

## *SEXTUS EMPIRICUS*

### AGAINST THE ETHICISTS

(1) We have previously gone over the difficulties brought by the sceptics against the logical and physical parts of philosophy; it is left for us to append in addition those which can be brought against the ethical part. For in this way each of us, by taking on the perfect – that is, sceptical – disposition, will live, as Timon says

With the greatest ease and tranquillity  
Always heedless and uniformly unmoved  
Paying no attention to the whirls of sweet-voiced wisdom.

(2) Now, since almost all have agreed in supposing that ethical enquiry is about the differentiation of good things and bad things (as indeed Socrates, the man who seems first to have initiated it, declared as most in need of investigation 'Whatever bad and good is wrought within the halls'), we too will need right at the start to examine the distinction in these things.

#### I. What is the Principal Distinction among Matters concerning Life

(3) All those philosophers who seem to proceed by methodical exposition of basic principles – and most conspicuously of all, those of the Old Academy and the Peripatetics, and also the Stoics – are accustomed to make a division, saying that, of existing things, some are good, some bad, and some between these, which they also call indifferent. (4) Xenocrates, however, somewhat unusually compared with the others, and using the singular forms, said, 'All that exists either is good or is bad or neither is good nor is bad.' (5) And while the rest of the philosophers accepted such a division without proof, he thought it proper also to include a proof, as follows. If there is anything which is distinct from good things and from bad things and from things which are neither good nor bad, that thing either is good or it is not good. And if it is good, it will be one of the three; but if it is not good, either it is bad or it neither is bad nor \*4\* is good. But if it is bad, it will be one of the three, while if it neither is good nor is bad, it will again be one of the

three. Thus everything that exists either is good or is bad or neither is good nor is bad. (6) But in effect he too accepted the division without proof, since the argument employed to construct it is none other than the division itself; hence, if the proof contains its warrant within itself, the division, being no different from the proof, will also be warranted by itself.

(7) But still, although it seems to be agreed upon by everyone that the distinction among existing things is threefold, some people none the less think up specious arguments, agreeing that the distinction among existing things is something like this, but sophistically pressing objections against the division laid out. And we will be clear about this if we start again from a little further back.

(8) The technical writers say that a definition differs from a universal merely in its syntax, and is the same in meaning. And reasonably so; for the person who says 'A human being is a rational mortal animal' says the same thing as far as meaning is concerned – though it is verbally different – as one who says 'if something is a human being, that thing is a rational mortal animal'. (9) And that this is the case is clear from the fact that not only does the universal encompass the particulars, but the definition also extends to all the specific instances of the object being defined – for example, the definition of a human being to all specific human beings, and that of a horse to all horses. Besides, if a single false instance is subsumed under it, each one becomes unsound – both the universal and the definition. (10) But now, just as these two are verbally different but identical in meaning, so too the perfect division, they say, differs from the universal in syntax while having a universal meaning. For one who divides in this way – 'Of human beings some are Greeks, some barbarians' – says something equivalent to 'If some are human beings, those are either Greeks or barbarians'. For if any human being is found who is neither Greek nor barbarian, necessarily the division is unsound and the universal is false. (11) Hence, too, the statement 'Of existing things, some are good, some bad, some between these' is in meaning, according to Chrysippus, a universal of the following kind: 'If some things are existents, those things either are good or are bad or indifferent.' Such a universal, however, is false, since a false instance is subsumed under it. (12) For they say that when two things exist, one good, the other bad, or one good, the other indifferent, or bad and indifferent, then 'This one among existing things is good' is true, but 'These are good' is false; for *they* are not good, but one is good, the other bad. (13) \*5\* And 'These things

are bad' is again false; for they are not bad, but one of them is. Similarly in the case of indifferents; for 'These things are indifferent' is false, just as is 'These things are good' (or '... bad'). (14) The objection, then, is something like this; but it does not seem to touch Xenocrates, because he does not use the plural forms, and thereby have his division falsified in the case of reference to things of different kinds.

(15) Others have objected in the following way. Every sound division, they say, is a cutting of a genus into its proximate species, and for this reason a division like this is unsound: 'Of human beings some are Greeks, some Egyptians, some Persians, and some Indians.' For one of the proximate species does not have the corresponding proximate species paired with it, but the subspecies of this; it should say this: 'Of human beings some are Greeks, some barbarians,' and then, by subdivision, 'Of barbarians some are Egyptians, some Persians, and some Indians.' (16) Therefore, in the case of the division of existing things, too, since whichever things are good and bad make a difference to us, while whichever are between the good and bad are indifferent to us, the division should not have been as it is, but rather as follows: 'Of existing things some are indifferent, others make a difference, and of the things which make a difference some are good, others bad.' (17) For such a division is like the one which says 'Of human beings some are Greeks, some barbarians, and of the barbarians some are Egyptians, some Persians, and some Indians.' But the one which has been set out was like one of this type: 'Of human beings some are Greeks, some Egyptians, some Persians, and some Indians.'

But it is not necessary now to prolong discussion of these objections; (18) however, it will perhaps be fitting to clarify the following point in advance. The word 'is' means two things; one is 'actually is' – as when we say at present 'It is day' instead of 'It actually is day' – and the other is 'appears' – as when some mathematicians often tend to say that the distance between two stars is a cubit, meaning something equivalent to 'appears so but is not necessarily actually so' (for perhaps it is actually 100 stades, but it appears to be a cubit on account of the height, i.e. on account of the distance from the eye). (19) Since, then, the component 'is' is ambiguous, when we say in sceptical fashion 'Of existing things some are good, some bad, and some between these', we insert the 'are' as indicative not of what is actually the case but of appearance. For we have plenty

of disputes with the dogmatists about the nature and existence of the things which are good and bad and neither; (20) but we have the habit of calling each of these things good or bad or indifferent according \*6\* to their appearance – as Timon too seems to indicate in his *Images*, when he says

For indeed I shall tell, as it appears to me to be,  
A word of truth, having a correct standard,  
That the nature of the divine and the good is everlasting,  
From which arises a most even-tempered life for a man.

So, now that the division mentioned above is in place in the manner indicated, let us see what we ought to think about the items within it, beginning our argument with the conception of them.

## II. What are the Good, the Bad, and the Indifferent

(21) Since the controversy in which we are engaged with the dogmatists on this topic has as its most important element the distinguishing of good things and bad things, it will be fitting before all else to fix the conception of these things; for, according to the wise Epicurus, it is not possible either to investigate or to raise difficulties without a preconception. (22) Well then, the Stoics, holding on to the 'common conceptions' (so to speak), define the good in this way: 'Good is benefit or not other than benefit,' by 'benefit' meaning virtue and excellent action, and by 'not other than benefit' the excellent human being and the friend. (23) For virtue, being the ruling part in a certain state, and excellent action, being a certain activity in accordance with virtue, are, precisely, benefit; while the excellent human being and the friend, also being themselves among the good things, could not be said to be either benefit or other than benefit, for the following reason. (24) Parts, say the sons of the Stoics, are neither the same as wholes nor of a different kind from wholes; for example, the hand is not the same as the whole human being (for the hand is not a whole human being), nor is it other than the whole (for it is *together with* the hand that the whole human being is conceived as a human being). Since virtue, then, is a part of both the excellent human being and the friend, and parts are neither the same as wholes nor other than wholes, the excellent human being

and the friend are called 'not other than benefit'. So that every good is encompassed by the definition, whether it is simply a benefit, or whether it is not other than benefit. (25) Then, as a consequence, they say that good is spoken of in three ways, and they indicate each of the significations, in turn, in accordance with its own application. In one way, they say, that by which or \*7\* from which one may be benefited is called good – which is the most primary good, namely virtue; for from this, as from a spring, all benefit naturally arises. (26) In another way, it is that in connection with which it results that one is benefited; in this way not only the virtues will be called goods, but also the actions in accordance with them, since in connection with these, too, it results that one is benefited. (27) In the third and final way, that which is able to be of benefit is called good, this definition encompassing the virtues and virtuous actions and friends and excellent human beings, gods, and good daimons. (28) For this reason, the claim that 'good' is used in multiple ways is not meant equivalently both by Plato and Xenocrates and by the Stoics. For the former, when they say that the Form is called good in one way and that which partakes of the Form in another way, put forward significations which are widely divergent from one another, and indeed have nothing in common, as we observe in the case of the word 'dog'. (29) For just as by this is signified a 'case' under which falls the barking animal, and also one under which falls the aquatic animal, and besides these the philosopher, as well as the star, and such 'cases' have nothing in common, nor is the first contained in the second, nor the second in the third, so in calling good the Form and that which partakes of the Form there is an exposition of significations, but of ones which are separate and exhibit no inclusion of one in the other. (30) The older philosophers, then, as I said earlier, held some such position. But the Stoics maintain that, in the case of the term 'good', the second signification contains the first, and the third contains the first two. There have also been those who say that good is that which is to be chosen for its own sake. And others hold the following: 'Good is that which contributes to happiness', while others say 'that which is capable of making happiness complete'. And happiness, as Zeno and Cleanthes and Chrysippus defined it, is a good flow of life.

Anyhow, in general terms the definition of the good is like this. (31) But while good is spoken of in three ways, some are in the habit of directing further attention straight to the definition of the first signification (according to which it

was stated 'Good is that by which or from which one may be benefited'), on the grounds that if good truly is that from which one may be benefited, one must say that only generic virtue is good (for from this alone does being benefited result), and that each of the specific virtues, such as practical wisdom, moderation, and the rest, falls outside the definition. (32) For from none of these does being of benefit, pure and simple, result; rather, from practical wisdom comes being wise, not being of benefit more generally (for if being of benefit, \*8\* pure and simple, should result, it will not be, determinately, practical wisdom, but generic virtue), and from moderation the predicate corresponding to it, being moderate, not the general one, being of benefit, and similarly in the remaining cases. (33) But those who are faced with this charge say this: When we say 'Good is that from which being benefited results', we are saying something equivalent to 'Good is that from which it results that one is benefited in respect of one of the things in one's life'. For in this way each of the specific virtues, too, will be a good, not as conferring being of benefit in general, but as providing that one is benefited in respect of one of the things in one's life; for example, being wise, in the case of practical wisdom, or being moderate, in the case of moderation. (34) But these people, wishing to defend themselves and escape the previous charge, have become involved in another one. For if the statement is as follows: 'Good is that from which it results that one is benefited in respect of one of the things in one's life', generic virtue, though it is a good, will not fall under the definition; for from this it does not result that one is benefited in respect of one of the things in one's life (since in that case it will become one of the specific virtues), but simply that one is benefited.

(35) And other things, connected with the dogmatists' pedantry, tend to be said against such definitions. But for us it is sufficient to show that one who says that the good is that which is of benefit, or that which is to be chosen for its own sake, or that which contributes to happiness, or gives some such definition, does not inform us what good is but states its property. But one who states the property of the good does not show us the good itself. At any rate, everyone agrees without hesitation that the good is of benefit, and that it is to be chosen (which is why it is called 'good' (*agathon*) – that is, wonderful (*agaston*), and that it is productive of happiness. (36) But if one asks the further question *what is* this thing which is of benefit and to be chosen for its own sake and productive of happiness, they will

no longer be of the same mind, even though they previously agreed in calling it that which is of benefit and that which is to be chosen, but will be carried off into an interminable war, one person saying that it is virtue, another pleasure, another freedom from pain, another something different again. (37) But if it had indeed been shown, by means of the definitions stated above, what the good is, they would not be in conflict, as if the nature of the good was unknown. Therefore the definitions which have been laid out do not teach us what the good is, but the property of the good. Hence they are unsound not only in this respect, but also in so far as they aim for something impossible; \*9\* (38) for one who does not know some existing thing cannot recognize that thing's property either. For instance, if one says to a person who does not know what a horse is, 'A horse is an animal inclined to neigh', one does not teach that person what a horse is; for to the person who does not recognize the horse, neighing, which is a property of the horse, is also unknown. And if one puts forward, to a person who has not apprehended what an ox is, the statement 'An ox is an animal inclined to bellow', one does not exhibit the ox; for the person who does not know the latter likewise does not apprehend bellowing, which is a property of the ox. (39) Thus it is also idle and profitless to say to the person who is without a conception of the good that good is that which is to be chosen or that which benefits. For it is necessary first to learn the nature of the good itself, and then after that to understand that it benefits and that it is to be chosen and is productive of happiness. In the case where this nature is not known, definitions like these also do not teach us the thing which is being sought.

(40) For the sake of example, then, it will suffice to have said this about the notion of the good. And from this, I think, the technical points made about the bad by those who hold varying opinions are also clear. For bad is the opposite of the good; it is harm or not other than harm – harm when it takes the form of vice and the inferior action, not other than harm when it takes the form of the inferior human being and the enemy. (41) And between these – I mean, between the good and the bad – is that which is in neither state (which is also called indifferent). What is the force of these definitions, and what should be said against the definitions, can be learned from what has been said about the good. But now, with these things established at the outset, let us move on and enquire whether good and bad also really exist by nature in the way in which they are conceived.

### III. Whether there are Good and Bad by Nature

(42) We argued above, then, that the dogmatists did not outline the conception of good and bad in a convincing fashion; but for the purpose of becoming more readily conversant with the arguments about its existence it is sufficient to say – as Aenesidemus, for one, used to say – that while all people think good that which attracts them, whatever it may be, the specific judgements which they have about it are in conflict. (43) And just as people agree (to take a random case) about the existence of \*10\* shapeliness of body, but are in dispute about the shapely and beautiful woman – the Ethiopian preferring the most snub-nosed and blackest, the Persian favouring the most aquiline and whitest, while someone else says that the woman who is intermediate with respect to both features and colouring is the most beautiful of all – (44) in the same way both ordinary people and philosophers think, in line with a common preconception, that there is such a thing as good and bad, and take good to be what attracts and benefits them, and bad what is in opposition to that, yet are at war with one another as far as specifics are concerned: 'For different men delight in different things', and, as Archilochus put it, 'One man's heart is warmed at one thing, one at another', given that one cherishes glory, another wealth, another well-being, and someone else pleasure. And it is the same story in the case of the philosophers. (45) For the Academics and the Peripatetics say that there are three types of goods, and that some have to do with the soul, some have to do with the body, and some are external to both soul and body; having to do with the soul are the virtues, having to do with the body are health and well-being and keenness of sensation and beauty and everything which is of a similar kind, and external to soul and body are wealth, country, parents, children, friends, and things like that. (46) The Stoics, on the other hand, also said that there are three types of goods, but not in the same way; for they said that some of them have to do with the soul, some are external, and some neither have to do with the soul nor are external, excluding, as not being goods, the type of goods having to do with the body. And they say that having to do with the soul are the virtues and excellent actions, external are the friend and the excellent human being and excellent children and parents and the like, and neither having to do with the soul nor external is the excellent human being in



relation to himself. For it is not possible for him either to be external to himself or to belong to the soul; for he consists of soul and body. (47) But there are some who are so far from excluding the type of goods having to do with the body that they actually let the most primary good reside in them; those who are fond of the pleasures of the flesh are of this kind. And so that we may not seem to be dragging out the argument excessively, in presenting the case that people's judgement about good and bad is in disharmony and conflict, we will have our treatment on a single example, namely health, since we are rather well accustomed to discussion about this.

(48) Some, then, think that health is a good, others that it is not a good; and of those who suppose it to be a good, some have said that this is the greatest good, some that it is not the greatest good; and of those \*11\* who have said that it is not a good, some have said that it is a preferred indifferent, others that it is an indifferent but not preferred. (49) So then, that health is a good, indeed the primary good, no small number of poets and authors, and generally all ordinary people, have maintained. Simonides the lyric poet says that not even fine wisdom brings delight, if one does not have glorious health; and Licymnius, after beginning with these words:

Bright-eyed mother, longed-for queen  
Of the most exalted holy throne of Apollo,  
Soft-smiling Health,

assigns to her what sort of exalted feature?

What joy can come from wealth or children  
Or from the royal rule of a godlike man?  
Apart from you no one is happy.

(50) And Herophilus in his *Regimen* says that wisdom cannot manifest itself and skill is non-evident and strength cannot compete and wealth is useless and reason is powerless if health is missing. (51) This, then, is what these people thought; but the Academics and the Peripatetics said that it is a good, but not the primary good. For they supposed that each of the goods must be assigned its own rank and value.

Hence Crantor, wishing to give us a clear picture of the matter being discussed, employed a most elegant parable. (52) If we conceive, he says, a theatre common to all the Greeks, and that each of the goods is present at this place, and is coming forward and competing for the first prize, we will be led straight away to a conception of the difference among the goods. (53) For first wealth will leap up and say, 'I, men of all Greece, providing ornament to all people and clothes and shoes and every other enjoyment, am needed by the sick and the healthy, and in peace I provide delights, while in war I become the sinews of action.' (54) Then of course all the Greeks, hearing these words, will unanimously order that the first prize be given to wealth. But if, while wealth is already being proclaimed the winner, pleasure appears,

In whom is love, is desire, is intimacy,  
Allurement, which steals the sense even of shrewd thinkers,

(55) and taking a position in the middle says that it is just to declare *her* the winner – \*12\*

For wealth is not steady, but lasts just a day;  
It blooms a short time and then flies away,

and it is pursued by people not for its own sake, but for the sake of the enjoyment and pleasure which result from it – then surely all the Greeks, supposing that this is exactly how the matter stands, will shout that pleasure must be crowned. (56) But as she too is about to carry off the prize, once health enters with her companion gods, and teaches that pleasure and wealth are no use in her absence –

For what benefit is wealth to me when I am sick?  
I would rather live a painless life, from day to day and having little  
Than to be wealthy but diseased –

(57) then again all the Greeks, having heard her and having been informed that it is not possible for happiness to exist when bedridden and sick, will say that health wins. But though health is already victorious, once courage enters, with a great

throng of warriors and heroes around her, and taking her position says (58) 'If I am not present, men of Greece, the possession of your goods passes to others, and your enemies would pray for you to have abundant supplies of all goods, presuming that they are going to conquer you'; then, having heard this, the Greeks will award the first prize to virtue, the second to health, the third to pleasure, and they will rank wealth last.

(59) So then, Crantor placed health in the second position, staying in line with the philosophers mentioned above; but the Stoics said that it is not a good but an indifferent. They think that the indifferent is spoken of in three ways: in one way it is that towards which there occurs neither impulse nor repulsion – for example, the fact that the number of stars or hairs on one's head is odd or even; (60) in another way it is that towards which impulse and repulsion do occur, but not more towards one thing than another, as in the case of two drachmas indistinguishable both in markings and in brightness, when one has to choose one of them; for there does occur an impulse towards choosing one of them, but not more towards one than the other. (61) They call indifferent in the third and final way that which contributes neither to happiness nor to unhappiness; in this signification they say that health and disease and all bodily things and most external things are indifferent, because they are conducive neither to happiness nor to unhappiness. For that which it is possible to use well and badly will be indifferent; virtue can always be used well, and vice badly, but health and things concerned with the body can be \*13\* used sometimes well and sometimes badly, hence they will be indifferent. (62) Now, of indifferents they say that some are preferred, some dispreferred, and some neither preferred nor dispreferred; and that preferred are things which have sufficient value, dispreferred are those which have sufficient disvalue, and neither preferred nor dispreferred is a thing such as extending or bending one's finger, and everything like that. (63) And among the preferred belong health and strength and beauty, wealth and glory and similar things, while among the dispreferred are disease and poverty and pain and things resembling them. (64) This is the Stoics' position; but Aristo of Chios said that health, and everything like it, is *not* a preferred indifferent. For to call it a preferred indifferent is equivalent to deeming it a good – the difference is almost solely in name. (65) For quite generally the indifferent things between virtue and vice have nothing to differentiate them, nor are some of them by nature preferred and some

dispreferred, but in keeping with the circumstances, which differ with the times, neither do the things which are said to be preferred turn out to be invariably preferred, nor are the things which are said to be dispreferred necessarily dispreferred. (66) At any rate, if healthy people have to serve the tyrant and for this reason be destroyed, while the sick are exempted from this service and thereby also exempted from destruction, the sage will choose being sick on this occasion rather than being healthy. And thus neither is health invariably a thing preferred nor sickness a thing dispreferred. (67) As, then, in writing names we sometimes place some letters first and at other times others, suiting them to the different circumstances (D when we are writing the name of Dion, I when it is Ion, O when it is Orion), not because some letters are given precedence over others by nature, but because the situations require us to do this, so too in the things between virtue and vice there is no natural precedence of some over others, but rather a precedence according to circumstances.

(68) But now that from these remarks, and largely by way of examples, the preconception about good things and bad things, and indifferent things besides, has been shown to be in disharmony, it will next be necessary to get to grips with the things which have been said by the sceptics on the subject under discussion. (69) Well now, if there is anything by nature good, and there is anything by nature bad, this thing ought to be common to all and to be good or bad for everyone. For just as fire, being by nature warming, warms everyone and does not warm some but chill others, and in the same way as snow, which chills, does not chill some people but warm others, but chills everyone equally, so \*14\* that which is by nature good ought to be good for everyone, and not good for some but not good for others. (70) For this reason Plato too, in establishing that god is by nature good, argued from similar cases. For, he says, as it is a distinctive feature of hot to heat and it is a distinctive feature of cold to chill, so too it is a distinctive feature of good to do good; but the good, surely, is god; it is therefore a distinctive feature of god to do good. (71) So that if there is anything by nature good, this is good in relation to everyone, and if there is anything by nature bad, this is bad in relation to everyone. But nothing is good or bad in a way which is common to all, as we will establish; therefore there is nothing by nature good or bad. (72) For either everything which is thought good by someone is to be described as good in reality, or not everything. And everything is not to be so described; for if we call

good everything which is thought good by anyone, then since the same thing is thought bad by one person and good by another, and by a different person is thought indifferent, we will be granting that the same thing is simultaneously good and bad and indifferent. (73) For example, Epicurus says that pleasure is a good thing, whereas the person who said 'I would rather be mad than feel pleasure' takes it as a bad thing, and the Stoics say it is an indifferent thing and not preferred – Cleanthes saying that it neither is natural nor has value in life, just as a cosmetic is not natural; Archedemus that it is natural like the hairs in the armpit, but does not have value; and Panaetius that some of it is natural and some of it contrary to nature. (74)

Accordingly, if everything which seems good to someone is good absolutely, then since pleasure seems good to Epicurus, bad to one of the Cynics, and indifferent to the Stoic, pleasure will be simultaneously good and bad and indifferent. But the same thing cannot be by nature opposite things – simultaneously good and bad and indifferent; therefore not everything which seems good or bad to someone should be said to be good or bad. (75) But if that which seems good to someone is also good for everyone, we ought to be in a position to apprehend this, and to be capable of discerning the difference among the things which are thought good, so that we can say that one thing, which seems to this person good, is in reality good, while another thing seems good to that person, but is *not* by nature good. (76) This difference, then, is grasped either through plain experience or through some reasoning. But it is not feasible that it should be through plain experience. For it is in the nature of everything which strikes us through plain experience to be grasped in a common and concordant fashion by those who have no interference in their perceptions, as can be observed in the case of nearly all appearances. But \*15\* the same thing is *not* called good concordantly by everyone, but by some virtue is called good, and what shares in virtue, by others pleasure, by others freedom from pain, and by some something else. The really good does not therefore strike everyone through plain experience. (77) But if it is grasped by reasoning, then since each one of all those who belong to the different schools has a private method of reasoning– Zeno one, by means of which he thought that virtue is good; Epicurus another, by means of which he thought pleasure is good; and Aristotle a different one, by means of which he thought health is good– each will in turn introduce a private good, which is not by

nature good nor common to all. (78) Therefore nothing is by nature good. For if the private good of each person is not the good of all nor good by nature, and beyond the private good of each person there is nothing which is by common accord good, there is nothing good. (79) Besides, if there is some good, this ought to be by its very definition a thing to be chosen, since every person chooses to get this, just as he chooses to avoid the bad. But nothing is to be chosen by its very definition as 'thing to be chosen', as we shall show; therefore there is not anything good. (80) For if anything is by its very definition a thing to be chosen, either choosing itself is to be chosen or something else besides this; for example, either choosing wealth is to be chosen or wealth itself is to be chosen. (81) And choosing itself could not be a thing to be chosen. For if choosing is by its very definition to be chosen, we ought not to be eager to get what we are choosing, so that we may not be deprived of continuing to choose. For just as (we put off) drinking or eating, so that we may not, once having drunk or eaten, be deprived of wanting any longer to drink or eat, so if choosing wealth or health is to be chosen, we should not pursue wealth or health, so that we may not, once having got them, be deprived of continuing to choose. (82) But we *do* pursue the getting of them; so choosing is not to be chosen, but rather to be avoided. And in the same way as the lover is eager to get the woman whom he loves, so that he may escape the distress involved in being in love, and as the person who is thirsty hastens to drink, so that he may escape the torment involved in being thirsty, so too the person who is troubled in his choosing of wealth hastens, in virtue of his choosing, to get wealth, so that he may be released from continuing to choose. (83) But if that which is to be chosen is something other than choosing itself, either it is among the things separate from us or among the things relating to us. And if it is separate from us and external, either something happens to us because of it or nothing happens; from the friend, for \*16\* example, or the excellent human being or child or any other of the so-called external goods— either a motion and a welcome condition and a wonderful experience happens to us because of it, or no such thing happens and we are not in any different state of motion when we regard the friend or the child as something to be chosen. (84) And if absolutely nothing of this kind happens to us, that which is external will not be something to be chosen at all. For how is it possible that we should make a choice of that towards which we are unmoved? (85) And furthermore, if the delightful is so conceived from our

delighting in it, and the painful from our experiencing pain, and the good (*agathon*) from our experiencing wonder (*agasthai*), it will follow that a thing from which neither delight is produced in us, nor a wonderful state, nor any pleasing motion, implants in us no choice. (86) But if a certain tranquil condition and pleasing experience occurs in us from the external thing, such as the friend or the child, the friend or the child will not be to be chosen for his own sake, but for the sake of the tranquil condition and pleasing experience. But such a condition is not external but relating to us. None of the external things, then, is to be chosen for its own sake or good. (87) Nor, however, is that which is to be chosen and good among the things relating to us. For this either belongs solely to the body or it belongs to the soul. But it could not belong solely to the body; for if in reality it belongs solely to the body, and is no longer also an experience of the soul, it will escape our awareness (for all awareness is on the part of the soul), and will be equivalent to things which exist externally and have no affinity with us. (88) But if the pleasing effect which it has extends to the soul, it will be something to be chosen and good as far as that is concerned, but not in so far as it is a movement merely of the body. For everything which is to be chosen is judged to be so by way of sensation or thought, not by way of an unreasoning body. But the sense or intelligence which grasps that which is to be chosen belongs by its very definition to the soul; so none of the things which happen to the body is to be chosen for its own sake and good, but if any, those which happen to the soul, (89) which again sends us headlong into the original difficulty. For since each person's intelligence contains judgements discordant with that of his neighbour, it is necessary that each person should hold good that which appears so to himself. But that which appears good to each person is not good by nature. Neither in this way, therefore, is anything good.

(90) The same argument applies also to bad. Indeed, it has in effect been presented by the investigation of the good, first, since when one is \*17\* done away with, the other is also done away with at the same time— for each of the two is conceived in virtue of its holding in relation to the other; and then, since it is possible again to rest such a point directly on a single example, namely folly, which the Stoics say is the only thing which is bad. (91) For if folly is by nature a bad thing, then in the same way as the hot is known to be hot by nature from the fact that those who come near it are heated, and the cold from the fact that they

are chilled, folly too will have to be known as being by nature a bad thing from the fact that they are harmed. Either, then, it is those who are called foolish who are harmed by folly, or the wise. (92) But the wise are not harmed; for they are remote from folly, and they could not be harmed by a bad thing which is not present to them but separate. But if folly harms fools, it harms them either being evident to them or non-evident. (93) And there is no way it could do so being non-evident; for if it is non-evident to them, it is neither a bad thing nor a thing to be avoided by them, but just as no one avoids or is disturbed at grief which is non-apparent and pain which is unfelt, so no one will shun as a bad thing folly which is unsuspected and not evidenced. (94) But if it is recognized by them in an evident fashion and is by nature a bad thing, fools ought to avoid it as by nature a bad thing. But fools do *not* avoid, as evidently a bad thing, that which is called 'being a fool' by those who are remote from it, but each person accepts his own judgement and deems bad that of the person who thinks the opposite. (95) So neither is folly evident to fools as by nature a bad thing. Hence, if neither are the wise harmed in any way by folly, nor is folly a thing to be avoided by fools, it must be affirmed that folly is not by nature a bad thing. But if this is not, neither is any other of the things called bad.

(96) But some members of the Epicurean school, in confronting such difficulties, tend to say that the animal avoids pain and pursues pleasure naturally and without being taught; at any rate, when it is born and is not yet a slave to opinions, it cries and shrieks as soon as it is struck by the unfamiliar chill of the air. But if it naturally strives towards pleasure and turns away from pain, then by nature pain is a thing to be avoided by it and pleasure a thing to be chosen. (97) But the people who say this have not observed, first, that they are giving a share of the good even to the most despised animals (for even they participate abundantly in pleasure), and then that not even pain is absolutely a thing to be avoided; indeed, pain is relieved by pain, and health and also physical strength and growth come about through pain, and men do not pick up the most exact skills and sciences without pain, so that pain is not by nature entirely a thing \*18\* to be avoided. (98) Furthermore, not even what seems pleasant is by nature entirely to be chosen; at any rate, often things which affect us pleasantly on the first encounter are thought unpleasant the second time, even though they are the same – which accords with the pleasant's not being such by nature, but moving us



sometimes in this way, sometimes in that way, depending on the different circumstances.

(99) Yes, but even those who believe that only the fine is good think that it is shown by the non-rational animals, too, that this is by nature to be chosen. For, they say, we see how certain noble animals, such as bulls and cocks, fight to the death even though no delight or pleasure is in store for them. (100) And those human beings who have given themselves up to destruction for their country or parents or children would never have done this, when no pleasure after death was hoped for on their part, if the fine and good had not naturally drawn them, as well as every noble animal, towards choosing it. (101) But these people, too, are not aware that it is the height of stupidity to think that the above-mentioned animals are driven to fight to their last breath by a conception of the good. For one can hear them saying themselves that the wise disposition alone perceives the fine and good, while as far as the recognition of this is concerned, folly is blind; hence the cock and the bull, not sharing in the wise disposition, could not perceive the fine and good. (102) (And besides, if there is anything over which these animals fight to the death, this is none other than winning and being the leader. But there are times when being defeated and being a subject is finer, seeing that either one is indifferent. Therefore winning and being the leader is not by nature good but indifferent.) (103) So that if they were to say that the cock or the bull or any other of the brave animals pursues the fine, how is it that humanity also aims at the same thing? For in showing that those animals concern themselves about this, it has not been shown that humanity is also this way, (104) since surely, if humanity too is said to concern itself with the fine because certain animals are brave and apt to despise pleasure as well as to resist pains, then, since most animals are gluttonous and ruled by their stomachs, we shall say, on the contrary, that humanity strives more after pleasure. (105) But if they should say that some animals are lovers of pleasure, but that humanity is not entirely of this kind, we too will reverse ourselves and say that it is not immediately the case that if some animals, in accordance with natural reason, pursue the fine, humanity too aims for the same end. (106) And someone else will say that winning and being the leader is fought over by animals for its own sake, but by humanity not for its own sake, but on \*19\* account of the delight and joy in the soul which accompanies it, this being a welcome condition. And this may be supposed all the more in the case of

human beings, for whom glory and praise and gifts and honours are sufficient to please and relax the mind and in this very process to make it apt to resist troubles. (107) Hence, too, it is perhaps for this reason that those who engage in heroic combat to the end, and give themselves up to destruction for their country, fight and die in manly fashion; for even if they die and pass on from life, yet they are doubtless pleased and feel joy at the praise while they are alive. (108) And it is even probable that some of them choose a death which was foreseen, thinking that similar praise also awaits them after death. Nor is it unlikely that others suffer this fate because they perceive that the circumstances of their lives will be even more difficult to bear, when they observe

Sons being destroyed and daughters dragged off  
Bedchambers being plundered and infant children  
Thrown to the ground in dreadful battle.

(109) There are many reasons, then, why some people choose death with good repute; it is not because they think that the fine, which certain of the dogmatists go on about, is eagerly to be pursued. But let this much suffice on the difficulties concerning these matters.

#### IV. Whether it is Possible to Live Happily if one Postulates Things Good and Bad by Nature

(110) we have, then, enquired sufficiently about nothing's being good or bad by nature; let us now look into whether, even if these are admitted, it is possible to live 'with a good flow' and happily. the dogmatic philosophers, then, claim that this is precisely how things are; for according to them, the person who achieves the good and avoids the bad is happy; hence they also say that practical wisdom is a science relating to life, which is able to distinguish good things and bad things and able to produce happiness. (111) The sceptics, on the other hand, neither affirming nor denying anything casually but bringing everything under examination, teach that for those who suppose that there are good and bad by nature an unhappy life is in store, while for those who make no determinations

and suspend judgement 'Is the easiest human life'. (112) And we can learn this if we start again from a little further back.

Now, all unhappiness comes about because of some disturbance. But, \*20\* in addition, every disturbance besets people either because of their intensely pursuing certain things or because of their intensely avoiding certain things. (113) But all people intensely pursue what is thought by them good and avoid what is supposed bad. All unhappiness, therefore, comes about by way of the pursuit of good things as good and the avoidance of bad things as bad. So, since the dogmatist is confident that this is by nature good and that is by nature bad, always pursuing the one and avoiding the other, and being disturbed for this reason, he will never be happy. (114) For either everything which anyone pursues is immediately also good by nature, and everything which anyone avoids as a thing to be avoided is such in reality; or a certain one of the things pursued is to be chosen, and not all, and a certain one of the things avoided is to be avoided; or these things depend on being in a certain state in relation to something, and in relation to this person this thing is to be chosen or to be avoided, but in relation to the nature of things it is neither to be chosen nor to be avoided, but at one time to be chosen and at another time to be avoided. (115) If, then, someone should reckon that everything which is in any way pursued by anyone is by nature good, and everything which is avoided is by nature to be avoided, he will have a life which is unlivable, being compelled simultaneously to pursue and avoid the same thing – to pursue it in so far as it has been supposed by some people a thing to be chosen, but to avoid it in so far as it has been considered by others a thing to be avoided. (116) But if one should say not that everything which is pursued or avoided is to be chosen and to be avoided, but that a certain one of them is to be chosen and a certain one avoided, he will live, but he will not live without disturbance; for by forever pursuing what is considered by him to be by nature good, and evading what is supposed bad, he will never be released from disturbance, but when he has not yet got hold of the good, he will be violently disturbed because of his desire to get it, and in addition, when he has got it, he will never be at peace, because of his excess of joy or because of his vigilance over what he has acquired. (117) And the same argument applies also to bad; for neither is the person who is untouched by it free from care, being persecuted in plenty both by the disturbance which comes with avoiding it and by that which

comes with guarding against it; nor does the person who is in the midst of it have any rest from his trials, as he considers 'How he might escape sheer destruction'. (118) But if someone should say that a certain thing is not more by nature to be chosen than to be avoided, nor more to be avoided than to be chosen, every event being in a certain state in relation to something and, in \*21\* accordance with differing states of affairs and circumstances, turning out as at one time to be chosen and at another time to be avoided, he will live happily and without disturbance, being neither uplifted at good as good nor dejected at bad, nobly accepting what happens by necessity but freed from the trouble associated with the opinion that something bad or good is present. Indeed, this will come to him from his thinking nothing good or bad by nature. Therefore it is not possible to live happily if one conceives certain things to be good or bad.

(119) Besides, that which is productive of something bad is surely to be avoided as also bad. For example, if pain is a bad thing, that which is productive of pain will surely also be classed together with pain as being a thing to be avoided; and if death is among the things which are bad, that which causes death will also be among the things which are bad as well as to be avoided. So in general, too, if the bad is to be avoided, necessarily that which is productive of the bad will also be to be avoided and bad. (120) But the things said by some people to be by nature good are also productive of bad things, as we will explain. In effect, then, the things which are said by some people to be good are bad, and for this reason are responsible for unhappiness. For it is actually because of such goods that everything bad exists, love of money and love of glory and love of victory and love of pleasure and whatever other things are like these. (121) For each person, in pursuing intensely and with excessive confidence what he thinks is good and to be chosen, falls without realizing it into the neighbouring vice. For example (for what is being said will be clear when examples are supplied which are familiar to us), (122) the person who has a preconception that wealth is good should eagerly take all steps towards getting wealth, and on every occasion should rehearse to himself the comic precept, 'Make money, friend, winter and summer', and accept the tragic one, 'Gold, finest thing received by mortals'. But taking all steps towards getting wealth is none other than being a lover of money. Therefore the person who imagines wealth to be the greatest good, in his eagerness for this, becomes a lover of money. (123) Again, the person who reckons that glory is to

be chosen aims intensely for glory, but to aim intensely for glory is to be a lover of glory; therefore reckoning glory a thing to be chosen and by nature good is liable to produce something very bad, love of glory. (124) And we will find the same thing in the case of pleasure; for certain wretched consequences— namely, the love of pleasure – necessarily attend those who strive towards getting it. So that if that which is productive of bad things is bad, and it has been shown that the things thought good by some of the \*22\* philosophers are productive of all the bad things, it must be said that the things which are thought good by some are in effect bad.

(125) Nor, however, is it possible for those on the opposite side to say that, in connection with the pursuit of them and the impulse towards them, something bad comes to those who are impelled and in pursuit – such as love of money to the person going after wealth, and love of glory to the person going after glory, and some other disturbance to the person going after something else – but that, in connection with the getting of them, there occurs a release from disturbances and a rest from the previous trouble; (126) for the person who has got wealth no longer intensely seeks wealth, and the person who has taken hold of pleasure will relax the intensity of his eagerness for it. So just as the animals which live on the precipices are driven for the sake of drinking through pain to pleasure, and once satisfied, are immediately relieved from their prior hardships, so too humanity is necessarily troubled during its striving towards the good, but having got what it desired is also released from trouble. (127) We say that it is just not possible to maintain this, nor is this how the matter stands. For even if they get the things which are thought by them to be good, they are afflicted and grieved all the more, because they are not the only ones who have them; for it is on this condition, that they be alone in possessing them, that they consider the goods valuable and worth fighting for, and so jealousy is implanted in them towards their neighbours and malevolence and envy. the result is both that the pursuit of the things said to be goods is not without sorrow, and that the acquisition of them is the gathering of bad things in larger number. (128) And again, the same argument applies also to the bad things themselves. For someone who has a preconception that certain things are by nature bad, such as a bad reputation, poverty, lameness, pain, disease, and in general folly, is not troubled only by these things, but also by the vast number of other bad things caused by them. (129) For when they are present,

he is storm-tossed not only by them, but also by his belief about them, on account of which he feels sure that he is in the presence of a bad thing, and he is ravaged by such a preconception as if by a bad thing of greater proportions. But when they are not present, he equally has no rest, but since he is either guarding against the future or is in fear, he has care as an intimate companion. (130) But when reason has established that none of these things is by nature good or by nature bad, there will be a release from disturbance and a peaceful life will await us.

But indeed it is evident from what has been said that because of the \*23\* things thought by some to be goods, masses of bad things happen, and because of the bad things other bad things come into being, so that thanks to them happiness becomes unattainable. (131) But following this it must be pointed out that neither is it possible to get help by making our way through dogmatic philosophy. For if anything by nature good or by nature bad is assumed, one who is consoling the person disturbed at the intense pursuit of the good as good or the excessive avoidance of the bad as bad reduces the disturbance either by saying this – that it is proper neither to pursue the good nor to avoid the bad; (132) or by establishing this – that while this thing which is being pursued by him has very little value, and it is not appropriate to pursue it, this other thing has greater value, and it is fitting to go after it (e.g. wealth has less value, virtue greater value, and one should pursue not the former but the latter); or that while this thing which has little use brings many troubles, this other thing which turns out to be very useful brings few troubles. (133) But to say that it is not appropriate either to pursue the good intensely or to avoid the bad runs counter to the point of view of the dogmatists, who are always going on about the selection and rejection of these things, and about choices and avoidances. (134) And to say that one should not pursue this thing, since it is worthless, but should strive towards this other thing, since it is more splendid, is characteristic of men who are not removing disturbance but rearranging it; for just as someone pursuing the first thing was troubled, so he will also be troubled pursuing the second thing, (135) so that the philosopher's reasoning produces one disease in place of another, since in turning away the person who is striving for wealth or glory or health as something good towards pursuing not these things but the fine, perhaps, and virtue, he does not free him from pursuit, but transfers him to another pursuit. (136) just as the doctor, then, if he removes pleurisy but produces inflammation of the lungs, or gets rid of

inflammation of the brain but brings on lethargy instead, does not put an end to the danger but alters it; so too the philosopher, in introducing one disturbance instead of another, does not help the disturbed person. (137) For it is not possible to say that the disturbance which is brought on instead is moderate, while the one which is removed is more violent. For the same kind of opinion which the disturbed person had about the thing previously pursued, he has also about the second thing; but his opinion about the first thing, after all, was that it was good, and that was why he eagerly sought it; (138) therefore in thinking also that the second thing is good, and seeking it with equal eagerness, he will have equal disturbance, or maybe \*24\* even more violent disturbance, to the extent that he has been converted to thinking that the thing now being pursued by him is of greater value. If the Philosopher should contrive, then, that the person who is troubled pursues one thing instead of another, he will not release him from trouble. (139) But if he simply teaches that this thing has little use, but brings many troubles, while this other thing which turns out to be very useful brings few troubles, he will be producing a comparison between one choice and avoidance and another choice and avoidance, and not a removal of disturbance – which is absurd. For the person who is troubled does not want to find out what is more troublesome and what less troublesome, but desires to be released from trouble. (140) It will only be possible to avoid this, then, if we show to the person who is disturbed on account of his avoidance of the bad or his pursuit of the good, that there is not anything either good or bad by nature, 'But these things are judged by mind on the part of humans,' to quote Timon. But such a teaching is certainly peculiar to scepticism; it is scepticism's achievement, therefore, to procure the happy life.

## V. Whether the Person who Suspends judgement about the Nature of Good and Bad Things is in All Respects Happy

(141) That person is happy who conducts himself without disturbance and, as Timon said, is in a state of peace and calm – 'For calm extended everywhere', and 'When I perceived him, then, in windless calm'. Of the things which are said to be good and bad, on the other hand, some are introduced by opinion, some by necessity. (142) By opinion are introduced whatever things people pursue or avoid

in virtue of a judgement; for example, among external things, wealth and glory and noble birth, and friendship and everything like that are called 'to be chosen' and 'good', among those having to do with the body, beauty, strength, and good condition, and among those having to do with the soul, courage, justice, practical wisdom, and virtue in general; and the opposites of these things are called 'to be avoided'. (143) But by necessity come whatever things happen to us in virtue of a non-rational sense experience, and whatever some natural necessity produces ('But no one would choose them willingly' or avoid them), such as pain or pleasure. (144) Hence, such being the difference in the objects, we have already established the fact that the only person who conducts himself without disturbance in the matter of the things which according to opinion are good \*25\* and bad is he who suspends judgement about everything – both earlier, when we discussed the sceptical end, and at present, when we showed that it is not possible to be happy while supposing that anything is by nature good or bad. (145) For the person who does this is swept around accompanied by never-ending disturbances, avoiding some things and pursuing others, and drawing on himself, because of the good things, many bad things, but being pounded, because of his opinion about the bad things, by many times more bad things. (146) For example, the person who says that wealth, perhaps, is good and poverty bad, if he does not have wealth is disturbed in two ways, both because he does not have the good, and because he busies himself over the acquisition of it; but when he has acquired it, he is punished in three ways, because he is elated beyond measure, because he busies himself with a view to the wealth's remaining with him, and because he agonizes and is afraid of its loss. (147) But the person who ranks wealth neither among the things by nature good nor among the things by nature bad, but utters the expression 'not more', is neither disturbed at the absence of this nor elated at its presence, but in either case remains undisturbed. So that as regards the things thought by opinion to be good and bad, and the choices and avoidances of these things, he is perfectly happy, (148) while as regards sensory and non-rational movements he gives way. For things which take place not because of a distortion of reason and worthless opinion, but by way of an involuntary sense experience, are impossible to get rid of by the sceptic's method of reasoning; (149) for in the person who is troubled on account of hunger or thirst, it is not possible through the sceptic's method of reasoning to engender an assurance that he is not troubled,



and in the person who is soothed by relief from these things it is not possible to engender a persuasion about the fact that he is not soothed.

(150) What help towards happiness, then, say the dogmatists, do you derive from suspension of judgement, if you are bound to be disturbed in any case, and to be unhappy through being disturbed? Great help, we will say. For even if the person who suspends judgement about everything is disturbed at the presence of that which gives pain, he still bears the distress more easily compared with the dogmatist, (151) first because it is not the same thing to be persecuted, when one is pursuing good things and shunning bad things (which are infinite in number), by the disturbances associated with these pursuits and avoidances, as if by Furies – or not to suffer this, but to busy oneself with avoiding and guarding against one single bad thing detached from all the others. (152) And second, even this thing which the suspenders of judgement avoid as bad \*26\* is not excessively disturbing. For the affliction is either somewhat small, such as the hunger or thirst or cold or heat, or something similar, which happens to us every day; (153) or on the contrary it is very violent and extreme, as in the case of those who are gripped by incurable agonies, in the course of which doctors often provide pain-killing medicines so that the person can get a brief respite, and so be helped; or it is middling and prolonged, as in certain diseases. (154) And of these, that which presents itself every day disturbs us the least, since it has remedies which are easy to provide – food and drink and shelter; while the most extreme, even if it is the most highly disturbing, none the less frightens us, after all, in the momentary manner of a lightning flash, and then either destroys us or is destroyed. (155) And that which is middling and prolonged neither persists through one's whole life nor is continuous in its nature, but has many periods of rest and casing off; for if it was continuous, it would not have extended over a long time. the disturbance which happens to the sceptic, then, is moderate and not so fearful. (156) Nevertheless, even if it is very great, we should hold responsible not those who are suffering involuntarily and by necessity, but nature, 'Who cares nothing for laws', and the person who by forming opinions and in virtue of a judgement draws the bad thing upon himself. For just as one ought not to hold responsible the person who has a fever because he has a fever (for he has a fever involuntarily), while one ought to hold responsible the person who does not abstain from things which are disadvantageous (for it lay in his power to abstain from

disadvantageous things), so one ought not to hold responsible the person who is disturbed at the presence of painful things; (157) for it is not through him that the disturbance due to the affliction comes about, but it is bound to come about whether he wishes it or not; but the person who through his own suppositions fashions for himself a mass of objects to be chosen and to be avoided ought to be held responsible; for he stirs up for himself a flood of bad things. And this can be seen in the case of the things called bad themselves. (158) For the person who has no further opinion about the affliction's being bad is possessed by the inevitable movement of the affliction; but the person who in addition invents the idea that the affliction is solely an alien thing, that it is solely a bad thing, doubles with this opinion the trouble which occurs in virtue of its presence. (159) For do we not observe that even in the case of people undergoing surgery, often the actual patient who is being cut endures in manly fashion the torment of the cutting, neither

Turning pale over his fine complexion, nor  
Wiping tears from his cheeks

\*27\* because he is undergoing only the movement associated with the cutting; while the person standing beside him, as soon as he sees a small flow of blood, goes pale, trembles, sweats all over, feels faint, and finally collapses speechless, not because of the pain (for it is not present in him), but because of the opinion about the pain's being a bad thing? (160) Thus the disturbance due to the opinion about something bad as bad is sometimes worse than that which occurs on account of the actual thing said to be bad. Therefore the person who suspends judgement about all matters of opinion enjoys the most complete happiness, (i6i) and during involuntary and non-rational movements is indeed disturbed –

For he is not born from an oak of ancient legend, nor from a rock  
But was of the race of men –

but is in a state of moderate feeling.

(162) Hence one also needs to look down on those who think that he is reduced to inactivity or to inconsistency – (163) to inactivity, because, since the whole of

life is bound up with choices and avoidances, the person who neither chooses nor avoids anything in effect renounces life and stays fixed like some vegetable, (164) and to inconsistency, because if he comes under the power of a tyrant and is compelled to do some unspeakable deed, either he will not endure what has been commanded, but will choose a voluntary death, or to avoid torture he will do what has been ordered, and thus no longer 'Will be empty of avoidance and choice', to quote Timon, but will choose one thing and shrink from the other, which is characteristic of those who have apprehended with confidence that there is something to be avoided and to be chosen. (165) In saying this, of course, they do not understand that the sceptic does not live in accordance with philosophical reasoning (for as far as this is concerned he is inactive), but that in accordance with non-philosophical practice he is able to choose some things and avoid others. (166) And if compelled by a tyrant to perform some forbidden act, he will choose one thing, perhaps, and avoid the other by the preconception which accords with his ancestral laws and customs; and in fact he will bear the harsh situation more easily compared with the dogmatist, because he does not, like the latter, have any further opinion over and above these conditions. (167) But these topics have been spoken of more precisely in the lectures on the sceptical end, and it is not necessary 'Once again to relate things clearly said'. Hence, having expounded on good and bad things, whose difficulties stretch over almost the entire subject of ethics, let us go on to consider next whether there is any skill relating to life. \*28\*

## VI. Whether there is any Skill Relating to Life

(168) We have shown well enough that it is possible for people who adopt suspension of judgement about everything to live acceptably; but there is nothing to prevent us from also scrutinizing in a parallel way the stance of the dogmatists, even though it has been scrutinized in part already. For they promise to impart a certain skill relating to life, (169) and for this reason Epicurus said that philosophy is an activity which procures the happy life by arguments and debates, (170) while the Stoics say straight out that practical wisdom, which is the science of things which are good and bad and neither, is a skill relating to life, and that those who have gained this are the only ones who are beautiful, the only ones who are rich, the only ones who are sages. For the person who possesses things of great value is

rich, but virtue is of great value, and the sage alone possesses this; therefore the sage alone is rich. And the person who is worthy of love is beautiful, but only the sage is worthy of love; therefore only the sage is beautiful. (171) Well, such promises snare the young with vain hopes, but they are in no way true. Hence Timon too at one point makes fun of those who promise to deliver these things, saying 'Ravagers with many wild voices, givers of hope', (172) and at another point he introduces the people who pay attention to them, regretting the pointless hardships they experienced, in these words:

Someone said lamenting, as mortals do lament,  
'Alas, what am I to suffer? What wisdom is to be born in me now?  
As to my mind I am a beggar, there is not a grain of sense in me.  
In vain I expect to escape sheer destruction.  
Three and four times blessed, though, are those, who have nothing  
And who have not eaten up at leisure what they grew to ripeness.  
Now I am fated to be overcome by wretched strife  
And poverty and whatever else chases mortal drones.'

(173) And that these things are so, we can learn if we pay attention to the following.

The skill which is deemed to relate to life, and in virtue of which they suppose that one is happy, is not one skill but many discordant ones, such as the one according to Epicurus, and the one according to the Stoics, and one belonging to the Peripatetics. Either, then, one is to follow all of them equally or just one or none. (174) And to follow them all is not feasible because of the conflict among them; for what this one commands as a thing to be chosen, this other one forbids as a thing to be \*29\* avoided, and it is not possible to pursue and avoid the same thing simultaneously. (175) But if one is to follow one, either it should be any one whatsoever; which is impossible. For it is equally a consequence that one is willing to follow all of them; for if one is to give one's attention to this one, why to this one rather than to that one, and vice versa? It remains, therefore, to say that one must follow the one which has been preferred. (176) Either, then, we will follow that which has been preferred by another skill, or that which has been preferred by itself. And if it is that which has been preferred by itself, it will be

untrustworthy – or we will have to regard them all as trustworthy; for if this one is trustworthy in so far as it has been judged by itself, the rest will also become trustworthy; for each of them has been judged by itself. (177) But if it has been judged by another skill, it must again, even in this case, be distrusted; for just as it, in so far as it disagrees with the others, was in need of a judgement, so also the skill which judges it, in so far as it disagrees with the remaining methods, will need one judging it, and for this very reason will not be a trustworthy criterion of the first one. If, therefore, it is not possible to follow either all the skills relating to life or one, it remains that one follow none.

(178) And besides:, as I said before, since there are many skills relating to life, the person who relies on one of these must of necessity be unhappy, not only because of the reasons mentioned before but also because of the one which will be stated as the argument moves forward. For every person is in the grip of a certain passion; either he is a lover of wealth or a lover of pleasure or a lover of glory; and being of such a character he cannot be calmed down by any of the dogmatists' methods, (179) but the lover of wealth or the lover of glory has his desire kindled all the more by the Peripatetic philosophy, according to which wealth and glory are among the goods, while the lover of pleasure is further inflamed by Epicurus' method (for in his way of thinking pleasure is represented as the completion of happiness), and the lover of glory is also thrown headlong into this very passion by the Stoic arguments, according to which virtue is the only thing that is good, and that which derives from virtue. (180) So every one of what the dogmatic philosophers call a science relating to life is a fortification of the bad things which afflict humanity, not a cure for them.

But even if we concede that there is one skill relating to life, and this one is agreed upon – for example, the Stoic one – not even in this case will we accept it, because of the many and varied disasters which are brought with it. (181) For if the skill relating to life, being practical \*30\* wisdom, is a virtue, and only the sage has virtue, the Stoics, not being sages, will not have practical wisdom nor any skill relating to life, and not having this, neither will they teach it to others. And if in fact, according to them, no skill can be put together, neither will the one relating to life be put together; but the first point is indeed true, therefore the second is true. (182) For a skill is a system made up of apprehensions, and an apprehension is an assent to an apprehensive impression. But there is no

apprehensive impression on account of the fact that neither is every impression apprehensive (for they are in conflict), nor is any one of them, because of the impossibility of discriminating among them. But if there is not an apprehensive impression, neither will there be any assent to it, and thus neither will there be an apprehension. But if there is not an apprehension, neither will there be a system made up of apprehensions – that is, a skill. From which it follows that neither is there any skill relating to life.

(183) In addition to this, the apprehensive impression is judged, according to the Stoics, to be apprehensive by the fact that it comes from an existing thing and corresponds with the existing thing itself in the manner of a stamp and a seal; and the existing thing is proved to be existing from the fact that it sets in motion an apprehensive impression. But if, in order that the apprehensive impression may be judged, the existing thing needs to be recognized, and in order that this may be apprehended, the apprehensive impression needs to be confirmed, and each one is untrustworthy on account of the other, then since the apprehensive impression is unknown, skill too is destroyed, since it is a system of apprehensions.

(184) And if the science relating to life – that is, practical wisdom – is capable of contemplating things which are good and bad and neither, either it turns out to be other than the goods of which it is said to be the science, or it is itself the good, as indeed some of them say in defining it: 'Good is virtue or what shares in virtue.'

(185) And if it is other than the goods of which it is said to be the science, it will not be a science at all; for every science is the knowledge of certain existing things, but we earlier showed good and bad things to be non-existent, so that neither will there be any science of good and bad things. (186) But if it is itself a good thing and is deemed to be a science of good things, it will be a science of itself; which is again absurd. For the things of which there is a science are conceived prior to the science. For example, medicine is said to be the science of things which are healthy and unhealthy and neither; but the things which are healthy and unhealthy exist before \*31\* medicine and precede it. And again, music is the science of things which are in tune and out of tune, rhythmic and unrhythmic; but music does not exist prior to these. (187) And they themselves said that dialectic is the science of things which are true and false and neither; accordingly, the things which are true and false and neither exist before dialectic. If, then, practical wisdom is the science of itself, it ought to exist before itself; but

nothing can exist before itself; therefore, neither in this way can it be said that there is any science relating to life.

(188) Moreover, every existing skill and science is apprehended from the skilful and scientific actions which it gives rise to – medicine, for example, from medical procedures, lyre-playing from the activities of the lyre-player, and also painting and sculpture and all similar skills. But the skill which is deemed to be occupied with life has no action resulting from it, as we will establish; therefore there is not any skill relating to life. (189) For example, since many things are said by the Stoics about the guidance of children and about honouring one's parents and also piety towards the departed, we will select a few cases from each category for the sake of example and put them forward with a view to constructing our argument.

(190) Well then, about the guidance of children, Zeno, the founder of the school, covers some such points as these in his Discourses: 'Have intercourse with one's boy-friend no more and no less than with one who is not one's boy-friend, nor with females than with males; for it is not different things, but the same things, that suit and are suited to boy-friend and non-boy-friend, and to females and males.' And again: 'Have you had intercourse with your beloved? I have not. Did you not desire to have intercourse with him? Yes indeed. But though desiring to get him for yourself, were you afraid to ask him? God, no! But you did ask him? Yes indeed. But he didn't submit to you? No, he didn't.' (191) And about honouring one's parents, one could cite their blather about sex with one's mother. At any rate Zeno, having put down the things which are recorded about Jocasta and Oedipus, says that it was not an awful thing for him to rub his mother. 'If he had helped her by rubbing her body with his hands when she was sick, there would have been nothing shameful; if, then, he stopped her suffering and cheered her up by rubbing her with another part, and creating children that were noble on their mother's side, what was shameful in that?' (192) And Chrysippus in his *Republic* says this, word for word: 'It seems good to me to organize these matters, too – as is the custom even now among many peoples, to no bad effect – so that the mother has children with the son and the \*32\* father with the daughter and the brother with the sister born of the same mother.' And an example of their piety towards the departed would be their recommendations about cannibalism; for they think it right to eat not only the dead, but also their own flesh, if some part of their

body should ever happen to be cut off. (193) And the following is said by Chrysippus in his *On Justice*: 'And if some part of our limbs is cut off which is useful for food, do not bury it or otherwise dispose of it, but consume it, so that from our own parts another part may come into being.' (194) And in his *On What Is Proper*, in discussing the burial of one's parents, he says explicitly:

When one's parents have passed away, one should employ the simplest mode of burial, consistently with the body's being nothing to us, like nails or hair, and with our not needing to give it any such care and attention. Hence, too, if their flesh is useful as food, people will use it, like their own parts as well – for example, when a foot is cut off, it is incumbent on one to use it, and similar things; but if they are of no use, people will either bury them and place the monument upon them, or cremate them and scatter the ashes, or dispose of them in a more distant spot and pay no attention to them, like nails or hair.

(195) Thus say the Stoics; but we should bring against them the next point in our argument. Either they recommend doing these things on the assumption that young people are going to put them into practice, or that they will not put them into practice. And it is certainly not on the assumption that they will put them into practice; for the laws forbid them, unless one has to live with the Laestrygonians and Cyclopes, among whom it is lawful 'To eat human flesh and then to drink pure milk'. (196) But if it is on the assumption that they will not put them into practice, the skill relating to life becomes redundant, since the practice of it is impossible. For just as painting is useless in a population of blind people (for the skill is for people who have sight), and in the same way as lyre-playing has no rewards in a city of deaf people (for it gives delight to those who have hearing), so too the skill relating to life is worth nothing to people who cannot use it. (197) Besides, every skill, whether it is theoretical, like geometry and astronomy or practical, like fighting with heavy arms, or productive like painting and sculpture, has an action peculiar to itself by which it differs from other dispositions; but there is no action peculiar to practical wisdom, as I will establish; therefore practical wisdom is not a skill relating to life. (198) For just as the action which is common to the musical and the unmusical person is not musical, and that which is common to the grammatical and ungrammatical person is not grammatical, so



quite \*33\* generally the action which is common to the skilled and unskilled person is not skilled. Hence, too, that which is common to the wise and the foolish person could not be an action peculiar to practical wisdom. (199) But every action which seems to be brought about by the wise person is found to be an action common also to the person who is not wise; for example, if we regard honouring parents as an action of the wise person, or returning money deposited with us to those who entrusted it, or any other such thing, we will also find those who are not excellent doing any one of these things. So that there is no action peculiar to the sage by which he will differ from those who are not sages. And if this is so, neither will practical wisdom be a skill relating to life, since no skilful action is peculiar to it.

(200) But in meeting this point, they say that while all the actions are common to all people, they are nevertheless distinguished by coming about from a skilful disposition or an unskilful one. For caring for one's parents and otherwise honouring one's parents is not the action of the excellent person; characteristic of the excellent person is doing so from practical wisdom. (201) And just as giving health is common to both the doctor and the ordinary person, but giving health in a medical fashion is peculiar to the skilled person, so too, honouring one's parents is common to both the excellent and the non-excellent person, but honouring one's parents from practical wisdom is peculiar to the sage – so that he does have a skill relating to life, the distinctive action of which is the performance from the best disposition of each of the things performed. (202) But those who employ this counter-argument seem to be wilfully deaf, and to be saying anything at all rather than something relevant to the question under examination. For while we were straightforwardly showing that there is no action peculiar to the wise person by which he differs from those who are not wise, but that everything which is brought about by him is also brought about by those who are not excellent, they did not have the power to refute this; but they say that the action common to both of them comes about sometimes from a wise disposition, sometimes from an inferior one – which is beside the point. (203) This is not a demonstration that there is not an action common to both the wise and those who are not such, but it is in need of a demonstration, since someone could ask how we are to distinguish when these things come about from the wise disposition and when they do not; for the common actions themselves do not reveal this, in so far as they are common.

(204) Hence even the example introduced from medicine is found rather to count against them. For when they say that giving health, being common to both the doctor and the non-doctor, is peculiar to the skilled person \*34\* when it is accomplished in a medical fashion, then either they know the difference in the way it is done by the doctor compared with the ordinary person – for example, that it is done quickly and painlessly and in an orderly manner and with quality – or they do not know this, but suppose that all these things are also common to ordinary people. (205) And if they know it, they have admitted right away that there is some action apparent which is peculiar to the doctor, and that it follows that they should move on from this and teach that there is also some action peculiar to the sage, by which he differs from the one who is not a sage. But if they do not know it, but will say that everything which is brought about by the doctor is also brought about by the ordinary person, they will be depriving the doctor of the action peculiar to him, and – since, as far as the appearance is concerned, there is no difference in the actions which are brought about – they will not be distinguishing between the skilled and the unskilled person, nor between that which is effected by a skilled disposition and by an unskilled one, on account of the fact that the individual non-apparent disposition cannot be identified on its own, since it is non-apparent. (206) Therefore it is no help to them to agree that the actions brought about by the sage and by the non-sage are common to both, but that they differ in coming about on one occasion from a wise disposition, on another occasion from a foolish one.

But there are others who think that these actions are distinguished by consistency and order. (207) For just as, in the case of the intermediate skills, doing a certain thing in an orderly manner and being consistent in his results is peculiar to the skilled person (for the ordinary person might also sometimes perform the skilled action, but rarely and not all the time, nor uniformly and in the same way), so too they say that the action of the wise person is being consistent in his right deeds, while that of the fool is the opposite. (208) But these people, too, are plainly not oriented in accordance with the nature of things, with respect to the investigation at hand. For that there is some order of life which has been articulated in a determinate manner by way of skilled reasoning seems rather like a pious wish. For everyone, in preparing himself for the different and varied circumstances which arise, is always unable to maintain the same order, and

especially the person of good sense, who is conscious of the instability of fortune and the insecurity of circumstances. (209) Besides, if the wise person had a single and determinate order of life, he would have been plainly apprehended even from this by those who are not wise; but he is *not* apprehended by these people; therefore the wise person is not to be grasped from the order of his actions. Hence if every skill is apparent from the actions peculiar to it, but there is no action peculiar to \*35\* practical wisdom from which it is apparent, practical wisdom cannot be any skill relating to life.

(210) Furthermore, if practical wisdom is a skill relating to life, it would not have benefited anyone else more than the sage who possesses it, affording him self-control in his impulses towards the good and in his repulsions from the bad. But practical wisdom does not benefit the sage, as we will establish; therefore it is not any skill relating to life. (211) For the sage, who is called self-controlled, is called self-controlled either in so far as he engages in no impulse towards the bad or repulsion from the good, or in so far as he has inferior impulses, but masters them by reason. But he could not be said to be self-controlled on account of his not engaging in inferior judgements; for he will not control what he does not have. (212) And just as no one would call the eunuch self-controlled about sexual intercourse, or the person with a bad stomach self-controlled about the enjoyment of food (for no desire for these things arises in them at all, to make them struggle, with self-control, against the desire), in the same way the sage should not be described as self-controlled, because that over which he is to be self-controlled does not arise in him. (213) And if they will claim that he is self-controlled in so far as he does engage in inferior judgements but rises above them by reason, they will be conceding, first, that practical wisdom was of no benefit to him right when he was in a state of disturbance and in need of help, and then, that he is found to be even more unhappy than inferior people. (214) For in that he has an impulse towards something, he is certainly disturbed, and in that he masters it by reason, he holds on to the bad thing within himself, and for this reason is more disturbed than the inferior person who no longer suffers this (for whereas he is disturbed, in that he has an impulse, he retains his disturbance in a weakened form, in that he gets the things which are desired). (215) Therefore the sage is not self-controlled as far as his practical wisdom is concerned; or if he is, he is more unhappy than all human beings. But if each skill benefits above all the person who possesses it, and

it has been shown that what is deemed to be the skill relating to life does not even benefit its possessor, it must be affirmed that there is not any skill relating to life.

## VII. Whether the Skill Relating to Life is Teachable

(216) It has in effect been shown, then, along with there not being any skill relating to life, that it is not teachable either; for of things which do not exist no learning takes place. Nevertheless, for good measure, let us \*36\* allow its existence, and teach that it is unteachable. (217) Weil then, the arguments about learning, among the philosophers, are many and varied; but we will select and present the most important points, of which some are arguments directed more generally on the part of the sceptics towards the conclusion that learning is nothing, while others speak more specifically about practical wisdom itself. But first in order let us look at the more general attacks.

(218) In every case of learning, then, the subject being taught and the teacher and the learner and the means of learning have to be agreed upon; but none of these things is agreed upon, as we will show; therefore there is not any learning. And since we first mentioned the subject being taught, we should first raise difficulties about it.

(219) If in fact any subject is taught, either what exists is taught or what does not exist. But neither is what exists taught, as we will show, nor what does not exist, as we will explain; therefore no subject is taught. Now what does not exist is not taught; for it has no attribute, and hence not that of being taught. (220) And besides, if what does not exist is taught, what does not exist will be true; for learning is of things which are true. But if what does not exist is true, it will immediately also be real; at any rate the Stoics say that 'True is what is real and is in opposition to something'. But it is absurd that what does not exist should be real; therefore what does not exist is not taught. And surely, what is taught is taught by setting in motion an impression, but what does not exist cannot set in motion an impression, therefore what does not exist is not teachable. (221) In addition to this, if what does not exist is taught, nothing true is taught; for the true belongs among the things which exist and are real. But if nothing true is taught, everything which is taught is false. But it is indeed absurd that everything which is taught should be false; therefore what does not exist is not taught. Since in fact,

if what does not exist is taught, it is taught either in virtue of being non-existent or in virtue of something else. Well, it is not taught in virtue of being non-existent; for if what is taught is taught in virtue of being non-existent, nothing which exists will be taught – which is absurd. Nor, however, is it in virtue of something else; for the 'something else' exists, but the non-existent does not exist. So that what does not exist could not be taught. (222) It is left to us, then, to say that what exists is taught; and this too we will show to be something impossible. For if what exists is taught, it is either in virtue of being existent or in virtue of something else. And if it is taught in virtue of being existent, nothing will be untaught; but if none of the things which exist is untaught, neither will \*37\* there be anything taught; for it is necessary that there be something untaught, in order that from this learning may come about. So that what exists could not be taught in virtue of being existent. (223) Nor, however, in virtue of some other attribute of it which is non-existent, but every attribute of it is existent. So that if what exists is not taught in virtue of being existent, neither will it be taught in virtue of anything else; for that other attribute of it, whatever it is, is existent. If, then, neither what exists is taught nor what does not exist, and there is nothing beyond these, none of the things which exist is taught.

(224) Besides, since of the 'somethings' some are bodies, and others are incorporeal, if anything is taught, either body is taught or the incorporeal; but neither is body taught nor the incorporeal; therefore nothing is taught. Now body is not taught, especially according to the Stoics; for the things which are taught are 'sayables', and 'sayables' are not body. (225) Besides, if body neither is sensible nor is intelligible, body is not taught. For that which is taught must be either sensible or intelligible, and if it is neither, it is not taught. And that body is neither sensible nor intelligible we have established in *Against the Physicists*. (226) For whether body is, as Epicurus says, a certain aggregation of size and shape and resistance, or whether it is that which has the three dimensions together with resistance, since it is not characteristic of non-rational sensation, but of a certain rational capacity, to grasp everything which is grasped by way of a conjunction of several things, body will not be among sensible things. (227) And even if it were sensible, it will again be untaught; for of sensible things nothing is taught – for example, no one learns to see white, nor to taste sweetness, nor to perceive the fragrance from something, or be chilled or heated by something, but

the grasp of all these things is untaught. Therefore neither is body sensible, nor, even if it were sensible, will it be teachable in virtue of this. (228) Nor, however, as an intelligible thing can it be taught. For if neither length, taken separately, is body, nor breadth nor depth, but the compound of all these, then since they are all incorporeal, we will also have to conceive of the aggregation of them as incorporeal and not body; and for this reason body must also be unteachable. (229) Further, of bodies some are sensible, others intelligible. So if body is taught, either the sensible is taught or the intelligible. But neither is the sensible taught, because it appears and is evident by itself to everyone, nor is the intelligible, because of its non-evidentness and the as yet unresolved disagreement about it, some saying that it is indivisible, others that it is divisible, and some saying that it is without parts and smallest, others that it is composed of parts \*38\* and can be divided to infinity. Therefore body is not teachable. (230) But yet neither is the incorporeal. For it is either some Platonic Form or the Stoics' 'sayable' or void or place or time or some other such thing. But whichever of these it is, its subsistence is still under investigation and is the subject of unresolved disagreement; (231) but to say that things which are still disputed are taught, as if they were undisputed, is completely absurd. But if some of the things which exist are bodies and others are incorporeal, and it has been shown that none of these is taught, then what is taught is nothing.

(232) Besides, if anything is taught, it is either true or false. And it is not false, as is immediately apparent; and if it is true it is intractable, as we showed in *On the Criterion*, and about intractable things there is no learning; therefore what is taught does not exist. (233) In addition to this, what is taught is either skilled or unskilled. But it is not unskilled, since then it will not need learning. But if it is skilled, either it is immediately apparent, or it is non-evident. And if it is immediately apparent, it is both unskilled and untaught; but if it is non-evident, it is not teachable precisely because of its being non-evident.

(234) From these points, then, the subject being taught is established as intractable; and together with it are eliminated both the teacher, because of having nothing to teach, and the learner, because of having nothing to learn. None the less, it will be possible to raise similar difficulties in their case as well. (235) For if there is any teacher and there is any learner, either the skilled person will teach the skilled person, or the unskilled the unskilled, or alternatively the skilled person

will teach the unskilled, or the unskilled the skilled. But neither can the unskilled teach the unskilled – just as the blind cannot lead the blind – nor the skilled the skilled; for he has nothing at all to teach him. Nor, however, can the unskilled teach the skilled, just as the blind cannot ever lead the sighted; for the ordinary person is defective as regards the principles of the skill, and for this reason is not suited for teaching. (236) It is left to us to say, then, that the skilled person teaches the ordinary person, which again is something not feasible; for we have subjected the skilled person to difficulties along with the principles of the skill, (237) and in addition, the unskilled person, if he is taught and becomes a skilled person, becomes a skilled person either when he is unskilled or when he is a skilled person; but neither can he become a skilled person when he is unskilled, nor when he is a skilled person is he still *becoming* a skilled person, but he *is* one. (238) And with reason; for the unskilled person is like the person who is blind or deaf from birth, and in the same way as neither \*39\* the person blind from birth comes to a conception of colours, nor does the person deaf from birth come to a conception of sounds, so too the unskilled person, in so far as he is unskilled, being defective as regards the grasp of skilled principles, cannot have knowledge of these things. But the skilled person is no longer being taught, but has been taught.

(239) Furthermore, just as these things are intractable, so too the means of learning is intractable. For it comes about either by plain experience or by discourse; but it comes about neither by plain experience nor by discourse, as we will establish, so that neither is the means of learning easy to deal with. (240) Well then, learning does not come about by plain experience, since plain experience is of things which are revealed. But what is capable of being revealed is apparent; and the apparent, in so far as it is apparent, can be grasped by everyone in common, but what can be grasped by everyone in common is unteachable. Therefore what is capable of being shown by plain experience is not teachable. (241) Nor, however, is anything taught by discourse. For either the discourse signifies something, or it does not signify a single thing. But if it does not signify a single thing, it will not be a teacher of anything. But if it does signify something, it signifies either by nature or by convention. And it does not signify by nature, because it is not the case that everyone understands everyone – Greeks understanding barbarians and barbarians Greeks. (242) But if it signifies by

convention, it is clear that those who have previously apprehended the things with which the words are correlated will grasp these things not through being taught by them what they did not know, but through recalling and renewing in their minds those things which they did know; while those who are in need of learning the things which are unknown, and who do not know the things with which the words are correlated, will not have a grasp of anything. (243) Hence if neither the subject being taught exists, nor the teacher nor the learner nor the means of learning, learning is nothing.

This, then, is how the sceptics direct their argument more generally towards the conclusion that learning does not exist; but it will also be possible to transfer the difficulties to the so-called skill relating to life. (244) For either the wise person will teach this to the wise person, or the fool to the fool, or the fool to the wise person, or the wise person to the fool. But neither could the wise person be said to teach this to the wise person (for both of them are perfect with respect to virtue and neither of them needs learning), nor the fool to the fool (for both have need of learning and neither of them is wise, so that he can teach the other). \*40\* (245) Nor, however, will the fool teach the wise person; for neither is the blind person capable of indicating colours to the sighted person. It remains, then, that the wise person is capable of teaching the fool; which is itself, too, something intractable. (246) For if practical wisdom is a science of things which are good and bad and neither, then the fool, who does not have any practical wisdom, but has ignorance about all these things, will only hear what is said when the wise person is teaching the things which are good and bad and neither, and will not know the things themselves. For if he should grasp them while in a state of folly, folly will be capable of knowing the things which are good and bad. and neither. But folly is not, according to them, capable of perceiving these things; therefore the fool will not grasp the things which are said or done by the wise person in accordance with the rationale of practical wisdom. (247) And in the same way as the person blind from birth, as long as he is blind, does not have a conception of colours, and the person deaf from birth, as long as he is deaf, does not grasp sounds, so too the fool, in so far as he is a fool, does not grasp things which are wisely said and done. Neither, then, can the wise person instruct the fool in the skill relating to life.



(248) Furthermore, if the wise person teaches the fool, practical wisdom ought to be capable of perceiving folly, just as skill is capable of perceiving lack of skill; but practical wisdom is not capable of perceiving folly; therefore the wise person is not capable of teaching the fool. For the person who has become wise as a result of some training and practice (for no one is this way by nature) either has folly underlying in him, and acquired practical wisdom in addition, or became wise by way of the loss of the former and the acquisition of the latter. (249) And if folly is underlying in him and he acquired practical wisdom in addition, the same person will be simultaneously wise and foolish; which is impossible. But if he acquired the one by the loss of the other, he will not be able to gain knowledge of the disposition which was there before, but which is now not present, by means of the disposition which came into being later. (250) And reasonably so; at any rate, the apprehension of every object, sensible or intelligible, comes about either empirically by way of plain experience or by way of analogical transition from the things which have appeared empirically; and this transition is either by resemblance, as when Socrates, who is not present, is identified from the image of Socrates, (251) or by composition, as when we conceive the non-existent centaur by way of combination from a human being and a horse, or by way of analogy, as when by enlargement from the normal human being \*41\* the Cyclops is grasped, who is not like 'A bread-eating man, but a wooded mountain peak', and by diminution the pygmy. (252) Hence, if folly is grasped by practical wisdom – and the fool by the wise person as well – it will be perceived either by way of experience or by way of transition from experience. But it is perceived neither by way of experience – for no one knows folly by way of experience, in the same way as white and black and sweet and bitter – nor by way of transition from experience – for none of the things which exist is like folly. But if the wise person makes the transition from this, it is either by resemblance or by composition or by analogy, so that practical wisdom will never grasp folly. (253) Yes, but perhaps someone will say that the wise person can understand the folly belonging to someone else by the practical wisdom in himself – which is silly. For folly is a disposition which is productive of certain actions. (254) If, therefore, the wise person perceives and apprehends it in another, either he will apprehend the disposition itself, on its own, or he will give attention to its actions and from them will also recognize the disposition itself, (255) just as one recognizes the medical

disposition from medical procedures, and that of the painter from painterly procedures. But neither can be grasp the disposition itself, on its own – for it is non-apparent and not to be perceived, and it is not possible to inspect it through the body's form – nor can he grasp it from the actions which are produced by it – for all the apparent actions, as we showed earlier, are common to practical wisdom and folly. (256) But if, in order that the wise person may teach the fool the skill relating to life, he has to be capable of perceiving folly, just as the skilled person is capable of perceiving lack of skill, and it has been shown that folly cannot be grasped by him, the wise person must not be able to teach the fool the skill relating to life.

(257) Having raised difficulties, then, about the most essential of the issues investigated in the area of ethics, at this point we round off our entire exposition of the sceptical method.

(from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the ethicists (Adversus Mathematicos XI)*, translation, commentary and introduction by Richard Bett, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997).