

## LECTURE XII.

### *SOURCES OF ARGUMENT.*

OUR subject now leads us back, young gentlemen, to the fourth, the main constituent part of the sermon. This, as we have seen, is termed the "Argument." Under this name is classed all evidence, everything, whether it be reasoning or testimony, which produces conviction of the understanding concerning the proposition or subject discussed. The speaker's ultimate object is always practical; but since man can only feel as his mind sees, and since his rational volitions follow the stronger present dictate of his own understanding, it is plain that the presentation of evidence must, in every discourse, be the foundation of all true effect.

Our treatment of this member of discourse naturally divides itself into two branches. Of these, one considers the matter, the other the form, of the argument. The former branch obviously falls into the department of "Invention," and the latter into that of "Disposition," if the old arrangement is regarded. But you will remember that I partially emancipated myself from the bonds of that distribution at the outset. The matter of the argument, or the sources from which it may be drawn, is to be considered first, because, as you will see, this decides concerning the form or arrangement. The nature of the matter to be organized largely determines the form of the organism.

Each scientific writer upon rhetorical reasoning has presented us with a classification of the sources of argument.<sup>1</sup> You will find them various. None of them,

<sup>1</sup> Thus, Aristotle, the father of logical science, in his *Rhetoric*, Bk. II., chs. 21-25, presents us the following classification:

The sources of arguments are *Enthymemes*, *Examples* and *Maxims*.

I. <i>Examples</i> , include	{	a. Real occurrences.
		b. Imaginary analogous occurrences, as fables, etc.
II. <i>Maxims</i> ( <i>γνώμαι</i> ).	{	1. Class. Not argued.
		The self-evident, or universally admitted.
		The generally admitted.
		2. Class. Deduced.
	{	a. Those which are major premises of enthymemes.
		b. Those which imply such premises.
III. <i>Enthymemes</i> .	{	a. <i>Ostensive</i> , inferring propositions from admitted truths.
		b. <i>Refutative</i> , rebutting false propositions.

Aristotle then proceeds to enumerate fourteen sources or topics of ostensive enthymemes and five of refutative enthymemes, many of his distinctions between them being shadowy. Such a classification is manifestly much better adapted to entangle the public speaker in a thorny wilderness of distinctions, than to show him how to grasp the convictions of a popular audience.

Archh. Whateley (who is largely a modern Aristotelian), in his *Rhetoric*, p. 33, Amer. ed., ranks the sources of arguments under two grand divisions: I. The *A priori*; II. The *A posteriori*. Thus:

I. <i>A priori</i> .	{	Argument from Cause to Effect, not only evincing the <i>το οτι</i> (the effect is), but the <i>το πως</i> (how it is).	
II. <i>A posteriori</i> . Arguing from Effect back to Cause.	{	1. By Sign ( <i>σημειον</i> ).	a. From Result.
			b. Consequence.
			c. Effect.
			d. Testimony.
	{	2. By Example ( <i>τεκμηριον</i> ).	a. Experience.
			b. Induction.
			c. Analogy.

Dr. George Campbell (*Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 57, Amer. ed.)

however, are wholly erroneous, and several of them are instructive; but I do not regard the best of them as sufficient for our purpose. Some are inaccurate, in that they do not separate the elements of proof according to the generic and real differences in the modes of the action of the human reason. Others of them are in-

gives a classification which approaches nearer completeness, accuracy and practical utility, at once, than any other which I have seen. Says he: Evidence proceeds—

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| I. <i>From Intuitions</i> , including | { | a. Axiomatic beliefs.  |
|                                       |   | b. Dicta of self-consciousness.  |
|                                       |   | c. Primitive moral judgments.  |
| II. <i>From Common Sense</i> ,        |   | <i>i.e.</i> , Conclusions so immediately near intuitions that they are uniformly admitted. |
| III. <i>From Deductions</i> ,         | { | a. Deductions of positive or mathematical force.   |
|                                       |   | b. Deductions of moral or probable force.  |

Dr. Porter, of Andover, *Homiletics*, recommends the following arrangement, which is neither exhaustive nor correct in any point of view. He says proofs may be drawn either, I. From the *Bible*; II. From *Consciousness*; III. From *Common Sense*; IV. From *Facts or Experience*.

*Vinet's Homiletics*, as translated by Skinner, p. 171, groups the sources of evidence as, I. Arguments from *Experience*; II. Arguments from *Testimony*; III. Arguments from *Reasoning*.

Aristotle, as a pagan, naturally omits that which must ever be the right arm of pulpit argument, the testimony of Revelation. Dr. George Campbell, writing chiefly for the secular orator, not unnaturally makes the same omission. Dr. Porter seems to recognize neither our intuitive judgments, mental or moral, nor our deductions from premises, as valid sources of conviction. *Vinet* appears to omit all appeal to consciousness and intuitions. Even Whateley fails to recognize that most important branch of popular argument, which consists in placing the proposition to be proved under the self-evidencing light of its equivalent intuition or self-consciousness.

complete, being rather fragments of a classification than exhaustive arrangements of the whole matter of argument. The objection which lies, in common, against the best of them is, that they are not practical; they do not group the kinds of evidence under classes truly convenient for instructing and aiding us in the rhetorical work; they state rather dialectical than practical grounds of distinction. It must, of course, be admitted that a correct knowledge of logic is useful and necessary for constructing an argument. But it is not my office here to teach this science. You are presumed to have learned its rudiments (which are sufficient for our purpose) while students of colleges, and my duty is to teach you how to apply this knowledge to rhetorical uses. This I shall attempt to do by seeking a simple and natural principle in the recognized laws of the mind itself, which will give us the guidance we need in constructing a system of practical rules for popular argument.

When we analyze the sources of our mental convictions, we trace all our beliefs ultimately to two fountains, self-consciousness and intuitive judgments. By consciousness we mean that knowledge which the soul has immediately of all its states as states or affections of itself. Of these informations of consciousness it is impossible to doubt, and for the truth of them it is absurd to demand premises. The evidence of that of which we are conscious in ourselves is as immediate and authoritative as the evidence to us of our own existence. Our intuitions are those primitive and necessary judgments whose truth is self-evident. They depend on no premises, because they, with the *dicta* of

consciousness, are the first premises of all our deduced conclusions. They are necessary truths. The mind apprehends that the admission of them is inevitable, immediately upon an intelligent inspection of the statement of them, because it sees that to deny them immediately contradicts its own laws. They are, consequently, universally admitted truths; every fair mind, the world over, believes them the moment it thoroughly understands the terms of their enunciation. Of these intuitions, some are logical and some are moral. It is an equally original judgment of the reason that the whole of a body must be larger than either of its parts; that no effect can arise without adequate cause, and that virtuous conduct is meritorious of reward, as sin deserves punishment. When I call the last two moral intuitions, I do not mean that they are not strictly rational; I only signify that they belong to that peculiar and highest class of the judgments of the reason with which conscience concerns itself.

The most careful inspection of our elements of thought will show that our self-consciousness and our mental and moral intuitions include all our primary convictions. But that all other judgments must derive their convictive force, directly or remotely, from some one or more of our primary judgments, is admitted by the reflecting minds of every age. Every dependent truth must have some other from which it depends, and the first truth of the series must be a primary judgment<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle. See previous note. Basil, on Psalm cxv. *Ανάγκη ἐκαστης μαθήσεως ἀλεξετάστους εἶναι τας ἀρχάς.* Turretin, Loc. ii., Qu. 6, § 11. *Prima principia nota sunt in seipsis, et sunt αναπόδεκτα*

dependent on no premise, or else the ultimate source of every conviction is infinitely removed backward.

I believe, young gentlemen, that a correct view of the logical powers will show that self-consciousness and intuitions are even more immediately concerned in every deduction than the last consideration would indicate. A deduction is seen to be true by a syllogism—that is to say, by the comparison of a major and a minor premise where such a relation is perceived by the mind between the two as evinces the conclusion to be really contained in them. Now, first, it is the authority of self-consciousness which assures us, when we thus syllogize, that it is the same perceiving mind self, *ego*, by which both the premises are apprehended. Without this assurance, if it were not evident but that the major premise were entertained by one intelligent agent, and the minor premise by another, having no proper identity with the first mind, no validity of relation could be seen by the understanding, and no inference could be drawn. We learn thus that the testimony of our self-consciousness is the immediate condition precedent of every judgment of relation which we form. But second: By what power of the soul is it that the inference is seen to be really included in the premises of a correct syllogism? I answer that it is (our self-consciousness co-operating) by an inspection of the reason. The act which the mind here performs is also an act of intuition, different indeed in its circumstances, but not in its kind, from the rational perception of a first truth. It is said that

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(quæ aliunde demonstrari non possunt) alioqui res abiret in infinitum. Citation of moderns is needless, as all true logicians (*i. e.*, all except Positivists) are agreed.

the truth of an inference is only seen by relation to its premises. I answer, so, many axiomatic judgments are judgments of relation. Why then must the former action of the reason be less an act of direct inspection than the latter? Is it said that the primitive judgment of an axiomatic truth is inevitable when the terms are understood which announce the axiom? I reply, the judgment of the inference in a conclusive syllogism is equally inevitable, if its terms are all understood; the only difference is, that there are more terms to be correctly apprehended and more relations, and thus more intricacy and risk of fallacy in the inspection. The reason is the soul's eyesight, the power by which it sees truth and right. If one sees with his bodily eyes, he sees only by looking. Whether he uses a mirror or not, to see directly, or by reflection, it is still true that he sees only by looking. His act is still the same—an act of immediate inspection; it differs from any other case of eyesight only in its outward circumstances. So this eyesight of the soul, the reason, sees the true and the right only by its own immediate looking; all its correct acts are intuitions; every valid judgment resumes virtually the force of a primary judgment, and hence only its real validity.<sup>1</sup> But I would remind you that your acceptance of my opinion in this particular is not at all necessary to establish my maxim, that self-consciousness and intuition are the ultimate sources of all our mental convictions.

As I have attempted to resolve our deductive conclusions into these sources (and a parallel process would resolve our inductions into the same) let us illustrate the

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<sup>1</sup> See Locke, *Essay*, b. iv., ch. ii., § 7.

truth by applying it to the cases of some other kinds of evidence. What is the nature of the evidence brought to the mind by its bodily senses? Self-consciousness convinces us of the rise of perception within us, and an intuitive judgment compels us to refer that effect to a real object without us as its cause. The evidence of my experience is, first, remembered perception brought from the past. (Self-consciousness tells me infallibly that the self which now recalls, is the same which before experienced, the same set of perceptions.) I then apply the remembered experience to the present analogous case by appealing to an intuitive judgment, that like causes produce like effects. The evidence of testimony is, in its first stage, that of our senses; we hear or read the words in which our fellow-creature affirms his statement. The same intuitive judgment, that effect must flow from adequate cause, then taking his utterance of that testimony as an effect, infers necessarily that something caused it. That cause must be either the actuality of what he asserts, or else some delusive or dishonest motive for asserting what has no truth, either existing in him or in his informant. The reason, in order to select the one or the other as the true cause of the utterance of the testimony, then considers the question of the witness' competency and credibility (unless these are already self-evident). In considering them the mind still refers to some primitive judgments.

You will observe, if you examine the lists of the sources of argument which I recited from other authorities, that they are all virtually included in the seven which I have now explained—*self-consciousness, intuition, deduction, sensation, experience, induction* and *testi-*

*mony*. And the last five all owe their authority to the first two. Conviction of the understanding is always to be traced ultimately to self-consciousness, or to some intuition, or to some union of the two. But while these are the primary sources, any truths of which the mind has, through them, become convinced, may in turn become secondary sources. Of these, some will be found more proximate and some more remote. Their practical value as sources of argument in preaching may not be according to their nearness to primitive judgments, but will rather be decided by their nature and their range of application.

Now, for the preacher, the chief of these secondary sources is the testimony of the sacred Scriptures. Their authority as our rule of faith is inferred immediately from their inspired character; for if God is perfect truth, as must be assumed, or else all search for truth anywhere is preposterous, and if the Bible is God's word, then it is infallible, and of course authoritative over the soul. But is the inspiration of the Bible self-evident to its readers? I answer, it is not immediately self-evident—that is to say, the proposition, "The Bible is inspired," is not axiomatic—but it is readily found to be true upon bringing the internal and external evidences of it under the light of our self-consciousness, our mental and our moral intuitions. This is but saying that God, in revealing himself to man, has clothed his revelation with an amount of reasonable and moral evidence adapted to the creature's nature, and sufficient, when inspected, to produce a perfect conviction. Thereupon the word of God assumes its place as of plenary authority over the soul in the department of which it

professes to teach, that of our religious beliefs, duties and redemption.

Let me here request your attention to two vital remarks. One is, that the fullest and most submissive faith is supremely reasonable. This is demonstrated by the fact that the postulate from which the authority of the Word over the soul inevitably arises (this, namely, that the Bible is inspired) has been irresistibly commended to the reason itself. Hence it is simply impossible there should be any competition between right reason and true faith. This is the Protestant, or, in other words, the Bible system. It does not demand the reception of the Scriptures as God's word in advance of rational evidence that it is such, upon the pretended authority of the Church, or on any such illogical pretext. But it presents to the reason and conscience credentials which triumphantly establish the claims of revelation, and then it places the Bible on the throne of the soul as authoritative witness for God—authoritative because proved true. The enlightened reason now delights to bow implicitly to it, and in doing so it finds the highest consistency with its own nature.

The other statement is this: Intelligent faith is still not rationalistic, in the vicious sense of that term. The basis of faith is not human speculation, but God's infallibility. It may be asked, "Did we not just now require the Scriptures to submit its claims of infallibility to our reason? Is not the authority which the Scriptures exercise, then, only that which reason has conferred upon them?" I answer, No; the point is only a verbal fallacy. If a trope must be suggested, it would be far more correct to say that the Scriptures

impose their irresistible evidences upon the reason. The Scriptures exercise all that authority which their own intrinsic truth confers; this reason does not confer, hut receives. Here, then, is the radical difference between intelligent faith and rationalism. Faith makes reason the recipient of revealed light; rationalism makes it the source. Faith begins by recognizing, on reasonable grounds, the infallibility of the Word, and thenceforward hows to it implicitly. Rationalism denies that infallibility, and calls the Word in question at every step, making reason the source and measure of authority in every doctrine. In the true believer the reason receives the teachings of the Word as the eye receives the light of the sun. There are certain actions of the eye with reference to the light, the raising of the lid, the direction of the axis, the refraction of the rays. But these actions are merely receptive. The light is from the sun, not from the eye. So the light in the soul is from the Word; the actions of the reason touching it are only receptive, not productive; the authority which the reason recognizes is that of God, and not its own.

You now perceive that when once the inspiration of the Scriptures is established, they become practically the great storehouse of proofs for pulpit argument. Their teachings, though not so primary in the order of analysis as those of the self-consciousness and the intuitions, are far more extensive and useful; for even these primitive faculties are not always infallible: the Word is always so. They, unaided, can discern hut a very few religious facts and verities, and none of these few are saving truths. Revelation discloses all those secrets of the divine mind which are necessary for sal-

vation. When we begin to reason from first truths to moral and theological conclusions, such are the darkness of mind and conscience and the perversion of will produced by sin, our deductions have but little value, save as they are confirmed by revelation. The Bible is, therefore, for the preacher, the great armoury of weapons of conviction.

This examination of the sources of mental conviction has now led us to two principles, which need no further proof after their enunciation. These I give you as the foundation of all rules for pulpit argument:

I. *In every resort to reasoning, recur as closely as possible to the primary sources of conviction, self-consciousness and intuitions.*

II. *Rely mainly on the testimony of the Word.*

You will see hereafter, how naturally these two principles include all that is valuable in the books concerning the sources and rules of argument. I will proceed to inculcate, in the next lecture, some precepts in detail, deducing them from the two guiding maxims just announced.