

through a number of different phases, each of which has affected the transmission of material from earlier phases through selective quotation or paraphrase. Those disagreements I have with B. are due in the main to differences of opinion over which pieces of evidence to accept or emphasize and in what way. But then, one of the virtues of B.'s work is that it is always clear what one must do to disagree with him.

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TRAILS OF SCEPTICISM

J. OPSOMER: *In Search of the Truth. Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism*. Pp. 332. Brussels: Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1998. Paper, Euro 35 (approx.). ISBN: 90-6569-666-0.

M. A. WŁODARCZYK: *Pyrrhonian Inquiry*. Pp. x + 72. Cambridge: The Cambridge Philological Society, 2000. Paper. ISBN: 0-906014-24-7.

Opsomer and Włodarczyk address from different perspectives two quite dissimilar branches of ancient scepticism, the Academic and the Pyrrhonian.

O.'s book explores the reception and adaptation of the Academic philosophizing in the period of the so-called Middle Platonism covering the approximately 300 years between Antiochus and Plotinus. Chapter I serves as an introduction, stating the main thesis that sceptical method(s) were alive among some Middle Platonists. O. notes that, although there was no such thing as unified monolithic Middle Platonism, several authors, most especially Plutarch, have numerous links with the Academic tradition.

At the centre of the book (Chapter IV) is a case-study of Plut.'s first *Platonic Question* dealing with the *Theaetetus* 150c, while Chapters II and III provide a detailed background. The argument proceeds in long circuits. O. examines other Platonists' interpretations of the *Theaetetus*, of Socratic irony, maieutics, and the idea of anamnesis, thus gradually building up to the themes focused on in the case-study. Interestingly, it is shown (pp. 27–33) how ancient classifications of Plato's dialogues played a part in the epistemological debate. Chapter V presents Plut.'s sceptic associate Favorinus. Chapter VI zooms in on a neglected Christian source on ancient scepticism, the dialogue *Octavius* by M. Minucius Felix. *Τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα τῶν οὐκ ἐν μέσῳ ἐστίν* (*Quaes. com.* 675B): indeed, Plut. himself would have been pleased with this choice over Augustine's more well-known *Contra Academicos*.

The book is a product of relentless scholarship. Philosophical analysis comes inseparable from the intricacies of the history of philosophy and occasional *Quellenforschung*. From the start the reader is thrown into the fascinating, if dizzy, world of ancient inter-school polemics that is closely matched by the modern debate. The book is fully indexed, with an extensive, possibly over-meticulous bibliography, as well as a hoard of data-packed notes in the solid continental fashion. Most Greek and Latin citations are translated; nearly every passage is also given in full in the original language.

O.'s achievement in the book, as well as in several previous articles, is twofold. First, he clarifies the status of the Academic sceptical inquiry as 'probabilist' epistemology

developed in the context of anti-Stoic polemics. Secondly, Plutarchan Platonism emerges as a coherent synthesis of the Academic approach with positive metaphysical and ethical principles, such as the principle of double causation rooted in the Platonic dichotomy between the material world and the all-rational divine.

The overall picture is convincing, yet several stones have been left unturned. The standard premise accepted by O. (pp. 59–60, 171–4) is that Plut. argued for continuity of the Academic tradition. This is based on a lost work's title in the 'Lamprias Catalogue', No. 63 *περὶ τοῦ μίαν εἶναι τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Ἀκαδημειαν*. A caveat is due. After all, we do not know what Plutarch wrote there. The title admits ambiguity: Favorinus used a similar *περὶ*-title (fr. 29 Barigazzi *περὶ τῆς καταληπτικῆς φαντασίας*) in a work *denying* existence of cognitive appearance. While passages such as *Adversus Colotem* 1122A lend some support to the traditional view, Plut.'s attitude to the troublesome figure of Antiochus needs more careful reassessment. The description 'the so-called' New/Old Academy (*Cic.* 4.1–3; *Brut.* 2.3; *Luc.* 42.3) does not necessarily indicate rejection of the labels.

On the other hand, assuming that Plut. believed in a unitarian Academy, O. might have commented on how New Academic scepticism fits in with what is known about the teaching of the Old Academics, primarily Xenocrates. Clearly, a unitarian perspective must have had an impact on Plut.'s interpretation of scepticism.

It is somewhat disappointing that O. does not seriously explore the implications of Plut.'s scepticism for his other, not so immediately philosophical, writings, e.g. the criterion of probability as applied to history (*Thest.* 1, etc.). But this may be just wishful thinking. As it is, O.'s book is probably the most illuminating study of Middle Platonism in English since J. Dillon, erudite and elegantly argued.

W.'s is a more modest project. The little book is a survey of the Pyrrhonian method, relying upon but also analytically combining previous interpretations by Burnyeat, Barnes, Frede, Striker, and Annas. The central question posed by W. is an old one: how is active life possible for a Sceptic? The answer, familiar from Sextus (*PH* 1.23–4) onwards, is that in everyday life the Sceptic lives *adoxastōs*, in a kind of cognitive zero-state, simply adhering to certain appearances without committing himself to forming any opinion about them. The main value of W.'s book is that the answer is confirmed through a progressive exposition of the procedure of the Sceptical reasoning.

After a technical yet lucid summary of the Modes (Chapter II), the Pyrrhonic algorithm is made clear as successive stages of establishing disagreement (*diaphōnia*), equipollence of beliefs (*isostheneia*), and suspension of judgement (*epokhē*). The Sceptics are still likely to face problems when they admit existence of undisputed appearances ('suggestive signs'), which W. does not fail to discuss.

The approach being philosophical rather than historical, the bibliography is short and almost exclusively in English. Predictably, no index. Oddly for a Cambridge Philological publication, proof-reading is not up to scratch: occasional misprints in Greek (pp. 33, 58), simplified transliteration (*epoche*, etc.), bibliographical inaccuracies (wrong title and publication place for Dillon and Long's volume; minor misprints in Frede's 1979 title). On the whole, the book tends to be reader-friendly. Given its size and scope, it might become an aid of some practical value to the students of ancient scepticism.

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