

are themselves men of indistinct views, for they could not otherwise avoid assenting to the demonstrated truths of science; and, so far as they may be taken as specimens of their contemporaries, they prove that indistinct ideas prevail in the age in which they appear. In the stationary period, moreover, the indefinite speculations and unprofitable subtleties of the schools might further impel a man of bold and acute mind to this universal skepticism, because they offered nothing which could fix or satisfy him. And thus the skeptical spirit may deserve our notice as indicative of the defects of a system of doctrine too feeble in demonstration to control such resistance.

The most remarkable of these philosophical skeptics is Sextus Empiricus; so called, from his belonging to that medical sect which was termed the *empirical*, in contradistinction to the *rational* and *methodical* sects. His works contain a series of treatises, directed against all the divisions of the science of his time. He has chapters against the Geometers, against the Arithmeticians, against the Astrologers, against the Musicians, as well as against Grammarians, Rhetoricians, and Logicians; and, in short, as a modern writer has said, his skepticism is employed as a sort of frame-work which embraces an encyclopedical view of human knowledge. It must be stated, however, that his objections are rather to the metaphysical grounds, than to the details of the sciences; he rather denies the possibility of speculative truth in general, than the experimental truths which had been then obtained. Thus his objections to geometry and arithmetic are founded on abstract cavils concerning the nature of points, letters, unities, &c. And when he comes to speak against astrology, he says, "I am not going to consider that perfect science which rests upon geometry and arithmetic; for I have already shown the weakness of those sciences: nor that faculty of prediction (of the motions of the heavens) which belongs to the pupils of Eudoxus, and Hipparchus, and the rest, which some call Astronomy; for that is an observation of phenomena, like agriculture or navigation: but against the Art of Prediction from the time of birth, which the Chaldeans exercise." Sextus, therefore, though a skeptic by profession, was not insensible to the difference between experimental knowledge and mystical dogmas, though even the former had nothing which excited his admiration.

The skepticism which denies the evidence of the truths of which the best established physical sciences consist, must necessarily involve a very indistinct apprehension of those truths; for such truths, properly exhibited, contain their own evidence, and are the best antidote