

specious hypothesis, yet be of substantial service to our cause.

18. A conjecture, then, a mere conjecture, at once unproved and unrefuted and alike unsusceptible of both, may be of most effective influence in the business of argumentation. It may be of no force in the upholding of any position—and yet be all-powerful in neutralizing the objection to it of adversaries. The origin of evil is a topic that has been wielded by infidels in opposition to the cause of religion, as making against the justice or benevolence of God. The defenders of this cause may not be able to offer a positive solution of the difficulty—yet of the multitude, if there be but one likely solution, or even one that cannot be disproved, this is enough to relieve the cause of that discredit which antagonists would lay upon it. It may have nought but an assumption to rest upon, an assumption which we can allege no reason nor experience for—yet enough in all sound logic for the purpose of defence, if we can allege no reason nor experience against it. A conjecture is made, which if admitted to be true, would reconcile the existence of a certain phenomenon with the character of God. We may not be able to demonstrate that it is true. But as little may our opponents be able to demonstrate that it is false. In this state, we cannot say of the thing conjectured that we know it to be true—but we can say that for aught we know it may be true. This is not enough for the establishment of a dogma. But it is enough for the displacing of an objection. And thus an hypothesis of far less imposing semblance than that of Leibnitz,