there are differences, G. gives the better and more accurate text and must be considered an improvement. (The only slight point where I would differ is in his number 4, my 3.162, where, I think, we must have a question mark after τί δεῖ μαθεῖν.) One chief virtue of G.’s edition lies in the publication of more material for Democritus from CP than just the sayings going there under Democritus’ name: G. is able to do this thanks to his preceding source analysis and argumentation, especially in Chapter 2. Another chief virtue is the very concise but judicious consideration of the validity of each item’s attribution to the tradition of Democritus.

Although I have brought up certain points of criticism – or, rather, points for further dialogue – let me conclude this review by stating my enthusiastic admiration of and gratitude for G.’s scholarly resourcefulness and stamina. This is a major contribution to the study of the Greek gnomic tradition. Some scholars of Democritus may perhaps be somewhat disappointed in the results – but only if they expect substantial new fragments and not typical gnomic fare. However, the real value for Democritean studies is the reevaluation of the whole tradition of ethical sayings, based on careful source-analysis, which delineates the connections of Byzantine to ancient sources more clearly than has previously been done. We can find traces of Democritus even in very late products like CP, such as the ‘nova Democritea’ of sayings 1 and 88 (= my 3.77 and 6.192): ‘Many choose as friends not those who are best but those who are wealthy’ and ‘Changes of place neither teach wisdom nor take away stupidity’ (my translation). G. is to be especially commended for his acribeta, his array of conceptual tools, the clarity and construction of his edition and his helpful appendices. He is perhaps to be less commended for the decision to communicate the results of his investigations in a single volume rather than in two complementary monographs or in a series of articles preparing his two different publics for the edition. At the basic level a collection of sayings like CP is easy to grasp conceptually. However, any reality becomes complex when you apply a variety of perspectives to it. That is what is so fascinating about the world we live in: you can go on digging forever to reach the reality behind the evidence.

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Timon of Phlius was a disciple of Pyrrho of Elis, the original inspiration for the later philosophical movement known as Pyrrhonian skepticism. He depicted Pyrrho and his ideas both in verse and in prose, and also, in his major hexameter work Silloi, satirized all the other philosophers who fell far short of Pyrrho’s standards of tranquility and renunciation of the search for truth. We have only fragments of these works, but at least in the case of the Silloi, we have enough to be able to piece together a fair idea of its contents. In recent years, scholars who have concerned themselves with Timon, at least in the Anglophone world, have tended to come from departments of Philosophy, rather than Classics; as a result,
they have tended to pay much more attention to Timon’s philosophical message than to his poetry. (I include myself in this description.) This new book is a most valuable corrective to this tendency; anyone concerned with early Pyrrhonism should read it. But it also offers a striking, if controversial, thesis about the character of Hellenistic poetry more generally; and this should attract readers who do not generally concern themselves with philosophy at all.

The book begins, after a brief introduction, with a chapter on the biographical data concerning both Timon and Pyrrho. The survey of the evidence is much more extensive than has usually been offered on this subject, and there are many intriguing results. For example, Sextus Empiricus reports that Pyrrho wrote poetry. From the meager evidence about Pyrrho’s attitude towards Homer, Clayman argues persuasively that his writing employed ‘ironic distancing’ and used Homeric references (33), both of which seem to suggest that it influenced Timon’s own poetic methods. Again, Pyrrho’s lack of interest in athletic pursuits, despite his originating from as athletically dominant a town as Elis (23–4), is a striking example of his more generally out-of-place demeanor. The parallels drawn between Pyrrho’s apparent interest in pigs and both Eumaeus, the swineherd in the Odyssey, and the ‘city of pigs’ stigmatized by Socrates’ companions (but not Socrates himself) in the early books of Plato’s Republic, are novel and well worth reflecting on. And the fact that the painter Apelles, who figures in a famous analogy for the skeptical attitude in the opening pages of Sextus Empiricus’ Outlines of Pyrrhonism, was a fellow-traveler with Pyrrho on Alexander’s expedition leads to the plausible suggestion that some form of this analogy originated with Pyrrho himself. That Pyrrho himself was also a painter adds a tantalizing further level to this story. But the conclusion that Pyrrho told the incident «as an amateur painter’s appreciation of a master’s ability to create a striking semblance of reality through the inspired use of simple techniques» (28) seems to go beyond any available evidence. And the same can be said of some other claims in the chapter, such as that Alexander «had a lifelong interest in [philosophy], nourished in his youth by Aristotle» (26); no evidence is cited bearing on the nature of Aristotle’s influence on Alexander, and as far as I know, there is none.

The next chapter examines the evidence for Timon’s prose work Pytho and his elegiac poem Indalmoi. Both works, as well as the Silloi, seem to have depicted a meeting between Pyrrho and Timon himself, at which Timon asks him about the source of his exceptional tranquility, and he answers. Little is known about Pytho, but Clayman manages to extract a number of significant details about the setting and purpose of the work from the generally hostile side-references in the Peripatetic Aristocles’ On Philosophy. In the same part of the work, quoted in Eusebius’ Praeparatio evangelica, Aristocles also gives what appears to be a general summary of Pyrrho’s philosophy as represented by Timon (14.18.1–5), which has been intensely scrutinized. It is not certain that this material derives from Pytho, though this has sometimes been suspected; without committing herself on that question, Clayman include here a brief discussion of the passage, which is well-informed and judicious. The section on the Indalmoi is extremely interesting. Of the two main surviving fragments of this work, one clearly has Timon himself asking Pyrrho about his tranquil demeanor. The other has usually been assumed to contain the beginning of Pyrrho’s answer to that question. But
this has seemed to pose intractable problems, because the fragment appears to commit the speaker to definite views about ‘the nature of the divine and the good’ (hê tou theiou te phusis kai t’agathou), as well as to the dogmatic-sounding claim to possess ‘a straight measure of the truth’ (alêtheiês orthon echôn kanona). In view of these difficulties, I myself proposed some years ago that the speaker was Timon, not Pyrrho, at a stage prior to being initiated into Pyrrho’s outlook, and that the two fragments are unrelated.\footnote{Richard Bett, What Did Pyrrho Think about ‘The Nature of the Divine and the Good?’, Phronesis 39 (1994), 309–337.} Clayman’s response is far more satisfactory. She agrees with me that Timon is the speaker, but places this fragment at the beginning of the poem, serving as an opening address to the audience, prior to the question addressed to Pyrrho. The argument depends on detailed comparisons with verses of Homer, Parmenides and Hellenistic poets. Particularly striking is the observation that the very same words alêtheiês orthon echôn kanona appear in an epigram of Timon’s contemporary Posidippus, where it is accurate representation of the subject-matter that is at issue, not anything of philosophical import. More generally, the discussion is an excellent object-lesson in the level of detail at which Hellenistic poetry engaged with, and was thereby shaped by, Homer and other earlier poets.\footnote{I stand corrected on this point; see p.328, n.63 of the article cited in the previous note, criticized by Clayman at p.59, n.44.} No interpretation of these difficult questions can be expected to settle the matter once and for all; but this reading is a very serious contender, particularly worthy of attention by philosophers generally unacquainted with the relevant poetic background.

The same detailed attention to poetic precedents is at work in the next two chapters, which deal with the Silloi. The first, Chapter 3, offers a reconstruction of the Silloi that, while appropriately tentative given the state of the evidence, is considerably more detailed than has generally been attempted in the past.\footnote{An exception is di Marco’s book-length edition of the Silloi fragments: M. di Marco, ed., Timone di Fliunte: Silli (Rome: Edizioni dell-Ateneo, 1989).} To my mind the layout of the three books and the placement of the fragments in them are broadly convincing; and Homeric and other poetic parallels, the significance of which has not usually been appreciated, are often a key part of the argument. In the same spirit, the chapter also argues for several specific scenes: battling philosophers, the marketplace of ideas, and ‘Hyde Park corner’ – that is, philosophers addressing crowds. Clayman is doubtful, however, about the idea of a fishing scene, originally proposed by Diels and broadly accepted since. Several fragments that Diels saw as related to fishing are argued to have no clear connection with this subject; hence the most that can be said is that «Timon probably used the fish analogy here and there» (112).

Chapter 4, «The Silloi in its Literary Context», examines the various poetic influences shaping the character of the work. First is the genre of Greek parodia, which draws prolifically on epic vocabulary to construct decidedly unheroic narratives. Clayman begins with a survey of the relatively meager evidence of parodia prior to Timon, and then considers in more detail Timon’s own exploitation of Homer and the ways in which it draws on, but also seems to go beyond,
the practice of earlier parodists. Comedy, especially comedy about philosophers, is the next genre discussed for its links with the *Silloi*; Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and *Frogs* get the most attention, but some fragments of and reports on comedians other than Aristophanes are also relevant. There follows a section on Timon’s «language of abuse», and especially his frequent coinages of compound adjectives, a practice in contexts of abuse that goes back to the *Iliad*. Next comes a short section on the influence of Cynic literature, already emphasized in a seminal article by A.A. Long¹. The rest of the chapter focuses on the more philosophical side of the work: the sources of his information about the philosophers whom he parodies, and the philosophic character of the *Silloi* itself. On the first topic, it is clear that he has access to the actual works of Xenophanes and Parmenides, and has read some words of Protagoras and Cleanthes; in other cases he may well have been dependent on second-hand reports. On the second, Clayman emphasizes the negativity of Timon’s portraits of all philosophers other than Pyrrho himself, downplaying what others have seen as limited praise directed to several others; this strikes me as a little excessive, although it is certainly true that no other philosopher besides Pyrrho emerges entirely unscathed. What is also surely correct is that the *Silloi* makes the case for skepticism largely by means of «character assassination» (144).

The remaining two chapters shift to a rather different subject: the influence of Timon on Hellenistic poetry. Chapter 5 assembles evidence that some of Timon’s major contemporaries – specifically, Callimachus and Theocritus – knew and responded to Timon’s work. The evidence in Callimachus’ case seems to consist largely in a general similarity of mood and tone, coupled with the fact that Callimachus too not infrequently writes about philosophers. But a striking exception is one of Callimachus *Epigrams* addressed to someone called Timon, usually taken to be the fifth-century Athenian Timon ‘the misanthrope’; Clayman plausibly argues that the critical attitude attributed to him, and the reference to Hades, suggests our Timon, and particularly the *Silloi* (149). As for Theocritus, the case relies in large part on a very interesting – but, I think, necessarily inconclusive – discussion of the original meaning of the title *Idylls* (*eidullia*); Clayman presses for a reading of it as «little images», connecting this with Timon’s *Indalmoi* or *Images* and seeing both works as concerned with semblances of reality (167–9).

All this, however, is really a prelude to Chapter 6, which argues for a pervasive presence of skepticism as a theme in Hellenistic Literature – including both Callimachus and Theocritus, but also Apollonius Rhodius – and attributing this to widespread acquaintance with the works of Timon. This is a fascinating, even arresting claim. But I must confess that I found the argument for it the weakest part of the book. The points of similarity are often too nebulous to be convincing. For example, Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos* depicts a world in which «the entire geography of Hellas … takes to its heels and runs away» (175) to avoid giving refuge to Leto, and in which the usual progression of time is suspended.

This is certainly fantastic, but it has nothing specially to do with skepticism. Pyrrho may have described the world as, in a certain sense, indeterminate; but he was giving a novel characterization of the ordinary world with which we are familiar. If this is what inspired Callimachus’ «dreamscape» (176), he fundamentally misunderstood the view; but there is no particular reason to think that this was the inspiration. The same may be said of the «multiple identities» (178) of characters in Theocritus. The idea that Theocritus’ characters enjoy something like ataraxia has more to recommend it. But, as Clayman recognizes, ataraxia as a practical ideal is by no means confined to the skeptics; the Epicureans also espoused it, and the claim that a ‘stronger case’ can be made for linking the attitude of Theocritus’ characters to skeptical than to Epicurean ataraxia (184) – or, for that matter, to a more general penchant in the period for tranquility and related attitudes – is not given adequate support. The most interesting case is Apollonius’ Argonautica, where Jason and other characters are often paralyzed by indecision – or, when they do act, go through the motions of action without endorsing their choices. This is clearly very different from the mindset of traditional epic heroes, and does seem to have something in common with skeptical suspension of judgement and the practical attitude that accompanies it. The trouble is that, in the Argonautica, this produces listlessness and depression, not ataraxia; indeed, a number of times it is release from impasse that produces joy (discussed at p.204). If this is a response of any kind to skepticism – and again, I do not find the evidence on this point compelling – it sounds more like a critique of skepticism than an endorsement of it; and Clayman does at one point say that «it is easy to read the Argonautica as an exposé of Skepticism» (207). Yet she also describes Jason as «the consummate Skeptic hero» (212). In the end, then, it is not quite clear what her thesis is concerning the poem’s relation to skepticism.

In the brief concluding chapter, «An Aesthetics of Skepticism», Clayman seems to hint at an alternative picture, according to which Timon and Pyrrho themselves are part of a larger shift in mood or Weltanschauung in the early Hellenistic period, a shift also affecting the poets just mentioned (209, 217). This seems to me a more plausible account of the connection between Timon and these other poets than that they were directly influenced by his skeptical outlook. In a very broad sense this new mood might be described as skeptical, and that in itself is worth drawing to our attention. But the similarities are by no means close enough to make us think that the specific position held by the early Pyrrhonists has a central role in the poetry of the period. Given the differences in genre, goal and subject-matter between Timon on the one hand, and Callimachus, Theocritus and Apollonius on the other, this is perhaps only to be expected.

As the last two paragraphs may have indicated, the discussion at times lacks something in philosophical precision. For example, Timon is never recorded as claiming that time «cannot exist at all», nor that it «can be neither divisible nor indivisible» (175). What he is reported to have said is that no process divisible into temporal parts can take place in an indivisible time; this means that time cannot be both divisible and indivisible, but it has no implications concerning which of the two (if either) it might be. More generally, Clayman tends towards a reading of Pyrrho’s thought as more metaphysical than epistemological in char-
acter, which, as she acknowledges (55), sets him somewhat apart from the later Pyrrhonist tradition represented by Sextus Empiricus. Yet this does not prevent her sometimes appealing to Sextus for evidence concerning Pyrrhonism, as if the tradition is monolithic, even though it is only the early period represented by Pyrrho and Timon that is really at issue.

Given the book’s aim, however, this is a minor shortcoming. I have been critical of the claim of a specific influence from Timon on the major early Hellenistic poets. But the book’s great virtue is to place Timon in the context of Greek poetry – both the poetry of his own time, and that of earlier periods stretching back to Homer – and to show, through a deep knowledge of that poetry, how this should importantly affect our interpretation of Timon’s work. Philosophers and literary scholars alike will have much to learn from it.

Richard Bett


