Against the Logicians

Book 1

A. Introduction (1–24)

(1) The general character of the skeptical ability has been indicated with the appropriate treatment, sketched out in part directly and in part by means of a division of the philosophies close to it.[1] What is left is to explain, next, how it is applied to the particulars,[2] with a view to avoiding a reckless haste either when inquiring about things on our own or when rebutting the dogmatists. **(2)** But since philosophy is a many-faceted sort of thing, it will be necessary, for the sake of an orderly and systematic search, to draw a few distinctions concerning its parts.

1. The parts of philosophy (2–23)

For, to begin with, some people seem to have supposed that it has one part, some two parts, and some three parts; and of those who have posited one part some have posited the physical part, some the ethical part, and some the logical part, **(3)** and similarly of those who divide it into two some have divided it into the physical and the logical parts, some into the physical and the ethical, and some into the logical and the ethical; **(4)** whereas those who divide it into three have agreed in dividing it into the physical, the logical, and the ethical parts.

(5) The ones who maintained that it has just the physical part are Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander, Empedocles, Parmenides, and Heraclitus – Thales, Anaximenes, and Anaximander according to

[1] See Introduction (p. xi) for the significance of this back-reference.
[2] I.e., the various specific parts of philosophy.

everyone and without dispute, but Empedocles and Parmenides and also Heraclitus not according to everyone. **(6)** For Aristotle says that Empedocles got rhetoric started, of which dialectic is a "counterpart" [*antistrophon*][3] – that is, correlated with it [*isostrophon*], because of being related to the same material, just as the poet called Odysseus "godlike" [*antitheon*],[4] that is, equal to god [*isotheon*]. **(7)** And Parmenides would seem to be not inexperienced in dialectic, since again Aristotle took his companion Zeno to be the originator of dialectic. And in Heraclitus' case as well, there was an issue as to whether he was not only a physical philosopher but also an ethical one.

(8) Well, the people who were prominent in the physical part are these; but Socrates was concerned, at least according to his other companions,[5] with only the ethical part, seeing that Xenophon in his *Memoirs* explicitly says that he rejected the physical part as being beyond us, and studied the ethical part alone as being our business.[6] And Timon too knows that he was like this, when he says

> From them the stone-chiseler,[7] blatherer on the lawful, turned away[8]

– that is, away from physical matters to reflection on ethics; that is why he added "blatherer on the lawful," seeing that discussion about laws belongs to the ethical part. **(9)** Plato, though, has him contributing to every part of philosophy, the logical in so far as he is brought in as a searcher after definitions and divisions and etymology (which are logical matters), the ethical because he inquires about virtue and government and laws, **(10)** and the physical because he also did some thinking about the universe, and about the generation of animals and the soul. Hence Timon blames Plato for embellishing Socrates in this way with multiple disciplines: "Indeed," he says, "the one who was not willing for him

[3] *Rhetoric* 1354a1 (the first sentence of the work) says that rhetoric is the "counterpart" of dialectic. But the claim about Empedocles (and Zeno, cf. 7) occurred in Aristotle's lost work *Sophist*; see Diogenes Laertius 8.57.

[4] A common epithet in Homer (and applied to others besides Odysseus). The wordplay in this sentence is impossible to reproduce in English; the words beginning *anti-* are from Sextus' point of view archaic – at least in these senses – needing an explanation in terms of the words beginning *iso-*.

[5] I.e., other than Plato; see 9.

[6] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.11ff.

[7] Socrates is reputed to have started as a stonemason (following in the family business). The Greek word (*laxoos*) may also suggest the meaning "people-chiseler" (from *laos*, "people); see A. A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," *Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988), 150–171, at 150.

[8] From Timon's poem *Silloi* (*Lampoons*), as attested by Diogenes Laertius (2.19) and Clement (1.14.63.3), both of whom give slightly more extensive quotations.

to remain a character-depicter."[9] **(11)** The Cyrenaics also seem to some people to embrace the ethical part only, and to put aside the physical and logical parts as contributing nothing to living happily. Yet some have thought that these people are turned about,[10] given that they divide the ethical part into the topic of things to be chosen and to be avoided, and that of effects on us, and then into that of actions and in addition that of causes, and finally into that of proofs. For among these the topic of causes, they say, comes from the physical part, and that of proofs from the logical part. **(12)** Ariston of Chios, too, they say, not only used to dismiss physical and logical reflection on account of their being useless and detrimental to those who investigate them, but even used to circumscribe some topics in the ethical part, namely the topic of exhortation and that of advice. For he thought these belonged to nurses and children's attendants, while it was enough for the purpose of living happily to have reasoning that oriented one towards virtue, alienated one from vice, and disparaged the things between these, over which the masses get excited and are unhappy. **(13)** And Panthoides and Alexinus and Eubulides and Bryson, as well as Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, were inclined toward the logical part.

(14) Of those who maintained that philosophy has two parts, Xenophanes, as some people say, pursued the physical and the logical parts together, whereas Archelaus of Athens pursued the physical and the ethical parts; with him some people also classify Epicurus as rejecting logical reflection. **(15)** But there were others who say that he did not excuse himself from logic in general, but only from that of the Stoics, so that in effect he left philosophy intact with three parts. And there is a view attributed by some to the Cyrenaics – indeed, Sotion has given evidence of this – namely, that they say there is an ethical and a logical part of philosophy.

(16) Well, these people seem to have been deficient in their approach; by comparison, the approach of those who say that one part of philosophy is physics, another ethics, and another logic seems to have been more complete. Of this group Plato is in effect the founder, since he engaged in discussion on many matters in physics, many in ethics, and not a few in logic. But the most explicit adherents of this division are Xenocrates,

[9] Timon's original words were also probably from his *Silloi*. But in this case either Sextus or his copyists have mangled the quotation; the words as they stand do not scan. *Ēthologon*, translated "character-depicter," normally refers to a mime; but Timon is clearly playing with the etymology so as to suggest someone who engages in discourse (*logos*) *about* character (*ēthos*).

[10] I.e., convicted of self-refutation; this term is common in Sextus.

the Peripatetics, and the Stoics. **(17)** Hence they implausibly[11] compare philosophy with a garden covered in fruit, so that the physical part can be likened to the height of the plants, the ethical part to the succulence of the fruits, and the logical part to the strength of the walls. **(18)** Others say that it is like an egg; for ethics is like the yolk, which some people say is the chick, physics is like the white, which is food for the yolk, and logic is like the outside shell. **(19)** But since the parts of philosophy are inseparable from one another, whereas plants are considered distinct from their fruit and walls are separate from plants, Posidonius thought it more appropriate to liken philosophy to an animal, the physical part being likened to blood and flesh, the logical part to bones and sinews, and the ethical part to soul.

(20) Now, given that philosophy has three parts, some rank physics as the first part, since the business of physical inquiry has precedence both in time (so that even up to now the first who engaged in philosophy are called physicists), and in order, because it makes sense first to make determinations about the universe and then to inquire about the specifics and about the human being. **(21)** Others began with ethical matters, on the grounds that they are more necessary and draw us towards happiness; for example, Socrates instructed us to examine nothing else except

> Whatever good and bad is wrought within the halls.[12]

(22) And the Epicureans begin with logical matters; for they look first at questions to do with rules,[13] and do their survey on things that are plain and unclear and matters related to these. The Stoics, too, say that logical matters lead, that ethical matters take second place, and that physical matters come last in order. **(23)** For they hold that the intellect must first be fortified, with a view to making its guard of the tradition hard to shake off, and that the area of dialectic tends to strengthen one's thinking; that, second, one must add ethical reflection with a view to the improvement of character traits (for the acquisition of this on top of the already present logical ability holds no danger); and that one must bring in physical reflection last (for it is more divine and needs deeper attention).

[11] I retain the mss. reading *enthende(n) apithanōs*.
[12] *Odyssey* 4.392; Sextus also quotes this line in the context of Socrates' ethical thinking at *M* 11.2, as does Diogenes Laertius (2.21).
[13] I.e., rules relating to correct inference. Epicurus' work on this topic was actually called *Rule* (*Kanōn*).

2. Decision to begin with logic (24)

(24) This is what these people say. We, on the other hand, are not right now looking into the exact state of the matter. We do, however, say this: that if in every part of philosophy what is to be sought is the truth, one must above all have starting-points and processes for discerning this that are reliable. But *logic* is the area that contains reflection about criteria and demonstrations; so this is where we should make our start.[14]

B. The Criterion (25–445)

1. Introductory remarks (25–45)

a. Methodological comments (25–28)

(25) And we can get our investigation against the dogmatists well underway as follows. Since plain things are thought to become known all by themselves through some criterion, while unclear things are thought to be tracked down through signs and demonstrations, by way of a transition from plain things, let us inquire in the first place into whether there is any criterion of the things that strike us all by themselves via sense-perception or thought, and then after that into whether there is a process capable of signifying or of demonstrating unclear things.[15] **(26)** For I think that once these have been done away with, there will be nothing left to investigate about our needing to suspend judgment, seeing that nothing true is found either in things in plain view or in things that are obscured. So let the discussion of the criterion be our starting-point, since it is actually thought to include all the processes of apprehension.

Whether there is a criterion of truth

(27) The investigation of the criterion is universally contentious, not only because the human being is by nature a truth-loving animal, but also because the highest-level schools of philosophy are here making judgments about the most important matters. For either the dogmatists' big solemn boast will need to be completely done away with, if no standard is found for the true reality of things, or, on the contrary, the skeptics will

[14] See Introduction (pp. x–xii) for the place of *Against the Logicians* in the entire work to which it belonged.

[15] A reference to the sections on sign and demonstration in Book 2 (141ff.).

need to be convicted as rash and dismissive of common belief, if something comes to light which is capable of leading our way to the apprehension of the truth. For it will be too bad if we expend extreme effort in investigating the external criteria, such as rulers and compasses, weights and balances, while we leave aside the one that is in us, and that is thought to be able to test those very things. **(28)** Let us therefore take up the matter in order, as befits the fact that our inquiry is about the whole subject. Since the issue contains two parts, the criterion and the truth, let us discuss each of these in turn, sometimes indicating by way of explanation the multiple ways in which the criterion and the truth are spoken of, and what on earth their nature is according to the dogmatists, and at other times inquiring in more of a spirit of impasse into whether any of these things can be real.

b. Different types of criterion (29–37)

On the criterion

(29) To begin with, then, the criterion (for we should start with this) is spoken of in two ways: in one way it is that to which we attend when we do some things and not others, while in another way it is that to which we attend when we say that some things are real and others are not real, and that these things are true and those things are false. The first of these we have laid out earlier in "On the skeptical method".[16] **(30)** For inevitably the person who does philosophy in a spirit of impasse – so as not to be completely inactive and without any part in the affairs of life – must have some criterion of choice as well as avoidance, namely what appears, as Timon has also attested in saying

> But what appears is powerful everywhere, wherever it comes.[17]

(31) The other one (I mean the one to do with reality, about which we are currently inquiring) seems to be spoken of in three ways, generally and specifically and most specifically. Generally, it is every measure of

[16] Editors have seen this as a reference to the chapter on the skeptic's method of acting in *PH* (1.21–24). But the title of that chapter is "On the skeptic's criterion." Rather, the reference is probably to a discussion in the lost portion of the larger work of which *Against the Logicians* is a part.

[17] Also quoted by Diogenes Laertius (9.105), who says that it came from Timon's poem *Indalmoi* (*Images*), and by Galen (8.781 Kühn).

apprehension, and in this signification even the natural criteria, such as sight, hearing, and taste, qualify for this label. **(32)** Specifically, it is every technical measure of apprehension – as one would call a cubit and a pair of scales and a ruler and a compass criteria, in so far as they are technical, but not by any means sight and hearing and in general the remaining common sense-organs, which are constituted naturally. **(33)** More specifically[18] it is every measure of apprehension of an unclear object, in terms of which the everyday ones are no longer called criteria; it is only the logical ones that are so called – namely, those that the dogmatists bring in for the discovery of the truth.[19]

(34) So, since the criterion is spoken of in many ways, the task before us is again to inquire primarily into the logical one that the philosophers go on about, but, as a subordinate matter, into each of the everyday ones as well. **(35)** It is, however, possible to subdivide this logical one, too, saying that one is a criterion in the manner of "by which," one in the manner of "through which," and one in the manner of "impact and state": "By which" – namely, a human being; "through which" – namely, sense-perception; the third one – namely, the impact of the appearance. **(36)** Compare the testing of heavy and light objects, in which there are three criteria, the weigher, the pair of scales, and the position of the scales, and of these the weigher is the criterion "by which," the scales are the criterion "through which," and the position of the scales is the criterion as "state." Or again, for the determination of straight and crooked objects there is a need for the craftsman and the ruler and the application[20] of this. In just the same way, in philosophy, too, we need the three aforementioned criteria for distinguishing true and false things, **(37)** and the human being, "by whom" the judgment occurs, is like the weigher or carpenter; sense-perception and thought, "through which" the judgment occurs, are like the scales and ruler; and the impact of the appearance, in virtue of which the human being undertakes to judge, is like the state of the aforementioned tools. This much was necessary, for the present, by way of preface on the criterion.

[18] I retain the mss. reading *idiaiteron*.

[19] This classification is not well adapted to Sextus' subsequent discussion, since at least some philosophers considered the senses to be a criterion in the "logical" sense just introduced (as is immediately stated, in fact, at 35) – despite Sextus' labeling them as criteria in only the "general" sense. See also Introduction, n. 12.

[20] *Prosbolē*, translated "impact" elsewhere in this passage.

c. Stoic distinction between the truth and what is true (38–45)

On truth

(38) As for the truth, some people, and especially the Stoics, think that it differs from what is true in three ways, in being, in composition, and in power. In being, in so far as the truth is a body, while what is true is incorporeal. And reasonably so, they say; for the latter is a proposition, and the proposition is a sayable, and the sayable is an incorporeal.[21] The truth, by contrast, is a body in so far as it is thought to be knowledge that is capable of asserting everything that is true, **(39)** and all knowledge is the leading part[22] in a certain state (just as the hand in a certain state is thought of as a fist). But the leading part, according to these people, is a body; therefore the truth too is bodily in kind. **(40)** In composition, in so far as what is true is thought of as something uniform and simple in nature, such as (at present) "It is day" and "I am having a discussion," while the truth, on the contrary, is supposed (on the assumption that it consists in knowledge) to be composite and an aggregation of many things. **(41)** Thus, just as the populace is one thing and the citizen another, and the populace is the aggregation of many citizens while the citizen is the single one, by the same reasoning the truth differs from what is true, and the truth resembles the populace and what is true resembles the citizen, because the former is composite, the latter simple. **(42)** And they are separate from one another in power since what is true is not entirely connected with knowledge (for the inferior and the stupid and the insane sometimes say something true, but do not have *knowledge* of what is true), while the truth is regarded as related to knowledge. Hence the person who has this is wise (for he has knowledge of things that are true), and he never lies, even if he speaks a falsehood, owing to the fact that it is uttered not from a bad but from a sophisticated disposition. **(43)** The doctor says something false about the health of the sick person, and promises to give him something but does not give it. He says something false but does not lie; for it is with a view to the health of the person in his care that he takes such a recourse. And the best military leaders often fabricate letters from allied states to cheer up the soldiers under their command; they say something false, but do not lie, because they do not do this with a bad

[21] On "sayables" (*lekta*), see 2.70ff. and LS sect. 33.
[22] I.e., the leading part of the soul. Cf. 232ff. for this Stoic term. On the Stoic view of the soul see also LS sect. 53.

purpose. **(44)** And the grammarian, in offering an example of misuse of language, cites a misuse of language but does not misuse language; for it is not by way of ignorance of correct speech that this happens. Just like them, the wise person too – that is, the person who has knowledge of what is true – will sometimes speak a falsehood, but will never lie, because of not having a mind-set that assents to what is false. **(45)** For, they say, one can learn that the liar is to be judged from his disposition, and not from the simple utterance, by means of the examples that are about to be offered. Someone is called a grave-digger both when he does this with the goal of stripping the corpses and when he digs graves for the corpses. But the first person is punished as doing this from a bad disposition, while the second actually gets payment for his service for the opposite reason. It is clear, therefore, that speaking a falsehood indeed differs a great deal from lying, in that the one comes about from a sophisticated mind-set, but lying comes about from a bad one.

2. *Review of previous positions on the criterion (46–260)*

(46) Having first laid out these points about the truth (according to some), let us next look at the disagreement that has occurred among the dogmatic philosophers about the criterion; while investigating the reality of this, we also have to consider at the same time what it is. **(47)** Many varied divisions are produced on this topic; but for now it is enough for us to say that some people have done away with the criterion, while others have held on to it. And of those who have held on to it, three positions are uppermost; some have held on to it in reason, others in non-rational plain experience, and others in both.

a. Deniers of the criterion (48–88)

(48) And Xenophanes of Colophon, Xeniades of Corinth, Anacharsis of Scythia, Protagoras, and Dionysodorus have in fact done away with it, as well as Gorgias of Leontini, Metrodorus of Chios, "Mr. Happiness" Anaxarchus, and Monimus the Cynic.

Xenophanes (49–52) **(49)** Of these Xenophanes occupied this position, according to some, in saying that everything is inapprehensible, when he writes