PART 2

Introduction

This treatise, found with manuscripts of Sextus Empiricus, is evidently a sophistic treatise from the end of the fifth century BC, as indicated by a reference to the Peloponnesian War as a recent event. It is written in the Doric dialect and contains a number of teaching techniques including model arguments, dialogue, and poetry citations. It breaks off with an introduction to the study of techniques of memorization, suggesting the work was a brief technē or textbook of rhetoric.

The author's style of presenting opposed arguments on a given topic reminds us of Protagoras' similar technique. The present treatise is, however, lacking in the insight and rigor ancient sources lead us to expect of Protagoras. At best it is a second-rate work, which shows little appreciation of the logical or philosophical issues associated with the topic surveyed. Despite its shortcomings, it gives us a glimpse of sophistic teaching practices in its time. And we see in its topics a number of issues treated (more subtly) in Plato's Socratic dialogues, and hence belonging to the intellectual context of the period.
Debated Questions (Dissoi Logoi, Dialeixeis)

1 On good and bad

There are competing accounts in Greece among those who philosophize about good and bad. Some say that the good is one thing, bad another. Others say that they are the same, and that to some a thing will be good, to others it will be bad, and to the same individual it will be at one time good, at another time bad. (2) I myself agree with the latter side; and I shall consider the question on the basis of human life, for the sake of which food, drink, and sexual relations matter; these things are bad for some who are ill, but they are good for someone who is healthy and in need of them. (3) And further, lack of self control is bad for those who lack it, but good for those who sell and make money by the transaction. Again, sickness is bad for the sick, but good for physicians. Further, death is bad for those who die, but good for undertakers and makers of tombs. (4) Agriculture which successfully produces crops is good for the farmers but bad for the importers. Further, for ships to be wrecked and shattered is bad for the shipowner, but good for the shipbuilders. (5) Again, when an iron tool is corroded, blunted, and worn out, it is bad for everyone else, but good for the blacksmith. Moreover, when a pot breaks it is bad for everyone else, but it is good for potters. For shoes to wear out and split is bad for everyone else, but good for the shoemaker.

(6) Now consider the area of athletic, musical, and military competitions; for example in athletic competition, victory in a foot race is good for the winner, but bad for the losers. (7) It is the same for wrestlers and boxers, and all the musicians: for example lyre-playing is good for the winner, but bad for the losers. (8) And in war (to mention the most recent one first), the victory which the Spartans won over the Athenians and their allies was good for the Spartans, but bad for the Athenians and their allies. The victory which the Greeks won over the Persians was good for the Greeks, but bad for the barbarians. (9) Further, the capture of Troy was good for the Achaeans, but bad for the Trojans. And likewise for the misfortunes which befell the Thebans and the Argives.
The battle of Lapiths and Centaurs was good for the Lapiths but bad for the Centaurs. Moreover, the so-called Battle of Gods and Giants and the ensuing victory was good for the gods but bad for the giants.

(11) There is another account that good is one thing, bad another, differing in fact as in name. I myself will explain this view: it would appear that I am saying nothing clear about the nature of good and bad, if the two things are the same and not different, which would be incredible. (12) Indeed, I do not think a person holding this view would have an answer, if someone asked him:

"Tell me, have your parents done anything good for you?"

"Indeed, many great things," he would reply.

"Then you owe them many great bad things, since good is the same as bad."

(13) Well then, have you done good for your kinsmen? Then you have done bad to them. Well then, have you done your enemies any bad? Then you have done them many of the greatest benefits. (14) Come, then, answer me this too: What else do you do but feel sorry for beggars because they have many bad things, <and> at the same time admire them, because they enjoy many goods, given that bad and good are the same?"

(15) Nothing prevents the Great King from being in the same condition as the beggars. For his many great good things are many great bad things, if good and bad are the same, and these things have been shown in every case.

(16) I shall proceed point by point starting with eating and drinking and sexual relations. For in the same way it is good for the sick to do these things, if the good is the same as the bad. And being sick is bad for the sick, and also good, if the good is the same as the bad. (17) And so it is for every case referred to in the foregoing argument. And I have not said what the good is, but I have tried to show that the bad and the good are not the same, but each is <distinct>.

2 On right and wrong

Or: Fine & Shameful (Dillon/Gergel)

There are also competing accounts of the right and <the> wrong. Some say the right is one thing, the wrong another, differing in physical reality as in name. Others say right and wrong are the same. (2) I shall try to explain it in this way. For example, it is right for a youth in his prime to gratify a respectable lover, but it is wrong to do this for a non-lover, even a handsome one.
καὶ τὸς γυναῖκας λούσθαι ἵνδοι καλὸν, ἐν παλαιστρᾳ δὲ αἰσχρὸν — ἀλλὰ
tούτοις ἀνδράσιν ἐν παλαιστρᾷ καὶ ἐν γυμνασίῳ καλόν, (4) καὶ συνήν τούτο ἀνδρὶ ἐν δυσχυὶ μὲν καλὸν, ὅπως τούτοις κρυφόκοιταί ἢξο αἰσχρῶν, ὅπου τοὺς
dύσκοι. (5) καὶ τοὺς μὲν αὐτὰς5 συνίν ἀνδρὶ καλὸν, ἀλλοτρίως δὲ αἰσχρόν.6 καὶ τῶν 
ὑπο τύχῃ τίμιο ἡμών γυναικεῖς συνίν καλὸν, ἀλλοτρίῳ δὲ αἰσχρὸν. (6) καὶ 
kυμαίνονται καὶ ψυμβουλοῖς χρείαις καὶ χρυσηὶς περιπτερείας, τοῦ μὲν
ἀνδρὶ αἰσχροῦ, ταῖς δὲ γυναικῖς καλοῖς. (7) καὶ τῶν μὲν φίλοις εὖ ποιεῖν καλὸν, τῶν, δὲ ἀνδρὶς αἰσχροῦ, καὶ τῶν μὲν πολεμίως πτολέμειν αἰσχροῦ, τῶν δὲ ἐν
σταματίῳ ἀγωνισταὶ καλὸν. (8) καὶ τῶν μὲν φίλοις καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν φωνεῖν αἰσχροῦ, τῶν, δὲ πολεμίως πολεμεῖν καλὸν, καὶ τὰ δὲ περὶ πάντων.
(9) εἶμι δὲ «ἐφο»4 ὅτι τῇ πολλῇ τε αἰσχροῦ ἐγίνετο καὶ τῇ εἰςκείς. αὐτίκα
Λακεδαιμονίος τὰς κόρας γυμνάζεσθαι καὶ καλὸν ἐν τῇ ἐν
σικέλιᾳ δὲ αἰσχρῶν καὶ δίωλον ἔργον. (11) Μακεδονῖς δὲ καὶ κατακαύσεις, ἐν τῷ ἐν
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σικέλιᾷ δὲ αἰσχρῶν καὶ δίωλον ἔργον.
(17) The Egyptians do not have the same customs as others. Here it is right for women to weave and prepare wool, but there for men to do it, while it is right for women do there what men do here. It is considered right for them to knead mud with their hands and dough with their feet; but for us the reverse.

(18) I think if one were to bid all men to gather together what is wrong, according to their opinions, into one pile, and from this collection to take what is right, according to the views of each, not one thing would be left, but all would take all. For all do not have the same beliefs. (19) I shall recite a poem:

For the diverse customs of mortals thus you will see as you distinguish them: nothing was right in every way, nor wrong, but the situation itself made them wrong, and changing made the same things right.

(20) To speak generally, everything is right in the appropriate situation, but wrong in the inappropriate situation. What have I accomplished then? I set out to prove that the same things are wrong and right, and I demonstrated this in all these cases.

(21) There is also the view concerning the wrong and the right that they are different things. For if someone should ask those who maintain that wrong and right are the same thing, whether anything right has ever been done by them, they will have to agree it is <also> wrong, if wrong and right are really the same thing. (22) And if they know a good man, he will also be bad; and if he is pale, he will also be tanned. If it is right to worship the gods, it will, by the same token, also be wrong to worship them, if wrong and right are the same. (23) And the same argument of mine should be applied to all cases. Now I shall turn to the argument which they give. (24) If it is right for a woman to adorn herself, it is <also> wrong for her to do so, if wrong and right are the same, and so on. (25) In Sparta it is right for girls to exercise naked, and also in Sparta it is wrong to do so, and so on. (26) They say that if one were to gather together what is wrong from all nations everywhere, then they were to assemble everyone and bid them take whatever anyone thought right, all these things would be taken away as being right. I would be surprised if the things gathered as wrong were also considered right, and not such as they came.

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(27) For instance, if they brought in horses, cattle, sheep, or men, they would take away nothing else. Likewise if they brought gold they would not take away bronze, and if they brought silver they would not take away lead. (28) In exchange for wrong things, then, will they take away right? Come now, if someone brought a bad <man>, would he take him away as a good man? But they call the poets as witnesses, <who> compose with a view to pleasure rather than truth.

3 On just and unjust

Or: Right & Wrong (Gagarin/Woodruff)

There are also competing accounts of the just and the unjust. And some say the just is one thing, the unjust another. Others that just and unjust are the same. And I shall try to defend the latter view. (1) And first I will establish that it is just to lie and deceive. To do these things to one’s enemies one would declare is <right and just, to do them to one’s friends> is wrong and evil. <But how is it good to treat enemies in this way> and not one’s friends and loved ones? For example, parents: if one should give one’s father or mother medicine to drink or eat, even if the parent was unwilling to take it, would it not be just to put it in his porridge or drink without telling him? (3) Hence we see that it is just to lie and deceive one’s parents and to steal one’s friends’ property and to use force on one’s kinsmen. (4) For instance, if a family member who was sad and depressed were about to commit suicide with a knife or rope or some other device, would it not be just to steal these, if possible, but if one came too late and found him with it, to take it away by force? (5) Is it not just to enslave one’s enemies, (and, > if one is able, to capture their city and sell the whole population into slavery? And it seems just to break into the public buildings of your city; for if your father were bound and condemned to death as a result of a coup by his political opponents, would it not be just to break in and steal your father to rescue him? (6)

(6) Swearing falsely. If, when someone were captured by his enemies he promised with an oath to betray his city if he were released, would he be just if he kept his oath? (7) I think not; but rather a man <should> protect his city, his friends, the city’s sanctuaries <and his> family property by violating the oath. Therefore it is just to swear falsely.

Roffing temples. (8) I shall pass over the property of individual cities. The common property of Greece, the treasures of Delphi and Olympia — would it not be just to take it and use it for war against the barbarian who is bent on invading Greece, when money would provide the means of salvation?
(9) It is just to kill one's relatives, since Orestes and Alcmæon did it; and God declared that they acted justly.

(10) I shall turn to the arts and poetic gifts. In the composition of tragedies and the painting of pictures, whoever is most deceptive in imitating the truth is best. Let me provide an example from an older poem. Cleoboulina says:

I saw a man stealing and deceiving by guile,
and to act by force is the most just thing to do.

(12) This is an ancient statement. The following lines come from Aeschylus:

God does not hold back from just deception

<and:>

God sometimes recognizes a time for lies.

(13) An account opposing this one is also current, that the just and the unjust are distinct, differing in fact as in name. If one should ask those who hold the view that the just is the same as the just, whether they have ever acted justly towards their parents, they will say they have. It follows that they have acted unjustly, since they agree the unjust and the just are the same thing. (14) Here is another argument: if you know some man who is just, then he is unjust, and tall and short by the same argument. And if—your opponent says, "Let him die for his great injustices," then let him die for accomplishing many just acts. (15) Enough of these arguments. I shall proceed to the arguments of those who claim to prove the just and the unjust are the same thing. (16) The argument that to steal your enemies' property is just, proves that it is also unjust, if their argument is true, and so on in all other cases. (17) And they appeal to the arts in which there is no just and unjust. In fact, poets do not compose their poems to tell the truth, but only to please men.

4 On truth and falsity

There are also competing accounts of the false and the true. One maintains that false speech is one thing, true another. But some people say they are the same.
5 [On madness and sanity]

The mad and the sane, the wise and the ignorant say and do the same things. (2) First, they use the same words: “earth,” “man,” “horse,” “fire,” and the rest. And they do the same things: they sit, eat, drink, sleep, and so on. (3) Furthermore, the same thing is both larger and smaller, more and less, heavier and lighter. Thus they are all the same. (4) A talent is heavier than a pound and lighter than two talents. The same thing, therefore, is both lighter and heavier.

(2) I say the latter: first, they are said with the same words; second, if, as the speech is spoken, so it has come to pass, the speech is true; but if it has not come to pass, then the same speech is false. (3) For instance, a speech accuses someone of robbing a temple. If this action took place, the speech is true; if it did not happen, it is false. And the same account applies to the speech of the defendant. And the courts judge the same speech to be false and true. Moreover, if as we are seated together we say, “I am an initiate of the mysteries,” we shall all be saying the same thing, but I alone am speaking the truth, since I alone really am an initiate. (5) So it is clear that the same speech, when falsehood attends it, is false, but when truth attends it, is true (just as a person is the same as a child, youth, man, and old man).

(6) There is also the account that false speech is one thing, true speech another, differing in name <as in fact>. For if someone should ask those who maintain that the same speech is false and true, which their own speech is: if they say “false,” then clearly there are two things; if they answer “true,” the same speech is also false. And if someone speaks or testifies truly, he does the same falsely; and if one knows an honest man, one also knows the same man is a liar. (7) On the basis of this argument, they say this, that if the corresponding fact occurs, <they utter> a true speech; if it does not, a false one. So it is not <the name> that is variable, <but the fact>. (8) And one might ask—the jurors in turn what they are judging, for they are not witnesses to the facts. (9) They themselves would agree that what has the false mixed in it is false, what has the true is true. And this whole differs.
(5) And the same man is both alive and not alive, and the same things both are and are not. For the things that are here are not in Africa, nor are the things in Africa in Cyprus. And so on by the same argument. Hence things both are and are not.

(6) Those who say these things, that the mad and the <the sane>, the wise and the ignorant accomplish and say the same things, and everything else that follows from this theory, are wrong. (7) For if someone should ask them whether madness differs from sanity and wisdom from ignorance, they would say, "Yes."

(8) For everyone effectively reveals himself by his actions, as asserting to this view. Hence if they do the same things, the wise are mad and the mad wise, and everything is confused. (9) The question should be raised whether the wise or the mad speak in the right situation. For they maintain that they say the same things, whenever someone asks them, but with the proviso that the wise speak in the right situation, the mad do not. (10) And if they admit this, they seem to making a small addition concerning what is right and what is not, but it is no longer the same. (11) I do not think the facts are altered so much by the addition of a thing, as by the change of arrangement, such as the accent of "Glaucus/bright," "Xanthus/yellow," and "Xouthus/nimble.

(12) By a change of accent these become different, while some words differ by the vowel being pronounced long or shorter. Depending on the placement of the accent and length of vowel, tpyor can stand for "Tyros" [Týros] or "cheese" [týros], sako for "sack" [sákos] or "enclosure" [sákos]; and other words can be created by interchanging letters, as in kartos/kratos ("power"/"head's") or onos/ooos ("monkey"/"mind"). (13) If words can differ so much when nothing is taken away, think what happens if one adds or takes something away! — as I shall now show. (14) If someone takes one away from ten, there <would> no longer be ten or even one, and so on in other cases. (15) As far as the same man both being and not being, I ask: "Is he in some respect or completely?" If then the answerer denies the man's existence, he errs in saying "completely." Thus in some way all these things are.

6 <On wisdom and virtue, whether they are teachable>

There is a current theory that is neither true nor new, that wisdom and virtue are neither teachable nor learnable. Those who hold this view advance these proofs.

1 Here kratos must be the genitive of kratos "head"; otherwise it would be just a variant spelling of the same word.
(2) It would not be possible, if you gave something to another, to still have it. This is one proof. (3) Second, if it were teachable, there would be recognized teachers of it, as of music. (4) Third, the wise men who lived in Greece would have taught their children and friends. (5) Fourth, some who have come to study with the sophists have not improved themselves at all. (6) Fifth, many who have not studied with the sophists have become successful.

(7) I consider this view quite naive. For I know teachers who teach letters which each happens to know himself, and lyre-players who teach the lyre. In reply to the second proof, that there are no recognized teachers, what else do the sophists teach but wisdom and virtue? (8) And what about the followers of Anaxagoras and Pythagoras? Third, Polycritos taught his son to sculpt statues.

(9) And even if someone did not teach his skill, that proves nothing; but if he can teach it, that would be evidence that the skill can be taught. (10) Fourth, that some who study with the sophists do not become wise: well, many who have studied letters have not learned how to read. (11) There is a natural ability by means of which someone who does not study with the sophists proves able, if he is indeed gifted, to grasp many things easily after learning a few things from those from whom we also learn words. And one man learns something of these things, either more or less, from his father, another from his mother.

(12) But if someone does not believe that we can learn words, but we are born knowing them, let him consider this: if one sent off a child to Persia as soon as he was born and the child was raised there without hearing the Greek language, he would speak Persian. If someone should bring a child here from there, he would speak Greek. Thus we learn words, even though we cannot name our teachers. (13) There you have my argument, with its beginning, middle, and end. And I do not maintain that these things are teachable, but only that I regard the aforesaid proofs as inadequate.

7 [On choosing by lot]

Some popular leaders claim that people should be chosen to rule by lot, on the basis of bad reasoning. (2) What if one should ask the proponent of this view, “why don’t you appoint tasks to your slaves by lot, so that he draws the lot of a cook, should cook, while the cook drives the team, and so on?"
(3) Why should we not bring together blacksmiths and shoemakers, builders and goldsmiths, and choosing lots compel each one to practice whatever trade he draws instead of the one he is familiar with? (4) In this way contestants in a music competition should draw lots, and whatever instrument they draw, they perform on: the flautist may by chance play the lyre and the lyre-player the flute. And in war the archers and infantrymen will be in the cavalry, and the cavalryman will draw the bow, so that everyone will do what he does not know how or have the ability to do.

(5) They say this is good and very democratic. But I think it is hardly democratic. For there are those in cities who hate the people, and if one of them is chosen by lot, he will overthrow the popular government. (6) But the people themselves should be watchful and elect all those who are favorable to them, and suitable commanders to lead them in war, and others to protect the laws and so on.

"The Importance of Rhetorical Training" (Dillon/Gergel)

I believe that it belongs to <the same> man and the same art to be able to converse briefly, to know <the> truth about things, to know how to plead one’s case rightly, to be able to speak in public assemblies, to know the art of words, and to teach the nature of all things, how they are and how they came to be. (2) And first, will not he who knows the nature of all things also be able to act rightly in all cases? (3) Further, he who knows the art of words will know also how to speak about all things. (4) For he who would speak rightly must speak about the things he knows; for he will know <about> all things. (5) For he knows the art of all speeches, and all speeches <are> about everything <that is>. (6) He who would speak rightly concerning whatever things he speaks, must know <the facts> and how to instruct the city correctly to do what is good and to instruct the citizens to avoid what is bad. (7) If he knows these things he will know things different from them too, for he will know everything. For the same things are the elements of all things, and <one> who encounters the same situation will do what is fitting, if one should.

(8) Even if one does not know how to play the flute, one will always be able to play the flute, if one needs to do so.
(9) One who knows how to judge court cases must rightly understand justice, for trials are about this. If one knows this, one will know the opposite of this and what is different from these. (10) He must know all the laws; yet if he does not know the facts, he will not know the laws either. (11) Who knows the rules of music? Whoever also knows music; he who does not know music, does not know the rules either. (12) Indeed, whoever knows the true facts, as it is easy to argue, knows all things. (13) And whoever is able to make a brief explanation must be able to answer a questioner on any subject. Accordingly, he must know everything.

9 [On memory]

The greatest and fairest discovery for life is found to be memory, which is beneficial for everything; for philosophy as well as for wisdom. (2) This is the first step: if you pay attention, as you pass through experiences your mind will perceive things better. (3) Second, to repeat what you hear. For by often hearing and saying the same things, the whole of what you have learned is committed to memory. (4) Third, whatever you hear refer to what you already know, for example: to remember the name 'Chrysippus' think of gold (ēhroa) and a horse (hippos). (5) Another example: for Pyrampes think of fire (pyr) and shining (lampeia). That is how to learn names. (6) Learn objects like this: for courage think of Ares and Achilles; for bronze-work think of Hephaestus; for cowardice think of Epeius. **
Commentary

There is an edition of the *Dissoi Logoi* with text, translation, and commentary in Robinson 1979, which I have generally followed in my text and drawn on in my translation and commentary. Although it was subsequently suggested that this work is a late, even Byzantine, school exercise (see Conley 1983), Robinson and most scholars agree that it was written around 400 BC by someone who was most influenced by Protagoras (41, 72-73). The odd Doric of the text suggests an author whose native dialect is Ionic, and who has translated his own lecture notes into Doric for teaching purposes (31-54). The usual title *Dissoi Logoi*, which might be rendered more literally as *Paired Arguments*, derives from the opening words; Henricus Stephanus gave the work the title *Dialectic*, "Lectures."

The first four sections of the work present rival arguments (although not quite opposing arguments, for reasons to be explained), while the next four deal with common topics and last deals with mnemonics. In general the treatise seems to offer a course in oratory, and perhaps the kind of material included in textbooks (technai) of the time.

1. The general pattern of exposition is the same in sections 1-4: there is a debate between those who say two contrary things are the same, and those who say they are different. The former view is rehearsed, then the latter. The assumptions and the style of argument are roughly the same in each section.

Here "good" and "bad" do not seem to carry moral overtones; even the sexual relations are brought up not for the moral questions they raise, but to consider when it is healthy to engage in them. The question is in every case about some sort of immediate advantage or disadvantage to the agent. Terms with (partly) moral implications are brought up in the next two sections.

To support the claim that good and bad are the same, the author trots out a series of examples in which some action is good for one party and bad for another, or good for someone in one condition and bad for someone in a different condition. This victory is good for the victor but bad for the vanquished; sex is good for the healthy but bad for the sick. In general, action A is good for S but bad for T, where S and T are persons or classes of persons in a different condition or situation. This general account is one which today would be dealt with by describing "good" in the sense intended as an incomplete predicate which must be filled in with reference to some subject before a truth value can be assigned.

The cases seem: almost trivial, but Plato puts a similar argument in the mouth of Protagoras, and shows the audience enthusiastically applauding (Prta 47). We may suppose that at some time this was considered an impressive piece of reasoning.

The opposed position consists of showing the absurdity of identifying good and bad: whatever we say is good turns out to be bad and vice versa. What is curious about this opposition is that the two views are not really opposed: one is a thesis about the denotation of respective terms (when suitably filled out), showing that the same action can be characterized by both "good" and "bad." The other thesis is about the connotation of the terms, showing that they cannot be identical. Yet the proponent of the former view does not hold that the two terms mean the same thing; indeed, the whole point of holding the view is to show that two contrary predicates can apply to the same subject. Thus the argument for the second theory does not refute the first theory at all. The author of the *Dissoi Logoi,* however, does not seem to recognize the irrelevance of the second argument to the first position.

One might complain that the first theory is misstated. What the evidence shows is not that good and bad are the same thing, but that the same things are both good and bad (in different respects or situations). At best it shows that a good thing is (extensionally) identical with a bad thing, not that goodness is identical with badness.

The author presents a mini-dialogue in (12-14), which shows how the proponent of the second theory could refute an opponent, reminding us that this treatise is about how to win arguments.

2. The properties of right and wrong include moral judgments, and also more general considerations of what is proper and improper (e.g. running away in a race). The discussion in (2) of what is right relative to a lover and a non-lover remind one of Lysias' speech in Plato's *Phaedrus* (230e-234c). Examples in (2-8) focus on different situations and statuses within the state. Examples in (9-17) focus on customs and practices in different Greek states and different foreign cultures. The case of scalping in Scythia (13) is reported in Herodotus 4.64. The case of the Massagetae's eating their relatives (14) is reported in Herodotus 1.216, and a similar custom of an Indian tribe is used to show the power (and diversity) of custom (Herodotus 3.38). For problems with the thought experiment here, see Gera 2000.

The author demonstrates his erudition with a poem (unknown, 19). The positive view is that everything is fitting in its *kairos,* or proper context or situation. Evidently we need to consider each action in relation to the cultural context, the social status of the agent, the relevant customs and conditions that apply, age, sex, situation, and so on. Given all the details, a proper determination can be made as to what is right in the circumstances, the judgment is neither subjective nor arbitrary. What will be right for one agent may be wrong for another in a given situation, but there is a determinate right and wrong.

3. Here the author gives examples of actions that are normally considered unjust, at least when done to friends, such as lying. He discovers cases in which lying to friends and family is just. Similarly Socrates gives examples of good actions, such as returning what is owed, which can be unjust in some instances (Plato *Republic* 335b-c). Even robbing temples and swearing falsely, two of the worst crimes recognized, can be justified in certain circumstances.

4. The same sort of debate as found in the first three sections appears here applied to the notion of truth. The argument for sameness of truth and falsity seems to be: a sentence, such as, "the sky is blue," is true just in case the sky is blue and...
otherwise false. A true statement and a false statement are made with the same words (in different situations). Thus the same sentence is both true and false. Modern treatments would map the words to different statements or propositions on one hand, or identify them as different speech acts in different situations. But even Aristotle would agree that the same sentence is both true and false (see Goldin 2202). In (3) it is not clear what speech (or sentence) the defendant uses that is the same as what the prosecutor uses. But we could imagine a tu quoque response: the prosecutor says, "You committed the crime"; the defendant replies, "No, you committed the crime" (given that political enemies often brought accusations against one another).

5. How this section fits with the others is not clear, especially since its opening words are missing; nevertheless, there are some similar arguments and issues raised. The mad and the sane do say the same things, but the same person does them in the right way at the right time, whereas the mad person does not. This evidence could be used to prove that madness and sanity are the same, but only in the limited way that truth and falsity, right and wrong are the same, that is: the same acts can have opposite properties.

In (3–4) we find that the same thing is smaller and larger, lighter and heavier, anticipating a kind of problem Plato puzzles over, for instance in the Phaedo (102b–103a). In (5) the series of examples is expanded to the conclusion that "things both are and are not." We then return to the question of madness and sanity. If the mad person and the sane person differ, it is by the fact that one does and says things when they are not fitting, the other when they are. This distinction, the author assures us, makes a big difference. Even a rearrangement, as in a shift of accent in a word, can change its meaning, and an addition can have a greater effect (as in arithmetic). Throughout the logic is difficult to follow and examples seem to overwhelm the slender thread of the argument.

6. The question of the teachability of wisdom and virtue has important connections to Socrates' views, as expressed notably in Plato's Protagoras, Euthydemus and Meno. The author gives five reasons for which some have held that wisdom and virtue are not teachable. The first is trivial, but the others are interesting, and some are used by Socrates in Plato's dialogues. In particular the second point (3) is brought up in Meno 96a–c, the third point (in 4) in Protagoras 319e–320b and Meno 93a ff.

The mention of Polycritus the sculptor in (8) shows that the author is thinking of wisdom in such a way as to include artistic skill. The rejoinders in (9–10) are better made by Isocrates, Against the Sophists 14–15. For language learning as a model of education in (11–12), see Plato Protagoras 327e–328a = Prt 46. The thought experiment of raising children from different parents in different environments to show the importance of the linguistic environment is valuable and convincing; see Gera 2000. In (13) the author stops with a refutation of arguments that virtue cannot be taught; he does not endorse the view that it can be taught. Barnes, PP 51, notes: "That passage makes, clearly and for the first time, the crucial distinction between rejecting an argument for a conclusion and rejecting the conclusion itself. The art of criticism cannot thrive unless that distinction is grasped."

7. The choice of most magistrates by lot was a characteristic of Athenian democracy, and presumably practiced in other democratic governments as well. Here the author attacks it as inept, not from the viewpoint of an aristocrat, but from that of a democrat, concerned that it might tend to undermine the democracy. For a grudging defense of the practice, see [Xenophon] The Constitution of the Athenians 1–9.

8. Here we get an expansive view of sophistisk skills such that knowing words and language entails knowing everything. Although the steps of the argument are not very clear, it appears that the author holds that knowing the art of words presupposes knowing the meanings of words, including the things they refer to; and this entails knowing contrary words and things, presumably, for instance, both justice and injustice. Thus a proper understanding of the art of words will entail a knowledge of the world. Knowing laws entails an ability to interpret and apply the laws. The author moves easily from knowing that to knowing how and vice versa (as in the music example in 11). Some of the claims here might be filled out in a plausible way by showing how a full understanding of, for instance, the language of the laws presupposes an understanding of legal procedures, the historical, and social context, and so on. But as they stand, the claims seem hasty and superficial. Plato may be drawing on this argument in Sophist 232b–d; see Robinson 1977.

9. Mnemonics was a valuable skill to teach and learn when speeches had to be memorized. The presence of this topic shows the present treatise to be part of a kind of practical course of rhetoric.
Select bibliography


