



FOREWORD

This special issue of *Lexicon Philosophicum* is devoted to Hellenistic epistemology. We have decided to focus not only on the three leading Hellenistic philosophical schools – Epicureanism, Academic and Pyrrhonian Scepticism, and Stoicism – but also on equally important philosophical and ‘cultural’ traditions in order to achieve as comprehensive as possible an overview of the different epistemological approaches in the Hellenistic period.

In the Hellenistic age the possibility of solid and certain knowledge of reality became the core of the epistemological debate. This, however, cannot seriously be studied (in historical-philosophical terms) without linking it to the epistemological doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. From a methodological point of view, this has crucial consequences: it means that in the philosophical field there is no real gap between the so-called ‘Classical’ age and the Hellenistic period. The philosophical problems remain essentially the same (for example: what is knowledge? How is it possible to obtain it?). Yet, at the same time, they are translated and understood differently, often by using new vocabulary and argumentative strategies. We can see that a new technical terminology was introduced, based on the concept of the *kriterion tes aletheias* or ‘criterion of truth’ (which could be considered a sort of ‘tool’ to attain knowledge via philosophical reflection). More generally, the criterion of truth is an epistemological ‘instrument’ which enables us to discriminate between what is true and what is false: the criterion, therefore, is useful as a means to evaluate, justify or confirm the truth value of propositions or sense-perceptions.

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Although the last few decades have witnessed a growing interest in Hellenistic philosophies, the key issue of knowledge and its criteria has essentially received little attention from scholars. The multilingual essays collected in this special issue of *Lexicon Philosophicum* aim to fill this gap in our understanding of the Hellenistic theories of knowledge by bringing together contributions from an international group of eminent scholars.

A basic point that should be stressed, because it highlights the considerable originality of this collection, is the following one: the present work we have edited provides not only lucid and detailed discussions of the leading Hellenistic philosophical schools and their later developments, but also a careful survey, on the one hand, of somewhat neglected philosophical traditions (the Hellenistic Academy, the Peripatos, and Pythagoreanism), and, on the other hand, of certain sciences (medicine) and arts (music and the figurative arts).

This collection of articles is primarily addressed to non-specialist readers, but also to specialists in the field of ancient philosophy. It provides a comprehensive and, above all, updated overview on Hellenistic theories of knowledge.

To show the reader the historical-thematic coherence of the volume, one needs to go into the details of its contents. The article by Massimiliano Papini is devoted to Polykleitos' *Canon*; John Dillon studies the epistemology of the Platonic Old Academy (Speusippus and Xenokrates); Han Baltussen deals with the epistemology of the Hellenistic Peripatos (from Theophrastus to Aristocles); Francesco Verde and David Sedley focus respectively on Epicurus and the Epicurean tradition (from Hermarchus to Lucretius and Philodemus); Jean-Baptiste Gourinat and Francesca Alesse study Stoic theories of knowledge and the debate on the cataleptic representation in the post-Chrysippean Stoa. The articles by Massimo Catapano and Harald Thorsrud deal with the sceptical milieu: the epistemology of Pyrrho and Aenesidemus and the sceptical Academy of Arcesilaus and Carneades. The monographic issue ends with three papers: the first one, by Giulia De Cesaris and Phillip Sidney Horky, is on Hellenistic 'Pythagorean' theories of knowledge, while Mario Vegetti and Aldo Brancacci respectively discuss the epistemological features of Hellenistic medicine and music.

In the meantime, Mario Vegetti passed away in Milan on March 11, 2018; he agreed to participate in this editorial project, but sadly did not live to witness its completion. As proof of his personal and professional

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earnestness, Vegetti sent us his contribution on the epistemology of Hellenistic medicine much earlier than the suggested deadline; maybe he was aware that his health conditions would deteriorate. In spite of all odds, he wished to fulfil his commitment and he concretely did so. We are therefore extremely honored to publish what we believe to be one of the last essays that Vegetti wrote (but whose proof copy he could not correct).

The Editors of the present special issue wish to wholeheartedly thank those scholars who have agreed to take part in this project. We are also grateful to the Editors of *Lexicon Philosophicum* for their interest in the topic. Finally, special thanks go to Maria Cristina Dalfino and Chiara Rover for their valuable, steadfast and extraordinary support in editing the essays.

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