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Greek Skepticism and Its Improbable Oriental Origin: A Critical Perspective on Aram M. Frenkian's Theses

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to analyze the thesis on Oriental philosophies' influence over the Ancient Greek skepticism. The Romanian philosopher Aram M. Frenkian is one of those who support this influence, basing his study on three main *topoi*: the *snake-rope* analogy, the *where there's smoke, there's fire* inference and the *tetralemma*. This present analysis is meant to be a rigorous critique of the Romanian philosopher's set of ideas and argumentative approach, and thus to expose their hermeneutic frailty and their lack of historical foundation and conceptual depth. The goal of this critique is to reinterpret the fusion of Hellenism and Hinduism.

Keywords: Greek skepticism, Hindu philosophemes, intercultural fusion, tetralemma, Aram M. Frenkian

The interaction between major socio-cultural archetypes represents a subject of high amplitude nowadays. Still, the interest in such a phenomenon has been fuelled and maintained for some time. When it comes to Antiquity, not a few debates took place regarding the effects of the contact between the ancient Greeks and Orientalism (Reale 1987, 11-12; Riedweg 2005, 42). Considering the scale of this phenomenon, it is quite obvious that no clear-cut conclusions could be reached when it comes to concrete influences suffered by a part or the other. If we attempt to offer a particular example of this kind of tendency, such as the theological concept of metempsychosis, we will immediately notice how difficult it is to decide which of these two cultural spheres this phenomenon belongs to. It is even more complicated to establish whether one of the two cultures could have made it manifest itself inside the other.

We may rather intuitively assert that, since ancient times, the human existence cycle based on birth-death-rebirth formula has been one of the chief principles that shaped the Eastern religions. Buddhism is worth

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mentioning in this case, and its controversial *samsāra*; and, why not, the Osiris myth in ancient Egyptian mythology. There is also the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (6th-5th century B.C.) - the uncertainty about the period 570-480 B.C. is well known (Riedweg 2005, 42) - who consolidated a theological vision based on relatively similar principles throughout the Hellenistic world. Still, *The Upanishads*, a collection of texts that spanned an uncertain period until the beginning of the 7th century B.C. (Phillips 2009, 30), also evoke this strange phenomenon, which makes us think that, by the time the Greek philosopher promoted it, it's highly likely that the belief in transmigration had already been active in the Oriental cultural environment. When it comes to the Egyptian myth, there is no point in discussing its ancestral origins in this manner, considering that we are talking about millennia, and not centuries. Adding the fact that Pythagoras made contact with the Orient in his journeys (Diogenes Laërtius VII, 2-3), we may speculate about the origins of metempsychosis in the Greek culture. The question is, can we go so far as to say that the Orient constituted the real source of inspiration for Pythagoras? Maybe we would risk too much to claim so. What role might we then assign Orpheus in this whole story, a legendary character of Thracian origins, whose existence dates back to pre-Homeric origins (Freeman 1984, 9) and which is also known to have consolidated a religious cult that supported the belief in transmigration (Uzdavinys 2011, 55)? Pythagoras might have shaped his doctrine by drawing inspiration from his own cultural environment. But we cannot be certain of this either, because the father of history himself states that the Orphic Mysteries may also have Oriental origins (Herodotus II, 81).

This example, though common, could at least offer a schematic representation of any kind of problem a thorough exegesis deals with when it attempts to bring the origins of a cultural phenomenon to light. The huge timespan and inadequate data constitute significant setbacks from this standpoint. And yet, despite these inconveniences, it is perfectly legitimate to form hypotheses, on condition that these should be well founded.

From an ideological standpoint, the Greek skepticism ranks among the most controversial phenomena, one that would irreversibly change the European societies' thinking pattern. Famous representatives of European philosophy such as Sextus Empiricus, Michel de Montaigne, David Hume, Pierre Charon, La Mothe Le Vayer, Pierre Bayle confirm not only the presence of this doctrine in European culture from the ancient times to the 16th-17th centuries (Junqueira and Charles 2017; Moreau 2014), but also the amplitude of the philosophical phenomenon itself. It was quite clear that this doctrine and the study of its origins would constitute the subject of numerous research projects. The doctrine's origin itself is actually the main aspect of the present article.

For methodological purposes, we are going to make use of Aram M. Frenkian's analysis of Greek skepticism's origins which sustained that this philosophical doctrine spread throughout Europe via Oriental connections, namely Hindu. He begins his argumentation by supporting this idea while using an instrument which skeptics employed to appraise the relations between two objects, phenomena or abstract notions, namely *tetralemma*. Frenkian reveals the only possible options that would give us an idea about the influences between Greek and Oriental culture. The four versions are as follows:

1. Greece influenced India
2. India influenced Greece
3. The two influenced each other
4. Each one of them developed their doctrines independently

The so-called skeptic's *tetralemma*¹ is easily noticeable in this four-fold scheme, a method that will be at the core of the present study. Thus, Frenkian takes this position: the first hypothesis is totally excluded; if there had been an influence from this standpoint, it could have only been from the Indian part (Frenkian 1996, 56). It is worth mentioning though that this option is taken into consideration in some sources (McEvelley 2002, 503). In Romanian philosopher's view, the second hypothesis is considered valid, specifically the Greek skepticism was built on the influence of Oriental philosophemes, especially the Hindu ones. The third hypothesis is not excluded by Frenkian; he accepts the mutual influence, but sustains that skepticism came from the East and spread towards West. Finally, the fourth hypothesis is not completely counted out by Frenkian, but he shares deep reservations about it; still, G. V. Aston dedicated a solid argumentation to this version in his 2004 study named *Early Indian logic and the question of Greek influence*.

As displayed above, this approach determines us to concentrate exclusively on the second mark of the *tetralemma*, the one that assumes the influence of Eastern culture over the Greek skepticism. Of course, there were other similar endeavors that tried to support this hypothesis. In his study, *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia*, Christopher I. Beckwith seeks to support the idea that the Pyrrhonism represents quite a faithful copy of early Buddhism. His theses were refuted with strong arguments.²

It is also worth mentioning the foundation on which the researchers based their speculation about this influence, one that is essential in Frenkian's perspective too. Diogenes Laërtius is probably the most reliable source that proves the validity of this foundation. From the biography of Pyrrho of Elis, the so-called founder of Greek skepticism, we find out this:

„Afterwards he joined Anaxarchus, whom he accompanied on his travels everywhere so that he even forgathered with the Indian Gymnosophists and with the Magi. This led him to adopt a most noble philosophy, to quote Ascanius of Abdera, taking the form of agnosticism and suspension of judgement. He denied that anything was honourable or dishonourable, just or unjust. And so, universally, he held that there is nothing really existent, but custom and convention govern human action; for no single thing is in itself any more this than that.” (Diogenes Laërtius, IX, 61).

Besides the precious information we pointed out, we also encounter here two of the three defining characteristics of skepticism as defined by Sextus Empiricus (*Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes* I, 8). We are talking about ἐποχή, known as „suspension of judgment” and ἰσοσθένεια τῶν λόγων, the so-called „equal validity of contrary arguments”. The one that was omitted by the biographer in this context, ἀταραξία, promoted by skeptics as inner peace, is mentioned by him later and recorded in the specified register (Diogenes Laërtius IX, 107). All three marks find their correspondent elements in the *Madhyamaka* Buddhism (Kuzminski 2008, pp. 53-57), a relevant religious tradition in the Eastern World. Despite this, we notice that, as in the previously mentioned situation in which metempsychosis might have come from the East and spread throughout the Hellenistic world, there is no solid reason to assert that these three elements that describe Greek skepticism in its essence were borrowed by Pyrrho of Elis from Orient and diffused throughout the Greek cultural environment, thus setting the base for the doctrine. Aware of the fact that no clear connections can be established, Aram M. Frenkian seeks to identify some concrete elements that might prove the Oriental origins of Greek skepticism. Therefore, he will insist on three philosophemes: the *snake-rope* analogy, the *where there’s smoke, there’s fire* inference and the aforementioned *tetralemma*. According to Frenkian, all these three elements might constitute solid proof of Oriental influence over Greek skepticism. This is the conclusion of his study:

„In the previous pages, we hope that we proved, with a degree of probability that is inherent in solving this kind of problems, that Indian thinking, in its logical and philosophical aspect, has exerted influence on Greek’s way of reasoning since the second half of the 4th century B.C., and that this influence has been exerted over the Greek’s schools of skepticism.” (Frenkian 1996, 62)

All those three Aram M. Frenkian’s arguments will undergo a rigorous critique so that we prove their hermeneutic frailty and lack of conceptual depth. We will, of course, take into account the phrase „inherent degree of probability” formulated by Frenkian in the conclusion and emphasize that, from the standpoint of the history of philosophy, there is no genuine source

to support his interpretation. He actually claims that, even if there had been a Hindu influence on the Greek skepticism it must have been transmitted by word of mouth (Frenkian 1996, 45). This is probably why Frenkian affirmed his reluctance by avoiding irrefutable assumptions and employing an essay style writing. Nevertheless, if we carefully read the text, we will notice that Frenkian seems quite assured in drawing his conclusion - the Greek skepticism was influenced by Oriental culture, and Hindu philosophemes and logic -, which would require a well-supported philosophical rebuttal in the context of the present study.

First, we have to emphasize that the demonstration of *tetralemma* originating in the Oriental culture plays a more important role in his argumentation than the other two aforementioned elements (the *snake-rope* and *where there's smoke there's fire* inference), which is the reason why we will offer this philosopheme a preferential treatment in our study too. We will respect though the order established by Frenkian and start our critical analysis with the first two aspects of our demonstration. Here we can find the most concrete element that might prove the Oriental provenience of those two marks according to Aram M. Frenkian:

„But if we pay attention to the fact that those two examples are widespread in India, while in Greece they can only be find in Sextus Empiricus' work, that the snake is encountered more frequently in India, and that the smoke-fire formula, besides its large dissemination in India, can be generated by the experience of summer wildfires in the region's immense forests, the hypothesis that Sextus, or his source, borrows these examples from Indians becomes quite plausible.” (Frenkian 1996, 32)

We have to specify that the *snake-rope* example appears in Sextus Empiricus' texts thanks to Carneades' philosophical concepts. This image is regarded as a means of consolidating the skeptic's action criteria for practical problems, the controversial *πιθανόν* and, implicitly, the three steps of approaching the phenomenon from a gnoseological perspective. Empiricus also evokes this image when he discusses about the particularities of the Academic philosophers' doctrine (*Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes* I, 227-228). According to Frenkian, this *snake-rope* example has only two other occurrences in Greek literature: one in Sextus Empiricus' *Adversus Mathematicos* VII, 187, where it is presented in the same context (Frenkian 1996, 17), and the other in Demetrius of Phaleron's, *De Elocutione*, 159. Still, some more recent exegetical resources signal that the image is also present in Aesop's *Proverbia* 132 (Aklan 2018, 12). This presence is eluded in Frenkian's approach. As far as its occurrence in Demetrius of Phaleron's text is concerned, it doesn't make the Romanian philosopher ascertain an independent presence of this image in Greek literature. He first justifies his angle through the fact that, in Demetrius' case, Carneades' rope is replaced

with a belt, and then he notices that, in that context, the image has a mostly comic effect that alters the philosophical and theoretical character this symbolic representation is supposed to possess (Frenkian 1996, 18, n. 3). Based on this observation, Frenkian considers that the occurrences in Ancient Greek literature are too sparse compared with those from the Oriental cultural sphere. In the case of the latter, according to Frenkian, the *snake-rope* appeared first in *Vedānta*, one of the six orthodox Indian philosophical systems whose shaping elements have existed since the birth of Buddhism (6th century B.C.). The phrase „it might have appeared in *Vedānta*” is justifiable, considering that the occurrence was rather an inference based on Bādarāyana’s commentaries, who is estimated to have lived in the 4th century (Frenkian 1996, 19). What is certain is that the *snake-rope* presence was confirmed for the first time in *Mahāvibhāṣā*, a compendium of texts dating back to approximately the second half of the 2nd century AD (Aklan 2018, 17).

There is need for a critical analysis of the thesis that the *snake-rope* image is proof of the influence of Indian philosophy over the Greek skepticism, knowing that this image had been found in pan-Hellenic texts of Aesop (approx. 6th century B.C.), Demetrius of Phaleron (4th-3rd century B.C.), and Sextus Empiricus (the end of the 2nd century AD), while in Hindu world it first appeared, as we have established, in the 2nd century AD. Frenkian doesn’t offer here any solid argument for the alleged Oriental influence on Greek skepticism, but he only gives other three examples of the image’s dissemination in Eastern world which are registered after the 4th century AD, thus being rendered irrelevant in his demonstration. So, in this case, what’s the relevance of invoking 6th century AD authors such as Gauḍapāda, Śāṅkara, 8th-9th century AD (Comans 2000, p. 163), Rāmānuja, and later on, 12th century AD. (Jones and Ryan 2007, 352), authors that make use of the *snake-rope* analogy in their works? We think that Frenkian’s attempt of increasing the occurrences of the image in the Oriental world based on sources that appeared a millennium later than the origins of Greek skepticism is exaggerated to say the least, despite the argument the philosopher offers trying to convince us of the irrelevance of the chronological analysis regarding the development of philosophical ideas in Hindu culture (Frenkian 1996, 26-27). Actually, we will prove that this is not the first time when Frenkian makes use of these sources in order to increase the occurrences of the philosophemes seen as proof in this case.

Based on the mentioned aspects, we can state that the *snake-rope* occurrences are more frequent during Antiquity in the Greek world than in the Orient. Therefore, we are going to reject Frenkian’s thesis that this image constitutes a philosopheme borrowed by Greek skeptics from Hindu culture, considering it invalid from a historiographic standpoint.

Regarding the second argument - the *where there's smoke, there's fire* inference -, it is even harder to back it up. This formula, says Frenkian, occurs only four times in the Greek literature, and only at Sextus Empiricus (Frenkian 1996, 29). It is necessary to ask a simple question in this case: based on this aspects, can we even deduce that the inference was brought from the Eastern world to the Greeks and integrated as an important element in strengthening the doctrine of Greek skepticism? The answer is absolutely not. The thesis of Oriental influence cannot be accepted, considering that the aforementioned inference confirms one of the operating devices used by the Dogmatic philosophers. We are speaking of *modus tollens*: if p , then q .³ Exegetically speaking, this kind of inference attempts to prove an immanent causality between two phenomena such as fire and smoke, something a skeptic wouldn't have accepted under any circumstances. Sextus brings it to the table indeed, but he refuses it, as he writes in *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes*, II, 101-102.⁴ What Frenkian admits is unacceptable, because the presence of this inference at only one Greek skeptic doesn't prove that skepticism (as a doctrine) was influenced by the Hindu philosophy. We can at the very most ask ourselves: how justifiable would it be to argue that this philosophy influenced the Stoicism or Epicureanism? But as this question is not important for our study, we can just deny the validity of this second argument offered by the Romanian philosopher and go to the next step.

As far as *tetralemma* is concerned, Frenkian focuses on three aspects in his demonstration that skepticism's principles were determined by the Oriental logic: its *anteriority*, *originality* and *dissemination*. For a better understanding, we will present two quotes from the Romanian philosopher's text: the first tries to emphasize the idea of chronological anteriority and the originality of this philosopheme in the Oriental world:

„Comparing Sextus Empiricus' tetralemma and the one that appears in the Indian philosophy, we can get a clear impression that the Indian form is the original, while Sextus' tetralemma is a collateral logical method that lacks depth. Therefore, the anteriority of tetralemma in Indian philosophy relative to its use by Sextus Empiricus is clearly established, although we limited ourselves to the *Pāli Canon* (1st c. B.C.).” (Frenkian 1996, 56)

The second draws attention to the problem of the scarce dissemination of the method among Greeks:

„As a logical method, tetralemma is hardly employed in Greek philosophy. Besides Sextus Empiricus, there are very few examples in Greek literature.” (Frenkian 1996, 51)

In order to support this last exhibited viewpoint, Frenkian points to one more occurrence of this philosopheme in Greek literature, more precisely in Plato's *Parmenides*, signaled by Stcherbatsky, but as the Romanian

philosopher specifies, it is impossible to confirm, therefore it should be excluded (Frenkian 1996, 51, n. 1).⁵ As for the most recent occurrence of tetralemma in the Orient, it is signaled in the *Pāli Canon* 1st c. B.C (Frenkian 1996, 55-56). We infer that this mark is chronologically anterior to the logical method present in Sextus Empiricus' work, who was active in 150-210 AD (Brochard 1887, 314-315), and who, according to Frenkian, represents the only source of tetralemma's presence in Greek literature. Once any trace of tetralemma present in the Greek cultural environment before Sextus Empiricus excluded, it would appear that all the three *tetralemma*-related ideas invoked by the Romanian philosopher can be accepted without any reservation: anteriority, originality and dissemination.

Another excerpt from his text determines us to change our perspective:

„Therefore, with a high degree of probability, we can state that both the two images that represent philosophical themes [the *snake-rope* and the Stoic inference, *An*] and the tetralemma were borrowed by Sextus Empiricus, or his source, from the Indian world.” (Frenkian 1996, 56)

The phrase „by Sextus Empiricus, or his source”⁶ draws our attention in particular. What source is he speaking about, while once Plato's *Parmenides* option excluded, the only possible proof of the tetralemma's presence in Greek culture was rejected? Does he prepare us for revealing the fact that *tetralemma* had been present in the Greek cultural environment before its appearance in the Orient, the *Pāli Canon* 1st c. B.C? That's quite obvious. Frenkian subtly comes back to the anteriority thesis and registers the presence of this philosopheme in Greek literature (attention!) in the 3rd century B.C. at a skeptic named Timon of Phlius (325-235 B.C.), known among the specialists as a pupil of Pyrrho of Elis (Diogenes Laërtius IX, 69). References to the presence of *tetralemma* in Timon's *Python* can be found thanks to Eusebius of Caesarea's apologetic writing called *Praeparatio evangelica*, which also contains the way the Peripatetic philosopher Aristocles of Messene critically responded to the skeptics' ideas. He offers us explanations related to Timon of Phlius that confirms the use of tetralemma in the Greek literature of 3rd century B.C. Here is a quote from *Praeparatio evangelica*:

„The things themselves then, he professes to show, are equally indifferent, and unstable, and indeterminate, and therefore neither our senses nor our opinions are either true or false. For this reason then we must not trust them, but be without opinions, and without bias, and without wavering, saying of every single thing that *it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not.*” (*Praeparatio Evangelica* XIV, 18)

The text in italics reflects the use of this philosophical *topos* by the skeptic Timon of Phlius in theorizing the problematic nature of the object of knowledge. Frenkian accepts this and confirms the presence of *tetralemma* at

this 3rd century B.C. author, building a solid analysis of the method. We are not going to insist on it, simply because it does not interest us. For the moment, we will settle for rejecting *the anteriority of Hindu tetralemma* basing our arguments on what Frenkian himself confirmed. We keep in mind that the anteriority of the philosopheme in Orient applies only relative to Sextus Empiricus moment, the end of 2nd c. AD., and not to what happened within the Greek skepticism of 4th-3rd century B.C. represented by Timon of Phlius. Thus being said, Frenkian's thesis that „the Indian version is the original” (Frenkian 1996, 56) loses its credibility.

Approaching this second element critically, we raise the following question: what else might determine us to accept the originality of Oriental tetralemma or the fact that Sextus Empiricus borrowed it from the Indian philosophy, considering that Sextus was certainly familiar with Timon of Phlius' work, which is proven by the multiple references to his ideas (*Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes*, I 223-224; *Adversus Mathematicos*, I 53-54, 304-307; *Adversus physicos* I, 57)? Frenkian offers the following solution:

„It is clearly established that Pyrrho had lived in the Orient for eleven years, and that he returned to Elis after the death of Alexander. The historians of Greek skepticism, such as Brochard and Robin, pointed out the influence of Indian lifestyle over Pyrrho and his ethical attitude. In addition to this, we might notice the Indian influence over the theoretical aspect of his doctrine. We are entitled to believe that Pyrrho was the first Greek philosopher who presented philosophical problems in tetralemma form, which he introduced in the Greek's way of thinking, especially in the schools of skepticism.” (Frenkian 1996, 61)

From what we understand here, the presence of *tetralemma* in Timon of Phlius' work is a mark of the influence that his master had over him, who also borrowed it from the Indian culture during the great conqueror's journeys, which is a plausible hypothesis. Aram M. Frenkian tries to maintain the idea of the Oriental origin of the aforementioned *topos* in the sphere of plausibility (not the one of the proven fact).

However, the fragment cited above reveals the weakest point of Frenkian's thesis, because the statement that Pyrrho of Elis was the first Greek philosopher who employed tetralemma to present philosophical problems is historically inaccurate. We notice that the presence of this philosopheme is signaled in Greek culture before Pyrrho's involvement in Alexander the Great's conquest campaign, and implicitly before the father of skepticism's encounter with magi and Indian gymnosophists. Besides Timon of Phlius and Sextus Empiricus, there are other Greek authors that use the *tetralemma* in their works. The first of them is Plato:

„Your examples are all ambiguous, in that it is impossible to form any definite conception of them either *as being something, or as not being something, or as both, or as neither.*” (*The Republic*, 479c)

The second is Aristotle:

„For he says neither that *it is so-and-so nor that it is not so-and-so, but that it both is so-and-so and is not so-and-so; and again he also denies both these, saying that it is neither so-and-so nor not so-and-so.*” (*Metaphysics*, Γ1008a)

The sequences in italics show the occurrences of *tetralemma* in the texts of the two mentioned Greek thinkers. We will thus refute the second argument proposed by Frenkian: *the originality* of Oriental tetralemma proves to be highly debatable; its anteriority, even more so. We don't know whether the Romanian philosopher ignored the two examples or he simply wasn't aware of their existence. He certainly avoids taking them into consideration, fact that irreversibly compromises his argumentation. We therefore have all the reasons to support that both Sextus Empiricus and his predecessors, Pyrrho of Elis and Timon of Phlius could have easily borrowed this technique from their own culture. A recent exegesis issues solid hypotheses in this regard (Long 2006, 54-55, n. 31).

We are now reaching the third argumentative point registered by the Romanian philosopher in his demonstration: its ampler diffusion in Oriental culture. We will mention the rest of *tetralemma* occurrences listed by Frenkian: *Mādhyamika-sūtra*, Nagarjuna, end of 2nd c. beginning of 3rd c. AD, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, 4th-5th c. AD and *Māṇḍukya Kārikā*, Gaudapāda, 5th-6th c. AD (Frenkian, pp. 51-56). Adding the *Pāli Canon* to this list, we count four Hindu sources mentioned by Frenkian. We will see whether these texts can justify this „more widespread” presence of this philosopheme in the Eastern world supported by the Romanian philosopher.

From what we demonstrated so far in our analysis, we can say that not only are the *tetralemma*'s appearances quite abundant in Greek literature, but also they are more widespread than in Oriental culture. There are four ancient Greek authors that employ the *tetralemma* in their texts: Plato, Aristotle, Timon of Phlius and Sextus Empiricus. We fairly exclude the occurrence of *tetralemma* in Simplicius' work, even when it confirms the use of the method by Parmenides, given the period in which the Neoplatonist lived and wrote. As far as the Orient is concerned, Frenkian also registers four significant presences: the *Pāli Canon*, Nagarjuna, Gaudapāda and Vasubandhu. So, there are four occurrences in Greek culture and four in the Eastern world. The problem resides in the fact that the four presences in the Orient cannot be taken into consideration given the historical periods that two of them are registered in (Vasubandhu in 4th-5th c. AD, while Gaudapāda even later, in 5th-6th c. AD). Given the criteria of chronological evaluation, these two texts came up too late compared to the practising of Greek skepticism in the pan-Hellenistic world. Like Frenkian, we focus on the *origins* of Greek skepticism which, according to our data (Duignan 2011,

135), had set its foundations eight-nine centuries before these two Indian writers wrote about *tetralemma*. Thus, only two occurrences mentioned by Frenkian apply to this demonstration: the *Pāli Canon* (1st century AD) and Nagarjuna (2nd-3rd century AD). Now, the ratio is 4 to 2 for Greeks, who register three presences of *tetralemma* in the 4th-3rd c. B.C. and one in the 2nd c. AD, thus the ampler dissemination of the method in the Orient is rendered inconclusive.

Considering everything that has been said regarding skeptical *tetralemma*'s status, we can observe the frailty of argumentation elaborated by Frenkian. Thus, based on every aspect presented so far, we think that neither the *anteriority*, nor the *originality*, nor the *widespread dissemination* of this philosopheme in the Oriental world can be supported with solid historical and philosophical arguments. Based on the „proofs” Frenkian offered, it's practically impossible to assert, let alone demonstrate, that „Sextus Empiricus or his source” borrowed the *tetralemma* method from Hindu philosophy.

To sum up our whole approach: in the case of the first argument invoked by Frenkian in his attempt to prove that Greek skepticism draws its inspiration from Hindu culture (the *snake-rope* example), we showed that neither „the widespread expansion” nor the *anteriority* can be offered as evidence here: the spread of the image is neither „enormous” nor anterior to its presence in Greece.

When it comes to the *where there's smoke, there's fire* inference, we also demonstrated that it does not represent relevant proof because this is an element specific to Dogmatic philosophies (maybe Stoicism), and definitely not to skepticism.

Finally, as far as the Oriental origin of *tetralemma* is concerned, we proved that all three hypotheses expounded by Frenkian, namely *anteriority*, *originality* and the *widespread dissemination* of the Oriental *topos*, can be disproved with solid historical arguments.

As a result, Aram M. Frenkian's perspective needs to be revisited. An endeavor of this amplitude not only could enrich the cultural patrimony with more objective exegetic analyses, but also bring its contribution to the definition of the paradoxical exegetical destiny that skepticism should embody in order to maintain its presence and validity. We therefore believe that skepticism should manifest itself even when its own origins undergo painstaking analysis.

Notes

¹ For the uninformed reader, we explained the *tetralemma* scheme here: A and not-B, not-A and B, A and B, not-A and not-B.

² See Johnson and Shults 2018.

³ This type of inference is frequently used in Stoic logic. Still, it seems that some Epicureans might also have used this inferential formula. A relevant example is Philodemus of Gadara (Cornea 2015, 383).

⁴ See also *Are there any indicative signs?* from *Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes* II, 104-133, where the rest of the examples including demonstrations employed by Stoic philosophers confirm the use in their logic of „from the specific to the specific” inferences, such as where there’s a scar, there was a wound, or the woman’s lactation as proof of her recent pregnancy.

⁵ Anna Aklan’s specifications eliminates the possible confusion made by Frenkian: it is about Parmenide the philosopher, not Plato’s dialogue (Aklan 2018, 25). The proof of the tetralemma’s use by the Eleatic thinker is found in the commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Simplicius 117, 4.

⁶ The phrase is also used in the case of the other two philosophemes. See Frenkian 1996, 32. This example was actually cited and proves both the caution and the permanent reticence of the Romanian philologist in developing strong theses regarding this aspect.

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