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Special Issue.

von  
Uwe Meixner, Albert Newen

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# Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy

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Christof Rapp · Pieter Sjoerd Hasper

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# Introduction

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Three years ago, the conference “Lost in Logical Space” on Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations* took place in Berlin (under the generous auspices of the Excellence Cluster TOPOI). It brought together, for the first time, with only a few exceptions, everyone working on the main topics Aristotle deals with in that work. Appreciating the quality of many of the contributions, we decided to assemble the most important ones in a collection of articles and to look for a few useful additions. We are very pleased that *History of Philosophy and Logical Analysis* was willing to accept this collection in their series.

Indeed, a volume dedicated to Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations* could not have found a more appropriate series to appear in, since the analysis of arguments in which something goes wrong without it being immediately clear what, stands at the beginning of philosophical analysis in general and the development of logic in particular. Not that Aristotle was the first ever to engage in such analysis – of course there was Plato before him, but also some Sophists and philosophers responding to the arguments of Parmenides and Zeno introduced useful analyses and distinctions. But in Aristotle we see the onset of systematic theorizing about argumentation, including an account of the ways in which arguments, despite of being incorrect, may appear to be correct and of the relations between different types of argumentation (in science, in discussions with various purposes, in everyday life), but also of the connections with more general philosophical issues, like the meaning of words and the ontological status of universals.

It is, however, primarily because of its account of argumentation, whether flawless or with defects, that Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations*, together with the *Topics*, has caught the attention of those working in the field of argumentation theory. In this respect pioneering work was done by Hamblin in his book *Fallacies* (1970), in which he highlighted the dialectical context, with its strict discussion rules, of Aristotle’s theories. Hamblin himself, followed by others, went on to develop formal dialectical systems, but also those who were less formally inclined were inspired through him by Aristotle to study argumentation in dialectical contexts, for example in Informal Logic (e.g. Woods and Walton) and in the pragma-dialectical approach (initiated by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst).

In the light of these developments in argumentation theory, it can hardly be an accident that since the 1990s the interest among ancient philosophers for Aristotle’s argumentation theory, and for the *Sophistical Refutations* in particular, has grown steadily. The conference “Lost in Logical Space” was the first exclusively dedicated to it, but real milestones were here the two new translations with commentary by Louis-André Dorion (1995) and Paolo Fait (2007, with many preceding publications). It is striking that there are thus good new translations, containing many new insights and interpretations, available in French and Italian

(as well, one should add, in some other languages, like Swedish, Japanese and Dutch), but not in English (not to mention German). That is why we decided to include in this volume a new translation into English, so as to make at least some of the progress achieved generally accessible.

The articles contribute, each in its own way, to further progress in our understanding of Aristotle's account of argumentation and of fallacies in particular. First there are a number of articles dedicated to various aspects of fallacy theory, mainly Aristotle's, but also that of the Stoics. Valentina di Lascio proposes a new account of Aristotle's claim that there are six, no more and no less, linguistic fallacies. Luca Castagnoli provides an in depth study of Aristotle's way of dealing with fallacy of begging the question, not only in the *Sophistical Refutations*, but also in the *Topics* and the *Prior Analytics*. Christof Rapp compares Aristotle's discussion of fallacious enthymemes in the *Rhetoric* with the better-known theory of the *Sophistical Refutations*. Susanne Bobzien discusses what the Stoics had to say about the one fallacy which is so conspicuously absent on Aristotle's list of thirteen, the fallacy involving a hidden presupposition.

Then we have three articles studying more general aspects of Aristotle's account of incorrect arguments. Colin King tries to answer the question what distinguishes, according to Aristotle, eristic arguments from correct dialectical arguments. Carrie Swanson provides a line by line commentary on the pivotal chapter 8 of the *Sophistical Refutations*, where Aristotle, having listed his thirteen fallacies, suddenly introduces a new type of incorrect argument and at least claims that his list of fallacies is complete; she also suggests how Aristotle's discussion there may be connected with chapters 9 and 11, but also chapter 10. Paolo Fait attempts to elucidate Aristotle's puzzling idea, also stated in chapter 8, that if someone commits a fallacy, he must somehow have tacitly accepted a fallacy-justifying principle.

In the final three articles there is one bone of contention, namely how to make sense of what Aristotle's says about a subtype of dialectical arguments, peirastic arguments (which are used to put someone who claims to have scientific knowledge to the test, and are discussed in chapter 11 of the *Sophistical Refutations*). Rob Bolton provides an invigorated restatement of the line of interpretation he has advanced since 1990. Pieter Sjoerd Hasper offers an alternative account of the ingredients of peirastic arguments and of how peirastic arguments are to be distinguished from fallacious arguments and other incorrect arguments, on the one hand, and from scientific arguments, on the other. Louis-André Dorion, finally, disagrees strongly with Bolton's thesis that in his account of peirastic argument Aristotle codified the practice of Socrates' refutations of people's claims to knowledge.

We hope that this collection shows that the study of argumentation theory in Ancient Philosophy, and with Aristotle in particular, is in good shape. We are certain that at least some of the points made in the articles brought together here will withstand scrutiny and will advance our understanding of the beginnings of logical analysis.

# Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*

## A Translation<sup>1</sup>

Pieter Sjoerd Hasper

### 1. Appearance and reality in argument and refutation

Now we must discuss sophistical refutations, that is, arguments that appear to be refutations, but are in fact fallacies rather than refutations. In accordance with the nature of things, however, we must start from the primary things. 164a20

That some arguments do constitute deductions, while others seem to, but in fact do not, is clear. For just as in other cases this comes about because of a certain similarity, so too with arguments. For also with regard to their condition some people are really in good shape, whereas others only appear to be because they have decked themselves out as tribesmen and have equipped themselves; and some people are beautiful because of their beauty, while others appear to be so because they have dressed up. It is like this also with lifeless things, for some of them are really made of gold or silver, whereas others are not, but appear so to the senses: things made of litharge or of tin, for example, appear to be made of silver, and yellow-coloured things of gold. In the same way, one argument constitutes a 164b20 b25

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<sup>1</sup> It would have been impossible for me to translate the *Sophistici Elenchi* into English if I had not already translated the work into Dutch together with Erik Krabbe, and if I had not been able to go through my first draft with Andreas Anagnostopoulos, who not only improved its English, but whose queries also forced me to reconsider some of the interpretations underlying any translation. His contribution to this translation is so significant, that it can be truly said that I did it together with him. All mistakes, however, remain my responsibility. Thanks are due to Chris Noble for checking the translation with an innocent eye.

The Greek text translated is that edited by W. D. Ross, *Aristotelis Topica et Sophistici Elenchi*. Oxford: Clarendon 1958. However, there are many passages where I have deviated from Ross' text, very often siding with all or most manuscripts; there are, however, also a few places where I think a reading with less support in the manuscripts is to be preferred. (There are still further places where Ross' preference for a minority reading can be called into question, but they require a fuller consideration than I have had time for. A new edition of the *Sophistici Elenchi* is really called for.) A list of deviations is added at the end of the translation.

Aristotle gives many examples of arguments there is something wrong with, and not all of them are easily translated into English. In such cases, I have supplied an alternative in English that at least fits the main point of the example, while describing the actual example in a footnote. In a few instances even the main point cannot be captured in an English alternative; in those cases there is some Greek in the translation, which is explained in a footnote.

Also in translation the point of most of the many examples will be clear, but there remain cases that seem rather impenetrable. It will not be possible to explain them in footnotes, but as far as the examples for the fallacies of combination and division are concerned, they are discussed in my "Logic and Linguistics. Aristotle's Account of the Fallacies of Combination and Division in the *Sophistical Refutations*", *Apeiron* 42 (2009), 105–152.

real deduction or a real refutation, while another does not, even though it appears to due to our lack of experience. For those without experience are like people remaining at a distance and judging from far away.

165a1 For a deduction is an argument based on certain granted points, such that it states, by way of necessity, something different from the points laid down, while a refutation is a deduction together with the contradictory of its conclusion. But some arguments do not achieve this, even though they seem to on various grounds  
a5 – of which one type of argumentation is very fertile and popular, the one based on words. For since it is impossible to have a discussion while adducing the things themselves, and we use words as symbols instead of the things, we assume that  
a10 what follows for words, also follows for the things (just as with stones for those who do calculations). It is not the same, however, since the words are limited, just like the number of sentences, whereas the things themselves are unlimited in number. It is then inevitable that the same sentence or a single word signify several things. Just as in calculation, those who are not versed in moving stones around  
a15 are tricked by the experts, so too those without experience of the possibilities of words are deceived by means of fallacies, both when themselves participating in a discussion and when listening to others.

On this particular ground, then, and on grounds to be mentioned later, there are arguments that seem to be deductions or refutations but are not. Now there  
a20 are people who value the appearance of being knowledgeable more than the reality without the appearance (for sophistry is an apparent, not a real way of being knowledgeable; and the sophist tries to make money from appearing knowledgeable). Hence, they clearly must make themselves seem to do what a knowledgeable  
a25 person would do, rather than do it without appearing to. To put it point by point, it is the task of someone with knowledge to avoid making false statements himself on any topic he knows about, and to be able to unmask anyone else who makes false statements. The former consists in being able to concede an argument and the latter in securing concession of an argument. Those who want to be sophists must then sort out the domain of arguments just mentioned, since it is worth the  
a30 effort; such an ability will make one appear knowledgeable and that is after all their preference.

It is thus clear that there is such a domain of arguments and that those whom we call sophists aspire to such an ability. How many kinds of sophistical arguments  
a35 there are, how many elements make up this ability, and how many parts this inquiry has – we must now discuss these and other things that contribute to this expertise.

## 2. Four kinds of argument

In discussions there are four domains of argument: didactic, dialectical, critically  
165b1 examinative and eristic. Those arguments are didactic that deduce on the basis of the principles appropriate to the discipline in question and not on the basis of the views of the answerer (for the student should rely on them). Those arguments are dialectical that, on the basis of acceptable views, constitute a deduction of

a contradictory. Those arguments are critically examinative that are based on views of the answerer or on things that must be known by anyone who purports to have scientific knowledge (in which way has been specified elsewhere). And those arguments are eristic that, based on points that appear acceptable without being so, constitute a deduction or appear to constitute a deduction.

Demonstrative arguments have been discussed in the *Analytics*, dialectical and critically examinative arguments elsewhere. Now we must discuss competitive and eristic arguments.

### 3. Goals of the eristics

First we must determine how many goals those who compete and battle it out in discussions have. These are five in number: refutation, falsity, unacceptability, solecism, and, fifth, making the interlocutor babble (that is, forcing him to say the same thing many times); or each of these not in reality, but in appearance. For their preference is, foremost, to be seen to refute, second, to expose someone who states a falsehood, third, to lead someone to an unacceptable statement, fourth, to make him commit a solecism (that is, to make the answerer express himself ungrammatically), and finally, that he say the same thing several times.

### 4. Apparent refutations dependent on the expression

There are two modes of refuting: some refutations are dependent on the expression, whereas others are independent of the expression. The ways of bringing about the appearance of refutation dependent on the expression are six in number; they are: homonymy, amphiboly, combination, division, intonation and form of expression. There is a proof of this through induction (whenever one considers another argument) as well as through deduction, namely that this is the number of ways in which one can indicate with the same words and statements what is not the same.

Arguments like the following depend on homonymy: "Those who are deaf understand the words coming from his mouth, for intelligent deaf people understand what he is saying." However, "understanding" is homonymous, being both understanding by using intelligence and being able to hear spoken sounds.<sup>2</sup> Another example: "Bad things are good, for what must be is good, and bad things must be." However, "must" is equivocal: it means "is inevitable", which often also applies to bad things (for some things that are bad are inevitable), but we also say of good things that they "must be". Further: "The same man sits and stands, and is ill and healthy, for he who stood up stands, and he who recovered is

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek text the relevant ambiguity is in the verb *manthanein*, which means both "to learn" and "to understand": "Those who have knowledge learn, for those who know how to read and write understand what is being dictated. For 'learning/understanding' is homonymous, being both comprehending by using knowledge and acquiring knowledge."