

The Diffusion of Sextus Empiricus's Works in the Renaissance

Luciano Floridi

Introduction: An Annotated List of Three Known Latin Translations

In discussing the recovery of Pyrrhonism during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it seems that any analysis of the influence of Sextus Empiricus's works on Renaissance culture has to be based on a careful investigation of what primary and secondary sources were available at the time, and who knew and made use of such sources. For this purpose scholars have, since the second half of the nineteenth century, located and studied five Latin translations of Sextus Empiricus's works. This has recently led to the reconstruction of a family of manuscripts consisting of three copies of a late medieval translation.

T₁: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat. 14700, s. XIII, mbr., misc., 396 fols.: (ff. 83^r-132^v) (*P*)*Irroniarum Informatio* libri.¹ This is the most widely known Latin translation of the *Outlines*. Because of its closeness to the original Greek text, it was used by Hermann Mutschmann for the *constitutio textus* in his critical edition of Sextus's works.² Discovered and described by Charles Jourdain, it was further studied by Clemens Baeumker and Mutschmann himself,³ who listed it as "Tr.I." in his still fundamental

¹ For detailed descriptions of the Ms. see M. Léopold Delisle "Inventaire des manuscrits latins de Saint-Victor," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 30 (1869), 40; G. Lacombe (ed.), *Aristoteles Latinus Codices* (Rome, 1939), I, 544-45; and Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* (Leiden, 1983), III, 235a.

² Cf. *Sexti Empirici Opera, recensuit Hermannus Mutschmann ... addenda et corrigenda adiecit I. Mau* (Leipzig, 1958).

³ Charles Jourdain, "Sextus Empiricus et la philosophie scolastique," in *Excursions historiques et philosophiques à travers le moyen âge* (Paris, 1888), 199-217; Clemens Baeumker, "Eine bisher unbekannte lateinische Übersetzung der Ὑποτυπώσεις des Sextus Empiricus," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 4 (1891), 574-77 (he does not

work on extant manuscripts of Sextus Empiricus and later on as “T” in the Preface of his edition of *Sexti Empirici Opera*.⁴

T₂: Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. Lat. X.267 (3460), s. XIV, cart., 57 fols.: (ff. 1^r-46^v) *Pirronie Informaciones* and (ff. 47^r-57^v) fragments of *Adversus Mathematicos* III-V. Only very recently did Walter Cavini show that this translation of the *Outlines* is another, more accurate copy of Paris Lat. 14700.⁵ Thanks to the close examination of a dated draft of a testament written on f. 46v, immediately after the translation of the *Outlines*, Cavini has been able to provide the *terminus ante quem* for dating this manuscript and correspondingly T₁ and T₃.

T₃: Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Ms. 10112 (Hh92, Toledo 98, 25), s. XIV, mbr., misc., 131 fols., not numbered: (ff. 1^r-30^r), *Pirroniarum informacionum libri*. Coming originally from Toledo’s Library, the Sextian part of the manuscript had been wrongly catalogued as excerpts from Aulus Gellius by José Millas Vallicrosa. The mistake was first discovered by P. O. Kristeller in 1955.⁶ It is a more accurate version of the same translation contained in Ms. Paris Lat. 14700.

The only other two manuscripts studied until now contain translations from *Adversus Mathematicos* and do not form a homogeneous group.

L₁: Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Lat. 2990, s. XV, cart., misc., 385 fols.: (ff. 266^r-381^v), *Adversus Mathematicos*, Books I-IV. This translation by Giovanni Lorenzi (c. 1440-1501) was first studied by Giovanni Mercati, then by Charles B. Schmitt.⁷

know of Jourdain’s article); A. Elter et L. Rademacher, *Analecta Graeca, Prog. zum Geburtstage d. Kaisers* (Bonn, 1889), 11-28; H. Mutschmann, “Zur Übersetzertätigkeit des Nicolaus von Rhegium (zu Paris lat. 14,700),” *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, 22 (1911), 691-93.

⁴ H. Mutschmann, “Der Überlieferung der Schriften des Sextus Empiricus,” *Rheinisches Museum*, 64 (1909), 250 and 478. See also *Sexti Empirici Opera*, X-XI.

⁵ Walter Cavini, “Appunti sulla prima diffusione in occidente delle opere di Sesto Empirico,” *Medioevo*, 3 (1977), 1-20; and see Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, II, 252b, and VI, 259a.

⁶ Cf. José Millas Vallicrosa, *Las traducciones orientales en los manuscritos de la Bibliotheca Catedral de Toledo* (Madrid, 1942), 211-18, no. 45 (Ms. 98-25, n. 327 of the 1727 Inventory), who thought it was part of the excerpt from Aulus Gellius. A more accurate description of the Ms. and correction of Vallicrosa’s information is in Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, IV, 567b-568a; see also E. Pellegrin in “Manuscrits des auteurs classiques latins de Madrid et du Chapitre de Tolède,” *Bulletin d’Information de l’Institut de Recherche et d’Histoire des Textes*, 2 (1953), 7-24, cf. 15, and Manuel de Castro, *Manuscritos Franciscanos de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid* (1973), 437-38, no. 407; and Martí de Barcelona, “Notes descriptives dels manuscrits franciscans medievals de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid,” *Estudis Franciscans*, 45 (1933), 384.

⁷ Giovanni Mercati, “Minuzie: Una Traduzione di Giovanni Lorenzi da Sesto Empirico,” *Bessarione*, 36 (1920), 144-46, now in *Opere Minori*, Studi e Testi (79) (Vatican City, 1937), IV, 107-8; Giovanni Mercati, “Questenbergiana,” *Rendiconti della*

L₃: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Sancroft 17 (S.C. 10, 318), s. XVI, cart., 86 fols.: *Adversus Logicos* I (i.e. Adv. Math. VII) translated by John Wolley [c. 1530-96]. The manuscript was discovered by Richard Popkin in the 1960s, then studied by Charles B. Schmitt.⁸

Obviously, scholars have also evaluated the degree of diffusion of Sextus's works in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries on the basis of the evidence provided by the previous list. Given the number and quality of the Latin translations, they have generally agreed that—with the important exception of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, who read Sextus in Greek⁹—his works had little impact on Renaissance culture, at least until Estienne's edition of his Latin translation in 1562.¹⁰ In what follows, I intend to expand the previous list by adding two more manuscripts. Having enlarged our evidential basis, I shall then attempt to refine our understanding of the initial stages of the history of modern skepticism by arguing that, although Sextus Empiricus's skeptical arguments were not widely used in philosophy during the Renaissance, nevertheless the *summa sceptica* represented by his works was rather better known among the humanists than has been suspected, and that therefore it would be more correct to speak of a Renaissance lack of interest in the anti-epistemological function of Pyrrhonian arguments than to infer from the absence of "influence" a corresponding absence of knowledge of the writings of Sextus Empiricus during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, ser. 3, VIII (1933), 249-69, now in *Opere Minori*, IV, 437-59 (on Vat. lat. 2990 see 448 n. 37 and 452-53); Charles B. Schmitt, "An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Translation of Sextus Empiricus by Giovanni Lorenzi," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of P. O. Kristeller*, ed. by C. H. Clough (Manchester, 1976), 244-61. About the physical nature of the codex see also Tammaro de Marinis, *La Legatura artistica in Italia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Firenze, 1960), II, 101, and III, 44 (on another Sextian codex, Paris BN Grec 1964); and again Kristeller *Iter Italicum*, II, 358a. For a description of 25 Mss. containing *Adv. Mat.* see *Against The Musicians*, ed. D. D. Greaves (Lincoln, 1986).

⁸ Charles B. Schmitt, "John Wolley (c. 1530-1596) and the First Latin Translation of Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Logicos* I," in *The Sceptical Mode in Modern Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Richard H. Popkin*, ed. R. A. Watson and J. E. Force (Dordrecht, 1988), 61-70. Wolley studied at Merton and was awarded a B.A. in 1553 and an M.A. in 1557. The College still owns a Greek transcription of *Adversus Mathematicos* (Merton, Ms. 304), but this does not seem to be the Ms. on which Wolley based his translation: the quotation from Parmenides reported by Wolley in Greek on f. 19 of his translation is slightly but clearly different from the corresponding Greek text of Ms. 304, f. 88^r. On this passage both Wolley and Camillus Venetus, the copyist of the Greek Ms, agree with Mss L and E (Laur. 81.11 and Parisinus 1964). See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, tr. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), XLIII, and *Against the Dogmatists*, tr. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 57, note 1.

⁹ On his interest in skepticism see Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533) and his Critique of Aristotle* (The Hague, 1967).

¹⁰ *Sexti Empirici Pyrrhoniatarum hypotypōseōn libri III. ...Graece nunquam, Latine nunc primum editi interprete Henrico Stephano* (Paris, 1562).

An Unstudied Translation of the *Outlines* by Paéz de Castro

When many years ago H. P. Kraus bought the remains of the Phillipps Collection, he acquired among many precious documents a Spanish codex which turns out to be of considerable importance for the purpose of evaluating the Latin diffusion of Sextus Empiricus in the Renaissance. The manuscript is the former Phillipps 4135 and contains an original Latin translation of the *Outlines* which, as we shall see in a moment, is to be dated to the third quarter of the sixteenth century. The codex belonged to a group of manuscripts from the libraries of Laserna de Santander, Yriarte, and Astorga acquired by Sir Thomas Phillipps through the dealer Thomas Thorpe,¹¹ and until Kraus's death it was part of his private collection.¹² It is a paper miscellany made of small and disbound folios, numbered irregularly and grouped into 32 fascicules. The fascicule containing the translation of *Sexti Cheronei[s] libri tres de Sceptica disciplina et caractere* (ff. 260^r-313^r, old title erased) is an autograph, with corrections, written in the hand of Juan Paéz de Castro. These are the incipit and the explicit:

Qui rem aliquam assertantur aut invenisse se illam, aut invenire intelligere non posse, aut se adhuc investigare fatiantur necesse est [the author replaced with the text underlined a previous, erased version].

... qui est [added afterwards] Sceptica predictus disciplina, idque data opera, ut pote que sibi satis sint ad solutionem proposita.

The manuscript bears many corrections and addenda and some linguistic notes. It is another interesting apograph that will need a closer examination in order to be fully described, but its importance for the history of skepticism is already evident. The translation probably remained unknown and unread in the past, but it may be an indication of the fact that some interest in Sextus Empiricus was rising at least by the mid-sixteenth century.

¹¹ *The Phillipps manuscripts. Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca D. Thomae Phillipps* (repr. London 1968), 60. On the Phillipps collection see also Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, IV, 230-36.

¹² The Ms is currently for sale at H. P. Kraus, Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York. I am grateful to Dr. Roland Folter, director of the Kraus Rare Books and Manuscripts, for showing me the Ms. Dr. Jill Kraye has provided me with a copy of Prof. Kristeller's letter in which he gives clarifications about several details concerning the Ms tradition of this and other Sextus's texts. I also thank Dr. Sandra Sider, who had supplied data and photocopies to the late Dr. Charles Schmitt when he was working on the article on Sextus Empiricus for the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*. I have consulted the related material at the Warburg Institute (Schmitt's papers and microfilms, uncatalogued). The Ms, seen by Kristeller still at Kraus several years ago, is described in *Iter Italicum*, V, 359a,b.

Paéz de Castro has been considered by many as one of the greatest Spanish humanists who ever lived,¹³ but despite his fame we do not know when he was born, although we are informed that he came from the small city of Quer (Guadalajara). Considering that when he was in Trent for the Council in 1545 he must have been about thirty years old, we cannot be too far from the truth if we fix the date of his birthday around 1515. He died in Quer in 1570, probably in March, but even this date is not certain because the registers from 1563 to 1598 of the parish archives of Quer are lost. Paéz de Castro studied in Alcalá and Salamanca, first law and then mathematics, history, philosophy, and above all languages. He knew Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldean, and it seems he had also studied Arabic. He was in contact with the most important Spanish humanists of his time, such as Florian de Ocampo, Juan de Vergara, Alvar Gómez, and Ambrosio de Morales; and in Spain he came to know Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and the Cardinal of Burgos, of whom he became the librarian, like Bonaventura Vulcanius. In 1545 he went with the cardinal to Trent, where he gained a reputation as a great scholar among other humanists.

In an interesting list of Spanish people attending the Council, written at the time, there is a long note dedicated to Paéz de Castro, who is introduced as “immensae eruditionis seu sacrae sive profanae vir.”¹⁴ The Council gave rise to one of the greatest meetings of humanists ever recorded, and like many of his colleagues, Paéz de Castro took advantage of the opportunity provided by the occasion. He studied many of the manuscripts acquired by or copied for Cardinal Mendoza first in Venice¹⁵ and then in Rome, especially those of

¹³ Cf. Charles Graux, *Essai sur les origines du Fonds Grec de l' Escorial*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, fasc. 46 (Paris, 1880), esp. 96-109 (page numbers refer to the recent Spanish translation, *Los Origenes del Fondo Griego del Escorial*, ed. and tr. Gregorio de Andrés [Madrid, 1982], which contains corrections and addenda). Information about Paéz de Castro's life is also given by Juan Catalina y Garcia in *Biblioteca de escritores de la provincia de Guadalajara* (Madrid, 1899), 393-413; C. Gutiérrez in *Españoles en Trento* (Valladolid, 1951), 663-69. See also A. Morel-Fatio, *Historiographie de Charles Quint* (Paris, 1913), and R. Cortés, “Estudio sobre la Historiographie de Charles Quint de Morel-Fatio,” *Bulletin Hispanique*, 15 (1913), 355-62.

¹⁴ Cod. 320 (old n. 143), *Library of Santa Cruz de Valladolid*, ed. and tr. C. Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ The name of Mendoza occurs very often in the registers of borrowing of the Marciana (cf. “Registro del Prestito dei manoscritti marciani 29 maggio 1545 18 novembre 1548 Codice marciano latino XIV, 22” and “Registro del Prestito dei manoscritti marciani 8 febr. 1548 [?] 20 aprile 1559 codice marciano latino XIV, 23,” H. Omont, “Deux registres de prêts de manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Saint-Marc à Venise 1545-1559,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 48 [1887], 651-86). Mendoza was suspected of stealing some of the Mss of the Marciana (see C. Castellani, *Il Prestito dei Manoscritti della Biblioteca di San Marco in Venezia ne' suoi primi tempi e le conseguenti perdite dei codici stessi. Ricerche e notizie* [Venezia, 1897], *Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienze, lettere ed arti*, VIII [Serie VII, 1896-97], see 4-5 [314-16]), but the charge was apparently unjustified (Joseph Valentinelli, *Bibliotheca manuscripta ad S. Marci Venetiarum* [Venetia, 1868], I, 46, where the author asserts to have seen the Mss presented to the Escorial by Mendoza and found none of them belonging to the Marciana).

Aristotle and Plato, and became an active member of the Aristotelian academy promoted by the group of learned people present in Trent. Before retiring, he travelled through Europe quite extensively. He was in Rome between 1547 and 1550;¹⁶ and in 1555 he was in Brussels with Charles V, who nominated him his chronicler in replacement of Ocampo. After 1560 he lived in Quer, where he may have accomplished his project of translating the *Outlines*.

Paéz de Castro did not write much and left most of what he did write unpublished.¹⁷ Before the discovery of his translation of the *Outlines*, his two most important and well-known works were the *Memorial de las cosas necesarias para escribir historia*¹⁸ and the *Memorial de Dr. J. Paéz de Castro ... al rey Ph. II sobre la utilidad de juntar una buena biblioteca*.¹⁹ The former was an essay preparatory to the composition of a history of the reign of Charles V, a work that Paéz de Castro never actually wrote; the latter, dedicated to Philip II, concerned the opportunity of building a library in Valladolid and represents the original project which gave rise to the Escorial.

Paéz de Castro's correspondence supplies a number of interesting details on his early interest in Sextus Empiricus. As far as I could ascertain, the first time he mentions the *Outlines* is in a letter sent to Geronimo Zurita from Trent on 10 August 1545. Having just visited the library of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, he wrote to his friend in order to report, enthusiastically, about the many works he had been able to see. Among several other titles he lists the "Hypotyposis Pyrrhonicorum, que es un libro grande, y bueno."²⁰ This manuscript, already mentioned by Konrad Gesner in his *Bibliotheca Universalis* as "Dionysii Longini opuscula ..." in the same year,²¹ was the

¹⁶ See Gregorio de Andrés, "Les Copistes Grecs du Cardinal de Burgos Francisco Mendoza," *XVI Internationaler Byzantinisten-Kongress Akten*, II/4, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* (1984), 97-104, esp. 98.

¹⁷ For bibliography see Juan Catalina y Garcia, *op. cit.*, and C. Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*, 670-71, which lists 14 entries. Graux, *op. cit.* and G. Antolin, *Catálogo de los códices latinos del Escorial V* (Madrid, 1923), 46-68, provide information about his library. A not very accurate selection of his letters was published in 1680 by Juan Francisco Andres de Ustaroz and Diego José Dormerv (*Progressos de la historia en el Reino de Aragon y Elogios de Geronimo Zurita, su primer cronista* [Zaragoza, 1680]). An excerpt from this work is in Graux, *op. cit.* appendix n. 4: "Extractos de Cartas de P. de C. a Zurita." More recently Gregorio de Andrés has edited "31 cartas inéditas de J. Paéz de Castro, cronista de Carlos V," in *Boletín de la R. Academia de la Historia*, 168 (1971), 515-71.

¹⁸ Cf. Graux, *op. cit.*, 51, published in *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*, 9 (1883), 165-78.

¹⁹ It was published by Eustasio Esteban in *Ciudad de Dios*, 28 (1892), 604-10 and 29ff.

²⁰ See Andres de Ustarroz and Dormer, *op. cit.*, 463b, and appendix n. 4 of Graux, *op. cit.*

²¹ *Bibliotheca Universalis, sive catalogus Omnium Scriptorum ... auctore Conrado Gesnero ... Tiguri apud Christophorum Froshoverum Mense Septembri Anno 1545, f. 212^v.*

miscellany n. VII.Γ.9 containing “Sexti Empirici pyrrhonicarum hypotyposeon libri 3 et contra disciplinas,” which was destroyed by the fire of the Escorial in 1671.²²

In another letter, dated September 1549 and also addressed to Zurita but this time sent from Rome, Paéz de Castro communicated to his friend the project of producing a translation of Sextus Empiricus: “Agora entiendo en hazer Latino a Sexto Empyrico Cheroneo, que son dos libros de Philosophia de los Pyrrhonios, haié una prefacion, en que porne grandes cosas de lo que toca para nuestra Religion, & effugiam vitiligatores; v.m. advierta lo que en esta parte tiene notando.”²³ Which Greek manuscript did Paéz de Castro intend to use for his translation? A third letter allows us to make a reliable conjecture about his original source. On 10 April 1568 he wrote to Mateo Vazquez that in the past Cardinal Mendoza had asked “un escribiente, griego de nacion,” to copy some rare books in Rome such as Photius and Sextus Empiricus. This Greek manuscript has now been identified as Ms. Madrid Bib. Nac. 4709 (O 30).²⁴ Already listed by Weber, the codex contains all Sextus Empiricus’s works and the *Dialaxis*. It has been dated 1549 (ff. 1-228) and circa 1550 (ff. 228-327^v): the first part was copied in Rome by Giovanni Mauromata of Corfù, while the second, containing the *Outlines*, is by a different hand and fully annotated by Paéz de Castro himself.²⁵ While he was writing to Zurita about the project of a translation, Paéz de Castro was probably attending to the copying of the original Greek text which he was planning to translate.

The manuscript and the letters by Paéz de Castro show that he knew Sextus Empiricus and planned his translation several years before Henri Estienne’s edition, so that when the latter decided to publish his translation, his regard for Sextus Empiricus was not a completely isolated case.²⁶

²² See Graux, *op. cit.*, 276, n. 186. It was the Ms E.II.19 cart. in folio misc. ff. 196, the first 93 ff. containing the *Outlines* (Gregorio de Andrés, *Catálogo de los Codices Griegos desaparecidos de la real biblioteca de el Escorial* [El Escorial, 1968], n. 297). The other codex of Sextus, catalogued by Gesner (f. 596^v) as belonging to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza’s library, contains *Adv. Math.* and is Ms. T 116 of the National Library in Madrid (*Iter Italicum*, II, 517, n. 1); it was catalogued by Mutschmann as Ms “z”; see also below Weber’s article (n. 28), and n. 185 in Graux’s list.

²³ See Andres de Ustaroz and Dormer, *op. cit.*, 483a, repr. in “Saragossa ... Disputacion provincial,” *Biblioteca de escriptores aragoneses. Seccion historica*, 7 (1878), 550 (letter to Zurita).

²⁴ Graux, *op. cit.*, 60-61, 412-13 (reproduction of the letter), and note 6. On 93, within a list of Greek Mss. belonging to the Fondo Caldinal Mendoza, Graux quotes: “Memor. 124 Sextus Empiricus enc. Cardl. mano de Paéz Huc tandem.”

²⁵ The Ms. was owned by Francisco de Mendoza and Garcia de Loaisa and was in the Convento de S. Vincente de Plasencia during the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century it was in the National Library: see Gregorio de Andrés, *Catálogo de los Codices Griegos de la Biblioteca Nacional* (Madrid, 1987), 274-76.

²⁶ I have provided a reconstruction of Henri’s humanistic anti-dogmatism in relation to his translation of the *Outlines* in “The Grafted Branches of the Sceptical Tree: ‘Noli altum sapere’ and Henri Estienne’s Latin Edition of Sexti Empirici Pyrrhonicarum Hypotyposeon libri III,” *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, 11 (1992), 127-66.

Estienne was part of a wider movement which was going to lead, after a few years, to the full philosophical impact of Pyrrhonism in France with authors such as Sanchez, Montaigne, Charron, and later Gassendi and even Descartes (although we do not know which skeptical authors he actually read). If he was anticipating, and therefore had an important role in increasing the influence that Sextus Empiricus was going to have, Estienne was at the same time meeting an already existing, if limited demand for an easily readable text. The works of Sextus Empiricus were available and read and even translated into Latin during the Renaissance somewhat more extensively than we have thought so far. Further evidence in favor of this hypothesis is given by an early sixteenth-century Latin manuscript which has not yet been studied.

Sextus Empiricus in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Turin

The National Library of Turin holds four manuscripts containing works by Sextus Empiricus. Three of them are Greek and have already been studied. The most famous is Cod. Gr. B.I.3 (late fifteenth, beginning of the sixteenth century), which bears the *ex libris* of Henri Estienne (*Ex libris Henrici Stephani Florentiae emptus* 1555). The codex is fully annotated, and there can be very few doubts that it is the codex used by Estienne for his *editio princeps* of the *Outlines*.²⁷ It is listed by Weber in his work on the *Dialexis*, where it is labelled Ms. T.²⁸ The designation was maintained by Mutschmann, who catalogued it as *Taurinensis* Gr. 12.²⁹ It contains Greek transcriptions of the *Pyrrhonianae Hypotyposes*, of the ten books of the *Contra Mathematicos*, and of part of the so-called *Dialexis*. A second manuscript, Cod. Gr. B.III.32, has been dated to the sixteenth century.³⁰ When Weber listed it as *Taurinensis* CXXIII. c.V.14, he had not seen it and wrote that he was thoroughly relying on Pasini's catalogue for his information. Maybe for this reason Mutschmann did not insert it in his annotated list.³¹ It contains *Sexti Empirici octo priores adversus Mathematicos*. The last manuscript in our short survey is Cod. Gr. B.VI.29 (sixteenth century), a miscel-

²⁷ Microfilm pos 13500, Rome, B. N., Centro Nazionale per lo Studio del Manoscritto. It is described in Albano Sorbelli, *Inventari dei Manoscritti delle Biblioteche d'Italia* (Florence, 1924), XXVIII, 13, n. 81 and in Josephus Pasinus, *Codices Manuscripti Bibliothecae Regii Taurinensis Atheneaei ...* (Taurini ex Typographia Regia, 1749), I, 85, Codex XI.b.IV.11.

²⁸ E. Weber, "Über den Dialect der sogenannten Dialexeis und die Handschriften des Sextus Empiricus," *Philologus*, 57 (1898), 66.

²⁹ H. Mutschmann, "Die Überlieferung," 246, and 281-82, on Estienne's notes.

³⁰ Microfilm pos 13587, Rome, B. N. Centro Nazionale per lo Studio del Manoscritto. Cf. Albano Sorbelli, *op. cit.*, XVIII, 21, n. 158 (Codex CXXIII. c.V.14 in Josephus Pasinus, *op. cit.*, I, 228).

³¹ Cf. Paolo Eleuteri, "Note su alcuni manoscritti di Sesto Empirico," *Orpheus*, 6 (1985), 432-36.

lany including *Sexti Empirici libri adversus mathematicos* (“alterius exscriptoris manu exarati,” according to Pasini, p. 371).³² Relying on the 1749 catalogue, Weber registered this manuscript as *Taurinensis* CCLXI, and, like the previous one, this too did not appear in Mutschmann’s list.

The fourth codex, which we shall be concerned with at more length, has been wrongly classified as Greek until now. It is in fact a miscellany containing a Latin translation of *Adv. Math. I-III*.

A Copy of Lorenzi’s Translation

The *Taurinensis* C. II.11 (henceforth L_2) is a paper manuscript of 94 numbered folios measuring cm. 27.2 x 21,3, which can be dated to the first half of the sixteenth century.³³ The codex was partly damaged on top and on the left-hand side by the fire which in 1904 destroyed part of the collection of the Regia Biblioteca Nazionale of Turin.³⁴ Although there are shadows due to the water used in order to extinguish the fire, it is still perfectly readable. The codex contains two works: according to the modern numeration from ff. 1 to 93, on ff. 2-42 we find *Apollodori Atheniensis grammatici Bibliotheca* in Greek,³⁵ while ff. 44^r-93^v contain a Latin translation of the first three books of Sextus Empiricus’s *Contra Mathematicos I-III*, i.e., *Adversus Geometras*, *Adversus Grammaticos*, and *Adversus Rhetores* (f. 1 and f. 43 are blank). The translation starts from the third paragraph of the first book (*Adv. Math. I*, 57, chapter III, “A Description of the Art of Grammar”) without title. A few notes by the same hand and the titles of the paragraphs are in red ink.

On closer inspection this Sextus manuscript turns out to be not an apograph but a reliable copy of Vat. Lat. 2990. In order to establish this point it is sufficient to compare the incipit and explicit of each book of Lorenzi’s translation—already published by Schmitt with some other interesting excerpts³⁶—with the parallel sections of L_2 . In the transcription of L_2 provided in the first appendix I have relied largely on Schmitt’s work as far as the ordinary conventions about punctuation and modern usage of letters are concerned, transcribing only the essential text, without all the further information that he included. On the other hand, I have added the numeration of the folios and, whenever possible, inserted a slash in order to indicate line breaks.

³² Microfilm pos 28685, Rome, B. N., Centro Nazionale per lo Studio del Manoscritto. See Albano Sorbelli, *op. cit.*, XXVIII, 31, n. 248, and Josephus Pasinus, *op. cit.*, I, 371, Codex CCLXI. c.I.15.

³³ Microfilm pos 13453, Rome, B. N., Centro Nazionale per lo Studio del Manoscritto.

³⁴ See Giovanni Gorini, *L’Incendio della Regia Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino* (Turin, 1905).

³⁵ See A. Diller, “The Text History of the Bibliotheca of Pseudo-Apollodorus,” *Transactions of the American Philological Society*, 66 (1935), 296-313, repr. in his *Studies in Greek Manuscript Tradition* (Amsterdam, 1983), 212.

³⁶ Cf. C. B. Schmitt, “An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Manuscript,” 250-57.

Some comments on the nature of the manuscript are now in order. A first problem with L_2 concerns the order of the folios: the person who added the numeration in pencil (according to a personal communication of the librarian this happened in 1937, when the manuscript was restored) did not realize that, as the folios stand, they are partially misplaced. There is a gap in L_2 between f. 47^v (corresponding to L_1 : f. 20^r) and f. 48^r (corresponding to L_1 : f. 24^r, l.14/15) which is filled by f. 52^{r/v} (corresponding to L_1 : f. 20^r[end], f. 21 and f. 22^r) and then by f. 63^{r/v} (corresponding to L_1 : f. 22^r[end], f. 22^v, f.23^{r/v} and the beginning of f. 24^r), so that, according to the original numeration, the manuscript should be read thus: ..., 47, 52, 63, 48..., 51, 53..., 62, 64, etc.

Turning to the reliability of the copy, it must be said that L_2 is not always as close to the original as it may seem from the foregoing excerpts. Sometimes the copyist adds to the original a few words of his own, as when instead of writing: “[L_1 : f. 13^r] ... apud poetas, Euripidem...,” he writes: “[L_2 : f. 44^r] ... apud poetas, ut pote, homerum, hesiodum, Pindarum, Euripidem ...” (note that proper names are commonly underlined only in L_2). Another example of this lack of accuracy occurs in the same folio a few lines down, when instead of having “[L_1 : f.13^v]: Consuetudine communi bonum loquendi...,” we read “[L_2 : f. 44^r]: consuetudine communi Quio [?] sermonis bonum loquendi ...” Some other times the copyist has slightly modified the syntactical structure of a sentence, as when instead of writing “[L_1 : f. 13^v] ... non enim inquit oportebat...,” he writes “[L_2 : f. 44^r] ... non enim oportebat inquit...,” or instead of “[L_1 : f. 15^r] ... ita eodem modo etiam...,” we have “[L_2 : f. 45^r] ... ita eodem etiam modo...” It also happens that the punctuation has been modified in several occasions, and in L_2 some abbreviations of L_1 are commonly made explicit, whereas other particles are usually abbreviated, such as the final “-m” or “-n.” On the other hand the copyist sometimes writes the “-que” in full when it is abbreviated in L_1 and abbreviates it when in the original it is written in full. More generally, the copyist of L_2 uses a greater number of abbreviations (e.g., “et” for “etiam,” “ipsus” for “ipsius,” “psuadendi” for “persuadendi,” “igit” for “igitur” and so on) than does Lorenzi or Questenberg (the copyist of L_1 according to Mercati), as if he were in more of a hurry and less interested in producing a fine text than the copyist of L_1 .

There are of course more serious and classic defects in the manuscript. Thus on L_2 : f. 89^v the copyist has jumped a line. The mistake is understandable. The original text says “[L_1 : f. 101^v] ... continet dimensionem et,/f.102^r] interior centroque proximus, parvam continet di/mensionem omnes autem...”; the copyist has been misled by the two occurrences of “dimensionem,” so that he wrote “[L_2 : f. 89^v] continet dimensionem, omnes autem...” Yet there is no doubt that all the foregoing points are occasional alterations, which cannot modify the overall judgment about the source of the manuscript: L_2 was not made on the basis of an original Greek text but is a copy of L_1 . With respect to this conclusion two more features are indicative

of the derivative nature of L_2 . Sextus's frequent quotations from other authors, which Lorenzi left in Greek, are never transcribed. Sometimes a blank space is left; more often they are translated into Latin. Thus on f. 66^r we read the following Homeric verse: "Sic ne iubes fieri gelidae ragnator aquai/ Atque superba Deum regi mandata feremus/Quae duro tecum volvis sub pectore dudum/Flecteris an potius, prudens nam flectitur olim," a verse that in L_1 is left in Greek.³⁷ A few exceptions are represented by the transcription of single words, such as "πίσυρες" ($[L_1: 17r] = \text{"\pi\iota\sigma\upsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma"} [L_2: 46r] = \text{"\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\upsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma"})$ or "βῆσσαι" ($[L_1: 17r] = \text{"\beta\eta\sigma\tau\alpha\iota"} [L_2: 46r] = \text{"\beta\eta\sigma\gamma\alpha\iota"})$.

A final interesting feature of the manuscript which deserves to be mentioned is the nature of the marginal annotations. While L_2 bears very few notes, which seem to be of no interest either philologically or philosophically, the copyist has sometimes included in the text remarks or addenda written on the margins of L_1 . The following is probably the clearest example: on f. 26^v of L_1 the words "sed solum generalem syllabam in brevem longamque dividitibus" are added in the margin of the manuscript with a sign (a slash and three points), indicating that they belong to the main text, to l. 17, where the same sign occurs. The copyist of L_2 has followed this suggestion and corrected the main text, so that on f. 49^r of L_2 we read the passage inserted directly in the translation.

On the History of the Manuscript

Before the discovery of L_2 there was no evidence that Lorenzi's translation had any diffusion in the Renaissance. On the contrary it was thought that VL 2990 had remained thoroughly unknown to the scholarly world until Mercati's short study.³⁸ The story of the manuscript goes some way towards explaining why L_2 did not previously figure in the historiography of the skeptical tradition. The codex reached the Library of Turin only at the beginning of the last century, when the great eighteenth-century scholar Tommaso Valperga of Caluso³⁹ (1737-1815) left it after his death to the Regia Biblioteca of Turin, as part of his private collection of manuscripts and books. Valperga himself does not seem to have studied it. A possible confirmation of this negative conclusion is provided not only by the misnumbering of the folios—which may have occurred afterwards, when the manuscript was acquired by the Turin Library, but might have been misplaced before—but above all by an interesting philosophical treatise written by Valperga in French in 1811, the *Principes de philosophie pour les initiés*

³⁷ Cf. Vittorio Amedeo Peyron, *Notitia librorum manu typisve descriptorum qui donante Ab. Thoma Valperga Calusio ...* (Leipzig, 1820), 23-24. The examples given by Peyron seem to be all misnumbered by one unity, e.g., his fol. 67 is fol. 66^r, etc.

³⁸ Cf. Schmitt, "An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Manuscript," 248.

³⁹ On the life and work of Tommaso Valperga of Caluso see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 1973), XVI, 827-32 with further bibliography.

aux mathématiques.⁴⁰ In the *Principi di Filosofia* the names of Leibniz, Descartes, Newton, Hobbes, St. Thomas, Malebranche, Kant, Plato, and St. Augustine occur several times, while Sextus Empiricus is never mentioned. This fact would not be of great significance if it were not for the fifth chapter, entitled “On Certainty about External Objects,” which is devoted to a discussion of skeptical issues. Even here there occurs only a generic reference to “Pyrrhonists” and a not very deep analysis of the notion of “epoche.” It is very unlikely that a fine philologist like Valperga, who had been described by his friend Vittorio Alfieri as a “Montaigne vivo,”⁴¹ would not have mentioned his manuscript or at least quoted the name of Sextus Empiricus if he had studied the contents of L₂.⁴²

Since the manuscript became publicly known so late, it was not recorded in any previous catalogue, including Pasini’s (1749), and so it was unknown to Fabricius, who mentioned the other three Turin manuscripts.⁴³ Indeed it was only in the new repertoire of 1896 that C. O. Zuretti acknowledged the fact that the second half of the codex was written in Latin. He went so far as to provide a very brief incipit of the Sextus section. However, because of the Greek text of *Apollodori Bibliotheca*, he still inserted it in the Greek section of his updated list of manuscripts possessed by the National Library. He did not repeat the entry in the Latin section,⁴⁴ and this partial misplacement caused later misunderstandings, so that in 1924 the codex came to be erroneously described as entirely Greek in Mazzatinti’s standard catalogue of the Library.⁴⁵

Things did not go much better on the scholarly side: the only one who described the manuscript correctly was Weber, but unfortunately he mentioned it in a list at the end of his article, and a careful examination of Mutschmann’s annotated list leads one to suspect that the latter disregarded that section of Weber’s work. I remarked above that Weber fully acknowl-

⁴⁰ I use the Italian translation, *Principi di Filosofia per gl’ Iniziati nelle matematiche di Tommaso Valperga-Caluso volgarizzati dal Professore Pietro Conte con Annotazioni dell’ Abate Antonio Rosmini-Serbati* (Turin, 1840). See also M. Cerruti’s *La Ragione Felice e altri miti del Settecento* (Florence, 1973).

⁴¹ Cerruti, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁴² The Fondo Carte Valperga, which the family Valperga of Masino has recently donated to the Fondo Ambiente Italiano together with the castle of Masino, at the moment is still being catalogued, so it is not unlikely that new information may come out in the future about the provenance of L₂ and how Valperga came to own the Ms. I am grateful to Marco Cerruti and Lucetta Levi-Momigliano for information concerning Valperga’s Mss in Turin and Masino.

⁴³ Johann Albert Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca* (Hildesheim, 1966, repr. of 1796 ed., the third corrected by G. C. Harles), V, caput XXI (olim XVIII), 527-39.

⁴⁴ C. O. Zuretti, *Indice de’ MSS. Greci Torinesi*, estratto da *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* (Florence, 1896), 216, n. 21. This catalogue of the Greek Mss (not mentioned in Pasini’s work) is based on the Ms Appendix added by Bernardino Peyron.

⁴⁵ Albano Sorbelli, *op. cit.*, XXVIII, 37, n. 304. Rather oddly Zuretti’s work is quoted in the note.

edged his debt to Peyron. The latter had supplied more data on the manuscript than Weber, in his concise study of the Fondo Valperga, and had been able to establish both that L_2 was written in a sixteenth-century hand and that the “anonymus interpres” must have lived “ante Gentiani Herveti tempora.” Peyron, like Schmitt in relation to L_1 , was rather critical of the Latin used in the translation.⁴⁶ His transcription of the first lines of f. 44^r, which he saw before 1820, are particularly valuable, since this part of the manuscript suffered from the fire of 1904. The inventory of the extant manuscripts which was written immediately after that disaster might have provided the opportunity for casting a clear light on the nature of the manuscript, but once again the first part written in Greek determined the insertion of the manuscript in the Greek section, as in Zuretti’s catalogue.⁴⁷

Conclusion: A Methodological Distinction between Knowledge and Use

Today nobody seems to doubt that a valid interpretation of the first historical phases of modern skepticism depends on a detailed reconstruction of the diffusion and provenance of the textual sources.⁴⁸ Unless adequately understood, however, the fundamental acquisition of this methodological postulate can represent at the same time a dangerous premise for a much less acceptable set of conclusions. In the history of early modern philosophy there can hardly be any influence without textual diffusion, and the potential degree of influence of a given text can be assessed only if we consider the level of circulation it reached at that time. Yet the absence of use of a certain text does not imply the absence of knowledge of that text on the part of those who might have used it but did not. To argue this way would be nothing less than endorsing an indefensible modal fallacy on the basis of an anachronistic assumption, namely, that if certain texts like the *Outlines* or *Contra Mathematicos* became important later on for the history of epistemology but had a very limited effect on Renaissance philosophy, then they must have remained largely unknown during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Had Sextus Empiricus been known, he would have been influential, but he was not influential and therefore he was not sufficiently known. The basis of this argument is logically untenable and factually wrong. That during the Renaissance the works of Sextus Empiricus were not widely employed for anti-epistemological attacks but were only rarely used for anti-intellectualistic purposes, is not equivalent to saying that they were unknown or did not

⁴⁶ See A. Peyron, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ “Inventario dei Codici Superstiti Greci e Latini Antichi della Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino,” *Rivista di Filologia e d’Istruzione classica*, fascicolo 3, n. XXXII (1904), 385ff. Our codex is listed as the 176th and last of the first section on Greek, paper Mss, 416. Zuretti’s catalogue is quoted.

⁴⁸ See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, rev. ed. (Los Angeles, 1979).

attain some diffusion among scholars. On the contrary, we have seen that the two translations examined above point in the opposite direction. The late Middle Ages discussed some weak forms of skepticism, but actually did not know the violent attacks against knowledge expounded by Sextus Empiricus in his compendia. However, there was already a Byzantine revival of interest in the works of Sextus Empiricus during the fourteenth century,⁴⁹ and recent scholarly work⁵⁰ on the circulation of the manuscripts of Sextus in the Renaissance has brought to light evidence in favor of the hypothesis that some Italian humanists were reasonably well acquainted with at least parts of Sextus's *Opera* during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By way of conclusion, I shall add a few other details which may help to paint a more complex but also more accurate picture of the influence of Sextus Empiricus in the Renaissance.

In recent times there has been some confusion about the alleged evidence that Francesco Filelfo was the first to bring back a Sextian manuscript from Greece.⁵¹ He was certainly among the first humanists who took a serious interest in Sextus Empiricus, at least as a literary source. The Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana in Florence has a codex, Laur. 85.19, which bears

⁴⁹ Cf. J. A. Fabricius, *op. cit.*, V, 527-28; A. Elter and L. Rademacher, *op. cit.*; R. Guillard, *Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras* (Paris, 1926), 79 and 206-7; D. M. Nicol, "The Byzantine Church and Hellenistic Learning in the Fourteenth Century," *Studies in Church History*, 5 (1969), 23-47, esp. 43; on the diffusion of Sextus's works in the Renaissance see Charles B. Schmitt in "The Recovery and Assimilation of Ancient Scepticism in the Renaissance," *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*, 27 (1972), 363-84; a modified version, "The Rediscovery of Ancient Skepticism in Modern Times," in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. M. Burnyeat (Los Angeles, 1983), repr. in his *Reappraisals in Renaissance Thought*, ed. Charles Webster (London, 1989), 225-51. See also Saul Horowitz, *Der Einfluss der griechischen Skepsis auf die Entwicklung der Philosophie bei den Arabern*, Jahres-Bericht, Jued-Theol. Sem. Fraenckel'sche Stiftung 1909 (Breslau, 1915, repr. Farnborough 1971).

⁵⁰ On skepticism and medieval philosophy see C. Jourdain, *art. cit.*; Schmitt "The Recovery"; and Cavini, *op. cit.*, Michael Frede, "A Medieval Source of Modern Scepticism" in *Gedankenzeichen, Festschrift für K. Oehler*, ed. Claussen and R. Daube-Schackat (1988), and Jack Zupko, "Buridan and Skepticism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993), 191-221.

⁵¹ Both Schmitt and Mutschmann (the former probably following the latter) have attributed to Remigio Sabbadini the idea that Filelfo brought the MS of Sextus Empiricus with him from his journey in Greece (Schmitt, "The Recovery," 378, n. 63, and 380); and "An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Manuscript," 246 and n. 16; Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford, 1992), 241; and Mutschmann's "Die Überlieferung," 478. In fact, Sabbadini wrote: "Il quarto italiano illustre che andò a Costantinopoli a studiar greco e a raccogliere codici fu Francesco Filelfo, partito per colà il 1420 e ritornatone il 1427. La lista dei suoi autori raggiunge la quarantina e tra essi noteremo quelli che non compaiono nell'elenco dell'Aurispia.... Molti altri poi se li venne acquistando in Italia, come Sofocle,... Sesto Empirico (here referring to *Philelphi Epistolae* f. 14^v; 32; 32^v: 185^v; 218^v, lib. XVII f. 121^v)...." See *Le Scoperte dei Codici Latini e Greci nei secoli XIV e XV* (Florence, 1905; reed. E. Garin with additions and corrections by the author, Florence, 1967), 48.

Filelfo's philological annotations in Greek in its margins,⁵² and it is well known that Filelfo mentioned Sextus Empiricus on different occasions in his works and in his correspondence with Aurispa,⁵³ Sassolo da Prato, Bessarion, Palla Strozzi,⁵⁴ and Alberto Zaccaria. The collection of Filelfo's letters was a sort of Renaissance "best seller," which circulated in at least nine different editions between 1454 and 1564, so that it is reasonable to assume that his remarks on Sextus Empiricus must have reached a far larger number of people than the group of scholars to whom his letters were originally addressed.

Further evidence is provided by the entry "Sextus Empiricus" in Gesner's *Bibliotheca*, which was published in 1545 but completed in 1544. The entry is not easily explicable unless we imagine that there was some diffusion of knowledge about and interest in the Pyrrhonist author before Estienne's edition. Such a diffusion, however, is not to be limited to the sixteenth century. We know, for example, of Poliziano's many quotations and excerpts from Sextus Empiricus⁵⁵ and of the importance Sextus's works had among the followers of Savonarola.⁵⁶

⁵² I have checked only the microfilm. For the indication about Filelfo see Eleuteri, *art. cit.*

⁵³ A mistake should here be corrected. Contrary to what Adriano Franceschini has written in *Giovanni Aurispa e la sua biblioteca, notizie e documenti* (Padua, 1976), 47-49: "Molti autori, ed opere loro, possedute dall'Aurispa restano ignote. Scopo dell'inventario del 1459, come di quello del 1461, fu infatti l'accertamento patrimoniale, non bibliografico.... Non figurano così nell'inventario, o non vi sono riconoscibili, opere e autori dei quali si sa che l'Aurispa possedette codici acquistati nei suoi viaggi in Oriente o scambiati con altri umanisti. Non figurano ... il codice di Sesto Empirico, inviato al Filelfo nel 1441," it was Filelfo who owned the Ms. and sent it to Aurispa: see *Carteggio di Giovanni Aurispa*, a cura di Remigio Sabbadini, *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia ...* (Rome, 1931), 97, "Lettera LXXVIII, Il Filelfo all'Aurispa ... petis a me nunc Sextum Empiricum eius exscribendi gratia, gero tibi morem (mi chiedi Sesto Empirico per copiarlo: eccotelo) Ex Mediolano .IIII. idus iunias .MCCCCXXXI."

⁵⁴ In the list of books and Mss left to S. Giustina by Palla Strozzi there is no mention of Sextus Empiricus; see Giuseppe Fiocco, "La Casa di Palla Strozzi" in *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, serie VIII, vol. V, fasc. 7 (1954), 361-82, the testament is reproduced on 374-77. For Sextus's Ms which belonged to Palla Strozzi (the Parisinus 2081) see Paul Canart, "Demetrius Damilas alias 'Librarius Florentinus,'" *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici*, 24-26 (1977-79), 281-347, 310.

⁵⁵ See above all Ida Maïer, *Les Manuscrits d'Ange Politien* (Geneva, 1965), 117-229, and Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, "Sesto Empirico e una Dispersa Enciclopedia delle Arti e delle Scienza di Angelo Poliziano," *Rinascimento*, 2a serie 20 (1980), 327-58.

⁵⁶ Besides Schmitt's articles see *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola Vita Savonarolae*, ch. II, repr. in W. Bates, *Vitae selectorum aliquot virorum* (London, 1681), 107-40, at 109, D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century* (London, 1972), 58-62; D. Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1970), 243, and Cavini, *art. cit.*, 16-20.

Another fact which has remained so far unnoticed but which will require further clarification is that Gioacchino Torriani (1416-1500)⁵⁷ who in 1494 borrowed from the Vatican library a “Sextum Empiricum in membranis,”⁵⁸ now lost,⁵⁹ was not just an ordinary reader but the “generalis ordinis predicatorum” from 1487 to 1500, and thus one of the judges at the trial of Savonarola. There is even a Florentine medal of 1498, commemorating the event which portrays him.⁶⁰ If we consider that, according to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, Savonarola had been suggesting to his followers the reading of Sextus Empiricus as an introduction to Christian faith, Torriani’s interest in Sextus Empiricus may not have been casual.

The disappearance of the Vatican codex borrowed by Torriani introduces a final group of considerations. As Charles Schmitt remarked, most of the extant fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts and translations of Sextus Empiricus are less important in themselves than as indications of the extent to which such sources of skepticism were gaining diffusion. Thus, some years ago Schmitt attempted the first quantitative analysis of the whole set of documents.⁶¹ Unfortunately, he adopted Mutschmann’s list as updated in the Preface to the edition of Sextus’s writings by J. Mau, so that the number of

⁵⁷ The standard work on Gioacchino Torriani is A. Mortier, *Histoire des maitres généraux de l’Ordre des frères precheurs* (Paris, 1911), V, 1-65.

⁵⁸ *I due primi registri di prestito della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, codici vaticani latini 3964, 3966 pubblicati in fototipia e in trascrizione con note e indici*, ed. Maria Bertola (Vatican City, 1942), 84.

⁵⁹ In the Inventory of the Vatican Library of 1475 (Vat. Lat. 3954, f. 62) we read: “[n. 245] Sexti Heberici opus. Ex membr. in pavonazio [?] {the question mark is in the original and means ‘lost’},” see Robert Devreesse, *Le Fonds Grec de la Bibliothèque Vaticane des Origines a Paul V* (Vatican City, 1965), 55. According to Devreesse this was a Sextus Empiricus Ms which is now lost, supposedly the same Ms listed in the Inventory of 1481 (Vat. Lat. 3947, f. 57) in which it is described thus: “[n. 209] Sextus Empiricus, ex membranis in rubeo [?],” cf. Devreesse, *op. cit.*, 91. The Ms was still in the Vatican library according to the Inventory of 1484 (Vat Lat 3949, f. 45’): “[n. 208] Sextus Empiricus [a critical note here refers to the n. 209 of the Inventory of 1481]” (Devreesse, *op. cit.*, 129). It may be the same Ms catalogued in the Inventory of 1518 (Vat Lat 3955, f. 31’): n. 241, where “Sextus Empiricus” is added on the margin of the Ms, cf. Devreesse, *op. cit.*, 197, and also the one referred to in a Greek Inventory compiled between 1517 and 1518 under Leone X (Vat Gr 1483 f. 68’): “[n. 237], Σέξτου Ἐμπειρικοῦ πρὸς μαθηματικούς – περὶ κριτερίου τῶν κατὰ Σέξτον σκεπτικῶν δέκα ὑπομνήματα, λόγος περὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ.” See Devreesse, *op. cit.*, 251. The Ms no longer appears in the inventories of the Vatican library compiled since 1533 (Vat Lat 3951). See also Eugène Müntz and Paul Fabre, *La bibliothèque du Vatican au XVe siècle d’après des documents inédits*, XLVIII (Paris, 1887, now repr. Amsterdam, 1970), 232: “Sexti Heberici opus. Ex membr. in pavonazio.” This listing is from the library at the time of Sixtus IV (1471-84) in the inventory made by Platina in 1475-77. Paul Canart, *art. cit.*, has convincingly suggested that Regimontanus S. 35 may be a copy of the Vaticanus made by Matthaes Devarius.

⁶⁰ On Torriani’s portrait see Carlo Bertelli, “Appunti sugli affreschi nella Cappella Carafa alla Minerva,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 35 (1965), 122.

⁶¹ Cf. Schmitt, “An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Manuscript,” 259.

documents on which he conducted his brief analysis was more limited than it should have been. He based his considerations on 36 items only, 7 of which were dated to the fifteenth century and 21 to the sixteenth century; but a new survey of the extant manuscripts known to contain portions of Sextus's writings turns out to consist of 67 items (one of which is datable to the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century and only three to the seventeenth century). Both the number and the dating of some of these codices will probably have to be improved in the future, especially if more data on manuscripts that disappeared since the seventeenth century become available.

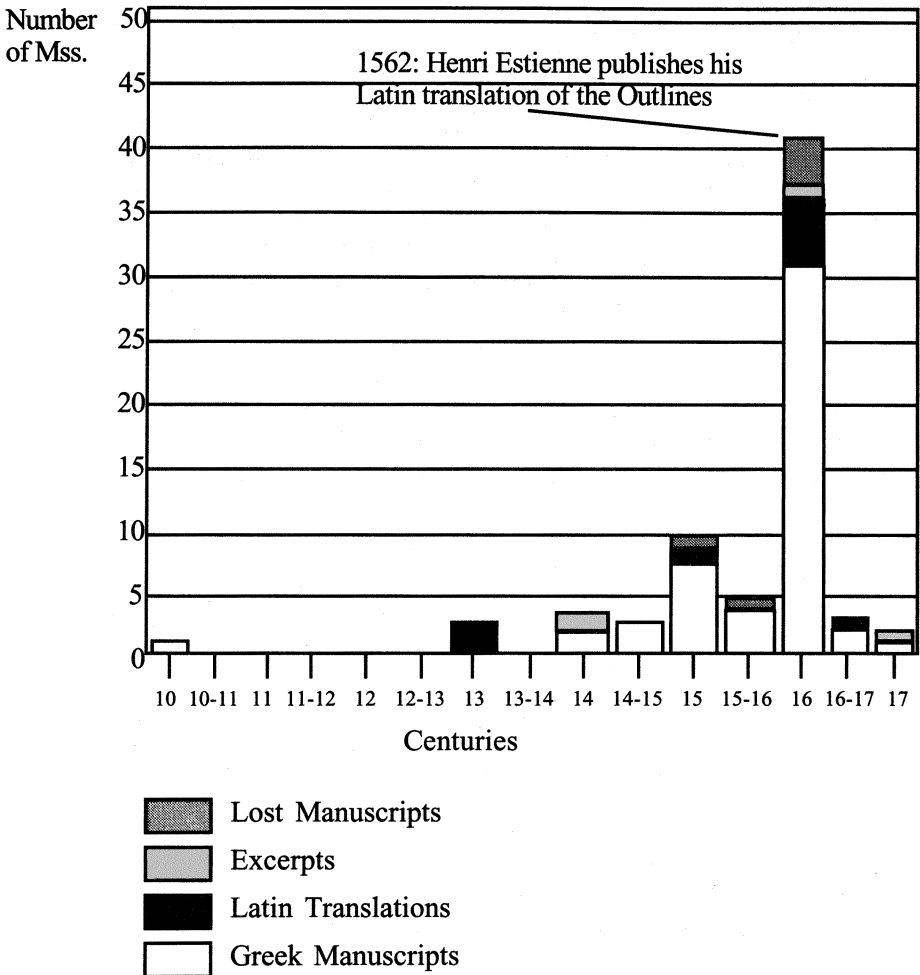
At the moment, we know that the Sextus manuscript copied for Diego Hurtado de Mendoza was lost in the fire of the Escorial in 1671 and that on the same occasion three other Sextus manuscripts were destroyed. If we add to these the one which disappeared after the Sack of Rome in 1527—i.e., Lorenzi's source,⁶² which may have been the same manuscript consulted by Torriani—and also take into account the folio containing a fragment of Sextus Empiricus that Gianvincenzo Pinelli sent in March 1582 to Fulvio Orsini (whose interest in Sextus Empiricus can be detected from his annotations in Vat. Gr. 1338) and which has never been found again,⁶³ we have at least six more Greek manuscripts that should be counted as evidence of a somewhat more substantial diffusion of the writings of Sextus Empiricus during the Renaissance than has been previously assumed. Thus, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the total number of manuscripts containing portions of Sextus's writings which were extant during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is now known to be at least 73. On this basis, we may draw the graph found on page 18 (see the second appendix for further explanation).

It is easy to see that there was a gradual growth in the number of Sextus's manuscripts available between the fifteenth and sixteenth century. As has been stressed by Schmitt, this increase was followed by a geographical shift

⁶² According to Mercati, *Opere minori*, IV, 92, the event caused the destruction of about 400 Greek Mss.

⁶³ This is not the well-known Vat. Gr. 1338 (the number 133 of Orsini's Inventory), which was owned and bears annotations by both Mattheus Devarius and Fulvio Orsini; see G. Beltrani, *I Libri di Fulvio Orsini nella Biblioteca Vaticana* (Rome, 1886), reproducing the *Inventarium Librorum Fulvii Ursini*, and see 16 "Libro di Sexto Empirico con emendationi nelle margini, et in uno quinternetto, scritto in papiro in 4o foglio, et coperto di carta pecora." On the contrary Pinelli's folio is the one referred to by Pinelli in a letter of 23 March to Orsini, see Pierre de Nolhac, *La Bibliothèque de Fulvio Orsini* (Paris, 1887; Paris, 1976), 103. Orsini left to the Vatican Library "omnes et singulos meos libros, tam Graecos quam Latinos, manuscriptos et impressos ... et omnes alias praeterea scripturas, quae cum dictorum librorum nominibus descriptae sunt in Indice seu Inventario a me subscripto...." (cf. 115), and yet, as already noted by Nolhac himself (183, n. 2), "On n'a aucune trace chez Orsini d'un feuillet de Sextus Empiricus, acquis en 1582."

The Diffusion of Sextus Empiricus's Manuscripts in the Renaissance



of interest in skeptical doctrine, which moved from Italy towards the north and found its most favorable reception in French philosophy. During the Renaissance Sextus Empiricus was read in Italy either for ethical and religious purposes, as a literary and linguistic source, or as a source of historical information about Greek philosophy, never for purely epistemological reasons. Like Savonarola and Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, Paéz de Castro underlined, although not explicitly, the religious aspect of his interest in translating the *Outlines*.

The function of skepticism as an anti-intellectualist tool and an introduction to religious faith also had great importance for Henri Estienne and Gentian Hervet. And it is from the point of view of a fideistic interpretation

of the skeptical doubt that we must interpret the short comment added at the end of Ms. Laur. 85,11: “Hoc est nescire, sine Christo plurima scire/Si Christum bene scis, satis est, si alias [sic] cetera plurima nescis,” and the following reference to St Paul *Ad Cor.* I.2 and *Ad Galat.*II. Whoever wrote this statement was interpreting Sextus Empiricus as a means to contrast *scientia naturae et humanarum rerum* in favor of *sapientia Dei*.

The fact that Sextus Empiricus was read as a simple source of information is not surprising if we consider that a scholar such as John Edwin Sandys, at the beginning of this century, could still write that “much of his work, though marked by considerable acumen, is puerile and pedantic, but his poetic quotations are of some interest, and, happily, in attacking the arts, he preserves some important facts about them. Thus his attack on the grammarians is of special value for certain items of evidence connected to the history of scholarship.”⁶⁴ Certainly, the main concern shared by Italian humanists like Poliziano or Filelfo, when dealing with information about Sextus Empiricus, was part of their more general policy of attempting to recover the classical past. That the Pyrrhonist philosopher could be read for purposes other than criticism of man’s intellectual faculties, and specifically as a philological document, is made clear in the work of Mattheus Devarius, who, in a Greek grammar published posthumously by his nephew in 1588, uses the writings of Sextus as one of his linguistic sources.⁶⁵

The evidence provided (or referred to) so far should now enable us to navigate between the opinion that “prior to Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, Sextus was apparently not studied, despite the existence of a few manuscripts of the Greek text and a Latin translation”⁶⁶ on the one hand, and on the other the conclusion that the fortune of Sextus Empiricus must be dated “a partire dal XIV sec.”⁶⁷ By doing so, we will see that the correct way of understanding the history of Sextus’s writings from Francesco Filelfo to Henri Estienne is to focus on the role played by humanists in recovering the

⁶⁴ See *A History of Classical Scholarship* (Cambridge, 1908), I, 330.

⁶⁵ See *Matthaei Devarii Liber de Graecae Linguae Particulis, ad Alexandrum Farnesium ... Romae, 1588 apud Franciscum Zannetum*. Passages from Sextus Empiricus are quoted on pp. 20, 53, and 76. During his work at the Vatican Library Matthaues Devarius (d. 1581) had fully annotated Vat. Gr. 1338 and Vat. Gr. 217 and made two retroversions into Greek of Latin passages from Gentian Hervet’s Latin edition of Sextus (1569) which were lacking in Vat. Gr. 1338. I have found no quotations from Sextus Empiricus in either the grammar of Chrysoloras (1350-1415) nor of Chalcondylas (1424-1511), see *Emanuelis Chrysolorae ... graecae grammaticae institutiones*, Lutetiae 1544, and *Demetrii Chalcondylae erotemata*, Basileae, 1546. On the first diffusion of Greek grammars during the Renaissance see Agostino Pertusi, “Per la Storia e le Fonti delle Prime Grammatiche Greche a Stampa,” *Italia Medievale e Umanistica*, V (1962), *Manoscritti e Stampe dell’Umanesimo, scritti in onore di Giovanni Mardersteig*, 323-51. The author does not discuss Devarius’s text as this is a rather later work.

⁶⁶ Charles Trinkaus, *Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 172.

⁶⁷ Eleuteri, *art. cit.*, 436.

knowledge of Sextus, rather than on the limited use of such writings in those years.⁶⁸ If very little use was made of Pyrrhonic arguments during the Renaissance, this was mainly because humanistic culture was not the right context in which such a radical attack on knowledge could be fully developed. As far as the principal interests of humanists were concerned, i.e., literary and linguistic studies, Christian ethics, and the recovery of the past, Sextus's works had a small but not insignificant share of attention. Nevertheless, in order to gain a new and central role in the philosophical tradition, the contents of the *Outlines* and *Contra Mathematicos* had to wait until the epistemological turn at the end of the Renaissance. A scholarly culture like that of the humanists, who were interested in the history of thought and still far from any idea of (let alone a faith in) the progress of scientific knowledge, was not likely to be affected by skeptical arguments. It was only when philosophers came to be faced by a vastly increased amount of scientific knowledge that they presented epistemological interpretations of the cognitive enterprise. Only then did the skeptical attitude regain all its destructive power and acquire those features that we still attribute to it nowadays. By the time Descartes was writing the *Meditations*, we should no longer speak of the influence of Sextus Empiricus's skeptical arguments on modern philosophy, but take them instead as an integral part of it.⁶⁹

Wolfson College, Oxford.

⁶⁸ See P. O. Kristeller, "Humanism and Moral Philosophy," in *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, 271-309, 277: during the Renaissance "equally important are some other sources of ancient moral philosophy made available for the first time by humanist scholarship. The new sources included ... Skeptics like Sextus Empiricus..."; and "Renaissance Humanism and Classical Antiquity," in *Renaissance Humanism*, I, 5-16, 13: the humanists "... added most of the sources of non-Aristotelian Greek philosophy: ... [included] the Skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus."

⁶⁹ This work has been written as part of a research preparatory to the writing of the article "Sextus Empiricus" for the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*. I wish to thank Claudine Lemaire of the Bibliothèque Royale Albert I in Brussels and to Marie-Françoise Damongeot of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris for information, Charlie Burns for help with material in the Vatican Library, Tullio Gregory and the Accademia dei Lincei for a grant which has supported this research, and Jonathan Barnes, Constance Blackwell, Jill Kraye, P. O. Kristeller, and Richard H. Popkin, who read previous drafts of this article.

Appendix I

Vat. Lat 2990

Liber I, .3, inc.:

“[f. 12^v, l. 14] Quid sit grammatica/ Et quoniam ut ait Epicurus, nec/ quaerere, nec dubitari de aliquo absque eius quod queritur seu/ dubitatur praeceptione potest. Rectius faciemus/ si ante omnia quid grammaticae sit et si secundum/ datam a grammaticis ipsis notionem, stabilis que/ dam et substantialis doctrina intelligi valeat considera/bimus.”

Liber I, expl.:

“[f. 66^r] Sed iam contra eos/ qui ab hac disciplina deducuntur, hec dixisse/ sufficiat. Ab alio igitur principio exordientes/ [f.67^r, l.1] que etiam contra oratores dicere oporteat consyderemus/”

Liber II, inc.:

“[f. 67^r, l.2] Sexti Empirici de grammatica/ Sequitur eiusdem de *Rhetorica*/ Posteaquam ea que de grammatica dicenda erant/ percurrimus, consequens est ut etiam de rhe/torica dicamus, quae virilior fortiorque existima/tur, ut pote cuius virtus in foro subselliisque quasi/ trutina quadam expenditur atque examinatur.”

Liber II, expl.:

“[f. 89^r] Sed postquam ad rhetoricam continentia theo/remata satis diximus. Ab alio rursus prin/cipio eas, quae ad geometras, Arithmeticosque/ [f. 89^r, l. 16] pertinent, dubitationes attingamus.

Liber III, inc.:

[f. 89^r, l. 17] Sexti Empirici *contra geometras*./ Quoniam geometrae dubitationum eos persequen/tium

Taurinensis CL.II.11

Liber I, .3 (Contra Mat. I, 57):

“[f. 44^r] Et quoniam (ut ait *Epicurus*) nec quaeri, nec dubitari| de aliquo absque eius quod queritur seu dubitatur, prae|ceptione potest, rectius faciemus, si ante omnia,| quid grammaticae sit, et an secundum datam a grammaticis ipsis notio|nem stabilis quedam et substantialis doctrina intelligi va|leat, considerabimus.”¹

Liber I, expl.:

“[f. 72^r] Sed iam contra eos, qui ab hac disciplina deducuntur, hec/ dixisse sufficiat. Ab alio igitur principio exordientes,/ Que etiam contra oratores dicere oporteat consyderemus./”

Liber II, inc.:

“[f. 72^v]² [P]Osteaquam ea que de grammatica dicenda [erant] /percurrimus consequens est, ut etiam/de rh[e]/torica dicamus, que virilior fortiorque existimatur, ut pote cuius virtus in foro [sic] sub/selliisque quasi trutina quadam expenditur atque examinatur[ur].

Liber II, expl.:

“[f. 83^v] Sed postquam ad rhetoricam continentia theoremata satis/ diximus, ab alio rursus principio, eas, quae ad geometras,/ arithmeticosque pertinent, dubitationes attingamus.”

Liber III, inc.

[f. 83^v] SEXTI EMPERICI DE RHETORICA FINIS/ SEQUITUR DE GEOMETRIA [capitals are in red]/

¹ The sign “/” indicates an approximate end of line.

² There is no title.

numerum perspicientes, ad rem, que peri/culi nihil et securitatis in se plurimum habere/ videtur ex Suppositione videlicet geometriae/ [f. 89^v] principia petendo, confugere solent, optimum/ erit si et nos quoque, in ea quam facturi sumus/ contradictione, de suppositionis ratione principium faciamus.”

Liber III, expl.:

“[f. 110^v] ... et in commentarijs contra physicos grammaticos/que ostendimus. Non igitur geometris aliquid/ ex linea auferre, secareque possibile est./ [Liber IV, inc.] Contra Arithmeticos...”

[Q]Uoniam geometrae, dubitationum eos persequentium numerum perspicientes, ad rem que periculi nihil/ et securitatis in se plurimum habere videtur,/ ex suppositione videlicet geometriae principia petendo, confugere solent. Optimum erit, si et nos quoque in ea quam/ facturi sumus contradictione, de suppositionis ratione principium/ faciamus.”

Liber III, expl.:

“[f. 93^v] [...] ut in comentarijs contra physicos, grammaticosque ostendimus. Non igitur geometris aliquid ex linea auferre, secareque possibile est. SEXTI EMPERICI DE GEOMETRIA FINIS [capitals are in red].”

Appendix II

A Short List of Mss. of Sextus Empiricus

The following is a short list of mss., containing portions of the works of Sextus Empiricus, which have been included in the graph. Sources have not been added, as they can be found in the footnotes of the article. Because of its complex dating, I have not inserted in the graph the ms. n. 58. Underlined mss. contain excerpts, mss. in italics represent Latin translations; lost mss. are in a separate group. The remaining mss. are Greek. The provenance of most of the mss. has not yet been studied.

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| 1. Paris 1963, s. XVI | 13. Regimontanus 16.b.12, s. XIV-XV |
| 2. Berol. Phill. 1518, s. XVI | 14. Mertonensis 304, s. XVI |
| 3. Paris suppl. 133., s. XVI | 15. Paris 1965, s. XVI |
| 4. Laur. 85,24, s. XV-XVI | 16. Savilianus Gr. 1 (Bodleian), s. XVI-XVII |
| 5. Laur. 85,19, s. XV-XVI | 17. Marc. 408, s. XV |
| 6. Vesontinus 409, s. XVI | 18. Paris 2081, s. XVI |
| 7. Monacensis 79, s. XVI | 19. Escorial T 116, s. XVI |
| 8. Vat. 1338, s. XVI | 20. Paris 1964, s. XV |
| 9. Vat. 217, s. XVI | 21. Paris 1966 and 1967, s. XVI |
| 10. Taurinensis Gr. 12, s. XV-XVI | 22. Ottobon. 21, s. XVI |
| 11. Marc. Class. IV Nr. 26, s. XVI | 23. Laur. 85,11, s. XV |
| 12. Savilianus Vratislaviensis Cizensis 70, s. XVI | 24. Londinensis (i.e. Brit. Mus. Old Royal mss. Gr. 16 d XIII), s. XVI |

25. Vratislavenſis Rhedig. 45, s. XVI
26. Savilianus Gr. 11, s. XVI
27. Vesontinus 408, s. XVI
28. Escorial R-III-12, s. XVI
29. Escorial R-III-6, s. XVI
30. Paris 2128, s. XVII
31. Barber. 248, s. XVI
32. Berol Ms. Gr. 22, s. XV
33. Escorial Psi-IV-16, s. XVI
34. Mutinensis Gr. 236, s. XVI
35. Paris suppl. 1156, + Vat. Gr. 738 +
Vindob. Theol. Gr. 179 (same
ms.), s. X
36. Taurinensis CCLXI c.I.15, s. XVI
37. Taurinensis CXXIII c. V.14, s. XVI
38. Monacensis 159, s. XIV-XV
39. Augustanus 234, s. XVI
40. Augustanus 236, s. XVI
41. Augustanus 238, s. XVI
42. Laur. 9, 32, s. XIV
43. Laur. 59, 17 s. XV
44. Laur. 85, 23, s. XV-XVI
45. Norimbergensis, s. XVI
46. Leidensis Voss. Gr. Q.44, s. XV
47. Leidensis, Scaligeranus 43, s. XVI
48. Bruxellensis Nr. 5362, s. XVI
49. Oxonienſis Coll. Corp. Chriſti 263,
s. XVII
50. Madrid, B. N. 4709 (O 30), s. XVI
51. Ac. Leningrad, Biblioteka Akade-
mij Nauk 0 128, s. XV
52. Ross 979, s. XVI
53. Vat. Gr. 1826, s. XVI
54. Monac. Gr. 439, s. XIV
55. Heidelb. Pal. Gr. 129, s. XIV
56. Vat. Gr. 435, s. XII-XIII, XIII-XIV
and XIV.
57. Monacensis 443, s. XV
58. Monacensis 429, s. XIV

59. *Gennadius n. 39, s. XVI*
60. *Paris Lat. 10197, XVII*
61. *Phillipps 4135, s. XVI*
62. *Vat. Lat. 2990. s. XV*
63. *Madrid, B. N. Ms. 10112, s. XIII*
64. *Paris Lat. 14700, s. XIII*
65. *Taurinensis II.11, s. XVI*
66. *Marcianus Lat. X.267 (3460), s.*
XIII

67. *Sancroft 17 [S.C. 10, 318], s. XVI*

Lost mss.:

68. Escorial VII.Γ.9, s. XVI
69. Escorial .V.15, s. XVI
70. Escorial .V.24, s. XVI
71. Escorial E.III.1, s. XVI
72. Pinelli's folio, s. XV-XVI
73. Torriani's and Lorenzi's ms., s. XV