

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-06924-4 - Sextus Empiricus and Ancient Physics

Edited by Keimpe Algra and Katerina Ierodiakonou

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SEXTUS EMPIRICUS AND ANCIENT PHYSICS

Sextus Empiricus' two books *Against the Physicists* have not received much attention in their own right, as sustained and methodical specimens of sceptical philosophy. This volume redresses the balance by offering a series of in-depth studies on them, focusing in particular on their overall argumentative structure and on the various ways in which their formal features relate to their contents, showing how Sextus' procedures vary from one section to the other, and throwing new light on the way he was using his sources. It follows Sextus' own division of these two books into nine successive topics, namely god, cause, wholes and parts, body, place, motion, time, number, coming-to-be and passing-away. These nine chapters are preceded by an introduction, which discusses a number of general features of Sextus' scepticism and links the conclusions of this volume to some recent discussions on the scope of ancient scepticism.

KEIMPE ALGRA is Professor of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy at the University of Utrecht. He has published widely on ancient philosophy, in particular on Hellenistic philosophy and ancient science. He co-edited the *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (1999, with Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld and Malcolm Schofield) and was managing editor of the international journal *Phronesis*. His most recent book is *Philoponus: On Aristotle Physics 4.1–5* (2012), published in the series *The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* (with Johannes van Ophuijsen). His current research focuses on the relation between physics and mathematics in ancient thought and on Stoic theology.

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For Michael Frede

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[More information](#)*Preface*

The chapters of this volume emerged from the eleventh Symposium Hellenisticum, which was held at the European Cultural Centre in Delphi, 6–12 August 2007. This symposium was dedicated to the two books *Against the Physicists* (M 9 and 10) by Sextus Empiricus. However, these books were not primarily studied for what they also are: an important source for our knowledge of earlier philosophies. Instead the focus was Sextus himself: on his strategy as a Pyrrhonist, the argumentative structures in the two books, their relation to the partly parallel accounts of book 3 of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, their possible sources, and the various ways in which their formal features relate to their contents. The conference was organized around nine papers, following Sextus' own division of the text into nine topics: god, cause, wholes and parts, body, place, motion, time, number, coming-to-be and passing-away. In the end, this resulted in the present volume in nine chapters. For reasons of (electronic) accessibility, and at the request of Cambridge University Press, we have opted for a volume title that is both straightforward and informative. This means that we have had to take leave of the tradition of providing the proceedings of the Symposium Hellenisticum with a more alluring, but less informative, alliterating main title.

The format of the Symposium Hellenisticum allows for in-depth discussions: the papers are as a rule circulated in advance and discussed in sessions of three hours each. Participants are also invited to send in written comments afterwards, and readers are assigned to every paper at the stage of final revision after the conference. In addition to the authors of the contributions included in this volume, the participants at this Symposium (and their affiliations at the time) were: Thomas Bénatouïl (University of Nancy), Charles Brittain (Cornell University), Myles Burnyeat (emeritus University of Oxford), Myrtho Dragona-Monachou (em. University of Athens), Michael Frede (em. University of Oxford), Dorothea Frede (University of Hamburg), Brad Inwood (University of Toronto), Anna Maria Ioppolo

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(University of Rome La Sapienza), Paul Kalligas (University of Athens), Vassilis Karasmanis (National Technical University of Athens), Maria Protopappas (Centre for Greek Philosophy, Academy of Athens), Malcolm Schofield (University of Cambridge), David Sedley (University of Cambridge).

As editors of this volume we would like to thank all participants for their contributions to the discussion, and the readers of the individual contributions for their constructive critical remarks and suggestions for improvement and revision. Thanks are also due to the two anonymous readers of Cambridge University Press for their helpful comments, and to our editor, Michael Sharp and our production editor, Elizabeth Hanlon, for their patience and support. Anna Tigani helped us in organizing the conference in Delphi, and Maarten van Houte and Johannes Rustenburg offered invaluable assistance in preparing the volume for print and in compiling the indices.

Financial support came from the European Science Foundation, the C. J. de Vogel Foundation, the Evert Willem Beth Foundation, the ZENO Research Institute for Philosophy at the University of Utrecht, the J. F. Costopoulos Foundation, the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and the Technical Chamber of Greece. We are very grateful for these generous grants, without which the conference would not have been possible.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Professor Michael Frede, one of the participants of the Symposium in Delphi, whose sudden death, on the last day of the conference, has deeply affected not only those present, but the whole international community of students of ancient philosophy.

KEIMPE ALGRA

KATERINA IERODIAKONOU

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The following abbreviations are used for standard works:

- | | |
|------|--|
| DG | Diels, H. (1879, 1958 ³) <i>Doxographi Graeci</i> . Berlin. |
| DK | Diels, H. (1903, 1952 ³ rev. by W. Kranz) <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (vols. I–III). Berlin. |
| EK | Edelstein, L. and I. Kidd (eds.) (1972) <i>Posidonius</i> , vol. 1: <i>The Fragments</i> . Cambridge. |
| FHSG | Fortenbaugh, W. W., P. M. Huby, R. W. Sharples and D. Gutas (eds. and trans.) (1992) <i>Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence</i> (2 vols.). Leiden. |
| LS | Long, A. A. and D. N. Sedley (eds.) (1987) <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , with translation and commentary (2 vols.). Cambridge. |
| LSJ | Liddell, H. G., R. Scott and H. S. Jones (1996 ⁹) <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> , revised and augmented edition. Oxford. |
| SVF | Von Arnim, J. (1903–5, 1964 ²) <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> (vols. I–III). Stuttgart. |

Works of Sextus Empiricus:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>M</i> | <i>Against the Mathematicians</i> |
| <i>PH</i> | <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> |

For abbreviations of titles of ancient works this volume follows the conventions of LSJ and the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (revised 3rd edn. 2003)