

RECENSIONS/BOOK REVIEWS

Skepsis:

A Journal for Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research

L.C.BARGELIOTES & N.CHRONIS (Eds), Athens-Olympia, Academia Verlag-Sankt Augustin, Vol. VI, 1995, pp.210.

Skepsis, is the periodical publication of the *International Center of Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research*, edited by Professors L.C. Bargeliotis and N. Chronis at the University of Athens, published in Athens and Olympia and distributed by Academia Verlag-Sankt Augustin.

A Journal for Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research, Skepsis, although closely related to Scepticism as the title indicates, is open to all philosophical currents and to all the disciplines of scientific research as the subtitle denotes. It is grounded on the constructive side of Scepticism. As was indicated in the "Introductory Note" of Volume I, (i) the aim of the Journal is "to initiate and encourage dialogue among those researchers, who consider criticism an obligation rather than a privilege" and "thus, *Skepsis* is predominantly addressed to those who, opposed to rigid and unprogressive conceptual patterns, submit their research activities to critique, as this proceeds in the continuous conflict of ideas and beliefs"; (ii) its principles are "the critique and the inquiry"; (iii) its aspiration is "to become an international forum" for essays and debates and, thus, "it does not intend to exclude from its pages the expression of opposing views and counterarguments". In conclusion, "*Skepsis* respects the intellectual tradition; however, it grounds the truth on searching criticism and questions the principles of scientific discovery".

The International Center of Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research organizes, since 1988, biannual or annual Symposia, Conferences or Congresses in Olympia-Amaliada-Zacharo. In the Summer of 1996, August 13-18, in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the Olympic Games, the Center organizes the VIIth International Conference on "Polis and Culture" and the VIIth International Symposium of Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Research on "Individual and Polis, Ancient and Modern Sociopolitical Theories".

Skepsis was first published in 1990 and, in 1995, Volume VI appeared. The Journal publishes Essays, Discussions and Book Reviews in English, French, German and, of course, in Greek. Following are the Contents of the last volume.

The present VIth Volume, besides the Discussions and the Book Reviews, contains 10 Essays on “Scepticism and Contemporary Thought”, the topic of the Vth International Symposium of the International Center of Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research, Symposium which took place in Olympia-Amaliada-Zacharo in the Summer of 1994.

The ADDRESS to the Symposium, published in this volume (pp.5-8), was delivered by the Dean of the School of Theology at the University of Athens, Prof. Basil TSAKONAS, who died suddenly and unexpectedly on March 4, 1995, and whose “IN MEMORIAM” appears in pp.191-192, along with that of Prof. Th. VEIKOS, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Athens, who passed away ten days later, March 14, 1995. Prof. Tsakonas, in his address, sees that “Skepticism, like the other philosophical systems of the hellenistic times, paved the way for Christianity, by giving a positive answer to the problems of God and truth, thus, liberating man from the impasse of doubt”. (In this review, the authors’ spelling of the word ‘Scepticism’ has been respected, according to the British and the American traditions).

In this issue of SKEPSIS there are ten excellent ESSAYS on Scepticism. The first three deal with the history of Scepticism, from pre-Pyrrhonian to post-modern. The next two articles deal with its relation to two other philosophical currents, Platonic and Stoic. The following two articles relate Scepticism to Religion followed, in turn, by three which discuss scepticism in Hume’s Ethics and in Newton’s Natural Philosophy.

In the first article, “Pyrrhonian Postmodernism: Ancient Roots of an Historiographical Crisis”, Prof. B.C. Southgate argues that, applied to historiography and historical texts and studies, the “sceptical contemporary [late twentieth-century] attitudes towards historical truth have their own historical roots in ancient scepticism” and, by tracing it through the centuries, “Scepticism is not a problem newly-discovered by post-modernist theorists: it is a perennial problem, the discussion of which periodically returns to fashion”.

Prof. Ch. Evangeliou, in “Sextus on Skepsis and Skepticism”, agreeing that “Skepticism, in one form or the other, has been present in every period of philosophy, ancient, modern, and post-modern”, and realizing “a need for a clear understanding of the nature and character of Skepticism”, feels that “this need may be partially satisfied by going back to the ancient roots of Skepsis”. However, going back to Sextus Empiricus, Prof. Evangeliou finds that, although “at the theoretical level, Sextus tried to differentiate genuine Pyrrhonian Skepticism from any other philosophical schools”, yet “in practice, Sextus seems to follow neither the consequence of his theoretical commitments to epoche and ataraxia nor the noble example of Pyrrho’s detachment”.

In the third Essay, “Roots, Rising and Versions of Skepticism”, Prof. L.C.Bargeliotes proposes that, in tracing out the roots, the rising and different

versions of Skepticism, we have “to go back to the pre-classical antiquity and follow its course of development and transformations through the classical, hellenistic, byzantine and western european periods down to our days”. Thus, the author, starting with Xenophanes and Socrates, comes to Phaedo and Pyrrho, both of Elis, close to Olympia, where “the rising of the Pyrrhonian Skepticism out of Phaedo’s School of Elis follows as a ‘natural’ consequence”. After a development of the Academic and the Pyrrhonian Skepticism, Prof. Bargeliotis traces the meta-Pyrrhonian Skepticism in the Christian Fideism, in Montaigne, Pascal and Descartes and in Hume’s Phenomenalism.

L.P. Gerson, in “Scepticism and the Platonic Tradition”, tries “to show how a Platonist would respond to the sceptical argument against rational belief” and “how Plotinus tries to remedy such defects” in Plato’s position. Next is the essay “Sceptical Criticisms of the Stoic Doctrine of Signs” by R.L. Purtill in which the author discusses Sextus’s attack of the absolute and relational predication in the relation between the indicator and the indicated in the Stoic Theory of the “Sign”(indicator) and Sextus’s logical criticisms of the Stoic system. Yet, Purtill notices, the Stoic theory did survive Sextus’s criticisms: “some lasting value?”

In the next essay on the “Theological uses of Skepticism: The ‘Pros’ and ‘Cons’”, Prof. J. Reedy proposes to answer the question “How did the Catholic Church [since 1870] come to view skepticism as an absolute evil” and become “a great champion of reason” while, in the XVIIth c. “Catholics, especially Jesuits”, used skepticism to combat Protestantism. D.N.Blakeley, in his Skepticism and the Religions of the World”, discusses John Hick’s thesis on “the third phase of the relationship between skepticism and religion” (i.e., across religious traditions in a multi-systems perspective), a thesis which is found not to meet the challenge of the contemporary skepticism, nor that of the ancient skeptics.

A.E. Hatzimousis, in his “Hume’s Ethics and the Limits of Hellenistic Scepticism”, finds that Hume “seems to maintain diverse, if not conflicting, philosophical claims: although he appears to be an epistemological Sceptic, Hume is, however, a Stoic in his ethical writings. In his “Human [Humean?] Skepticism and Moral Sentiment”, M.Hester concludes also that Hume’s thesis “will surprise those who take Hume to be mainly a skeptic”, since, by accepting that “the principles of taste are universal in the human species”, “Hume has a certain kind of systematic and comprehensive study of the ‘science of human nature’ lacked by many Greek skeptics”. In “ ‘Phenomenon’ and ‘Occult Qualities’ (*occultae qualitates*): sceptical views in Newton’s Philosophy” (in Greek, with an English ‘Summary’), Prof. J.G.Dellis traces, first, the indirect and direct sceptical influences on Newton’s thought and, second, Newton’s sceptical philosophy in accepting the notion of “phenomenon’ in the sceptic

sense and “rejecting the concepts of ‘*occultae qualitates*’ because they belong to the area of Metaphysics”. Newton’s Scepticism is found, in the end, to be a “mitigated” (cf. D.Hume) or “enlightened Scepticism” (cf. S.Brown).

In the DISCUSSIONS, we find “Les principes épistémologiques généraux chez le néoplatonicien Proclus (412-485) et chez le chrétien pseudo-Denys (5 ou 6 s.), where Dr. Chr.Terezis tries to show the gnoseological differences of the two thinkers and, consequently, their difference in Henology and Ontology.

A Journal for Philosophy and Inter-disciplinary Research, SKEPSIS, although closely related to Scepticism as the title indicates, is open to all philosophical currents and to all the disciplines of scientific research as the subtitle denotes. If all the articles of this issue are on Scepticism, it is only because, incidentally, Scepticism was the theme of the Center’s International Symposium in the Summer of 1994. The 1995 Symposium was on “Scepticism and the Platonic Tradition”. For the Summer of 1996 (August 13-18), the topic will be “Individual and Polis: Ancient and Modern Sociopolitical Theories”.

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CONSTAS DIMITRI AND STAVROU THEOFANIS G., Editors,
Greece Prepares for the Twenty-first Century

Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995 (Published in cooperation with the Institute of International Relations, Panteion University). XI+319p.

Modern Greece remains a country of paradoxes and of contradictions, a country pushed by its history and its traditions and pushed by the forces of modernity. Unique amongst its Balkan neighbours, it is an integral part of what may perhaps be the most potent institutions of the modern world: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Both institutions, in their own way, have had a profound effect on their members. For Greece in particular membership was actively pursued for security and political reasons. In regards to NATO it was pursued in order to counter the threat from the north posed by the combination of Tito’s national communism as this was expressed with Yugoslavia’s support to the Greek communists and to the concept for an “independent” Slavic Macedonia stretching from Skopje to Thessaloniki, Greece’s primary northern port.

Membership in the EU was primarily sought in order to consolidate what by general consensus is considered the greatest political achievement of Modern