian’ Scepticism from Pyrrho to Aenesidemus to Sextus. Now that scholars finally recognize that Sextus’ version of Pyrrhonism cannot be used uncritically to infer Pyrrho’s views, we can begin to determine exactly how and why Pyrrho’s restricted scepticism developed into Sextus’ radical scepticism. Hankinson does not take the time to address this issue directly (a chapter on this problem at the end of book 2 would have been nice), but he does lay the groundwork for others to do so.4

Chapters 5-7 address the history of scepticism in the Academy from Arcaesilaus onward. The Dialectical Interpretation (DI) of Arcaesilaus (77) says that he was strictly negative—he made dialectical attacks on Stoic epistemology which forced the Stoics to admit epoche (suspension of judgment), but he himself did not embrace it. But Hankinson is more sympathetic to the view that Arcaesilaus did positively embrace epoche himself and so was a true sceptic. Hankinson also lays out the debate over apraxia (inactivity), showing the practical side of Arcaesilaus’ scepticism. He argues (against the DI and Long and Sedley) that Arcaesilaus had a positive criterion for action: what seems reasonable (eulogon), what actually seems to result in success.

Carneades’ greatest contribution was his attack on Stoic epistemology, specifically on their criterion of certain knowledge—the ‘catalectic impression’—the definition of which was made increasingly complex in response to sceptical criticism. Hankinson argues that Carneades, like Arcaesilaus, did have positive views (e.g., he said it is impossible to act without some assent, but it must be assent to the ‘plausible’ only, not to any definite claim about reality) and Carneades went further than Arcaesilaus in espousing them. This is contradictory to the popular scholarly opinion that Arcaesilaus and Carneades were merely arguing dialectically, not believing the views they espoused (this is the DI).

Chapter 7 covers the Fourth Academy (Philo of Larissa, and Antiochus of

Ascalon who left the Academy for the Stoa) and Aenesidemus, the reviver of Pyrrhonism. Hankinson presents evidence for and against the ‘Ten Modes’ being from Aenesidemus (121); and he considers the evidence for a dogmatic tendency in Aenesidemus, concluding with a reading that makes Aenesidemus as consistently sceptical as possible (but he admits problems, 129-131). In the final historical chapter, Hankinson addresses several minor sources of information on scepticism from the Early Empire.

The first half of book 2 analyzes the various Modes of Agrippa and Aenesidemus and Sextus’ attack on any form of criterion, sign, proof, or causal explanation. Hankinson’s general evaluation is that Sextus’ arguments would be very effective against his contemporary targets, but it is not clear that they would work against a ‘sophisticated empiricist’ of our day.

Hankinson brings his knowledge of ancient medicine to bear in chapter 13, on Scepticism in the Medical Schools. His focus is the Empiricists, who embody practical scepticism in their medicine: they say to do what has worked in the past, based on how things appear to you, and make no claims about real natures (226-229). ‘Transition to the Similar’ is their method of applying similar treatment to cases that are similar to past ones, without any theoretical commitments (229).

This turns out to be the same approach used by the declared Sceptics to live daily life.

Chapter 14, on Sceptical physics and metaphysics, is particularly interesting regarding the Sceptics’ influence on theology: Hankinson also discusses Sextus’ arguments against the Dogmatists’ conceptions of body, motion, and space.

The last three chapters focus on the practical side of Sextan Scepticism: ethics, attitude, and way of life. Hankinson argues that it is at least coherent for sceptics to disassociate themselves from any commitment to the truth of their impressions (288); this conclusion is pace Burnyeat, who believes that such extreme detachment from the self is incoherent (282). Whether such disassociation is psychologically possible is an empirical question, but Hankinson assumes that it is possible (288). The final question of the book is whether such a psychological state is desirable. Hankinson notes a tension in Sextus’ philosophy on this point: Sextus sounds as if he were ‘engaged on a Sceptical crusade against Dogmatic rashness’ (305), with the philanthropic goal of curing the latter’s inevitable anxiety. But obviously many Dogmatists do not suffer from anxiety, because they have their own cure. Hankinson believes the sceptic cannot consistently advocate the sceptical cure for those Dogmatists not suffering from anxiety; his solution is that Sextus’ PH is ‘a self-help book’ published for the benefit of any Dogmatist who does happen to be disturbed by ‘the anomaly in things’ (306). Hankinson’s final evaluation of the desirability of the sceptical life is that this question can only be decided on an individual basis. He sees Sextus as doing no more than reporting, like an Empiricist doctor, what has in fact helped a condition he and others have suffered; it is up to the individual to decide if the cure is desirable.

Overall, this book accomplishes its goal with great success; it provides a concise and comprehensive history of Greek scepticism which is accessible enough
for beginners (scholars outside the specialty or intelligent students) yet sophisticated enough (at least in many areas) for specialists. It is especially rich in its references to the secondary literature. While many sections make for very tedious reading, that is due to the nature of the subject; Hankinson’s presentation is quite clear and readable. This book would be an ideal supplement for a course in Scepticism.

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