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Sharples [hereafter "RWS"] has written a new introduction to Hellenistic philosophy which is, I believe, the best now available. I made the book required reading for my introductory course on Ancient Philosophy last autumn, and found it highly satisfactory. It is explicitly introductory, and we may waive the inevitable criticisms about lack of depth on this or that point; nor will the reviewer indulge in the normal optatives of unfulfilled wish over what might have received different emphasis and to what extent. None of this would change the fact that RWS has written an attractive, brief, and uniformly useful guide for complete novices, that will help students over the initial hurdles to understanding the philosophy of the period. Used in combination with a good collection of primary texts (see below), it would be an excellent text for a one-semester course on Hellenistic philosophy, or (as in my class) for a briefer segment of a survey devoted to all of Greek philosophy. Among similar surveys on ancient philosophy, only Jonathan Lear's "Aristotle" is comparable in its combination of scholarship and accessibility (a good introduction to Plato is unfortunately not to be found). RWS tells us that the book originated in lectures for his classics undergraduates, and this probably explains the higher than expected number of citations to Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, and even Wordsworth. But other than these ornaments, I see little to justify the suggestion on the back cover that the book is specially tailored for students of Rome and Latin literature. Any student of antiquity, as well as students of philosophy with interests in Greek philosophy, would find it a useful introduction. A work of this sort could in principle be arranged in several different ways. It might, for instance, present all of its material chronologically, always discussing earlier views before later, no matter which school or topic they involved. Or the book could be divided into three pieces corresponding to the schools of its title, and then each piece could deal exhaustively but exclusively with the system of that school (this is the arrangement, for instance of Long and Sedley's collection of fragments). Or the major divisions could follow the lines of the topics, so that each school's views on, say, ethics, were considered at the same time, before moving on to anyone's views on physics. It is this third method that RWS adopts; each of the central five chapters treats a topic or area of philosophy, presenting the views of all of the relevant schools on that topic. Chapters two through six are thus titled "How do we know anything?" (a survey of the epistemological and logical views of all three schools); "What is reality?" (physics and metaphysics); "What are we?" (psychology in its ancient sense, with a special focus on the freedom of the agent); "How can I be happy?" (ethics considered in relation to the agent's eudaimonia); and finally "What about other people?" (the other-regarding end of ethics, as well as politics). Bracketing these five are a first chapter ("Aims, context, personalities, sources") which gives a helpful overview of the historical, biographical, and bibliographical information students tend to need; and a last chapter ("Epilogue") which collects some especially pithy ethical texts in order to set the tone for a line that RWS calls "the summary of Hellenistic philosophy as this book has attempted to present it" (p.132), namely Marcus Aurelius' injunction, "Just don't go on discussing what sort of person a good person ought to be; be one". RWS was wise to choose this format; it does not overly disintegrate the systems of the individual schools, but does allow for close comparison between the answers that different schools gave to the same question (see, e.g., the comparisons of Stoic and Epicurean views on the criterion of truth, pp.12-23, or providence and teleology, pp. 54-57). RWS is also certainly right to stress the ethical focus of the Post-Aristotelians, but he does so, thankfully, without falling into several popular traps. He avoids depicting the ancients as neurasthenic ninnies whose sole motive for philosophizing was a sense of insecurity — proper weight is given to, e.g. Epicurean discussions of the fear of death (pp. 93-99), but without giving students the impression that the Greeks only had One Idea, and that a whiney one. He also abstains from the current fashion for denying the centrality of theology and physics to Stoic ethics — a perversity that cannot survive scrutiny of the texts, but has somehow caught on in prominent circles. As a result, on those issues in which controversy currently reigns RWS sometimes sounds aporetic, and often sounds old-fashioned; but both are preferable to erroneous novelty, especially for the student first meeting with the material. Perhaps the only area in which RWS allows his own interests a free hand is in his treatments of determinism, which are fuller than one would expect in a book of this scope, but not surprising from the editor of both Cicero's and Alexander's treatises on fate. I had occasion to comment elsewhere, in the review of a similar but unsuccessful book, that the rapid advances in our understanding of Hellenistic philosophy over the last few decades make it especially important that the author who attempts such a survey be familiar with the best of the recent literature. RWS has this familiarity, both because of his involvement in the thriving London ancient philosophical community, and because of his editorship of the journal "Phronesis" over the last number of years. The results are to be found both in the body of the text, which everywhere reflects the best available scholarship, and in the end-notes, which contain frequent citations of both journal articles and the Symposium Hellenisticum series ("Doubt and Dogmatism", "The Norms of Nature", and the rest of its alliterative allies). Since A.A. Long's "Hellenistic Philosophy" is the only sensible standard of comparison for the RWS volume, I should say a word about their relative merits. First, it should be said that RWS clearly did not set out to make a new epoch in Hellenistic studies; since this was exactly the effect of Long's book in its 1974 edition, there is a sense in which it will always be the greater work of scholarship, and the fitter object of admiration and acclaim. Long's book is also more extensive (nearly twice the length in either edition) and equally dense; ergo it contains more. It is also harder; Long made few concessions to the beginner. RWS has written a short book, which reads easily. It also has the benefit, just mentioned, of reflecting more recent scholarship, since Long's text is now some twenty-five years old (the revision of 1986 consisted solely in an updated bibliography). There has been much progress since 1974 — much of it due to Long's own further efforts, sometimes revising or criticizing his own earlier conclusions. We have all profited by Long's continued engagement with the Stoics (esp. now that it is collected in his masterful "Stoic Studies", Cambridge 1996); RWS has had the chance to improve his book in light of that and much else. RWS also has the advantage, by a sort of irony (though I should be hard-pressed to name its sort), of having all of his references keyed to the fragments in Long & Sedley; Long's volume predates that handy compendium. For all of these reasons, I would certainly use Long in tandem with RWS for an upper-level semester on the Hellenistic period, and I might even recommend Long ahead of RWS to a graduate student (though RWS again would have the more up-to-date references). But as a text for first-year philosophers, or as part of a broader survey not focussed on the Hellenistic period, or as a help to classicists not primarily interested in philosophy, RWS would be my choice. RWS's prose is not sprightly, and his exposition is not emotionally charged; not for him the vivid metaphor or lurid personal revelation. If you need the histrionic appeal of an ever-present authorial persona, insisting on the burning relevance of it all, then you will need to look elsewhere. But in fact it is one of the great excellences of RWS' book that it remains in this way relatively free from idiosyncrasy, both in its presentation and in its lines of interpretation. The beginner is in safe hands. One point en passant. I applaud the fact that RWS uses L&S numbers (along with references to the original author); this is exactly the right accompanying text for any course short of a graduate seminar in the original languages. Although it is not a tool for working scholars, L&S is a terrific collection of texts for students, far more attractive and useful than Inwood and Gerson's Hackett production (though perhaps their new second edition will remedy some of its deficiencies, e.g. its omission of Lucretius). Unfortunately, when making up my book list last term I had to order I & G, because Cambridge has so drastically overpriced L&S. If Cambridge were to drop the paper-back English volume below \$20.00, they could sell it as the introductory text that it is, and move quite a lot of copies. RWS made the right choice; now let's hope Cambridge follows suit.







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