

HOW TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND

An Ancient Guide to Thinking Like a Skeptic



Fig. 1: Sextus Empiricus, he saw both sides of the coin

Sextus Empiricus

Selected, translated, and introduced by Richard Bett

HOW TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND

ANCIENT WISDOM FOR MODERN READERS



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HOW TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND



An Ancient Guide to Thinking Like a Skeptic

Sextus Empiricus

*Selected, translated, and introduced
by Richard Bett*

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INTRODUCTION

Sextus Empiricus and His Works

A skeptical person, as the term is normally used today, is someone who is inclined to be doubtful—who doesn't accept what others tell them without a good deal of persuading. The ancient Greek skeptic with whom we will be concerned here, Sextus Empiricus, certainly has something in common with this person, but he is quite a bit more single-minded about it. He has a series of ready-made techniques for making sure that he (or whoever these techniques are applied on) *never* accepts *anything*—or at least, anything put forward by someone who claims to understand how the world works. Instead, he suspends judgment about all matters

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of that kind. And the payoff for this suspension of judgment, he says, is that you are much calmer and less troubled than other people; skepticism actually has a beneficial effect on your life. I will explain all this in more detail shortly. I will also suggest some things we might be able to learn from this outlook, as well as a few difficulties it may cause. But first, a word about who Sextus was and what he wrote.

About Sextus as an individual, we know almost nothing. We know that he was a doctor, and a member of one of the major schools of medical thought at the time, the Empirical school. He lived during the period of the Roman Empire, and presumably somewhere within its boundaries. The best guesses place him as active around 200 CE, or maybe a little later, but this is far from certain. We don't know where he was from or where he lived. He wrote in Greek, but that really doesn't tell us much. In the Roman imperial period Greek was widely

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understood, especially among the educated classes, and widely used for intellectual purposes; for example, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, with whom Sextus was perhaps more or less contemporary, wrote his reflections to himself (usually called the *Meditations*) in Greek.

Sextus' claim to fame rests on his extensive surviving writings. He identifies himself as a member of the Pyrrhonist tradition of skepticism, and his are the only complete surviving works from that tradition. Pyrrhonism traces its origins to the obscure figure (I mean, obscure to *us*) of Pyrrho of Elis (c.360–270 BCE), who we are told accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaigns and met some “naked wise men” in India who supposedly inspired him. It is a fascinating and controversial question whether Pyrrho—and thereby, indirectly, the Pyrrhonist tradition—was actually influenced by some form of early Buddhism. But

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quite apart from the question of historical influence, many readers of Sextus do sense a certain affinity with aspects of Buddhism. I will touch on this again when we have seen some of the details.

Pyrrho clearly attracted some attention in his lifetime, but he did not found a lasting philosophical movement. It was a couple of centuries later that another obscure figure, Aenesidemus of Cnossos, started a skeptical movement that appealed to Pyrrho as a sort of forefather. And it is this movement to which Sextus later belonged, probably near its end. The history of Pyrrhonism is difficult to reconstruct in detail, because our evidence is pretty sketchy; this is a common problem in attempting to understand ancient cultures—not that it stops scholars trying. But we need not worry about these complications here. What we do have are a lot of the writings of Sextus Empiricus, and they are what we'll focus on.

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We have three of Sextus' works, two of them complete and a third that is almost certainly incomplete. The most accessible, and the one that will occupy most of this volume, is *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. *Outlines* (I'll often refer to it in this abbreviated form) is in three books—where a “book” was originally a segment of a long work that would conveniently fit on a roll of papyrus. (Plato's *Republic*, for example, is in ten books; the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are each in twenty-four.) The first book is a general introduction to Sextus' brand of skepticism; the second and third then examine the theories of other philosophers (more about them below) in the three main areas of philosophy recognized in later antiquity—logic, physics, and ethics; logic occupies book II, physics and ethics, book III. In addition to *Outlines*, we have two books discussing logic, two others discussing physics, and one other discussing ethics—all these parts of a single work, much longer than *Outlines*, which

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Sextus calls *Skeptical Treatises*, and which almost certainly also included (before the books on logic) a general discussion of skepticism, now lost, that would have covered similar ground to the first book of *Outlines*. Sextus frequently reminds us in *Outlines* that he is, in fact, speaking in an “outline” fashion; the surviving books of *Skeptical Treatises* show us how he liked to proceed when not constrained by space. The effect can be somewhat overwhelming if you are not a specialist, or even sometimes if you are. (Trust me—I have translated all of them!) In any case, what we have is, in effect, two editions of the same work, an abbreviated version and a full-length version; the parallels between the two, and also the differences, are often quite interesting.

In addition to these, we have *Against Those in the Disciplines*, which survives complete. It examines the claims of theorists in six different fields: grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic,

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astrology, and music. Sextus therefore does not limit his attention to philosophical topics (although there are a few overlaps in material between this work and the other two); anyone who claims expert knowledge on any subject is fair game, as far as he is concerned.

This volume will follow the basic plan of *Outlines*. I will give you a selection of central passages from each of the three books, with a rather greater emphasis on the first, general book than on the second and third books. And I will add very brief pointers to indicate how the pieces connect and what happens in the parts I have not included. I will supplement all this with a few very short excerpts from the other works of Sextus that have something interesting to add to the treatment of a topic in *Outlines*. I have chosen passages that, as much as possible, can be understood without background knowledge about ancient Greek philosophy or the ancient Greco-Roman world.

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But occasionally, when a little extra information will help to explain what Sextus is talking about, I will provide this in a note.

Sextus' Brand of Skepticism

So, what does skepticism amount to, in Sextus' hands? As I said, it is a technique, or a set of techniques, for producing suspension of judgment. The best place to start in explaining this is perhaps the first sentence of the section at the beginning of *Outlines* called "What skepticism is" (I.8):¹ "The skeptical ability is one that produces oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatsoever, from which, because of the equal strength in the opposing objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment, and after that to tranquility."

There are three stages here. The first thing you do is to "produce oppositions" on some topic. To take an example Sextus actually dis-

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cusses, the topic might be whether there are gods. Many different views exist on whether there are gods and what they are like. There are theoretical arguments on both sides, and there are also the impressions of ordinary people; for example, some people claim to have had direct experience of the divine, while others may hold that our everyday experience gives us no reason to believe in any divine power. The skeptic collects all these impressions and arguments (“things that appear and things that are thought”) and balances them against one another; since they disagree with one another in all sorts of ways, the result is a whole series of “oppositions.” Now, the skeptic who is really skillful does this in such a way that these opposing arguments and impressions each have “equal strength”; that is, the points on either side strike one as equally plausible—neither side seems to have any advantage over the other. And if that is the situation, there seems to be no

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alternative but to suspend judgment on the subject—which is the second stage; if the points on either side really are equally balanced in terms of their level of persuasiveness, you won't have any more inclination to pick one side than the other, and so you pick neither, which is suspension of judgment. And this in turn, he says, produces tranquility, which is the final stage.

Let's leave aside the point about tranquility for the moment. Skepticism is described as an “ability”: an ability that consists in lining up the ideas on either side (or on all sides) of a question in such a way that the case for any one answer is just as forceful as the case for any other, which drives one to suspend judgment. I gave one example where this might be applied: the question whether there are gods. But what if you did this about everything? Wouldn't that leave you paralyzed and unable to act? Surely any normal life requires you to make decisions among alternatives.

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Sextus is well aware of this issue. As he makes clear elsewhere in the opening pages of *Outlines*, what he and his fellow skeptics suspend judgment about—and invite all of us to try suspending judgment about—is the way things really are. In his daily activities, he is happy to go along with how things appear, and this is all you need to lead a normal life. What he does not do—and what he accuses other philosophers and theorists of doing—is claim to have figured out the real nature of things. An example he gives is the taste of honey (I.20). Honey tastes sweet, and that will obviously affect what we do with it. But the sweet taste does not necessarily tell us anything about the underlying structure of honey—what honey is really like in itself. Maybe the sweetness is actually part of honey’s real nature (in the ancient world, this was a possible point of view), or maybe it’s not—maybe the fact that it tastes sweet is really as much a fact about us as a fact about honey itself (and

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there were ancient views along those lines as well). This is the kind of thing the skeptic will suspend judgment about, after assembling competing but equally persuasive theories on the subject.

It is the people who do claim to have figured out the real nature of things, over and above just the way they appear to us—whether in physics, or in ethics, or in any other subject—that Sextus calls “dogmatists.” A dogmatist is someone who has definite views about how things are. The Greek word *dogma* (still reflected to some extent in the word “dogma” in modern English) refers to definite views of this kind, and I have translated it by “doctrine.” Sextus also sometimes describes a statement or a claim as “dogmatic,” and that too means “put forward as a definite view about how things are.” The non-skeptical philosophers Sextus discusses all qualify as dogmatists in this sense. But so does anyone else who puts forward theories that pur-

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port to go beyond the way things strike us in ordinary experience and to penetrate to the real nature of things. The divide between philosophy and science was by no means as clear in Sextus' time as it is in ours. But a great many modern scientists, particularly the more theoretical kind, would also count as dogmatists in Sextus' usage.

Another word that Sextus often uses in this context is "opinion." An "opinion," in Sextus' usage (which is not unusual in Greek philosophy), is a definite belief that something-or-other is the case—where, again, this goes beyond what is simply apparent in our experience. This is roughly the same as a "doctrine," except that "opinion" covers not only the views of philosophers or other theorists;² at one point Sextus tells us that *ordinary people* hold the "opinion" that some things really are good and others really are bad (I.30). By contrast, Sextus frequently reminds us that, as a skeptic, he is

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speaking “without opinions”; that is, he is simply describing how things strike him, without claiming to lay down the law about the final truth of the matter.

What about tranquility, the supposed practical benefit of this? The Greek word I translate by “tranquility” is *ataraxia*, which signifies a state of not being troubled or bothered. So the idea is that the skeptic is free from trouble or annoyance, and the implication is that if one is *not* a skeptic, one is afflicted by troubles or annoyances of some kind. What is Sextus talking about here?

There seem to be two somewhat different answers to this question, one of them laid out more clearly than the other. The clearer story is this. Among the definite views people have about the world are views about what things are really good and what things are really bad. As I just noted, it is not only philosophers who hold such views, though they are certainly in-

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cluded. Now, if you firmly believe that some things are really good and others really bad, you will be desperate to get, or to keep, the good things, and desperate to avoid the bad things. You are therefore in a permanent state of turmoil and distress, because it matters so much that you have the good things and not the bad things. On the other hand, if you don't have any definite views about what's really good or really bad, but simply follow your inclinations, you will avoid all this frenzy; the stakes, for you, will be much lower, and so you will have tranquility.

This need not be a self-centered or anti-social existence. Your inclinations may very well include a desire to be nice to other people, especially those close to you. And Sextus says that among the "appearances" that guide the skeptic's conduct are the laws and customs of one's society (I.23–4). The key point is that you don't think anything is desperately important (as you

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would if you were convinced that some things were really good and others really bad), and so your life is calm and relatively trouble-free. Sextus acknowledges that being a skeptic won't free you from unpleasant things like hunger or physical pain. But even here, he says, a skeptic comes off more easily; if you are convinced that hunger or pain is really something bad, that gives you an extra thing to worry about beyond just the hunger or pain itself.

This, as I say, is one of the lines of thought Sextus gives us about why suspension of judgment yields tranquility. But he talks about much more than just good and bad. And in his opening description of what skepticism is, which we looked at earlier, he seems to be saying that suspension of judgment on *any* topic—not just good and bad—yields tranquility. Sextus does not spell out so clearly why this should be true, but I think we can see what he intends.

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The idea seems to be that the attempt to discover the truth is an aggravating and frustrating business. You might think that knowledge will give you tranquility, but you never seem to get there. You keep finding obstacles, and you keep finding indications that point in opposite directions. Even if you think you have made a discovery, new evidence could overturn it, and so you can never really afford to be confident that you know the way things are. So dogmatism, and the road to dogmatism, are by no means trouble-free. And yet, Sextus suggests, it can happen that when you are forced into suspension of judgment, given all the conflicting evidence on some question, that can actually give you the tranquility you were hoping for in the first place; you just find yourself not caring as much about getting the answers, and your stress level goes way down. And if this happens enough times, maybe you will give up on the

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search altogether and instead willingly cultivate the skeptic's "ability" to generate suspension of judgment on all the questions researched by the dogmatists—and reap the accompanying benefit of tranquility.

For both these reasons, then, suspension of judgment is supposed to free one from a certain sort of emotional trauma. In the one case it is the trauma associated with being convinced of certain definite views (about what's really good or bad); in the other case it is the trauma associated with *not* having been able to settle on any definite views (in this case, about the real nature of things quite generally), but wishing very strongly to do so. While these are clearly distinct (in a sense, almost opposite) accounts, Sextus doesn't seem to make much effort to disentangle them, which is somewhat surprising. But either way, one can see why suspension of judgment might be believed to have tranquility as an important after-effect. In any case, it is this

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tranquility, and the release from striving that (on either of the two accounts) accompanies it, that today's readers most often tend to find reminiscent of Buddhist ideas.

The general account of skepticism that I have sketched throughout this section appears mostly in book I of *Outlines*, and especially in the opening pages that I have marked out as the first chapter, "Skepticism: The Big Picture."³ The other two books of *Outlines*, and all the surviving books from Sextus' other works, are then designed to do the job of producing suspension of judgment on a great many different topics.

What We Can Take from This

I have tried to explain the central points of Sextus' skepticism in a sympathetic fashion, but without taking any kind of stand for or against it. And while some scholars would probably disagree about a few points in my account, it is

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well within the mainstream of how Sextus is currently understood. But now let's raise the question, how much of this skeptical outlook can still represent a viable way of thinking for us today?

I think there is room for reservations about two of the three stages I identified at the beginning of the last section. First, we can ask, is it realistic to think that if we suspended judgment, we would get tranquility? And the answer, it seems to me, is "It depends." It depends on the circumstances, and it depends on the temperament of the individual. This is true, I think, for both of the explanations Sextus offers. Turning first to the trauma caused by beliefs about things being really good or really bad: we can certainly think of cases where people take things too seriously—where they treat something as desperately important that most of us don't see as all that important and

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would be much calmer if they were not so convinced about how much this thing *really matters*. But there are also surely some people whose firm moral convictions, including a clear-eyed sense that some things really *are* important, keep them on an even keel and therefore much calmer than they would be if they were unsure about these things.

As for the other explanation, centered on the trauma associated with attempting to discover the truth: again, we can imagine a researcher hopelessly frustrated with the way their research is going, whose only route to tranquility would be to give up on the research altogether. But we can also imagine someone utterly immersed in a research project, whose peace of mind comes precisely from the sense that, whether the project succeeds or not, they are doing everything they can to find the answers—and who would be devastated if, for some reason, the research

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was cut off at a point when they were (as they had hoped, only temporarily) suspending judgment between two opposing alternatives.

These examples could be filled out; other ones could be devised. But the point is clear enough. It is certainly possible for suspension of judgment on some question to lead to tranquility. But when Sextus speaks as if the one is a predictable and reliable recipe for the other, this is hard to accept.⁴ And I don't think this point has anything to do with differences between our time and his. While the skeptics' ancient critics (of whom there were plenty) did not, as far as we can tell, focus on this feature of the Pyrrhonist outlook, it seems to me that this criticism would have been just as available to them, given standard assumptions of the time, as it is to us.

Now let's go back to the previous stage. Leaving aside the question of what the benefits of suspending judgment might be, is it realistic

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to think that suspension of judgment can be produced on all questions concerning the real nature of things? Here I think there *is* a difference between Sextus' time and ours. With all due respect to the engineering feats of the Roman Empire, which were considerable, it is fair to say that the level of scientific understanding in Sextus' day, compared with the present, was almost unimaginably primitive. And this made it much easier for questions about how the world works to end up in unresolved dispute. To take just one example that Sextus briefly alludes to (I.147, in chapter 2): is the basic structure of matter atomic, or does it consist of a continuous stuff that is uniform down to the most microscopic level? Both views had their adherents, who used sophisticated arguments in their support; but no one had any knock-down argument that clinched the case. And given the lack of experimental techniques, abstract argument was all they had. In these circumstances,

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it is easy to see how suspension of judgment would be a possible or even a natural outcome.

This kind of question is just not going to arise today. We have a huge body of scientific knowledge that is simply not open to question. Of course, there are also lots of open questions at the frontiers of the sciences. And there are certainly subjects where this kind of settled knowledge does not exist, and where, at least on many central questions, endless and unresolved debate is still the norm; ethics and politics are perhaps among the most obvious examples. So I certainly don't want to suggest that we are beyond the stage where suspension of judgment might seem a reasonable option. My point is just that this is not available on anywhere near as wide a scale as it was in Sextus' time. Even then, one might wonder whether there weren't issues where the case on one side was just obviously much stronger than the case on the other side, so that suspension of judgment would be

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hard to produce without somehow pulling the wool over the audience's (or your own) eyes. But now, the ambition of full-scale suspension of judgment is not remotely an option; we just know too much.

So where does this leave us? Suspension of judgment may make sense on some subjects, but certainly not on all. And suspension of judgment may sometimes produce tranquility, but certainly not always. Sextus' outlook, in the very sweeping way he intended it, doesn't seem to be available to us. But that doesn't mean we can't apply his strategy in a more modest way. Sometimes suspending judgment *is* a good idea. And sometimes it may even reduce your anxiety level. We just need to recognize the limits to this kind of approach.

Besides, I think there may be other lessons we can learn from him—even if they are not quite the ones he intended. Although the words “keep an open mind” never actually appear in

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Sextus' text, I have chosen to use them in the title of this volume because I think that is one thing Sextus may still be able to help us do. What he gives us is an example—an extreme example, perhaps—of always being willing to consider opposing points of view, and never settling for some definite answer when there is something still to be said on the other side. As you will see, he frequently calls his dogmatic opponents “rash.” And “rashness”—that is, jumping to conclusions too easily—is something his example can help us to guard against.

Now, it's a bit more complicated than this. For I do not mean to suggest that Sextus himself is exactly open-minded. An open-minded person is someone who wants to achieve a clear-eyed and unbiased view on an issue, in light of all relevant information. An attitude of this kind will certainly include the desire to avoid rash conclusions. But it will not include the ambition to avoid *all* conclusions—which is what

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Sextus' agenda of generating suspension of judgment (and thereby tranquility) across the board in effect amounts to. On the contrary, an open-minded person will give due consideration to all sides of an argument and will draw conclusions when warranted. Sometimes the state of the evidence will not allow this, and in that case an open-minded person will indeed suspend judgment. But sometimes, after careful consideration, one answer will appear superior to all the others, and in that case the open-minded person will not hesitate to draw that conclusion—with the recognition, of course, that new information or new perspectives could lead to a change of view. In other words, the open-minded person is aiming to find the most justifiable view available on the topic at hand. And that is rather different from Sextus' project of inducing suspension of judgment.

But if Sextus is not a paragon of open-mindedness, that does not mean that *we* cannot

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find in his writings a stimulus toward open-mindedness. This is where my earlier reservations again become relevant. If suspension of judgment cannot be counted upon to produce tranquility, and if we know too much today for *universal* suspension of judgment to be feasible anyway, then the first stage in Sextus' method— assembling “oppositions”— comes to look somewhat different. Examining as many different sides of an issue as possible⁵ will sometimes lead to suspension of judgment (and perhaps even to tranquility as a result). But at other times, given the current state of knowledge, one point of view on that issue will emerge as more plausible than all the others, and hence more deserving of acceptance—at least for now. We arrive, then, at something very much like the open-mindedness I sketched in the previous paragraph. So while it would not really be accurate to say that Sextus advocates being open-minded, a recommenda-

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tion to be open-minded is, in effect, what one can gain from approaching his writings in a sympathetic yet critical spirit.

In a world where it can often seem that almost no factual issue of importance is immune from manipulation, this may not be a bad thing. To take one easy example, think of all the cases where someone's conviction in a trial is shown to have been mistaken, sometimes after the person has spent decades in prison—or even been executed; maybe if juries really took seriously the words “beyond a reasonable doubt,” this would happen less frequently. And readers can no doubt think of many cases where facts are reported in starkly different ways, often to suit different political or other agendas, by different public figures, media outlets, etc. It surely makes sense for anyone trying to approach these matters in a thoughtful and constructive fashion to gather as wide a

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range of information as possible and assess it as carefully as possible.

Of course, even when there is agreement on the facts, there can still be disagreement on what to do about them, because of differing value judgments among the people involved. As I said, ethical and political questions are very often subjects of unresolved debate, and it is on questions of that kind (unlike much of natural science) that Sextus' program of suspension of judgment may seem to have the most to recommend it, intellectually speaking. Yet this is a luxury that only those not engaged with real ethical and political problems can generally afford; and for this reason the skeptic has often been seen as a parasite, whose ivory-tower suspension of judgment is only possible against a background of active decision-making and social involvement—of policies and laws being written and implemented, of arguments being made for why these are appropriate (or not ap-

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appropriate), and so on. In other words, skepticism is possible only in a functioning society, and society can only function if most people are *not* skeptics.

Against this kind of criticism, others have argued that skepticism can be a powerful force against fanaticism and for political tolerance. They have also resisted the picture of the skeptic as a passive figure always sitting on the fence; there is nothing, they argue, that prevents skeptics from working for ethical and political causes, so long as they do not claim to have figured out the final truth about the issues concerned.

I think there is something to both these points of view; and again, I think there is room for us to learn from Sextus provided we do not try to follow his skepticism in a pure and unqualified form. Suppose we agree, to begin with, on the primary importance of living in a broadly democratic society where people of differing

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persuasions can coexist, as opposed to a regime where opponents are simply fired, imprisoned, or shot. This is already a substantial ethical and political commitment—not something available to a pure skeptic as described by Sextus. But if we accept this crucial starting point (as I assume almost any reader of this volume will), then we may again find real value in a version of the open-mindedness I have been describing.

At a forum I recently attended, about current attacks on democratic norms and how to address them, I heard a very distinguished political theorist make the case that democracy thrives on endless argument. Not shouting at one another from entrenched positions—which is what we tend to have today—but genuine engagement with opposing views, where you are trying to convince others, but are also prepared to modify your own views in response to others. You may never convince one another (and the matter may need to be decided by a vote); but

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taking other sides of a question seriously, and keeping the conversation permanently open, are important to a flourishing democratic culture. By contrast, autocratic regimes can't stand endless debate and do their best to shut it down. If we find this picture persuasive, the open-mindedness I have been talking about—not identical with Sextus' skepticism but inspired by it—clearly sits better with democracy than with the alternative.

Again, then, if we don't try to go all the way with Sextus, but still take his method seriously where we can, we may find something useful. To conclude: if Sextus can serve as a model for us, it is perhaps as a model of willingness to look at all sides of any question and not to judge things too quickly—something we could probably use more of in the present state of the world.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

This volume presents a selection of the work of Sextus Empiricus in translation, with the original Greek text on facing pages. Almost all the selections are from Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and the layout broadly follows that of *Outlines*. The division into six chapters, and the titles of those chapters, are my own. The headings within chapters are from Sextus—or at least, there is no good reason to doubt this. In the original manuscripts these are numbered, and in translations this is usually represented by Roman numerals; but since these numbers are rarely used in referring to passages, and since they would not always be in sequence given that this is a selection, I have omitted them as a needless complication. What are commonly

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used for references are the numbers marking short stretches within the text—usually no more than a sentence or two—and these are included throughout. These numbers start at [I] at the beginning of each book of *Outlines* (and each book of Sextus' other works).

The brief explanations in italics are my additions. These often give information about what occurs in the parts omitted from this selection. In these cases, a quick look at the small section numbers in two adjacent passages will give a rough idea of how much has been left out. Also, within the passages I have chosen, I occasionally omit small portions (where the material is technical or confusing, and not essential for the main line of thought); the gaps are indicated by three dots: “. . .” Again, in these cases a look at the small section numbers will give a sense of how much is missing; sometimes there will be no interruption in the numerical sequence, but sometimes the break is a little longer.

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Except for the few small excerpts I have included from other works of Sextus, chapters 1 and 2, and most of chapter 3, are from book I of *Outlines*; the end of chapter 3 and all of chapter 4 are from book II; and chapters 5 and 6 are from book III. In all cases the order of my selections from *Outlines* follows Sextus' own order. (I indicate this throughout in my italicized explanations.) The small numbered sections therefore follow three increasing sequences, with interruptions for the omitted passages—except, again, for the excerpts from other works, which have small numbered sections of their own, unrelated to the numbers in *Outlines*.

My italicized explanations and notes include occasional cross-references to other passages. These are indicated by small section number (e.g., “[45]”) if the reference is to a passage in the same book of *Outlines*, by book and small section number (e.g., “II.45”) if the reference is to

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a passage in a different book of *Outlines*. References to other works of Sextus (though there are very few of these) are also to book and small section number, but preceded by “*M*” (basically an abbreviation of the title in Greek—I spare you the full details): *M* I–VI for the six books of *Against Those in the Disciplines*, *M* VII–XI for the five surviving books of *Skeptical Treatises*.

The volume includes a glossary that explains a few important terms, and a list of persons and schools of thought with brief information about them. These terms and names are marked in the text with an asterisk [*] on their first occurrence, but many of them recur throughout the book.

I use the edition of the Greek text of *Outlines* by H. Mutschmann, revised by J. Mau (Leipzig: Teubner, 1958—now published, in print and electronic versions, by De Gruyter), and, for the excerpts from other works, the Greek texts in

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the same Teubner series—see Further Reading. A printed edition of a Greek text represents the best guesses of the editor as to what the author originally wrote. For most authors (including Sextus) there are multiple manuscripts of the same works. These are copies of copies of copies (and so on) of the original, and there are always minor (sometimes more than minor) discrepancies among them. We are better off in this respect with Sextus than with many other ancient Greek and Roman authors. But there is sometimes room for disagreement about what the original text is likely to have been, and in a few cases I have translated (and put in the Greek text) something slightly different from what Mutschmann and Mau printed. In these instances, the Greek text is marked with plus signs: +.

My translation aims to make Sextus as accessible as possible to English-speaking readers, while remaining faithful to the original Greek

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text. Although in my own writing I am careful to avoid using “he” to refer to people in general, I have not attempted to eliminate the equivalent phenomenon in Sextus’ writing. The ancient Greek language exhibited a clear male bias, and Sextus (like everyone else at the time) simply follows the usual conventions. It is not impossible that there were women skeptics; we do not know of any, but we do hear of a few women philosophers in later antiquity. However, when Sextus refers generically to “the skeptic,” or to some generic person in other contexts, he uses the masculine gender, and it would misrepresent him to pretend otherwise. I hope this will not be off-putting.

HOW TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND

περὶ τῆς ἀνωτάτω διαφορᾶς
τῶν φιλοσοφιῶν

[1] Τοῖς ζητοῦσί τι πρᾶγμα ἢ εὗρεσιν ἐπακο-
λουθεῖν εἰκὸς ἢ ἄρνησιν εὐρέσεως καὶ ἀκατα-
ληψίας ὁμολογίαν ἢ ἐπιμονὴν ζητήσεως.

[2] διόπερ ἴσως καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν
ζητουμένων οἱ μὲν εὐρηκέναι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔφα-
σαν, οἱ δ' ἀπεφήναντο μὴ δυνατὸν εἶναι τοῦτο

CHAPTER 1

Skepticism: The Big Picture

Sextus gives an overview of skepticism in the opening of book I of Outlines of Pyrrhonism: except for one minor omission (in section [7]), I include the whole of this.

On the Most Basic Difference among Philosophies

[1] Suppose you're investigating some topic: chances are, the result is that either (a) you make a discovery, or (b) you deny making a discovery and admit the matter is not to be grasped*, or (c) you keep on investigating. [2] So equally, when it comes to the things investigated in philosophy, some people have claimed to have discovered the truth, some have declared that it is not possible for this to be grasped, and some are

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καταληφθῆναι, οἱ δὲ ἔτι ζητοῦσιν. [3] καὶ εὐρηκέναι μὲν δοκοῦσιν οἱ ἰδίως καλούμενοι δογματικοί, οἷον οἱ περὶ Ἀριστοτέλην καὶ Ἐπίκουρον καὶ τοὺς Στωικούς καὶ ἄλλοι τινές, ὡς δὲ περὶ ἀκαταλήπτων ἀπεφήναντο οἱ περὶ Κλειτόμαχον καὶ Καρνεάδην καὶ ἄλλοι Ἀκαδημαῖκοί, ζητοῦσι δὲ οἱ σκεπτικοί. [4] ὅθεν εὐλόγως δοκοῦσιν αἱ ἀνωτάτω φιλοσοφίαι τρεῖς εἶναι, δογματικὴ Ἀκαδημαϊκὴ σκεπτικὴ. περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἄλλων ἑτέροις ἀρμόσει λέγειν, περὶ δὲ τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς ὑποτυπωτικῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ἡμεῖς ἐροῦμεν, ἐκεῖνο προειπόντες, ὅτι περὶ οὐδενὸς τῶν λεχθησομένων διαβεβαιούμεθα ὡς οὕτως ἔχοντος πάντως καθάπερ λέγομεν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ νῦν φαινόμενον ἡμῖν ἱστορικῶς ἀπαγγέλλομεν περὶ ἐκάστου.

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still investigating. [3] It is those strictly called dogmatists* who think they have discovered it—people like Aristotle* and Epicurus* and the Stoics* and some others; it's Clitomachus* and Carneades* and other Academics* who have declared they are dealing with things not to be grasped; and it's the skeptics who are still investigating. [4] Hence it makes sense that the most basic philosophies are thought to be three: dogmatic*, Academic, and skeptical. About the other ones, it will be appropriate for others to speak; right now it's about the skeptical approach that we are going to speak in outline, with the following preface—that on none of the things to be discussed do we insist* that the matter is definitely as we say, but on each one we are reporting like a case study, according to how it now appears to us.

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περὶ τῶν λόγων τῆς σκέψεως

[5] Τῆς σκεπτικῆς οὖν φιλοσοφίας ὁ μὲν λέγεται καθόλου λόγος ὁ δὲ εἰδικός, καὶ καθόλου μὲν ἐν ᾧ τὸν χαρακτῆρα τῆς σκέψεως ἐκτιθέμεθα, λέγοντες τίς ἔννοια αὐτῆς καὶ τίνες ἀρχαὶ καὶ τίνες λόγοι, τί τε κριτήριον καὶ τί τέλος, καὶ τίνες οἱ τρόποι τῆς ἐποχῆς, καὶ πῶς παραλαμβάνομεν τὰς σκεπτικὰς ἀποφάσεις, καὶ τὴν διάκρισιν τῆς σκέψεως ἀπὸ τῶν παρακειμένων αὐτῇ φιλοσοφιῶν· [6] εἰδικὸς δὲ ἐν ᾧ πρὸς ἕκαστον μέρος τῆς καλουμένης φιλοσοφίας ἀντιλέγομεν. περὶ τοῦ καθόλου δὴ πρῶτον διαλάβωμεν λόγου, ἀρξάμενοι τῆς ὑφηγήσεως ἀπὸ τῶν τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς ὀνομάτων.

Περὶ τῶν ὀνομασιῶν τῆς σκεπτικῆς

[7] Ἡ σκεπτικὴ τοίνυν ἀγωγή καλεῖται μὲν καὶ ζητητικὴ ἀπὸ ἐνεργείας τῆς κατὰ τὸ ζητεῖν καὶ σκέπτεσθαι, καὶ ἐφεκτικὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ μετὰ τὴν

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On the Accounts of Skepticism

[5] There is one account of the skeptical philosophy called “general,” and another called “specific.” The general one is where we expound the features of skepticism, telling how it is conceived, what are its starting points and its arguments, its criterion and its aim, what are the modes of suspension of judgment, how we employ the skeptical statements, and the distinction between skepticism and the philosophies closest to it; [6] the specific one is where we argue against each part of so-called philosophy. Well, let’s deal first with the general account, beginning our survey with the names of the skeptical approach.

On the Ways Skepticism Is Named

[7] The skeptical approach, then, is called investigative, from its activity involving investigation and inquiry, and suspensive from the reaction

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ζήτησιν περὶ τὸν σκεπτόμενον γινομένου πάθους, . . . καὶ Πυρρώνειος ἀπὸ τοῦ φαίνεσθαι ἡμῖν τὸν Πύρρωνα σωματικώτερον καὶ ἐπιφανέστερον τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ προσεληλυθέναι τῇ σκέψει.

Τί ἐστι σκέψις

[8] Ἔστι δὲ ἡ σκεπτικὴ δύναμις ἀντιθετικὴ φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων καθ' οἷονδήποτε τρόπον, ἀφ' ἧς ἐρχόμεθα διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ἀντικειμένοις πράγμασι καὶ λόγοις ἰσοσθένειαν τὸ μὲν πρῶτον εἰς ἐποχὴν, τὸ δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰς ἀταραξίαν.

[9] Ἐξ ἀνάγκης μὲν οὖν αὐτὴν καλοῦμεν οὐ κατὰ τὸ περιέργον ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς κατὰ τὸ δύνασθαι ἄφαινόμενα δὲ λαμβάνομεν νῦν τὰ αἰσθητά, διόπερ ἀντιδιαστέλλομεν αὐτοῖς τὰ νοητά. τὸ δὲ καθ' οἷονδήποτε τρόπον δύναται προσαρμόζεσθαι καὶ τῇ δυνάμει, ἵνα ἀπλῶς τὸ τῆς δυνάμεως

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that comes about in the inquirer after the investigation . . . and Pyrrhonian, from the fact that Pyrrho* appears to us to have gone in for skepticism in a more full-bodied and obvious way than those before him.

What Skepticism Is

[8] The skeptical ability is one that produces oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatsoever, from which, because of the equal strength in the opposing objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment, and after that to tranquility*.

[9] We call it an “ability” not in any elaborate sense, but simply in terms of *being able*; “things that appear” we are taking here as the things perceived with the senses, which is why we contrast with them the things that are thought. “In any way whatsoever” can be connected with the ability (meaning that we’re

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ὄνομα, ὡς εἰρήκαμεν, παραλαμβάνωμεν, καὶ τῷ ‘ἀντιθετικῇ φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων’ ἐπεὶ γὰρ ποικίλως ἀντιτίθεμεν ταῦτα, ἢ φαινόμενα φαινομένοις ἢ νοούμενα νοουμένοις ἢ ἐναλλάξ ἀντιτιθέντες, ἵνα πᾶσαι αἱ ἀντιθέσεις ἐμπεριέχωνται, λέγομεν ‘καθ’ οἰονδήποτε τρόπον’. ἢ ‘καθ’ οἰονδήποτε τρόπον φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων’, ἵνα μὴ ζητῶμεν πῶς φαίνεται τὰ φαινόμενα ἢ πῶς νοεῖται τὰ νοούμενα, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς ταῦτα λαμβάνωμεν. [10] ‘ἀντικειμένους’ δὲ λόγους παραλαμβάνομεν οὐχὶ πάντως ἀπόφασιν καὶ κατάφασιν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς ἀντὶ τοῦ μαχομένους. ‘ἰσοσθένειαν’ δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κατὰ πίστιν καὶ ἀπιστίαν ἰσότητα, ὡς μηδένα μηδενὸς προκεῖσθαι τῶν μαχομένων λόγων ὡς πιστότερον. ‘ἐποχὴ’ δὲ ἐστὶ στάσις διανοίας δι’

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taking the word “ability” in a simple way, as we said), or with “producing oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought”; since we oppose these in a variety of ways—opposing things that appear to things that appear, or things thought to things thought, or interchanging them, so that all the oppositions are included—we say “in any way whatsoever.” Or “in any way whatsoever” goes with “things that appear and things thought,” meaning that we are not investigating *how* the things that appear do appear, or the things that are thought are thought—we’re taking these in a simple way. [10] We speak of “opposing” accounts not necessarily in the sense of an assertion and a negation, but simply in place of “conflicting.” “Equal strength” refers to an equality in terms of trustworthiness or its absence, so that none of the conflicting accounts is ahead of any other as more trustworthy. Suspension of judgment is when thought comes to a stop; because of

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ἦν οὔτε αἴρομέν τι οὔτε τίθεμεν. ‘ἀταραξία’ δέ ἐστι ψυχῆς ἀοχλησία καὶ γαληνότης. πῶς δὲ τῆ ἐποχῇ συνεισέρχεται ἡ ἀταραξία, ἐν τοῖς περιτέλους ὑπομνήσομεν.

Περὶ τοῦ σκεπτικοῦ

[11] Καὶ ὁ Πυρρώνειος δὲ φιλόσοφος δυνάμει τῆ τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς ἐννοία συναποδέδεται· ἔστι γὰρ ὁ μετέχων ταύτης τῆς δυνάμεως.

Περὶ ἀρχῶν τῆς σκέψεως

[12] Ἀρχὴν δὲ τῆς σκεπτικῆς αἰτιώδη μὲν φαμεν εἶναι τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ ἀταρακτῆσειν· οἱ γὰρ μεγαλοφυεῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ταρασσόμενοι διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀνωμαλίαν, καὶ ἀποροῦντες τίσιν αὐτῶν χρῆ μᾶλλον συγκατατίθεσθαι, ἤλθον ἐπὶ τὸ ζητεῖν, τί τε ἀληθές ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι καὶ τί ψεῦδος, ὡς ἐκ τῆς ἐπικρίσεως τούτων ἀταρακτῆσοντες. συστάσεως δὲ τῆς

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this we neither deny nor put forward anything. Tranquility is a trouble-free condition, or calmness, of the soul. How tranquility comes in alongside suspension of judgment we will suggest in our remarks on the aim.¹

About the Skeptic

[11] The Pyrrhonian philosopher was in effect already explained in the conception of the skeptical approach; it's the person who has a piece of this "ability."

About the Starting Points of Skepticism

[12] The starting point that causes skepticism, we say, is the hope of getting tranquility. Highly gifted people, being bothered by the inconsistency in things, and at a loss as to which of them they should give more of their assent to, went for investigating what is true in things and what is false, on the assumption that by determining these things they would achieve tranquility. But

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σκεπτικῆς ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ μάλιστα τὸ παντὶ λόγῳ λόγον ἴσον ἀντικεῖσθαι· ἀπὸ γὰρ τούτου καταλήγειν δοκοῦμεν εἰς τὸ μὴ δογματίζειν.

Εἰ δογματίζει ὁ σκεπτικός

[13] Λέγομεν δὲ μὴ δογματίζειν τὸν σκεπτικὸν οὐ κατ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ σημαίνόμενον τοῦ δόγματος καθ' ὃ δόγμα εἶναι φασὶ τινες κοινότερον τὸ εὐδοκεῖν τινι πράγματι (τοῖς γὰρ κατὰ φαντασίαν κατηναγκασμένοις πάθεσι συγκατατίθεται ὁ σκεπτικός, οἷον οὐκ ἂν εἴποι θερμαίνόμενος ἢ ψυχόμενος ὅτι δοκῶ μὴ θερμαίνεσθαι ἢ ψυχεσθαι), ἀλλὰ μὴ δογματίζειν λέγομεν καθ' ὃ δόγμα εἶναι φασὶ τινες τὴν τινι πράγματι τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ζητουμένων ἀδήλων συγκατάθεσιν (οὐδενὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀδήλων συγκατατίθεται ὁ Πυρρώνειος). [14] ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ προφέρεσθαι περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων τὰς σκεπτικὰς φωνάς, οἷον τὴν 'οὐδὲν μᾶλλον' ἢ τὴν 'οὐδὲν

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the starting point of the skeptical setup is, above all, every argument's having an equal argument lying in opposition to it; for from this we seem to end up not having doctrines*.

Whether the Skeptic Has Doctrines

[13] We say that the skeptic does not have doctrines not in that more everyday sense of “doctrine” in which some say that a doctrine is when you agree to something²—for the skeptic assents to the reactions that are forced on him by appearance* (for example, when being warmed or cooled, he would not say “I think I’m not being warmed or cooled”); we say that he does not have doctrines in the sense in which some say that a doctrine is the assent to some unclear matter investigated by the sciences—for the Pyrrhonist does not assent to anything unclear. [14] He doesn’t have doctrines even in uttering the skeptical phrases *about* unclear things—for example, “No more”³ or “I determine nothing,”

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ὀρίζω' ἢ τινα τῶν ἄλλων περὶ ὧν ὕστερον
λέξομεν δογματίζει. ὁ μὲν γὰρ δογματίζων ὡς
ὑπάρχον τίθεται τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐκεῖνο ὃ λέγεται
δογματίζειν, ὁ δὲ σκεπτικὸς τὰς φωνὰς τίθησι
ταύτας οὐχ ὡς πάντως ὑπαρχούσας· ὑπολαμ-
βάνει γὰρ ὅτι, ὡσπερ ἡ 'πάντα ἐστὶ ψευδῆ'
φωνὴ μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἑαυτὴν ψευδῆ εἶναι
λέγει, καὶ ἡ 'οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀληθές' ὁμοίως, οὕτως
καὶ ἡ 'οὐδὲν μᾶλλον' μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἑαυ-
τὴν φησι μὴ μᾶλλον εἶναι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοῖς
ἄλλοις ἑαυτὴν συμπεριγράφει. τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων σκεπτικῶν φωνῶν λέγομεν.
[15] πλὴν ἀλλ' εἰ ὁ δογματίζων τίθησιν ὡς ὑπάρ-
χον τοῦτο ὃ δογματίζει, ὁ δὲ σκεπτικὸς τὰς
φωνὰς αὐτοῦ προφέρεται ὡς δυνάμει ὑφ' ἑαυ-
τῶν περιγράφεσθαι, οὐκ ἂν ἐν τῇ προφορᾷ
τούτων δογματίζειν λεχθεῖη. τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, ἐν
τῇ προφορᾷ τῶν φωνῶν τούτων τὸ ἑαυτῷ φαι-
νόμενον λέγει καὶ τὸ πάθος ἀπαγγέλλει τὸ ἑαυ-

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or any of the others about which we'll speak later. For someone with a doctrine puts forward as a reality the matter on which they are said to have a doctrine, but the skeptic does not put forward these phrases as definite realities; he supposes that, just as the phrase "everything is false" says that it is itself false along with the others, and likewise "nothing is true," so too "no more [this way than that]" says that, along with the others, it is itself "no more" the case [than its opposite], and for this reason brackets³ itself together with the others. We say the same about the other skeptical phrases too. [15] But if the dogmatist puts forward as a reality the thing on which he has a doctrine, while the skeptic utters his own phrases in such a way that they are potentially bracketed by themselves, he cannot be said to have doctrines in uttering them. But the most important thing is that in uttering these phrases he says what appears to himself, and announces without

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τοῦ ἀδοξάστως, μηδὲν περὶ τῶν ἔξωθεν ὑποκειμένων διαβεβαιούμενος.

εἰ αἴρεσιν ἔχει ὁ σκεπτικός

[16] Ὅμοίως δὲ φερόμεθα καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐρωτᾶσθαι εἰ αἴρεσιν ἔχει ὁ σκεπτικός. εἰ μὲν <γάρ> τις αἴρεσιν εἶναι λέγει πρόσκλισιν δόγμασι πολλοῖς ἀκολουθίαν ἔχουσι πρὸς ἄλληλά τε καὶ <τὰ> φαινόμενα, καὶ λέγει δόγμα πράγματι ἀδήλω συγκατάθεσιν, φήσομεν μὴ ἔχειν αἴρεσιν. [17] εἰ δέ τις αἴρεσιν εἶναι φάσκει τὴν λόγῳ τινὶ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀκολουθοῦσαν ἀγωγὴν, ἐκείνου τοῦ λόγου ὡς ἔστιν ὀρθῶς δοκεῖν ζῆν ὑποδεικνύοντος (τοῦ ὀρθῶς μὴ μόνον κατ' ἀρετὴν λαμβανομένου ἀλλ' ἀφελέστερον) καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἐπέχειν δύνασθαι διατείνοντος, αἴρεσιν φάμεν ἔχειν· ἀκολουθοῦμεν γάρ τινι λόγῳ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ὑποδεικνύντι ἡμῖν τὸ ζῆν πρὸς τὰ

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opinions* the way he himself is affected, making no firm statements* about the objects actually out there.

Whether the Skeptic Has a School of Thought

[16] We go a similar way on the question whether the skeptic has a school of thought. If one says that a school is an attachment to many doctrines that are consistent with one another and with apparent* things, and by “doctrine” one means assent to an unclear matter, we will say that he does not have a school. [17] But if one says that a school is an approach that follows a certain rationale in line with what appears, where that rationale indicates how it is possible to seem to live properly (“properly” being understood not only in terms of virtue but in a more straightforward way) and extends to the ability to suspend judgment, we say that he does have a school; for we do follow a certain rationale that, in line with what appears, marks out

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πάτρια ἔθη καὶ τοὺς νόμους καὶ τὰς ἀγωγὰς καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα πάθη.

εἰ φυσιολογεῖ ὁ σκεπτικός

[18] Παραπλήσια δὲ λέγομεν καὶ ἐν τῷ ζητεῖν εἰ φυσιολογητέον τῷ σκεπτικῷ· ἔνεκα μὲν γὰρ τοῦ μετὰ βεβαίου πείσματος ἀποφαίνεσθαι περί τινος τῶν κατὰ τὴν φυσιολογίαν δογματιζομένων οὐ φυσιολογοῦμεν, ἔνεκα δὲ τοῦ παντὶ λόγῳ λόγον ἴσον ἔχειν ἀντιτιθέναι καὶ τῆς ἀταραξίας ἀπτόμεθα τῆς φυσιολογίας. οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ λογικὸν μέρος καὶ τὸ ἠθικὸν τῆς λεγομένης φιλοσοφίας ἐπερχόμεθα.

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a life for us that fits with ancestral customs and the laws and the culture and our own reactions.

Whether the Skeptic Does Natural Science

[18] We say similar things on the question whether the skeptic should do natural science. If the point is to make declarations with strong confidence about any of the things on which doctrines are held in natural science, we do not do natural science. But if the point is to be able to oppose to every argument an equal argument, and to achieve tranquility, we do engage in natural science. This is also how we cover the logical and the ethical parts of so-called philosophy.

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εἰ ἀναιροῦσι τὰ φαινόμενα οἱ σκεπτικοί

[19] Οἱ δὲ λέγοντες ὅτι ἀναιροῦσι τὰ φαινόμενα οἱ σκεπτικοί ἀνήκοοί μοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν λεγομένων· τὰ γὰρ κατὰ φαντασίαν παθητικὴν ἀβουλήτως ἡμᾶς ἄγοντα εἰς συγκατάθεσιν οὐκ ἀνατρέπομεν, ὡς καὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐλέγομεν· ταῦτα δὲ ἐστὶ τὰ φαινόμενα. ὅταν δὲ ζητῶμεν, εἰ τοιοῦτον ἔστι τὸ ὑποκείμενον ὁποῖον φαίνεται, τὸ μὲν ὅτι φαίνεται δίδομεν, ζητοῦμεν δ' οὐ περὶ τοῦ φαινομένου ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐκείνου ὃ λέγεται περὶ τοῦ φαινομένου· τοῦτο δὲ διαφέρει τοῦ ζητεῖν περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ φαινομένου. [20] οἷον+φαίνεται+ ἡμῖν γλυκάζειν τὸ μέλι (τοῦτο συγχωροῦμεν· γλυκαζόμεθα γὰρ αἰσθητικῶς), εἰ δὲ καὶ γλυκὸν ἔστιν ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, ζητοῦμεν· ὃ οὐκ ἔστι τὸ φαινόμενον ἀλλὰ +περὶ τοῦ φαινομένου λεγόμενον+. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀντι-

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Whether the Skeptics Do Away with Apparent Things

[19] Those who say that the skeptics do away with apparent things seem to me not to be listening to what we say. We don't overturn the things that lead us, owing to a passive appearance and whether we like it or not, to assent—as we said before;⁴ and these are the apparent things. When we investigate whether the actual object *is* such as it appears, we allow that it appears, and our investigation is not about the apparent thing but about what's *said about* the apparent thing; and that's different from investigating the apparent thing itself. [20] For example, honey appears to us to sweeten; we agree to this, for as a matter of sense-perception, we are sweetened. But whether it *is* indeed sweet as far as argument is concerned,⁵ we investigate—which is not the apparent thing but something said about the apparent thing. And even if we

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κρυς κατὰ τῶν φαινομένων ἐρωτῶμεν λόγους, οὐκ ἀναιρεῖν βουλόμενοι τὰ φαινόμενα τούτους ἐκτιθέμεθα, ἀλλ' ἐπιδεικνύντες τὴν τῶν δογματικῶν προπέτειαν· εἰ γὰρ τοιοῦτος ἀπατεῶν ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος ὥστε καὶ τὰ φαινόμενα μόνον οὐχὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν ὑφαρπάξουν, πῶς οὐ χρὴ ὑφοραῖσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἀδήλοις, ὥστε μὴ κατακολουθοῦντας αὐτῷ προπετεύεσθαι;

περὶ τοῦ κριτηρίου τῆς σκεπτικῆς

[21] Ὅτι δὲ τοῖς φαινομένοις προσέχομεν, δῆλον ἀπὸ τῶν λεγομένων ἡμῖν περὶ τοῦ κριτηρίου τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς. κριτήριον δὲ λέγεται διχῶς, τό τε εἰς πίστιν ὑπάρξεως ἢ ἀνυπαρξίας λαμβανόμενον, περὶ οὗ ἐν τῷ ἀντιρρητικῷ λέξομεν λόγῳ, τό τε τοῦ πράσσειν, ᾧ προσέχοντες κατὰ τὸν βίον τὰ μὲν πράσσομεν τὰ δ' οὐ, περὶ οὗ νῦν λέγομεν. [22] κριτήριον τοίνυν φημὲν εἶναι τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς τὸ φαινόμε-

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do go ahead and raise arguments against apparent things, we put these forward not with the aim of doing away with the apparent things, but for a show of the dogmatists' rashness; for if argument is so tricky that it just about snatches apparent things from under our eyes, how can we not be suspicious of it on unclear matters, and hence avoid following it and acting rashly?

On the Criterion of Skepticism

[21] That we pay attention to apparent things is clear from what we say about the criterion of the skeptical approach. A criterion is spoken of in two ways: there's the kind that is used for the purpose of trust on a matter of reality or unreality—and we'll talk about this in the account that involves counter-arguments;⁶ and there's the one for acting—by attending to this in life we do some things and don't do others, and this is the one we're now talking about. [22] So, we say that the criterion of the skeptical

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νον, δυνάμει τὴν φαντασίαν οὕτω καλοῦντες· ἐν πείσει γὰρ καὶ ἀβουλήτῳ πάθει κειμένη ἀζήτητός ἐστιν. διὸ περὶ μὲν τοῦ φαίνεσθαι τοῖον ἢ τοῖον τὸ ὑποκείμενον οὐδεὶς ἴσως ἀμφισβητήσει, περὶ δὲ τοῦ εἰ τοιοῦτον ἔστιν ὁποῖον φαίνεται ζητεῖται.

[23] τοῖς φαινομένοις οὖν προσέχοντες κατὰ τὴν βιωτικὴν τήρησιν ἀδοξάστως βιοῦμεν, ἐπεὶ μὴ δυνάμεθα ἀνενέργητοι παντάπασιν εἶναι. ἔοικε δὲ αὕτη ἢ βιωτικὴ τήρησις τετραμερῆς εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὲν τι ἔχειν ἐν ὑψηλήσει φύσεως, τὸ δὲ ἐν ἀνάγκῃ παθῶν, τὸ δὲ ἐν παραδόσει νόμων τε καὶ ἔθῶν, τὸ δὲ ἐν διδασκαλίᾳ τεχνῶν, [24] ὑψηλήσει μὲν φυσικῇ καθ' ἣν φυσικῶς αἰσθητικοὶ καὶ νοητικοὶ ἐσμεν, παθῶν δὲ ἀνάγκῃ καθ' ἣν λιμὸς μὲν ἐπὶ τροφήν ἡμᾶς ὀδηγεῖ, δίψος δ' ἐπὶ πόμα, ἔθῶν δὲ καὶ νόμων παραδόσει καθ' ἣν τὸ μὲν εὐσεβεῖν παραλαμβάνομεν βιωτικῶς ὡς ἀγαθὸν τὸ δὲ ἀσεβεῖν ὡς

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approach is what is apparent, in effect here meaning the appearance; for it has to do with a reaction, with how we're affected whether we like it or not, and so is not up for investigation. I mean, whether the actual object *appears* this way or that, surely no one will dispute; it's whether it *is* as it appears that gets investigated.

[23] Paying attention, then, to the things that appear, we live without opinions according to the routine of life, since we can't be completely inactive. This "routine of life" seems to have four aspects: one is involved with the guidance of nature, one with the necessity of how we're affected, one with the handing down of laws and customs, and one with the teaching of skills. [24] Natural guidance is how we are naturally perceivers and thinkers; the necessity of ways we're affected is how hunger drives us to food and thirst to drink; the handing down of laws and customs is how, as far as our lives are concerned,⁷ we accept being pious as good and

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φαῦλον, τεχνῶν δὲ διδασκαλία καθ' ἣν οὐκ ἀνενέργητοί ἐσμεν ἐν αἷς παραλαμβάνομεν τέχναις. ταῦτα δὲ πάντα φαμὲν ἀδοξάστως.

τί τὸ τέλος τῆς σκεπτικῆς

[25] Τούτοις ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἴη καὶ περὶ τοῦ τέλους τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς διεξελεῖν. ἔστι μὲν οὖν τέλος τὸ οὗ χάριν πάντα πράττεται ἢ θεωρεῖται, αὐτὸ δὲ οὐδενὸς ἔνεκα, ἢ τὸ ἔσχατον τῶν ὀρεκτῶν. φαμὲν δὲ ἄχρι νῦν τέλος εἶναι τοῦ σκεπτικοῦ τὴν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ δόξαν ἀταραξίαν καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατηναγκασμένοις μετριοπάθειαν. [26] ἀρξάμενος γὰρ φιλοσοφεῖν ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὰς φαντασίας ἐπικρῖναι καὶ καταλαβεῖν, τίνες μὲν εἰσιν ἀληθεῖς τίνες δὲ ψευδεῖς, ὥστε ἀταρακτῆσαι, ἐνέπεσεν εἰς τὴν ἰσοσθενῆ διαφωνίαν, ἣν ἐπικρῖναι μὴ δυνάμενος ἐπέσχεν· ἐπισχόντι δὲ αὐτῷ τυχικῶς παρηκολού-

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being impious as bad; and the teaching of skills is how we are not inactive in the skills we take up. And we say all this without opinions.

What Is the Aim of Skepticism?

[25] After this, the next thing for us to go over would be the aim of the skeptical approach. Now an aim is what everything is done or considered *for the sake of*, while it is not itself *for* anything; in other words, it's the endpoint of the things desired. We say up to now that the skeptic's aim is tranquility in things to do with opinion and moderate reactions in things that are forced on us. [26] For though he began to do philosophy with a view to deciding among the appearances and grasping which were true and which false, so as to achieve tranquility, he fell into a dispute with sides of equal strength. Since he couldn't resolve it, he suspended judgment. But when he suspended judgment, it just

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θησεν ἡ ἐν τοῖς δοξαστοῖς ἀταραξία.

[27] ὁ μὲν γὰρ δοξάζων τι καλὸν τῆ φύσει ἢ κακὸν εἶναι ταρασσεται διὰ παντός· καὶ ὅτε μὴ πάρεστιν αὐτῷ τὰ καλὰ εἶναι δοκοῦντα, ὑπὸ τε τῶν φύσει κακῶν νομίζει ποινηλατεῖσθαι καὶ διώκει τὰ ἀγαθὰ, ὡς οἶεται· ἅπερ κτησάμενος πλείοσι ταραχαῖς περιπίπτει, διὰ τε τὸ παράλογον καὶ ἀμέτρως ἐπαίρεσθαι καὶ φοβούμενον τὴν μεταβολὴν πάντα πράσσειν, ἵνα μὴ ἀποβάλλῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ αὐτῷ δοκοῦντα εἶναι. [28] ὁ δὲ ἀοριστῶν περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὴν φύσιν καλῶν ἢ κακῶν οὔτε φεύγει τι οὔτε διώκει συντόνως· διόπερ ἀταρακτεῖ.

ὅπερ οὖν περὶ Ἀπελλοῦ τοῦ ζωγράφου λέγεται, τοῦτο ὑπῆρξε τῷ σκεπτικῷ. φασὶ γὰρ ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἵππον γράφων καὶ τὸν ἀφρὸν τοῦ ἵππου μιμήσασθαι τῆ γραφῆ βουληθεὶς οὕτως

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so happened that tranquility in matters of opinion accompanied this.

[27] For the person who has the opinion that anything is by nature good or bad is disturbed all the time. When the things thought to be good are not available to him, he believes he is being persecuted by things that are by nature bad, and he pursues those that (as he thinks) are good; but upon getting these, he falls into even more disturbance, both because of being excited beyond reason and measure, and because, fearing a change, he does everything in order not to lose the things he thinks are good. [28] But the person who is indefinite about things good or bad in their nature neither flees nor pursues anything intensely, and for this reason has tranquility.

What happened to the skeptic is the same as what's told about the painter Apelles. They say that he was painting a horse and wanted to depict the horse's froth in the painting; but it was

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ἀπετύγχανεν ὡς ἀπειπεῖν καὶ τὴν σπογγιὰν εἰς ἣν ἀπέμασσε τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ γραφείου χρώματα προσρῖψαι τῇ εἰκόνι· τὴν δὲ προσαψαμένην ἵππου ἀφροῦ ποιῆσαι μίμημα. [29] καὶ οἱ σκεπτικοὶ οὖν ἤλιζον μὲν τὴν ἀταραξίαν ἀναλήψεσθαι διὰ τοῦ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν τῶν φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων ἐπικρίναι, μὴ δυνηθέντες δὲ ποιῆσαι τοῦτο ἐπέσχον· ἐπισχοῦσι δὲ αὐτοῖς οἶον τυχικῶς ἢ ἀταραξία παρηκολούθησεν ὡς σκιά σώματι.

οὐ μὴν ἀόκλητον πάντη τὸν σκεπτικὸν εἶναι νομίζομεν, ἀλλ' ὀχλεῖσθαί φαμεν ὑπὸ τῶν καθηναγκασμένων· καὶ γὰρ ῥίγοῦν ποτε ὁμολογοῦμεν καὶ διψῆν καὶ τοιουτότροπά τινα πάσχειν. [30] ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τούτοις οἱ μὲν ἰδιῶται δισσαῖς συνέχονται περιστάσεσιν, ὑπὸ τε τῶν παθῶν αὐτῶν καὶ οὐχ ἦττον ὑπὸ τοῦ τὰς περιστάσεις ταύτας κακὰς εἶναι φύσει δοκεῖν· ὁ δὲ σκεπτικὸς τὸ προσδοξάζειν ὅτι ἔστι κακὸν

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such a failure that he gave up and flung at the picture the sponge he used for wiping the colors off his brush—which, when it hit, created an image of horse-froth. [29] You see, the skeptics too were hoping to achieve tranquility by means of making a ruling on the inconsistency in the things that appear and the things that are thought; and being unable to manage this they suspended judgment. But when they suspended judgment, it sort of just happened that tranquility accompanied this, as a shadow does a body.

It's not as if we think the skeptic is completely trouble-free—we do say that he is troubled by things that are forced on him; for we agree that sometimes he is cold and is thirsty and suffers some other things of this kind. [30] But even in these cases, ordinary people are oppressed by a pair of conditions: by the reactions themselves and, no less, by holding the opinion that these conditions are bad by nature. The skeptic, on the other hand, gets rid of the

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τούτων ἕκαστον ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν περιαιρῶν
μετριώτερον καὶ ἐν τούτοις ἀπαλλάσσει. διὰ
τοῦτο οὖν ἐν μὲν τοῖς δοξαστοῖς ἀταραξίαν
τέλος εἶναί φαμεν τοῦ σκεπτικοῦ, ἐν δὲ τοῖς
κατηναγκασμένοις μετριοπάθειαν. τινὲς δὲ τῶν
δοκίμων σκεπτικῶν προσέθηκαν τούτοις καὶ
τὴν ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσιν ἐποχήν.

[I] Τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἀντίρρη-
σιν κοινότερον μὲν διατεθεῖσθαι δοκοῦσιν οἳ τε
περὶ τὸν Ἐπίκουρον καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ Πύρρωνος,

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additional opinion that each of these things is bad in its nature, and so comes out more moderately even in these cases. For this reason, then, we say that the skeptic's aim is tranquility in matters of opinion and moderate reactions in things that are forced on us. Some esteemed skeptics have added to this "suspension of judgment in investigations."

Sextus also makes some general remarks about skepticism at the beginning of Against Those in the Disciplines (M I–VI), his work on the specialized sciences (grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and music). Though much less detailed, and directed to his treatment of these "disciplines," it is broadly consistent with the picture in Outlines; but there are some interesting differences of tone and emphasis.

[I] The counter-argument against those in the disciplines seems to have been wielded quite generally by both the Epicureans and the

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οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς δὲ διαθέσεως, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν περὶ τὸν Ἐπίκουρον ὡς τῶν μαθημάτων μηδὲν συνεργούντων πρὸς σοφίας τελείωσιν, ἢ, ὡς τινες εἰκάζουσι, τοῦτο προκάλυμμα τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀπαιδευσίας εἶναι νομίζοντες (ἐν πολλοῖς γὰρ ἀμαθῆς Ἐπίκουρος ἐλέγχεται, οὐδὲ ἐν ταῖς κοιναῖς ὁμιλίαις καθαρεύων), [2] τάχα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸς τοὺς περὶ Πλάτωνα καὶ Ἀριστοτέλη καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους δυσμένειαν πολυμαθεῖς γεγονότας· . . . [5] πλὴν ὁ μὲν Ἐπίκουρος, ὡς ἂν τις εἰκοβολῶν εἴποι, ἀπὸ τοιούτων τινῶν ἀφορμῶν πολεμεῖν τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἤξιου, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Πύρρωνος οὔτε διὰ τὸ μηδὲν συνεργεῖν αὐτὰ πρὸς σοφίαν, δογματικὸς γὰρ ὁ λόγος, οὔτε διὰ τὴν προσοῦσαν αὐτοῖς ἀπαιδευσίαν· σὺν γὰρ τῷ πεπαιδεῦσθαι καὶ πολυπειροτέρους παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ὑπάρχειν φιλοσόφους ἔτι καὶ <ἀ>διαφόρως ἔχουσι πρὸς τὴν παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς δόξαν· [6] καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ δυσμενείας χάριν

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Pyrrhonists, though their attitudes were not the same. The Epicureans proceeded on the basis that the disciplines contribute nothing to the achievement of wisdom—or, as some speculate, thinking that this was a cover for their own lack of education (for Epicurus is guilty of being without learning in many things; even in ordinary conversation his usage is impure), [2] and perhaps also because of hostility toward Plato,* Aristotle, and the like, who had extensive learning. . . . [5] Well, this is more or less where Epicurus was coming from, to hazard a guess, when he saw fit to make war on the disciplines. But the Pyrrhonists did so not because they contribute nothing to wisdom—for that is a dogmatic statement—nor because of being characterized by lack of education; for besides being educated and having wider experience than the other philosophers, they are also indifferent to the opinion of the mob. [6] Not that this is due to hostility toward anyone (a vice

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τῆς πρὸς τινὰς (μακρὰν γὰρ αὐτῶν τῆς πραότη-
τός ἐστιν ἢ τοιαύτη κακία)· ἀλλὰ τοιοῦτόν τι ἐπι-
τῶν μαθημάτων παθόντες ὅποιον ἐφ' ὅλης
ἔπαθον τῆς +φιλοσοφίας+. καθὰ γὰρ ἐπὶ ταύ-
την ἦλθον πόθῳ τοῦ τυχεῖν τῆς ἀληθείας, ἰσο-
σθενεῖ δὲ μάχῃ καὶ ἀνωμαλία τῶν πραγμάτων
ὑπαντήσαντες ἐπέσχον, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μα-
θημάτων ὀρμήσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνάληψιν αὐτῶν,
ζητοῦντες καὶ τὸ ἐνταῦθα μαθεῖν ἀληθές, τὰς
δὲ ἴσας εὐρόντες ἀπορίας, οὐκ ἀπεκρύψαντο.
[7] διόπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς τὴν αὐτὴν τούτοις ἀγωγὴν
μεταδιώκοντες πειρασόμεθα χωρὶς φιλονει-
κίας τὰ πραγματικῶς λεγόμενα πρὸς αὐτὰ ἐπι-
λεξάμενοι θεῖναι.

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of that sort is far from their gentleness); but the same sort of thing happened to them in the case of the disciplines as it did in the case of philosophy as a whole. For just as they went after it with a longing to attain the truth, but after encountering conflict of equal strength and inconsistency in the objects they suspended judgment, so too in the case of the disciplines they set out to pick them up, here too seeking to learn the truth, but on discovering equal impasses they did not conceal them. [7] For this reason we too will pursue the same approach as them and will try without contentiousness to select and set out the effective things said against the disciplines.⁸

περὶ τῶν ὀλοσχερῶν
τρόπων τῆς ἐποχῆς

[31] Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ἀταραξίαν ἀκολουθεῖν ἐφάσκομεν τῇ περὶ πάντων ἐποχῇ, ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἶη λέγειν ὅπως ἡμῖν ἡ ἐποχὴ περιγίνεται. γίνεται τοίνυν αὕτη, ὡς ἂν ὀλοσχερέστερον εἴποι τις, διὰ τῆς ἀντιθέσεως τῶν πραγμάτων. ἀντιτίθεμεν δὲ ἢ φαινόμενα φαινομένοις ἢ νοούμενα νοουμένοις ἢ ἐναλλάξ, [32] οἷον φαινό-

CHAPTER 2

Arguments to Have Up Your Sleeve: The Modes

Continuing in book I of Outlines, Sextus immediately follows his general overview with a survey of the Modes, which are ready-made forms of skeptical argument.

On the General Modes of Suspension of Judgment

[31] Since we said that tranquility follows suspension of judgment about everything, the next thing for us to talk about would be how we get to suspension of judgment. It comes about, to speak in rather general terms, by putting things in opposition. We oppose things that appear to things that appear, or things thought to things thought, or interchanging them: [32] for exam-

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μενα μὲν φαινομένοις, ὅταν λέγωμεν ‘ὁ αὐτὸς πύργος πόρρωθεν μὲν φαίνεται στρογγύλος, ἐγγύθεν δὲ τετράγωνος’, νοούμενα δὲ νοουμένοις, ὅταν πρὸς τὸν κατασκευάζοντα ὅτι ἔστι πρόνοια ἐκ τῆς τάξεως τῶν οὐρανίων, ἀντιτιθῶμεν τὸ τοὺς μὲν ἀγαθοὺς δυσπραγεῖν πολλάκις τοὺς δὲ κακοὺς εὐπραγεῖν, καὶ διὰ τούτου συνάγωμεν τὸ μὴ εἶναι πρόνοιαν· [33] νοούμενα δὲ φαινομένοις, ὡς ὁ Ἀναξαγόρας +τῷ λευκῆν εἶναι+ τὴν χιόνα ἀντετίθει, ὅτι ἡ χιὼν ὕδωρ ἐστὶ πεπηγός, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ ἐστὶ μέλαν, καὶ ἡ χιὼν ἄρα μέλαινά ἐστιν.

καθ’ἐτέραν δὲ ἐπίνοιαν ἀντιτίθεμεν ὅτε μὲν παρόντα παροῦσιν, ὡς τὰ προειρημένα· ὅτε δὲ παρόντα παρεληλυθόσιν ἢ μέλλουσιν, οἷον ὅταν τις ἡμᾶς ἐρωτήσῃ λόγον ὃν λῦσαι οὐ δύναμεθα, [34] φαμὲν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅτι, ὥσπερ πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι τὸν εἰσηγησάμενον τὴν αἴρεσιν ἦν μετέρχη, οὐδέπω ὁ κατ’ αὐτὴν λόγος ὑγιῆς

ARGUMENTS TO HAVE UP YOUR SLEEVE

ple, things that appear to things that appear when we say “The same tower appears round from far away but square when close up”; things thought to things thought, when in opposition to the person who maintains that there is providence given the order of the heavenly bodies, we put forward the fact that good people often do badly and bad people do well, and conclude from this that there is no providence; [33] and things thought to things that appear, as when, in opposition to the fact that snow is white, Anaxagoras* put it that snow is frozen water, and water is black, and therefore snow is black.

Thinking of it in another way, we sometimes oppose present things to present things, like the ones just mentioned, but sometimes present things to past or future things. For instance, when someone confronts us with an argument that we cannot undo, [34] we say to him, “Just as before the birth of the person who founded the school you belong to, its reasoning was not

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ὧν ἐφαίμετο, ὑπέκειτο μέντοι ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν, οὕτως ἐνδέχεται καὶ τὸν ἀντικείμενον τῷ ὑπὸ σοῦ ἐρωτηθέντι νῦν λόγῳ ὑποκεῖσθαι μὲν ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν, μηδέπω δ' ἡμῖν φαίνεσθαι, ὥστε οὐδέπω χρὴ συγκατατίθεσθαι ἡμᾶς τῷ δοκοῦντι νῦν ἰσχυρῷ εἶναι λόγῳ.

[35] ὑπὲρ δὲ τοῦ τὰς ἀντιθέσεις ταύτας ἀκριβέστερον ἡμῖν ὑποπεσεῖν, καὶ τοὺς τρόπους ὑποθήσομαι δι' ὧν ἡ ἐποχὴ συνάγεται, οὔτε περὶ τοῦ πλήθους οὔτε περὶ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτῶν διαβεβαιούμενος· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ αὐτοὺς καὶ σαθροὺς εἶναι καὶ πλείους τῶν λεχθησομένων.

περὶ τῶν δέκα τρόπων

[36] Παραδίδονται τοίνυν συνήθως παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαιοτέροις σκεπτικοῖς τρόποι, δι' ὧν ἡ ἐποχὴ συνάγεσθαι δοκεῖ, δέκα τὸν ἀριθμόν . . .

yet apparent as being sound—even though, from nature’s perspective, it was actually there—so too it is possible that the argument opposing the one you have now presented is actually there, from nature’s perspective, but is not yet apparent to us, so that we shouldn’t yet assent to an argument that now seems to be strong.”

[35] But in order for us to get a more exact view of these oppositions, I am going to set out the Modes by which suspension of judgment is produced. I don’t insist on either their number or their force; it’s possible they are unsound, or that there are more than the ones I’m going to speak of.

On the Ten Modes

[36] The older skeptics hand down some Modes, usually ten in number, by which suspension of judgment is thought to be produced. . . .

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[79] . . . δεύτερον δὲ ἐλέγομεν εἶναι τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς διαφορᾶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἵνα γὰρ καθ' ὑπόθεσιν καὶ συγχωρήσῃ τις πιστοτέρους εἶναι τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, εὐρήσομεν καὶ ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ διαφορᾷ τὴν ἐποχὴν εἰσαγομένην. δύο τοίνυν εἶναι λεγομένων ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, κατ' ἄμφω ταῦτα διαφέρομεν ἀλλήλων, οἷον κατὰ σῶμα ταῖς τε μορφαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἰδιοσυγκρισίαις. [80] διαφέρει μὲν γὰρ κατὰ μορφήν σῶμα Σκύθου Ἰνδοῦ σώματος, τὴν δὲ παραλλαγὴν ποιεῖ, καθάπερ φασίν, ἢ διάφορος

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Sextus now gives a list of the Ten Modes and various ways of classifying them. He then dwells at some length on the first mode, which focuses on differences in how things appear to humans and to other animals. We pick up the story with the second Mode:

[79] . . . The second one, we said, was based on the differences among humans. For even if one agrees, for the sake of argument, that humans are to be trusted more than the non-rational animals, we shall find suspension of judgment coming on the scene as far as our own differences are concerned. The human being is said to be composed of two things—soul and body—and in both these respects we differ from one another. With respect to the body, for example, in shape and in our individual mixtures.¹
[80] A Scythian's body differs in shape from an Indian's body, and what creates this diversity, so they say, is a difference in which humors are

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τῶν χυμῶν ἐπικράτεια. παρὰ δὲ τὴν διάφορον τῶν χυμῶν ἐπικράτειαν διάφοροι γίνονται καὶ αἱ φαντασίαι, . . . ταῦτά τοι καὶ ἐν τῇ αἰρέσει καὶ φυγῇ τῶν ἐκτὸς διαφορὰ πολλὴ κατ' αὐτούς ἐστιν· ἄλλοις γὰρ χαίρουσιν Ἴνδοι καὶ ἄλλοις οἱ καθ' ἡμᾶς, τὸ δὲ διάφοροις χαίρειν τοῦ παρηλλαγμένης ἀπὸ τῶν ὑποκειμένων φαντασίας λαμβάνειν ἐστὶ μνηυτικόν. [81] κατὰ δὲ ἰδιοσυγκρισίας διαφέρομεν ὡς ἐνίους κρέα βόεια πετραίων ἰχθυδίων ῥᾶον πέττειν καὶ ὑπὸ Λεσβίου οἶναρίου εἰς χολέραν περιτρέπεσθαι. ἦν δέ, φασίν, γραῦς Ἀττικὴ τριάκοντα ὀλκὰς κωνείου ἀκινδύνως προσφερομένη, Λῦσις δὲ καὶ μηκωνείου τέσσαρας ὀλκὰς ἀλύπως ἐλάμβανεν. [82] καὶ Δημοφῶν μὲν ὁ Ἀλεξάνδρου τραπεζοπιὸς ἐν ἡλίῳ γινόμενος ἢ ἐν βαλανείῳ ἐρρίγου, ἐν σκιᾷ δὲ ἐθάλπεται, Ἀθηναγώρας δὲ ὁ Ἀργεῖος ὑπὸ σκορπίων καὶ φαλαγγίων ἀλύπως ἐπλήσσετο, οἱ δὲ καλούμενοι Ψυλλαεῖς οὐδ' ὑπὸ

dominant. And corresponding to the difference in which humors are dominant, the appearances come to be different too. . . . Hence there is also a lot of difference among them in the choice and avoidance of things out there. Indians like some things and we like others, and liking different things is an indication that we get diverse appearances from the actual objects. [81] Our differences in terms of individual mixture mean that some of us digest beef more easily than rockfish and suffer diarrhea from the lousy wine of Lesbos. There was an old woman of Attica, they say, who consumed thirty drams² of hemlock without ill effect, and Lysis took four drams of opium and came to no harm. [82] Demophon, Alexander's steward, would shiver when he was in the sun or in the bath but was warm in the shade. Athenagoras of Argos was stung by scorpions and poisonous spiders and came to no harm. And the people called Psyllaeans are not hurt when they are bitten by

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ὄφρων ἢ ἀσπίδων δακνόμενοι βλάπτονται, [83] οἱ δὲ Τεντυρίται τῶν Αἰγυπτίων οὐ βλάπτονται πρὸς [ἄνω κάτω] τῶν κροκοδείλων. ἀλλὰ καὶ Αἰθιόπων οἱ ἀντιπέραν τῆς Μερόης παρὰ τὸν Ἀστάπουν ποταμὸν οἰκοῦντες σκορπίους καὶ ὄφεις καὶ τὰ παραπλήσια ἀκινδύνως ἐσθίουσιν. καὶ Ῥουφῖνος δὲ ὁ ἐν Χαλκίδι πίνων ἐλλέβορον οὔτε ἡμεῖ οὔτε ὄλως ἐκαθαίρετο, ἀλλ' ὡς τι τῶν συνήθων προσεφέρετο καὶ ἔπεσεν. [84] Χρῦσερμος δὲ ὁ Ἡροφίλειος εἴ ποτε πέπερι προσηνέγκατο, καρδιακῶς ἐκινδύνευεν. καὶ Σωτήριχος δὲ ὁ χειρουργὸς εἴ ποτε σιλούρων ἤσθετο κνίσσης, χολέρα ἠλίσκετο. Ἄνδρων δὲ ὁ Ἀργεῖος οὔτως ἄδιψος ἦν ὡς καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀνύδρου Λιβύης ὀδεύειν αὐτὸν μὴ ἐπιζητοῦντα ποτόν. Τιβέριος δὲ ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐν σκότῳ ἑώρα. Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ ἱστορεῖ Θάσιόν τινα ᾧ ἐδόκει ἀνθρώπου εἶδωλον προηγεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ διὰ παντός.

[85] τοσαύτης οὖν παραλλαγῆς οὔσης ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις κατὰ τὰ σώματα, ἵνα ὀλίγα ἀπὸ

snakes or asps, [83] nor are the Tentyritae of Egypt hurt by crocodiles. Moreover, the Ethiopians who live on the Astapus river on the other side of Lake Meroë eat scorpions and snakes and the like without ill effect. And Rufinus of Chalcis drank hellebore but didn't vomit—in fact, there was no purging at all; he consumed and digested it just like something normal. [84] Chrysermus the Herophilean³ risked heart trouble if he ever consumed pepper. And Soterichus the surgeon had an attack of diarrhea if he ever smelled catfish frying. Andron of Argos was so immune from thirst that he could go through the Libyan desert without requiring a drink. The emperor Tiberius could see in the dark. And Aristotle tells of a Thasian who had the impression that a phantom person was going in front of him all the time.

[85] Since, then, there is so much diversity among human beings in terms of their bodies—

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πολλῶν [τῶν παρὰ τοῖς δογματικοῖς κειμένων]
ἀρκεσθῶμεν εἰπόντες, εἰκός ἐστι καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν
τὴν ψυχὴν διαφέρειν ἀλλήλων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους·
τύπος γάρ τις ἐστι τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς καὶ ἡ
φυσιογνωμονικὴ σοφία δείκνυσιν. τὸ δὲ μέγι-
στον δεῖγμα τῆς κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν ἀνθρώ-
πων πολλῆς καὶ ἀπείρου διαφορᾶς ἢ διαφωνία
τῶν παρὰ τοῖς δογματικοῖς λεγομένων περὶ τε
τῶν ἄλλων καὶ περὶ τοῦ τίνα μὲν αἰρεῖσθαι προ-
σῆκει τίνα δὲ ἐκκλίνειν. [86] δεόντως οὖν καὶ οἱ
ποιηταὶ περὶ τούτων ἀπεφήναντο· ὁ μὲν γὰρ
Πίνδαρός φησιν

ἀελλοπόδων μὲν τιν' εὐφραίνουσιν ἵππων
τιμαί <τε> καὶ στέφανοι,
τοὺς δ' ἐν πολυχρύσοις θαλάμοις βιοτά·
τέρπεται δὲ καὶ τις ἐπ' οἶδμ' ἄλιον
ναῖ θοᾶ διαμείβων.

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to make do with telling a few cases out of many— chances are that humans also differ from one another in terms of the soul itself; for the body is a sort of replica of the soul, as the science of physiognomy shows. The biggest evidence of the great and endless difference in the thought of human beings is the disagreement in what is said by the dogmatists about (among other things) what we ought to choose and what we ought to avoid. [86] The pronouncements of the poets about these things are spot on. Pindar says:

One delights in the honors and crowns
He wins with his storm-footed horses;
For others it's living in gold-encrusted
 mansions;
Some even find joy in speeding over
The sea swell in a ship.

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ὁ δὲ ποιητὴς λέγει

ἄλλος γάρ τ' ἄλλοισιν ἀνὴρ ἐπιτέρπεται
ἔργοις.

ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ τραγωδία μεστή τῶν τοιούτων ἐστὶ
λέγει γοῦν

εἰ πᾶσι ταῦτὸν καλὸν ἔφυ σοφὸν θ' ἅμα,
οὐκ ἦν ἂν ἀμφίλεκτος ἀνθρώποις ἔρις,

καὶ πάλιν

δεινὸν γε ταῦτὸν τοῖς μὲν ἀνδάνειν βροτῶν
τοῖς δ' ἔχθος εἶναι.

[87] ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡ αἵρεσις καὶ ἡ φυγὴ ἐν ἡδονῇ
καὶ ἀηδισμῷ ἐστίν, ἡ δὲ ἡδονὴ καὶ ὁ ἀηδισμὸς
ἐν αἰσθήσει κεῖται καὶ φαντασία, ὅταν τὰ αὐτὰ

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And the poet⁴ says:

Different men delight in different deeds.

Tragedy is also full of this kind of thing—for instance:

If fine and wise had the same nature for all
There wouldn't be conflict and strife
among humans;⁵

And again:

Amazing that the same thing pleases some
mortals
While others hate it.

[87] So, since choosing and avoiding are a matter of pleasure and displeasure, and pleasure and displeasure are a function of sense-perception and appearance, we can validly infer, when the

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οἱ μὲν αἰρῶνται οἱ δὲ φεύγωσιν, ἀκόλουθον ἡμᾶς ἐπιλογίζεσθαι ὅτι οὐδὲ ὁμοίως ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν κινουῦνται, ἐπεὶ ὁμοίως ἂν τὰ αὐτὰ ἤροῦντο ἢ ἐξέκλινον. εἰ δὲ τὰ <αὐτὰ> διαφόρως κινεῖ παρὰ τὴν διαφορὰν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, εἰσάγοιτ' ἂν εἰκότως καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ἡ ἐποχή, ὅ τι μὲν ἕκαστον φαίνεται τῶν ὑποκειμένων ὡς πρὸς ἐκάστην διαφορὰν ἴσως λέγειν ἡμῶν δυναμένων, τί δὲ ἔστι [κατὰ δύναμιν] ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν οὐχ οἴων τε ὄντων ἀποφήνασθαι. [88] ἦτοι γὰρ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πιστεύσομεν ἢ τισίν. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν πᾶσιν, καὶ ἀδυνάτοις ἐπιχειρήσομεν καὶ τὰ ἀντικείμενα παραδεξόμεθα· εἰ δὲ τισίν, εἰπάτωσαν ἡμῖν τίσι χρὴ συγκατατίθεσθαι· ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πλατωνικὸς λέξει ὅτι Πλάτωνι, ὁ Ἐπικούρειος δὲ Ἐπικούρω, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἀναλόγως, καὶ οὕτως ἀνεπικρίτως στασιάζοντες αὐθις ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐποχὴν περιστήσουσιν.

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same things are chosen by some and avoided by others, that they are not affected alike by the same things, since in that case they would have acted alike by choosing or steering clear of the same things. But if the same things affect them differently given the difference among humans, suspension of judgment will likely be introduced on this score too: we'll maybe be able to say how each of the actual objects *appears*, from the standpoint of each difference, but what it *is* in respect of its nature we will not be able to state. [88] For either we're going to trust all humans or just some. But if we trust all, we'll be trying our hand at something impossible: accepting things that are opposed. But if it's just some, let them tell us *who* we must assent to. The Platonist will say "Plato," the Epicurean "Epicurus," and the others along the same lines; and so, being in a state of unresolved disagreement, they will again bring us round to suspension of judgment.

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[89] ὁ δὲ λέγων ὅτι τοῖς πλείστοις δεῖ συγκατατίθεσθαι παιδαριῶδές τι προοίσεται, οὐδενὸς δυναμένου πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐπελθεῖν καὶ διαλογίσασθαι τί τοῖς πλείστοις ἀρέσκει, ἐνδεχομένου τοῦ ἔντισιν ἔθνεσιν, ἃ ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἴσμεν, τὰ μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν σπάνια τοῖς πλείοσι προσεῖναι τὰ δὲ ἡμῶν τοῖς πολλοῖς συμβαίνοντα σπάνια ὑπάρχειν, ὡς τοὺς πολλοὺς μὲν ὑπὸ φαλαγγίων δακνομένους μὴ ἀλγεῖν, τινὰς δὲ σπανίως ἀλγεῖν, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἔμπροσθεν εἰρημένων ἰδιοσυγκρισιῶν τὸ ἀνάλογον. ἀναγκαῖον οὖν καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαφορὰν εἰσάγεσθαι τὴν ἐποχὴν.

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[89] And a person who says that we must assent to the majority is proposing something childish. No one can consult all humanity and figure out what pleases the most. It could be that, among peoples we don't know, what for us is rare belongs to the majority, while what characterizes most of us is rare—such as most of them not feeling pain when bitten by poisonous spiders, while some of them feel pain just occasionally, and correspondingly with the other individual mixtures, as mentioned before. Suspension of judgment, then, is also inevitably introduced because of the difference among humans.

The Ten Modes continue with many other types of conflicting impressions, designed to generate suspension of judgment; Modes 3–9 focus on (3) differences among the senses; (4) differences in circumstances; (5) differences in positions, distances, and places; (6) mixtures; (7) differences

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[145] Δέκατός ἐστι τρόπος, ὃς καὶ μάλιστα συνέχει πρὸς τὰ ἠθικά, ὁ παρὰ τὰς ἀγωγὰς καὶ τὰ ἔθη καὶ τοὺς νόμους καὶ τὰς μυθικὰς πίστεις καὶ τὰς δογματικὰς ὑπολήψεις. ἀγωγή μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν αἴρεσις βίου ἢ τινος πράγματος περὶ ἓνα ἢ πολλοὺς γινομένη, οἷον περὶ Διογένην ἢ τοὺς Λάκωνας· [146] νόμος δέ ἐστὶν ἔγγραφος συνθήκη παρὰ τοῖς πολιτευομένοις, ἣν ὁ παραβαίνων κολάζεται, ἔθος δὲ ἢ συνήθεια (οὐ διαφέρει γάρ) πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων κοινὴ πράγματός τινος παραδοχὴ, ἣν ὁ παραβὰς οὐ πάντως κολάζεται, οἷον νόμος ἐστὶ τὸ μὴ μοιχεύειν, ἔθος δὲ ἡμῖν τὸ μὴ δημοσίᾳ γυναικὶ μίγνυσθαι. [147] μυθικὴ δὲ πίστις ἐστὶ πραγμάτων ἀγενήτων τε

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in the quantities and arrangements of things; (8) relativity; and (9) frequent versus rare occurrences of things. It is perhaps the tenth Mode that resonates most with contemporary concerns:

[145] The tenth Mode, which connects especially with ethical matters, is the one that concerns ways of life, customs, laws, mythical beliefs, and dogmatic suppositions. A way of life is a choice of a life, or of a certain practice, that involves one person or many (for example, Diogenes*, or the Spartans); [146] a law is a written agreement on the part of the citizens, which one is punished for contravening; a custom or habit (there's no difference) is a common acceptance by many people of a certain practice, which one is not always punished for contravening—for example, there is a law against committing adultery, but it is a custom with us not to have intercourse with a woman in public. [147] A mythical belief is an acceptance of

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καὶ πεπλασμένων παραδοχή, οἷά ἐστιν ἄλλα τε καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ Κρόνου μυθεύόμενα· ταῦτα γὰρ πολλοὺς εἰς πίστιν ἄγει. δογματικὴ δὲ ἐστὶν ὑπόληψις παραδοχὴ πράγματος δι' ἀναλογισμοῦ ἢ τινος ἀποδείξεως κρατύνεσθαι δοκοῦσα, οἷον ὅτι ἄτομα ἔστι τῶν ὄντων στοιχεῖα ἢ ὁμοιομερῆ <ἦ> ἐλάχιστα ἢ τινα ἄλλα.

[148] ἀντιτίθεμεν δὲ τούτων ἕκαστον ὅτε μὲν ἑαυτῷ, ὅτε δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἐκάστω. οἷον ἔθος μὲν ἔθει οὕτως· τινὲς τῶν Αἰθιοπῶν στίζουσι τὰ βρέφη, ἡμεῖς δ' οὐ· καὶ Πέρσαι μὲν ἀνθοβαφεῖ ἐσθῆτι καὶ ποδήρει χρῆσθαι νομίζουσιν εὐπρεπὲς εἶναι, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀπρεπές· καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἴνδοι ταῖς γυναιξὶ δημοσίᾳ μίγνυνται, οἱ δὲ πλειστοὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσχρὸν τοῦτο εἶναι ἡγοῦνται. [149] νόμον δὲ νόμῳ οὕτως ἀντιτίθεμεν· παρὰ μὲν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ὁ τῆς πατρώας ἀποστάς οὐσίας οὐκ ἀποδίδωσι τὰ τοῦ πατρὸς χρέα, παρὰ

things that didn't happen and are made up, such as, among others, the myths told about Cronus*; many people are drawn to a belief in these. And a dogmatic supposition is an acceptance of a matter that seems to be confirmed through reasoning by analogy or some kind of demonstration—for example, that there are elements of things: atomic, or like-parted,⁶ or minimal, or something else.

[I48] We oppose each of these sometimes with itself, and sometimes with each of the others. For example, custom to custom: some Ethiopians tattoo their babies, but we don't; the Persians think it's appropriate to wear brightly colored clothing down to the ground, but we think it's inappropriate; and the Indians have intercourse with women in public, while most other people consider this to be shameful. [I49] We oppose law to law like this: among the Romans, if you give up your father's property you don't pay your father's debts, but among the

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δὲ τοῖς Ῥοδίοις πάντως ἀποδίδωσιν· καὶ ἐν μὲν Ταύροις τῆς Σκυθίας νόμος ἦν τοὺς ξένους τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι καλλιερεῖσθαι, παρὰ δὲ ἡμῖν ἄνθρωπον ἀπείρηται πρὸς ἱερῶ φονεύεσθαι. [150] ἀγωγὴν δὲ ἀγωγῆ, ὅταν τὴν Διογένους ἀγωγὴν ἀντιτιθῶμεν τῇ τοῦ Ἀριστίππου ἢ τὴν τῶν Λακόνων τῇ τῶν Ἰταλῶν. μυθικὴν δὲ πίστιν πίστει μυθικῆ, ὅταν ὅπου μὲν <λέγωμεν> τὸν Δία μυθεύεσθαι πατέρα ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, ὅπου δὲ τὸν Ὠκεανόν, λέγοντες

Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν.

[151] δογματικὰς δὲ ὑπολήψεις ἀλλήλαις ἀντιτίθεμεν, ὅταν λέγωμεν τοὺς μὲν εἶναι στοιχεῖον ἀποφαίνεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ ἄπειρα, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θνητὴν τὴν ψυχὴν, τοὺς δὲ ἀθάνατον, καὶ τοὺς μὲν προνοία θεῶν διοικεῖσθαι τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς, τοὺς δὲ ἀπρονοήτως.

[152] τὸ ἔθος δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀντιτίθεμεν, οἷον νόμῳ μὲν, ὅταν λέγωμεν παρὰ μὲν Πέρσαις ἔθος εἶναι ἀρρενομιξίαις χρῆσθαι, παρὰ δὲ

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Rhodians, you certainly do; and among the Tauri of Scythia there was a law that foreigners should be sacrificed to Artemis, whereas with us killing a human at a temple is forbidden. [150] We oppose way of life to way of life when we oppose Diogenes' way of life to Aristippus', or the Spartans' to the Italians'. We oppose mythical belief to mythical belief when in one place we say that, as myth has it, Zeus is the father of gods and men, and in another place that it's Ocean, as in "Ocean, source of the gods, and Tethys their mother." [151] And we oppose dogmatic suppositions to one another when we say that some declare that there is one element, others an infinite number, and some that the soul is mortal, others that it is immortal, and some that our affairs are managed by divine providence, others without providence.

[152] We oppose custom to the others—for example, to law, when we say that among the Persians homosexual behavior is the custom,

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Ῥωμαίοις ἀπαγορεύεσθαι νόμῳ τοῦτο πράττειν, καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν μὲν τὸ μοιχεύειν ἀπειρησθαι, παρὰ δὲ Μασσαγέταις <έν> ἀδιαφορίας ἔθει παραδεδόσθαι, ὡς Εὐδοξος ὁ Κνίδιος ἱστορεῖ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς περιόδου, καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν μὲν ἀπηγορευῆσθαι μητράσι μίγνυσθαι, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Πέρσαις ἔθος εἶναι μάλιστα οὕτω γαμεῖν. καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις δὲ τὰς ἀδελφὰς γαμοῦσιν, ὃ παρ' ἡμῖν ἀπειρήται νόμῳ. [153] ἀγωγῇ δὲ ἔθος ἀντιτίθεται, ὅταν οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι ἀναχωροῦντες μίγνύωνται ταῖς ἑαυτῶν γυναιξίν, ὃ δὲ Κράτης τῇ Ἰπαρχίᾳ δημοσίᾳ· καὶ ὁ μὲν Διογένης ἀπὸ ἐξωμίδος περιήει, ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς εἰώθαμεν. [154] μυθικῇ δὲ πίστει, [ὡς] ὅταν λέγωσιν οἱ μῦθοι ὅτι ὁ Κρόνος κατήσθιεν αὐτοῦ τὰ τέκνα, ἔθους ὄντος ἡμῖν προνοεῖσθαι παίδων· καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν μὲν συνήθεια ὡς ἀγαθοὺς καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν σέβειν τοὺς θεοὺς, τιτρωσκόμενοι δὲ καὶ φθονοῦντες ἀλλήλοις ὑπὸ τῶν ποιη-

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whereas among the Romans this practice is forbidden by law; and that among us adultery is forbidden, while among the Massagetae it is allowed by custom as indifferent,⁷ as Eudoxus of Cnidus recounts in the first book of his *Circuit of the Earth*; and that among us intercourse with mothers is forbidden, whereas among the Persians this kind of marriage is most customary. And in Egypt they marry their sisters, which with us is forbidden by law. [153] And custom is opposed to way of life, when most people have intercourse with their wives in private, but Crates* did it with Hipparchia* in public; and Diogenes went around with clothes off the shoulder,⁸ while we dress in the accustomed way. [154] It's opposed to mythical belief when the myths say that Cronus ate his own children, while our custom is to take care of our children; and it's our habit to revere the gods as good and not subject to evils, but they are presented by the poets as getting wounded and

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τῶν εἰσάγονται. [155] δογματικῇ δὲ ὑπολήψει, ὅταν ἡμῖν μὲν ἔθος ἦ παρὰ θεῶν αἰτεῖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ, ὁ δὲ Ἐπίκουρος λέγῃ μὴ ἐπιστρέφεσθαι ἡμῶν τὸ θεῖον, καὶ ὅταν ὁ μὲν Ἀρίστιππος ἀδιάφορον ἡγῆται τὸ γυναικείαν ἀμφιέννυσθαι στολήν, ἡμεῖς δὲ αἰσχροὺς τοῦτο ἡγώμεθα εἶναι.

[156] ἀγωγὴν δὲ ἀντιτίθεμεν νόμῳ μὲν, ὅταν νόμου ὄντος μὴ ἐξεῖναι τύπτειν ἄνδρα ἐλεύθερον καὶ εὐγενῆ οἱ παγκρατιασταὶ τύπτωσιν ἀλλήλους διὰ τὴν ἀγωγὴν τοῦ κατ' αὐτοὺς βίου, καὶ ὅταν ἀπειρημένου τοῦ ἀνδροφονεῖν οἱ μονομάχαι ἀναιρῶσιν ἀλλήλους διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν. [157] μυθικὴν δὲ πίστιν ἀγωγῇ ἀντιτίθεμεν, ἐπειδὴν λέγωμεν ὅτι οἱ μὲν μῦθοι παρὰ τῆ Ὀμφάλῃ τὸν Ἡρακλέα λέγουσιν

εἰριά τε ξαίνειν καὶ δουλοσύνης ἀνέχεσθαι

καὶ ταῦτα ποιῆσαι ἅπερ οὐδ' ἂν μετρίως προηρημένος ἐποίησεν ἂν τις, ἢ δὲ ἀγωγὴ τοῦ βίου τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ἦν γενναία. [158] δογματικῇ δὲ ὑπολήψει, ὅταν οἱ μὲν ἀθληταὶ ὡς ἀγαθοῦ

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being jealous of one another. [155] And it's opposed to dogmatic supposition when it's our custom to ask for good things from the gods, but Epicurus says that the divine doesn't pay attention to us; and when Aristippus holds that wearing a woman's outfit is indifferent, whereas we hold that this is shameful.

[156] We oppose way of life to law when, though it's a law that you're not allowed to hit a free man of good birth, pancration⁹ contestants hit each other because that's their way of life, and, though homicide is forbidden, gladiators do away with one another for the same reason. [157] We oppose mythical belief to way of life when we say that the myths tell of Hercules at Omphale's place "carding wool and enduring slavery" and doing things that no one would have done by choice, even within limits—but Hercules' way of life was noble. [158] And way of life to dogmatic supposition when athletes strive for celebrity as something good and

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<τινος> τῆς δόξης ἀντιποιοῦμενοι ἐπίπονον ἀγωγὴν βίου δι' αὐτὴν ἐπαναιρῶνται, πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν φιλοσόφων φαῦλον εἶναι τὴν δόξαν δογματίζουσιν. [159] τὸν δὲ νόμον ἀντιτίθεμεν μυθικῇ μὲν πίστει, ὅταν οἱ μὲν ποιηταὶ εἰσάγωσι τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ μοιχεύοντας καὶ ἀρρενομιξίαις χρωμένους, νόμος δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν κωλύη ταῦτα πράττειν, [160] δογματικῇ δὲ ὑπολήψει, ὅταν οἱ μὲν περὶ Χρῦσιππον ἀδιάφορον εἶναι λέγωσι τὸ μητράσιν ἢ ἀδελφαῖς μίγνυσθαι, ὁ δὲ νόμος ταῦτα κωλύη. [161] μυθικὴν δὲ πίστιν δογματικῇ ὑπολήψει ἀντιτίθεμεν, ὅταν οἱ μὲν ποιηταὶ λέγωσι τὸν Δία κατελθόντα θνηταῖς γυναιξὶ μίγνυσθαι, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς δογματικοῖς ἀδύνατον τοῦτο εἶναι νομίζεται, [162] καὶ ὁ μὲν ποιητὴς λέγη, ὅτι Ζεὺς διὰ τὸ πένθος τὸ ἐπὶ Σαρπηδόνι αἵματοέσσας ψεκάδας κατέχευεν ἔραζε, δόγμα μέντοι φιλοσόφων <ἧ> ἀπαθὲς εἶναι τὸ θεῖον, καὶ ὅταν τὸν τῶν ἵπποκενταύρων μῦθον ἀναιρῶσιν, ἀνυπαρξίας παράδειγμα τὸν ἵπποκένταυρον ἡμῖν φέροντες.

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undertake a tough way of life because of it, yet many philosophers have the doctrine that celebrity is a trivial thing. [159] We oppose law to mythical belief when the poets present the gods committing adultery and engaging in homosexual behavior, but among us the law prohibits doing these things; [160] and to dogmatic supposition, when Chrysippus* says that intercourse with mothers and sisters is indifferent, but the law prohibits this. [161] And we oppose mythical belief to dogmatic supposition, when the poets say that Zeus came down and had intercourse with mortal women, while among the dogmatists this is thought to be impossible; [162] and when the poet says that because of his grief over Sarpedon, Zeus “poured down drops of blood towards the earth,” yet the philosophers’ doctrine is that the divine is unaffected; and when they do away with the myth of the centaurs, bringing us the centaur as an example of non-existence.

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[163] πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα ἐνῆν καθ'ἐκάστην τῶν προειρημένων ἀντιθέσεων λαμβάνειν παραδείγματα· ὡς ἐν συντόμῳ δὲ λόγῳ ταῦτα ἀρκέσει. πλὴν τοσαύτης ἀνωμαλίας πραγμάτων καὶ διὰ τούτου τοῦ τρόπου δεικνυμένης, ὅποῖον μὲν ἔστι τὸ ὑποκείμενον κατὰ τὴν φύσιν οὐκ ἔξομεν λέγειν, ὅποῖον δὲ φαίνεται πρὸς τήνδε τὴν ἀγωγὴν ἢ πρὸς τόνδε τὸν νόμον ἢ πρὸς τόδε τὸ ἔθος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον. καὶ διὰ τοῦτον οὖν περὶ τῆς φύσεως τῶν ἐκτὸς ὑποκειμένων πραγμάτων ἐπέχειν ἡμᾶς ἀνάγκη. οὕτω μὲν οὖν διὰ τῶν δέκα τρόπων καταλήγομεν εἰς τὴν ἐποχὴν.

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[I63] Well, it would be possible to find many other examples under each of the oppositions we've mentioned; but for an abbreviated account, this will do. Now, since so much inconsistency in things has been shown by means of this Mode too, we will not be able to say what the actual object is like in its nature, but only how it appears in relation to this way of life, or in relation to this law, or in relation to this custom, and so on. And for this reason we have to suspend judgment about the nature of the actual objects out there. So this is how we end up at suspension of judgment via the ten Modes.

Sextus immediately follows with the Five Modes, which are much more general and (unlike the Ten) designed to fit together as a system:

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περὶ τῶν πέντε τρόπων

[164] οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι σκεπτικοὶ παραδιδάσκει τρούπους τῆς ἐποχῆς πέντε τούσδε, πρῶτον τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς διαφωνίας, δεύτερον τὸν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκβάλλοντα, τρίτον τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς τι, τέταρτον τὸν ὑποθετικόν, πέμπτον τὸν διάλληλον. [165] καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς διαφωνίας ἐστὶ καθ' ὃν περὶ τοῦ προτεθέντος πράγματος ἀνεπίκριτον στάσιν παρά τε τῷ βίῳ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις εὐρίσκομεν γεγενημένην, δι' ἣν οὐ δυνάμενοι αἰρεῖσθαι τι ἢ ἀποδοκιμάζειν καταλήγομεν εἰς ἐποχὴν. [166] ὁ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπτώσεως ἐστὶν ἐν ᾧ τὸ φερόμενον εἰς πίστιν τοῦ προτεθέντος πράγματος πίστεως ἐτέρας χρῆζειν λέγομεν, κάκεῖνο ἄλλης, καὶ μέχρις ἀπείρου, ὡς μὴ ἐχόντων ἡμῶν πόθεν ἀρξόμεθα τῆς κατασκευῆς τὴν ἐποχὴν ἀκολουθεῖν. [167] ὁ

On the Five Modes

[164] The more recent skeptics hand down five Modes of suspension of judgment, as follows: first, the one from dispute; second, the one that throws you into an infinite regress; third, the one from relativity; fourth, the hypothetical one; and fifth, the reciprocal one. [165] The one from dispute works by our finding that an unresolved standoff is in place on the matter under consideration, both in ordinary life and among philosophers; because of this, we can't choose or reject anything, and so we end up at suspension of judgment. [166] The one from infinite regress is where we say that what's brought forward as a guarantee on the matter under consideration is in need of a further guarantee, and *that* one is in need of another, and so on to infinity, so that we don't have anywhere from which to begin building things up, and suspension of judgment follows. [167] The one from

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δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς τι . . . ἐν ᾧ πρὸς μὲν τὸ κρῖνον καὶ τὰ συνθεωρούμενα τοῖον ἢ τοῖον φαίνεται τὸ ὑποκείμενον, ὁποῖον δὲ ἔστι πρὸς τὴν φύσιν ἐπέχομεν. [168] ὁ δὲ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἔστιν ὅταν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκβαλλόμενοι οἱ δογματικοὶ ἀποτινος ἄρξωνται ὃ οὐ κατασκευάζουσιν ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀναποδείκτως κατὰ συγχώρησιν λαμβάνειν ἀξιοῦσιν. [169] ὁ δὲ διάλληλος τρόπος συνίσταται, ὅταν τὸ ὀφείλον τοῦ ζητουμένου πράγματος εἶναι βεβαιωτικὸν χρεῖαν ἔχη τῆς ἐκ τοῦ ζητουμένου πίστεως· ἔνθα μηδέτερον δυνάμενοι λαβεῖν πρὸς κατασκευὴν θατέρου, περὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἐπέχομεν.

ὅτι δὲ πᾶν τὸ ζητούμενον εἰς τούτους ἀνάγειν τοὺς τρόπους ἐνδέχεται, διὰ βραχέων ὑποδείξομεν οὕτως. [170] τὸ προτεθὲν ἦτοι αἰσθητὸν ἔστιν ἢ νοητὸν, ὁποῖον δ' ἂν ᾖ, διαπε-

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relativity . . . is where the actual object *appears* this way or that in relation to what's doing the judging (and the things observed at the same time), but we suspend judgment on how it *is* in its nature. [168] The one from hypothesis is when, on being thrown into an infinite regress, the dogmatists start from something that they don't establish, but decide it's OK simply to assume as a matter of agreement, without demonstration. [169] And the reciprocal Mode arises when what is supposed to provide confirmation of the matter being investigated is in need of a guarantee *from* the thing under investigation; and so, being unable to assume either for the purpose of establishing the other, we suspend judgment about both.

That it's possible to bring every object of investigation under these Modes, we will show briefly as follows. [170] The point under consideration is either something perceived or something thought, and whichever it is, there is

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φώνηται· οί μὲν γὰρ τὰ αἰσθητὰ μόνα φασὶν εἶναι ἀληθῆ, οἱ δὲ μόνα τὰ νοητά, οἱ δὲ τινα μὲν αἰσθητὰ, τινα δὲ νοητά. πότερον οὖν ἐπικριτὴν εἶναι φήσουσι τὴν διαφωνίαν ἢ ἀνεπίκριτον; εἰ μὲν ἀνεπίκριτον, +ἔχομεν+ ὅτι δεῖ ἐπέχειν· περὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀνεπικρίτως διαφωνουμένων οὐχ οἷόν τέ ἐστὶν ἀποφαίνεσθαι. εἰ δὲ ἐπικριτὴν, πόθεν ἐπικριθήσεται πυνθανόμεθα. [171] οἷον τὸ αἰσθητὸν (ἐπὶ τούτου γὰρ προτέρου στήσομεν τὸν λόγον) πότερον ὑπὸ αἰσθητοῦ ἢ ὑπὸ νοητοῦ; εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ αἰσθητοῦ, ἐπεὶ περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ζητοῦμεν, καὶ ἐκεῖνο ἄλλου δεήσεται πρὸς πίστιν. εἰ δὲ κάκεῖνο αἰσθητὸν ἔσται, πάλιν καὶ αὐτὸ ἄλλου δεήσεται τοῦ πιστώσωντος, καὶ τοῦτο μέχρις ἀπείρου. [172] εἰ δὲ ὑπὸ νοητοῦ ἐπικρίνεσθαι δεήσει τὸ αἰσθητὸν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ νοητὰ διαπεφώνηται, δεήσεται καὶ τοῦτο

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dispute about it; for some people say that it's only things perceived that are true, others that it's only things thought, and others that it's some things perceived and some things thought. So, are they going to say that the dispute is decidable or undecidable? If it's undecidable, we have the result that we must suspend judgment; for about matters of unresolved dispute it's not possible to take a position. But if it is decidable, we ask on what basis it is going to be decided. [171] For example, will the thing perceived (we'll set up the argument with this one first) be decided by a thing perceived or by a thing thought? If it's by a thing perceived, then since things perceived are what our investigation is about, that too will need something else as a guarantee. And if that too is a thing perceived, *it* will also need something else to provide a guarantee, and so on to infinity. [172] But if the thing perceived has to be decided on by a thing thought, then since things thought are also a

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νοητὸν ὃν κρίσεώς τε καὶ πίστεως. πόθεν οὖν πιστωθήσεται; εἰ μὲν ὑπὸ νοητοῦ, εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπεσεῖται ὁμοίως· εἰ δ' ὑπὸ αἰσθητοῦ, ἐπεὶ πρὸς μὲν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ παρελήφθη νοητόν, πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ πίστιν αἰσθητόν, ὁ διάλληλος εἰσάγεται τρόπος. [173] εἰ δὲ ταῦτα φεύγων ὁ προσδιαλεγόμενος ἡμῖν κατὰ συγχώρησιν καὶ ἀναποδείκτως ἀξιῶσειε λαμβάνειν τι πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν τῶν ἐξῆς, ὁ ὑποθετικὸς εἰσαχθήσεται τρόπος, ἄπορος ὑπάρχων. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ὑποτιθέμενος πιστὸς ἐστίν, ἡμεῖς αἰετὸ ἀντικείμενον ὑποτιθέμενοι οὐκ ἐσόμεθα ἀπιστότεροι. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἀληθές τι ὑποτίθεται ὁ ὑποτιθέμενος, ὑποπτον αὐτὸ ποιεῖ, καθ' ὑπόθεσιν αὐτὸ λαμβάνων ἀλλὰ μὴ μετὰ κατασκευῆς· εἰ δὲ ψεῦδος, σαθρὰ ἔσται ἢ ὑποβάθρα τῶν

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matter of dispute, this too, being a thing thought, will need to be decided on and guaranteed. Where, then, will the guarantee come from? If it's from a thing thought, there will be a similar infinite regress; but if it's from a thing perceived, then since a thing thought was taken on as a guarantee for the thing perceived, and a thing perceived as a guarantee for the thing thought, the reciprocal Mode is introduced. [173] But if, to avoid this, the person talking to us decides it's OK to assume something as a matter of agreement, without demonstration, for the purpose of demonstrating the things that come next, the hypothetical Mode will be introduced—and that's a dead end. For if the person giving the hypothesis is trustworthy, we will be no less trustworthy whenever we give the opposite hypothesis. And if the hypothesis the person gives is something true, he makes it suspect by taking it as a hypothesis instead of establishing it—while if it's false,

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κατασκευαζομένων. [174] καὶ εἰ μὲν ἀνύει τι τὸ ὑποτίθεσθαι πρὸς πίστιν, αὐτὸ τὸ ζητούμενον ὑποτιθέσθω, καὶ μὴ ἕτερόν τι δι' οὗ δὴ κατασκευάσει τὸ πρᾶγμα περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος· εἰ δὲ ἄτοπὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ὑποτίθεσθαι τὸ ζητούμενον, ἄτοπον ἔσται καὶ τὸ ὑποτίθεσθαι τὸ ἐπαναβεβηκός. [175] ὅτι δὲ καὶ πρὸς τι ἐστὶ πάντα τὰ αἰσθητά, δῆλον· ἔστι γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς αἰσθανομένους.

φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι ὅπερ ἂν ἡμῖν προτεθῆ πρᾶγμα αἰσθητόν, εἰς τοὺς πέντε τρόπους ἀνάγειν τοῦτο εὐμαρές ἐστίν. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ ἐπιλογιζόμεθα. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἀνεπικρίτως διαπεφωνῆσθαι λέγοιτο, δοθήσεται ἡμῖν τὸ δεῖν ἐπέχειν περὶ αὐτοῦ. [176] εἰ δὲ ἐπικριθήσεται ἢ διαφωνία, εἰ μὲν διὰ νοητοῦ, εἰς

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the foundation of the things being “established” will be unsound. [174] Besides, if giving a hypothesis gets us somewhere in creating trust, let’s give as a hypothesis the very thing being investigated—not something *else* by means of which the matter we’re arguing about is going to be established. But if giving as a hypothesis the thing being investigated is absurd, it will also be absurd to give as a hypothesis something higher up.¹⁰ [175] And that everything perceived is relative is clear: it’s relative to the perceivers.

It’s obvious, then, that whatever perceived object is proposed to us, it’s easy to bring this under the Five Modes. And we reason in the same way about what is thought. If it is said to be an object of unresolved dispute, we have to suspend judgment about it—that will have been conceded. [176] But if the dispute is going to be decided, then if it’s by means of a thing thought,

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ἄπειρον ἐκβαλοῦμεν, εἰ δὲ ὑπὸ αἰσθητοῦ, εἰς τὸν διάλληλον· τὸ γὰρ αἰσθητὸν πάλιν διαφωνούμενον, καὶ μὴ δυνάμενον δι' αὐτοῦ ἐπικρίνεσθαι διὰ τὴν εἰς ἄπειρον ἔκπτωσιν, τοῦ νοητοῦ δεῖσεται ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ νοητὸν τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ. [177] διὰ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως λαμβάνων τι πάλιν ἄτοπος ἔσται. ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τί ἐστὶ τὰ νοητὰ· πρὸς γὰρ τὸν +νοοῦντα+ νοητὰ λέγεται, καὶ εἰ ἦν τῇ φύσει τοιοῦτον ὁποῖον λέγεται, οὐκ ἂν διεφωνήθη. ἀνήχθη οὖν καὶ τὸ νοητὸν εἰς τοὺς πέντε τρόπους, διόπερ ἀνάγκη περὶ τοῦ προτεθέντος πράγματος πάντως ἡμᾶς ἐπέχειν.

Τοιοῦτοι μὲν καὶ οἱ παρὰ τοῖς νεωτέροις παραδιδόμενοι πέντε τρόποι· οὓς ἐκτίθενται οὐκ ἐκβάλλοντες τοὺς δέκα τρόπους, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ

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we'll throw them into an infinite regress—and if it's by means of a thing perceived, into the reciprocal Mode; for since what is perceived is in turn a matter of dispute, and cannot be decided by means of itself because of the infinite regress, it will need what is thought, just as what is thought needs what is perceived. [177] For these reasons, assuming something by hypothesis will again be absurd. And things thought are also relative: it's relative to the thinker that they get their name, and if they were by nature such as they are said to be, they would not have been an object of dispute. What is thought, then, has also been brought under the Five Modes, which means that it is necessary all around for us to suspend judgment about the matter under consideration.

So this is what the Five Modes handed down by the more recent skeptics are like; they set them out not in rejection of the Ten Modes, but in order to broaden the variety of ways they

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ποικιλώτερον καὶ διὰ τούτων σὺν ἐκείνοις
ἐλέγχειν τὴν τῶν δογματικῶν προπέτειαν.

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catch out the dogmatists' rashness, by means of these ones together with those.

Sextus now gives the Two Modes, which are a compressed version of the Five, and then lists a group of more specialized Modes dealing with causation.

περὶ τῶν σκεπτικῶν φωνῶν

[187] Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ χρώμενοι... τῶν τῆς ἐποχῆς τρόπων ἐπιφθεγγόμεθα φωνάς τινὰς τῆς σκεπτικῆς διαθέσεως καὶ τοῦ περὶ ἡμᾶς πάθους μηνυτικάς, οἷον λέγοντες ‘οὐ μᾶλλον’ ‘οὐδὲν ὀριστέον’ καὶ ἄλλας τινὰς, ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἶη καὶ περὶ τούτων ἐξῆς διαλαβεῖν. ἀρξώμεθα δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ‘οὐ μᾶλλον.’

CHAPTER 3

Talking and Thinking Like a Skeptic (and Not Like Anyone Else)

Still in book I of Outlines, following the Modes, Sextus discusses various distinctive skeptical forms of language, designed to express suspension of judgment. I include a few highlights from this portion of the book.

On the Skeptical Phrases

[187] Since in using each of . . . the Modes of suspension of judgment we utter certain phrases that indicate the skeptical disposition and our reactions—saying, for example, “not more,” “nothing is to be determined,” and some others—it makes sense for these to be the next thing we discuss. Let’s begin with “not more.”

περὶ τῆς ‘οὐ μᾶλλον’ φωνῆς

[188] Ταύτην τοίνυν ὅτε μὲν ὡς ἔφην προφερόμεθα, ὅτε δὲ οὕτως ‘οὐδὲν μᾶλλον’· οὐ γὰρ ὡς τινες ὑπολαμβάνουσι, τὴν μὲν ‘οὐ μᾶλλον’ ἐν ταῖς εἰδικαῖς ζητήσεσι παραλαμβάνομεν, τὴν δὲ ‘οὐδὲν μᾶλλον’ ἐν ταῖς γενικαῖς, ἀλλ’ ἀδιαφόρως τὴν τε ‘οὐ μᾶλλον’ καὶ τὴν ‘οὐδὲν μᾶλλον’ προφερόμεθα, καὶ νῦν ὡς περὶ μιᾶς διαλεξόμεθα. ἔστι μὲν οὖν αὕτη ἡ φωνὴ ἐλλιπής. ὡς γὰρ ὅταν λέγωμεν ‘διπλῆ’, δυνάμει φαμὲν ‘ἔστία διπλῆ’, καὶ ὅταν λέγωμεν ‘πλατεῖα’, δυνάμει λέγομεν ‘πλατεῖα ὁδός’, οὕτως ὅταν εἴπωμεν ‘οὐ μᾶλλον,’ δυνάμει φαμὲν ‘οὐ μᾶλλον τόδε ἢ τόδε, ἄνω κάτω.’ . . . [190] δηλοῖ δὲ τὸ ‘οὐ μᾶλλον τόδε ἢ τόδε’ καὶ πάθος ἡμέτερον, καθ’ ὃ διὰ τὴν ἰσοσθένειαν τῶν ἀντικειμένων πραγμάτων εἰς ἀρρεψίαν καταλήγομεν, ἰσοσθένειαν μὲν λεγόντων ἡμῶν τὴν <ἰσότητα τὴν> κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἡμῖν πιθανόν, ἀντικείμενα δὲ κοινῶς τὰ μαχόμενα, ἀρρεψίαν δὲ

On the Phrase “not more”

[188] We pronounce this one sometimes as I’ve said, but sometimes in the form “no more.” It’s not that we use “not more” in our special investigations and “no more” in our general ones—as some suppose; we pronounce the phrases “not more” and “no more” indifferently, and we’ll now talk about them as one. This phrase, then, is abbreviated. Just as when we say “a double,” we are in effect saying “a double shot,” and when we say “Broad,” we are in effect saying “Broad Street,”¹ so when we say “not more,” we are in effect saying “not more this than that, one way or the other.”² . . . [190] “Not more this than that” shows our reaction—the way we end up at equilibrium because of the equal strength of the opposed objects. By “equal strength” we mean equality in terms of what appears to us persuasive; by “opposed” we mean in general conflicting; and by “equilibrium” we mean

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τὴν πρὸς μηδέτερον συγκατάθεσιν. [191] ἡ γοῦν ‘οὐδὲν μᾶλλον’ φωνὴ κἂν ἐμφαίνει χαρακτηριστικῶς συγκαταθέσεως ἢ ἀρνήσεως, ἡμεῖς οὐχ οὕτως αὐτῇ χρώμεθα, ἀλλ’ ἀδιαφόρως αὐτὴν παραλαμβάνομεν καὶ καταχρηστικῶς, . . . ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν ‘ἀγνοῶ τίς μὲν τούτων χρὴ συγκατατίθεσθαι, τίς δὲ μὴ’ +συγκατατίθεσθαι+. πρόκειται <γὰρ> ἡμῖν δηλῶσαι τὸ φαινόμενον ἡμῖν· κατὰ δὲ τὴν φωνὴν δι’ ἧς αὐτὸ δηλοῦμεν ἀδιαφοροῦμεν. κάκεῖνο δὲ χρὴ γινώσκειν, ὅτι προφερόμεθα τὴν ‘οὐδὲν μᾶλλον’ φωνὴν οὐ διαβεβαιούμενοι περὶ τοῦ πάντως ὑπάρχειν αὐτὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ βεβαίαν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἡμῖν καὶ περὶ αὐτῆς λέγοντες.

assent to neither option. [191] So even if the phrase “no more” displays the character of assent or denial, we do not use it in this way; we employ it indifferently and loosely . . . in place of saying “I don’t know which of these I should assent to and which not assent to.” The point is for us to make clear what is apparent to us; as for the phrase by which we make this clear, we are indifferent. And this too must be recognized: we pronounce the phrase “no more” without insisting that it is itself definitely true and secure—even in its case we’re speaking in terms of what is apparent to us.

There follows a similar review of several other skeptical phrases, and Sextus then concludes the topic with some general remarks:

παραπήγματα ὑπὲρ τῶν
σκεπτικῶν φωνῶν

[206] Περὶ τοσούτων ἀρκέσει τῶν φωνῶν ὡς ἐν ὑποτυπώσει διεξελεθῆναι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐπεὶ ἐκ τῶν νῦν ἡμῖν εἰρημένων δυνατόν ἐστι λέγειν καὶ περὶ τῶν παραλελειμμένων. περὶ πασῶν γὰρ τῶν σκεπτικῶν φωνῶν ἐκεῖνο χρή προειληφέναι, ὅτι περὶ τοῦ ἀληθεῖς αὐτὰς εἶναι πάντως οὐ διαβεβαιούμεθα, ὅπου γε καὶ ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν αὐτὰς ἀναιρεῖσθαι λέγομεν δύνασθαι, συμπεριγραφομένης ἐκείνοις περὶ ὧν λέγονται, καθάπερ τὰ καθαρτικὰ τῶν φαρμάκων οὐ μόνον τοὺς χυμοὺς ὑπεξαιρεῖ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτὰ τοῖς χυμοῖς συνεξάγει.

[207] φαμέν δὲ καὶ ὡς οὐ κυρίως δηλοῦντες τὰ πράγματα, ἐφ' ὧν παραλαμβάνονται, τίθεμεν αὐτάς, ἀλλ' ἀδιαφόρως καὶ εἰ βούλονται καταχρηστικῶς· οὔτε γὰρ πρέπει τῷ σκεπτικῷ φωνομαχεῖν, ἄλλως τε ἡμῖν συνεργεῖ τὸ μηδὲ ταύτας

Guidelines for the Skeptical Phrases

[206] This many phrases will do for an outline discussion, especially since the ones left out can be talked about using what we said just now. About all the skeptical phrases it's the following that needs to be grasped first of all: we don't insist on their being definitely true. In fact, we say that they can do away with themselves, being bracketed together with those things about which they are said—just as purgative medicines don't just remove the humors from the body, but expel themselves, too, along with the humors.

[207] We also say that we present them not as showing in an authoritative way the objects they refer to, but indifferently and, if you like, loosely; it doesn't suit a skeptic to fight about words—and anyway, it helps us that these phrases are not said to have a pure and simple

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τὰς φωνὰς εἰλικρινῶς σημαίνειν λέγεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τι καὶ ὡς πρὸς τοὺς σκεπτικούς.

[208] πρὸς τούτοις κάκεινου δεῖ μεμνησθαι, ὅτι οὐ περὶ πάντων τῶν πραγμάτων καθόλου φαμέν αὐτάς, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων καὶ τῶν δογματικῶς ζητουμένων, καὶ ὅτι τὸ φαινόμενον ἡμῖν φαμεν καὶ οὐχὶ διαβεβαιωτικῶς περὶ τῆς φύσεως τῶν ἐκτὸς ὑποκειμένων ἀποφαινόμεθα· ἐκ γὰρ τούτων πᾶν σόφισμα πρὸς φωνὴν ἐνεχθὲν σκεπτικὴν οἶομαι δύνασθαι διατρέπεσθαι.

significance, but one that's relative (meaning, relative to the skeptics).

[208] Added to that, one must remember that we do not use them universally about all objects, but about the unclear things that are subjects of dogmatic investigation, and that we speak of what is apparent to us and do not make any firm declarations about the nature of the actual objects out there. On this basis, I think every quibble brought against a skeptical phrase can be deflected.

The final portion of book I discusses various other views that some have thought equivalent to skepticism, showing in each case that they are different. I include just the last of these, where Sextus also tells us a little more about the skeptic's way of life.

εἰ ἢ κατὰ τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐμπειρία ἢ
αὐτὴ ἐστὶ τῆ σκέψει

[236] Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τῆ ἐμπειρία τῆ κατὰ τὴν ἰατρικὴν αἰρέσει τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι λέγουσίν τινες τὴν σκεπτικὴν φιλοσοφίαν, γνωστόν ὅτι, εἴπερ ἡ ἐμπειρία ἐκείνη περὶ τῆς ἀκαταληψίας τῶν ἀδήλων διαβεβαιοῦται, οὔτε ἡ αὐτὴ ἐστὶ τῆ σκέψει οὔτε ἀρμόζοι ἂν τῷ σκεπτικῷ τὴν αἴρεσιν ἐκείνην ἀναλαμβάνειν. μᾶλλον δὲ τὴν καλουμένην μέθοδον, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, δύναίτο ἂν μετιέναι· [237] αὕτη γὰρ μόνη τῶν κατὰ ἰατρικὴν αἰρέσεων περὶ μὲν τῶν ἀδήλων δοκεῖ μὴ προπετεῦσθαι, πότερον καταληπτὰ ἐστὶν ἢ ἀκατάληπτα λέγειν ἀθαδειαζομένη, τοῖς δὲ φαινομένοις ἐπομένη ἀπὸ τούτων λαμβάνει τὸ συμφέρειν δοκοῦν κατὰ τὴν τῶν σκεπτικῶν ἀκολουθίαν.

ἐλέγομεν γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν, ὅτι ὁ βίος ὁ κοινός, ᾧ καὶ ὁ σκεπτικὸς χρῆται, τετραμερῆς ἐστίν, τὸ μὲν τι ἔχων ἐν ὑψηγῆσει φύσεως, τὸ

Whether Medical Empiricism Is the
Same as Skepticism

[236] Some say that the skeptical philosophy is the same as the Empirical school of medicine. But it has to be recognized that if in fact that form of Empiricism makes a strong statement* about the impossibility of grasping unclear things, it's not the same as skepticism, nor would it make sense for the skeptic to align himself with that school. It's more the so-called Method, it seems to me, that he could pursue.³

[237] For it alone of the medical schools seems not to be rash about unclear things, with the effrontery to say whether or not they can be grasped, but follows what is apparent and takes from this what seems to be of benefit—which goes along with skeptical practice.

We said earlier⁴ that common life, which the skeptic also adheres to, has four aspects, one having to do with the guidance of nature, one

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δ' ἐν ἀνάγκῃ παθῶν, τὸ δ' ἐν παραδόσει νόμων τε καὶ ἐθῶν, τὸ δ' ἐν διδασκαλίᾳ τεχνῶν. [238] ὡσπερ οὖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην τῶν παθῶν ὁ σκεπτικὸς ὑπὸ μὲν δίψους ἐπὶ ποτὸν ὁδηγεῖται, ὑπὸ δὲ λιμοῦ ἐπὶ τροφήν, καὶ ἐπὶ τι τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως, οὕτω καὶ ὁ μεθοδικὸς ἰατρὸς ὑπὸ τῶν παθῶν ἐπὶ τὰ κατάλληλα ὁδηγεῖται, ὑπὸ μὲν στεγνώσεως ἐπὶ τὴν χαύνωσιν, ὡς καταφεύγει τις ἀπὸ τῆς διὰ ψυχῆς ἐπιτεταμένον πυκνώσεως ἐπὶ ἀλέαν, ὑπὸ δὲ ῥύσεως ἐπὶ τὴν ἐποχὴν αὐτῆς, ὡς καὶ οἱ ἐν βαλανεῖῳ ἰδρῶτι πολλῶ περιρρέομενοι καὶ ἐκλυόμενοι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐποχὴν αὐτοῦ παραγίνονται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τὸν ψυχρὸν ἀέρα καταφεύγουσιν. ὅτι δὲ καὶ τὰ φύσει ἀλλότρια ἐπὶ τὴν ἄρσιν αὐτῶν ἰέναι καταναγκάζει, πρόδηλον, ὅπου γε καὶ ὁ κύων σκόλοπος αὐτῷ καταπαγέντος ἐπὶ τὴν ἄρσιν αὐτοῦ παραγίνεται. [239] καὶ ἵνα μὴ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγων ἐκβαίνω τὸν ὑποτυπωτικὸν τρόπον τῆς συγγραφῆς, πάντα οἶμαι τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν μεθοδικῶν οὕτω λεγόμενα ὑποτάσσεσθαι δύνασθαι τῇ ἐκ

TALKING AND THINKING LIKE A SKEPTIC

with the necessity of how we're affected, one with the handing down of laws and customs, and one with the teaching of skills. [238] Well, just as the skeptic, owing to the necessity of how he's affected, is led by thirst to drink, by hunger to food, and likewise to other things, so too the Methodic doctor is led by the ways people are affected to the corresponding treatments:⁵ by constriction to loosening, as when one escapes to heat from the tightness resulting from extreme cold, or by flow to stopping it, as when people in the baths, running with lots of sweat and feeling faint, proceed to stop it and for this reason escape to the cold air. It's also quite clear that things that are naturally alien compel taking steps to remove them; after all, even the dog, when stuck by a thorn, proceeds to remove it. [239] And—not to go beyond the outline style of this book by speaking of them one by one—I think all the things of this kind said by the Methodists can be placed under the

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τῶν παθῶν ἀνάγκη, τῶν τε κατὰ φύσιν <καὶ τῶν παρὰ φύσιν>, πρὸς τῷ καὶ τὸ ἀδόξαστόν τε καὶ ἀδιάφορον τῆς χρήσεως τῶν ὀνομάτων κοινὸν εἶναι τῶν ἀγωγῶν. . . . [241] ὅθεν οἰκειότητά τινα ἔχειν τὴν ἀγωγὴν τὴν κατὰ ἰατρικὴν τῶν μεθοδικῶν πρὸς τὴν σκέψιν, μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων κατὰ ἰατρικὴν αἰρέσεων (καὶ ὡς πρὸς σύγκρισιν ἐκείνων, οὐχ ἀπλῶς), ῥητέον ἐκ τούτων καὶ τῶν παραπλησίων τούτοις τεκμαιρομένους.

Τοσαῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶν παρακεῖσθαι δοκού-
ντων τῇ κατὰ τοὺς σκεπτικοὺς ἀγωγῇ διεξε-
λθόντες, ἐν τούτοις ἀπαρτίζομεν τὸν τε καθόλου
τῆς σκέψεως λόγον καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ὑποτυ-
πώσεων σύνταγμα.

heading “necessity of the ways we’re affected,” some of them natural and others against nature. In addition, the unopinionated and indifferent use of words is common to both approaches. . . . [241] Hence, on the evidence of these and similar points, I must say that the medical approach of the Methodists has a certain family resemblance to skepticism, more than the other medical schools (and when viewed in comparison with them, not just on its own).

Having gone over this much ground concerning those who are thought to be close to the skeptical approach, at this point we round off the general account of skepticism and the first book of our *Outlines*.

The remaining two books of Outlines are devoted to what Sextus called the “specific account” (I.6); that is, a critique of dogmatic theories in logic, physics, and ethics. But at the start of book II, as an introduction to this, he addresses

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εἰ δύναται ζητεῖν ὁ σκεπτικὸς περὶ τῶν λεγομένων παρὰ τοῖς δογματικοῖς

[1] Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ζήτησιν τὴν πρὸς τοὺς δογματικούς μετήλθομεν, ἕκαστον τῶν μερῶν τῆς καλουμένης φιλοσοφίας συντόμως καὶ ὑποτυπωτικῶς ἐφοδεύσωμεν, πρότερον ἀποκρινάμενοι πρὸς τοὺς ἀεὶ θρυλοῦντας ὡς μήτε ζητεῖν μήτε νοεῖν ὄλως οἷός τέ ἐστίν ὁ σκεπτικὸς περὶ τῶν δογματιζομένων παρ' αὐτοῖς.

[2] φασὶ γὰρ ὡς ἦτοι καταλαμβάνει ὁ σκεπτικὸς τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν δογματικῶν λεγόμενα ἢ οὐ καταλαμβάνει· καὶ εἰ μὲν καταλαμβάνει, πῶς ἂν ἀποροίῃ περὶ ὧν κατειληφέναι λέγει; εἰ δ' οὐ καταλαμβάνει, ἄρα περὶ ὧν οὐ κατείληφεν

an objection from the dogmatists that claims the skeptic cannot even get started on this project. Since this sheds further light on the skeptic's overall way of thinking, I include it here:

Whether the Skeptic Can Investigate the
Things Said by the Dogmatists

[1] Since the investigation we have taken on is against the dogmatists, let us explore, in a concise and outline fashion, each of the parts of so-called philosophy, after first responding to those who are always going on about how the skeptic can neither investigate nor, quite generally, think about the things on which they hold doctrines.⁶

[2] They say that the skeptic either grasps the things spoken of by the dogmatists or does not grasp them. If he grasps them, how can he be at an impasse about things that he says he has grasped? But if he doesn't grasp them, well, he doesn't even know how to speak about things

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οὐδὲ οἶδε λέγειν. [3] ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ μὴ εἰδώς, εἰ τύχοι, τί ἐστι τὸ καθ' ὃ περιαιρουμένου ἢ τὸ διὰ δύο τροπικῶν θεώρημα, οὐδὲ εἰπεῖν τι δύναται περὶ αὐτῶν, οὕτως ὁ μὴ γινώσκων ἕκαστον τῶν λεγομένων παρὰ τοῖς δογματικοῖς οὐ δύναται ζητεῖν πρὸς αὐτοὺς περὶ ὧν οὐκ οἶδεν. οὐδαμῶς ἄρα δύναται ζητεῖν ὁ σκεπτικὸς περὶ τῶν λεγομένων παρὰ τοῖς δογματικοῖς.

[4] οἱ δὴ ταῦτα λέγοντες ἀποκρινάσθωσαν ἡμῖν, πῶς λέγουσι νῦν τὸ καταλαμβάνειν, πότερον τὸ νοεῖν ἀπλῶς ἄνευ τοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἐκείνων περὶ ὧν ποιούμεθα τοὺς λόγους διαβεβαιουῖσθαι, ἢ <τὸ> νοεῖν μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἐκείνων τιθέναι περὶ ὧν διαλεγόμεθα. εἰ μὲν γὰρ καταλαμβάνειν εἶναι λέγουσιν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τὸ καταληπτικῆ φαντασία συγκατατίθεσθαι, τῆς καταληπτικῆς φαντασίας οὔσης ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος, κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον

he hasn't grasped. [3] For just as the person who doesn't know (let's say) what the "how far removed" theorem is, or the theorem "by two turning premises," is not even able to say anything about them,⁷ so the person who is not cognizant of any of the things talked of by the dogmatists is not able to confront them with an investigation about things he doesn't know. Therefore there's no way the skeptic can do an investigation about the things spoken of by the dogmatists.

[4] Well, the people who say this should answer us: how do they mean "grasp" here? Is it just thinking, without also committing to the reality of the things we are arguing about; or is it thinking that *includes* putting forward the reality of the things we are debating? If they say that "grasping" in their argument is assenting to a grasp-giving appearance—where a grasp-giving appearance is (a) from what is real, (b) stamped and impressed in accordance with just

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ἐναπομεμαγμένης καὶ ἐναπεσφραγισμένης, οἷα οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀπὸ μὴ ὑπάρχοντος, οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ βουλήσονται τάχα μὴ δύνασθαι ζητεῖν περὶ ἐκείνων ἄ μὴ κατείληφασιν οὕτως. [5] οἷον γοῦν ὅταν ὁ Στωικὸς πρὸς τὸν Ἐπικούρειον ζητῆ λέγοντα ὅτι διήρηται ἡ οὐσία ἢ ὡς ὁ θεὸς οὐ προνοεῖ τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ ἢ ὅτι ἡ ἡδονὴ ἀγαθόν, πότερον κατείληφεν ἢ οὐ κατείληφεν; καὶ εἰ μὲν κατείληφεν, ὑπάρχειν αὐτὰ λέγων ἄρδην ἀναιρεῖ τὴν Στοάν· εἰ δ' οὐ κατείληφεν, οὐ δύναται τι πρὸς αὐτὰ λέγειν. [6] τὰ δὲ παραπλήσια καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων αἰρέσεων ἀναγομένους λεκτέον, ὅταν τι ζητεῖν περὶ τῶν δοκούντων τοῖς ἑτεροδόξοις αὐτῶν ἐθέλωσιν. ὥστε οὐ δύνανται περὶ τινος ζητεῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

μᾶλλον δέ, εἰ χρή μὴ ληρεῖν, συγχυθήσεται μὲν αὐτῶν ἅπασα ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἡ δογματική,

that real thing, and (c) such that it could not occur from what is not real⁸—surely *they* won't want to be unable to investigate things that they haven't "grasped" in this way. [5] I mean, when the Stoic launches an investigation against the Epicurean, who says that being is divided, or that god does not have providence for what happens in the world, or that pleasure is a good thing,⁹ has he grasped these things or not grasped them? If he has grasped them, then he is saying that they are real and is immediately doing away with Stoicism; but if he hasn't grasped them, he can't say anything against them. [6] And similar things must be said against those who come from the other schools, when they wish to investigate anything to do with the opinions of those who disagree with them. So they can't do any investigation directed against one another.

Or rather—let's be serious—more or less the whole of their dogmatic philosophy will be

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συντόνως δὲ προσαχθήσεται ἡ σκεπτικὴ φιλοσοφία, διδομένου τοῦ μὴ δύνασθαι ζητεῖν περὶ τοῦ μὴ οὕτως κατειλημμένου. [7] ὁ γὰρ περὶ τινος ἀδήλου πράγματος ἀποφαινόμενός τε καὶ δογματίζων ἦτοι κατειληφώς αὐτὸ ἀποφαίνεσθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ λέξει ἢ μὴ κατειληφώς. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν μὴ κατειληφώς, ἄπιστος ἔσται· εἰ δὲ κατειληφώς, ἦτοι αὐτόθεν καὶ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ κατ' ἐνάργειαν ὑποπεσὸν αὐτῷ τοῦτο λέξει κατειληφέναι ἢ διὰ τινος ἐρεύνης καὶ ζητήσεως. [8] ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ περιπτωτικῶς κατ' ἐνάργειαν λέγοι ὑποπεσεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ κατειληφθαι τὸ ἄδηλον, οὕτως ἂν οὐδὲ ἄδηλον εἶη ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ἐπ' ἴσης φαινόμενον καὶ ὁμολογούμενον καὶ μὴ διαπεφωνημένον. περὶ ἐκάστου δὲ τῶν ἀδήλων ἀνήνυτος γέγονε παρ' αὐτοῖς διαφωνία· οὐκ ἄρα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ κατ' ἐνάργειαν ὑποπεσὸν αὐτῷ κατειληφώς ἂν εἶη τὸ ἄδηλον ὁ περὶ τῆς ὑπάρξεως αὐτοῦ διαβεβαιούμενός τε

demolished, and the skeptical philosophy will get a powerful boost, if it is agreed that one cannot investigate what has not been grasped in this way. [7] For the person who holds forth with a doctrine about some unclear matter will say that he is holding forth about it either having grasped it or not having grasped it. If he hasn't grasped it, he will not be worth trusting. But if he has grasped it, he will say that he has grasped this either immediately and by itself—it strikes him plainly—or by means of some research and investigation. [8] But if he says that the unclear thing strikes him plainly by itself through experience and has been grasped in that way, in this case it won't even be an unclear thing, but equally apparent to everyone, accepted and not disputed. On every unclear thing an endless dispute has arisen among them; therefore it can't be that the dogmatist who holds forth with a strong statement about the reality of an unclear thing

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καὶ ἀποφαινόμενος δογματικός. [9] εἰ δὲ διὰ τινος ἐρεύνης, πῶς οἴός τε ἦν ζητεῖν πρὸ τοῦ καταλαβεῖν ἀκριβῶς αὐτὸ κατὰ τὴν προκειμένην ὑπόθεσιν; τῆς μὲν γὰρ ζητήσεως χρηζούσης τοῦ πρότερον ἀκριβῶς κατειληφθαι τὸ μέλλον ζητεῖσθαι καὶ οὕτω ζητεῖσθαι, τῆς δὲ καταλήψεως τοῦ ζητουμένου πράγματος δεομένης πάλιν αὐτῆς τοῦ προεζητηῆσθαι πάντως αὐτό, κατὰ τὸν διάλληλον τρόπον τῆς ἀπορίας ἀδύνατον αὐτοῖς γίγνεται καὶ τὸ ζητεῖν περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων καὶ τὸ δογματίζειν, ἦν τε ἀπὸ τῆς καταλήψεως ἄρχεσθαι βούλωνταί τινες, μεταγόντων ἡμῶν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖν αὐτὸ προεζητηκέναι πρὸ τοῦ κατειληφέναι, ἦν τε ἀπὸ τῆς ζητήσεως, ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖν πρὸ τοῦ ζητεῖν κατειληφέναι τὸ μέλλον ζητεῖσθαι, ὥστε διὰ ταῦτα μήτε καταλαμβάνειν αὐτοὺς δύνασθαί τι τῶν ἀδήλων μήτε ἀποφαίνεσθαι διαβεβαιωτικῶς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν. ἐξ ὧν ἀναιρεῖσθαι μὲν τὴν δογμα-

TALKING AND THINKING LIKE A SKEPTIC

has grasped it by itself, with it striking him plainly. [9] But if it's by means of some research, how *could* he investigate it (on the assumption we're working with) before precisely grasping it? If investigation requires that the thing to be investigated has first been precisely grasped, and *that's* how it's investigated, but the very grasping of the matter under investigation definitely needs, in turn, for it to have been previously investigated, then in view of the reciprocal mode of impasse, investigating and holding doctrines about unclear things becomes impossible for them. If any of them want to start with the grasp of the thing, we alert them to the need to have investigated it first before grasping it, and if they want to start with the investigation, we alert them to the need to have grasped the thing to be investigated before investigating it. So, for these reasons they're not able to grasp any unclear thing or hold forth with a strong statement about it. And from this, I think, it

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τικὴν εὐρεσιλογίαν αὐτόθεν, οἶμαι, συμβήσεται, τὴν ἐφεκτικὴν δὲ εἰσάγεσθαι φιλοσοφίαν.

[Ιο] εἰ δὲ φήσουσι μὴ τοιαύτην λέγειν κατάληψιν ἡγεῖσθαι ζητήσεως προσήκειν, νόησιν δὲ ἀπλῶς, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀδύνατον [ἐν] τοῖς ἐπέχουσι περὶ τῆς ὑπάρξεως τῶν ἀδήλων ζητεῖν. νοήσεως γὰρ οὐκ ἀπείργεται ὁ σκεπτικός, οἶμαι, ἀπό τε τῶν παθητικῶς ὑποπιπτόντων <καὶ> κατ' ἐνάργειαν φαινομένων αὐτῷ λόγῳ γινόμενης καὶ μὴ πάντως εἰσαγωγῆς τὴν ὑπαρξιν τῶν νοουμένων· οὐ γὰρ μόνον τὰ ὑπάρχοντα νοοῦμεν, ὡς φασιν, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ τὰ ἀνύπαρκτα. ὅθεν καὶ ζητῶν καὶ νοῶν ἐν τῇ σκεπτικῇ διαθήσει μένει ὁ ἐφεκτικός· ὅτι γὰρ τοῖς κατὰ φαντασίαν παθητικὴν ὑποπίπτουσιν αὐτῷ, καθὸ φαίνεται αὐτῷ, συγκατατίθεται, δεδήλωται. [ΙΙ] ὅρα δὲ μὴ καὶ νῦν οἱ δογματικοὶ ζητήσεως ἀπείργωνται. οὐ γὰρ τοῖς ἀγνοεῖν τὰ πράγματα ὡς

will turn out immediately that the dogmatists' crafty arguments are done away with, and the suspensive philosophy takes the stage.

[10] But if they say that they don't mean it's *this* kind of grasp that should precede investigation, but just thinking, then it's not impossible for those who suspend judgment about the reality of unclear things to investigate them. For the skeptic is not, I think, prohibited from thinking, which comes about by reason from the things that strike him passively and appear to him plainly, and does not at all bring in the reality of the things thought of; for, as they say, we think not only of real things, but also of unreal things. Thus the suspender of judgment remains in a skeptical disposition while investigating and while thinking; for, as was shown,¹⁰ he assents to the things that strike him by way of a passive appearance, insofar as they appear to him. [11] But look: even here the dogmatists may be blocked from investigation. For it's not

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ἔχει πρὸς τὴν φύσιν ὁμολογοῦσι τὸ ζητεῖν ἔτι
περὶ αὐτῶν ἀνακόλουθον, τοῖς δ' ἐπ' ἀκριβὲς
οἰομένοις ταῦτα γινώσκειν· οἷς μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ
πέρας ἤδη πάρεστιν ἢ ζήτησις, ὡς ὑπειλήφα-
σιν, οἷς δὲ τὸ δι' ὃ πᾶσα συνίσταται ζήτησις
ἀκμὴν ὑπάρχει, τὸ νομίζειν ὡς οὐχ εὐρήκασιν.

those who admit that they don't know how things are in their nature for whom still investigating them doesn't make sense—it's those who do think they know these things precisely. For the latter, the investigation has already come to an end (they imagine), whereas for the former, the reason why every investigation gets going—thinking that they haven't made discoveries—absolutely applies.

Sextus now turns to his critique of the dogmatists in logic, physics, and ethics. In the following chapters I give a few excerpts on each subject.

περὶ σημείου

[97] Τῶν πραγμάτων τοίνυν κατὰ τοὺς δογματικούς τὰ μὲν ἐστὶ πρόδηλα, τὰ δὲ ἄδηλα, καὶ τῶν ἀδήλων τὰ μὲν καθάπαξ ἄδηλα, τὰ δὲ πρὸς

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Going After the Other Philosophers: Logic

Logic occupies the whole of book II of Outlines, except for the passage at the end of the previous chapter. “Logic” in the ancient Greek context covered rather more than we would normally understand under that term; it includes theories about what knowledge is and how we can get it. Among the topics Sextus considers in this area is “signs,” which are methods for inferring from the observed to the unobserved—that is, more or less what we would call evidence. His treatment of this topic also sheds further light on the skeptic’s relation to ordinary life.

On Signs

[97] Some objects, according to the dogmatists, are clear on their face, and others are unclear. Of the unclear ones, some are unclear pure and

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καιρὸν ἄδηλα, τὰ δὲ φύσει ἄδηλα. καὶ πρόδηλα μὲν εἶναί φασι τὰ ἐξ ἑαυτῶν εἰς γινῶσιν ἡμῖν ἐρχόμενα, οἷόν ἐστι τὸ ἡμέραν εἶναι, καθάπαξ δὲ ἄδηλα, ἃ μὴ πέφυκεν εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν πίπτειν κατάληψιν, ὡς τὸ ἀρτίους εἶναι τοὺς ἀστέρας, [98] πρὸς καιρὸν δὲ ἄδηλα ἅπερ τὴν φύσιν ἔχοντα ἐναργῆ παρά τινος ἕξωθεν περιστάσεις κατὰ καιρὸν ἡμῖν ἀδηλεῖται, ὡς ἐμοὶ νῦν ἢ τῶν Ἀθηναίων πόλις, φύσει δὲ ἄδηλα τὰ μὴ ἔχοντα φύσιν ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν πίπτειν ἐνάργειαν, ὡς οἱ νοητοὶ πόροι· οὔτοι γὰρ οὐδέποτε ἐξ ἑαυτῶν φαίνονται, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα, ἐξ ἐτέρων καταλαμβάνεσθαι ἂν νομισθεῖεν, οἷον τῶν ἰδρώτων ἢ τινος παραπλησίου.

[99] τὰ μὲν οὖν πρόδηλα μὴ δεῖσθαι σημείου φασίν· ἐξ ἑαυτῶν γὰρ αὐτὰ καταλαμβάνεσθαι. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὰ καθάπαξ ἄδηλα ἅτε δὴ μηδὲ τὴν

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simple, some unclear for the moment, and some unclear by nature. Those that are clear on their face, they say, are the ones that come to our knowledge all by themselves, such as the fact that it is day; unclear pure and simple are those that are not of a nature to fall within our grasp—for example, that the number of stars is even; [98] unclear for the moment are those that, while being plain in their nature, are made unclear to us at the moment owing to certain external circumstances—for example, the city of Athens for me now; and unclear by nature are those that do not have such a nature as to fall under our plain experience¹—for example, intelligible pores.² For these are never apparent by themselves; they would be thought to be grasped, if at all, from other things, such as sweat or something similar.

[99] Well, those that are clear on their face, they say, do not need signs; they are grasped by themselves. Nor do those that are unclear pure

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ἀρχὴν καταλαμβάνόμενα. τὰ δὲ πρὸς καιρὸν ἄδηλα καὶ τὰ φύσει ἄδηλα διὰ σημείων μὲν καταλαμβάνεσθαι, οὐ μὴν διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν πρὸς καιρὸν ἄδηλα διὰ τῶν ὑπομνηστικῶν, τὰ δὲ φύσει ἄδηλα διὰ τῶν ἐνδεικτικῶν.

[100] τῶν οὖν σημείων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶν ὑπομνηστικά κατ' αὐτοὺς, τὰ δ' ἐνδεικτικά. καὶ ὑπομνηστικὸν μὲν σημεῖον καλοῦσιν ὃ συμπαρατηρηθὲν τῷ σημειωτῷ δι' ἐναργείας ἅμα τῷ ὑποπεσεῖν, ἐκείνου ἀδηλουμένου, ἄγει ἡμᾶς εἰς ὑπόμνησιν τοῦ συμπαρατηρηθέντος αὐτῷ καὶ νῦν ἐναργῶς μὴ ὑποπίπτοντος, ὡς ἔχει ἐπὶ τοῦ καπνοῦ καὶ τοῦ πυρός. [101] ἐνδεικτικὸν δὲ ἐστὶ σημεῖον, ὡς φασιν, ὃ μὴ συμπαρατηρηθὲν τῷ σημειωτῷ δι' ἐναργείας, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας φύσεως καὶ κατασκευῆς σημαίνει τὸ οὐ ἐστὶ ση-

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and simple, seeing that they are not even grasped at all. It's those that are unclear for the moment and those that are unclear by nature that are grasped by means of signs—but not by the same ones; things unclear for the moment are grasped by means of reminder signs, while things unclear by nature are grasped by means of indicative signs.

[100] Some signs, then, are reminders, according to them, and others are indicators. “Reminder sign” is what they call a thing that has been plainly observed together with the thing signified, and immediately when it strikes us—and when the other thing is obscured—brings us to a reminder of the thing that has been observed together with it (but is not now striking us plainly), as we have in the case of smoke and fire.³ [101] An indicative sign, they say, is what has *not* been plainly observed in conjunction with the thing signified, but by means of its own nature and constitution signifies the

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μεῖον, ὡσπεροῦν αἱ περὶ τὸ σῶμα κινήσεις ση-
μεῖά εἰσι τῆς ψυχῆς. . . .

[102] διττῆς οὖν οὔσης τῶν σημείων δια-
φορᾶς, ὡς ἔφαμεν, οὐ πρὸς πᾶν σημεῖον ἀντι-
λέγομεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μόνον τὸ ἐνδεικτικὸν ὡς
ὑπὸ τῶν δογματικῶν πεπλάσθαι δοκοῦν. τὸ
γὰρ ὑπομνηστικὸν πεπίστευται ὑπὸ τοῦ βίου,
ἐπεὶ καπνὸν ἰδὼν τις σημειοῦται πῦρ καὶ οὐλὴν
θεασάμενος τραῦμα γεγενῆσθαι λέγει. ὅθεν οὐ
μόνον οὐ μαχόμεθα τῷ βίῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ συναγωνι-
ζόμεθα, τῷ μὲν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πεπιστευμένῳ ἀδοξά-
στως συγκατατιθέμενοι, τοῖς δ' ὑπὸ τῶν δογμα-
τικῶν ἰδίως ἀναπλαττομένοις ἀνθιστάμενοι.

[103] Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἤρμοζεν ἴσως προειπεῖν
ὑπὲρ τῆς σαφηνείας τοῦ ζητουμένου· λοιπὸν δὲ
ἐπὶ τὴν ἀντίρρησιν χωρῶμεν, οὐκ ἀνύπαρκτον
δεῖξαι τὸ ἐνδεικτικὸν σημεῖον πάντως ἐσπου-
δακότες, ἀλλὰ τὴν φαινομένην ἰσοσθένειαν

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thing of which it is a sign, as the movements of the body are signs of the soul. . . .

[102] Since there is a difference between the two kinds of sign, as I said, we're not arguing against every sign, but only against the indicative sign, as it seems to have been made up by the dogmatists. The reminder sign has been found trustworthy in ordinary life; someone who sees smoke takes it as a sign of fire, and someone who observes a scar says that a wound has occurred. So not only are we not in conflict with everyday life; we're actually on the same side. We assent without opinions to what it has found trustworthy and direct our opposition to the things privately fabricated by the dogmatists.

[103] It maybe made sense to say these things in advance, to clarify the topic under investigation. Let's come next to the counter-argument—not in any eagerness to show that the indicative sign is definitely not real, but as a reminder⁴ of

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τῶν φερομένων λόγων πρὸς τε τὴν ὑπαρξιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀνυπαρξίαν ὑπομινῆσκοντες.

[124] . . . ἦτοι φαινόμενα μόνον ἐστὶ τὰ σημεῖα ἢ ἄδηλα μόνον, ἢ τῶν σημείων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶ φαινόμενα, τὰ δὲ ἄδηλα. οὐδὲν δὲ τούτων ἐστὶν ὑγιές· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι σημεῖον. ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἄδηλα οὐκ ἔστι πάντα τὰ σημεῖα, ἐντεῦθεν δείκνυται. τὸ ἄδηλον οὐκ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ φαίνεται, ὡς οἱ δογματικοὶ φασιν, ἀλλὰ δι' ἑτέρου ὑποπίπτει. καὶ τὸ σημεῖον οὖν, εἰ ἄδηλον εἶη, ἑτέρου δεῖσεται σημείου ἀδήλου, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν φαινόμενόν ἐστὶ σημεῖον κατὰ τὴν προκειμένην ὑπόθεσιν, κάκεῖνο ἄλλου, καὶ μέχρις ἀπείρου. ἀδύνατον δὲ ἄπειρα σημεῖα λαμβάνειν· ἀδύνατον ἄρα τὸ σημεῖον

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the apparently equal strength of the arguments brought forward for its reality and for its unreality.

This goes on for a while, and much of it refers to specific dogmatic views and points of logic. I include the final stretch of argument on signs, which is less dependent on these technicalities:

[124] . . . Signs are either only apparent, or only unclear, or some signs are apparent and some unclear. But none of these is sound; therefore there are no signs. That signs are not all unclear is shown as follows. What is unclear, the dogmatists say, is not apparent by itself, but registers with us by means of something else. The sign too, then, if it is unclear, will be in need of another sign—an unclear one, since nothing apparent is a sign on the assumption we're working with—and *that* one will need another, and so on to infinity. But it's impossible to take in an infinite number of signs; therefore

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καταληφθῆναι ἄδηλον ὄν. διὰ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἀνύπαρκτον ἔσται, μὴ δυνάμενον σημαίνειν τι καὶ σημεῖον εἶναι διὰ τὸ μὴ καταλαμβάνεσθαι.

[125] εἰ δὲ πάντα τὰ σημεῖα φαινόμενά ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρὸς τι ἐστὶ τὸ σημεῖον καὶ πρὸς τῶ σημειωτῶ, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τι συγκαταλαμβάνεται ἀλλήλοις, τὰ σημειωτὰ εἶναι λεγόμενα σὺν τοῖς φαινομένοις καταλαμβανόμενα φαινόμενα ἔσται· ὥσπερ γὰρ ἅμα ὑποπιπτόντων τοῦ τε δεξιοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ οὐ μᾶλλον τὸ δεξιὸν τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ ἢ τὸ ἀριστερὸν τοῦ δεξιοῦ φαίνεσθαι λέγεται, οὕτω συγκαταλαμβανομένων τοῦ τε σημείου καὶ τοῦ σημειωτοῦ οὐ μᾶλλον τὸ σημεῖον ἢ τὸ σημειωτὸν φαίνεσθαι ῥητέον. [126] εἰ δὲ φαινόμενόν ἐστὶ τὸ σημειωτόν, οὐδὲ σημειωτὸν ἔσται μὴ δεόμενον τοῦ σημανοῦντος αὐτὸ καὶ ἐκκαλύψοντος. ὅθεν ὥσπερ ἀναιρουμένου δεξιοῦ οὐδὲ ἀριστερὸν ἔστιν, οὕτως ἀναιρουμένου τοῦ σημειωτοῦ οὐδὲ σημεῖον

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it is impossible for signs to be grasped, if they are unclear. And for this reason they are also unreal; because of not being grasped, they can't signify anything—or be signs.

[125] But if all signs are apparent, then since the sign is relative—it's relative to what's signified—and relative things are grasped together with one another, the things said to be signified, being grasped together with apparent things, will *be* apparent things. When right and left strike us at the same time, right is not said to be any more apparent than left, nor left than right; well, in the same way, if the sign and what is signified are grasped together, the sign can't be said to be any more apparent than what is signified.⁵ [126] But if what is signified is apparent, it *won't* be signified, since it won't need the thing that's going to signify or uncover it. And so, just as if right is done away with, there's no left either, in the same way if what is signified is done away with, there can't be a sign either,

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εἶναι δύναται, ὥστε ἀνύπαρκτον εὐρίσκεται τὸ σημεῖον, εἴπερ φαινόμενα μόνα εἶναι λέγοι τις τὰ σημεῖα.

[I27] λείπεται λέγειν, ὅτι τῶν σημείων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶ φαινόμενα, τὰ δὲ ἄδηλα· καὶ οὕτως δὲ αἱ ἀπορίαι μένουσιν. τῶν τε γὰρ φαινομένων σημείων τὰ σημειωτὰ εἶναι λεγόμενα φαινόμενα ἔσται, καθὰ προειρήκαμεν, καὶ μὴ δεόμενα τοῦ σηματοῦντος οὐδὲ σημειωτὰ ὄλως ὑπάρξει, ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα σημεῖα ἔσται, μηδὲν σημαίνοντα· [I28] τὰ τε ἄδηλα σημεῖα χρήζοντα τῶν ἐκκαλυψόντων αὐτά, ἐὰν μὲν ὑπὸ ἀδήλων σημαίνεσθαι λέγεται, εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτοντος τοῦ λόγου ἀκατάληπτα εὐρίσκεται καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνύπαρκτα, ὡς προειρήκαμεν· ἐὰν δὲ ὑπὸ φαινομένων, φαινόμενα ἔσται σὺν τοῖς φαινομένοις αὐτῶν σημείοις καταλαμβανόμενα, διὰ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἀνύπαρκτα. ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τι πρᾶγμα, ὃ καὶ ἄδηλόν ἐστι φύσει καὶ φαινόμε-

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so that the sign is found to be unreal, if one says that signs are only apparent.

[I27] It remains to say that some signs are apparent and some are unclear—and in that case the impasses remain. In the case of the apparent signs, the things said to be signified will be apparent, as we've said before; and not needing something to signify them, they won't really be *signified* things at all—which means that the former won't be *signs* either, since they don't signify anything. [I28] And the unclear signs will need something to uncover them. If they are said to be signified by unclear things, the argument falls into an infinite regress, and we'll find that they are not to be grasped and for this reason unreal, as we've said before. But if they are signified by apparent things, they will *be* apparent, being grasped together with their apparent signs, and for this reason also unreal. For it's impossible for there to be any object that is both unclear by nature and apparent; but the

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νον, τὰ δὲ σημεία περὶ ὧν ἔστιν ὁ λόγος, ἄδηλα ὑποτεθέντα, φαινόμενα εὐρέθη κατὰ τὴν περιτροπὴν τοῦ λόγου. [129] εἰ οὖν μήτε πάντα τὰ σημεία φαινόμενά ἐστι μήτε πάντα ἄδηλα, μήτε τῶν σημείων τινὰ μὲν ἔστι φαινόμενα, τινὰ δὲ ἄδηλα, καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν ἔστιν, ὥς καὶ αὐτοί φασιν, ἀνύπαρκα ἔσται τὰ λεγόμενα σημεία.

[130] Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὀλίγα ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἀρκέσει νῦν εἰρησθαι πρὸς ὑπόμνησιν τοῦ μὴ εἶναι σημεῖον ἐνδεικτικόν· ἐξῆς δὲ καὶ τὰς ὑπομνήσεις τοῦ εἶναι τι σημεῖον ἐκθησόμεθα, ἵνα τὴν ἰσοσθένειαν τῶν ἀντικειμένων λόγων παραστήσωμεν. ἦτοι οὖν σημαίνουσί τι αἰ κατὰ τοῦ σημείου φωναὶ φερόμεναι ἢ οὐδὲν σημαίνουσιν. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἄσημοί εἰσιν, πῶς ἂν κινήσειαν τὴν ὑπαρξιν τοῦ σημείου; εἰ δὲ σημαίνουσί τι, ἔστι σημεῖον. [131] ἔτι ἦτοι ἀποδεικτικοί εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι οἱ κατὰ τοῦ σημείου ἢ οὐκ ἀποδεικτικοί.

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signs about which we're arguing, which were supposed to be unclear, have been found to be apparent owing to the turnaround in the argument. [129] So if neither are all signs apparent, nor all signs unclear, nor are some signs apparent and some unclear, and there is no other option (as they themselves say), so-called signs will be unreal.

[130] We've said a few things out of many; but this will do to put us in mind of there not being any indicative signs. Next we will set out the points that put us in mind⁶ of there *being* signs, in order for us to put on display the equal strength of the opposing arguments. Well, the phrases employed against signs either signify something or they signify nothing. If they are without significance, how could they upset the reality of signs? But if they do signify something, there are signs. [131] Again, the arguments against signs either do the job of demonstration, or they do not. But if they don't do the

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ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν οὐκ ἀποδεικτικοί, οὐκ ἀποδεικνύουσι τὸ μὴ εἶναι σημεῖον· εἰ δὲ ἀποδεικτικοί, ἐπεὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις τῷ γένει σημεῖον ἐστίν, ἐκκαλυπτική οὖσα τοῦ συμπεράσματος, ἔσται σημεῖον. ὅθεν καὶ συνερωτᾶται λόγος τοιοῦτος· εἰ ἔστι τι σημεῖον, ἔστι σημεῖον, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἔστι σημεῖον, ἔστι σημεῖον· τὸ γὰρ μὴ εἶναι σημεῖον δι' ἀποδείξεως, ἢ δὴ ἐστὶ σημεῖον, δείκνυται. ἤτοι δὲ ἔστι σημεῖον ἢ οὐκ ἔστι σημεῖον· ἔστιν ἄρα σημεῖον.

[132] τούτῳ δὲ τῷ λόγῳ παράκειται τοιοῦτος λόγος. εἰ οὐκ ἔστι τι σημεῖον, οὐκ ἔστι σημεῖον· καὶ εἰ ἔστι σημεῖον ὃ φασὶν οἱ δογματικοὶ σημεῖον εἶναι, οὐκ ἔστι σημεῖον. τὸ γὰρ σημεῖον περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος, κατὰ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸς τι εἶναι λεγόμενον καὶ ἐκκαλυπτικὸν τοῦ σημειωτοῦ, ἀνύπαρκτον εὐρίσκεται, ὡς παρεστήσαμεν. [133] ἤτοι δὲ ἔστι σημεῖον ἢ οὐκ ἔστι σημεῖον· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι σημεῖον. . . .

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job of demonstration, they don't demonstrate that there aren't signs; and if they do the job of demonstration, then since demonstration is a kind of sign—its function is to uncover the conclusion—there will be signs. Hence this kind of argument is also mounted: if there are any signs, there are signs; and if there are not signs, there are signs; for there not being signs is shown by a demonstration—which is a sign. But either there are signs or there are not signs; therefore there are signs.

[132] But alongside that argument is another like this: if there are not any signs, there are not signs; and if there are signs (namely, what the dogmatists say are signs), there are not signs. For the sign the argument is about—which according to its conception is said to be relative and capable of uncovering what is signified—is found to be unreal, as we established. [133] But either there are signs or there are not signs; therefore there are not signs. . . .

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Πλὴν ἀλλ' οὕτω πιθανῶν καὶ πρὸς τὸ εἶναι
σημεῖον καὶ πρὸς τὸ μὴ εἶναι λόγων φερομένων,
οὐ μᾶλλον εἶναι σημεῖον ἢ μὴ εἶναι ῥητέον.

περὶ συλλογισμῶν

[193] Διὸ καὶ περὶ τῶν θρυλουμένων συλλογι-
σμῶν ἴσως περιττόν ἐστιν διεξιέναι . . . [194] ἐξ
ἐπιμέτρου δὲ οὐ χεῖρον ἴσως καὶ ἰδίᾳ περὶ αὐτῶν
διαλαβεῖν, ἐπεὶ μάλιστα ἐπ' αὐτοῖς μέγα φρο-
νοῦσιν. πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ἔστι λέγειν τὸ ἀνυπό-
στατον αὐτῶν ὑπομιμνήσκοντας· ὡς ἐν ὑποτυ-

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In sum, since such persuasive arguments are brought to bear both for there being signs and for there not being, it should no more be said that there are signs than that there are not.

Sextus follows this with an extensive discussion of demonstration (or, as it is sometimes translated, proof), which, as he said just above, is a certain kind of sign. The next subject is deductive arguments—or in the ancient terminology, “syllogisms.” I include a portion of his treatment of this topic:

On Deductive Arguments

[193] It is perhaps overkill to go over the deductive arguments they make such a fuss about . . .

[194] But for good measure it perhaps doesn't hurt to deal with these on their own too, since they are especially full of themselves about them. There are many things to say in bringing to mind⁷ their non-existence; but as we're giving

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πώσει δὲ ἀρκεῖ τῆδε τῆ μεθόδῳ χρῆσθαι κατὰ αὐτῶν. λέξω δὲ καὶ νῦν περὶ τῶν ἀναποδείκτων· τούτων γὰρ ἀναιρουμένων καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ σύμπαντες λόγοι διατρέπονται, τὴν ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ συνάγειν ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔχοντες.

[195] Ἡ πρότασις τοίνυν αὕτη 'πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ζῶον' ἐκ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἐπαγωγικῶς βεβαιούται· ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ Σωκράτην ἄνθρωπον ὄντα καὶ ζῶον εἶναι, καὶ Πλάτωνα ὁμοίως καὶ Δίωνα καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν κατὰ μέρος, δυνατὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ διαβεβαιούσθαι καὶ ὅτι πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ζῶόν ἐστιν, ὡς εἰ κἂν ἓν τι τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἐναντιούμενον φαίνοιτο τοῖς ἄλλοις, οὐκ ἔστιν ὑγιῆς ἢ καθόλου πρότασις, οἷον γοῦν, ἐπεὶ τὰ μὲν πλεῖστα τῶν ζῶων τὴν κάτω γένυν κινεῖ, μόνος δὲ ὁ κροκόδειλος τὴν ἄνω, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθῆς ἢ 'πᾶν ζῶον τὴν κάτω γένυν κινεῖ' πρότασις. [196] ὅταν οὖν λέγωσι 'πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ζῶον, Σωκράτης δ' ἄνθρωπος, Σωκράτης ἄρα

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an outline, it's enough to use the following method against them. Here too⁸ I will talk about the indemonstrables;⁹ for if these are done away with, all the rest of the arguments are also side-tracked, since it's from them that the demonstration of their cogency is to be had.

[195] So, the proposition “every human is an animal” is confirmed by induction from the particular cases; from the fact that Socrates, who is a human, is also an animal, and likewise Plato and Dion and each of the particular cases, it is thought to be possible to make a firm statement that every human is an animal—the idea being that if even one of the particular cases appeared in opposition to the others, the universal proposition is not sound (for example, since most animals move their lower jaw, and the crocodile alone moves its upper jaw, the proposition “every animal moves its lower jaw” is not true). [196] So when they say “Every human is an animal; Socrates is a human; therefore

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ζῶον', ἐκ τῆς καθόλου προτάσεως τῆς 'πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ζῶον' τὴν κατὰ μέρος πρότασιν συνάγειν βουλόμενοι, τὴν 'Σωκράτης ἄρα ζῶον', ἢ δὴ βεβαιωτικὴ τῆς καθολικῆς προτάσεως ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸν ἐπαγωγικὸν τρόπον, ὡς ὑπεμνήσαμεν, εἰς τὸν διάλληλον ἐμπίπτουσι λόγον, τὴν μὲν καθολικὴν πρότασιν δι' ἐκάστης τῶν κατὰ μέρος +<ἐπαγωγικῶς βεβαιοῦντες, τὴν δὲ κατὰ μέρος>+ ἐκ τῆς καθολικῆς συλλογιστικῶς. [197] παραπλησίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τοιούτου λόγου 'Σωκράτης ἄνθρωπος, οὐδεὶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος τετράπους, Σωκράτης ἄρα οὐκ ἐστὶ τετράπους' τὴν μὲν 'οὐδεὶς ἄνθρωπος τετράπους' πρότασιν ἐκ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἐπαγωγικῶς βουλόμενοι βεβαιοῦν, ἐκάστην δὲ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἐκ τῆς 'οὐδεὶς ἄνθρωπος τετράπους' συλλογίζεσθαι θέλοντες, τῇ κατὰ τὸν διάλληλον ἀπορίᾳ περιπίπτουσιν.

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Socrates is an animal,” and from the universal proposition “every human is an animal” they want to reach as a conclusion the particular proposition “therefore Socrates is an animal”—which, of course, has the function of *confirming* the universal proposition by way of the method of induction, as we have mentioned—they fall into the reciprocal argument, confirming the universal proposition inductively by means of each of the particular ones, and the particular one deductively from the universal one. [197] Similarly in the case of an argument like this: “Socrates is a human; no human is four-footed; therefore Socrates is not four-footed.” They want to confirm the proposition “no human is four-footed” inductively from the particular cases, but they wish to deduce each of the particular cases from “no human is four-footed,” and so they fall into the impasse of the reciprocal Mode.

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περὶ ἐπαγωγῆς

[204] Εὐπαραίτητον δὲ εἶναι νομίζω καὶ τὸν περὶ ἐπαγωγῆς τρόπον. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ μέρος πιστοῦσθαι βούλονται δι' αὐτῆς τὸ καθόλου, ἥτοι πάντα ἐπιόντες τὰ κατὰ μέρος τοῦτο ποιήσουσιν ἢ τινά. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν τινά, ἀβέβαιος ἔσται ἡ ἐπαγωγή, ἐνδεχομένου τοῦ ἐναντιοῦσθαι τῷ καθόλου τινὰ τῶν παραλειπομένων κατὰ μέρος ἐν τῇ ἐπαγωγῇ· εἰ δὲ πάντα, ἀδύνατα μοχθήσουσιν, ἀπειρών ὄντων τῶν κατὰ μέρος καὶ

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Sextus continues with a similar critique of several other basic argument patterns. He then deals much more briefly with induction, where (as already mentioned just now) one infers a universal conclusion from particular instances. Numerous modern philosophers, including David Hume in the eighteenth century, have had similar worries about induction.

On Induction

[204] The method of induction, I think, is easy to dispose of. Since they want to use it to guarantee the universal from particular cases, they will do this by going over either all the particular cases or just some. But if it's just some, the induction will not be secure—it's possible that some of the particular cases left out in the induction go against the universal.¹⁰ But if it's all, they will have an impossible struggle; there's an infinite number of particular cases—you can't

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ἀπεριορίστων. ὥσθ' οὕτως ἐκατέρωθεν, οἶμαι, συμβαίνει σαλεύεσθαι τὴν ἐπαγωγήν.

[473] ὅμως δὲ καὶ τοὺς σκεπτικούς ἂν δέη ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποκρίνασθαι, ἀσφαλῶς ἀποκρινοῦνται. φήσουσι γὰρ τὸν κατὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως λόγον πιθανὸν εἶναι μόνον καὶ πρὸς τὸ παρὸν

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put a limit on them. So either way, I think, it turns out that induction is shaky.

The rest of book II deals with a few other, more technical issues in logic.

I close the chapter on logic with an excerpt from the very end of Sextus' much longer treatment of logic, Against the Logicians (M VII–VIII). He has been arguing against demonstration, and has addressed an objection from the dogmatists: "Have you demonstrated that there is no such thing as demonstration or not? If not, then we have no reason to believe you. But if you have, then you have admitted that there is such a thing as demonstration." Sextus' reply to this is a nice example of his typical attitude in arguing with the dogmatists:

[473] If the skeptics have to answer for themselves, they will answer in a safe way. For they will say that the argument against demonstration is merely persuasive, and that for

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πείθειν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐπάγεσθαι συγκατάθεσιν, ἀγνοεῖν δέ, εἰ καὶ αὖθις ἔσται τοιοῦτος διὰ τὸ πολύτροπον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης διανοίας. . . . [476] εἰ μὲν δισχυρίζοντο οἱ σκεπτικοὶ μετὰ συγκαταθέσεως περὶ τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν, τάχα ἂν διετρέποντο ὑπὸ τοῦ διδάσκοντος, ὅτι ἔστιν ἀπόδειξις· νῦν δέ, ἐπεὶ ψιλὴν θέσιν λόγων ποιοῦνται τῶν κατὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως χωρὶς τοῦ συγκατατίθεσθαι τούτοις, τοσοῦτον ἀπέχουσι τοῦ βλάπτεσθαι πρὸς τῶν τούναντίον κατασκευαζόντων ὡς ὠφελεῖσθαι μᾶλλον. [477] εἰ γὰρ οἱ μὲν κατὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως κομισθέντες λόγοι μεμενήκασιν ἀναντίρρητοι, οἱ δὲ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν παραληφθέντες λόγοι πάλιν εἰσὶν ἰσχυροί, μήτε ἐκείνοις μήτε τούτοις προσθέμενοι τὴν ἐποχὴν ὁμολογῶμεν. [478] κἂν συγχωρηθῇ δὲ ἀποδεικτικὸς εἶναι ὁ κατὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως λόγος, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο ὠφελοῦνται τι

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the moment it persuades them and induces assent, but that they do not know whether it will also be like this in the future given the fickle character of human thought. . . . [476] If the skeptics made a strong statement, with assent, to the effect that demonstration is nothing, perhaps they would be turned away from this position by the person who teaches that there is demonstration. But in fact, since they engage in a bare positing of the arguments against demonstration, without assenting to them, they are so far from being damaged by those who construct the opposite case that, rather, they are helped. [477] For if the arguments produced against demonstration have remained unrefuted, and the arguments taken up in favor of there being demonstration are also strong, let us attach ourselves neither to one set nor to the other, but agree to suspend judgment. [478] And if the argument against demonstration is agreed to do the job of demonstration, the dogmatists are

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εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν οἱ δογματικοί . . . · συνάγει γὰρ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν, καὶ τούτου ἀληθοῦς ὄντος ψεῦδος γίνεται τὸ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν.

[479] ναί, φασίν, ἀλλ' ὁ συνάγων τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν ἀποδεικτικὸς ὢν ἑαυτὸν ἐκβάλλει. πρὸς ὃ ρητέον, ὅτι οὐ πάντως ἑαυτὸν ἐκβάλλει. πολλὰ γὰρ καθ' ὑπεξαίρεσιν λέγεται, καὶ ὡς τὸν Δία φασὶν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι πατέρα καθ' ὑπεξαίρεσιν αὐτοῦ τούτου (οὐ γὰρ δή γε καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ ἦν πατήρ), οὕτω καὶ ὅταν λέγωμεν μηδεμίαν εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν, καθ' ὑπεξαίρεσιν λέγομεν τοῦ δεικνύντος λόγου, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπόδειξις· μόνος γὰρ οὗτός ἐστιν ἀπόδειξις. [480] κἂν αὐτὸν δὲ ἐκβάλλῃ, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο κυροῦται τὸ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν. πολλὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄπερ ὃ ἄλλα ποιεῖ, τοῦτο καὶ ἑαυτὰ διατί-

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not helped on this account toward there being demonstration . . . ; for it concludes that there is *not* demonstration, and if this is true it becomes false that there is demonstration.

[479] Yes, they say, but the argument that concludes that there is not demonstration, if it does the job of demonstration, tosses itself out. To which it should be said that it does not definitely toss itself out. For many things are said that allow for an exception, and just as we say that Zeus is the father of gods and humans, allowing for the exception of himself (for of course he is not his own father), so too, when we say that there is no demonstration, we say this allowing for the exception of the argument showing that there is no demonstration; for this alone is a demonstration. [480] And even if it does toss itself out, that there is demonstration is not thereby ratified. For there are many things that put themselves in the same condition as they put other things. For example, just as

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θησιν. οἷον ὡς τὸ πῦρ δαπανῆσαν τὴν ὕλην καὶ ἑαυτὸ συμφθεῖρει, καὶ ὄν τρόπον τὰ καθαρτικά, ἐξελάσαντα τῶν σωμάτων τὰ ὑγρά, καὶ αὐτὰ συνεκτίθησιν, οὕτω δύναται καὶ ὁ κατὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως λόγος μετὰ τὸ πᾶσαν ἀπόδειξιν ἀνελεῖν καὶ ἑαυτὸν συμπεριγράφειν. [481] καὶ πάλιν ὡς οὐκ ἀδύνατόν ἐστι τὸν διὰ τινος κλίμακος ἐφ' ὑψηλὸν ἀναβάντα τόπον μετὰ τὴν ἀνάβασιν ἀνατρέψαι τῷ ποδὶ τὴν κλίμακα, οὕτως οὐκ ἀπέοικε τὸν σκεπτικόν, ὡς διὰ τινος ἐπιβάθρας τοῦ δεικνύντος λόγου τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν χωρήσαντα ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ προκειμένου κατασκευήν, τότε καὶ αὐτὸν τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἀνελεῖν.

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fire after consuming the wood destroys itself as well, and just as purgatives after driving the fluids out of bodies eliminate themselves as well, so too the argument against demonstration, after doing away with all demonstration, can bracket itself as well. [481] And again, just as it is not impossible for the person who has climbed to a high place by a ladder to knock over the ladder with his foot after his climb, so it is not unlikely that the skeptic too, having got to the accomplishment of his task by a sort of step-ladder—the argument showing that there is not demonstration—should do away with this argument.¹¹

[1] Περὶ μὲν <οὔν> τοῦ λογικοῦ μέρους τῆς λε-
γομένης φιλοσοφίας ὡς ἐν ὑποτυπώσει τοιαῦτα
ἄρκούντως λέγοιτο ἄν·

CHAPTER 5

Going After the Other Philosophers: Physics

Book III of Outlines includes both physics and ethics, in that order. “Physics” meant, quite generally, the study of nature (phusis), and so corresponds roughly to what we would call natural science. But since most (though not all) ancient Greek thinkers held that some kind of divine power had a crucial role in the workings of nature, god is understood as a topic within physics. And this is the topic with which book III of Outlines begins:

[1] What we’ve said will be enough, for an outline, about the logical part of so-called philosophy.

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περὶ τοῦ φυσικοῦ μέρους

Κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον τῆς συγγραφῆς καὶ τὸ φυσικὸν μέρος αὐτῆς ἐπιόντες οὐ πρὸς ἕκαστον τῶν λεγομένων αὐτοῖς κατὰ τόπον ἀντεροῦμεν, ἀλλὰ τὰ καθολικώτερα κινεῖν ἐπιχειροῦμεν, οἷς συμπεριγράφεται καὶ τὰ λοιπά. ἀρξώμεθα δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ ἀρχῶν λόγου.

περὶ ἀρχῶν δραστικῶν

Καὶ ἐπειδὴ παρὰ τοῖς πλείστοις συμπεφώνηται τῶν ἀρχῶν τὰς μὲν ὑλικὰς εἶναι, τὰς δὲ δραστικὰς, ἀπὸ τῶν δραστικῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ λόγου ποιησόμεθα· ταύτας γὰρ καὶ κυριωτέρας τῶν ὑλικῶν φασιν εἶναι.

περὶ θεοῦ

[2] Οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ θεὸν εἶναι δραστικώτατον αἴτιον οἱ πλείους ἀπεφήναντο, πρότερον περὶ θεοῦ σκοπήσωμεν, ἐκεῖνο προειπόντες, ὅτι τῶ μὲν βίῳ κατακολουθοῦντες ἀδοξάστως φαμὲν

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On the Physical Part

We'll engage with its physical part in the normal manner of this book: instead of arguing against each of the things they say, topic by topic, we will aim to disrupt the more general points, in which the rest are contained. Let's begin with the argument about principles.

On Active Principles

Since it is agreed by most people that some principles are material, others active, we'll make a start¹ to the argument with the active ones; for they say that these have priority over the material ones.

On God

[2] Since most people have declared that god is a most active cause, let's first examine god, with this preface—that following ordinary life without opinions, we say that there are gods and we

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εἶναι θεοὺς καὶ σέβομεν θεοὺς καὶ προνοεῖν αὐτούς φαμεν, πρὸς δὲ τὴν προπέτειαν τῶν δογματικῶν τάδε λέγομεν.

Τῶν ἐννοουμένων ἡμῖν πραγμάτων τὰς οὐσίας ἐπινοεῖν ὀφείλομεν, οἷον εἰ σώματά ἐστιν ἢ ἀσώματα. ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ εἶδη· οὐ γὰρ ἂν τις ἵππον ἐννοῆσαι δύναίτο μὴ οὐχὶ πρότερον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἵππου μαθῶν. τό τε ἐννοούμενον ἐννοεῖσθαί που ὀφείλει. [3] ἐπεὶ οὖν τῶν δογματικῶν οἱ μὲν σῶμά φασι εἶναι τὸν θεόν, οἱ δὲ ἀσώματον, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀνθρωποειδῆ, οἱ δὲ οὐ, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐν τόπῳ, οἱ δὲ οὐ, καὶ τῶν ἐν τόπῳ οἱ μὲν ἐντὸς κόσμου, οἱ δὲ ἐκτός, πῶς δυνησόμεθα ἐννοῖαν θεοῦ λαμβάνειν μήτε οὐσίαν ἔχοντες αὐτοῦ ὁμολογουμένην μήτε εἶδος μήτε τόπον ἐν ᾧ εἶη; πρότερον γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι ὁμολογησάτωσάν τε καὶ συμφωνησάτωσαν, ὅτι τοιόσδε ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, εἶτα ἡμῖν αὐτὸν ὑποτυπώσαμενοι

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worship gods and we say that they show providence; it's against the rashness of the dogmatists that we say the following things.²

When we conceive objects, we ought to conceive their being—for example, whether they are bodies or incorporeal. But also their forms; no one could conceive a horse without first having learned the form of a horse. Also, what is conceived ought to be conceived as *somewhere*. [3] Well, since some of the dogmatists say that god is a body, others that he is incorporeal; and some that he is human in form, others not; and some that he is in a place, others not; and of those who say he is in a place, some say this is within the universe, some outside it; how are we going to be able to gain a conception of god, if we don't have any agreement on his being, or his form, or a place he occupies? They should first agree on a common view, that god is such-and-such; only then, after giving us an outline

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οὕτως ἀξιούτωςαν ἡμᾶς ἔννοιαν θεοῦ λαμβάνειν. ἐς ὅσον δὲ ἀνεπικρίτως διαφωνοῦσιν, τί νοήσομεν ἡμεῖς ὁμολογουμένως παρ' αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔχομεν.

[4] ἀλλ' ἀφθαρτόν τι, φασί, καὶ μακάριον ἐννοήσας, τὸν θεὸν εἶναι τοῦτο νόμιζε. τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν εὐήθης· ὥσπερ <γὰρ> ὁ μὴ εἰδὼς τὸν Δίωνα οὐδὲ τὰ συμβεβηκότα αὐτῷ ὡς Δίῳ δύναται νοεῖν, οὕτως ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἴσμεν τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐδὲ τὰ συμβεβηκότα αὐτῷ μαθεῖν τε καὶ ἐννοῆσαι δυνησόμεθα. [5] χωρὶς δὲ τούτων εἰπάτωσαν ἡμῖν, τί ἐστὶ τὸ μακάριον, πότερον τὸ ἐνεργοῦν κατὰ ἀρετὴν καὶ προνοούμενον τῶν ὑφ' ἑαυτὸ τεταγμένων, ἢ τὸ ἀνενέργητον καὶ μήτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχον μήτε ἑτέρῳ παρέχον· καὶ γὰρ καὶ περὶ τούτου διαφωνήσαντες ἀνεπικρίτως ἀνεννόητον ἡμῖν πεποιήκασιν τὸ μακάριον, διὰ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ τὸν θεόν.

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of him, should they expect us to gain a conception of god. As long as they are in unresolved dispute, we don't have from them any agreement on *what* we are to conceive.

[4] But they say, once you have conceived something imperishable and blessed, consider that to be god. But this is silly. The person who doesn't know Dion³ cannot conceive of his attributes, either, as those of Dion; in the same way, since we do not know the being of god, we also won't be able to learn or conceive his attributes. [5] And aside from that, they should tell us what "blessed" is—is it what acts according to virtue and shows providence toward those things ranked below it, or is it what is inactive and neither has any trouble itself nor produces any for others?⁴ In fact, since they are in an unresolved dispute about this too, they have made us unable to conceive what's blessed, and therefore also god.

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[6] Ἴνα δὲ καὶ ἐπινοῆται ὁ θεός, ἐπέχειν ἀνάγκη περὶ τοῦ πότερον ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅσον ἐπὶ τοῖς δογματικοῖς. τὸ γὰρ εἶναι τὸν θεὸν πρόδηλον μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν. εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ προσέπιπτεν, συνεφώνησαν ἂν οἱ δογματικοί, τίς ἐστὶ καὶ ποδαπὸς καὶ ποῦ· ἢ ἀνεπίκριτος δὲ διαφωνία πεποίηκεν αὐτὸν ἄδηλον ἡμῖν εἶναι δοκεῖν καὶ ἀποδείξεως δεόμενον. [7] ὁ μὲν οὖν <ἀποδεικνύων> ὅτι ἔστι θεός, ἥτοι διὰ προδήλου τοῦτο ἀποδείκνυσιν ἢ δι' ἀδήλου. διὰ προδήλου μὲν οὖν οὐδαμῶς· εἰ γὰρ ἦν πρόδηλον τὸ ἀποδεικνύον ὅτι ἔστι θεός, ἐπεὶ τὸ ἀποδεικνύομενον πρὸς τῷ ἀποδεικνύντι νοεῖται, διὸ καὶ συγκαταλαμβάνεται αὐτῷ, καθὼς καὶ παρῆσθησάμεν, πρόδηλον ἔσται καὶ τὸ εἶναι θεόν, συγκαταλαμβανόμενον τῷ ἀποδεικνύντι αὐτὸ

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[6] But even allowing that god *is* conceived, it is necessary to suspend judgment on whether he exists or does not exist (as far as the dogmatists are concerned). That god exists is not clear on its face. If he came to our attention all by himself, the dogmatists would be of one voice on what he is, and of what kind, and where; but the unresolved dispute has made him seem to us to be unclear and in need of a demonstration.

[7] Well, the person who demonstrates that there is a god demonstrates this either by means of something clear on its face or by means of something unclear. And there's no way it can be by something clear on its face; for if what demonstrates that there is a god was clear on its face, then since what is demonstrated is conceived in relation to what does the demonstrating, and for that reason is grasped together with it, as we established,⁵ it will also be clear on its face that there is a god—that will be grasped together with what demonstrates it, which is clear on its

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προδήλω ὄντι. οὐκ ἐστὶ δὲ πρόδηλον, ὡς ὑπε-
μνήσαμεν· οὐδὲ ἀποδείκνυται ἄρα διὰ προδή-
λου. [8] ἀλλ' οὐδὲ δι' ἀδήλου. τὸ γὰρ ἀδηλον τὸ
ἀποδεικτικὸν τοῦ εἶναι θεόν, ἀποδείξεως χρῆ-
ζον, εἰ μὲν διὰ προδήλου λέγοιτο ἀποδείκνυσθαι,
οὐκέτι ἀδηλον ἔσται ἀλλὰ πρόδηλον [τὸ εἶναι
θεόν]. οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ἀποδεικτικὸν αὐτοῦ ἀδηλον
διὰ προδήλου ἀποδείκνυται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ δι' ἀδή-
λου· εἰς ἄπειρον γὰρ ἐκπεσεῖται ὁ τοῦτο λέγων,
αἰτούντων ἡμῶν ἀεὶ ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ φερομένου
ἀδήλου πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ προεκκειμένου. οὐκ
ἄρα ἐξ ἑτέρου δύναται ἀποδείκνυσθαι τὸ εἶναι
θεόν. [9] εἰ δὲ μήτε ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ ἐστὶ πρόδηλον
μήτε ἐξ ἑτέρου ἀποδείκνυται, ἀκατάληπτον
ἔσται εἰ ἔστι θεός.

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face. But it is *not* clear on its face, as we mentioned; therefore it is not demonstrated by means of something clear on its face. [8] But not by something unclear either. For the unclear thing that has the job of demonstrating that there is a god will be in need of demonstration. If it is said to be demonstrated by something clear on its face, *it* will no longer be unclear but clear on its face. The unclear thing that has the job of demonstrating it is therefore not demonstrated by something clear on its face. But not by something unclear either; for the person who says this will fall into an infinite regress—we'll always be asking for a demonstration of the unclear point brought up as a demonstration of the one offered the previous time. Therefore it cannot be demonstrated that there is a god from something else. [9] But if it's neither clear on its face by itself, nor is it demonstrated by something else, we will not be in a position to grasp whether there is a god.

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Ἔτι καὶ τοῦτο λεκτέον. ὁ λέγων εἶναι θεὸν ἤτοι προνοεῖν αὐτὸν τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ φησὶν ἢ οὐ προνοεῖν, καὶ εἰ μὲν προνοεῖν, ἤτοι πάντων ἢ τινῶν. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν πάντων προνοεῖ, οὐκ ἦν ἂν οὔτε κακόν τι οὔτε κακία ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ· κακίας δὲ πάντα μεστὰ εἶναι λέγουσιν· οὐκ ἄρα πάντων προνοεῖν λεχθήσεται ὁ θεός. [10] εἰ δὲ τινῶν προνοεῖ, διὰ τί τῶνδε μὲν προνοεῖ, τῶνδε δὲ οὐ; ἤτοι γὰρ καὶ βούλεται καὶ δύναται πάντων προνοεῖν, ἢ βούλεται μὲν, οὐ δύναται δέ, ἢ δύναται μὲν, οὐ βούλεται δέ, ἢ οὔτε βούλεται οὔτε δύναται. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν καὶ ἠβούλετο καὶ ἠδύνατο, πάντων ἂν προνοεῖ· οὐ προνοεῖ δὲ πάντων διὰ τὰ προειρημένα· οὐκ ἄρα καὶ βούλεται καὶ δύναται πάντων προνοεῖν. εἰ δὲ βούλεται

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There is also this to be said. The person who says that there is a god says either that he has providence for the things in the universe, or that he does not; and if he does have providence, it's either for everything or for just some things. But if he had providence for everything, there wouldn't be anything bad or any flaw in the universe; yet they say that everything is full of flaws; therefore god won't be said to have providence for everything. [10] But if he has providence for just some things, why does he have providence for these things and not those? For either he both wants and is able to have providence for everything; or he wants to but is not able to; or he is able to but doesn't want to; or he neither wants nor is able to. But if he both wanted to and was able to, he *would* have providence for everything; but he doesn't have providence for everything, given what was just said; therefore it's not that he both wants and is able to have providence for everything. If he

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μέν, οὐ δύναται δέ, ἀσθενέστερός ἐστι τῆς αἰτίας δι' ἣν οὐ δύναται προνοεῖν ὧν οὐ προνοεῖ [11] ἔστι δὲ παρὰ τὴν θεοῦ ἐπίνοϊαν τὸ ἀσθενέστερον εἶναί τινος αὐτόν. εἰ δὲ δύναται μὲν πάντων προνοεῖν, οὐ βούλεται δέ, βάσκανος ἂν εἶναι νομισθεῖη. εἰ δὲ οὔτε βούλεται οὔτε δύναται, καὶ βάσκανός ἐστι καὶ ἀσθενής, ὅπερ λέγειν περὶ θεοῦ ἀσεβούντων ἐστίν. οὐκ ἄρα προνοεῖ τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ ὁ θεός.

εἰ δὲ οὐδενὸς πρόνοιαν ποιεῖται οὐδὲ ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ ἔργον οὐδὲ ἀποτέλεσμα, οὐχ ἔξει τις εἰπεῖν, πόθεν καταλαμβάνεται ὅτι ἔστι θεός, εἶγε μήτε ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ φαίνεται μήτε δι' ἀποτελεσμάτων τινῶν καταλαμβάνεται. καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἄρα ἀκατάληπτόν ἐστιν εἰ ἔστι θεός.

[12] ἐκ δὲ τούτων ἐπιλογιζόμεθα, ὅτι ἴσως ἀσεβεῖν ἀναγκάζονται οἱ διαβεβαιωτικῶς λέγοντες

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wants to but is not able to, he is weaker than what causes him to be unable to have providence for the things he doesn't have providence for; [11] but it goes against the conception of god for him to be weaker than anything. If he *can* have providence for everything, but doesn't want to, he must be considered to be malicious. And if he neither wants to nor can, he is both malicious and weak; but people who say *that* about god are impious. Therefore god does not have providence for the things in the universe.

But if he doesn't show providence for anything, and he doesn't do any work or accomplish anything, one will not be able to say how it is grasped that there is a god, seeing that he is neither apparent by himself nor is grasped by means of some accomplishments. For these reasons too, therefore, we are not in a position to grasp whether there is a god.

[12] From these points we reckon that those who say with full commitment that there is a

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εἶναι θεόν· πάντων μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν προνοεῖν λέγοντες κακῶν αἴτιον τὸν θεὸν εἶναι φήσουσιν, τινῶν δὲ ἢ καὶ μηδενὸς προνοεῖν αὐτὸν λέγοντες ἦτοι βάσκανον τὸν θεὸν ἢ ἀσθενῆ λέγειν ἀναγκασθήσονται, ταῦτα δὲ ἐστὶν ἀσεβούντων προδήλως.

[49] Ἐπεὶ οὐ πᾶν τὸ ἐπινοούμενον καὶ ὑπάρξεως μετείληφεν, ἀλλὰ δύναται τι ἐπινοεῖσθαι μὲν, μὴ ὑπάρχειν δέ, καθάπερ Ἴπποκένταυρος καὶ Σκύλλα, δεήσει μετὰ τὴν περὶ τῆς ἐπινοίας τῶν θεῶν ζήτησιν καὶ περὶ τῆς ὑπάρξεως τούτων

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god are probably forced into impiety. If they say that he has providence for everything, they will be saying that god is a cause of bad things, while if they say that he has providence for just some things, or even for nothing, they will be forced to say that god is either malicious or weak—and people who say these things are quite clearly impious.

Sextus also discusses god at much greater length in the first book of Against the Physicists (M IX). There too he first considers the conception of god, and then whether there are any gods. I include a short passage at the transition between these two topics, which says a little more about the skeptic's own attitude toward religion:

[49] Since not everything that is conceived also shares in reality, but something can be conceived but not be real, like a Centaur or Scylla, it will be necessary after our investigation of the conception of the gods to inquire also into their

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σκέπτεσθαι. τάχα γὰρ ἀσφαλέστερος παρὰ τοὺς ὡς ἑτέρως φιλοσοφοῦντας εὐρεθήσεται ὁ σκεπτικός, κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάτρια ἔθνη καὶ τοὺς νόμους λέγων εἶναι θεοὺς καὶ πᾶν τὸ εἰς τὴν τούτων θρησκείαν καὶ εὐσέβειαν συντεῖνον ποιῶν, τὸ δ' ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ φιλοσόφῳ ζητήσει μηδὲν προπετευόμενος.

περὶ τόπου

[119] Τόπος τοίνυν λέγεται διχῶς, κυρίως καὶ καταχρηστικῶς, καταχρηστικῶς μὲν [ὡς] ὁ ἐν πλάτει, ὡς ἐμοῦ ἢ πόλις, κυρίως δὲ ὁ πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν κατέχων, ὑφ' οὗ περιέχομαι πρὸς

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reality. For perhaps the skeptic will be found to be safer than those who do philosophy in another way; in line with his ancestral customs and laws, he says that there are gods and does everything that tends to worship of and reverence toward them, but as far as philosophical investigation is concerned, he makes no rash moves.⁶

Returning to Outlines, the portion of book III on physics touches on many other topics. I include excerpts from just one of these—place; one of the interesting things about this is the use of common sense on one side of the opposing arguments:

On Place

[119] Place is spoken of in two ways, strictly and loosely. Loosely is place in a broad sense—for instance, the city as my place; strictly is the kind that precisely confines, by which I am con-

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ἀκρίβειαν. ζητοῦμεν οὖν περὶ τοῦ τόπου <τοῦ> πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν.

τοῦτον δὲ οἱ μὲν ἔθεσαν, οἱ δὲ ἀνεῖλον, οἱ δὲ ἐπέσχον περὶ αὐτοῦ. [120] ὧν οἱ μὲν ὑπάρχειν αὐτὸν φάσκοντες ἐπὶ τὴν ἐνάργειαν καταφεύγουσιν. τίς γὰρ ἄν, φασί, λέξειε μὴ εἶναι τόπον ὁρῶν τὰ μέρη τοῦ τόπου, οἷον τὰ δεξιὰ τὰ ἀριστερά, τὰ ἄνω τὰ κάτω, ἔμπροσθεν ὀπίσω, καὶ ἄλλοτε ἀλλαχοῦ γιγνόμενος, βλέπων τε, ὅτι ἔνθα ὁ ὑφηγητῆς ὁ ἐμὸς διελέγετο, ἐνταῦθα ἐγὼ νῦν διαλέγομαι, τόπον τε διάφορον καταλαμβάνων τῶν κούφων φύσει καὶ τῶν φύσει βαρέων, [121] ἔτι καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀκούων λεγόντων ‘ἦτοι μὲν γὰρ πρῶτα χάος ἐγένετο’. . . . εἶγε μὴν ἔστι τι σῶμα, φασίν, ἔστι καὶ ὁ τόπος· ἄνευ γὰρ τούτου οὐκ ἂν εἶη τὸ σῶμα. . . .

[122] οἱ δὲ ἀναιροῦντες τὸν τόπον οὔτε τὰ μέρη τοῦ τόπου διδόασιν εἶναι· μηδὲν γὰρ εἶναι

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tained precisely. Our investigation, then, is about place understood precisely.

Some people have proposed this, some have done away with it, and some have suspended judgment about it. [120] Those who say that it is real appeal to plain experience. For who, they say, would claim that there is no such thing as place when they see the parts of place—right and left, up and down, in front and behind; and they turn up here and there at different times; and they notice that where my teacher used to hold discussions, there I am holding a discussion now; and they grasp that the place of naturally light things is different from that of naturally heavy things;⁷ [121] and moreover, they hear the people of old saying “For indeed Chaos first came into being.”⁸ . . . Then again, if there is any body, they say, there is also place; for without this there couldn’t be body. . . .

[122] But those who do away with place don’t accept that there are parts of place either; for

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τὸν τόπον παρὰ τὰ τούτου μέρη, καὶ τὸν συνάγειν πειρώμενον, ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ τόπος ἐκ τοῦ τὰ μέρη αὐτοῦ ὡς ὄντα λαμβάνειν, τὸ ζητούμενον δι' ἑαυτοῦ κατασκευάζειν βούλεσθαι. ὁμοίως δὲ ληρεῖν καὶ τοὺς ἔν τινι τόπῳ γίνεσθαι τι ἢ γεγονέναι φάσκοντας, ὅλως μὴ διδομένου τοῦ τόπου. συναρπάζειν δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑπαρξιν μὴ διδομένην αὐτόθεν. . . . [123] τὸν τε Ἡσίοδον μὴ ἀξιόχρεων εἶναι κριτὴν τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν. καὶ οὕτω διακρουόμενοι τὰ εἰς κατασκευὴν φερόμενα τοῦ εἶναι τόπον, ἤδη καὶ ποικιλώτερον κατασκευάζουσιν, ὅτι ἀνύπαρκτός ἐστι, ταῖς ἐμβριθεστέραις εἶναι δοκούσας τῶν δογματικῶν στάσεις περὶ τοῦ τόπου προσχρώμενοι, τῇ τε τῶν Στωικῶν καὶ τῇ τῶν Περιπατητικῶν, τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον.

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place is nothing aside from its parts, and the person who tries to conclude that there is place by taking its parts as existing is wanting to establish the point under investigation by means of itself. Similarly (in their view), those who say that something turns up or has turned up in some place are being silly, if place as a whole is not accepted. They're also helping themselves to the reality of body, which is not automatically accepted. . . . [123] And Hesiod is not an adequate judge of philosophical issues. And while shoving aside in this way the points brought up to establish that there is place, they also establish in quite a variety of ways that it is unreal, focusing on what are thought to be the weightier stances of the dogmatists concerning place—that of the Stoics and that of the Peripatetics*—in the following manner.

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[131] . . . οἱ δὲ Περιπατητικοὶ φασιν εἶναι τόπον τὸ πέρασ τοῦ περιέχοντος, καθὸ περιέχει, ὡς ἐμοῦ τόπον εἶναι τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ ἀέρος τὴν περιτετυπωμένην τῷ ἐμῷ σώματι. ἀλλ' εἴπερ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ τόπος, τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἔσται καὶ οὐκ ἔσται. ὅτε γὰρ μέλλει ἔν τινι τόπῳ γίνεσθαι τὸ σῶμα, καθὸ μὲν οὐδὲν δύναται γενέσθαι ἐν τῷ μὴ ὑπάρχοντι, δεῖ προὔπαρχειν τὸν τόπον, ἵνα οὕτως ἐν αὐτῷ γένηται τὸ σῶμα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἔσται ὁ τόπος πρὶν ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι τὸ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ σῶμα. καθὸ δὲ περιτυπουμένης τῆς τοῦ περιέχοντος ἐπιφανείας τῷ περιεχομένῳ ἀποτελεῖται, οὐ δύναται ὑποστῆναι ὁ τόπος πρὸ τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι τὸ σῶμα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔσται τότε. ἄτοπον δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ λέγειν καὶ

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I omit the arguments against the Stoics, many of which are somewhat technical. We pick up with the arguments against the Peripatetics:

[131] . . . The Peripatetics say that place is the limit of what contains, insofar as it contains, as my place is the surface of the air that envelops my body. But if this is place, the same thing will both be and not be. For when the body is on the verge of coming to be in a certain place, insofar as nothing can come to be in what does not exist, the place must exist beforehand, so that the body may in this way come to be in it, and for this reason the place will be there before the body in the place comes to be in it. But insofar as it is brought to completion when the surface of what contains envelops what is contained, place *can't* subsist before the body comes to be in it, and for this reason it won't at that point be there. But it's absurd to speak of the same thing both being something and not being.

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εἶναι τι καὶ μὴ εἶναι· οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶ τόπος τὸ πέρασ τοῦ περιέχοντος, καθὸ περιέχει.

[132] πρὸς τούτοις, εἴ ἐστὶ τι ὁ τόπος, ἦτοι γεννητός ἐστὶν ἢ ἀγέννητος. ἀγέννητος μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἐστὶν· περιτυπούμενος γάρ, φασίν, τῷ ἐν αὐτῷ σώματι ἀποτελεῖται. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ γεννητός· εἰ γάρ ἐστι γεννητός, ἦτοι ὅτε ἐν τόπῳ ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα, τότε γίνεται ὁ τόπος ἐν ᾧ ἤδη λέγεται εἶναι τὸ ἐν τόπῳ, ἢ ὅτε οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ. [133] οὔτε δὲ ὅτε ἐν αὐτῷ ἐστὶν (ἔστι γὰρ ἤδη τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ σώματος ὁ τόπος) οὔτε ὅτε οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ, εἶγε περιτυποῦται μὲν, ὡς φασίν, τῷ περιεχομένῳ τὸ περιέχον καὶ οὕτω γίνεται τόπος, τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐν αὐτῷ ὄντι οὐδὲν δύναται περιτυπωθῆναι. εἰ δὲ μήτε ὅτε ἐν τόπῳ ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα, μήτε ὅτε οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ, γίνεται ὁ τόπος, παρὰ δὲ ταῦτα οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἐπινοεῖν, οὐδὲ γεννητός ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος. εἰ δὲ μήτε γεννητός ἐστὶ μήτε ἀγέννητος, οὐδὲ ἔστιν. . . .

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Therefore place is not the limit of what contains insofar as it contains.

[132] In addition, if place is anything, it is either generated or ungenerated. But it's not ungenerated; for it is brought to completion, they say, by enveloping the body in it. But neither is it generated. For if it is generated, it's either when the body is in place that the place (in which the thing in place is already said to be) comes into being, or it's when the body is not in it. [133] But it's not when the body is in it—for the place of the body in it is already there; nor is it when the body isn't in it, if in fact, as they say, what contains envelops what is contained, and that's how place comes into being, but nothing can envelop what's not in it. But if it's neither when the body is in place, nor when it isn't, that the place comes into being, and nothing can be thought of besides these, place isn't generated either. But if it's neither generated nor ungenerated, it does not exist. . . .

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[135] Ἐνεστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πλείω λέγειν. ἀλλ' ἵνα μὴ τὸν λόγον μηκύνωμεν, ἐκεῖνο ἐπακτέον, ὅτι τοὺς σκεπτικοὺς ἐντρέπουσι μὲν οἱ λόγοι, δυσωπεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐνάργεια. διόπερ οὐθετέρῳ προστιθέμεθα ὅσον ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τῶν δογματικῶν, ἀλλ' ἐπέχομεν περὶ τοῦ τόπου.

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[135] Lots of other things may be said. But in order not to extend the argument too long, we should point out the following: the skeptics are troubled by the arguments, but also embarrassed by plain experience.⁹ For this reason we attach ourselves to neither side (as regards what is said by the dogmatists), but suspend judgment about place.

περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ μέρους τῆς
φιλοσοφίας

[168] Λείπεται δὲ τὸ ἠθικόν, ὅπερ δοκεῖ περὶ τὴν
διάκρισιν τῶν τε καλῶν καὶ κακῶν καὶ ἀδιαφό-
ρων καταγίγνεσθαι. ἵνα οὖν κεφαλαιωδῶς καὶ
περὶ τούτου διαλάβωμεν, περὶ τῆς ὑπάρξεως

CHAPTER 6

Going After the Other Philosophers: Ethics

Sextus devotes the shortest amount of space to ethics, and his entire discussion in book III of Outlines focuses on just two topics: (1) whether anything is really, or by nature, good or bad (or indifferent)—essentially the same question that today might be phrased “Are there any objective values?”; and (2) whether living well can be captured in a systematic skill or craft (technê), as the Stoics maintained. I include the central points from his treatment of the first topic.

On the Ethical Part of Philosophy

[I68] There remains the ethical part, which is thought to be concerned with distinguishing things that are admirable and bad and indifferent. In order to handle this too in a summary

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τῶν τε ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν καὶ ἀδιαφόρων ζη-
τήσωμεν, τὴν ἔννοιαν ἐκάστου προεκθέμενοι.

εἰ ἔστι τι φύσει ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν καὶ ἀδιάφορον

[179] Τὸ πῦρ φύσει ἀλεαῖνον πᾶσι φαίνεται ἀλεαντικόν, καὶ ἡ χιῶν φύσει ψύχουσα πᾶσι φαίνεται ψυκτική, καὶ πάντα τὰ φύσει κινουῦντα ὁμοίως πάντας κινεῖ τοὺς κατὰ φύσιν, ὡς φασίν, ἔχοντας. οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν λεγομένων ἀγαθῶν πάντας κινεῖ ὡς ἀγαθόν, ὡς ὑπομνήσομεν· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι φύσει ἀγαθόν.

ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲν τῶν λεγομένων ἀγαθῶν πάντας ὁμοίως κινεῖ, δηλόν, φασίν. [180] ἵνα γὰρ τοὺς ιδιώτας παρῶμεν, ὧν οἱ μὲν εὐεξίαν σώματος ἀγαθὸν εἶναι νομίζουσιν, οἱ δὲ τὸ λαγνεύειν, οἱ

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way, let us investigate the reality of good and bad and indifferent things, first setting out the conception of each one.

I omit the portion about the conceptions. The main topic is addressed as follows:

Whether Anything Is by Nature Good or Bad or Indifferent

[179] Fire, which by nature warms, appears warming to everyone; and snow, which by nature cools, appears cooling to everyone; and everything that has an effect by nature has the same effect on all those who are, as they say, in a natural state. But none of the so-called goods affects everyone as good, as we will indicate; therefore there isn't anything by nature good.

That none of the so-called goods has the same effect on everyone is, they say, clear. [180] Leaving aside ordinary people—some of whom think physical fitness is a good thing, others

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δὲ τὸ ἀδηφαγεῖν, οἱ δὲ οἰνοφλυγίαν, οἱ δὲ τὸ
χρῆσθαι κύβοις, οἱ δὲ πλεονεξίαν, οἱ δὲ καὶ
χείρῳ τινὰ τούτων, αὐτῶν τῶν φιλοσόφων
τινὲς μὲν τρία γένη φασὶν εἶναι ἀγαθῶν, ὡς οἱ
Περιπατητικοί· τούτων γὰρ τὰ μὲν εἶναι περὶ
ψυχὴν ὡς τὰς ἀρετάς, τὰ δὲ περὶ σῶμα ὡς ὑγι-
ειαν καὶ τὰ ἐοικότα, τὰ δὲ ἐκτὸς ὡς φίλους,
πλοῦτον, τὰ παραπλήσια. [181] οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς
Στοᾶς τριγένειαν μὲν καὶ αὐτοὶ φασιν εἶναι
ἀγαθῶν· τούτων γὰρ τὰ μὲν εἶναι περὶ ψυχὴν
ὡς τὰς ἀρετάς, τὰ δὲ ἐκτὸς ὡς τὸν σπουδαῖον
καὶ <τὸν> φίλον, τὰ δὲ οὔτε περὶ ψυχὴν οὔτε
ἐκτὸς, οἷον τὸν σπουδαῖον ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτόν· τὰ
μέντοι περὶ σῶμα [ἢ ἐκτός], ἅ φασιν οἱ ἐκ τοῦ
Περιπάτου ἀγαθὰ εἶναι, οὐ φασιν ἀγαθὰ. ἔνιοι
δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἡσπάσαντο ὡς ἀγαθόν, τινὲς δὲ
κακὸν αὐτὴν ἄντικρυς εἶναί φασιν, ὥστε καὶ
τινα τῶν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας ἀναφθέγξασθαι ἄμα-
νεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ἡσθεῖν.’

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sex, others stuffing themselves, others binge drinking, others gambling, others having the most money, and others even worse things—even among the philosophers some say that there are three kinds of good, such as the Peripatetics: some of them are of the soul, such as the virtues, some are of the body, such as health and the like, and some are external, such as friends, wealth, and similar things. [181] The Stoics, too, say that there is a triad of goods; some of them are of the soul, such as the virtues, some are external, such as the excellent person and the friend, and some are neither of the soul nor external, such as the excellent person in relation to himself; however, the things of the body that the Peripatetics say are good, they say are not good. And some have welcomed pleasure as a good, but others say that, on the contrary, it is a bad thing, so that one of the philosophers even exclaimed, “I would rather have madness than pleasure.”¹

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[182] εἰ τοίνυν τὰ μὲν φύσει κινουῦντα πάντα ὁμοίως κινεῖ, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀγαθοῖς οὐ πάντες ὁμοίως κινούμεθα, οὐδὲν ἐστὶ φύσει ἀγαθόν. καὶ γὰρ οὔτε πάσαις ταῖς προεκκειμέναις στάσεσι πιστεύειν ἐνδέχεται διὰ τὴν μάχην οὔτε τινί. ὁ γὰρ λέγων, ὅτι τῆδε μὲν πιστευτέον τῆ στάσει, τῆδε δὲ οὐδαμῶς, ἐναντιουμένους τοὺς παρὰ τῶν ἀντιδοξούντων λόγους αὐτῶ ἔχων, μέρος γίνεται <τῆς> διαφωνίας, καὶ τοῦ κρινουῦντος αὐτὸς δεήσεται διὰ τοῦτο μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἑτέρους κρινεῖ. μήτε οὖν κριτηρίου ὄντος ὁμολογουμένου μήτε ἀποδείξεως διὰ τὴν ἀνεπίκριτον καὶ περὶ τούτων διαφωνίαν, εἰς τὴν ἐποχὴν καταστήσει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐχ ἔξει διαβεβαιοῦσθαι, τί ἐστὶ τὸ φύσει ἀγαθόν.

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[182] So if the things that have an effect by nature have the same effect on everyone, but when it comes to the so-called goods, we *don't* all get the same effect, nothing is by nature good. Indeed, it is impossible to put our trust either in all the positions just laid out, because of the conflict, or in just one of them. For the person who says that this position should be trusted, but not that one, becomes a party to the dispute, since in opposition to him he faces the arguments of those who have contrary opinions; for this reason he'll be in need of someone to make a judgment, just like the others—he won't *be* a judge of others. But since there isn't an agreed-upon criterion or demonstration, given the unresolved dispute about these things too, he will descend into suspension of judgment, and for this reason will be unable to make a firm statement on what the good by nature is.

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[190] . . . Διὰ δὲ τὰ προειρημένα οὐδὲ κακόν τι ἔστι φύσει. τὰ γὰρ ἑτέροις δοκοῦντα εἶναι κακά, ταῦτα ἕτεροι διώκουσιν ὡς ἀγαθὰ, οἷον ἀσέλγειαν ἀδικίαν φιλαργυρίαν ἀκρασίαν, τὰ εἰκότα. ὅθεν εἰ τὰ μὲν φύσει πάντας ὁμοίως πέφυκε κινεῖν, τὰ δὲ λεγόμενα εἶναι κακὰ οὐ πάντας ὁμοίως κινεῖ, οὐδὲν ἔστι φύσει κακόν.

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Sextus adds a few other, more complicated arguments to the same effect. He then turns from good to bad:

[190] . . . Given what was said before, there isn't anything bad by nature either. For the things that seem to some to be bad, others pursue as good, such as lewdness, injustice, money-grubbing, lack of restraint, and the like. Hence, if things that are *by nature* something-or-other naturally have the same effect on everyone, but the things said to be bad don't have the same effect on everyone, nothing is by nature bad.

He also makes an argument that nothing is by nature indifferent; I omit this, since it depends heavily on details of the Stoic view about indifferent things. Then, after a brief critique of the Epicurean view that pleasure is by nature good, he turns to a long review of conflicting ethical attitudes and cultural practices in different societies, which is very similar to material we have

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[235] Ὁ τοίνυν σκεπτικὸς τὴν τοσαύτην ἀνωμαλίαν τῶν πραγμάτων ὁρῶν ἐπέχει μὲν περὶ τοῦ φύσει τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ ὅλως πρακτέον εἶναι, κὰν τούτῳ τῆς δογματικῆς ἀφιστάμενος προπετείας, ἔπεται δὲ ἀδοξάστως τῇ βιωτικῇ τηρήσει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μὲν τοῖς δοξαστοῖς ἀπαθὴς μένει, ἐν δὲ τοῖς κατηναγκασμένοις μετριοπαθεῖ. [236] ὡς μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος αἰσθητικὸς πάσχει, μὴ προσδοξάζων δέ, ὅτι τοῦτο ὃ πάσχει κακὸν ἐστὶ φύσει, μετριοπαθεῖ. τὸ γὰρ προσδοξάζειν τι τοιοῦτο χεῖρόν ἐστὶ καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πάσχειν, ὡς ἐνίοτε τοὺς μὲν τεμνομένους ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτο πάσχοντας φέρειν, τοὺς δὲ παρεστῶτας διὰ τὴν περὶ τοῦ γινομένου δόξαν ὡς φαύλου

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already seen in the last of the Ten Modes (I.145–63, in chapter 2). He wraps up the whole topic in the following passage:

[235] The skeptic, then, seeing so much inconsistency in what is done, suspends judgment about anything being by nature good or bad, or in general to be done—in this respect, too, he stands apart from dogmatic rashness—but follows the routine of life without opinions; and for this reason he stays free of reactions in matters of opinion and has moderate reactions on things that are forced on us.² [236] As a sentient human being, he has a reaction, but as he doesn't have the additional opinion that this reaction he is having is bad by nature, his reaction is moderate. For having the additional opinion that something is like this is worse than the reaction itself; sometimes those who are undergoing surgery, or something else of that kind, put up with it, while the attendants faint because of their opinion about what's

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λειποψυχεῖν. [237] ὁ μέντοι γε ὑποθέμενος τὸ φύσει τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ ὅλως πρακτέον ἢ μὴ πρακτέον εἶναι ταρασσεται ποικίλως. καὶ γὰρ παρόντων αὐτῶ τούτων ἂ νομίζει φύσει κακὰ εἶναι ποινηλατεῖσθαι δοκεῖ, καὶ τῶν φαινομένων ἀγαθῶν αὐτῶ γινόμενος ἐγκρατῆς ὑπὸ τε τοῦ τύφου καὶ τοῦ περὶ τὴν ἀποβολὴν αὐτῶν φόβου, [καὶ] εὐλαβούμενος μὴ πάλιν ἐν τοῖς φύσει κακοῖς νομιζομένοις παρ' αὐτῶ γένηται, ταραχαῖς οὐχὶ ταῖς τυχούσαις περιπίπτει. [238] . . . ὅθεν ἐπιλογιζόμεθα, ὅτι εἰ τὸ κακοῦ ποιητικὸν κακὸν ἐστὶ καὶ φευκτόν, ἢ δὲ πεποιθήσις τοῦ τάδε μὲν εἶναι φύσει ἀγαθὰ, τάδε δὲ κακὰ ταραχὰς ποιεῖ, κακὸν ἐστὶ καὶ φευκτόν τὸ ὑποτίθεσθαι καὶ πεποιθέναί φαῦλόν τι ἢ ἀγαθὸν ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν εἶναι. Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ἀρκεῖ λελέχθαι περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν καὶ ἀδιαφόρων.

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happening—that it's a bad thing. [237] In fact, the person who supposes that there is something by nature good or bad, or in general to be done or not to be done, is disturbed in several different ways. When he is encountering the things he considers to be bad by nature, he thinks he is being persecuted, and when he has got hold of the things that appear to him good, he falls into disturbance of no ordinary kind, both because of his conceit and because of the fear of losing them—he's nervous about getting back among things he considers to be bad by nature. [238] . . . Hence we reckon that if what produces bad effects is bad and to be avoided, and trust in some things being by nature good and others by nature bad produces disturbance, supposing or trusting that anything is bad or good as regards its nature is bad and to be avoided. Enough said, for now, about good, bad, and indifferent.

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[162] . . . καταφρονεῖν ἀναγκαῖον τῶν εἰς ἀνε-
νεργησίαν αὐτὸν περικλείεσθαι νομιζόντων ἢ
εἰς ἀπέμφασιν, [163] καὶ εἰς ἀνενεργησίαν μὲν,
ὅτι τοῦ βίου παντὸς ἐν αἰρέσεσι καὶ φυγαῖς
ὄντος ὁ μήτε αἰρούμενός τι μήτε φύγων δυνά-
μει τὸν βίον ἀρνεῖται καὶ τινος φυτοῦ τρόπον
ἐπεῖχεν, [164] εἰς ἀπέμφασιν δέ, ὅτι ὑπὸ τυ-
ράννῳ ποτὲ γενόμενος καὶ τῶν ἀρρήτων τι ποι-
εῖν ἀναγκαζόμενος ἢ οὐχ ὑπομενεῖ τὸ προστατ-
τόμενον, ἀλλ' ἐκούσιον ἐλεῖται θάνατον, ἢ

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Sextus now turns to his other main ethical topic, whether there is a skill or craft for living, which occupies the rest of book III.

In conclusion, I add a short passage from Sextus' other treatment of ethics, Against the Ethicists (M XI). There too he discusses whether anything is by nature good or bad. At the end of this discussion he addresses two objections to the skeptical position:

[I62] . . . We have to treat with contempt those who think that he [the skeptic] is reduced to inactivity or to inconsistency—[I63] to inactivity because, since the whole of life is bound up with choosing and avoiding things, the person who neither chooses nor avoids anything in effect renounces life and stays fixed³ like some vegetable; [I64] 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 stand to do what has been commanded, but will choose a voluntary death, or

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φεύγων τὰς βασάνους ποιήσει τὸ κελευόμενον, οὕτω τε οὐκέτι “ἀφυγῆς καὶ ἀναίρετος ἔσται” κατὰ τὸν Τίμωνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἐλεῖται, τοῦ δ’ ἀποστήσεται, ὅπερ ἦν τῶν μετὰ πείσματος κατειληφόντων τὸ φευκτόν τι εἶναι καὶ αἰρετόν. [165] ταῦτα δὴ λέγοντες οὐ συνιαῖσιν, ὅτι κατὰ μὲν τὸν φιλόσοφον λόγον οὐ βιοῖ ὁ σκεπτικός (ἀνενέργητος γὰρ ἔστιν ὅσον ἐπὶ τούτῳ), κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀφιλόσοφον τήρησιν δύναται τὰ μὲν αἰρεῖσθαι, τὰ δὲ φεύγειν. [166] ἀναγκαζόμενός τε ὑπὸ τυράννου τι τῶν ἀπηγορευμένων πράττειν, τῇ κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους καὶ τὰ ἔθη προλήψει τυχὸν τὸ μὲν ἐλεῖται, τὸ δὲ φεύξεται· καὶ ῥᾶόν γε οἴσει τὸ σκληρὸν παρὰ τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν δογμάτων, ὅτι οὐδὲν ἕξωθεν τούτων προσδοξάζει καθάπερ ἐκεῖνος.

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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 the action of someone who has grasped with confidence that there is something to be avoided and to be chosen. [I65] In saying this, of course, they do not understand that the skeptic does not live in accord with philosophical reasoning (for as far as this is concerned he is inactive), but that in accord with non-philosophical routine he is able to choose some things and avoid others. [I66] And if compelled by a tyrant to perform some forbidden act, he will choose one thing, perhaps, and avoid the other relying on the preconception that fits 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 additional opinion over and above these conditions.⁴

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Appearance, Apparent (*phantasia, phainomenon*):

The way things strike you on a given occasion is an “appearance,” or something “apparent.” Examples might be: that it is a sunny day today; that the honey you spread on your toast tasted sweet; that the change in your pocket that you just counted out came to \$2.56. In saying that things “appear” a certain way, you specifically do not commit yourself to whether they are that way in the nature of things, or in reality. Sextus is happy to go along with “appearances” in his daily life, while suspending judgment about the real nature of things.

Bracketing (*perigraphhein*): “Bracketing”—that is, enclosing within parentheses—was a device used by ancient scholars to indicate a portion of a text that, in their view, was invalid and needed to be deleted. Recent scholarship has convincingly

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identified this as the metaphor Sextus is using with this word. So “bracket” means, in effect, “cancel out.”

Doctrine (*dogma*): A definite view on the nature of things held by a dogmatist (see Dogmatist). Sextus does at one point admit that *dogma* can be used in a looser sense, where it just refers to an impression you go along with (I.13, in chapter 1). But normally Sextus uses it in the stronger way, and this seems to be generally in line with its use in other authors. Others have translated *dogma* by “belief,” in an attempt to straddle these two senses. But “belief” is too weak for the stronger sense, which is the usual one. So I translate by “doctrine,” while conceding that this doesn’t fit in the one place where he mentions the looser sense; see my note at I.13.

Dogmatic, Dogmatist (*dogmatikos*): A “dogmatist” is someone who claims to have figured out the real nature of things, at least on some subjects. Philosophy conducted in this spirit is sometimes referred to as “dogmatic.”

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Grasp (*katalambanein*): The Greek word can refer to physically grasping or taking hold of something, but it can also refer to grasping something mentally. In this usage, to “grasp” something is to know it for sure, where there is no possibility of your being wrong. The Stoics were the first philosophers to give importance to this term, but by Sextus’ time it seems to be standard philosophical vocabulary. Sextus himself, of course, would never claim to have “grasped” anything; for him, “grasping” things is just something the dogmatists claim to do. There is one passage in *Outlines* (II.10, at the end of my chapter 3) where he flirts with a looser sense of the term “grasp,” where it simply means “think of.” But this is because the normal meaning of “grasp” has led to hopeless consequences for the dogmatists.

Insist (*diabebaiousthai*): To “insist” on something is to make a claim in a “dogmatic” spirit—that is, with confidence that one has captured how things really are. I sometimes translate this word by “make a firm statement” or “make a strong

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statement”—also occasionally by “commit to” and related phrases.

Make a firm statement, make a strong statement (*di-abebaioussthai*): See Insist.

Opinion (*doxa*): To hold an “opinion” is to commit yourself to a definite position about how things are, a position that is not adequately supported. “Opinion” is thus a term of abuse. The Stoics shared Sextus’ usage of this term. Their ideal of wisdom includes never holding an opinion; the sage, the person who has achieved this wisdom, will only make a commitment to a definite position when the matter in question has been “grasped.” (Sextus thinks this will never happen, but the Stoics disagree.)

Tranquility (*ataraxia*): The word *ataraxia* comes from a word meaning “trouble” or “harassment” (*tarachê*), with the negative prefix *a-*. It thus refers to a state of freedom from worry.

PERSONS REFERRED TO

This list does not include most of the persons and groups mentioned in the Ten Modes (in chapter 2); in many cases we know little or nothing about them, and their identities are generally not important for the points Sextus is making.

Academics. Members of the Academy, the school founded by Plato, which lasted as a continuous institution until the early first century BCE. From the mid-third century until its end, it had an approach that is generally called skeptical, although this appears to have differed in some ways from the skepticism of Sextus. Sextus insists that the Academics are not skeptics at all, in his sense of the term (see I.1–4); whether his account of them is a fair one is controversial.

Anaxagoras (c.500–428 BCE). Early cosmologist.

PERSONS REFERRED TO

Aristippus of Cyrene (c.435–c.355 BCE). Follower of Socrates; generally viewed as the founder of the Cyrenaic school, which emphasized pleasure, especially bodily pleasure, and disclaimed all knowledge of matters outside our immediate experience.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE). Studied with Plato but eventually founded his own distinct school, the Lyceum (also known as the Peripatetic school). Arguably the most influential philosopher of all time.

Carneades (214–129 BCE). Head of the Academy from the mid-second century to 137, when he retired. The most important Academic during its skeptical period (see Academics).

Chrysippus (c.280–c.208 BCE). The third head of the Stoic school (see Stoics); generally seen as the greatest Stoic philosopher.

Clitomachus (187/6–110/9 BCE). From Carthage, originally named Hasdrubal. Pupil of Carneades and known for preserving his arguments; head of the Academy from 127/6 to his death.

PERSONS REFERRED TO

Crates (c.368–c.283 BCE). Cynic philosopher (see Diogenes).

Cronus. The father of Zeus.

Diogenes. There are many Diogeneses in the history of Greek philosophy. But the one Sextus mentions in these selections is almost certainly Diogenes of Sinope (c.410–c.324–1 BCE), generally viewed as the founder of Cynicism, a radically unconventional, back-to-nature philosophy and lifestyle.

Epicurus (341–270 BCE). Founder of a school with an atomic theory and hedonism as its central tenets (though with the highest pleasure understood as freedom from pain).

Hipparchia. Follower, and eventually spouse, of Crates; dates uncertain, but probably somewhat younger than him. Fully adopted the Cynic lifestyle; because she was a woman, was seen as even more outrageous than the Cynics in general.

Peripatetics: See Aristotle.

Plato (c.424–347 BCE). Follower of Socrates, author of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the

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Academy. The first Greek thinker to articulate a clear conception of philosophy as a specific subject of study.

Pyrrho (c.360–c.270 BCE). The supposed originator of Pyrrhonist skepticism. Wrote nothing, but was written about by his follower Timon (see Timon).

Stoics. The leading Greek philosophy in the final three centuries BCE; continued well into the early centuries CE. Held that the world is pervaded through and through by a providential god; proposed as an ideal the perfection of reason and virtue—as embodied in the figure of the sage, who never goes wrong, intellectually or morally. Named after the *Stoa poikilê* (painted porch) in Athens, where its founder, Zeno of Citium, taught.

Timon (c.320–230 BCE). Disciple and biographer of Pyrrho (see Pyrrho). Probably almost everything we know (or think we know) about Pyrrho derives from his writings, which survive only in fragments and second-hand reports.

NOTES

Introduction

1. References in this form give the book of *Outlines* with a Roman numeral and the section with a regular numeral; these short numbered sections, usually just a couple of sentences long, are standard in all editions of Sextus' works and are marked in my translation.
2. "Opinion," in this usage, also has the connotation that the view in question is not adequately supported; to call something an "opinion" is in effect a criticism—somewhat as we might say "Oh, that's just your opinion." Since Sextus would say that about all "doctrines" as well, this does not, for him, mark a difference between the two terms; but others might have more positive things to say about doctrines.

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3. These chapter divisions are my own. More on this in the Note on the Translation.
4. One might also object that this is not something Sextus ought to be claiming in the first place. Isn't the idea that suspension of judgment leads regularly to tranquility a piece of dogmatism? Sextus would probably reply that this is just what he has experienced so far (note the words "up to now," I.25); he wouldn't want to claim that it will *always* be this way. However, he does seem very sure about the connection between the two, and it is natural at least to wonder whether this is consistent for a skeptic. But my point in the main text is that, regardless of that issue, he overstates his case.
5. That this much, at least, is genuinely part of what Sextus aspires to is suggested by his comment that skeptics are "educated" and have "wider experience" than other philosophers (*M* I.5, in the final passage in chapter 1).

NOTES

Chapter 1. Skepticism: The Big Picture

1. See [25]–[30] below.
2. This doesn't quite work in English. The Greek *dogma* mostly means “doctrine” or “theory”; but it can also refer, as it does here, merely to the way things *seem* to someone (from the related verb *dokēō*, “seem”), where “doctrine” is not really appropriate. Sextus is drawing attention to this ambiguity, and pointing out that in this looser sense, you could say that a skeptic has *dogmas*. See also Glossary.
3. “No more” is short for “no more this way than that,” expressing suspension of judgment between conflicting alternatives; in the next sentence, for the sake of clarity, I have added these or equivalent words (which are not in the Greek) in square brackets in the two places where “no more” occurs. Sextus discusses “no more” at [188]–[191] (included in chapter 3).
4. See [13].

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5. That is, an argument a non-skeptic might make about the real nature of honey, presumably on the basis of its sweet taste.
6. I.e., what he called the “specific” account in [6] above. This kind of criterion is examined in book II (in a portion I have not included).
7. I.e., as opposed to accepting these things as a matter of theological (or other intellectual) commitment.
8. This passage is reprinted (slightly modified) from Sextus Empiricus, *Against Those in the Disciplines*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Chapter 2. Arguments to Have Up Your Sleeve: The Modes

1. The Greek word is *idiosynkrasias* (“idiosyncrasies”), a term in medical writings for the individual mixture of bodily humors in each person.
2. A dram is an eighth of an ounce.

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3. That is, member of the medical school founded by Herophilus.
4. I.e., Homer (*Odyssey* 14.228).
5. Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 499–500. The source of the next quotation is unknown.
6. I.e., such that any part, no matter how small, is of the same character as the whole. (Before the advent of chemistry as we know it, this was a possible point of view.)
7. That is, neither good nor bad.
8. A tunic with one sleeve was typically worn by slaves and the poor.
9. A combat sport with (virtually) no holds barred; the etymology suggests “winning by every means.”
10. That is, something at an earlier stage in the argument, which is meant to help establish the desired conclusion.

NOTES

Chapter 3. Talking and Thinking Like a Skeptic (and Not Like Anyone Else)

1. I have changed these examples to make them more accessible to a modern audience; “double” and “broad” are the terms in the original Greek, but they refer to different things. The first one is not about spirits (which they did not have); the word “double” refers perhaps to a house (as in the English “duplex”), but more likely, given a plausible correction in the Greek—*ἔσθῆς* instead of the manuscripts’ *ἔστία*—to a type of cloak that was folded double. (Since my English version does not reflect the Greek either way, I have not altered the Greek text.) The second almost works at least in American English, although in the original, “broad” is a description rather than the name of the street: “a broad” is short for “a broad street.”
2. That is, neither of the two (conflicting) alternatives applies any more than the other.
3. This is very puzzling, since Sextus was a member of the Empirical school. The words “*that*

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form of Empiricism” may suggest internal division within the school, but we do not know enough about the debates within medical schools or between them to be sure where Sextus is coming from. Nonetheless, it is the Methodic school that he singles out here as similar to skepticism (at least in certain respects). The Methodic school held that all diseases are a matter of excessive constriction or looseness (or a combination of the two) in the body, and that these states, and therefore the appropriate treatment for them, are directly observable.

4. See [23]–[24], in chapter 1.
5. One difference, of course, is that while the skeptics are concerned (mainly, at any rate) with what is happening to themselves, the Methodist doctors are concerned with the symptoms of their patients.
6. “They” here refers to the dogmatists, not the skeptics.
7. The second of these comes from Stoic logical theory. The first may do so as well, but there is

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no other surviving reference to it; we are in fact in exactly the situation Sextus describes!

8. The “grasp-giving appearance” (*phantasia katalêptikê*) is a fundamental concept in the Stoic theory of knowledge. While the details are controversial, the central point is that a grasp-giving appearance is guaranteed to be true.
9. All basic Epicurean beliefs opposed by the Stoics. (“Being is divided” refers to the Epicureans’ atomic theory; the Stoics held that matter is continuous.)
10. See I.13, in chapter 1.

Chapter 4. Going After the Other Philosophers: Logic

1. This sounds very similar to the “unclear pure and simple” category. The difference is between “plain experience” and “grasp.” The “unclear pure and simple” kind cannot be grasped, period—by any means whatever—whereas the “unclear by nature” kind *can* be grasped (according to the dogmatists, that is), although

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this has to be by inference from something else rather than by direct observation.

2. That is, pores that can only be grasped by the intellect (because they are too small for the senses to perceive).
3. Since you have frequently observed smoke and fire together in the past, the sight of smoke will immediately make you think (or, in this terminology, *remind* you) of fire, even though the fire is not in plain sight.
4. Sextus here uses the same word (*hupomimnêiskô*) that he has just introduced for the kind of sign he is happy with.
5. Sextus is being sneaky here about the word “grasp.” (This is not unlike what he [justifiably] accused the dogmatists of at the start of book II—see the end of the previous chapter.) Obviously the *idea* of a sign carries with it the *idea* of something signified by it; in that sense the two are indeed “grasped together,” or understood in relation to one another. It does not follow that the thing signified has to be just as

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immediately apparent as the sign, as Sextus claims. The whole point of signs is that (a) they are observable and (b) they point to the existence of something else that is not observable; that is not put in doubt by pointing out that the ideas of “sign” and “thing signified” are interconnected. This dubious reasoning also extends to the next paragraph.

6. Again we have the same language as was used for the reminder sign (compare n.4). The translation “remind” will not work here, as it would naturally suggest that both these opposed alternatives are true. Sextus, as always, is operating at the level of how things strike us; what he is really “putting us in mind of” are equally forceful *impressions* of the existence of signs and of their non-existence—which will make us give up on any conclusions about what’s really true.
7. See again n.6.
8. As he did in the previous discussion of demonstration.

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9. These are the most basic patterns of argument, such as (in the example included below) “every A is B; C is A; therefore C is B.” Since they are the most basic, their correctness cannot be demonstrated by anything else—hence the name; they serve as the foundations or building blocks for all other valid forms of argument.
10. For example, if you looked at a lot of animals and made the induction “every animal moves its lower jaw,” without having checked the crocodile; see [195] above.
11. This passage is reprinted (slightly modified) from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Chapter 5. Going After the Other Philosophers: Physics

1. The word for “start” is the same in Greek as the word for “principle” (*archê*); Sextus is having fun with some cheeky wordplay. (He does

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exactly the same at the beginning of the book on geometry in *Against Those in the Disciplines*, M III.1).

2. Ordinary Greek religion recognized a huge number of different gods, often at odds with one another. But philosophers, even if they recognized numerous distinct divine beings, tended to conceive of the divine as united in a single character and a single purpose. Hence it makes sense that Sextus uses the plural “gods” in speaking of his adherence to ordinary religion, but the singular when discussing dogmatic views.
3. Often used as the name of an arbitrary person, like our Jane or John Doe.
4. These are the Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of god respectively.
5. In the discussion of demonstration in book II, which I have not included. But the very same point is made about signs at II.125; see n.5 in chapter 4. (The argument is just as fishy here.)

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6. This passage is reprinted (slightly modified) from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
7. The place of naturally heavy things (e.g., earth) is down, that of naturally light things (e.g., fire) is up; Aristotle, for one, is explicit about this.
8. This line is from the early poet Hesiod (*Theogony* 116); hence the mention of him in [123] below. Chaos is the primeval empty space in which the world is subsequently created.
9. Plain experience was used in [120] to make the case *for* the existence of place; “the arguments” refers to the arguments on the other side. The skeptics are worried either way because they find the cases on both sides persuasive, but not so persuasive that they can make up their minds on the subject.

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Chapter 6. Going After the Other Philosophers: Ethics

1. Other sources identify this philosopher as Antisthenes, one of Socrates' followers.
2. Compare the discussion of the aim of skepticism at I.25–30 (in chapter 1).
3. The word for “stays fixed” (*epeichen*) is the same as the word for “suspends judgment.” Sextus' imagined opponent is having some fun at the skeptic's expense.
4. This passage is reprinted (slightly modified) from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Ethicists*, translated with introduction and commentary by Richard Bett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

FURTHER READING

Greek Edition of Sextus

The standard Greek edition of Sextus Empiricus' original texts, which is used in this volume, is the twentieth-century edition published by Teubner, under the general title *Sexti Empirici Opera* [Sextus Empiricus' Works]. These are now published, in print and electronic versions, by De Gruyter: <https://www.degruyter.com>.

Vol. I, ed. H. Mutschmann, rev. J. Mau (Leipzig: Teubner, 1958) contains *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.

Vol. II, ed. H. Mutschmann (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914) contains the surviving portions of *Skeptical Treatises*, i.e., *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, and *Against the Ethicists*.

Vol. III, ed. J. Mau (Leipzig: Teubner, 1961) contains *Against Those in the Disciplines*.

FURTHER READING

There is also a fourth volume containing indices compiled by K. Janáček. This was superseded by a revised version:

Janáček, K. *Sexti Empirici Indices*, editio tertia completior (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2000).

Translations of Sextus

The best complete English translation of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, translated with introduction and notes by J. Annas and J. Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; 2nd edition 2000, with a new introduction).

Translations of Sextus' other works (small excerpts of which are reprinted in this volume) are:

Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

FURTHER READING

Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Ethicists*, translated with introduction and commentary by Richard Bett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Sextus Empiricus, *Against Those in the Disciplines*, translated with introduction and notes by Richard Bett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Studies of Sextus and Ancient Skepticism

A good, accessible, and relatively recent survey of skepticism in Greco-Roman philosophy is

Thorsrud, H. *Ancient Scepticism* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

For those who can read French, another fine volume of this kind is

FURTHER READING

Marchand, S. *Le scepticisme: vivre sans opinions* (Paris: Vrin, 2018).

A study of the Pyrrhonist tradition of skepticism prior to Sextus is

Bett, R. *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

The following are collections of essays covering Sextus, Pyrrhonism, other skeptical strands in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, and (in some cases) skepticism in more recent philosophy:

Bett, R. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Bett, R. *How to Be a Pyrrhonist: The Practice and Significance of Pyrrhonian Skepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

FURTHER READING

- Burnyeat, M. and M. Frede (eds.). *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1997).
- Machuca, D. (ed.). *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011).
- Machuca, D. (ed.). *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy* (Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York: Springer, 2011).
- Machuca, D. and B. Reed (eds.). *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

These volumes are just a small selection of what is available. All of them have additional bibliographies of their own.

