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Parerga and Paralipomena

Short Philosophical Essays

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On logic and dialectic

§22

Every *general* truth is related to the special ones as gold is to silver, insofar as one can convert it into a considerable number of special truths that result from it, like a gold coin into small change. For example, that the entire life of plants is a deoxidation process, whereas an animal's is a process of oxidation; or that wherever an electric current circulates, a magnetic one immediately arises that cuts through it perpendicularly; or 'no animal that does not breathe through a lung has a voice'^a or 'every fossilized animal belongs to an extinct species';^b or 'no egg laying animal has a diaphragm'^c – these are general truths from which very many individual ones can be derived in order to use them for explaining phenomena that occur or even for anticipating them before they appear. The general truths are just as valuable in matters of morals and psychology; how golden is every general rule here too, every sentence of the kind, indeed, every proverb! For they are the quintessence of thousands of occurrences that repeat themselves each day and are illustrated by them through exemplification.²

§23

An *analytic* judgement is merely a concept pulled apart; a *synthetic* judgement on the other hand is the formation of a new concept from two already present in different form in the intellect. But the combination of these must then be brought about and grounded^c by some kind of *intuition*;^d according to whether the latter is empirical or purely a priori, the judgement stemming from it will be synthetic a posteriori or a priori. 23

Every *analytic* judgement contains a tautology and every judgement without any tautology is *synthetic*. From this it follows that in

^a *nulla animalia vocalia, nisi quae pulmonibus respirant* ^b *tout animal fossil est un animal perdu*

^c *begründet* ^d *Anschauung*

communicating, analytic judgements are only to be used under the condition that the one who is addressed does not know the concept of the subject so completely, or have it as present to mind as the one who is speaking. – Furthermore, the synthetic nature of geometric propositions can be proven by the fact that they contain no tautology; this is not so apparent in arithmetic propositions, and yet it is the case. For it is no tautology, for instance, that counting from 1 to 4 and from 1 to 5 repeats the unit precisely as often as counting from 1 to 9, but instead this is brought about purely by the intuition of time and cannot be understood without it.

§24

From a *single* proposition no more can result than already lies there, i.e., than it itself says towards an exhaustive understanding of its meaning; but when *two* propositions are syllogistically joined as premises, more can result than lies in each taken separately – just as a chemical compound displays qualities not attributable to its individual components. On this rests the value of conclusions.

§25

Every *demonstration of proof*^a is a logical deduction of the stated proposition from one already agreed upon and certain, with the help of another as second premise. Now this proposition itself must have either immediate, more correctly original certainty, or must logically result from one that has such certainty. Such propositions from original certainty, hence those not brought about by proof, as they constitute the basic truths of all the sciences, have always arisen through the translation of what is somehow intuitively conceived into what is thought, the abstract. This is why they are called *evident*, a predicate applying really only to them but not to the merely proven propositions which, as conclusions from the premises,^b are to be called merely logically consistent. This truth of theirs accordingly is always only a mediate, derived and borrowed one; nonetheless, they can be just as certain as any proposition of immediate truth, namely when they are properly deduced from such a proposition, even if only through parenthetical clauses. In fact, under this condition their truth is often easier to demonstrate and to make comprehensible to everyone than that of an axiomatic proposition whose truth is only immediate and intuitively

^a *Beweisführung* ^b *conclusiones ex praemissis*

knowable, because for the recognition of such a truth now the objective, now the subjective conditions are missing. This relationship is analogous to that of the steel magnet produced artificially; not only is it just as strong, but often even stronger in its magnetic force than the original magnetic iron ore.

The subjective conditions for knowing immediately true propositions constitute that which is called power of judgement,^a but this belongs to the qualities of superior minds, while the capacity to draw the right conclusion from given premises is not lacking in any healthy mind. For the determination of original, immediately true propositions requires the translation of what is intuitively cognized into abstract cognition; however, the capacity for this is extremely limited in ordinary minds and extends only to easily perceived relationships, as for example Euclid's axioms or even quite simple, unambiguous facts that are obvious to them. Whatever goes beyond this can only succeed in convincing them by way of proof demanding no other immediate cognition than is expressed in logic by the principles of contradiction and identity and is repeated in the proofs at every step. In such a way then they must trace everything back to the most simple truths which are the only ones they are capable of grasping immediately. If one proceeds here from the general to the specific, then it is deduction, but in the opposite direction it is induction.

Minds with the power of judgement, on the other hand, and even more so inventors and discoverers, possess the capacity of transitioning from what is intuited to what is abstract, or to what is thought, to a much higher degree. Their capacity extends to the solving of very complicated relationships, such that the field of propositions of immediate truth is for them far more expansive and includes much that other minds can never achieve more of than a weaker, merely mediate conviction. For the latter actually the proof of a newly discovered truth is sought after the fact, i.e., they trace it back to what is already acknowledged, or to otherwise unquestionable truths. – There are however cases in which this is not feasible. So for instance I can find no evidence for the six fractions with which I expressed the six primary colours, and which alone offer insight into the actual, specific nature of each one and thereby really explain colours to our understanding in the first place. Nonetheless, their direct certainty is so great that any mind capable of judging would scarcely doubt them seriously, which is after all why Professor Rosas in Vienna has taken it upon

^a *Urtheilskraft*

himself to propose that they are the result of his own insight – as I point out in my *On Will in Nature* (p. 19).^a

§26

Controversy and *disputing* on a theoretical subject can without doubt become fruitful for both implicated parties, insofar as it corrects or confirms the thoughts they have and also awakens new ones. It is a friction or collision of two minds that often causes sparks, but it is therefore also analogous to the collision of two bodies whereby the weaker must often suffer, while the stronger feels good and merely gives off a triumphant sound. In consideration of this it is a prerequisite that both disputants be at least somewhat evenly matched, in their knowledge^b as well as in intelligence and skill. If one of them lacks knowledge, then he is not on the same level^c and thus not accessible to the other's arguments; he stands outside the ring even while fighting. But if he lacks intelligence, then the ensuing exasperation that will quickly stir in him will drive him inevitably to all kinds of dishonesty, tricks and chicanery while disputing, and turn to outright rudeness when these are pointed out to him. Accordingly, just as only those of equal birth were allowed into tournaments,³ a scholar should never dispute with unlearned types, for he cannot use his best arguments against them because they lack the knowledge to understand and weigh them. If he tries nevertheless in this discomfiture to render his arguments comprehensible, this will most often fail; indeed, using a bad and clumsy counter-argument they will appear to be right in the eyes of listeners who are just as ignorant as they. For this reason Goethe says:

Never let yourself be lured
To inconsistent prattle:
Wise men will stoop to an ignorant word,
When ignorants are in the battle.^d

But one is even worse off if an opponent lacks intelligence and understanding, unless he were to replace this lack with a genuine striving for truth and instruction. For in addition he soon feels himself wounded in his most sensitive spot; now whoever argues with him will immediately perceive that he is no longer dealing with his intellect, but instead with the radical nature of the human being,^e with his will, whose only concern is

^a [WN, 335–6; Hübscher SW 4, 14–16] ^b *Kenntnissen* ^c *au niveau*

^d [*West–Eastern Divan*, 'Buch der Sprüche' ('Book of Proverbs')] ^e *mit dem Radikalen des Menschen*

that it triumph whether by fair means or foul.^a Hence his understanding is now directed at nothing but tricks, ruses and dishonesty of every kind, and when he is later driven from these he will ultimately seize upon rudeness simply in order to compensate for his feelings of inferiority in one way or another and, depending on the social standing and circumstances of the disputants, to transform the struggle of intellects into a struggle of bodies, where he hopes to have a better chance for himself. Accordingly the second rule is that one should not dispute with persons of limited understanding. One can see already that not many will remain with whom one may engage in a controversy at need, and truly this should only happen with those who are already the exceptions. On the other hand, people as a rule take offence when one does not share their opinion; but then they should adjust their opinions in such a way that one could adopt them. Now if one were to go so far as to engage in a controversy with them, even if they do not seize upon the above-mentioned last refuge of the stupid,^b one will experience mostly annoyance, insofar as one would have to deal not only with their intellectual incapacity but also with their moral depravity, which signals its presence by the frequent dishonesty of its conduct while disputing. The tricks, ruses and chicanery on which they seize simply in order to be right are so numerous and manifold, moreover so regularly recurring, that in earlier years they became my own subject of reflection. I focused on their purely formal aspects once I recognized that however different the topics of discussion as well as the persons might be, still the same and identical tricks and ruses recurred constantly and were very easy to recognize. This led me back then to the notion of separating out the purely formal nature of these tricks and ruses from the substance, and to display it like a discrete anatomical specimen. So I collected all of the frequently recurring, dishonest tricks of disputation and clearly displayed each of them in their unique character, illuminated by examples and characterized by their own name; to this I added the means to be applied against them, the parries to these feints, as it were. Thus arose a formal *eristic dialectic* or discursive technique. Now in this dialectic the said celebrated tricks or stratagems, as eristic-dialectical figures, took the place occupied by syllogistical figures in logic, and rhetorical figures in rhetoric; with which both have in common that they are more or less inborn, since their practice precedes their theory, so that in order to practise them one need not first have learned them. Accordingly their purely formal presentation would be a complement to that *technique of reason* consisting of logic, dialectic and rhetoric exhibited

^a per fas oder per nefas ^b *ultima ratio stultorum*

in the second volume of my main work, chapter 9. Since as far as I know there exists no previous attempt of this nature, I could make use of no forerunner in this task; I did, however, occasionally make use of Aristotle's *Topics* and was able to use for my purpose some of its rules for setting up (28 *kataskeuazein*^a) and overturning (*anaskeuazein*^b) assertions. What best corresponded to my needs would have to have been the text by Theophrastus mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, *Field Manual for the Theory of Disputation*^c which, along with all his rhetorical writings, has been lost. Plato too (*Republic*, V, p. 12, Bipont) touches upon an art of refutation^d which taught disputation,^e just as dialectic^f taught conversation.^g Of recent books that most closely match my purpose is the late University of Halle Professor Friedemann Schneider's *Special logical treatise in which the process of disputation, its rules and also the errors of disputants are set forth*,^h Halle, 1718, insofar as he reveals many an eristical dishonesty in his chapters on the errors.ⁱ Still, he focuses only on formal academic disputations, and on the whole his treatment of the subject is dull and meagre, as faculty products tend to be; moreover it is written in perfectly miserable Latin. Decidedly better is Joachim Lange's *Method of Disputation*^j that appeared one year later, but it contains nothing for my purpose. – Now however, as I take up the revision of my earlier work, such a thorough and minute meditation on the sneaky paths and tricks used by vulgar human nature to conceal its shortcomings is no longer compatible with my state of mind, and so I lay it aside. Meanwhile, in order to sketch my procedure in greater detail for those who in the future might undertake something of the kind, I want here to set forth a couple of such stratagems as samples; but first I will share from that work in progress the *outline of what is essential for every disputation*. Since it delivers the abstract framework, the proverbial skeleton of the controversy in general, and can serve as its osteology, it clearly deserves to be reproduced here by virtue of its surveyable nature and its clarity. It reads:

In every disputation, whether public as in academic lecture-halls and before courts of law, or as conducted in mere conversation, the essential procedure is as follows:

^a κατασκευάζειν ^b ἀνασκευάζειν ^c Ἀγωνιστικὸν τῆς περὶ τοὺς ἐριστικούς λόγους θεωρίας
^d ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη ^e ἐρίζειν ^f διαλεκτικὴ ^g διαλέγεσθαι

^h *Tractatus logicus singularis, in quo processus disputandi, seu officia, aequae ac vitia disputantium exhibentur*

ⁱ *vitia*

^j *methodus disputandi* [*Genuina Methodus Disputandi, Materis Theologicis praecipue accommodata* (Magdeburg, 1719)]

A *thesis* is advanced and is to be refuted; for this now there are two *modes* and two *ways*.

(1) The *modes* are *ad rem* and *ad hominem* or *ex concessis*.^a Only with the first one do we overturn the absolute or objective truth of the thesis, by demonstrating that it does not correspond with the nature of the matter in question. But with the others we overturn only its relative truth by proving that it contradicts other claims or concessions of the defender of the thesis, or by proving his arguments untenable, in which case the objective truth of the matter itself actually remains undecided. For example, if in a controversy over questions of philosophical or natural science the opponent (who would therefore have to be an Englishman) stoops to raising biblical arguments, then we would want to refute him with precisely these, even though they are merely arguments *ad hominem*^b which decide nothing in the matter. It is as if one paid someone with the same paper money one had received from him.⁴ In some cases one could even compare this means of proceeding^c with a plaintiff in court who produced a false promissory note, which the defendant for his part absolved using a false receipt; the loan could nonetheless have taken place. But, just as in this latter scenario, so too arguing merely *ad hominem*^d often has the advantage of brevity, since quite often in the one case as in the other, the true and complete explanation of the matter would be extremely complicated and difficult.

(2) The two *ways* furthermore are the *direct* and the *indirect*. The first attacks the thesis in its *grounds*, the other in its *consequences*. The former proves that it is not true, the latter that it could not be true. We want to investigate this more closely.

(a) Refuting in the *direct* way, that is by attacking the *grounds* of the thesis, we show either that the grounds themselves are not true, by saying 'I dispute the major proposition' or 'I dispute the minor proposition';^e in both we attack the *substance* of the conclusion that grounds the thesis. Or we admit these grounds, but demonstrate that the thesis does not result from them, thus saying 'I dispute the conclusion',^f whereby we attack the *form* of the conclusion.

(b) Refuting in the *indirect* way, that is attacking the thesis in its *consequences* in order to conclude from their falseness the falseness of the thesis itself, by virtue of the rule 'From the falseness of the consequent

^a [Literally: 'in relation to the thing', 'in relation to the person', 'on the basis of concessions']

^b *argumenta ad hominem* ^c *modus procedendi* ^d *argumentatio ad hominem*

^e *nego majorem . . . nego minorem* ^f *nego consequentiam*

arises the falseness of the ground^a we can now make use of either mere *instance* or of *apagoge*.

(i) The *instance* (*enstasis*^b) is merely a counter-example;^c it refutes the thesis by demonstrating things or circumstances that are subsumed under its statement, and thus result from it, but to which it obviously does not apply, which is why it cannot be true.

(ii) The *apagoge* is brought about insofar as we provisionally accept the thesis as true, but now connect it with some other undisputed proposition, known to be true, in such a way that both become the premises of a syllogism whose conclusion is obviously false in that it contradicts either the nature of things generally, or the certainly acknowledged character of the matter in question, or finally another claim of the defender of the thesis. Thus the *apagoge* according to its *mode* can either be merely *ad hominen* or also *ad rem*. Now if that conclusion contradicts truths that are completely unquestionable or even certain a priori, then we have actually led the opponent to absurdity.^d In any case, since the other added premise is indisputably true, the falseness of the conclusion must result from his thesis: therefore it *cannot* be true.

Every process of attack in disputing can be traced back to the procedures formally represented here. In dialectics these are what the regular thrusts, such as tierce, carte, etc. are to fencing, whereas the ploys or stratagems compiled by me on the other hand are perhaps to be compared to feints, and finally the personal lunges while disputing can be compared to the so-called dirty strokes of the university fencing masters. As samples and examples of those stratagems compiled by me the following may here be presented.

31 Seventh stratagem: the *extension*. The opponent's claim is projected beyond its natural limit, hence^e taken in a broader sense than he intended or even expressed, in order to then refute it handily in this sense.

Example: A claims that the English surpass all other nations in the dramatic arts. B makes the apparent counter-instance^e that in music and consequently also in opera their achievements are negligible. – From this it follows, as a parry to this feint, that when a contradiction is raised one must immediately limit his pronounced claim strictly to its usual expressions or their commonly accepted meaning, and generally speaking compress it into the narrowest possible boundaries. For the more general a claim becomes, the more numerous the attacks to which it is exposed.⁶

^a a falsitate rationati ad falsitatem rationis valet consequentia ^b ενστασις

^c exemplum in contrarium ^d ad absurdum ^e instantia in contrarium

Eighth stratagem: the *fabricating of conclusions*. One adds to the opponent's proposition, often even tacitly, a second one which is related to it by subject or predicate; now from these two premises one draws a false, usually malicious conclusion with which the opponent is charged.

Example: A praises the French for having expelled Charles X. B retorts immediately: "So you want us to expel our King." – The proposition tacitly added by him as major proposition is: 'All who expel their king are to be praised.' – This can also be reduced to the fallacy of interpreting in an unlimited sense what was claimed in a limited sense.^a

Ninth stratagem: the *diversion*. When in the course of a disputation one notices that things are going badly and the opponent will win, then one promptly seeks to prevent this mishap through a change of topic,^b hence by diverting the discussion to another subject, namely to some secondary issue, if necessary even by making a leap to it. Now one seeks to foist this on the opponent, in order to dispute it instead of the original subject and to make it the issue of the controversy; and so the opponent must abandon his anticipated victory in order to turn to this. But if, unfortunately, one were to see a strong counter-argument quickly mobilized here too, then one would have to do the same thing right away, namely leap once more to something else; this can be repeated ten times in a quarter of an hour if only the opponent does not lose his patience. These strategic diversions will be carried out most skilfully when one transitions the controversy imperceptibly and gradually to something related to the subject in question, if possible to something still actually concerned with it, only in a different manner. It is much less elegant when one retains merely the subject of the thesis but brings up other relationships to it, which have nothing at all to do with those in question, e.g. speaking of the Buddhism of the Chinese and switching to their tea trade. But if even this should not be doable, then one could seize on some expression arbitrarily used by the opponent in order to attach an entirely new controversy to it and thus break free of the old one. For example, the opponent might have expressed himself thus: "Here precisely lies the mystery of the matter", and one swiftly interjects: "Yes, if you speak of mysteries and mysticism, then I am not your man, for in this regard" and so on, and now one is in the open again. But if no opportunity presents itself even for this, then one must go to work more boldly and suddenly leap over to an entirely unrelated matter, perhaps with: "Yes, and so you claimed recently" and so on. – Diversion generally is the favourite and most used of all tricks of which dishonest disputants avail

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^a *fallacia a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* ^b *mutatio controversiae*

themselves, most often instinctively, and it is nearly inevitable as soon as they get into a predicament.

Thus I had collected and explicated approximately forty such stratagems. But illuminating all these hiding places of obtuseness and incompetence, whose cousins are obstinacy, vanity and dishonesty, now disgusts me; which is why I allow this sample to suffice and refer again, all the more earnestly, to the reasons cited above for avoiding disputation with people as they commonly are. At best one should attempt to come to the aid of another's power of comprehension through arguments, but one should quit on the spot as soon as one notices obstinacy in his counter-arguments. For right away he will also become dishonest, and a sophism in theory is a chicanery in practice. The stratagems brought up here, however, are even
 33 much more worthless than sophisms; in them the will dons the mask of the understanding and plays its role, which always turns out abominably, since few things occasion such indignation as when one observes that a person deliberately misunderstands. Whoever does not acknowledge the good reasons of his opponent demonstrates either a directly weak understanding, or one that is suppressed by the tyranny of his own will, indirectly; therefore one should put up with such a person only when demanded by one's office or duty. – Having said all of this, I must nevertheless confess, in the interest of doing justice even to the above-mentioned subterfuges, that one can also be too hasty in giving up one's opinion in the face of a pertinent argument by the opponent. After all, we feel the power of the argument in such cases, but the counter reasons^a or whatever might otherwise preserve and rescue our claim itself do not so quickly occur to us. If in such cases we were to immediately give up our thesis for lost, it could happen that in doing precisely this we betray truth, insofar as we could later discover that we were right after all, but had surrendered to the momentary impression out of weakness and lack of confidence in our business. – Indeed, the proof that we had proposed for our thesis might have actually been false, but there could be a different and correct one for it. Feeling this, it happens that even sincere and truth-loving persons do not readily surrender to a good argument, but instead attempt a brief opposition, indeed even persist a while in their proposition after counter-argumentation has rendered its truth questionable. In this they resemble the general who seeks to hold a position for a while, even though he cannot maintain it and he knows it, in the hope of being reinforced. Indeed they are hoping that while defending themselves for a time with bad arguments,

^a *Gegengründe*

good ones will occur to them in the meantime, or that the mere apparentness of the opponent's arguments will become clear to them. Thus one is nearly compelled to a minor dishonesty in disputing, in that momentarily one has to fight not so much for truth as for one's proposition; to an extent this is a consequence of the uncertainty of truth and the imperfection of the human intellect. Now, however, the danger immediately arises that one could go too far in this manner, fight too long in bad faith and in the end become obstinate, giving way to the baseness of human nature after all. One might defend one's proposition by fair means or foul,^a even with the help of dishonest stratagems, clinging to it obstinately.^b Here may each be protected by his good genius, so that he does not need to be ashamed afterwards. Meanwhile, clear knowledge of the nature of the matter as set forth here will certainly lead to self-cultivation^c in this respect as well.

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^a *per fas et nefas* ^b *mordicus* ^c *Selbstbildung*