



The Art of Being Right

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



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Machine-assisted, directly from Deussen's German edition (1923).

TRANSLATOR

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THE WORK

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The manuscript is unfinished; this is its complete text in the 1923 edition. The final unnumbered stratagem is labeled 38. Source critical brackets and notes are retained; “our edition” inside notes refers to Deussen's edition. The printed incomplete Horace citation is retained without an invented completion.

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Logic and dialectic

Logic and *dialectic* were already used as synonyms by the ancients, although *logizesthai*—to think over, consider, calculate—and *dialegesthai*—to converse—are two very different things. The name *dialectic*—dialectic, dialectical inquiry, dialectician—was first used by *Plato*, according to Diogenes Laertius. In the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Republic*, book 7, and elsewhere, we find that he understands it as the orderly use of reason and proficiency in its use. *Aristotle* uses “dialectical matters” in the same sense; but, according to Laurentius Valla, he was the first to use “logic” in this sense. In his writings we find “logical difficulties,” that is, subtleties, “a logical proposition,” and “a logical perplexity.” Accordingly, “dialectic” would be older than “logic.” Cicero and Quintilian use *Dialectica* and *Logica* in the same general sense. Cic. in Lucullo: “Dialectic was invented as, so to speak, an arbiter between truth and falsehood.” And: “The Stoics carefully pursued the methods of judgment in that science which they call dialectic.” Cic. *Topica*, c. 2. Quinct. lib. [XII,2]: “And so this part of dialectic—or, if we prefer to call it so, disputation.” He therefore seems to regard the latter as the Latin equivalent of “dialectic.” So far, following Petri Rami *dialectica*, Audomari Talaei *praelectionibus illustrata*. 1569. This use of the words logic and dialectic as synonyms persisted through the Middle Ages and into more recent times, down to the present. In modern times, however, especially in Kant, “dialectic” has often been used in a bad sense, as “the sophistical art of disputation”; hence the preference for the more innocent name “logic.” Yet the two originally mean the same thing, and in recent years they have once again been treated as synonyms.

It is a pity that “dialectic” and “logic” have been used as synonyms from ancient times, leaving me less freedom than I would otherwise wish to distinguish their meanings: to *define* “logic”—from *logizesthai*, to think over, calculate, itself from *logos*, word and reason, which are inseparable—as “the science of the laws of thought, that is, of the procedure of *reason*”; and “*dialectic*”—from

dialegesthai, to converse, every conversation communicating either facts or opinions, and thus being historical or deliberative—as “the art of disputation,” in the modern sense of that word. Logic would then plainly have an object determinable purely a priori, without empirical admixture: the laws of thought, the procedure followed by reason, by logos, when left to itself and undisturbed—that is, in the solitary thinking of a rational being led astray by nothing. *Dialectic*, by contrast, would concern the association of two rational beings who consequently think together. As soon as they fail to agree like two clocks keeping the same time, this becomes a dispute, a contest of minds. As *pure reason*, the two individuals would necessarily agree. Their differences spring from the diversity essential to individuality and are therefore *an empirical element*. Logic, the science of thought, of the procedure of pure reason, could accordingly be constructed entirely a priori; dialectic, for the most part, only a posteriori: from experience of the disturbances that diversity of individuality brings to pure thought when two rational beings think together, and of the means individuals employ against one another to establish each one’s own thinking as pure and objective. For human nature brings it about that when, in thinking together—*dialegesthai*, the communication of opinions, historical conversations excluded—A learns that B’s thoughts on the same subject differ from his own, he does not first revise his own thinking to find the error, but assumes it to lie in the other’s. In other words, a human being is by nature *bent on being right*. What follows from this quality is taught by the discipline I would like to call dialectic, but, to avoid misunderstanding, shall call “*eristic dialectic*.” It would therefore be the study of the procedures of humanity’s natural insistence on being right.

Introduction

Eristic dialectic [1] is the art of disputing, and of disputing in such a way that one *remains in the right, by fair means or foul*.² One may be objectively right about the matter itself and yet come away wrong in the eyes of the bystanders,

sometimes even in one's own. For when an opponent refutes my proof and this is taken as a refutation of the assertion itself, although other proofs of it may exist, the situation is naturally reversed for the opponent: he comes away right while objectively wrong. Thus the objective truth of a proposition and its acceptance by the disputants and their hearers are two different things. Dialectic is directed toward the latter.

Where does this come from? From the natural wickedness of the human race. Were this absent, were we honest to the core, we would seek in every debate only to bring the truth to light, quite unconcerned whether it favored the opinion we had first advanced or the other person's.³ That would be a matter of indifference, or at least wholly secondary. Now, however, it is the chief concern. Our inborn vanity, particularly sensitive about our intellectual powers, will not allow what we first asserted to prove false and the opponent's assertion right. Each of us should therefore strive only to judge correctly, thinking first and speaking afterward. But in most people, talkativeness and an inborn *dishonesty* join this inborn vanity. They speak before they have thought; even if they later notice that their assertion is false and they are wrong, they still want it to appear the other way around. The interest in truth, which was probably most often the sole motive for advancing the supposedly true proposition, now yields entirely to the interest of vanity: truth must appear false and falsehood true.

Yet even this dishonesty, this persistence in a proposition that already seems false to us, has an excuse. We are often firmly convinced at first of the truth of our assertion; now the opponent's argument seems to overthrow it. If we immediately abandon its cause, we often discover afterward that we were right after all. Our proof was false, but a correct proof of the assertion was possible; the saving argument simply did not occur to us at once. Thus there arises in us the maxim of continuing to fight even when the counterargument seems correct and decisive, in the belief that its correctness is merely apparent and that, as we dispute, an argument will occur to us that overturns it or otherwise confirms our own truth. This all but compels us to be dishonest in disputation, or at least readily tempts us. The weakness of our understanding and the pervers-

sity of our will thus support one another. Hence, as a rule, the disputant fights not for truth but for his proposition, as if for hearth and home, proceeding by fair means or foul; indeed, as we have seen, he can hardly do otherwise.

Each person will therefore generally wish to carry his assertion through even when it seems false or doubtful to him for the moment.⁴ His own cunning and wickedness put the means for this to some extent into his hands: daily experience in disputation teaches it. Everyone therefore has his *natural dialectic*, just as he has his *natural logic*. But the former guides him far less securely than the latter. Hardly anyone will readily think or infer against the laws of logic: false judgments are common, false inferences exceedingly rare. A person therefore seldom reveals a lack of natural logic, but may well reveal a lack of natural dialectic. This is an unequally distributed natural gift—in this resembling the power of judgment, which is distributed very unequally, whereas reason is essentially equal. For it often happens that we allow merely specious argument to confound and refute us when we are actually right, or the reverse. Whoever emerges victorious from a dispute very often owes it not so much to the correctness of his judgment in advancing his proposition as to the cunning and dexterity with which he defended it. Here, as everywhere, the inborn gift is best;⁵ yet practice and reflection upon the maneuvers by which one throws an opponent, or which he generally uses to throw others, can do much to make one a master of this art. Thus, even if logic can have no properly practical use, dialectic certainly can. It also seems to me that Aristotle developed his logic proper, the *Analytics*, chiefly as a foundation and preparation for *dialectic*, which was his main concern. Logic deals with the bare form of propositions; dialectic with their import or matter, their content. The consideration of *form* as the universal therefore had to precede that of content as the particular.

Aristotle does not define the purpose of dialectic as sharply as I have. He does name disputation as its chief purpose, but also the discovery of truth.⁶ Later he says again that propositions should be treated philosophically according to truth, dialectically according to appearance or approval, the opinion of others—doxa. *Top.* I, 12. He is aware of the distinction and separation between the objective truth of a proposition and establishing its acceptance, or obtaining

approval. But he does not keep them sharply enough apart to assign dialectic only the latter.⁷ Rules directed toward this latter purpose are therefore often intermingled with rules directed toward the former. Hence it seems to me that he has not resolved his task in its purity.⁸

¹ [Earlier addition:] The ancients generally use logic and dialectic as synonyms; so do the moderns. [The following is crossed out in ink:] I, however, say.

² “Eristic” would merely be a harsher word for the same thing. Aristotle, according to Diog. Laert. V, 28, grouped rhetoric with dialectic, whose purpose is persuasion, to pithanon; then analytics with philosophy, whose purpose is truth. “Dialectic is the art of arguments by which we refute or establish something through the questioning and answering of the participants in the conversation.” Diog. Laert. III, 48 in vita Platonis.

Aristotle distinguishes 1) logic or analytics, the theory of or instruction in true, apodictic inferences; 2) dialectic, instruction in inferences that pass as true, that have currency as true—endoxa, probabilia (Top. I. c. 1 [et] 12). It is not established that these are false, but neither is it established that they are true in themselves; that is not what matters. Yet what is this but the art of remaining in the right, regardless of whether one is fundamentally right or not? It is the art of acquiring the appearance of truth, unconcerned with the matter itself. Hence what was said at the beginning. Aristotle actually divides inferences into logical and dialectical, as just described; then 3) *eristic* ones, eristic, in which the form of inference is correct but the propositions themselves, the matter, are not true and only appear so; and finally 4) *sophistical* ones, sophistry, in which the form of inference is false but appears correct. All three latter kinds properly belong to *eristic dialectic*, since all aim not at objective truth but at its appearance, unconcerned with truth itself: at *remaining in the right*. The book on sophistical inferences was only published separately later; it was the last book of dialectic.

³ [Note beneath:] See Buhle’s Latin introductions to Topica and Elenchi.

⁴ [Accompanying note:] *Machiavelli* advises the prince to seize every moment of his neighbor's weakness to attack him, since otherwise that neighbor may one day seize the moment when the prince is weak. If loyalty and honesty prevailed, it would be different. But since one cannot count on them, one must not practice them: they are poorly rewarded. It is the same in disputation. If I concede that the opponent is right as soon as he seems so, he will hardly do the same when the case is reversed; rather, he will proceed wrongfully, and so must I. It is easy to say that one should follow truth alone without partiality toward one's proposition; but one must not assume that the other person will do so, and therefore must not do so oneself. Besides, if, as soon as he seems to be right, I were to abandon a proposition I had previously thought through, I could easily be misled by a momentary impression into abandoning truth and embracing error.

⁵ [Beside this in the margin:] Yet learning advances inborn strength. [Hor.

⁶ [Beside this in the margin:] Top. I, 2.

⁷ [Added in the margin:] Yet in the book *de elenchis sophisticis*, he is again too intent on separating dialectic from sophistry and eristic. The distinction is supposed to be that dialectical inferences are true in form and content, while eristic or sophistical inferences are false. These two differ only in purpose: the former, eristic, seeks to be right in itself; the latter, sophistry, seeks the reputation to be gained thereby and the money that reputation will earn. Whether propositions are true in content is always far too uncertain to furnish a basis for this distinction. Least of all can the disputant himself be perfectly certain of it: even the result of the dispute gives only an uncertain indication. Under Aristotle's dialectic we must therefore include sophistry, eristic and the art of examination, and define it as the art of remaining in the right in disputation. The greatest aid is certainly to be right about the matter at the outset. But given the disposition of human beings, this is insufficient by itself; given the weakness of their understanding, it is not even absolutely necessary. Other stratagems are needed,

which, precisely because they are independent of objective rightness, can also be used when one is objectively wrong; and one almost never knows this with complete certainty.

My view, then, is to distinguish *dialectic* more sharply from *logic* than Aristotle did: to leave objective truth to *logic*, insofar as it is formal, and restrict dialectic to *remaining in the right*. On the other hand, sophistry and eristic should not be separated from it as Aristotle separates them. That distinction rests on objective material truth, of which we cannot be securely certain beforehand. Rather, we must say with Pontius Pilate: what is truth? For truth lies in a well: ἐν βυθῷ ἡ ἀληθεῖα, a saying of Democritus. Diog. Laert. IX, 72. It is easy to say that in a dispute one should seek nothing but to bring truth to light; but one does not yet know where it lies. One is led astray by the opponent's arguments and one's own. Besides, once the matter is understood, let us be easy about words. Since the name *dialectic* is generally taken as synonymous with *logic*, we will call our discipline *eristic dialectic*, *Dialectica eristica*.

- ⁸ [Accompanying addition:] One must always distinguish the subject of one discipline cleanly from that of every other.

Aristotle's Topics

In the Topics, Aristotle undertook the construction of dialectic with his own scientific spirit, proceeding most methodically and systematically. This deserves admiration, although the purpose, plainly a practical one here, was not particularly well achieved. After considering concepts, judgments and inferences in the *Analytics* according to their pure *form*, he now turns to their *content*. In doing so he is really concerned only with concepts, for it is in these that the content lies. Propositions and inferences, taken by themselves, are bare form; concepts are their content.¹ His procedure is as follows. Every dispute has a thesis or problem—these differ only in form—and then propositions intended to help resolve it. The matter at issue is always the relationship of concepts to one

another. There are initially four such relationships. Of a concept one seeks either 1) its definition, 2) its genus, 3) its peculiar, essential characteristic, its proprium, idion, or 4) its accidens: some attribute, whether peculiar and exclusive or not—in short, a predicate. The problem of every dispute must be referred to one of these relationships. This is the basis of the whole of dialectic. Throughout its eight books he sets out all the relationships concepts can bear to one another in these four respects, and gives rules for every possible relationship: how one concept must relate to another to be its proprium, accidens, genus, definitum or definition; what errors are easily made in establishing such a relationship; and in each case what one must observe when establishing it oneself—*kataskeuwazein*—and what one can do to overturn it after another has established it—*anaskeuwazein*. He calls the formulation of each such rule, or each such general relationship between those classes of concepts, a *topos*, locus, and gives 382 such *topoi*: hence *Topica*. To these he adds a few general rules about disputation itself, though they are far from exhaustive.

A *topos* is thus not purely material: it does not refer to a particular object or concept, but always concerns a relationship between whole classes of concepts. This relationship may be shared by countless concepts as soon as they are considered in relation to one another in one of the four respects mentioned, as happens in every dispute. These four respects have subordinate classes in turn. The consideration is therefore still in a sense formal, though not as purely formal as in logic. It concerns the content of *concepts*, but in a formal way: it states how the content of concept A must relate to that of concept B for the latter to be established as its genus, proprium or characteristic, accidens, or definition, or under the subordinate headings of opposite, *antikeimenon*, cause and effect, attribute and privation, and so forth. Every dispute is supposed to turn upon such a relationship. Most of the rules he gives as *topoi* about these relationships are inherent in the nature of conceptual relationships, apparent to everyone without instruction, and such that everyone already insists on the opponent's observing them, just as in logic. It is easier to observe them in a particular case, or notice their neglect, than to recall the abstract *topos* concerning them. Hence the practical use of this dialectic is slight. He says almost nothing but

what is self-evident and what sound reason naturally leads us to observe. Examples: "If a thing is asserted to have a *genus*, it must also have some *species* of that genus. Otherwise the assertion is false. For example, it is asserted that the soul has *movement*: it must therefore possess some particular kind of movement—flight, walking, growth, decline, and so forth. If it does not, it has no movement either. Thus what has no species has no genus either: that is the topos." This topos serves both to establish and to overthrow. It is the ninth topos. Conversely, what has no genus has no species either. For example, someone is alleged to have spoken ill of another: if we prove that he did not speak at all, neither did he do that, for where there is no genus there can be no species. Under the heading of *the peculiar characteristic, proprium*, the 215th locus runs as follows: "First, for overthrowing: if the opponent gives as a peculiar characteristic something perceptible only to the senses, he has given a poor account of it. For everything sensible becomes uncertain as soon as it passes beyond the reach of the senses. Suppose, for example, he assigns to the *sun* as its peculiar characteristic that it is the brightest star passing over the earth. This will not do: once the sun has set, we do not know whether it is passing over the earth, since it is then outside the reach of the senses. Second, for establishing: a peculiar characteristic is correctly assigned when one is advanced that is not known through the senses, or, if known through the senses, is nevertheless necessarily present. For example, suppose the peculiar characteristic assigned to a *surface* is that it is the first thing to be colored. This is indeed a sensible characteristic, but one plainly always present, and therefore correct." So much to give you some idea of Aristotle's dialectic. It seems to me not to achieve its purpose; I have therefore attempted it differently. Cicero's *Topica* is an imitation of Aristotle's from memory, exceedingly shallow and wretched. Cicero has no clear conception whatever of what a topos is and what it aims at. So he rambles out all manner of things from his own invention and furnishes them lavishly with legal examples. One of his worst writings.

¹ [Added in the margin:] Concepts, however, can be brought under certain classes, such as genus and species, cause and effect, attribute and opposite, possession and privation, and the like. Certain general rules hold for these classes: these are the *loci*, topoi. For example, a locus of cause and effect is: “The cause of the cause is the cause of the effect.” Applied: “The cause of my happiness is my wealth; therefore the person who gave me the wealth is also the author of my happiness.” Loci of opposites: 1) They exclude one another, as straight and curved do. 2) They reside in the same subject. For example, if love has its seat in the will, epithymetikon, so does hatred. But if the latter is seated in feeling, thymoeides, then so is love. If the soul cannot be white, neither can it be black. 3) Where the lower degree is absent, the higher is absent too: if a person is not just, neither is he benevolent. You see from this that loci are certain general truths applying to whole classes of concepts, to which one can turn in particular cases to draw arguments from them, and also appeal to them as generally evident. Most, however, are very deceptive and subject to many exceptions. For example, there is a locus: opposite things have opposite relationships. Virtue is beautiful, vice ugly; friendship benevolent, enmity malevolent. But now: extravagance is a vice, therefore miserliness a virtue; fools tell the truth, therefore the wise lie. That will not do. Death is passing away, therefore life is coming into being; false.

[Addition:] An example of the deceptiveness of such topoi: Scotus Erigena, in the book *de praedestinatione* cap. 3, seeks to refute the heretics who assumed two predestinations in God, one of the elect to salvation and one of the rejected to damnation. He uses this topos, taken from God knows where: “Of all things contrary to one another, their causes must also be contrary to one another; for *reason forbids* one and the same cause to produce different things contrary to one another.” Indeed! But *experience teaches* that the same heat hardens clay and softens wax, and a hundred similar things. Yet the topos sounds plausible. He calmly builds his demonstration upon it; the demonstration concerns us no further.

Bacon of Verulam assembled a whole collection of loci and their refutations under the title *Colores boni et mali*. These may be used here as examples. He calls them *Sophismata*.

[Addition, earlier in date than the preceding addition, judging by the manner of its entry:] Another locus may be seen in the argument by which, in the Symposium, Socrates proves to Agathon the opposite of what he had asserted when attributing every excellent quality—beauty, goodness and so forth—to *Love*: “What a person seeks, he does not have. Now love seeks the beautiful and the good; therefore it does not have them.”

[Addition:] There is something plausible in the idea of certain universally valid truths applicable to everything, by which one could decide every particular case, however different, without examining its particular nature more closely. The law of compensation is quite a good locus. But this will not work, precisely because concepts arise by abstraction from differences and therefore embrace the most diverse things. Their diversity reasserts itself when concepts bring together particular things of the most different kinds and a decision is made solely according to the higher concepts. Indeed, it is natural for a person under pressure in a dispute to take refuge behind some general topos. Loci also include the law of nature’s economy, and “nature does nothing in vain.” [Later addition:] Yes, all proverbs are loci with a practical tendency.

The task of dialectic

To establish *dialectic* in its purity, we must leave objective truth aside—it is the concern of logic—and regard dialectic solely as *the art of remaining in the right*. This will of course be easier when one is actually right about the matter. But dialectic as such must teach only how to defend oneself against attacks of every kind, especially dishonest ones, and how in turn to attack another’s assertions without contradicting oneself or being refuted at all. The discovery of objective truth must be cleanly separated from the art of securing acceptance for one’s propositions as true. The former belongs to an entirely different inquiry: it is

the work of judgment, reflection and experience, and there is no special art for it. The latter is the purpose of dialectic. Dialectic has been defined as the logic of appearances: falsely, for then it would serve only to defend false propositions. Yet even when one is right, one needs dialectic to uphold one's position, and must know dishonest stratagems to meet them, indeed often use some oneself to defeat the opponent with equal weapons. Thus objective truth must be set aside in dialectic or treated as incidental. We must consider only how to defend our assertions and overthrow the other's; rules for this must not take *objective truth* into account, since we generally do not know where it lies.¹ Often we ourselves do not know whether we are right; often we believe we are and are mistaken; often both parties believe it. For truth lies in a well—truth is in the depths, Democritus. At the beginning of a dispute each generally believes truth to be on his side; as it proceeds, both become doubtful; the outcome is meant to determine and confirm the truth for the first time. Dialectic must therefore no more concern itself with this than the fencing master concerns himself with who was really right in the quarrel that brought about the duel. Striking and parrying are what matter. So too in dialectic: it is intellectual fencing. Only when conceived so purely can it be established as a separate discipline. For if we make pure objective truth our goal, we return to mere *logic*; if we make the successful assertion of false propositions our goal, we have mere *sophistry*. Both would presuppose that we already knew what was objectively true and false, but this is seldom certain beforehand. The true conception of dialectic is therefore the one advanced here: intellectual fencing to remain in the right in disputation. “Eristic” would be a more suitable name; most accurately, “eristic dialectic,” *Dialectica eristica*. It is very useful; it has been unjustly neglected in more recent times.

Since dialectic in this sense is to be only a systematic, rule-governed collection and presentation of the arts that nature inspires in most people when they notice that truth is not on their side in a dispute and nevertheless wish to remain in the right, it would also be quite contrary to its purpose for scientific dialectic to consider objective truth and the means of bringing it to light. Original, natural dialectic does not do so: its sole aim is being right. Scientific

dialectic in our sense therefore has as its principal task *to set out and analyze the stratagems of dishonesty in disputation*, so that in actual debates they may be recognized and destroyed at once. Precisely for this reason, its presentation must avowedly make being right, not objective truth, its ultimate goal.

I know of nothing that has been accomplished in this sense, although I have looked far and wide.² It is therefore an untilled field. To achieve the purpose, one would have to draw upon experience, observe how one stratagem or another is employed by either party in the debates that so often occur in conversation, then reduce stratagems recurring in different forms to their general character. In this way one would establish certain general stratagems, useful both for one's own employment and for thwarting them when the other person employs them.

Let the following be regarded as a *first attempt*.

¹ [Beside this in the margin:] Truth lies in a well, truth is in the depths, a saying of Democritus. Diog. Laert. IX, 72.

Two people often dispute very vigorously, and then each goes home with the other's opinion: they have exchanged views.

² [Added in the margin:] According to Diogenes Laertius, among the many rhetorical writings of Theophrastus, all now lost, there was one entitled *The Theory of Eristic Arguments in Contest*. That would be our subject.

Basis of all dialectic

First we must consider *the essential character of every dispute*: what actually happens in it.

The opponent has advanced a thesis—or we have ourselves; it makes no difference. There are two modes and two ways of refuting it.

1) *The modes*: a) *ad rem*; b) *ad hominem*, or *ex concessis*. We show either that the proposition does not agree with the nature of things, with absolute objective truth, or that it does not agree with the opponent's other assertions or con-

cessions, with relative subjective truth. The latter is only a relative refutation and determines nothing about objective truth.

2) *The ways*: a) direct refutation; b) indirect. Direct refutation attacks the thesis through its grounds; indirect refutation through its consequences. The former shows that the thesis is not true; the latter that it cannot be true.

1) In *direct* refutation we can do two things. Either we show that the grounds of the assertion are false—"I deny the major premise; the minor premise"—or we concede the grounds but show that the assertion does not follow from them—"I deny the inference"—thus attacking the *consequence*, the form of the inference.

2) In *indirect* refutation we use either *apagoge* or the *counterinstance*.

a) *Apagoge*: we assume his proposition to be true and show what follows when we use it as a premise in an inference, in combination with some other proposition acknowledged to be true. A conclusion then emerges that is plainly false, contradicting either the nature of things¹ or the opponent's own other assertions: false ad rem or ad hominem. Socrates in Hippias maj. et alias. Consequently, the proposition too was false, for only true propositions can follow from true premises, although false ones do not always follow from false premises.

b) *The counterinstance*, enstasis, exemplum in contrarium: the refutation of a general proposition by directly demonstrating particular cases included in its assertion to which it nevertheless does not apply, so that it must itself be false.

This is the framework, the skeleton of every dispute: we have its osteology. For all disputation fundamentally comes back to this. But it can all be real or merely apparent, accomplished with genuine or spurious grounds. Because it is not easy to determine anything certain about this, debates are so long and obstinate. Nor, in giving instruction, can we separate the true from the apparent, since the disputants themselves are never certain of it beforehand. I therefore give the *stratagems* without regard to whether one is objectively right or wrong: one cannot oneself know this securely; the dispute is meant to settle it for the

first time. Besides, in every dispute or argument one must agree upon something from which, as a principle, to judge the question at hand: there is no disputing with someone who denies the principles.

- ¹ [Addition to the addition:] If it directly contradicts an entirely indubitable truth, we have reduced the opponent to absurdity.

Stratagem 1

Extension. Carry the opponent's assertion beyond its natural boundary: interpret it as generally as possible, take it in the widest possible sense, and exaggerate it. Your own assertion, by contrast, should be drawn back into the most restricted sense and the narrowest possible limits. The more general an assertion becomes, the more attacks it is exposed to. The remedy is a precise statement of the point or state of the controversy.

Example 1. I said: "The English are the leading nation in drama." The opponent wished to attempt a counterinstance and replied: "It is well known that they can achieve nothing in music, and therefore in opera." I drove him back by reminding him that "music is not included under *drama*: this means only tragedy and comedy." He knew this perfectly well and was merely trying to generalize my assertion so that it embraced all theatrical performances, and thus opera, and thus music, in order then to defeat me with certainty.

Conversely, one may rescue one's own assertion by narrowing it beyond its original intention, if the wording admits it.

Example 2. A says: "The peace of 1814 restored independence even to all the German Hanseatic cities." B gives the counterinstance that Danzig lost, through that peace, the independence Bonaparte had granted it. A saves himself as follows: "I said all the German Hanseatic cities: Danzig was a Polish Hanseatic city."

Aristotle already teaches this stratagem. Topica Lib. VIII, c.12,11.

Example 3. Lamarck, *Philosophie zoologique* Vol. 1, p 203, denies polyps all sensation because they have no nerves. Yet they certainly *perceive*: they follow the light, moving deftly from branch to branch, and seize their prey. It has therefore been assumed that their nervous substance is evenly distributed throughout the mass of the body, as though fused into it, for they plainly have perceptions without separate sense organs. Since this overturns Lamarck's assumption, he argues dialectically as follows: "Then every part of a polyp's body would have to be capable of every kind of sensation, and also of movement, will and *thought*. The polyp would then possess in every point of its body all the organs of the most perfect animal. Every point could see, smell, taste, hear, and so forth—indeed, think, judge and infer. Every particle of its body would be a perfect animal, and the polyp itself would stand above the human being, since every little part of it would possess all the faculties that the human being possesses only as a whole. There would moreover be no reason not to extend what is asserted of the polyp to the *monad*, the most imperfect of all beings, and ultimately to plants as well, since they too live, and so forth." Through such dialectical stratagems a writer betrays his inward awareness that he is wrong. Because it was said that "their whole body has sensation for light, and is therefore nerve-like," he turns this into the claim that the whole body thinks.

Stratagem 2

Use *homonymy* to extend the assertion to something that, apart from the same word, has little or nothing in common with the matter under discussion. Then refute this decisively, giving the impression that you have refuted the assertion itself.

Observation. Synonyms are two words for the same concept; homonyms are two concepts designated by the same word. See Aristot. *Topica* Lib. I. cap. 13. "Deep," "sharp" and "high," used now of bodies, now of sounds, are *homonyms*. "Honest" and "upright" are *synonyms*.

One may regard this stratagem as identical with the sophism arising from homonymy. An obvious sophism of homonymy, however, will deceive no one in earnest.

Every light can be extinguished.

The intellect is a light.

The intellect can be extinguished.

Here one immediately notices that there are four terms: “light” understood literally and “light” understood figuratively. But in subtle cases it certainly deceives, particularly when the concepts designated by the same expression are related and shade into one another.

Example 1.¹ A: “You have not yet been initiated into the mysteries of Kantian philosophy.”

B: “Ah, where there are mysteries, I want to know nothing of them.”

[Example 2.] I criticized as irrational the principle of honor according to which receiving an insult makes one dishonored unless one answers it with a greater insult or washes it away with blood, the opponent’s or one’s own. My reason was that true honor cannot be injured by what one suffers, but only by what one does; anything can happen to anyone. The opponent made a direct attack upon this ground. He showed me decisively that falsely accusing a merchant of fraud, dishonesty or negligence in his business constitutes an attack on his honor. Here his honor is injured solely through what he suffers, and he can restore it only by bringing the attacker to punishment and retraction.

Thus, by homonymy, he slipped *civil honor*, otherwise called a *good name*, which is injured by *slander*, under *the concept of chivalric honor*, also called *point d’honneur*, which is injured by *insults*. Since an attack on the former must not be ignored but must be repelled by public refutation, an attack on the latter, by the same right, must not be ignored either, but repelled by a stronger insult and a duel. Two essentially different things are thus confounded through the homonymy of the word “*honor*”, and a change in the point at issue is brought about through homonymy.

¹ [Beside this in the margin:] Deliberately invented cases are never subtle enough to deceive; they must therefore be collected from one's own actual experience. It would be very good if every stratagem could be given a short, aptly descriptive name, by means of which, when it occurred, one could immediately reproach someone for employing this or that stratagem.

Stratagem 3

Take an assertion¹ made in a particular respect, relatively, as though it had been made generally, without qualification, absolutely; or at least understand it in an entirely different relation, and then refute it in that sense. Aristotle's example is: the Moor is black, but white in respect of his teeth; therefore he is black and not black at the same time.

This is an invented example that will deceive no one in earnest; let us take one instead from actual experience.

Example. In a conversation about philosophy, I conceded that my system defended and praised the Quietists. Soon afterward the conversation turned to Hegel, and I maintained that he had written mostly nonsense, or at least that many passages in his writings were such that the author supplied the words and the reader was supposed to supply the meaning. The opponent did not attempt to refute this *ad rem*, but contented himself with the argument *ad hominem* that "I had just praised the Quietists, and they too had written much nonsense."

I conceded this, but corrected him: I praised the Quietists not as philosophers and writers, not for their *theoretical* achievements, but only as human beings, for their conduct, solely in a *practical* respect. In Hegel's case, however, theoretical achievements were at issue. Thus the attack was parried.

The first three stratagems are related. They have this in common: the opponent is actually speaking of something other than what was asserted. To let oneself be dismissed in this way would therefore be to mistake the point at issue. For in all the examples given, what the opponent says is true; but its contradiction of

the thesis is only apparent, not real. The person attacked therefore denies the consequence of the opponent's inference: the inference from the truth of his proposition to the falsity of ours. This is thus a direct refutation of his refutation by denying the inference.

Refusing to concede true premises because one foresees the consequence. Against this, the following two remedies, rules 4 and 5.

- ¹ [Beside this in the margin:] The fallacy of passing from a qualified statement to an unqualified one. This is Aristotle's second sophistical refutation independent of wording: speaking absolutely, or not absolutely but in a certain respect, or place, or time, or relation to something. *De sophist. elenchis*, c. 5.

Stratagem 4

When one wishes to draw an inference, do not let it be foreseen. Instead, obtain unnoticed concessions of the premises, separately and scattered through the conversation; otherwise the opponent will attempt all manner of obstruction. Or, if it is doubtful whether he will concede them, advance the premises of these premises: construct preliminary syllogisms, obtain concessions of the premises of several such syllogisms in a disordered mixture, and thus conceal your game until everything needed has been conceded. Bring the matter about from a distance. Aristotle gives these rules. *Arist. Topic. Lib. VIII*, c. 1.¹

No example is needed.

- ¹ [Accompanying note:] See *Adversaria* p 269 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].

Stratagem 5

- ¹ To prove one's proposition, one may also use false premises when the opponent would not concede the true ones, either because he does not see their truth or because he sees that the thesis would follow immediately. Then take propositions false in themselves but true *ad hominem*, and argue from the opponent's way of thinking, from his concessions. For truth can follow from false premises, although falsehood can never follow from true ones. In the same way, one may refute an opponent's false propositions by other false propositions that he takes as true. We are dealing with him and must use his way of thinking. If, for example, he adheres to a sect with which we do not agree, we may use that sect's pronouncements against him as principles. Arist. Top. VIII, c. 9.

- ¹ [The late addition here:] Belongs to the preceding passage.

Stratagem 6

Make a concealed begging of the question by postulating what ought to be proved: 1) under another name—for example, good name instead of honor, virtue instead of virginity, and so forth; also interchangeable concepts, such as red-blooded animals instead of vertebrates. 2) Obtain a general concession of what is disputed in the particular case: for example, when the uncertainty of medicine is asserted, postulate the uncertainty of all human knowledge. 3) When, conversely, two things follow from one another and one must be proved, postulate the other. 4) When the general proposition must be proved, obtain concessions of each particular instance—the reverse of number 2. (Arist. Top. VIII, c. 11.)

The last chapter of Aristotle's *Topica* contains good rules for *practice* in dialectic.

Stratagem 7

When disputation is conducted somewhat strictly and formally, and one wishes to reach a perfectly clear understanding, the person who has advanced the assertion and must prove it proceeds against his opponent by *questioning*, so as to infer its truth from the opponent's own concessions. This interrogative method was especially customary among the ancients; it is also called Socratic. The present stratagem and several that follow refer to it. (All freely adapted from Aristotle's *Liber de elenchis sophisticis* c. 15.)¹

Ask many questions at once and at length, to conceal what you actually want conceded. Present the argument from the concessions quickly: slow-witted people cannot follow it exactly and overlook possible errors or gaps in the proof.

¹ [Accompanying note:] *Adversaria* p 269 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].

Stratagem 8

Provoke the opponent to anger, for in anger he is unable to judge correctly or perceive his own advantage. Make him angry by openly wronging and harassing him, and by being generally insolent.

Stratagem 9

Do not ask the questions in the order required by the inference to be drawn from them, but in a variety of transpositions. He then does not know where you are heading and cannot take precautions. His answers can also be used for different inferences, even opposite ones, according to how they turn out. This is related to stratagem 4: conceal your procedure.

Stratagem 10

If one notices that the opponent deliberately answers no to questions whose affirmative answers could support one's proposition, ask about the opposite of the proposition needed, as though one wished this to be affirmed; or at least offer him both alternatives, so that he does not notice which proposition one wants affirmed.

Stratagem 11

When we are making an induction and he concedes the particular cases by which it is to be established, we must not ask whether he also concedes the general truth arising from them. Instead, introduce it afterward as settled and conceded. He will sometimes then believe he conceded it himself; the listeners too will think so, remembering the many questions about the particular cases, which must surely have achieved their purpose.

Stratagem 12

If the discussion concerns a general concept with no name of its own, which must therefore be designated figuratively through a comparison, choose the comparison at once so that it favors your assertion. Thus in Spain, the names of the two political parties, *serviles* and *liberales*, were certainly chosen by the latter. The names Protestants and Evangelicals were chosen by those who bear them, while the name heretics was chosen by the Catholics.

This also applies to the names of things where these are more literal. For example, if the opponent has proposed a *change*, call it an “innovation,” for that word is hostile; the reverse if you are the proposer. In the first case, call its opposite “the established order”; in the second, “dead convention.” What someone wholly disinterested and impartial might call “religious worship” or “public religious doctrine,” its advocate calls “piety” or “godliness,” its opponent “bigotry” or “superstition.” Fundamentally this is a subtle begging of the question: what one first wants to establish is put beforehand into the word, the name, from which it then emerges through a merely analytic judgment. What one person calls “securing a person” or “taking into custody,” his opponent calls “locking up.” A speaker often betrays his intention in advance through the names he gives things. One says “the clergy,” the other “the parsons.” Of all stratagems, this is the most frequently used, instinctively. Religious zeal $\equiv$ fanaticism. A lapse or gallantry $\equiv$ adultery. Double entendres $\equiv$ obscenities. Disordered finances $\equiv$ bankruptcy. “Through influence and connections” $\equiv$ “through bribery and nepotism.” “Sincere gratitude” $\equiv$ “good payment.”

Stratagem 13

To make him accept a proposition, offer him its opposite and let him choose, putting this opposite in such stark terms that, to avoid appearing paradoxical, he must accept our proposition, which looks quite plausible beside it. For example, he is to concede that a person must do everything his father tells him. We ask: “Should one be disobedient or obedient to one’s parents in everything?” Or something has been said to occur “often”: we ask whether “often” means few cases or many, and he will say “many.” It is like placing gray beside black, when it may be called white, or beside white, when it may be called black.

Stratagem 14

An insolent stroke: after he has answered several questions, although his answers have not favored the inference we intend, advance the conclusion we wish to establish as nevertheless proved by them, even though it does not follow at all, and proclaim it triumphantly. If the opponent is timid or stupid, and one has ample insolence and a strong voice, this can succeed quite well. It belongs to the fallacy of treating a non-cause as a cause.

Stratagem 15

If we have advanced a paradoxical proposition and are at a loss to prove it, offer the opponent some correct proposition whose correctness is not entirely obvious, to accept or reject, as though we intended to draw our proof from it. If he rejects it out of suspicion, reduce him to absurdity and triumph. If he accepts it, we have for the moment said something reasonable and must see how to pro-

ceed. Or we add the preceding stratagem and now assert that our paradox has thereby been proved. This requires extreme insolence, but it occurs in experience, and some people do all of it instinctively.

Stratagem 16

Arguments *ad hominem* or *ex concessis*.¹ When the opponent makes an assertion, look for some way in which it contradicts—if necessary, only apparently—something he has said or conceded before, the tenets of a school or sect he has praised and approved, the conduct of that sect’s adherents, even merely its spurious and apparent adherents, or his own conduct and omissions. If, for example, he defends suicide, cry out at once: “Why don’t you hang yourself?” Or he maintains that Berlin is an unpleasant place to live: immediately cry out, “Why don’t you leave on the first express coach?” Some quibble can surely be dug up somewhere.

¹ See Hefte Appendix B zu B. 122 [of the “Lectures”; in our edition, volume IX, S. 511,1—33].

Stratagem 17

If the opponent presses us with a counterproof, we can often save ourselves by a subtle distinction that admittedly had not occurred to us before, provided the matter admits a double meaning or a double case.

Stratagem 18

If we notice that the opponent has taken up an argument with which he will defeat us, we must not let it come to that or allow him to carry it through. Instead, interrupt the course of the dispute in good time, break off or divert it, and lead it toward other propositions: in short, bring about a change in the point at issue.¹

¹ [The late addition beside this in the margin:] For this, stratagem 29.

Stratagem 19

If the opponent expressly challenges us to bring something against a particular point in his assertion, but we have nothing worthwhile, turn it into a very general issue and then argue against that. We are supposed to say why a particular physical hypothesis is not to be trusted; instead we speak of the fallibility of human knowledge and illustrate it in all manner of ways.

Stratagem 20

Once we have questioned him about the premises and he has conceded them, we must not ask about the conclusion too, but draw it ourselves without more ado. Indeed, even if one or another premise is still missing, assume that it too has been conceded and draw the conclusion. This is another application of the fallacy of treating a non-cause as a cause.

Stratagem 21

When the opponent presents a merely apparent or sophistical argument that we see through, we can certainly dismantle it by explaining its deceptive and specious character. It is better, however, to meet it with an equally specious and sophistical counterargument and so dispose of him. For truth is not the concern: victory is. If, for example, he gives an argument *ad hominem*, it is enough to weaken it with a counterargument *ad hominem*, *ex concessis*. In general, it is shorter to give an argument *ad hominem*, when one presents itself, than to explain the true nature of the matter at length.

Stratagem 22

If he demands that we concede something from which the question at issue would follow immediately, refuse by presenting it as a begging of the question. He and the listeners will readily take a proposition closely related to the problem as identical with it; thus we deprive him of his best argument.

Stratagem 23

Contradiction and contention provoke an *exaggeration* of an assertion. By contradicting the opponent, we can therefore provoke him into pushing beyond truth an assertion that, in itself and with proper qualifications, might be true. Once we have refuted this exaggeration, it appears that we have refuted his original proposition too. We ourselves must take care not to let contradiction tempt us into exaggerating or further extending our proposition. The oppo-

nent will also often try directly to extend our assertion beyond the terms in which we advanced it. We must stop him at once and return him to its boundary with: “This much I said, and no more.”

Stratagem 24

Manufacturing consequences. By false inferences and distortion of concepts, we force from the opponent’s proposition other propositions that it does not contain and that are not at all his meaning, but are absurd or dangerous. Since it now appears that his proposition produces propositions contradicting either themselves or acknowledged truths, this passes for an indirect refutation, *apagoge*. It is again an application of the fallacy of treating a non-cause as a cause.

Stratagem 25

This concerns *apagoge* by a *counterinstance*, *exemplum in contrarium*. Induction requires a large number of cases to establish its general proposition; *apagoge* needs only to establish a single case to which the proposition does not apply, and it is overturned. Such a case is called a counterinstance, *enstasis*, *exemplum in contrarium*, *instantia*. For example, the proposition “All ruminants have horns” is overturned by the single counterinstance of camels. A counterinstance is a case in which a general truth is applied, something to be subsumed under its principal concept, but to which that truth does not apply, and by which it is therefore entirely overturned. Yet deception can occur here. When the opponent presents counterinstances, we must therefore consider: 1) whether the example is actually true. There are problems whose only true solution is that the case is not true—for example, many miracles, ghost stories, and so forth. 2) Whether it really belongs under the concept of the truth advanced:

often this is only apparent and must be resolved by a sharp distinction. 3) Whether it really contradicts the truth advanced: this too is often only apparent.

Stratagem 26

A brilliant stroke is the *retorsio argumenti*, turning the argument back: the argument he wants to use in his favor can be used better against him. For example, he says: "He is a child; we must make allowances for him." The retort: "Precisely because he is a child, he must be punished, so that he does not become hardened in his bad habits."

Stratagem 27

If an argument makes the opponent unexpectedly angry, press it vigorously. Not only is it useful to put him into a rage, but we may presume that we have touched a weak point in his train of thought and that there is probably more to attack there than we ourselves yet see.

Stratagem 28

This is chiefly applicable when learned people dispute before an unlearned audience. If one has no argument *ad rem*, nor even one *ad hominem*, one makes an argument *ad auditores*, to the listeners: an invalid objection whose invalidity only an expert can see. The opponent is such an expert, but the listeners are not; in their eyes he is therefore defeated, especially if the objection casts his assertion in a ridiculous light. People are always ready to laugh, and one has the laughs on one's side. To show the objection's worthlessness, the

opponent would have to give a long explanation and return to the principles of the science or other subject concerned. He will not readily find a hearing for this.

Example. The opponent says: when primitive rock was formed, the substance from which granite and all other primitive rock crystallized was fluid through heat, and therefore molten. Its temperature must have been about 200° R; the substance crystallized beneath the sea that covered it. We make the argument to the listeners that at that temperature—indeed, long before it, at 80°—the sea would long since have boiled away and be suspended in the air as vapor. The listeners laugh. To defeat us, he would have to show that boiling point depends not only upon temperature but just as much upon atmospheric pressure; and that, as soon as perhaps half the seawater is suspended as vapor, this pressure is so greatly increased that even at 200° R no boiling occurs. But he never gets that far, since among nonphysicists it requires a treatise.

(Mitscherlich, Abhdlg. d. Berl. Akad. 1822.)

Stratagem 29

If one notices that¹ one is being defeated, make a *diversion*: suddenly begin speaking of something quite different, as though it belonged to the matter and were an argument against the opponent. This is done with some modesty if the diversion still concerns the general subject of the question; shamelessly if it concerns only the opponent and says nothing at all about the matter.

For example, I praised the fact that China had no hereditary nobility and that offices were granted only on the basis of examinations. My opponent maintained that learning qualified a person for office no more than the advantages of birth, which he valued. Things then went badly for him. At once he made the diversion that all classes in China are punished with the bastinado. He connected this with the drinking of much tea and reproached the Chinese for both. Anyone who immediately entered into all this would have allowed himself to be diverted and let an already-won victory slip from his hands.

The diversion is shameless when it entirely abandons the question at issue and begins, for example: “Yes, and you recently maintained something like that too, and so on.” Here it belongs in a sense to “becoming personal,” which will be discussed in the last stratagem. Strictly speaking, it is an intermediate stage between the *argumentum ad personam* to be examined there and the *argumentum ad hominem*.

How nearly inborn this stratagem is can be seen in every quarrel among common people. When one makes personal accusations against another, the other does not answer by refuting them, but by making personal accusations against the first, leaving those against himself standing and thus, as it were, conceding them. He acts like Scipio, who attacked the Carthaginians not in Italy but in Africa.(?) In war such a diversion may sometimes serve. In a quarrel it is poor, because it leaves the accusations received unanswered, and the listener learns everything bad about both parties. In disputation it is customary for want of anything better.

¹ [The late addition beside this in the margin:] For stratagem 18.

Stratagem 30

The *argumentum ad verecundiam*. Use authorities instead of reasons, according to the extent of the opponent’s knowledge. “Everyone prefers believing to judging,” says Seneca. We therefore have an easy game when an authority respected by the opponent is on our side. The more limited his knowledge and abilities, the more authorities will be valid for him. If these are of the first rank, he will recognize very few authorities, almost none at all. At most he will accept specialists in a science, art or craft of which he knows little or nothing, and even these with suspicion. Ordinary people, by contrast, have deep respect for specialists of every kind. They do not know that someone who makes a profession of a subject loves not the subject but his livelihood, nor that someone who teaches a subject seldom knows it thoroughly: those who study it thoroughly

generally have no time left to teach. For the crowd, however, there are very many authorities that command respect. If none is quite suitable, choose one that seems suitable: quote what someone said in another sense or in different circumstances. Authorities the opponent does not understand generally work best. The unlearned have a peculiar respect for Greek and Latin phrases. If necessary, one may not merely twist authorities but falsify them outright, or even cite authorities of one's own invention. Usually he does not have the book to hand and does not know how to consult it either. The finest example is the French curé who, to avoid paving the street in front of his house as the other citizens were required to do, quoted a biblical saying: "paveant illi, ego non pavebo"—"Let them fear; I shall not fear." This convinced the municipal officials. *General prejudices*, too, may be used as authorities. For most people think with Aristotle: "What many believe, we affirm to be so"—in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I think. Indeed, there is no opinion so absurd that people will not readily adopt it once they have been persuaded that it is *generally accepted*. Example governs their thinking as it governs their conduct. They are sheep following the lead ram wherever he leads; it is easier for them to die than to think. It is very strange that the universality of an opinion carries such weight with them, since they can see in themselves how opinions are adopted without any judgment, solely through example. But they do not see this, for they lack all self-knowledge. Only the select few say with Plato: "The many have many notions." That is, the crowd has many foolish notions in its head, and anyone who wished to heed them would have much to do.

The universality of an opinion is, seriously considered, no proof of its correctness, not even a ground of probability. Those who maintain otherwise must assume 1) that distance in *time* deprives universality of its evidential force; otherwise they would have to recall all the old errors once generally taken for truths, such as the Ptolemaic system, or restore Catholicism in all Protestant countries. 2) That distance in *space* has the same effect; otherwise the universality of opinion among adherents of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam will embarrass them. (After Bentham, *Tactique des assemblées législatives*, Vol 2, p 76.)

What is called *general opinion* is, examined in the light, the opinion of two or three people. We would be convinced of this if we could watch the formation of such a universally accepted opinion. We would then find that two or three people first adopted or advanced and maintained it, and others were kind enough to trust that they had thoroughly examined it. On the assumption that these people were sufficiently capable, a few others first adopted the opinion too. Many more believed these in turn, their laziness advising them to believe at once rather than undertake a laborious examination. Thus the number of these lazy and credulous adherents grew from day to day. Once the opinion had a good number of voices in its favor, those who followed attributed this solely to the cogency of its grounds. Those still remaining were now compelled to accept what was generally accepted, lest they be considered unruly minds resisting universally valid opinions, and impertinent fellows who wished to be wiser than the whole world. Assent now became a duty. The few capable of judging must now remain silent; those allowed to speak are wholly incapable of opinions and judgments of their own, mere echoes of another's opinion, yet all the more zealous and intolerant in defending it. For what they hate in the dissenter is not so much his different opinion as his presumption in wishing to judge for himself—something they never undertake themselves, and secretly know they do not. In short, very few can think, but everyone wants opinions. What remains but to take them ready-made from others instead of making them oneself? Since this is how matters stand, what is the voice of a hundred million people worth? As much as a historical fact found in a hundred historians, when it is then shown that they all copied one another, so that everything ultimately comes back to the statement of one person. (After Bayle, *Pensées sur les Comètes*, Vol I, p 10.)

“I say it, you say it, and he too has said it at last:

After so many sayings, you see nothing but sayings.”

Nevertheless, in a dispute with ordinary people, one can use general opinion as an authority.

In general, when two ordinary minds dispute, one will find that authorities are usually their mutually chosen weapon: with these they strike at one another. If the better mind has to deal with such a person, the wisest course is to accommodate himself to this weapon too, choosing authorities according to his opponent's vulnerabilities. For against the weapon of reasons the opponent is, by hypothesis, a horn-armored Siegfried, bathed in the flood of his inability to think and judge.

In court, disputes are actually conducted only through authorities: the established authority of the laws. Judgment's task is to find the law, the authority applicable to the case at hand.¹ Dialectic nevertheless has ample room to maneuver, since, when necessary, a case and a law that do not actually fit one another are twisted until they are taken to fit; and conversely.

¹ See *Cogitata* p 116 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].

Stratagem 31

When one has nothing to offer against the opponent's stated reasons, declare oneself incompetent with subtle irony: "What you say exceeds my poor powers of comprehension. It may be perfectly correct, but I cannot understand it, and I refrain from all judgment." In this way one insinuates to listeners who respect one that it is nonsense. Thus, when the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared—or rather, when it first began to cause a sensation—many professors of the old eclectic school declared, "We do not understand this," and thought they had thereby disposed of it. When some adherents of the new school showed them that they were right and really did not understand it, they became very ill-tempered.

One may use this stratagem only where one is certain of enjoying decidedly greater standing among the listeners than the opponent—for example, a professor against a student. Strictly speaking, this belongs to the preceding stratagem: it is a particularly malicious assertion of one's own *authority* instead of reasons.

The counterstroke is: “Permit me: with your great discernment, you must find it easy to understand, and only my poor presentation can be to blame.” Then spoon-feed him the matter so that, willing or unwilling, he must understand it, and it becomes clear that he really had merely failed to understand it before. Thus the argument is turned back: he wanted to insinuate “nonsense” against us; we have proved his “lack of understanding.” Both with the finest courtesy.

Stratagem 32

An assertion of the opponent that stands against us may be quickly disposed of, or at least made suspect, by placing it under a hated category, even if it is connected with that category only by a resemblance or in some loose way. For example: “That is Manichaeism; that is Arianism; that is Pelagianism; that is idealism; that is Spinozism; that is pantheism; that is Brownianism; that is naturalism; that is atheism; that is rationalism; that is spiritualism; that is mysticism,” and so forth. We assume two things: 1) that the assertion is actually identical with, or at least contained in, that category, and thus exclaim, “Oh, we know all about that already!” 2) That the category has already been entirely refuted and cannot contain a true word.

Stratagem 33

“That may be correct in theory; in practice it is false.” Through this sophism one concedes the grounds but denies the consequences, contrary to the rule that the inference from ground to consequence is valid. That assertion posits an impossibility: what is correct in theory must also hold in practice. If it does not, there is an error in the theory: something has been overlooked and not taken into account. Consequently, it is false in theory too.

Stratagem 34

If the opponent gives no direct answer or response to a question or argument, but evades it with a counterquestion, an indirect answer, or something irrelevant, and tries to move elsewhere, this is a sure sign that we have touched a rotten spot, sometimes without knowing it. He has fallen silent *on that point*. The point we raised must therefore be pressed, and the opponent must not be allowed to move from it, even if we still cannot see what the weakness we have touched actually consists in.

Stratagem 35

This stratagem, whenever practicable, makes all the others unnecessary: instead of acting upon the intellect through reasons, act upon the will through motives. The opponent, and the listeners too if they share his interest, are immediately won over to our opinion, even if it were borrowed from a madhouse. For a single lot-weight of will generally weighs more than a centner of insight and conviction. This is of course possible only in special circumstances. If one can make the opponent feel that his opinion, were it to prevail, would noticeably injure his interest, he will drop it as quickly as a hot iron he had carelessly grasped.

For example, a clergyman defends a philosophical dogma: make him notice that it indirectly contradicts a fundamental dogma of his church, and he will abandon it.

A landowner asserts the excellence of machinery in England, where one steam engine does the work of many people. Give him to understand that carriages will soon be drawn by steam engines too, whereupon the horses of his large stud must fall greatly in price, and we shall see. In such cases everyone's usual feeling is: "How rashly we enact a law unjust to ourselves."

It is the same when the listeners belong with us to a sect, guild, trade, club, and so forth, but the opponent does not. His thesis may be perfectly correct: as soon as we hint that it conflicts with the common interest of that guild or the like, all the listeners will find his arguments weak and miserable, however excellent they may be, and ours correct and telling, even if plucked from thin air. The chorus will speak loudly for us, and the opponent will leave the field in shame. Indeed, the listeners will generally believe they have voted from pure conviction. For what disadvantages us usually appears absurd to the intellect. The intellect is not a dry light, and so forth. This stratagem might be called “seizing the tree by the root”; it is usually called the argument from advantage.¹

¹ See *Cogitata* p 280 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].

Stratagem 36

Stun and bewilder the opponent with a senseless flood of words. This rests upon the fact that:

“A person generally believes, on merely hearing words,
Some thought must surely lie within.”

If he is secretly conscious of his own weakness, if he is used to hearing much that he does not understand while pretending that he does, one can impress him by gravely spouting learned- or profound-sounding nonsense that bewilders his hearing, sight and thought, and passing it off as the most indisputable proof of one’s own thesis. As everyone knows, in recent times some philosophers have employed this stratagem with the most brilliant success, even before the whole German public. But since examples are odious, let us take an older example from Goldsmith, *Vicar of Wakefield*, p 34.

Stratagem 37

(This ought to be one of the first.) Even when the opponent is right about the matter, if he fortunately chooses a bad proof of it, we can easily refute that proof and then pass this off as a refutation of the matter itself. Fundamentally this comes down to passing off an argument *ad hominem* as one *ad rem*. If neither he nor the bystanders can think of a better proof, we have won. For example, someone advances the ontological proof of God's existence, which can very well be refuted. This is how bad advocates lose a good case: they seek to justify it through a law that does not fit, and the appropriate one does not occur to them.

Stratagem 38

When one notices that the opponent is superior and one is going to come away wrong, become personal, insulting and rude. Becoming personal consists in leaving the subject of the dispute, where one's game is lost, to attack the disputant and his person in some way. This may be called an *argumentum ad personam*, as distinct from the *argumentum ad hominem*. The latter departs from the purely objective subject to hold to what the opponent has said or conceded about it. In becoming personal, however, one abandons the subject altogether and directs the attack against the opponent's person: one becomes hurtful, spiteful, insulting and rude. It is an appeal from the powers of the mind to those of the body, or to brutishness. This rule is very popular because everyone is capable of carrying it out, and it is therefore frequently employed.¹ The question now is what counterrule holds for the other party. If he wishes to use the same rule, there will be a brawl, a duel or legal proceedings for insult.

One would be greatly mistaken to think it enough merely to avoid becoming personal oneself. For by showing someone quite calmly that he is wrong, and therefore judges and thinks falsely—as happens in every dialectical victory—one embitters him more than through a rude, insulting expression. Why? Because, as Hobbes says in *de Cive*, c. 1: “All the mind’s pleasure and all its cheerfulness consist in having others with whom to compare oneself and thereby form a high opinion of oneself.” Nothing matters more to a person than the satisfaction of his vanity, and no wound hurts more than one inflicted upon it. Hence sayings such as “Honor is worth more than life,” and so forth. This satisfaction of vanity arises chiefly from comparing oneself with others in every respect, but principally in intellectual powers. This very comparison takes place effectively and very forcefully in disputation. Hence the defeated person’s bitterness, though no injustice has been done him, and his resort to the last resource, this last stratagem. Mere courtesy on one’s own side cannot avert it. Great composure, however, can help even here: as soon as the opponent becomes personal, calmly reply that this is irrelevant, return at once to the subject, and continue proving him wrong there without heeding his insults. In effect, say what Themistocles said to Eurybiades: “Strike, but listen.” Not everyone, however, has this gift.

The only safe counterrule is therefore the one Aristotle already gives in the last chapter of the *Topica*: do not dispute with the first person who comes along, but only with people one knows to have enough understanding not to advance utter absurdities and be shamed by them; enough to dispute with reasons rather than pronouncements of authority, and to listen to and engage with reasons; and, finally, people who value truth, willingly hear good reasons even from the opponent’s mouth, and possess enough fairness to bear coming away wrong when truth is on the other side. It follows that scarcely one person in a hundred is worth disputing with. Let the others say what they please, for folly is a right of all peoples. Remember what Voltaire says: “Peace is worth still more than truth.” And an Arabic saying runs: “On the tree of silence hangs its fruit, peace.”

Disputation, as a friction between minds, is certainly often of mutual benefit: it corrects one's own thoughts and produces new views. But both disputants must be fairly equal in learning and intellect. If one lacks the former, he does not understand everything and is not at the same level. If he lacks the latter, the bitterness this causes will tempt him into dishonesty and tricks, or rudeness.² There is no essential difference between disputation in private or familiar conversation and solemn public disputation for a degree and the like. Only, perhaps, that in the latter the respondent is always required to remain in the right against the opponent, so the presiding officer comes to his aid if necessary; or that in the latter one argues more formally, readily clothing one's arguments in strict syllogistic form.

¹ [The note beside this in the margin:] See Foliant p 261 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].

² Spic[ilegia] 334 [in our edition, volumes VII and VIII].