These book notes mainly deal with some recent books on Hellenistic philosophy, but the final section will be devoted to three books on ancient science (post-Hellenistic as well as Hellenistic). Let us begin with Hellenistic scepticism. Its students are well served by three recent books (one edition and two monographs) published by Oxford University Press. Aristocles of Messene is one of the most important sources for our knowledge of (or perhaps better: for our ideas about) Pyrrho and early Pyrrhonism, since he reported a summary of an account of Pyrrho’s central ideas by his ‘pupil’ Timon, a report which has been preserved for us by Eusebius. The other fragments (all, as it happens, preserved by Eusebius) also offer interesting critical accounts of other schools. We now have a new edition, with English translation and extensive commentary, of the fragments and testimonia of this Aristocles, prepared by Maria Lorenza Chiesara, which supersedes the earlier editions of Mullach (1881) and Heiland (1925). In her introduction C. depicts Aristocles as an acute and faithful representative of the Aristotelianism of the first century AD (although his date can still not be established with certainty). She rejects the idea of a specific debt, on Aristocles’ part, to either Antiochus of Ascalon or Middle Platonism, while acknowledging that Aristocles seems to have shared the idea of a philosophical continuity between Plato and Aristotle, and that it may be significant that Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics were lumped together in book 7 of his On Philosophy, whereas the schools to be rejected (Pyrrhoneans, Cyrenaics, Metrodorus, Protagoreans, Eleatics and Epicureans) were discussed in book 8. She also discusses such meagre indications as there are of the original structure of the ten books of Aristocles’ On Philosophy, and offers a plausible reconstruction of the sequence of the available fragments from book 8 (showing, on the basis of the introductions and connecting texts, that the original sequence in Aristocles was not the same as the sequence in Eusebius – hence the numbering of the fragments in this edition

does not reflect the sequence in Eusebius). The material is not extensive: 6 testimonies, from the Suda, Asclepius and Philoponus; and 8 fragments proper, all from Eusebius. Yet the interpretation, especially, of the famous fragment on Pyrrho (fr. 4 in this edition) is not easy. Not surprisingly its discussion takes up about half of the commentary. We are offered a cautious line-by-line commentary, charting the philosophical and philological problems and offering well-balanced assessments of the positions that have been taken by other scholars thus far (not much that is new, though). One of C.’s conclusions is that Aenesidemus, or an epitomator close to him, was Aristocles’ source for most of the chapter on Pyrrhonism, including the part on Pyrrho’s and Timon’s kepalaia (in which case what we have is Eusebius reporting Aristocles reporting Aenesidemus reporting Timon reporting Pyrrho). I am not in a position to assess the quality of the edition as such, but the commentary in itself will prove to be a useful tool for students of Hellenistic philosophy in general, and of Pyrrhonism in particular.

Next, we have Richard Bett’s *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy.* As the title already indicates, the book is an attempt to study Pyrrho not, or not only, in his own right, but in the context of both the earlier thinkers from whom he may have taken inspiration and the later philosophers who adopted him as a figurehead. Indeed, B. claims that his reconstruction of Pyrrho’s philosophy is more probable than others, not only insofar as it makes better sense of the evidence on Pyrrho himself, but also insofar as it is more successful in accounting for Pyrrho’s position in the history of philosophy. Hence the parts of the book that deal with pre-Pyrrhonian and post-Pyrrhonian developments are integral to the main project of making sense of the evidence on Pyrrho, a project which B. calls an ‘excercise in reflective equilibrium’ (p. 13). B. opts for a non-epistemological, ‘metaphysical’ interpretation of Pyrrho’s original position: Pyrrho’s primary claim was that reality is inherently indeterminate (the ‘indeterminacy thesis’). This means that according to Sextus’ standards Pyrrho would qualify as a ‘negative dogmatist’ rather than as a sceptic. This is not in itself new: comparable reconstructions have been offered by Decleva Caizzi and Hankinson (and, cautiously, by Chiesara in the book referred to above), and in the first chapter of Long and Sedley’s *The Hellenistic Philosophers.* But, as said above, B. attempts to strengthen this case by taking a fresh approach to the question of Pyrrho’s sources (ch. 3, ‘Looking Backwards’) and to the question of what happened between Pyrrho and Sextus (ch. 4, ‘Looking Forwards’). As for the former question, he maintains that Pyrrho’s indeterminacy thesis owes most to the attitude towards sensible objects exhibited in some dialogues of Plato and, more remotely, by the Eleatics, although he admits that the additional connection with ataraxia, made by Pyrrho, is not found there (in this respect other possible sources present themselves, such

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