

世界经典学术名著原版库

ON SOPHISTICAL REFUTATIONS

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学苑音像出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

世界经典学术名著原版库/北京师联教育科学研究所编. —北京 :学苑音像出版社 2005. 3

ISBN 7 - 88050 - 259 - 9

I. 世... II. 北... III. 世界文学—学术—名著 :英文 IV. I299 - 2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2005)第 187965 号

世界经典学术名著原版库
北京师联教育科学研究所 编

出 版 :学苑音像出版社

印 刷 :北京密云红光印刷厂

开 本 :850mmx1168mm 1/16

印 张 :498

字 数 :10 000 千字

版 次 :2005 年 4 月第 1 版

印 数 :1 - 5 000

书 号 :ISBN 7 - 88050 - 259 - 9

定 价 :1080.00 元(全 50 册)

Book I

1

LET us now discuss sophistic refutations, i.e. what appear to be refutations but are really fallacies instead. We will begin in the natural order with the first.

That some reasonings are genuine, while others seem to be so but are not, is evident. This happens with arguments, as also elsewhere, through a certain likeness between the genuine and the sham. For physically some people are in a vigorous condition, while others merely seem to be so by blowing and rigging themselves out as the tribesmen do their victims for sacrifice; and some people are beautiful thanks to their beauty, while others seem to be so, by

dint of embellishing themselves. So it is, too, with inanimate things; for of these, too, some are really silver and others gold, while others are not and merely seem to be such to our sense; e.g. things made of litharge and tin seem to be of silver, while those made of yellow metal look golden. In the same way both reasoning and refutation are sometimes genuine, sometimes not, though inexperience may make them appear so: for inexperienced people obtain only, as it were, a distant view of these things. For reasoning rests on certain statements such that they involve necessarily the assertion of something other than what has been stated, through what has been stated: refutation is reasoning involving the contradictory of the given conclusion. Now some of them do not really achieve this, though they seem to do so for a number of reasons; and of these the most prolific and usual domain is the argument that turns upon names only. It is impossible in a discussion to bring in the actual things discussed: we use their names as symbols instead of them; and therefore we suppose that what follows in the names, follows in the things as well, just as people who calculate suppose in regard to their counters. But the two cases (names and things) are not alike. For names are finite and so is the sum-total of formulae, while things are infinite in number. Inevitably, then, the same formulae, and a single name, have a number of meanings. Accordingly just as, in counting, those who are not clever in manipulating their counters

are taken in by the experts, in the same way in arguments too those who are not well acquainted with the force of names misreason both in their own discussions and when they listen to others. For this reason, then, and for others to be mentioned later, there exists both reasoning and refutation that is apparent but not real. Now for some people it is better worth while to seem to be wise, than to be wise without seeming to be (for the art of the sophist is the semblance of wisdom without the reality, and the sophist is one who makes money from an apparent but unreal wisdom); for them, then, it is clearly essential also to seem to accomplish the task of a wise man rather than to accomplish it without seeming to do so. To reduce it to a single point of contrast it is the business of one who knows a thing, himself to avoid fallacies in the subjects which he knows and to be able to show up the man who makes them; and of these accomplishments the one depends on the faculty to render an answer, and the other upon the securing of one. Those, then, who would be sophists are bound to study the class of arguments aforesaid: for it is worth their while: for a faculty of this kind will make a man seem to be wise, and this is the purpose they happen to have in view.

Clearly, then, there exists a class of arguments of this kind, and it is at this kind of ability that those aim whom we call sophists.

Let us now go on to discuss how many kinds there are of sophistical arguments, and how many in number are the elements of which this

faculty is composed, and how many branches there happen to be of this inquiry, and the other factors that contribute to this art.

2

Of arguments in dialogue form there are four classes:

Didactic, Dialectical, Examination-arguments, and Contentious arguments. Didactic arguments are those that reason from the principles appropriate to each subject and not from the opinions held by the answerer (for the learner should take things on trust): dialectical arguments are those that reason from premisses generally accepted, to the contradictory of a given thesis: examination-arguments are those that reason from premisses which are accepted by the answerer and which any one who pretends to possess knowledge of the subject is bound to know-in what manner, has been defined in another treatise: contentious arguments are those that reason or appear to reason to a conclusion from premisses that appear to be generally accepted but are not so. The subject, then, of demonstrative arguments has been discussed in the Analytics, while that of dialectic arguments and examination-arguments has been discussed elsewhere: let us now proceed to speak of the arguments used in competitions and contests.

3

First we must grasp the number of aims entertained by those who argue as competitors and rivals to the death. These are five in number, refutation, fallacy, paradox, solecism, and fifthly to reduce the opponent in the discussion to babbling-i.e. to constrain him to repeat himself a number of times: or it is to produce the appearance of each of these things without the reality. For they choose if possible plainly to refute the other party, or as the second best to show that he is committing some fallacy, or as a third best to lead him into paradox, or fourthly to reduce him to solecism, i.e. to make the answerer, in consequence of the argument, to use an ungrammatical expression; or, as a last resort, to make him repeat himself.

4

There are two styles of refutation: for some depend on the language used, while some are independent of language. Those ways of producing the false appearance of an argument which depend on language are six in number: they are ambiguity, amphiboly, combination, division of words, accent, form of expression. Of this we may assure ourselves both by induction, and by syllogistic proof based on this-and it may be on other assumptions as well-that this is the

number of ways in which we might fall to mean the same thing by the same names or expressions. Arguments such as the following depend upon ambiguity. 'Those learn who know: for it is those who know their letters who learn the letters dictated to them'. For to 'learn' is ambiguous; it signifies both 'to understand' by the use of knowledge, and also 'to acquire knowledge'. Again, 'Evils are good: for what needs to be is good, and evils must needs be'. For 'what needs to be' has a double meaning: it means what is inevitable, as often is the case with evils, too (for evil of some kind is inevitable), while on the other hand we say of good things as well that they 'need to be'. Moreover, 'The same man is both seated and standing and he is both sick and in health: for it is he who stood up who is standing, and he who is recovering who is in health: but it is the seated man who stood up, and the sick man who was recovering'. For 'The sick man does so and so', or 'has so and so done to him' is not single in meaning: sometimes it means 'the man who is sick or is seated now', sometimes 'the man who was sick formerly'. Of course, the man who was recovering was the sick man, who really was sick at the time: but the man who is in health is not sick at the same time: he is 'the sick man' in the sense not that he is sick now, but that he was sick formerly. Examples such as the following depend upon amphiboly: 'I wish that you the enemy may capture'. Also the thesis, 'There must be knowledge of what one knows': for it is

possible by this phrase to mean that knowledge belongs to both the knower and the known. Also, 'There must be sight of what one sees: one sees the pillar: ergo the pillar has sight'. Also, 'What you profess to-be, that you profess to-be: you profess a stone to-be: ergo you profess-to-be a stone'. Also, 'Speaking of the silent is possible': for 'speaking of the silent' also has a double meaning: it may mean that the speaker is silent or that the things of which he speaks are so. There are three varieties of these ambiguities and amphibolies: (1) When either the expression or the name has strictly more than one meaning, e.g. aetos and the 'dog'; (2) when by custom we use them so; (3) when words that have a simple sense taken alone have more than one meaning in combination; e.g. 'knowing letters'. For each word, both 'knowing' and 'letters', possibly has a single meaning: but both together have more than one-either that the letters themselves have knowledge or that someone else has it of them.

Amphiboly and ambiguity, then, depend on these modes of speech. Upon the combination of words there depend instances such as the following: 'A man can walk while sitting, and can write while not writing'. For the meaning is not the same if one divides the words and if one combines them in saying that 'it is possible to walk-while-sitting' and write while not writing]. The same applies to the latter phrase, too, if one combines the words 'to write-while-not-writing': for then it means that he has the power to write and not to write at once;

whereas if one does not combine them, it means that when he is not writing he has the power to write. Also, 'He now if he has learnt his letters'. Moreover, there is the saying that 'One single thing if you can carry a crowd you can carry too'.

Upon division depend the propositions that 5 is 2 and 3, and odd, and that the greater is equal: for it is that amount and more besides. For the same phrase would not be thought always to have the same meaning when divided and when combined, e.g. 'I made thee a slave once a free man', and 'God-like Achilles left fifty a hundred men'.

An argument depending upon accent it is not easy to construct in unwritten discussion; in written discussions and in poetry it is easier. Thus (e.g.) some people emend Homer against those who criticize as unnatural his expression *to men ou kataputhetai ombro*. For they solve the difficulty by a change of accent, pronouncing the *ou* with an acuter accent. Also, in the passage about Agamemnon's dream, they say that Zeus did not himself say 'We grant him the fulfilment of his prayer', but that he bade the dream grant it. Instances such as these, then, turn upon the accentuation.

Others come about owing to the form of expression used, when what is really different is expressed in the same form, e.g. a masculine thing by a feminine termination, or a feminine thing by a masculine, or a neuter by either a masculine or a feminine; or, again, when a quality is expressed by a termination proper to quantity or vice

versa, or what is active by a passive word, or a state by an active word, and so forth with the other divisions previously' laid down. For it is possible to use an expression to denote what does not belong to the class of actions at all as though it did so belong. Thus (e.g.) 'flourishing' is a word which in the form of its expression is like 'cutting' or 'building': yet the one denotes a certain quality-i.e. a certain condition-while the other denotes a certain action. In the same manner also in the other instances.

Refutations, then, that depend upon language are drawn from these common-place rules. Of fallacies, on the other hand, that are independent of language there are seven kinds:

(1) that which depends upon Accident:

(2) the use of an expression absolutely or not absolutely but with some qualification of respect or place, or time, or relation:

(3) that which depends upon ignorance of what 'refutation' is:

(4) that which depends upon the consequent:

(5) that which depends upon assuming the original conclusion:

(6) stating as cause what is not the cause:

(7) the making of more than one question into one.

Fallacies, then, that depend on Accident occur whenever any

attribute is claimed to belong in like manner to a thing and to its accident. For since the same thing has many accidents there is no necessity that all the same attributes should belong to all of a thing's predicates and to their subject as well. Thus (e.g.), 'If Coriscus be different from "man", he is different from himself: for he is a man': or 'If he be different from Socrates, and Socrates be a man, then', they say, 'he has admitted that Coriscus is different from a man, because it so happens (accidit) that the person from whom he said that he (Coriscus) is different is a man'.

Those that depend on whether an expression is used absolutely or in a certain respect and not strictly, occur whenever an expression used in a particular sense is taken as though it were used absolutely, e.g. in the argument 'If what is not is the object of an opinion, then what is not is': for it is not the same thing 'to be x' and 'to be' absolutely. Or again, 'What is, is not, if it is not a particular kind of being, e.g. if it is not a man.' For it is not the same thing 'not to be x' and 'not to be' at all: it looks as if it were, because of the closeness of the expression, i.e. because 'to be x' is but little different from 'to be', and 'not to be x' from 'not to be'. Likewise also with any argument that turns upon the point whether an expression is used in a certain respect or used absolutely. Thus e.g. 'Suppose an Indian to be black all over, but white in respect of his teeth; then he is both white and not white.' Or if both

characters belong in a particular respect, then, they say, 'contrary attributes belong at the same time'. This kind of thing is in some cases easily seen by any one, e.g. suppose a man were to secure the statement that the Ethiopian is black, and were then to ask whether he is white in respect of his teeth; and then, if he be white in that respect, were to suppose at the conclusion of his questions that therefore he had proved dialectically that he was both white and not white. But in some cases it often passes undetected, viz. in all cases where, whenever a statement is made of something in a certain respect, it would be generally thought that the absolute statement follows as well; and also in all cases where it is not easy to see which of the attributes ought to be rendered strictly. A situation of this kind arises, where both the opposite attributes belong alike: for then there is general support for the view that one must agree absolutely to the assertion of both, or of neither: e.g. if a thing is half white and half black, is it white or black?

Other fallacies occur because the terms 'proof' or 'refutation' have not been defined, and because something is left out in their definition. For to refute is to contradict one and the same attribute-not merely the name, but the reality-and a name that is not merely synonymous but the same name-and to confute it from the propositions granted, necessarily, without including in the reckoning the original point to be proved, in the same respect and

relation and manner and time in which it was asserted. A 'false assertion' about anything has to be defined in the same way. Some people, however, omit some one of the said conditions and give a merely apparent refutation, showing (e.g.) that the same thing is both double and not double: for two is double of one, but not double of three. Or, it may be, they show that it is both double and not double of the same thing, but not that it is so in the same respect: for it is double in length but not double in breadth. Or, it may be, they show it to be both double and not double of the same thing and in the same respect and manner, but not that it is so at the same time: and therefore their refutation is merely apparent. One might, with some violence, bring this fallacy into the group of fallacies dependent on language as well.

Those that depend on the assumption of the original point to be proved, occur in the same way, and in as many ways, as it is possible to beg the original point; they appear to refute because men lack the power to keep their eyes at once upon what is the same and what is different.

The refutation which depends upon the consequent arises because people suppose that the relation of consequence is convertible. For whenever, suppose A is, B necessarily is, they then suppose also that if B is, A necessarily is. This is also the source of the deceptions that attend opinions based on sense-perception. For

people often suppose bile to be honey because honey is attended by a yellow colour: also, since after rain the ground is wet in consequence, we suppose that if the ground is wet, it has been raining; whereas that does not necessarily follow. In rhetoric proofs from signs are based on consequences. For when rhetoricians wish to show that a man is an adulterer, they take hold of some consequence of an adulterous life, viz. that the man is smartly dressed, or that he is observed to wander about at night. There are, however, many people of whom these things are true, while the charge in question is untrue. It happens like this also in real reasoning; e.g. Melissus' argument, that the universe is eternal, assumes that the universe has not come to be (for from what is not nothing could possibly come to be) and that what has come to be has done so from a first beginning. If, therefore, the universe has not come to be, it has no first beginning, and is therefore eternal. But this does not necessarily follow: for even if what has come to be always has a first beginning, it does not also follow that what has a first beginning has come to be; any more than it follows that if a man in a fever be hot, a man who is hot must be in a fever.

The refutation which depends upon treating as cause what is not a cause, occurs whenever what is not a cause is inserted in the argument, as though the refutation depended upon it. This kind of thing happens in arguments that reason ad impossibile: for in these

we are bound to demolish one of the premisses. If, then, the false cause be reckoned in among the questions that are necessary to establish the resulting impossibility, it will often be thought that the refutation depends upon it, e.g. in the proof that the 'soul' and 'life' are not the same: for if coming-to-be be contrary to perishing, then a particular form of perishing will have a particular form of coming-to-be as its contrary: now death is a particular form of perishing and is contrary to life: life, therefore, is a coming to-be, and to live is to come-to-be. But this is impossible: accordingly, the 'soul' and 'life' are not the same. Now this is not proved: for the impossibility results all the same, even if one does not say that life is the same as the soul, but merely says that life is contrary to death, which is a form of perishing, and that perishing has 'coming-to-be' as its contrary. Arguments of that kind, then, though not inconclusive absolutely, are inconclusive in relation to the proposed conclusion. Also even the questioners themselves often fail quite as much to see a point of that kind.

Such, then, are the arguments that depend upon the consequent and upon false cause. Those that depend upon the making of two questions into one occur whenever the plurality is undetected and a single answer is returned as if to a single question. Now, in some cases, it is easy to see that there is more than one, and that an answer is not to be given, e.g. 'Does the earth consist of sea, or the sky?' But

in some cases it is less easy, and then people treat the question as one, and either confess their defeat by failing to answer the question, or are exposed to an apparent refutation. Thus 'Is A and is B a man?' 'Yes.' 'Then if any one hits A and B, he will strike a man' (singular), 'not men' (plural). Or again, where part is good and part bad, 'is the whole good or bad?' For whichever he says, it is possible that he might be thought to expose himself to an apparent refutation or to make an apparently false statement: for to say that something is good which is not good, or not good which is good, is to make a false statement. Sometimes, however, additional premisses may actually give rise to a genuine refutation; e.g. suppose a man were to grant that the descriptions 'white' and 'naked' and 'blind' apply to one thing and to a number of things in a like sense. For if 'blind' describes a thing that cannot see though nature designed it to see, it will also describe things that cannot see though nature designed them to do so. Whenever, then, one thing can see while another cannot, they will either both be able to see or else both be blind; which is impossible.

The right way, then, is either to divide apparent proofs and refutations as above, or else to refer them all to ignorance of what