

[12] “Well, do you have anything to say, apart from ‘I believe I’m right,’ to convince us that you’re the one who’s applying them better? All a madman ever does is what he thinks it right for him to do. Would that serve as a criterion of truth in his case too?”

“No, it wouldn’t.”

“So look for something over and above belief. What is it? [13] And there you have the starting point of philosophy: recognizing that people hold conflicting opinions, looking into why the conflict occurs, condemning belief as inherently untrustworthy, investigating whether a given belief is correct, and discovering a standard, such as the scale that was devised to measure weights, or the rule that allows us to decide whether something is straight or bent.

[14] “This is how we make a start in philosophy: Are all opinions sound? But how can conflicting opinions be sound? Not all opinions are sound, therefore. But ours might be, mightn’t they? [15] Why ours rather than those held by Syrians or Egyptians? Why mine rather than anyone else’s? There’s no good reason to prefer one over the other. So what someone believes isn’t a sufficient criterion for determining the truth. After all, when it comes to weights and measures, we aren’t satisfied with mere appearances but have devised standards to determine the truth. [16] So is there no standard higher than belief in the present case? But surely it’s impossible for the most crucial matters in the world to be undeterminable and undiscoverable. So there must be a standard.* [17] So why don’t we look

for it and discover it, and then in the future unfailingly make use of it and never even extend a finger without it? [18] This is something, I'm sure, the discovery of which will cure the madness of those who currently assess everything only by means of belief, because from then on, on the basis of known and clearly defined criteria, we'll be in a position to apply our various preconceptions to particular cases.