

which pervades all discussions on abstract and general subjects. Those who practised this art most successfully professed to be in possession of such wisdom as was attainable, and so were called "Sophists" or professors of "Sophia."

The first prominent historical appearance of the "Sophistic" phase of thought was among the Greeks. But the appearance of the Sophists called forth a further advance in abstract reasoning, and the object of this was to fix the meaning of those abstract words and terms which were in general accepted and used without a clear definition of what is meant by them. This new phase or manner of thought was in antiquity termed "dialectic"; in modern times it is called "criticism." It led in due course to two distinct branches of philosophy: Logic and Metaphysic. And these two distinct sciences reacted again upon the earlier dialectic, making it more intricate, and as was thought, a more powerful instrument of research. In reality, though the dialectic of the Schoolmen and of Hegel is much more refined and difficult than that contained in the Socratic Dialogues of Plato, the main characteristics of the process remain the same. It is a process of cross-examination, not unlike that which is carried on in the Law Courts of to-day, or which the solitary thinker may carry on in the form of self-questioning. The aim of the process is to attain two fixed points. The first point is clearness and consistency of thought, as expressed in the words of language. The second is agreement between different persons; just as in a legal trial the Judge, with the help of Counsel and through cross-examination, tries to arrive at a