done before him. He gave them, in fact, a body and a vi­tality, by applying them to the realities with which men had to do in their daily life.@@1 Instead of employing them for the purpose of verbal distinction, or for the expression of some abstract and barren generality, he applied them to limit the vague notions entertained about matters of prac­tical concern, and to bring opinions into harmony with or­dinary experience. To the dialecticians before him, Defi­nition and Induction were the commencement of their dis­cussions. They unsuspectingly presumed on the logical processes involved in these instruments of discourse, as al­ready sufficiently accomplished. They attempted, indeed, to define; but they took such definitions as they found at hand,—of course the most superficial.@@2 General princi­ples they scarcely though of establishing; but they assum­ed such as were the current maxims of the day. And the rest of their discourse proceeded from these crude and un­scientific elements. But Socrates did not profess to give definitions, or to have arrived at any positive certain prin­ciples, from which, as data, other truths might be demon­strated.

He disclaimed, as has been already pointed out, the de­sign or the ability to teach. He was only an inquirer, him­self *knowing nothing.* When pressed, as by the sophist Hippias, to give his own account of the particular subject about which he is importunately questioning, he evades the point, and recurs to his established way of proceeding by interrogatories.@@3 He is constantly, that is, endeavouring to rise to a correct definition of the subject under discus­sion. He presents it as the end to be attained by the whole discussion; leading the person questioned from point to point, until he brings him close to the true and exact idea of the subject. So also does he employ Induction. He cites some instance,—commonly some coarse and very familiar one, from the workshop of the smith or the shoemaker, or from the culinary art, and the like,—as apposite to the point under debate ; and thus brings the principle itself, on which the dispute turns, to the test of actual experience. This was so much his manner, that it was made a standing jest by those against whom he so triumphantly employed it. They complained of his ever repeating the same thing; ever talking of “ carpenters, and smiths, and fullers, and cooks, and such like nonsense.@@4” But he was not deterred by the scoff, which in reality proved the point and force of his rea­sonings. He replied, that about the same things, he must persist in saying the same things; unless it could be shewn, that a person being asked, whether twice five were ten, should answer differently at different times.@@5 Thus, he would continually recur to his well-known illustrations from com­mon life, hackneyed as they were in his own use, and low and trifling as they might seem.

From this his constant practice of bringing men to the test of definition and familiar instance, on every subject dis­cussed, he had been regarded by the Thirty as the teacher of an “ art of discourse,” and as therefore obnoxious to a law which they had made (chiefly with a view to him), for­bidding the teaching of such an art.@@6 Such a restriction, however, could not apply to Socrates ; since, as we have seen, he professed no art ; he imparted no method of argu­ment ; and, to have silenced him, they must, as he shewed them, have absolutely prevented his asking the most sim­ple and familiar question. Here it was the point of an apt illustration that had provoked this sally of resentment from Critias and Charicles, two of the Thirty. It had been re­ported to them that he had drawn attention to their acts of

violence, by asking, what would be thought of the herds­man under whose care an herd should be diminished. On this occasion, Charicles, after vainly remonstrating with him against the practice of his daily conversations, shewed the point of the illustration, by bidding him beware lest he also should make the number of the herd still less.@@7

So far, indeed, was Socrates from instituting any method either of argument or of investigation, that the very defini­tions and instances which he employed were of a popular character, adapted for refutation of error rather than for conviction of the truth,—such as to place difficulties in the way of a dogmatic opponent, rather than didactic illustra­tions of any particular subject. He was engaged in repel­ling dogmatism. And nothing is of more avail for this purpose than analogies ; such instances, that is, as test the truth of an assumption in one case, by its application to an­other of the same kind. Direct instances, shewing experi­mentally the truth or falsehood of an assumption, may be difficult to be found; and, in their use, they require a parti­cular acquaintance with the subject itself, in order that their application may be seen. For example, if it were de­sired to expose a false theory of government, some fact of history must be adduced, and its bearing on the theory in question must be distinctly pointed out. But an analogous instance does not require this intimate acquaintance with the subject itself, in illustration of which it is brought. It shews at once that a given hypothesis is either tenable, or not tenable,—that it is verified or not verified in some pa­rallel case, and therefore may be granted or not, in the sub­ject about which the argument is. Only it is necessary, for this purpose, that the analogous instance should be a fa­miliar one,—that the exhibition of the principle in question should be clear and striking in the instances adduced. For example, to set forth the evil of tyranny, it would be quite enough to point out, as Socrates did, the case of a herdsman under whose keeping an herd should be deteriorated; and the inference would be immediate, that a career of confiscation and blood was no evidence of a good government. Again, whether it were wise to choose magistrates by lot, would be a difficult question to be decided by the direct evidence of facts bearing on the point. But when Socrates referred to the absurdity of appointing a steersman by lot, it was at once evident, that there were cases in which this mode of appointing important officers of the state would be mis­chievous. Such then was the kind of evidence which So­crates was constantly adducing from analogous instances to the point in question ;—an evidence, not conveying any po­sitive instruction in the theories of the subjects to which it was applied ; but removing false impressions respecting them, and opening the mind to the reception of the truth. It was an admirable method of unteaching prejudices or vain assumptions, and of silencing the dogmatist,—a method, powerful at once for the refutation of error, and the con­viction of ordinary minds incapable of being instructed by a more direct and positive evidence. Such, accordingly, was the method practised by Socrates. In pursuing any ar­gument, “ he would proceed,” as Xenophon observes, “ by the most admitted principles ; considering this to be the sound basis of discussion. And therefore,” adds Xenophon, “ he, far beyond all I ever knew, when he spoke, carried conviction to his hearers ;” and he would say, “ that Ho­mer had ascribed to Ulysses the merit of being a sound orator, on account of his ability to conduct a discussion, by reasoning from such principles as men acknowledged.”@@8

It was seldom, however, if ever, that Socrates avowedly

@@@, Xenoph. Mcm. iii. 3. 11. Λiyrιr, *iφη, σv τι>v Ίππαρχον τrρoς* roιr5λλorv *eπι∣i(∖fΙσθaι δ(ϊν και* τον *∖iγκιv δvvaσ0aΓ, κ.* τ. λ.

@@@i Aristot. Metaph. i. 5. Καί *π.ρ'ι τον τί cστιv ηρξαντο μiv* λ<yf∣v καί *όρίξκσθαι,* λίαν δ\* ΰιτλών *iπpayμaτfvθησav. ώριζοντό τ( yàp* rrιπoλαιωr, κ. τ. λ.

@@@5 Xenoph. Mem. iv. 4, 9.

@@@∙ Ibid. i. 2, 37. Plato, Gorgiae, p. 491, a. t iv. p. 96.

@@@δ Xenoph. Mem. iv. 4, 7. διό *των δοκονντων τοΐτ* ’ανθρώπου.

@@@6 Xenoph. Mem. i. 2. 31. 3.—Aristid. t. ii. p. 248.

@@@7 Xenoph. Mem. i. 2. 37.

@@@\* Ibid. iv. 6. 15.