

# Sextus Empiricus : his outlook, works, and legacy

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## Sextus Empiricus: His Outlook, Works, and Legacy

Nowadays Pyrrhonism is alive and well. This necessarily means that there is considerable interest in the works of Sextus Empiricus, since he is our chief source for Pyrrhonian skepticism.<sup>1</sup> Until not long ago, however, the predominant tendency among scholars of ancient philosophy was to regard Sextus' oeuvre merely as a key source of information about other thinkers and schools whose views would otherwise be even more obscure or completely unknown. Paradoxically, his writings were not read as what they essentially are: a detailed account of Pyrrhonism by one of the leading representatives of this philosophical movement. The reason seems to have been that Pyrrhonism was deemed to lack the cogency and import of the Dogmatic philosophies.<sup>2</sup> There were, of course, some exceptions, such as Léon Robin,<sup>3</sup> Karel Janáček,<sup>4</sup> and Charlotte Stough,<sup>5</sup> along with scholars from the nineteenth century, the most important of whom was Victor Brochard.<sup>6</sup> But it is particularly since the 1980s that there has been a strong trend to assess more highly the importance

<sup>1</sup> Interest in Sextus' writings is in part reflected in the recent publication of an important number of new translations of them. Among these are the following: ANNAS, Julia / BARNES, Jonathan: *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000 (1994); MATES, Benson: *The Skeptic Way. Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996; BETT, Richard: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005; PELLEGRIN, Pierre: *Sextus Empiricus: Esquisses Pyrrhoniennes*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1997; PELLEGRIN, Pierre / DALIMIER, Catherine / DELATTRE, Daniel / DELATTRE Joëlle / PÉREZ Brigitte: *Sextus Empiricus: Contre les professeurs*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil 2002; FLÜCKIGER, Hansueli: *Sextus Empiricus: Gegen die Dogmatiker*. St. Augustine: Academia 1998; SPINELLI, Emidio: *Sesto Empirico: Contro gli etici*. Napoli: Bibliopolis 1995; *Sesto Empirico: Contro gli astrologi*. Napoli: Bibliopolis 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Following Sextus' usage, I will employ "Dogmatic" and its cognates to refer to any non-Pyrrhonian thinker, outlook, or philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> ROBIN, Léon: *Pyrrhon et le scepticisme grec*. Paris: PUF 1944.

<sup>4</sup> JANÁČEK, Karel: *Prolegomena to Sextus Empiricus*. Olomouc: Nákladem Palackého University 1948; *Die Hauptschrift des Sextus Empiricus als Torso erhalten?* In: *Philologus* 107 (1963) 271–277; *Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Methods*. Prague: Charles University 1972. I only refer here to Janáček's most influential works. For a complete list of his many important writings on Pyrrhonism, see BARNES, Jonathan: *Diogenes Laertius IX 61–116: The Philosophy of Pyrrhonism*. In: HAASE, W. (ed.): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II* 36.6. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1992, 4241–4301, at 4298–4299.

<sup>5</sup> STOUGH, Charlotte: *Greek Skepticism. A Study in Epistemology*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press 1969.

<sup>6</sup> BROCHARD, Victor: *Les Sceptiques grecs*. 4th ed. Paris: Le livre de poche 2002 (1887).

of Pyrrhonism as a philosophy. The spate of works on Pyrrhonian skepticism that have been published since then is characterized, in general, by high scholarly quality and analytic depth.

The change of attitude towards Skepticism<sup>7</sup> has been, in fact, part of a re-evaluation of the Hellenistic and Imperial ages as a whole, which are now widely regarded as original and stimulating periods of thought. However, it must first be noted that, unlike other Hellenistic and Imperial philosophical currents, the Pyrrhonism found in Sextus' writings has been regarded by some scholars as key to understanding the origin and development of early modern philosophy. Second, again unlike other philosophies from the Hellenistic and Imperial ages, Skepticism has considerably influenced contemporary epistemology. More specifically, the so-called Five Modes of Agrippa as expounded by Sextus have shaped a great deal of the current epistemological debates about the possibility of knowledge and justification, even if not all the parties to these debates are aware of the Pyrrhonian origin of the problematic they are dealing with.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: to discuss some challenging issues concerning Sextus' works and outlook, and to offer an overview of the influence exerted by Sextan Pyrrhonism on both early modern and contemporary philosophy. In the course of doing so, it presents the *status quaestionis* on the topics examined. Section 1 summarizes the scant information we possess about Sextus' life, deals with the structure, content, and chronology of his writings, and touches on the question of his originality as an author. Section 2 addresses the problem of Sextus' relationship with the Empirical and the Methodical schools of medicine. Section 3 is devoted to an analysis of the different types of Skepticism that seem to coexist in his works. This analysis is relevant both for the question of the uniformity of Sextus' philosophical stance and for the history of the Pyrrhonian movement. Finally, Section 4 deals briefly with the reception of Pyrrhonism in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and examines the influence that Sextus' works have had on the development of both early modern and contemporary philosophy. It also summarizes some of the key differences between Pyrrhonian skepticism and its early modern and contemporary counterparts.

## 1. LIFE AND WRITINGS

Little is known about the life of Sextus Empiricus. With regard to when he lived, D. K. House, in his excellent article on Sextus' life, points out that the evidence "is of such a nature that one cannot do any more than set a limit on the possible dates of Sextus which range from A.D. 100 to the first part of the

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth, I will use "Skepticism" with a capital "S" to refer specifically to Pyrrhonism.

third century”.<sup>8</sup> Though it is true that it is not possible to set a date with precision, most scholars agree to place Sextus in the latter part of the second century AD.<sup>9</sup> Concerning where he lived and worked, the situation is not better, since there is no conclusive evidence in support of any particular place.<sup>10</sup> But we can eliminate Alexandria (see *Pyrrōneioi Hypotypōseis* [PH] III 221) and, with less assurance, Athens (see PH I 98, *Adversus dogmaticos* [AD] II 145).

As regards Sextus’ philosophical outlook and profession, we have reliable information based on both internal and external evidence. First, Sextus writes as a representative of the Pyrrhonian philosophy, making use of the first person plural when describing and explaining it (see esp. PH I 17–24, 187–209). The external evidence confirms that he was a Skeptical philosopher, since Diogenes Laertius includes Sextus in the chronological list of Pyrrhonists which he offers at the end of his *Life of Timon* (DL IX 115–116). Diogenes tells us that Sextus was the pupil of Herodotus and the teacher of Saturninus, and that he wrote “the ten books of the *Skeptical Commentaries* (*ta deka tōn Skeptikōn* [scil. *Hypomnēmātōn*]) and other fine works” (DL IX 116).

Second, Sextus was a physician, as is made clear by some passages of his works. He speaks of Asclepius as the “founder of our science” (*Adversus mathematicos* [AM] I 260). In another passage, he observes that in a disease there are two kinds of abatement, and that “we recommend a varied diet not for this abatement [i.e., that of the particular attack that occurs for the most part before the first third day] but for the abatement of the entire disease” (PH II 238). When arguing that people’s judgments about good and bad are in conflict, Sextus says that he will base his treatment of this issue on the example of health, because “the discussion about this is very familiar to us” (AD V 47). One may assume that this familiarity is that of a doctor who is actively engaged in his profession. Also, in the course of his attack against astrology, Sextus points out that, “in medicine, we have observed that a puncture of the heart is a cause of death, having observed along with it not only the death of Dion, but also of Theon and Socrates and many others” (AM V 104). This passage may be interpreted as describing Sextus’ own experience as a doctor. In addition, he refers to his now lost *Medical Commentaries* (*Iatrika Hypomnēmata*), in which he examined in detail the position of the physician Ascle-

<sup>8</sup> HOUSE, D.K.: *The Life of Sextus Empiricus*. In: *The Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980) 227–238, at 231.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., ANNAS, Julia / BARNES, Jonathan: *The Modes of Scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985, 16; DECLEVA CAIZZI, Fernanda: *L’elogio del cane. Sesto Empirico*, Schizzi pirroniani I 62–78. In: *Elenchos* 14 (1993) 305–330, at 328–330; BARNES, Jonathan: *Introduction*. In: ANNAS / BARNES: *Sextus Empiricus*, xi–xxxii, at xii; STRIKER, Gisela: *Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo-Pyrrhonism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG, Walter (ed.): *Pyrrhonian Scepticism*. New York: Oxford University Press 2004, 13–24, at 23 n. 1; BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, ix–x.

<sup>10</sup> See HOUSE: *The Life of Sextus Empiricus*, 231–234.



piades (*AD* I 202). Finally, he speaks of his *Empirical Commentaries* (*Empeirika Hypomnēmata*), in which he showed that the term *empeiria* is also applied to *technē* (*AM* I 61). Judging by its title, this work must have dealt with Empirical medicine. Scholars have generally supposed that the *Empirical Commentaries* are probably the same as the *Medical Commentaries*.<sup>11</sup> In the light of the passages just referred to, it is significant that in his extant works Sextus makes frequent use of medical examples and information (see *PH* I 44, 51–52, 71, 80, 93, 101–103, 126–127, 131, 133, II 237–240, III 280–281; *AD* I 179, II 188, 219–221; *AM* I 95, 307–308, II 49). The internal evidence about Sextus' profession is confirmed by the external evidence since, as we will see in the next section, we also know from Diogenes Laertius and a pseudo-Galenic work that Sextus was a physician.

While the writings of other Pyrrhonists have been lost – except for fragments and summaries – we possess two complete works and an important part of a third by Sextus: the three books of the *Pyrrōneioi Hypotypōseis* (*Pyrrhonian Outlines*), the six books of the *Pros Mathēmatikous* (*Against the Learned or Professors*), and the five extant books of the *Pros Dogmatikous* (*Against the Dogmatists*). The latter two are better known by their Latin titles of *Adversus mathematicos* and *Adversus dogmaticos*, respectively. It is important to note that, in our manuscripts, *AD* is attached to the end of *AM*. It is clear, however, that they are two different works. First, *AD* I 1 refers back to a general treatment of Pyrrhonism which has just been made but which corresponds to nothing that is found in *AM* I–VI. Second, the beginning and the end of *AM* clearly show that it is a self-contained work (see *AM* I 1, VI 68). Unfortunately, scholars conventionally refer to the five surviving books of *AD* as *AM* VII–XI, even though they know that this designation is incorrect.

The reason I have spoken of the five “surviving” books of *AD* is that Karel Janáček has convincingly argued that what we know as *AD* are only the extant books of a work that also included a part dealing with the same issues as the first book of *PH*.<sup>12</sup> This hypothesis allows us to explain the otherwise inexplicable references to previous discussions found in some of the books of *AD* (see I 1, 29, 345, III 195, V 144, 167). As these discussions parallel topics addressed in the first book of *PH*, some scholars thought that in the passages

<sup>11</sup> See BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*, 334; HOUSE: *The Life of Sextus Empiricus*, 234; ALLEN, James: *The Skepticism of Sextus Empiricus*. In: HAASE, W. (ed.): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 36.4. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1990, 2582–2607, at 2583 with n. 8; PELLEGRIN: *Sextus Empiricus*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> See JANÁČEK: *Die Hauptschrift des Sextus Empiricus*.

of *AD* in question Sextus is referring back to that work.<sup>13</sup> However, this cannot be so for several reasons.

In the first place, with respect to the issues dealt with at *AD* V 162–166, at *AD* V 167 Sextus says that he has “spoken more accurately about these matters in the lectures on the Skeptical end”. Now, the issues discussed at *AD* V 162–166 do not correspond to those dealt with in the chapter on the end of Skepticism (*PH* I 25–30), but to those addressed in the chapter on the criterion of Skepticism (*PH* I 21–24). Unless one supposes a slip on Sextus’ part, he cannot be referring to *PH* I, but to a now lost part of *AD*.

The second reason is that, if the passages of *AD* refer back to *PH* I, we must assume that Sextus used the general account of Pyrrhonism provided in that book as a preliminary to the specific account given both in *PH* II–III and in *AD* I–V. However, this is highly implausible.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, at the beginning of the first book of *AD* Sextus tells us: “The general character of the Skeptical ability has been indicated with the appropriate treatment, having been sketched out both directly and by way of a division of its neighboring philosophies. It remains, next, to explain also its application to the parts [of philosophy]” (*AD* I 1). The way in which Sextus expresses himself here implies that he is referring back to topics that have just been discussed in a preceding part of the same work, so it would be utterly awkward if the passage quoted were a back-reference to *PH* I.

In addition, when Diogenes compares the order of the Ten Modes that he follows in his exposition with the orders in Sextus, Aenesidemus, and Favorinus, he indicates that the Ninth and the Tenth in his list are, in Sextus’ list, the Tenth and the Eighth, respectively (*DL* IX 87). However, the Ninth Mode in Diogenes is also the Ninth in Sextus, whereas the Tenth in Sextus corresponds to the Fifth in Diogenes. Several explanations have been proposed: Diogenes made a mistake, or a scribe miscopied the text, or the order which Diogenes ascribes to Sextus corresponds to the order which the latter followed in his account of the Ten Modes contained in a part of *AD* that is no longer extant.<sup>15</sup> This last explanation gets support from the fact that, at *AD* I 345, Sextus makes reference to his previous discussion of the “Ten Modes of Aenesidemus”. This mention of Aenesidemus can be taken as an indication that Sextus is not referring to *PH* because, in the chapter of *PH* I in which he ex-

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., BROCHARD, *Les sceptiques grecs*, 332 with nn. 3–4; BURY, R. G. (trans.): *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1935, 3 n. a; ROBIN: *Pyrrhon*, 197.

<sup>14</sup> See BAILEY, Alan: *Sextus Empiricus and Pyrrhonian Scepticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 2002, 101.

<sup>15</sup> See esp. BARNES: *Diogenes Laertius*, 4278–4279. See also ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*, 29; BRUNSCHWIG, Jacques: Introduction and notes to Book IX. In: GOULET-CAZÉ, M.-O. (dir.): *Diogène Laërce: Vies et doctrines des philosophes illustres*. Paris: Le livre de poche 1999, 1121 n. 7

pounds the Ten Modes of suspension of judgment (*PH* I 36–163), he does not ascribe them to Aenesidemus, but to “the older skeptics” (*PH* I 36). One may therefore think that, at *AD* I 345, Sextus is referring back to an exposition of the Ten Modes made in a lost part of *AD*.

Finally, as we will see later on, several scholars have maintained that *PH* is later than *AD*. If this is the case, then it is impossible that the passages of *AD* mentioned above refer back to *PH* I – unless one supposes that the references were added after *PH* had been written.

With regard to *AD*, it must also be noted that Jerker Blomqvist has convincingly argued that the work *Skeptika* in ten books to which Diogenes refers at *DL* IX 116 is *AD*, so that the part of this work which is no longer extant would have consisted of five books.<sup>16</sup> This interpretation is supported, first, by the fact that in *AM* Sextus refers to his *Skeptika* (*AM* I 26) or *Skeptika Hypomnēmata* (*AM* I 29, II 106, VI 52) and that these are references to *AD*: I 26 refers back to *AD* III 359–440 (as the parallel at *AD* V 225 shows), I 29 to *AD* I 29–446 (as the parallel at *AD* V 232 shows), II 106 to *AD* II 300–481, and VI 52 to *AD* II 131.<sup>17</sup> Also, the manuscripts, at the beginning and/or the end of *AD* II–V, identify these books as the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth books of Sextus’ *Skeptika* or of his *Hypomnēmata*.<sup>18</sup> There are two other facts that support Blomqvist’s thesis. First, at *AD* I 446 and II 1, Sextus refers to *AD* I as a whole with the word *hypomnēma* (commentary). Second, at *AM* III 116, Sextus speaks of the “commentary against the grammarians and that against the physicists”; the subject dealt with in this passage of *AM* III makes it clear that the commentary against the physicists is *AD* III–IV.

It is worth noting that some scholars have maintained that, in *DL* IX 116, Diogenes is most likely referring to the six books of *AM* plus the five remaining books of *AD*, since these eleven books are grouped together as a single work in the manuscripts. These scholars argue that the reason Diogenes speaks of *ten* books is that books III and IV of *AM* were originally a single book.<sup>19</sup> This hypothesis presents some problems. First, it requires the implausible supposition that the initial part of *AD* was already lost in Diogenes’ time and that he (or his source) owned a copy in which the five extant books of *AD* had already been attached to *AM*. Second, if we concede that this did happen, we must be prepared to accept that Diogenes (or his source) failed to

<sup>16</sup> BLOMQVIST, Jerker: *Die Skeptika des Sextus Empiricus*. In: Grazer Beiträge 2 (1974) 7–14.

<sup>17</sup> See BLOMQVIST: *Die Skeptika*, 11–12.

<sup>18</sup> See BLOMQVIST: *Die Skeptika*, 13–14 with n. 24.

<sup>19</sup> See BROCHARD, *Les sceptiques grecs*, 331 n. 3; JANÁČEK, Karel: *Ta deka tōn Skeptikōn*. In: IRMSCHER, J. and al. (eds.): *Miscellanea critica aus Anlaß des 150 jährigen Bestehens der Verlagsgesellschaft und des graphischen Betriebes B.G. Teubner*. Teubner: Leipzig 1964, 119–121; ALLEN: *The Skepticism*, 2583; BRUNSCHWIG: Introduction and notes, 1145 n. 3. Cf. POLITO, Roverto: *The Sceptical Road. Aenesidemus’ Appropriation of Heraclitus*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004, 23 n. 39.

realize that *AM* and *AD* are two distinct works, and that the passages of *AM* that mention the *Skeptika* refer to *AD* and do not apply this title to *AM* together with the extant books of *AD*.

In *AM* Sextus speaks of certain topics dealt with *en tois Pyrrōneiois* (see *AM* I 282, VI 58, 61). Though one might think that this work *Pyrrōneia* is identical with *PH*, the topics referred to in the first two passages do not correspond to any of the contents of *PH*. Indeed, at *AM* I 282 Sextus points out that in his *Pyrrōneia* he talked about some of the reasons why Pyrrho constantly read Homer's poetry; and at *AM* VI 58 he observes that in that work he dealt with other arguments that prove that sound (*phonē*) is nothing. Neither topic is addressed in *PH*, but note that, although in the remaining books of *AD* there is no discussion of Pyrrho's interest in Homer, there is an argument against the existence of *phonē* (see *AD* II 131). As for *AM* VI 61, in this passage Sextus tells us that, in his *Pyrrōneia*, he showed that time is nothing. In this case, we do find arguments that time does not exist both at *PH* III 136–150 and at *AD* IV 189–247. Now, if we analyze *AM* VI 58 carefully, we come to the conclusion that the *Pyrrōneia* are actually identical with *AD* and, hence, that *AM* VI 61 refers to *AD* IV 189–247 and not to *PH* III 136–150. For at *AM* VI 58 Sextus tells us: “It is also possible to make use of many other arguments concerning [the non-existence of sound], through which, as I said, we went in detail, commenting on them in the *Pyrrōneia* (*en tois Pyrrōneiois hypomnēmatizomenoi diexēimen*)”. Sextus indicates here that, in a previous passage, he said that in his *Pyrrōneia* he had examined the arguments against the existence of sound. That passage is found at *AM* VI 52, where he observes: “That sound is non-existent has been shown by us in the *Skeptical Commentaries* (*en tois skeptikois hypomnēmasi*) on the basis of the testimony of the Dogmatists”. *AM* I 52 and 58 make it plain that the *Skeptika Hypomnēmata* are identical with the *Pyrrōneia*.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is clear that the phrase *en tois Pyrrōneios* presupposes a noun like *hypomnēmasi*. In this regard, note that at *AM* VI 58 Sextus makes use of the related verb *hypomnēmatizein*; something very similar occurs at *AM* I 26, where he mentions the *Skeptika* together with the same verb: *en tois skeptikois hypemnēsamen*. Therefore, it is plain that *AD* was entitled either *Skeptika Hypomnēmata* or *Pyrrōneia Hypomnēmata*; Sextus uses one or the other of these titles interchangeably simply because, though in his extant writings he employs *skeptikos* much more often than *Pyrrōneios*, he takes them as synonyms. If the hypothesis under consideration is correct, then we know that in the lost part of *AD* there was a discussion of (i) Pyrrho's interest in Homer's poetry, and (ii) various arguments against the existence of sound – since whereas at *AD* II 131 we find one argument of this type, at *AM* VI 58

<sup>20</sup> Cf. BLOMQUIST: *Die Skeptika*, 12.

Sextus says that in the *Pyrrōneia* he examined in detail “many other arguments”.

In the chapter of *PH* I in which he examines whether the Academic philosophy is the same as Skepticism, Sextus considers whether Plato may be deemed “purely Skeptical” and points out that “we deal with this more fully in our *Commentaries* (*Hypomnēmata*)”, whereas in *PH* he treats the question in an outline (*PH* I 222). Though some may think that it is impossible to identify the work to which this title refers,<sup>21</sup> it has been suggested that the work in question is the *Skeptical Commentaries*.<sup>22</sup> As already indicated, Sextus refers to *AD* I as a whole with the word *hypomnēma* (*AD* I 446, II 1). The suggestion under consideration is perfectly compatible with the hypothesis about the part of *AD* which is no longer extant. For, just as *AD* I–V is in general terms an expanded version of *PH* II–III, so too the lost part of *AD* must have been an expanded version of what we find in *PH* I. Therefore, we can assume that, in the chapter of the lost part of *AD* in which he examined whether the Academic philosophy is the same as Skepticism, Sextus expounded at more length the reasons why Plato cannot be considered a real Skeptic.

In Sextus’ surviving writings, we find references to other works by him which are no longer extant – i.e., which cannot be identified with those we still possess. In Section 1, I already mentioned the *Medical Commentaries* (*AD* I 202) and the *Empirical Commentaries* (*AM* I 62), which are perhaps identical. Sextus also speaks of his *Commentaries on the Soul*, in which he discussed the Pythagoreans’ metaphysical theory of numbers (*AD* IV 284) and showed that soul is nothing (*AM* VI 55).

Let us now turn to the structure and content of Sextus’ surviving writings, beginning with *PH*. As its title indicates, this work offers an outline of the Pyrrhonian philosophy (see *PH* I 4), and Sextus reminds us of this fact when he treats a subject briefly (see *PH* I 206, 222, 239; II 1, 79, 185, 194; III 1, 114, 167, 279). The first book of *PH* presents what Sextus calls a “general account” of Pyrrhonism: among other things, it offers a definition of Skepticism, explains the criterion and the aim of the Skeptical philosophy, expounds the modes that induce suspension of judgment and the modes against causal explanations, and explains the Skeptical expressions and the differences between Skepticism and its neighboring philosophies. This general account is invaluable because it is the only remaining detailed exposition of the nature of Pyrrhonism by one of its representatives. Books two and three of *PH* are devoted to the “specific account”, i.e., they expound the attack against the three parts into which post-Aristotelian philosophy was commonly divided, namely logic, physics, and ethics. Book two deals with “logic”, which comprises both

<sup>21</sup> This is the view of PELLEGRIN: *Sextus Empiricus*, 183 n. 1.

<sup>22</sup> See ANNAS / BARNES: *Sextus Empiricus*, 58 n. 241.



what we call logic *stricto sensu* and what we call epistemology. Book three discusses both “physics” (*PH* III 1–167) – i.e., metaphysics and philosophy of science – and ethics (*PH* III 168–279). Book three ends with a most interesting chapter that explains why the Pyrrhonist makes use of different types of arguments: just as a doctor employs different kinds of drugs depending on how severe is the affliction of his patient, so too does the Pyrrhonist, wishing out of philanthropic motivation to cure the rashness and conceit of the Dogmatists, employ different kinds of arguments depending on the severity of their disease (*PH* III 280–281).

The first two remaining books of *AD* (*Against the Logicians*) deal with logic; books three and four (*Against the Physicists*) address physics; book five (*Against the Ethicists*) discusses ethics. These five books cover, on the whole, the same subjects as the last two books of *PH*, but they are much lengthier than *PH* II–III, examine a number of important topics which are not included in these two latter books<sup>23</sup> and, more importantly, the outlook of *AD* V seems to be incompatible with that of *PH* III, on which more in Section 3. It is perhaps worth noting that the titles of the extant books of *AD* do not appear in the manuscripts, but have been introduced by modern editors.<sup>24</sup> The choice of the titles, however, can be justified by (i) in the manuscripts *AD* I bears the heading “The first of Sextus’ books against the logicians”, and (ii) in several passages of *AD* we find references to the investigation, the argument, or the refutation against the logicians or the physicists (see *AD* I 25; II 300, 481; IV 1, 77, 310, 351; V 225).<sup>25</sup> To this we may add that (i) at *AM* I 35, Sextus speaks of his refutations against the physicists, and (ii) at *AM* III 116, as we saw, he refers to a commentary against the physicists, both being references to *AD* III–IV.

Finally, the six books of *AM* – which is Sextus’ least read and studied work – deal with the “liberal arts” (a possible translation of the Greek *mathēmata*), namely grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and music. The books are then entitled *Against the Grammarians* (*Pros Grammatikous*), *Against the Rhetoricians* (*Pros Rhētoras*), *Against the Geometers* (*Pros Geōmetras*), *Against the Arithmeticians* (*Pros Arithmētikous*), *Against the Astrologers* (*Pros Astrologous*), and *Against the Musicians* (*Pros Mousikous*); though in the manuscripts the second book actually bears the title *On Rhetoric* (*Peri Rhētorikēs*).<sup>26</sup> That these titles were used by Sextus himself seems to be confirmed by the fact that, in a number of passages of *AM*, he refers to the inves-

<sup>23</sup> For instance, *AD* I 46–260 offers a most valuable survey of the Dogmatists’ views for and against the criterion of truth which is not found in *PH* II.

<sup>24</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, 45; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xi n. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xi n. 5.

<sup>26</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, 45.



tigation, the refutation, the objections, or the commentary against the grammarians, the rhetoricians, *et cetera* (see *AM* I 41, 160; II 48, 52, 72, 113; III 93, 116; IV 34; V 106; VI 28, 37, 56). As to the structure of the work, Sextus first offers a proem (*AM* I 1–8), and then divides the discussion between general arguments against the *mathēmata* (*AM* I 9–40) and particular arguments against each of them which are expounded in the rest of the work. The discussion of grammar (*AM* I 41–320) is almost as long as that of the other *mathēmata* in *AM* II–VI. It is important to note that the outlook adopted in *AM* has been deemed to differ from the official Pyrrhonian stance expounded in Sextus' other surviving writings. This is the view of Janáček, who has considered the perspective of *AM* to be of such a nature as not to be Skeptical. This issue will be discussed more fully in Section 3.

Regarding the order of composition of Sextus' extant works, it must first be noted that most specialists consider *AM* to be the latest of his surviving writings. Although it seems clear that *AM* is later than *AD* because in the former we find back-references either to the extant or to the lost parts of *AD* (see *AM* I 26, 29, 33, 35, 282; II 106; III 116; VI 52, 58, 61), some scholars have argued that these references could be later additions.<sup>27</sup> There is, however, no evidence that supports this hypothesis.

As for the chronological order of *PH* and *AD*, while some scholars have remained neutral,<sup>28</sup> others have maintained that *PH* is earlier than *AD*. This view has been defended particularly in the philological works of Janáček, who has proposed it on the basis of stylistic and terminological comparisons.<sup>29</sup> In his opinion, such comparisons show that the style of *AD* is better than that of *PH*. This order of composition of *PH* and *AD* had already been adopted by Brochard,<sup>30</sup> and Janáček's arguments have been judged as sound by some present-day interpreters.<sup>31</sup> Quite a few scholars, however, have suggested that *AD* actually predates *PH*. This view has been defended especially by Richard Bett,

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Bett, Richard: *La double 'schizophrénie' de M. I–VI et ses origines historiques*. In: DELATTRE, Joëlle (ed.): *Sur le Contre les professeurs de Sextus Empiricus*. Lille: Presses de l'Université de Charles-de-Gaulle–Lille 3 2006, 17–34, at 34.

<sup>28</sup> ALLEN: *The Skepticism*, 2583; BARNES, Jonathan: *Scepticism and the Arts*. In: HANKINSON, R. J. (ed.): *Method, Metaphysics and Medicine. Studies in the Philosophy of Ancient Medicine*. Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing 1988, 53–77, at 55; *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation. Observations on the Scepticism of Sextus Empiricus*. In: HAASE, W. (ed.): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 36.4. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1990, 2608–2695, at 2618 n. 36; *Diogenes Laertius*, 4270 n. 150; *Introduction*, xiii–xiv; FLORIDI, Luciano: *Sextus Empiricus. The Transmission and Recovery of Pyrrhonism*. New York: Oxford University Press 2002, 10, 108 nn. 34–35.

<sup>29</sup> See esp. JANÁČEK: *Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Methods*.

<sup>30</sup> See BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*, 332.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., DUMONT, Jean-Paul: *Le scepticisme et le phénomène*. 2nd ed. Paris: Vrin 1985 (1972), 164 n. 26; ANNAS, Julia: *The Morality of Happiness*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, 360 n. 24; SPINELLI: *Sesto Empirico: Contro gli etici*; BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, 102–103.

who has affirmed that stylistic and terminological considerations are worthless for determining the chronological order of Sextus' surviving writings and has argued that *AD* is earlier than *PH* for three reasons.

The first reason is that there are important similarities between the Skepticism of *AD* V and that adopted by Aenesidemus, as well as significant differences between the latter and the Skepticism expounded in the ethical section of *PH* III. This indicates that the Pyrrhonism found in this section corresponds to a later phase in the Pyrrhonian tradition, since "it is reasonable to suppose that the order of Sextus' own works reflects the order of the versions of Pyrrhonism with which each conforms".<sup>32</sup>

The second reason is that close comparison between the parallel passages of *PH* III and *AD* V shows that the ethical section of the former is the revised and improved version of the latter.<sup>33</sup> Recently, Bett has also argued that the argumentation and layout of *PH* II are, in several respects, superior to those of *AD* I-II, which indicates that the former is a cleaned-up version of the latter.<sup>34</sup> It must be noted that the examination of the parallel passages of *PH* and *AD* has also led other scholars to maintain that *AD* is earlier than *PH*. Concerning some of the parallels between *PH* II and *AD* I-II, David Glidden and Jacques Brunschwig have maintained that the discussions in the former are superior to those in the latter, and that Janáček's stylistic considerations are consistent with *PH* being an improved version of *AD*.<sup>35</sup> With regard to the parallel discussion of signs in *PH* II and *AD* II, Theodor Ebert has affirmed that the latter's version is inferior to the former's, from which he has concluded that the source of *AD* is earlier than that of *PH*.<sup>36</sup> Though Ebert talks about the chronology of the sources of Sextus' writings, it is reasonable to apply his conclusion to these writings themselves – in fact, it is not clear why he restricts his conclusion to the chronology of the sources. Finally, Gisela Striker and Pierre Pellegrin have contended that the reworked versions of *PH* intend to respond to objections raised by the arguments advanced in *AD*.<sup>37</sup>

The third reason that Bett offers to support his view is that, when there are parallel passages between *DL* IX, *AD* V, and *PH* III, the passages of *AD* V are

<sup>32</sup> BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xxiv.

<sup>33</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xi, xxv–xxvi, 257–271, 274–276.

<sup>34</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xxv–xxx.

<sup>35</sup> See GLIDDEN, David: *Skeptic Semiotics*. In: *Phronesis* 28 (1983) 213–255, at 227, 246 n. 24, 253 n. 183; BRUNSCHWIG, Jacques: *Le problème de l'héritage conceptuel dans le scepticisme: Sextus Empiricus et la notion de kritērion*. In: BRUNSCHWIG: *Études sur les philosophies hellénistiques*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1995, 289–319, at 296 n. 1.

<sup>36</sup> See EBERT, Theodor: *The Origin of the Stoic Theory of Signs in Sextus Empiricus*. In: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1987) 83–126, at 91–95, 97, 99–100, 118, 123.

<sup>37</sup> See STRIKER, Gisela: *Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquillity*. In: STRIKER: *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996, 183–195, at 191; PELLEGRIN: *Sextus Empiricus*, 12.

much closer to those of DL IX than the passages of *PH* III.<sup>38</sup> The reason this fact indicates that *AD* is earlier than *PH* is that Diogenes does not use Sextus' writings to compose his account of Pyrrhonism, since there exist major differences between both writers.<sup>39</sup> Hence, in the parallel passages of their works, Diogenes and Sextus must be drawing on one or more common sources.<sup>40</sup> Given that it is clear that *AD* V is closer to the source(s) than *PH* III, it is necessary to suppose that "Sextus composed *M* XI first, with the common source or sources in front of him, and then revised (and contracted) *M* XI, without further direct consultation of the common source or sources, so as to produce the ethical portion of *PH* III".<sup>41</sup>

To Bett's reasons for affirming that *PH* is later than *AD*, we may add another: if the Commentaries to which Sextus refers at *PH* I 222 are the Skeptical Commentaries, and this work is to be identified with *AD*, then we must conclude that *AD* predates *PH*.<sup>42</sup>

Though in his writings Sextus expounds and attacks the positions of a wide range of thinkers and philosophical schools from the Presocratics onwards, his main rivals are the Stoics. The Stoics in question are almost always those from the Early and Middle Stoa.<sup>43</sup> This corresponds, in fact, to a general feature of Sextus' work: most of the philosophers and schools that he mentions and discusses are not contemporary with him. The reason is not that he considered the views of his contemporaries to be of much less import than those of earlier thinkers, and hence not to be worth examining, but that he heavily relied and drew on earlier Pyrrhonian sources. We also know that he directly or indirectly drew on skeptical Academic sources (see, e.g., *AM* II 20, 43), which in part accounts for the central place the Stoics from the first centuries BC occupy in his writings. If this hypothesis is correct, then it could be taken as evidence that Sextus was little more than a copyist, who limited himself to reproducing what he found in his sources. In fact, scholars have, with some recent exceptions, regarded Sextus as a completely unoriginal thinker.<sup>44</sup> But al-

<sup>38</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xxvii.

<sup>39</sup> See esp. BARNES: *Diogenes Laertius*, 4249–4256, 4263–4272; also POLITO: *The Sceptical Road*, 23–24.

<sup>40</sup> See BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xxvi–xxvii, 272–273; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xix.

<sup>41</sup> BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xxvii–xxviii. Bett also thinks that *PH* is later than *AM*, but recognizes that in this case the evidence is less compelling (see BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xi, 225, 266–270; *La double 'schizophrénie'*, 33–34).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. DECLEVA CAZZI: *Sesto e gli scettici*. In: *Elenchos* 13 (1992) 279–327, at 284 n. 11.

<sup>43</sup> An exception is found at *PH* I 65, where Sextus refers to Stoics contemporary with him. On this passage, see esp. DECLEVA CAZZI: *L'elogio del cane*, 318–320.

<sup>44</sup> On the question of Sextus' originality and his reliance on earlier sources, see BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*, 335–340; BARNES: *Scepticism and the Arts*, 57 with n. 11; *Introduction*, xv–xvi, xix; SPINELLI, Emidio: *Sextus Empiricus, the Neighbouring Philosophies and the Sceptical Tradition (again on Pyr. I 220–225)*. In: SIHVOLA, J. (ed.): *Ancient Scepticism and the Sceptical Tradition*. (=

though Sextus never claims to be proposing a new kind of philosophy and although he draws to a very considerable extent on various sources, there are some facts that make it necessary to qualify that opinion. First, we have seen that close comparison between the parallel passages of *AD* and *PH* shows that there are substantial differences between the two works which are to be explained by the fact that Sextus revised and modified the material he took from his sources. Second, in several passages he introduces his own stance on the subject under consideration by using expressions such as “it seems to me”. For example, in the chapter in which he examines the connection between the Empirical and Methodical sects and the Pyrrhonian philosophy, Sextus says that the Skeptic “might rather adopt, as it seems to me (*ōs emoi dokei*), the so-called Method” (*PH* I 236). It is possible that the content of this chapter of *PH* is to be ascribed to Sextus himself, who as a doctor was well acquainted with the positions of the medical sects. Similarly, in the chapter of *PH* I which examines the relationship between the positions of the different Academies and Skepticism, Sextus clearly distinguishes his own view from others’ when discussing Arcesilaus’ outlook. He first points out that “Arcesilaus certainly seems to me (*emoi dokei*) to share the Pyrrhonian discourse, so that his way of thought and ours are almost one and the same” (*PH* I 232), and offers the reasons why this is so. He then refers, without placing trust in what he reports, to the Dogmatic views which, according to others, Arcesilaus espoused (*PH* I 233–234).<sup>45</sup>

## 2. SEXTUS’ RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDICAL SCHOOLS

The evidence presented in the previous section established that Sextus was a doctor. There is nothing surprising in this fact, not only because in antiquity there was a close relationship between philosophy and medicine, but also because quite a few Pyrrhonists were doctors or at least had some kind of medical knowledge.<sup>46</sup> A case worth mentioning is that of Timon, who according to Diogenes taught medicine to his son (*DL* IX 109). If this information is accurate, then the intimate connection between Pyrrhonism and medicine dates back to an early phase in the history of Pyrrhonism, since Timon was the most important of Pyrrho’s immediate pupils. In addition, in Sextus’ exposition of the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus, we find a number of medical examples

Acta Philosophica Fennica 66). Societas Philosophica Fennica: Helsinki 2000, 25–61, at 35–36, 44–46, and n. 39; SVAVARSSON, Svavar Hrafn: *Review of ANNAS / BARNES: Sextus Empiricus*. In: Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2001.02.30; BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xix–xx.

<sup>45</sup> See MACHUCA, Diego: *The Pyrrhonist’s ataraxia and philanthrōpia*. In: *Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2006) 111–139, at 128. Cf. IOPPOLO, Anna Maria: *Sesto Empirico e l’Accademia scettica*. In: *Elenchos* 13 (1992) 169–199, at 179–185.

<sup>46</sup> For a complete list of all the possible Pyrrhonian physicians of whom we have some information, see BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2613 n. 20.



(see *PH* I 44, 51–52, 71, 80, 93, 101–103, 126–127, 131, 133). These may be additions by Sextus, but it is also possible that they formed part of Aenesidemus' original formulation of the Ten Modes, in which case they could be taken as evidence of the latter's interest in medicine.<sup>47</sup> This point is important because Aenesidemus is a key figure in the history of the Pyrrhonian movement, as he was responsible for the revival of Pyrrhonism in the early first century BC.

In his list of Pyrrhonists, Diogenes refers to Sextus as *Sextos ho empeirikos*, i.e., “Sextus the Empiricist” (DL IX 116). The sobriquet “Empiricus” indicates that Sextus was a member of the Empirical school of medicine. Diogenes also says that Sextus' pupil was Saturninus, “himself an Empirical doctor too” (DL IX 116). In addition, in the *Introductio seu medicus* – a work probably dating from the second century AD which the manuscripts erroneously ascribe to Galen – we find a further reference to Sextus as an Empirical doctor. The pseudo-Galen talks about “Menodotus and Sextus, who strengthened [the Empirical school] in precision” (XIV 683 Kühn [K]). Medical Empiricism extended from the third century BC to the second century AD and was, according to the division found particularly in Celsus (first century AD) and Galen (second century AD), one of the three main medical “sects” of the Hellenistic and Imperial ages, the other two being the Rationalist or Dogmatic and the Methodical.<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that, in some passages of his works, Sextus himself refers to these three schools (see *PH* I 236–241; *AD* II 156, 191, 204, 327–328).

That Sextus was an Empiricist seems to be confirmed by the fact that he wrote the *Empirical Commentaries*. One might object that this does not prove by itself that Sextus belonged to the Empirical sect, since we cannot rule out the possibility that in that work he expounded the Empirical stance solely in order to attack it, just as in his extant writings he expounds and attacks the

<sup>47</sup> See DECLEVA CAZZI, Fernanda: *Aenesidemus and the Academy*. In: *The Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992) 176–189, at 178.

<sup>48</sup> On medical Empiricism, see EDELSTEIN, Ludwig: *Empiricism and Scepticism in the Teaching of the Greek Empiricist School*. In: EDELSTEIN: *Ancient Medicine*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1967, 195–203; MUDRY, Philippe: *La préface du De medicina de Celsus*. Lausanne: Imprimerie des Arts et Métiers 1982; *Le scepticisme des médecins empiriques dans le traité De la médecine de Celse: modèles et modalités*. In: VOELKE, A.-J. (ed.): *Le scepticisme antique. Perspectives historiques et systématiques* (= *Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 15). Genève/Lausanne/Neuchâtel 1990, 85–96; FREDE, Michael: *The Ancient Empiricists*. In: FREDE: *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987, 234–260; *The Empiricist Attitude towards Reason and Theory*. In: HANKINSON: *Method, Metaphysics and Medicine*, 79–97; *An Empiricist View of Knowledge: Memorism*. In: EVERSON, S. (ed.): *Companions to Ancient Thought I. Epistemology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, 225–250; HANKINSON, R. J.: *Causes and Empiricism: A Problem in the Interpretation of Later Greek Medical Method*. In: *Phronesis* 32 (1987) 329–348; MATTHEN, Mohan: *Empiricism and Ontology in Ancient Medicine*. In: HANKINSON: *Method, Metaphysics and Medicine*, 98–121; STOK, Fabio: *La scuola medica Empirica a Roma. Problemi storici e prospettive di ricerca*. In: HAASE, W. (ed.): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 37.1. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1993, 600–645.

views held by the Dogmatists in the different areas of philosophy. However, if the *Empeirika Hypomnēmata* had been a work against the Empiricists, its title probably would have been *Pros Empeirikous* (*Against the Empiricists*), for in the previous section we saw that Sextus uses the construction *pros* + accusative to refer to his books against the Dogmatists. In addition, the title *Empeirika Hypomnēmata* bears an evident resemblance to *Skeptika Hypomnēmata*. Given that the aim of this latter work is not to attack the Skeptical philosophy, but to offer an account of it from the point of view of one of its representatives, one may suppose that in the *Empeirika Hypomnēmata* Sextus held a positive view of Empiricism. Even if the two arguments just advanced were deemed inconclusive, we should recognize that the fact that Sextus wrote a work on Empirical medicine is significant when considered in conjunction with the external evidence that he was an Empiricist.

Empiricists and Pyrrhonists were closely related in antiquity, since besides Sextus and Saturninus, we know of other Pyrrhonists who were Empiricists or were deemed to be associated with Empiricism. First, the physician mentioned along with Sextus in the passage of the *Introductio seu medicus* quoted above is Menodotus of Nicomedia, who flourished in the first part of the second century AD. He figures in Diogenes' listing of Pyrrhonian philosophers as the teacher of Herodotus, Sextus' teacher; he is the first in that listing to be labeled an Empirical doctor (DL IX 116). In this respect, it is worth noting that in the *Subfiguratio empirica* (*SE*), which is one of our main sources of information about the epistemology of the Empirical medical school, Galen constantly refers to Menodotus' views (see *SE* 46, 49, 65, 67, 69, 82, 84, 87 Deichgräber [D]). This has led some scholars to think that Galen probably drew on a work by Menodotus to compose *SE*.<sup>49</sup> Second, another Empirical doctor to whom Galen refers in this work is "the Pyrrhonist Cassius" (*SE* 49 D), who is probably the same as "Cassius the Skeptic" mentioned by Diogenes (DL VII 32, also 34). In the Preface to his *De medicina* – which is our earliest source for medical Empiricism – Celsus speaks of Cassius as "the most talented doctor of our age" (*Praefatio* 69). Third, Galen points out that the Empiricists considered Timon as one of their forerunners (*SE* 43 D), which is a recognition that their outlook was in part influenced by Pyrrhonism. Finally, Galen also tells us that Menodotus praised Pyrrho (*SE* 84 D), and compares the Empiricist's attitude with Pyrrho's (*SE* 82–83, 84–85 D).

From a philosophical point of view, medical Empiricism and Pyrrhonism have several features in common. First, in the *De sectis ingredientibus* (*SI*), Galen observes that the Empiricists maintain that the disagreement (*diaphō-*

<sup>49</sup> E.g., BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*, 326, 383; MUDRY: *Le scepticisme des médecins empiriques*, 87. Contra PERILLI, Lorenzo: *Menodoto di Nicomedia e i principi della medicina empirica*. In: BRANCACCI, A. (ed.): *Antichi e moderni nella filosofia di età imperiale*. Napoli: Bibliopolis 2001, 267–297, at 279–285.



nia) among the Dogmatists about non-evident things (*ta adēla*) is unresolvable (*anepikritos*), and that this kind of disagreement is the sign of inapprehensibility (*akatalēpsia*) (*SI* 11–12 Helmreich [H]). Similarly, Celsus points out that the Empiricists affirm that nature is inapprehensible (*non comprehensibilis*) because of the disagreement (*discordia*) that exists among philosophers and doctors about non-evident causes and natural functions, there being no reason to prefer one view to the others (*Praef.* 27–28). The ideas and terminology found in these passages of Galen and Celsus constantly appear in Sextus' account of Pyrrhonism (see, e.g., *PH* I 98, 165, II 32–33, 56, 222, 259, III 6, 56; *AD* I 380; *AM* I 171, 320). Second, in *SE* Galen remarks that the Empiricist adopts with regard to medicine the same attitude the Skeptic adopts with regard to the whole of life: he is in a state of uncertainty as regards non-evident things and follows what is evident as a criterion of action (*SE* 82 D, cf. *PH* I 21–24). Third, Galen also tells us that the Empiricists doubt whether there are causes or not (*De causis procatarcticis* XIII 162), which is in perfect agreement with the Pyrrhonian attitude (see, e.g., *PH* III 17–29). In this regard, it has been suggested that some of Sextus' arguments against causation were taken from the Empiricists.<sup>50</sup> Fourth, both the Empiricists (see Galen, *SI* 10 H; *De causis continentibus* 23 K; pseudo-Galen, *De optima secta* I 149 K, *Definitiones medicae* XIX 396 K) and the Pyrrhonists (see *PH* II 97–133, *AD* II 141–299) reject the indicative sign and accept the recollective or commemorative sign.<sup>51</sup> Fifth, at the beginning of *SE* Galen says that, just like the Sceptics, the Empiricists do not want to be called after a man, but prefer to be known by their frame of mind (*SE* 42 D). Although Sextus observes that “Pyrrhonian” is one of the appellations of the Sceptical stance (*PH* I 7) and Diogenes Laertius points out that the Sceptics were called Pyrrhonian (DL IX 69), the latter reports that Theodosius, in his *Sceptical Summaries*, argued that the Sceptical philosophy should not be called Pyrrhonian. One of the reasons is that, since it is impossible to know another person's state of mind, we cannot know Pyrrho's mental disposition (DL IX 70). Finally, Celsus tells us that, to indicate that they cannot prefer one Dogmatic theory to another, the Empiricists use the expression *cur potius...quam*: “Why, indeed, would someone believe in Hippocrates rather than in Herophilus? Why in this latter rather than in Asclepiades?” (Celsus, *Praef.* 28). As Philippe Mudry has pointed out, the Latin *cur potius...quam* reminds us of the Greek *dia ti mallon tode ē tode* (“why this rather than that?”).<sup>52</sup> This expression is, according to Sextus, a variant of the phrase *ou mallon*, by which the Pyrrhonist expresses that the conflicting opinions, arguments, or theories which he is examining appear to him to be of

<sup>50</sup> BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2614.

<sup>51</sup> On the influence of Empiricism on Sextus' treatment of sign-inference, see Section 3.

<sup>52</sup> MUDRY: *La Préface*, 118; *Le scepticisme des médecins empiriques*, 89.

equal force (*isostheneia*), so that he cannot assent to any of them (see *PH I* 188–191, 213, also *AM I* 315).<sup>53</sup> According to Michael Frede, medical Empiricism not only influenced Sextan Skepticism, but also contributed to the revival of the Pyrrhonian philosophy in the first century BC,<sup>54</sup> which means that Aenesidemian Skepticism, too, was influenced by Empirical epistemology. What seems clear is that, in the complex relationship between Empiricism and Pyrrhonism, the influence was mutual.

There exists, however, a serious difficulty concerning the association of Pyrrhonism with Empiricism. When examining, in the last chapter of *PH I*, the question whether medical Empiricism is the same as Skepticism, Sextus points out that, despite what some claim, “it must be recognized that, if indeed (*eiper*) that [form of] Empiricism makes assertions about the inapprehensibility of non-evident things (*tōn adēlōn*), then it is not the same as Skepticism, nor would it be appropriate for the Skeptic to attach himself to that school” (*PH I* 236). Even though Sextus uses a conditional sentence here, the rest of the passage confirms that he attributes to the Empiricists the assertion that non-evident things are inapprehensible. For he adds that the Skeptic could rather adopt the stance of medical Methodism, a school which arose in the first century AD.<sup>55</sup> The reason is that “it *alone* of the medical schools seems not to speak with rashness about non-evident things, presuming to say whether they are apprehensible or inapprehensible, but, following the things which appear (*ta phainomena*), it gets from them what seems to be beneficial, in accord with the practice of the Skeptics” (*PH I* 237, emphasis added). This is because everything the Methodists say about their therapeutic practice falls within the concept of “compulsion of the affections” (*anagkē pathōn*), which is one of the four aspects of ordinary life, in which the Skeptic participates (*PH I* 237–239). Sextus also tells us that, like the Skeptic, the Methodist makes a non-Dogmatic use of words, as is seen in the case of the terms “common features”, “pervade”, and “indication” (*PH I* 239–240). Finally, after referring to the similarities between Pyrrhonism and Methodism, Sextus concludes that, “judging from these and similar points, it must be said that the way of thought (*agōgē*) of the medical Methodists has some affinity with Skepticism more than the other medical schools and in comparison with them, not absolutely” (*PH I* 241). Thus, in the last chapter of *PH I*, Sextus explicitly distinguishes

<sup>53</sup> For other points of contact between Empiricism and Pyrrhonism, see MUDRY: *La Préface*, 83, 120–121, 190; *Le scepticisme des médecins empiriques*, 90–92.

<sup>54</sup> FREDE: *The Ancient Empiricists*, 245.

<sup>55</sup> On Methodism, see FREDE: *The Method of the So-called Methodical School of Medicine*. In: BARNES, J. / BRUNSCHWIG, J. / BURNEYAT, M. / SCHOFIELD, M. (eds.): *Science and Speculation. Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice*. Cambridge/Paris: Cambridge University Press/Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme 1982, 1–23; PIGEAUD, Jackie: *Les fondements du méthodisme*. In: MUDRY, P. / PIGEAUD, J. (eds.): *Les Écoles médicales à Rome*. Genève: Droz 1991, 7–50.

Skepticism from Empiricism, and although he associates the former with the stance of the Methodical school, he does not affirm a complete identification between Skepticism and Methodism. It is therefore no surprise that Sextus does not claim here to be a member of either medical school. It is significant, however, that he does not mention any point of divergence between Skepticism and Methodism. In this regard, it is also important to note that none of the chapters of the section of *PH* I in which Sextus explains the differences between Skepticism and each of its neighboring philosophies (*PH* I 210–241) is devoted to medical Methodism.

That the Empiricists adopted the kind of negative Dogmatism that Sextus ascribes to them in *PH* is confirmed by our chief sources for medical Empiricism. First, Celsus declares, as we saw, that the Empiricists maintain that nature is inapprehensible (*Praef.* 27). Second, Galen points out that the Empiricists affirm that the unresolvable disagreement among the Dogmatists about non-evident things is the sign of inapprehensibility (*SI* 11–12 H). Finally, Galen tells us that Empiricists and Methodists differ on a key point: the former affirm that non-evident things are unknowable (*agnōsta*), whereas the latter say that they are useless (*achrēsta*) (*SI* 14 H, cf. *SI* 16).

It is important to remark that the point on which Sextus bases his rejection of the claim that Empiricism and Pyrrhonism are identical is one of the points on which he bases his distinction between the neo-Academic and the Skeptical philosophies. When examining the relationship between Skepticism and the so-called New Academy, which is that of Carneades and Clitomachus (*PH* I 220), Sextus observes that one of the differences between them is that the neo-Academics affirm that everything is inapprehensible, whereas the Skeptic thinks that it is possible that some things may be apprehended (*PH* I 226). Similarly, in the first chapter of *PH*, Sextus tells us that the followers of Carneades and Clitomachus, and other Academics, asserted that the things investigated in philosophy are inapprehensible (*PH* I 3).<sup>56</sup> The similarity between the Empirical and the neo-Academic positions as they are portrayed by Sextus is clear. It is worth mentioning two other points of contact between the Empirical sect and the New Academy. First, the Empiricists make use of the notion of “the plausible” (*to pithanon*) (see *SI* 9–10 H; cf. Celsus, *Praef.* 29,

<sup>56</sup> Note that Sextus’ claim that the neo-Academics denied the apprehensibility of things has been deemed to be historically inaccurate by scholars. See, e.g., STRIKER, Gisela: *On the Differences between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics*. In: STRIKER: *Essays*, 135–149, at 136; *Scepticism as a Kind of Philosophy*. In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 83 (2001) 113–129, at 124; BONAZZI, Mauro: *I Pirroniani, l’Accademia e l’interpretazione scettica di Platone*. In: BONAZZI, M. / TRABATTONI, F. (eds.): *Platone e la tradizione platonica. Studi di filosofia antica*. Milano: Cisalpino 2003, 181–219, at n. 81; BRUNSCHWIG, Jacques: *The Beginnings of Hellenistic Epistemology*. In: ALGRA, K. / BARNES, J. / MANSFELD, J. / Schofield, M. (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Paperback edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, 229–259, at 233. Cf. HANKINSON, R. J.: *The Sceptics*. 2nd ed. London/New York: Routledge 1998 (1995), 114–115.

41), which is taken as a criterion by the neo-Academics (see Cicero, *Academica* II 33, 59, 99–105; *PH* I 227–229, *AD* I 166–189, 401, 435–438). Second, the Empiricists affirm that, in the speculations about non-evident matters, it is possible to argue on either side (Celsus, *Praef.* 39: *in utramque partem disseri posse*), which immediately reminds us of the Academic *disputatio in utramque partem* (see *Acad.* II 7, 105, 108, 124, 133; I 46). Such similarities between Empiricism and Academic skepticism have led some scholars to maintain that the skeptical Academy exerted a strong influence on medical Empiricism.<sup>57</sup> It has also been suggested that the existence of this intimate connection between both positions is the reason Sextus could not accept the identification of Pyrrhonism with Empiricism, and that his interest in distinguishing the former from Academic skepticism was stronger than his own relationship with the Empirical school.<sup>58</sup> However, if Sextus was an Empirical doctor and was particularly interested in distinguishing Pyrrhonism from Academic skepticism, why did he not try minimizing the influence of the latter on medical Empiricism instead of affirming that it is not appropriate for the Pyrrhonist to attach himself to the Empirical school? Be that as it may, the existence of a close relationship between Empiricism and Academic skepticism would be a serious obstacle for the claim that Empiricism and Pyrrhonism were closely associated, except that Academic skepticism, in its radical form, has several key features in common with Pyrrhonism and exerted an important influence on it.<sup>59</sup>

There are three other passages of Sextus' work which mention the Empiricists. In the first, he argues that the sign is not among perceptible things because these are unteachable, whereas the sign is taught. He gives as examples the signs used in navigation and astrology and those used by "the Empirical doctors (*tois empeirikōs iatreuousin*), such as flushing and swelling of the vessels and thirst and other things, which the person who has not been taught does not grasp as signs" (*AD* II 204). Unfortunately, this passage does not tell us anything about Sextus' view of medical Empiricism.

The second passage is *AD* II 327–328, where Sextus points out that, concerning proof, "the Dogmatic philosophers and the Rationalist doctors posit it, the Empiricists do away with it, and perhaps also Democritus (...) and the

<sup>57</sup> See EDELSTEIN: *Empiricism and Scepticism*, 198 with n. 11, 201 with n. 19; and esp. MUDRY: *La Préface*, 78, 116, 118, 132, 142, 163; *Le scepticisme des médecins empiriques*, 92–96.

<sup>58</sup> IOPPOLO, Anna Maria: *Accademici e pirroniani nel II secolo D.C.* In: ALBERTI, A. (ed.): *Realtà e ragione. Studi di filosofia antica*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore 1994, 85–103, at 94.

<sup>59</sup> See DECLEVA CAIZZI, Fernanda: *Pirroniani ed Accademici nel III secolo a.C.* In: FLASHAR, H. / GIGON, O. (eds.): *Aspects de la philosophie hellénistique*. Vandœuvres/Genève: Fondation Hardt 1986, 147–183, at 148, 177–178; *Sesto e gli scettici*, 292; STRIKER: *On the Differences; Skepticism as a Kind of Philosophy*, 124, 127–128; MACHUCA, Diego: *Review of* BRITAIN, Charles: *Cicero: On Academic Scepticism* (Indianapolis: Hackett 2006). In: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2006.11.07.



Skeptics have kept it in suspension of judgment, making use of the ‘no more’ expression”. Insofar as the Empiricists deny the existence of proof, they distance themselves from the Skeptics, who suspend judgment. This passage is in agreement with *PH* I 236, because both portray the Empiricists as negative Dogmatists and make it clear that Skepticism is not the same as medical Empiricism. Hence, *AD* II 327–328, too, runs counter to the claim that Sextus was an Empiricist.

The third passage that mentions the Empiricists has puzzled the interpreters. In his discussion of the indicative sign, Sextus points out that “some, such as the Empirical doctors and the Skeptical philosophers, say that [non-evident things] are not apprehended (*mē katalambanesthai*)” (*AD* II 191). Before examining this text, it is worth noting that Galen states that the Empiricists accept neither the existence of indication nor that of the signs of things which are non-evident by nature (*SI* 10 H). Even though he does not explicitly say that the Empiricists deny their existence, the passage seems to indicate that this was the position they adopted. Sextus’ and Galen’s passages are clearly related: if (i) indication is the logical inference from the evident to the non-evident (see *SI* 7, 10 H) and the indicative sign is that by means of which one can apprehend things that are non-evident by nature (see *PH* II 99; *AD* II 151, 154–155), and (ii) the Empiricists consider indication and indicative signs to be non-existent, then (iii) they must affirm that non-evident things are not (and cannot be) apprehended. One may think that, at *AD* II 191, Sextus is implicitly ascribing to the Skeptics the same reasoning and, hence, the same assertion he condemns in *PH*. In fact, this is what some scholars have thought, since they have considered *AD* II 191 to be at odds with *PH* I 236 or to express approval of the Empiricists.<sup>60</sup> There is, however, no real conflict between *AD* II 191 and *PH* I 236. But before explaining why, I would like to point out that, if we accept that at *AD* II 191 Sextus is espousing the Empirical view he rejects in *PH*, we will have an ambiguous attitude towards medical Empiricism, but this time in the very same work. For, as we saw, at *AD* II 327–328 Sextus clearly distances himself from the negative Dogmatism adopted by the Empiricists as regards the existence of proof, whereas at *AD* II 191 he allegedly espouses the Empiricist’s negative Dogmatism as regards the apprehensibility of non-evident things. Hence, even if we grant that Sextus changes his mind at *AD* II 191, we cannot affirm that *AD* in its entirety adopts a view of Empiricism different from that of *PH*.

The reason *AD* II 191 does not run counter to *PH* I 236 is that, in the former passage, Sextus merely remarks that the Skeptic and the Empiricist say that non-evident things are not apprehended, *not* that they are inapprehen-

<sup>60</sup> See ROBIN: *Pyrrhon*, 197; Barnes: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2620 n. 43; FLORIDI: *Sextus Empiricus*, 7.

sible. Only to the extent that both make note of that fact do they have something in common; they differ as to their explanations of it: the Empiricist says that non-evident things are not apprehended because he believes that they are inapprehensible owing to the non-existence of the indicative sign, whereas the Skeptic says that they are not apprehended because, as a matter of fact, he has been unable to apprehend them owing to the apparently equal force or equipollence (*isostheneia*) of the arguments pro and con the existence of the indicative sign. Indeed, Sextus tells us that, when he advances arguments against this kind of sign, his intention is not to prove its nonexistence, but rather to show that the arguments against the reality of the sign appear to be equal in force to those which purport to prove its existence (see *PH* II 103, *AD* II 159–161; cf. *PH* II 133, *AD* II 298).<sup>61</sup> One might object that the Skeptic, too, says that things are inapprehensible (see, e.g., *PH* II 71, III 45, 50; *AD* II 170). However, this difficulty is only apparent, since at *PH* I 200 Sextus explains that, when the Skeptic says “All things are inapprehensible”, he is not making an assertion about how things really are, but is merely reporting that the things he has so far investigated appear to him inapprehensible owing to the equipollence of the opposites.

There is still a difficulty with regard to the Pyrrhonist’s attitude to Empiricism both in *PH* and in *AD*. For we saw that, in both works, Sextus rejects the indicative sign and accepts the recollective sign, and that in this he is in agreement with the Empiricist. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that, in the passages in which Sextus defends the recollective sign, he is not arguing *in propria persona*, but only dialectically. But even if it is the case that he accepts the recollective sign, this in no way entails the nonexistence of key differences between Pyrrhonism and medical Empiricism, which are those that Sextus himself identifies both in *PH* and in *AD*.

As for *AM*, it seems that in this work Sextus adopts a more sympathetic view of medical Empiricism. First, at the beginning of his discussion of astrology, Sextus explains that his assault will not be directed against astronomy, but only against astrology. The reason is that the former, “like agriculture and navigation, is an observation (*tērēsis*) based upon the phenomena, from which it is possible to predict droughts and floods, plagues and earthquakes” (*AM* V 2; cf. *AD* II 270). Sextus seems here to recognize implicitly an affinity between Pyrrhonism and medical Empiricism, since the notion of *tērēsis* was fundamental to the latter. This impression is reinforced by the fact that agriculture and navigation as examples of skills based solely on observation or experience are found in Celsus’ exposition of the Empirical doctors’ stance (see *Praef.* 31–32). However, one cannot exclude the possibility that, in line with the cha-

<sup>61</sup> A similar interpretation of *AD* II 191 is defended by HOUSE: *The Life of Sextus Empiricus*, 237. See also BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*, 331.



meleonic style of argumentation characteristic of Pyrrhonism, Sextus accepts the predicting power of astronomy, agriculture, and navigation solely in order to set a contrast with astrology that makes it possible to undermine it.

Second, in the fifth book of *AM* Sextus also points out that

just as in medicine we have observed (*etērēsamen*) that a puncture of the heart is a cause of death, having observed along with it not only the death of Dion, but also of Theon and Socrates and many others, so too in mathematics [i.e., astrology, as *AM* V 1 makes clear], if it is credible that a particular configuration of the stars is indicative of a certain type of life, then certainly it has been observed not once on one single occasion, but many times on many occasions. (*AM* V 104)

This passage offers a good description of the Empirical stance, and the case chosen – a puncture of the heart as a cause of death – is mentioned by Galen when explaining the position of medical Empiricism (*SE* 58 H).<sup>62</sup> It seems that, in the passage quoted, Sextus is describing his own medical experience, in which case he is recognizing a connection between his outlook and that of the Empiricists'. Once again, however, we cannot completely discount the possibility that he is using the medical example in question only to argue against astrology.

Now, if one thinks that in the two passages quoted Sextus is not merely arguing dialectically and accepts the common view that *AM* is the last of his surviving writings, then one may suppose that, by the time he wrote *AM*, he had already modified his view of Empiricism. In fact, Jean-Paul Dumont has maintained that in *AM* Sextus “perçoit déjà la première possibilité d’une induction empirique qui l’éloigne de plus en plus de l’école méthodiste”.<sup>63</sup> In general, scholars have adopted the view that in *AM* Sextus adopts an outlook which amounts to that of medical Empiricism, as is seen especially in his use of the notions of *tērēsis* and *paratērēsis*.<sup>64</sup> It must be emphasized that, even if it is the case that in *AM* Sextus accepts the Empirical notion of observation as a secure foundation on which to base certain *technai*, this does not in any way imply his acceptance of the view that non-evident things are inapprehensible or of the view that there is no proof. Hence, crucial differences between Pyrrhonism and Empiricism still remain.

I would like to note that, to solve the conundrum about Sextus’ relationship with Empiricism, several scholars have suggested that, at *PH* I 236, he does not reject Empiricism *tout court*, but only a particular form of Empiri-

<sup>62</sup> The same example is also found in Sextus’ account of the recollective sign (see *AD* II 153, 158).

<sup>63</sup> DUMONT: *Le scepticisme et le phénomène*, 164 n. 26. See also DESBORDES, Françoise: *Le scepticisme et les ‘arts libéraux’: une étude de Sextus Empiricus, Adversus Mathematicos I–VI*. In: VOELKE: *Le scepticisme antique*, 167–179, at 170.

<sup>64</sup> See BARNES: *Scepticism and the Arts*, 69–70; SPINELLI: *Sesto Empirico: Contro gli astrologi*, 49–51; *Non scire per causas...* In: SPINELLI: *Questioni scettiche. Letture introduttive al pirronismo antico*. Roma: Lithos 2005, 81–113, at 101–102.

cism.<sup>65</sup> This view has been defended particularly by Michael Frede, who has claimed that Sextus only criticizes the early Empiricists' Dogmatic stance and that medical Empiricism was radically transformed under the influence of Pyrrhonists such as Menodotus, Theodas and Sextus.<sup>66</sup> A few remarks about Frede's interpretation are in order. First, at *PH* I 236 Sextus does not mention any difference within the Empirical sect with respect to the view that non-evident things are inapprehensible, but ascribes this view to the sect as a whole. Likewise, at *AD* II 327–328 he does not say that *only* some Empiricists deny the existence of proof. Third, Sextus was certainly better acquainted with the position of later Empiricists than with that of the early Empiricists, so that it is reasonable to assume that his criticisms were directed particularly against the former. Fourth, if Sextus was one of the Pyrrhonists who saw the need to revise the Empirical stance and did so, it is not clear why he does not tell us, at *PH* I 236–241, that there is a form of Empiricism compatible with Pyrrhonism. At *PH* I 237, he explicitly says that the Methodical school seems to be the *only* medical sect that refrains from saying whether non-evident things are apprehensible or inapprehensible. Fifth, even though Celsus predates the Empiricism of the second century, still it is significant that he attributes to the Empiricists, without differentiating between them, the affirmation that things are inapprehensible. Finally, Galen, who is well acquainted with the Empiricism of the second century, ascribes to all Empiricists, not only to some of them, the view that non-evident things are unknowable or inapprehensible.

In the previous section, we saw that the evidence found in Sextus' works makes it clear that he was a physician, which is in agreement with the external evidence. As regards his affiliation to one of the medical sects, in this section we have shown, first, that although some sources affirm that he was an Empirical doctor and although some passages of his works may be interpreted as expressing a sympathetic view of Empiricism, Sextus emphasizes essential differences between the Empiricist and the Pyrrhonist, and says that it would not be appropriate for the latter to attach himself to the Empirical sect. Second, even though he recognizes strong affinities between Methodism and Pyrrhonism, he does not equate the two and does not claim to belong to the Methodical school.

<sup>65</sup> See EDELSTEIN: *Empiricism and Scepticism*, nn. 8, 24; FREDE: *The Ancient Empiricists*, 252; HANKINSON: *Causes and Empiricism*, 347; ALLEN: *The Skepticism*, 2587; *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Scepticism: Sextus Empiricus' Treatment of Sign-inference*. In: ALLEN: *Inference from Signs. Ancient Debates about the Nature of Evidence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 2001, 87–146, at 90–91; BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, ix; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, ix; BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, 93–94.

<sup>66</sup> See FREDE: *The Ancient Empiricists*, 251–252, also 248–249, 256–257; *The Empiricist Attitude*, 95–96; *An Empiricist View*, 250. Cf. BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, 93–94, who surprisingly does not mention Frede's papers.

## 3. VARIETIES OF SKEPTICISM IN SEXTUS' OEUVRE

In Sextus' works, it is possible to detect different approaches and positions which seem to correspond to differing varieties of Skepticism and to reflect his use of various sources to compose his writings. These sources are only sometimes identifiable due to a general trait of his works: they rarely mention the names of other Pyrrhonists and only incidentally provide us with scant information about the history of Pyrrhonism.<sup>67</sup> In this section, the most significant differences and tensions detectable in Sextus' oeuvre will be examined.

Let us begin with the different sets of modes by means of which the Skeptic seeks to induce suspension of judgment (*epochē*). In book one of *PH*, Sextus expounds the Ten Modes (*PH* I 36–163) and the Five Modes (*PH* I 164–177). These two sets of modes differ in nature: whereas each of the Ten Modes applies to a particular conflict of perceptual appearances or opinions, the Five Modes are thematically neutral and of universal application, since they can be employed in relation to any assertion or doctrine.<sup>68</sup> In this case, it is possible to identify Sextus' sources. First, as we saw, at *PH* I 36 he ascribes the Ten Modes to “the older Sceptics”, and at *AD* I 345 he speaks of “the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus” (*tous para tō Ainēsidēmō deka tropous*). As already noted, we also know from Diogenes that Aenesidemus made use of the Ten Modes (*DL* IX 87).<sup>69</sup> Second, Sextus ascribes the Five Modes to “the more recent Sceptics” (*PH* I 164), whereas Diogenes attributes them to Agrippa (*DL* IX 88), of whom we know nothing, except that he probably lived in the first century BC. It must be noted that Sextus also expounds the Two Modes of suspension of judgment (*PH* I 178–179), but they actually work by the application of three of the Five Modes and most likely derive from Agrippa.<sup>70</sup> Now, both the fact that the Aenesideman and the Agrippan modes differ in character and the fact that they were proposed by Sceptics belonging to different phases of the Pyrrhonian tradition indicate that they correspond to differing types of

<sup>67</sup> Cf. DECLEVA CAIZZI: *Sesto e gli scettici*, 279–280; *Pirrone, pirroniani, pirronismo*. In: BURKERT, W. / GEMELLI MARCIANO, L. / MATELLI, E. / ORELLI, L. (eds.): *Fragmentsammlung philosophischer Texte der Antike – Le raccolte dei frammenti di filosofi antichi*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1998, 336–353, at 336.

<sup>68</sup> On the Ten Modes, see esp. ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*; also STRIKER, Gisela: *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus*. In: STRIKER: *Essays*, 116–134; GAUKROGER, Stephen: *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus and the Myth of Ancient Scepticism*. In: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 3 (1995) 371–387; HANKINSON: *The Sceptics*, chapter IX; SPINELLI, Emidio: *I dieci tropi scettici*. In: SPINELLI: *Lecture introduttive*, 27–60. On the Five Modes, see esp. BARNES, Jonathan: *The Toils of Scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990; also HANKINSON: *The Sceptics*, chapter X.

<sup>69</sup> Scholars have usually thought that Aenesidemus was not strictly the author of the Ten Modes, but their compiler.

<sup>70</sup> See BARNES: *The Toils of Scepticism*, 116–119.

Skepticism.<sup>71</sup> It is important to remark, however, that although the Ten Modes and the Five Modes differ in their scope and force, they are not incompatible and their joint presence in Sextus' work does not threaten the coherence of his Pyrrhonism.

A second case to be mentioned concerns the vexed question of the scope of the Pyrrhonian *epochē*, namely, is it directed solely towards philosophico-scientific beliefs or does it extend over all beliefs, including those of ordinary people? This difference of scope corresponds to the distinction between an "urbane" Pyrrhonism, which is a moderate or mitigated form of skepticism that does not call into question everyday beliefs, and a "rustic" Pyrrhonism, which is a radical or extreme form of skepticism that undermines all beliefs alike, no matter whether they are theoretical or ordinary. The term "urbane" was coined by Jonathan Barnes, while the term "rustic" was taken by him from Galen, who speaks of the *agroikopyrrōneioi*, i.e., "rustic Pyrrhonists" (*De differentia pulsuum* VIII 711 K, *De praenotione ad Posthumum* XIV 628).<sup>72</sup> In drawing this distinction, Barnes was referring to a debate between Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede in which the former affirmed that Sextus' Pyrrhonism is rustic and the latter that it is urbane.<sup>73</sup> Restricting his analysis to *PH*, Barnes has clearly shown that both kinds of Pyrrhonism can be found in that work and has proposed two possible explanations of this fact. The first accounts for the coexistence of both types of Pyrrhonism in the light of Sextus' description of the Skeptic's philanthropic therapy at *PH* III 280–281: depending on the seriousness of a person's disease of Dogmatism, the Skeptic will make use of different kinds of arguments which vary in their power and scope.<sup>74</sup> The second possible explanation<sup>75</sup> is that, to compose his writings, Sextus drew on various sources which presented different forms of Pyrrhonism.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> This fact is not surprising, since we know that ancient Pyrrhonism was not a uniform philosophical stance, but had a history and therefore underwent significant changes. On this, see BROCHARD: *Les sceptiques grecs*; BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2617; *Diogenes Laertius*, 4247 n. 30; BETT, *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xix–xxiii; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xiv–xv, xix–xxiv; and esp. his *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Bett 2000.

<sup>72</sup> See BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2618.

<sup>73</sup> See BURNYEAT, Myles: *Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?* In: BURNYEAT, M. / FREDE, M. (eds.): *The Original Sceptics. A Controversy*. Indianapolis: Hackett 1997, 25–57; *The Sceptic in his Place and Time*. In: BURNYEAT / FREDE: *The Original Sceptics*, 92–126; FREDE, Michael: *The Sceptic's Beliefs*. In: BURNYEAT / FREDE: *The Original Sceptics*, 1–24; *The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Possibility of Knowledge*. In: BURNYEAT / FREDE: *The Original Sceptics*, 127–151. See also GLIDDEN: *Skeptic Semiotics*; STOUGH, Charlotte: *Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion*. In: *Phronesis* 29 (1984) 137–164; HANKINSON, R. J.: *Values, Objectivity and Dialectic; The Sceptical Attack on Ethics: its Methods, Aims, and Success*. In: *Phronesis* 39 (1994) 45–68, at 53, 67–68; FINE, Gail: *Sceptical Dogmata: Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I 13. In: *Méthexis* 13 (2000) 81–105; BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, chapters 7–9, 11.

<sup>74</sup> See BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2691–2692.

<sup>75</sup> See BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2690; *Introduction*, xxiii–xxiv.



Another tension has to do with Sextus' discussion of sign-inference (*PH* II 97–133, *AD* II 141–299), in which he distinguishes between the commemorative or recollective sign (*hypomnēstikon sēmeion*) and the indicative sign (*endeiktikon sēmeion*).<sup>76</sup> The recollective sign is defined as “that which, having been evidently co-observed with the signified, at the same time as it manifests itself, while the other thing remains non-evident, leads us to a recollection of the thing which was co-observed with it but is now not manifesting itself evidently” (*PH* II 100, cf. *AD* II 152). For its part, the indicative sign is that which “signifies that of which it is a sign not by having been evidently co-observed with the signified, but from its own nature and constitution” (*PH* II 101, cf. *AD* II 154). The problem arises because, although Sextus points out that the Pyrrhonist rejects the indicative sign and accepts the recollective sign, as a matter of fact (i) some of the arguments he advances against signification seem to undermine confidence not only in the indicative sign but also in the recollective sign, and (ii) the endorsement of the recollective sign presupposes that there are evident things which are apprehended directly, but this is something about which the Pyrrhonist suspends judgment (see *PH* II 95; *AD* I 25–26, II 141–142). This tension is related to the previous one, since it may be explained by the rustic and urbane tendencies that coexist in Sextus' writings: the rustic Pyrrhonist rejects all signs alike, whereas the urbane Pyrrhonist only rejects the indicative sign because it is a theoretical construction accepted by Dogmatic philosophers and Rationalist doctors (see *AD* II 156).<sup>77</sup> Following Robert Philippson, James Allen has argued that the aforementioned distinction between two kinds of signs did not originate in the philosophical arena, but in the dispute between the Rationalist and the Empirical doctors, and that Sextus applied to philosophical theories of signification a distinction which is therefore alien to them.<sup>78</sup> In Allen's view, in Sextus' discussion of signs “two different controversies have been conflated: the Empiricists' battle with Rationalism and the Pyrrhonists' battle with dogmatic philosophy”.<sup>79</sup> The endorsement of the recollective sign and the arguments that undermine only the indicative sign are Empirical and hence correspond to the first controversy,<sup>80</sup> whereas the arguments that are effective against both kinds of sign

<sup>76</sup> On Sextus' discussion of signs, see GLIDDEN: *Skeptical Semiotics*; EBERT: *The Origin of the Stoic Theory of Signs*; ALLEN, James: *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Scepticism: Sextus Empiricus' Treatment of Sign-inference*. In: ALLEN: *Inference from Signs. Ancient Debates about the Nature of Evidence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 2001, 87–146.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. BARNES: *Pyrrhonism, Belief and Causation*, 2646–2649.

<sup>78</sup> See ALLEN: *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Scepticism*. Allen's interpretation has forcefully been challenged by EBERT, Theodor: *La théorie du signe entre la médecine et la philosophie*. In: KANY-TURPIN, J. (ed.): *Signe et Prédiction dans l'Antiquité*. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne 2005, 51–63. Cf. GLIDDEN: *Skeptical Semiotics*, 225–229, 236–238.

<sup>79</sup> ALLEN: *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Scepticism*, 108.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. GLIDDEN: *Skeptical Semiotics*, 228–232, 242.

and the suspension of judgment about evident things are Pyrrhonian and therefore correspond to the second controversy. If Allen's interpretation is correct, then in Sextus' treatment of sign-inference it is possible to detect two distinct approaches, the one corresponding to the kind of skeptical stance espoused by the Empirical doctors, the other corresponding to the more radical skepticism adopted by the Pyrrhonists – or at least by part of them. Now, if one considers the Empiricists to be urbane skeptics – as does Hankinson<sup>81</sup> – then the tension under consideration may be taken, once again, as a subclass of that between the urbane and the rustic forms of Pyrrhonism. However, we may perhaps free Sextus from this third tension if, like Glidden, we maintain that his endorsement of recollective signs is just another case of the application of the dialectical strategy that characterizes the Pyrrhonian argumentation: the Pyrrhonist makes use of any argument or doctrine at his disposal in order to counter the objections directed against him, but without endorsing such argument or doctrine *in propria persona*.<sup>82</sup>

A further tension detectable in Sextus' writings concerns his discussion of ethics. Sextus tells us that the ethical part of philosophy “seems to deal with the distinction among good, bad, and indifferent things” (*PH* III 168), and that “almost all unanimously suppose that ethical inquiry is about the distinction between things good and bad” (*AD* V 2). As we saw in Section 1, Sextus addresses ethics in the second part of book three of *PH* and in book five of *AD*, but there are also passages from book one of *PH* that are relevant to this matter, among which is the exposition of the Tenth Mode of Aenesidemus. In at least part of those texts, Sextus adopts what may be called the official Pyrrhonian stance, namely, to refrain from making any positive or negative assertion about the nature and existence of the good, the bad, and the indifferent. To be more precise, he suspends judgment about (i) what the good, the bad, and the indifferent are, (ii) what things these notions apply to, and (iii) whether there is anything good, bad, or indifferent by nature. According to Sextus, by suspending judgment – not only about ethical matters, but about all matters – the Skeptic attains the states of undisturbedness (*ataraxia*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*). At variance with this official Pyrrhonian stance, however, some passages of *AD* V seem to attribute to the Pyrrhonist both a type of negative Dogmatism and a type of moral realism. In those passages, the Pyrrhonist seems to adopt *in propria persona* three beliefs which are incompatible with a thoroughgoing Skepticism, namely: (i) that nothing is by nature or invariably good, bad, or indifferent, (ii) that things can be deemed to be objectively good, bad, or indifferent only in relation to a person in specific circumstances,

<sup>81</sup> See HANKINSON: *Causes and Empiricism*, 347–348.

<sup>82</sup> See GLIDDEN: *Skeptic Semiotics*, 238–243.



and (iii) that the attainment of *ataraxia* and *eudaimonia* is possible only if one holds (i) and (ii) (see *AD V* 69–78, 114, 118, 130, 140, 185).

Most of the interpreters that have examined the Pyrrhonism expounded in *AD V* have adopted either of two views. Some have maintained that *AD V* ultimately presents the same type of Pyrrhonism as *PH*.<sup>83</sup> Others have held that *AD V* differs from the Pyrrhonism of *PH* and that it is incompatible with the Pyrrhonian outlook.<sup>84</sup> Distancing himself from both views, Bett has propounded an original interpretation of the Skepticism of *AD V*. He admits that this book expounds a position different from the Skepticism defended in *PH*, but affirms that “this is not in itself grounds for criticism; there is no reason why *M XI* should be obliged to conform to the canons of *PH*. *M XI*’s distinctive view is consistent in its own terms, and can be legitimately understood as a variety of skepticism”.<sup>85</sup> In his view, this form of Skepticism corresponds to that espoused by Aenesidemus, whereas the outlook expounded in *PH* and the other four books of *AD* conforms to a variety of Skepticism that was later introduced in the history of Pyrrhonism particularly by Agrippa.<sup>86</sup> Though Bett’s interpretation is forcefully argued for, it faces some problems, the most important of which is that it requires one to accept that, in *AD*, the key Pyrrhonian notion of *epochē* takes on two radically incompatible senses.<sup>87</sup>

A final case concerns *AM*, in which it is possible to detect the following three tensions. First, even though the general arguments Sextus puts forth at *AM I* 9–40 undermine all forms of teaching and learning and all *mathēmata* alike, in some passages he indicates that his assault is directed only against cer-

<sup>83</sup> MCPHERRAN, Mark: *Pyrrhonism’s Arguments against Value*. In: *Philosophical Studies* 60 (1990) 127–142; ANNAS: *The Morality of Happiness*; HANKINSON: *Values, Objectivity and Dialectic*; NUSSBAUM, Martha: *Skeptic Purgatives: Disturbance and the Life without Belief*. In: NUSSBAUM: *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994, 280–315; SPINELLI: *Sesto Empirico: Contro gli etici*.

<sup>84</sup> ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*; ANNAS, Julia: *Doing without Objective Values: Ancient and Modern Strategies*. In: EVERSON, S. (ed.): *Companions to Ancient Thought IV. Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, 193–220; STRIKER: *The Ten Modes; Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquillity*; SVAVARSSON, Svavar Hrafn: *Pyrrho’s Undecidable Nature*. In: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2004) 249–295.

<sup>85</sup> BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, xiii.

<sup>86</sup> See BETT, Richard: *Sextus’s Against the Ethicists: Scepticism, Relativism or Both?* In: *Apeiron* 27 (1994) 123–161; *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, introduction and commentary; *Pyrrho*, chapter 4, esp. section 3; *La double ‘schizophrénie’*, 29–31. Let us add that Bett has recently considered it possible that *AD I–II* contain traces of the Aenesideman variety of Pyrrhonism, namely, negative arguments purporting to establish that the Dogmatists’ logical and epistemological theories are wrong. He claims, however, that in *AD I–II* that earlier material is used to counterbalance the positive arguments advanced by the Dogmatists in order to induce suspension of judgment (see BETT: *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, xxiii–xxiv).

<sup>87</sup> For critical discussion of Bett’s interpretation, see ANNAS, Julia: *Review of BETT: Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*. In: *The Philosophical Review* 108 (1999) 137–139; MACHUCA, Diego: *Reseña de BETT: Pyrrho*. In: *Méthexis* 14 (2001) 155–158, at 157–158; *The Pyrrhonist’s ataraxia and philanthrōpia*, 121–123.

tain kinds of *mathēmata* or a certain way of conceiving them. Thus, in *AM I* Sextus distinguishes between two sorts of grammar, and cautions us that his attack is aimed at theoretical grammar, not at what he calls “grammaticistic”, since this is most useful for life (*AM I* 44–56). Likewise, in *AM V* he draws a distinction between astrology and astronomy, and points out that his onslaught is directed only against the former (*AM V* 1–2); and in *AM VI* he distinguishes between music as a science and music as an instrumental skill, and indicates that his attack is aimed at the former (*AM VI* 1–3). In addition, Sextus points out that, unlike the Epicureans, he will not criticize poetry (*AM I* 299), and mentions other *mathēmata* or *technai* which the Skeptic appears to accept because they are useful for life, namely medicine, navigation, and agriculture (see *AM I* 51, *V* 2, cf. *II* 13). Second, although Sextus distinguishes the Pyrrhonists’ type of argumentation from that of the Epicureans in that the latter purport to establish the uselessness of the *mathēmata* for attaining wisdom, whereas the former consider this to be a Dogmatic assertion (*AM I* 1, 5), at times he seems to appropriate the Epicurean arguments against the *mathēmata* (e.g., *AM I* 49–55, 171–172, 320, *V* 47). Finally, even though as a Pyrrhonist Sextus is supposed to suspend judgment on the *mathēmata* (*AM I* 6–7, 28, 144, 171–173, *II* 99), a large part of his arguments have a negative Dogmatic conclusion, namely, that the *mathēmata* do not exist (e.g., *AM I* 90; *II* 60, 88; *VI* 5, 59, 61).

Scholars have adopted different views on the character of *AM*. First, Janáček has maintained that in this work Sextus abandons the Skepticism he espouses in his other surviving writings,<sup>88</sup> and Guido Cortassa has affirmed that Sextus does not apply the Skeptical way of thought (*hē skeptikē agōgē*) to his discussion of the *mathēmata*.<sup>89</sup>

For his part, Jonathan Barnes has explained the joint presence of a radical and a moderate form of Skepticism by having recourse to the two possible ways he proposes to account for the coexistence of the rustic and the urbane varieties of Pyrrhonism in *PH*. The first explanation is that the above-mentioned “schizophrenia” is the result of Sextus’ use of both Pyrrhonian and Epicurean sources. The second explanation, favored by Barnes, consists in drawing an analogy between the Pyrrhonist’s arguments and the physician’s drugs: the Pyrrhonist will make use of different kinds of argumentative drugs depending on the seriousness of his Dogmatic patient’s condition.<sup>90</sup>

In general, interpreters have maintained that the outlook of *AM* does not (completely) differ from that of *PH* and *AD*, and hence that it is genuinely

<sup>88</sup> See JANÁČEK: *Sextus Empiricus’ Sceptical Methods*, 87, 133.

<sup>89</sup> See CORTASSA, Guido: *Sesto Empirico e gli ‘egkuklia mathēmata’: un’introduzione a Sext. Emp. Adv. Math. I–VI*. In: GIANNANTONI, G. (ed.): *Lo scetticismo antico*. vol. II. Napoli: Bibliopolis 1981, 713–724, at 719–720.

<sup>90</sup> See BARNES: *Scepticism and the Arts*, 73–77.

Pyrrhonian.<sup>91</sup> They have argued (i) that the divergences between *AM* and Sextus' other extant writings are to be explained by their different subject matter, not by their supposedly differing outlooks; (ii) that Sextus' approach to grammar and rhetoric is in agreement with his explanation, at *PH* I 187–208, of the sense in which the Skeptical expressions or utterances (*phonaî*) must be interpreted; (iii) that his attitude towards *mathēmata* such as grammaticistic and astronomy is consistent with the Skeptical *didaskalia technōn*, which *PH* I 21–24 presents as one of the four aspects that constitute the Pyrrhonist's criterion of action; (iv) that the arguments with negative conclusions are not designed to establish these conclusions, but to counterbalance the beliefs of “the learned”, so as to induce suspension of judgment; (v) that at least part of Sextus' negative arguments against the *mathēmata* are merely *ad hominem*; and (vi) that in *AM* Sextus makes use of terminology and types of argument – such as the Modes of Agrippa – that are characteristic of Pyrrhonism as expounded in his other extant works.

Finally, Bett has recently proposed a new interpretation of *AM*. In his opinion, the tensions detectable in this work are to be explained by Sextus' drawing on different Pyrrhonian sources and by his failure to adapt fully earlier Skeptical arguments to his later version of Pyrrhonism. Those arguments would have the same origin as the negative arguments found in the fifth book of *AD*.<sup>92</sup>

From what has been said about the differences and tensions that can be detected in Sextus' writings, it would seem that we must draw the following conclusion: Sextus drew on different sources which expounded different varieties of Pyrrhonism, and he seems to have confined himself to reproducing what he found in them without trying to integrate those differing types of Pyrrhonism. If this were so, he would have been a mere copyist as far as his use of those sources is concerned. However, given the differences that exist between *AD* V and the ethical section of *PH* III, we must rather conclude that, although he heavily relied and drew on earlier sources, at least in some cases he reworked the material he took from them, possibly in order to adapt it to various purposes.

<sup>91</sup> See KRENTZ, Edgar: *Philosophic Concerns in Sextus Empiricus, Adversus Mathematicos I*. In: *Phronesis* 7 (1962) 152–160; DESBORDES: *Le scepticisme et les 'arts libéraux'*; HANKINSON: *The Sceptics*, 251–256; SLUITER, Ineke: *The Rhetoric of Scepticism: Sextus against the Language Specialists*. In: SIHVOLA: *Ancient Scepticism*, 93–123; BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, 105–109; PELLEGRIN: *Introduction*. In: PELLEGRIN / DALIMIER / DELATTRE / DELATTRE / PÉREZ: *Sextus Empiricus*, 9–47, at 10–27; PELLEGRIN: *De l'unité du scepticisme sextien*. In: DELATTRE: *Sur le Contre les professeurs*, 35–45; MACHUCA, Diego: *Review of PELLEGRIN / DALIMIER / DELATTRE / DELATTRE / PÉREZ: Sextus Empiricus*. In: *Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004) 503–510, at 505–509.

<sup>92</sup> See BETT: *La double 'schizophrénie'*.

## 4. SEXTUS' LEGACY

The history of Pyrrhonism did not end with Sextus and his immediate successors, since it has had a tremendous impact on both early modern and contemporary philosophy. First, historians of ideas have shown that the Renaissance rediscovery of Sextus' works played a key role in the formation of early modern thought. Second, many contemporary epistemologists have vigorously discussed the Pyrrhonian arguments against the rational justification of our beliefs, even if most of them are not well acquainted with the writings of Sextus and the other sources for Pyrrhonism. In addition, Pyrrhonian ideas have recently been used to develop a new kind of ethical skepticism.

Before dealing with the influence of Pyrrhonism on both early modern and contemporary philosophy, a few words about its reception in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages are in order. As regards the former period, it must first be noted that Pyrrhonian arguments are detectable in the work of the third-century Neoplatonist Plotinus.<sup>93</sup> Second, knowledge of Pyrrhonism is attested in the fourth century in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and the emperor Julian.<sup>94</sup> There is also evidence of knowledge of the Pyrrhonian philosophy in Neoplatonic commentators of the fifth and sixth centuries, namely Syrianus, Ammonius, Asclepius, Philoponus, Olympiodorus, Elias, and David.<sup>95</sup> It is important to remark, however, that in Late Antiquity Pyrrhonism lost its force and influence as a kind of philosophy.

As for the Middle Ages, knowledge of Pyrrhonism is also attested, of which two examples may suffice. First, Photius, the ninth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, offers in his *Bibliotheca* an invaluable summary of Aenesidemus' lost *Pyrrhonian Discourses*. Second, three early-fourteenth-century manuscripts of a Latin translation of *PH* by Niccolò da Reggio are extant, but this translation appears to have had no diffusion. In general, in the Middle Ages direct acquaintance with Pyrrhonian texts was rare, and interest in and discussion of Skeptical arguments were very limited, with the result that Pyrrhonism had no real impact on medieval thought.<sup>96</sup> In that period, Academic

<sup>93</sup> See O'MEARA, Dominic: *Scepticism and Ineffability in Plotinus*. In: *Phronesis* 45 (2000) 240–251.

<sup>94</sup> See ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*, 18; FLORIDI: *Sextus Empiricus*, 12–13.

<sup>95</sup> See FLÜCKIGER, Hansueli: *The ephektikoi in the Commentators*. In: BRANCACCI, A. (ed.): *Philosophy and Doxography in the Imperial Age*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore 2005, 113–129.

<sup>96</sup> See SCHMITT, Charles: *The Rediscovery of Ancient Skepticism in Modern Times*. In: BURNYEAT, M. (ed.): *The Skeptical Tradition*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press 1983, 226–251, at 226–227 with n. 6; FLORIDI: *Sextus Empiricus*, 13–25, 63–69.

skepticism was better known than Pyrrhonism thanks especially to Augustine's *Contra Academicos*.<sup>97</sup>

It is only from the Renaissance onwards that Pyrrhonism began to recover the force it had had particularly from the first century BC to the second century AD. The pioneering book on the influence of Pyrrhonism on early modern thought is *The History of Scepticism* by Richard Popkin. Since its first edition, which spans the period from Erasmus to Descartes,<sup>98</sup> through the second, which extends the investigation to Spinoza,<sup>99</sup> to the last, which reaches back to Savonarola and forward to Bayle,<sup>100</sup> this book has had an enormous impact on historians of early modern thought. Popkin's central thesis is that early modern philosophy developed out of a skeptical crisis which first arose in the religious sphere with the quarrels between Catholics and Reformers about the correct rule of faith, and then spread as to cover philosophy and the sciences. The leading role in this crisis was played by the re-discovery and revival of ancient Pyrrhonian arguments, thanks especially to the publication of Henri Éstienne's Latin translation of *PH* in 1562 and of Gentian Hervet's Latin translation of *AM* and *AD* in 1569.<sup>101</sup> Hence, that skeptical crisis was more specifically what Popkin liked to call a *crise pyrrhoniennne*. According to his interpretation, the history of early modern philosophy is, at least to a very large extent, the history of the different strategies which early modern thinkers adopted to deal with the Pyrrhonian crisis. The view just outlined was also developed by Popkin in dozens of essays on various early modern thinkers, some of which were collected in his *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*.<sup>102</sup>

There have been two main reactions to Popkin's position. On the one hand, several scholars have sought to reinforce it either by further investigating the impact that skepticism had on the views of figures already studied by him, or by revealing its influence on other early modern thinkers. This line of research has gained force in the last years, as it is shown by the publication of several collective volumes dealing with the impact of skepticism (especially

<sup>97</sup> See SCHMITT: *The Rediscovery*, 227; MAIERÙ, Alfonso / VALENTE, Luisa: *Scetticismo e criticismo nel Medioevo*. In: DE CARO, M. / SPINELLI, E. (eds.): *Scetticismo. Una vicenda filosofica*. Roma: Carocci 2007, 39–65, at 39–50.

<sup>98</sup> POPKIN, Richard: *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*. Assen: van Gorcum 1960.

<sup>99</sup> POPKIN: *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1979.

<sup>100</sup> POPKIN: *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*. New York: Oxford University Press 2003.

<sup>101</sup> For a comprehensive and detailed study of the transmission and recovery of Sextus' works, see FLORIDI: *Sextus Empiricus*. See also SCHMITT: *The Rediscovery*.

<sup>102</sup> POPKIN, Richard / WATSON, Richard / FORCE, James (eds.): *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*. Indianapolis: Hackett 1993.



Pyrrhonian skepticism) on early modern philosophy.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, a few scholars have argued that Popkin's view about the central role played by Pyrrhonism in shaping early modern thought is overstated. This is because (i) other types of skepticism and other philosophical traditions – such as Platonism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism – played an equally important role, and (ii) skepticism (broadly construed) had much less impact on the thought of certain figures – such as Montaigne, Mersenne, Gassendi, and Descartes – than Popkin thinks.<sup>104</sup> In any case, what seems to be incontestable is that Popkin has shown that Pyrrhonism was one of the intellectual forces that molded early modern philosophical discussions.

Of course, the fact that Pyrrhonism influenced early modern philosophy – and hence early modern skepticism – does not mean that there do not exist significant differences between ancient and early modern skeptical arguments. Myles Burnyeat has argued that one crucial difference is that the existence of the external world was not one of the targets of the Pyrrhonian attack, and that it only started to be called into question by the skeptical arguments expounded in Descartes' works. In this respect, Pyrrhonism is less radical than early modern skepticism.<sup>105</sup> Although this view about the scope of the Pyrrhonian arguments have generally been accepted among scholars,<sup>106</sup> Gail Fine has lately made a strong case against it.<sup>107</sup>

If it is the case that Pyrrhonism did not call into question the existence of the external world, then it also differs from contemporary skepticism, since external world skepticism is one of the most common forms of contemporary skepticism. There are other differences between Pyrrhonian and contemporary skepticism, of which three are worth mentioning. The first is that, whereas contemporary skeptical arguments are directed primarily against knowledge claims, Pyrrhonian arguments are more radical insofar as they call

<sup>103</sup> See, e.g., MOREAU, Pierre-François (ed.): *Le retour des philosophies antiques à l'âge classique. Tome II: Le scepticisme aux XVIe et au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Albin Michel 2001; PAGANINI, Gianni (ed.): *The Return of Scepticism from Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*. Dordrecht: Kluwer 2003; MAIA NETO, José / POPKIN, Richard (eds.): *Skepticism in Renaissance and Post-Renaissance Thought: New Interpretations*. Amherst, New-York: Humanity Books 2004.

<sup>104</sup> See AYERS, Michael: *Popkin's Revised Scepticism*. In: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12 (2004) 319–332; PERLER, Dominik: *Was There a 'Pyrrhonian Crisis' in Early Modern Philosophy? A Critical Notice of Richard H. Popkin*. In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86 (2004) 209–220.

<sup>105</sup> See BURNYEAT, Myles: *Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed?* In: *The Philosophical Review* 91 (1982) 3–40.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., EVERSON, Stephen: *The Objective Appearance of Pyrrhonism*. In: EVERSON (ed.): *Companion to Ancient Thought II. Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, 121–147; HANKINSON: *The Sceptics*; COLIVA, Annalisa: *Lo scetticismo sull'esistenza del mondo esterno*. In: DE CARO / SPINELLI: *Scetticismo*, 185–209.

<sup>107</sup> See FINE, Gail: *Sextus and External World Scepticism*. In: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2003) 341–385.

into question the rational justification or warrant of our beliefs.<sup>108</sup> The second difference has to do with the opposite ways in which the Pyrrhonist and the contemporary skeptic conceive of the relation between philosophical reflections and ordinary beliefs. It has been argued that the contemporary skeptic “insulates” his skepticism from his everyday life, so that his ordinary beliefs are immune from philosophical doubt. By contrast, the Pyrrhonist’s philosophical reflections have direct bearing on his everyday beliefs and actions, since Pyrrhonism is a way of life.<sup>109</sup> The third difference is that, whereas the contemporary skeptic typically adopts a negative Dogmatic stance, the Pyrrhonist suspends his judgment. For example, the contemporary ethical skeptic denies the existence of objective moral values; the Pyrrhonist, by contrast, suspends judgment as to whether anything is good or bad by nature.<sup>110</sup>

Given that the differences just referred to may give the impression that Pyrrhonism has had no influence on contemporary philosophy, it must be noted that such an impression is misleading, since a considerable number of present-day philosophers have found in Sextus’ writings a valuable resource of ideas, arguments, or challenges. The clearest example is probably Robert Fogelin, who in his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*<sup>111</sup> presents and defends a “neo-Pyrrhonian” stance. In a nutshell, Fogelin’s neo-Pyrrhonist is an urbane Pyrrhonist who is not interested in the attainment of *ataraxia* by the adoption of *epochē* and who does not make any use of the Modes of Aenesidemus but bases his skepticism solely on the Modes of Agrippa.<sup>112</sup> Fogelin examines how the argumentative strategies found in Sextus’ writings can be applied to present-day epistemological debates and purports to show that the contemporary epistemological theories he considers – namely foundationalism and coherentism – cannot meet the Agrippan challenge.<sup>113</sup> Recently, he has also argued that externalism and contextualism can-

<sup>108</sup> See, e.g., ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*, 7–8; BAILEY: *Sextus Empiricus*, 1–9.

<sup>109</sup> See esp. BURNYEAT: *The Sceptic in his Place and Time*; also ANNAS / BARNES: *The Modes of Scepticism*, 8–9; ANNAS, Julia: *Scepticism about Value*. In: POPKIN, R. (ed.): *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy: A Panamerican Dialogue*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1996, 205–218, at 210–211; *Doing without Objective Values*, 216–219. For critical discussion of the view that the contemporary skeptic insulates his philosophical reflections from daily life, while the Pyrrhonist does not, see BETT, Richard: *Scepticism and Everyday Attitudes in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*. In: *Metaphilosophy* 24 (1993) 363–381.

<sup>110</sup> On the differences between Pyrrhonism and contemporary ethical skepticism, see ANNAS: *Scepticism about Value*; *Doing without Objective Values*; MACHUCA, Diego: *The Local Nature of Modern Moral Skepticism*. In: *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006) 315–324.

<sup>111</sup> FOGELIN, Robert: *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. New York: Oxford University Press 1994.

<sup>112</sup> For a contrast between Fogelin’s neo-Pyrrhonism and its ancient ancestor, see STRIKER: *Historical Reflections*.

<sup>113</sup> See also FOGELIN, Robert: *Précis of Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) 395–400; *What does a Pyrrhonist Know?* In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) 417–425.

not meet that challenge either.<sup>114</sup> Fogelin's work has awakened a lively interest in both Pyrrhonism and neo-Pyrrhonism among contemporary epistemologists, who have adopted either a critical or a sympathetic attitude towards both types of skepticism.<sup>115</sup>

Another example of the influence of Pyrrhonism on the philosophical stance of a contemporary thinker is found in the type of ethical skepticism espoused by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, which in some respects is close to Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism. Sinnott-Armstrong has recently defended what he calls a "moderate Pyrrhonian moral skepticism", according to which, although no moral belief can be justified without qualification, moral beliefs can be modestly justified relative to particular contrast classes, none of which is deemed to be really appropriate or relevant.<sup>116</sup>

Besides the formulation and discussion of neo-Pyrrhonian outlooks, a large part of contemporary epistemological debates have revolved around the challenge to the rational justification of our beliefs posed by the Agrippan modes. Coherentists, foundationalists, infinitists, and contextualists have proposed different ways to deal with that challenge,<sup>117</sup> even if not all of them are aware of its Pyrrhonian origin. In addition, Agrippan Pyrrhonism has recently been studied in connection with the current discussions of epistemic luck. In this regard, it has been claimed that the skeptical challenge posed by the Modes of Agrippa is concerned with the problem of "reflective" epistemic luck and not with that of "veritic" epistemic luck, and hence that the Pyrrhonian attack is not directed against knowledge *simpliciter* but only against internalist knowl-

<sup>114</sup> See FOGELIN, Robert: *The Sceptic's Burden*. In: *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7 (1999) 159–172; *The Sceptics Are Coming! The Sceptics Are Coming!* In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 161–173.

<sup>115</sup> See DRETSKE, Fred: *So Do We Know or Don't We?* In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) 407–409; MOSER, Paul: *The Relativity of Skepticism*. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) 401–406; STROUD, Barry: *Unpurged Pyrrhonism*. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) 411–416; *Contemporary Pyrrhonism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 174–187; WILLIAMS, Michael: *Fogelin's Neo-Pyrrhonism*. In: *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7 (1999) 141–158; *The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 121–145; SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG, Walter: *Classy Pyrrhonism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 188–207; SORENSEN, Roy: *Commercial Applications of Skepticism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 208–232; SOSA, Ernest: *Two False Dichotomies: Foundationalism/Coherentism and Internalism/Externalism*. In: SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG: *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 146–160.

<sup>116</sup> See SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG, Walter: *Moral Skepticisms*. New York: Oxford University Press 2006.

<sup>117</sup> See, respectively, DAVIDSON, Donald: *A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge*. In: LEPORÉ, E. (ed.): *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell 1986, 307–319; HARMAN, Gilbert: *Skepticism and Foundations*. In: LUPER, S. (ed.): *The Sceptics. Contemporary Essays*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2003, 1–11; KLEIN, Peter: *How a Pyrrhonian Sceptic Might Respond to Academic Skepticism*. In: LUPER: *The Sceptics*, 75–94; and WILLIAMS: *The Agrippan Argument*.

edge, so that Pyrrhonism is compatible with widespread externalist knowledge.<sup>118</sup>

The current discussions of topics and arguments found in Sextus' works are a clear proof that Sextan Pyrrhonism continues to exert a considerable influence on the development of philosophy.<sup>119</sup>

*Abstract*

*The present paper has two objectives. The first is to examine some difficult issues concerning Sextus Empiricus' works and outlook, namely: (i) the character and chronology of his writings, (ii) his relationship with the Empirical and the Methodical medical sects, and (iii) the different positions that seem to coexist in his works. The second objective is to offer an overview of the impact of Sextan Pyrrhonism on the development of both early modern and contemporary philosophy.*

<sup>118</sup> See PRITCHARD, Duncan: *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 2005.

<sup>119</sup> I take this opportunity to thank Mauro Bonazzi, Fernanda Decleva Caizzi, Theodor Ebert, Anna Maria Ioppolo, Philippe Mudry, Lorenzo Perilli, Ineke Sluiter, Emidio Spinelli, Fabio Stok, and Svavar Svavarsson for kindly sending me copies of some of their works. I am also grateful to Dominic O'Meara for his suggestions.