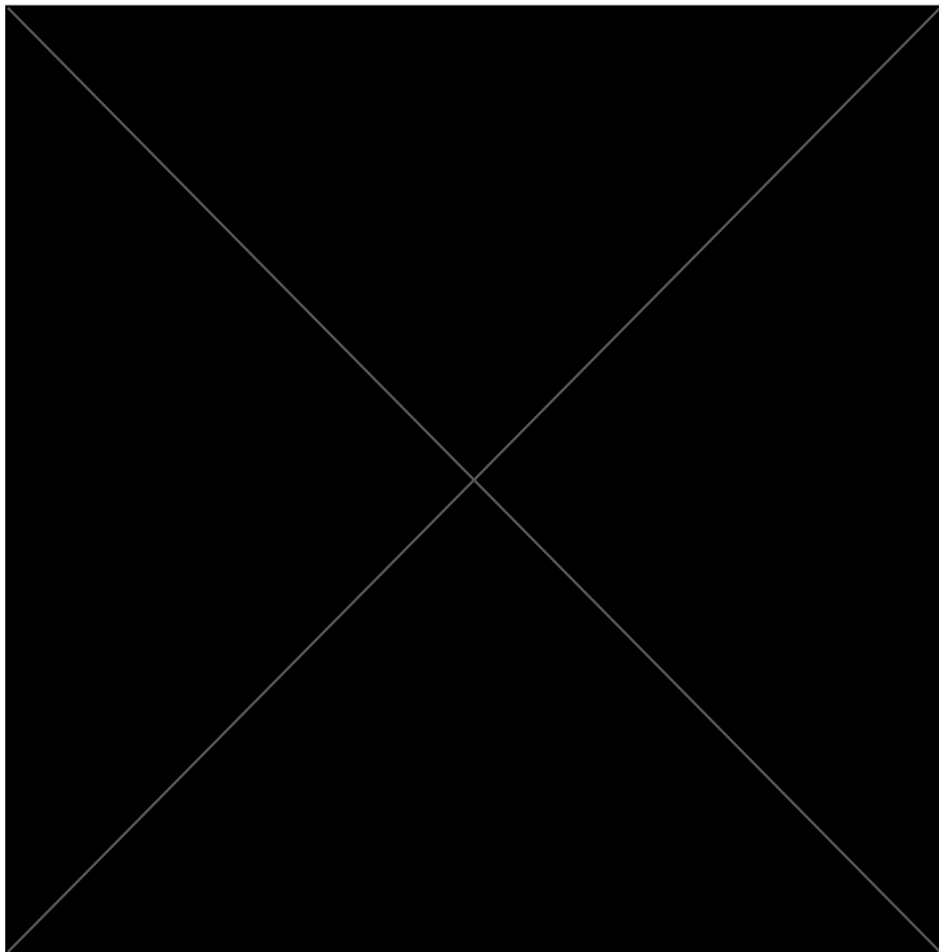




5. **understanding:** This is the sort of cognitive grasp that was demanded in i 3, to avoid a circle or infinite regress of justification.

TOPICS¹

BOOK I

[THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF DIALECTIC]

1

The purpose of our discussion is to discover a line of inquiry that will allow us to reason deductively from common beliefs on any problem proposed to us, and to give an account ourselves without saying anything contradictory. First, then, we must say what a deduction is and what different types of it there are, so that we can grasp what dialectical deduction is—for this is what we are looking for in our proposed discussion.

100a18
20

A deduction, then, is an argument in which, if p and q are assumed, then something else r, different from p and q, follows necessarily through p and q. It is a demonstration whenever the deduction proceeds from true and primary premisses or our knowledge_s of the premisses is originally derived from primary and true premisses. A dialectical deduction is the one that proceeds from common beliefs.

25

The premisses that are true and primary are those that produce conviction not through other things, but through themselves. For in the principles of knowledge_s we must not search further for the reason why; rather, each of the principles must be credible itself in its own right.

100b
20

The common beliefs are the things believed by everyone or by most people or by the wise (and among the wise by all or by most or by those most known and commonly recognized). A contentious deduction is one proceeding from apparent common beliefs that are not really common beliefs, or one apparently proceeding from real or apparent common beliefs. <We speak of 'apparent' common beliefs,> because not everything that appears

25

1. The *Topics* is about *topoi*, 'places' (hence 'commonplaces'). 'Places' probably refers to a technique for remembering a list of items by correlating them with a previously learned grid or list of places. Hence the dialectical 'places' are common forms of argument to be remembered for use in dialectical discussions.

30 to be a common belief really is one; for none of the things called
 101a common beliefs has the appearance entirely on the surface. On this
 point they differ from what happens in the case of the principles of
 contentious arguments. For in the latter case the nature of the
 falsity is especially clear straightaway to those with even a little
 ability to trace consequences. The first kind of deduction that we
 have called contentious, then, should indeed count as a genuine
 deduction, whereas the other kind is a contentious deduction,
 but not a genuine deduction, since it appears to make a deduction,
 but does not actually do so.

5 Further, apart from all the types of deduction just mentioned,
 there are fallacious arguments that start from premisses that are
 proper to a given science, as happens in the case of geometry and
 cognate sciences. For this type of argument would seem to be
 10 different from the types of deduction previously mentioned; for
 someone who draws the wrong diagram deduces a conclusion
 neither from true and primary premisses nor from common
 beliefs. He does not fall into either class, since he does not accept
 what is believed by all, or by most people, or by the wise (either
 all or most or the most commonly recognized of these), but pro-
 15 duces his deduction by accepting things that are proper to the
 science but are not true. For example, he produces his fallacious
 argument either by describing the semicircles wrongly or by
 drawing lines wrongly.

20 These, then, are, in outline, the types of deduction. In general,
 both in all the cases we have discussed and in all those to be
 discussed later, this degree of determinateness is to be taken as
 adequate. For <in undertaking this discussion> the account we
 decide to give on any subject is not an exact account, but enough
 for us to describe it in outline. We assume that the ability to
 recognize these things in some way is entirely adequate for the
 proposed line of inquiry.

2

Our next task is to say what areas, and how many, there are
 in which our discussion is useful. It is useful, then, for three
 purposes—for training, for encounters, and for the philosophical
 sciences.

25 Its usefulness for training is immediately evident; for if we
 have a line of inquiry, we will more easily be able to take on a

question proposed to us. It is useful for encounters, because once
 we have catalogued the beliefs of the many, our approach to them
 will begin from their own views, not from other people's, and
 we will redirect them whenever they appear to us to be wrong.
 It is useful for the philosophical sciences, because the ability to
 35 survey the puzzles on each side of a question makes it easier to
 notice what is true and false. Moreover it is useful for finding
 the primary things in each science. For from the principles proper
 to the science proposed for discussion nothing can be derived
 about the principles themselves, since the principles are primary
 among all <the truths contained in the science>; instead they
 101b must be discussed through the common beliefs in a given area.
 This is distinctive of dialectic, or more proper to it than to anything
 else; for since it cross-examines, it provides a way toward the
 principles of all lines of inquiry.

* * * * *

5

We must say, then, what a definition, a distinctive property, a
 genus, and a coincident are.

(A definition is an account that signifies the essence.) One pro-
 102a vides either an account to replace a name or an account to replace
 an account—for it is also possible to define some of the things
 signified by an account. Those who merely provide a name, what-
 ever it is, clearly do not provide the definition of the thing, since
 5 every definition is an account. Still, this sort of thing—for example,
 'the fine is the fitting'—should also be counted as definitory. In
 the same way one should also count as definitory a question such
 as 'Are perception and knowledge the same or different?'; for
 most of the discussion about definition is occupied with whether
 things are the same or different. Speaking without qualification,
 we may count as definitory everything that falls under the same
 10 line of inquiry that includes definition.

It is clear immediately that all the things just mentioned meet
 this condition. For if we are able to argue dialectically that things
 are the same and that they are different, we will in the same way
 be well supplied to take on definitions; for once we have shown
 that two things are not the same, we will have undermined the

15

<attempted> definition. The converse of this point, however, does not hold; for showing that two things are the same is not enough to establish a definition, whereas showing that two things are not the same is enough to destroy a definition.

A distinctive property is one that does not reveal what the subject is, though it belongs only to that subject and is reciprocally predicated of it. It is distinctive of man, for instance, to be receptive of grammatical knowledge; for if someone is a man, he is receptive of grammatical knowledge, and if someone is receptive of grammatical knowledge, he is a man. For no one counts as a distinctive property what admits of belonging to something else—for instance, no one counts being asleep as a distinctive property of a man, even if at some time it happens to belong only to him. If, then, something of this sort were to be called a distinctive property, it would be called distinctive not without qualification, but at a time, or in relation to something; being on the right, for instance, is distinctive of something at a particular time, while being a biped is distinctive of one thing in relation to another—of man, for instance, in relation to horse and dog. It is clear that nothing that admits of belonging to something else is reciprocally predicated of its subject; it is not necessary, for instance, that what is asleep is a man.

A genus is what is essentially predicated of a plurality of things differing in species. Let us count as essentially predicated whatever it is appropriate to mention if we are asked what a given thing is; when we are asked what man is, for instance, it is appropriate to say that it is an animal. It is also relevant to the genus to say whether two things are in the same genus, or each is in a different genus, since this also falls under the same line of inquiry as the genus. If, for instance, we argue dialectically that animal is the genus of man, and also of ox, we will have argued that they are in the same genus; and if we prove that something is the genus of one thing but not of another, we will have argued that these two things are not in the same genus.

A coincident is what though it is none of these things—neither a definition nor a distinctive property nor a genus—belongs to the subject. Again, it is whatever admits both of belonging and of not belonging to one and the same subject. Being seated, for instance, admits both of belonging and of not belonging to one and the same subject, and so does being pale, since the same subject may easily be pale at one time and not pale at another.

The second of these two definitions of coincident is better. For if the first is stated, we will not understand it unless we first know what a definition, a distinctive property, and a genus are; the second, however, is sufficient in its own right for our knowing, what is meant.

Let us also add to the <class of> coincidents the comparisons between things whose descriptions are derived in some way from the coincident. These include, for instance, the question whether the fine or the advantageous is more choiceworthy, or whether the life of virtue or the life of gratification is pleasanter, and any other questions similar to these. For in all such cases the question proves to be about whether the thing predicated is more <properly> a coincident of the one subject or of the other.

It is immediately clear that a coincident may easily be distinctive of a subject at a particular time and in relation to a particular thing. Whenever, for instance, someone is the only one seated, being seated, which is a coincident, is distinctive at that time; and when he is not the only one seated, being seated is distinctive of him in relation to those not seated. Hence a coincident may easily turn out to be distinctive in relation to a particular thing and at a particular time, but it is not a distinctive property without qualification.

* * * * *