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Insoluble Logic

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INSOLUBLE LOGIC

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INSOLUBLE LOGIC

PART ONE

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Selected Publications:

"Are we obliged to feed PVS patients until natural death?" in Artificial Nutrition and Hydration: The New Catholic Debate C. Tollefsen, ed., Springer Press, forthcoming.
"What is the Scope of Aristotle's Defense of the PNC?" Apeiron 32.3 (September, 1999) 243-274.
"Searle on Free Will and Thinking", American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 69 (1995) 257-270.
"Aristotle on Unqualified Knowledge: Do Referential Universals Solve the Meno Paradox?", American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 68 (1994) 145-158.
"Recent Work in Aristotle's Logic", Philosophical Books 35.2 (April, 1994): 81-89.
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"Logic, Law and Abortion", with Russell Pannier, Linacre Quarterly (February, 1992): 53-58.

Aristotle on Unqualified Knowledge: Do Referential Universals Solve the Meno Paradox?

In the Origins of Aristotelian Science Michael Ferejohn argues that Aristotle solves the paradox of learning raised in Plato's Meno by distinguishing between "merely universal knowledge" (*katholou epistatai*) and "knowledge in the unqualified sense" (*episteme haplos*).[1] According to Ferejohn, Aristotle holds that although "merely universal" knowledge does not entail specific acquainttance with individuals, unqualified knowledge of a general claim entails knowledge of its application to all the particulars that happen to fall under its term. Ferejohn calls these existentially loaded generalizations, "referential universals.,,[2]

Ferejohn's second reason for believing that Aristotle endorses the notion of "referential universal" is that it allows Aristotle to marry his anti-Platonic metaphysical theses with his Platonic epistemological principles.[3]

In this paper I claim that it is not clear that referential universals can be consistently expressed and do the work Ferejohn wants them to do. Second, I argue that Ferejohn's concept of referential universals fails to explain Aristotle's solution to the Meno paradox. Third, I argue that referential universals are not needed to reconcile Aristotle's Platonic epistemological principles with his anti-Platonic metaphysiccal claims. Finally, I offer an interpretation of unqualified knowledge that retains some advantages of Ferejohn's reading without its difficulties. Aristotle expresses the paradox of learning in the first chapter of Posterior Analytics (Apo): But you can become familiar by being familiar earlier withsome things but getting knowledge of the others at the very same time-i.e., of whatever happens to be under the universal of which you have knowledge. For that every triangle has angles equal to two right angles was already known; but that there is a triangle in the semicircle here became familiar at the same time as the indu-

ction. Before the induction, or before getting a deduction, you should perhaps be said to understand in a way - but in another_way not. For if you did not know if it is *simpliciter*, [*haplos*] how did you know that it has two right angles *simpliciter*? But it is clear that you understand it in this sense - that you understand it universally - but you do not understand it *simpliciter*. (Otherwise the puzzle in the Meno will result; for you will learn either nothing or what you know.) 71a17-21, 25-30)[4]

In order to facilitate discussion of the passage it is helpful to layout three central claims.

1. All triangles have internal angles equal to two right angles (2R).
2. This figure in the semicircle is a triangle.
3. This figure in the semicircle is 2R.

On Aristotle's reading the paradox of the Meno can be expressed in the following way:

S. If one learns (3) on the basis of knowing (1) and (2), then one knows (1).
T. If one knows (1), then one knows (3).
U. If one knows (3), then it is not possible to learn (3).
V. So if one learns (3) on the basis of knowing (1) and (2), then it is not possible to learn (3).

S seems true because the consequent is included in the antecedent.
T seems true given the relation of a universal to its corresponding instances.
U seems true because it is not possible to learn what one already knows. The paradox of learning ensues. The two sentences in bold from Apo quoted above are the basis for Ferejohn's interpretation of Aristotle's response to the Meno paradox. Although he doesn't say so explicitly, in effect Ferejohn takes the second 'it' of the second bolded sentence to refer to statement 1. The one who does not recognize that the figure in the semicircle is 2R knows state-

ment1 universally but not unqualifiedly, for he does not know unqualifiedly that the figure is a triangle. So, unqualified knowledge of statement 1 must include knowledge of the particular instances under the universal, as indicated in the first sentence of the quoted passage.

Ferejohn calls such universal claims, "referential universals."[5] On Ferejohn's view both Plato's and Aristotle's solutions to the Meno paradox depend on separating universal knowledge from knowledge of particulars. For Plato universal knowledge of Forms turns out to be the only genuine form of knowledge, while for Aristotle universal knowledge that entails knowledge of particu-lar cases is the only unqualified knowledge. [6]

According to Ferejohn, prior to the encounter with Socrates, the learner in the Meno does not know "All triangles are 2R" unqualifiedly, for he does not know that the general claim entails the particular one. The learner moves toward unqualified knowledge of the general claim only when he recognizes the entailment relation. On Ferejohn's reading Aristotle's solution to the paradox amounts to sorting out two senses of:

T. The first sense is "If one knows (1) unqualifiedly, then one knows;

(3)." The second sense is "If one knows (1) qualifiedly, then one knows.

(3)." The former sense is true, while the latter is false. Since the latter is false, learning is possible because it involves the movement from qualified to unqualified knowledge. Ferejohn notes that Aristotle rejects understanding "A given knower knows 'all triangles are 2R'" as meaning "All things known to be triangles by the given knower are known to be 2R," since the subject of the proposition is the universal 'triangle,' not just those entities known to be triangles by a given knower. Jonathan Barnes suggests another way of expressing how a person has unqualified knowledge of "all triangles are 2R."[7]

1a. For anything, if it is a triangle, then a knows that it is 2R (where a is a knower). As Ferejohn points out, the problem with this re-

ading is that it could be vacuously true even if no triangles existed. Another attempt to capture what it means for a person to have unqualified knowledge is to add an existential quantifier to 1a.
lb. For anything, if it is a triangle, then a knows that it is 2R and there are triangles.

Ferejohn believes this version also fails for it simply insures that the set of triangles is nonempty. According to Ferejohn, existential import is more radical for Aristotle. He writes, in Aristotelian logic [existential import] is always carried by singular existential presuppositions generated by the fundamental idea that general subjects like "Every man" no less than singular subjects like "Socrates" actually make reference to the individuals to which they apply.[8]

Ferejohn goes on to say that according to Aristotle, if the membership of the human species were different from what it actually is, then the facts expressed by "Every man is an animal" would be different. Such is not the case with a reading like lb. On Ferejohn's view the claim "Every triangle is 2R" makes distributed reference to every one of the subject class's actual instances. He writes, " ... by virtue of this referential function, the sentence as a whole involves a presupposition of the singular existence of each of those individuals.[9] He expresses the concept of a referential universal in the language of recent analytic philosophy:

Aristotle's point is that de re knowledge contexts are transparent in the sense that if a knows de re that "every triangle is 2R" is true, then it follows that for every triangle b, a knows that b is 2R, whether or not a knows of b's existence.[10]

To say that the reference is transparent and not opaque means that one can substitute coextensive descriptions of triangles in epistemic, doxastic or modal contexts without loss of truth value. So, for example, if it is true that I know all triangles are 2R, then it must also be true that I know that the figure in the semicircle is 2R. Ferejohn expresses the unqualified knowledge claim about triangles in the following way:

lc. Every (actual) triangle is known by a to be 2R. From this descripttion there seem to be at least four necessary conditions for a generalization to count as a referential universal about triangles:

A. For any member of the subject class, triangles, a knower, a, knows that the member has a certain property.
B. Knowledge of the universal generalization entails knowledge of particular cases.
C. It is not the case that [for every member ofthe subject class, a knows whether it exists or not].[11]
D. The referential universal expresses a general claim with a subject that designates a universal.

My objection is that conditions A, Band C cannot all be met given the interpretations they must have to capture Ferejohn's notion of referential universal. Propositions A, Band C are rich in ambiguities. I find three possible meanings of A:

Let [K]Up : ***a*** knows that the property p belongs to the universal triangle.
[k] : ***a*** knows where designates a proposition.
[c]y: ***a*** has cognitive contact with **y** where **y** designates an individual.
(3x)Tx: There exists at least one individual that is a triangle.
AI. ***a*** knows that a certain property belongs to the universal, triangle. It is not the case that a knows there are any instances of the universal, triangle.
[K]Up and -[k](3x)Tx.
A2. ***a*** knows that a certain property belongs to the universal, triangle, and ***a*** knows there are some instances of the universal but ***a*** does not have cognitive contact with the instances nor does ***a*** know which individuals are instances of the universal.
[K]Up and [k]{(3x)(Tx and -[c]x and -[k]Tx)}.
A3. ***a*** knows that a certain property belongs to the universal, triangle, and ***a*** knows there are instances of the universal triangle

VALERIU PERIANU

Romanian philosopher who excels through originality and ambition to answer the great unsolved questions of forerunners. With his writings "Paradoxical Being and Aesthetic Nonentity" and "Theory of Reality" he develops a complete system of understanding the world, establishing a non-contradictory beginning that precedes the process of being. He solves the infinite regression belonging to the question about the worlds physical and metaphysical beginning by introducing the concept of causative past of being. He claims that at the beginning there was the past of any being and because before the past can only be the past, the regressive sequence of the question is interrupted and the philosophical discourse has epistemological support. From an ontological point of view, he considers the being is omniliving in local reality as a raw being, but which is paradoxically transformed into Aesthetic Nonentity with the help of art. From the gnoseological point of view, he thinks that the being is omniscient, but its knowledge is limited by paradoxical character of the thought. The thinking keeps the memory of prenatal nothingness that gives the living consciousness. This one does so that the present is percieved as discontinuity of life and death. Valeriu Perianu builds a complete theory of reality, and within it solves the question of what preceded the Big Bang, thus having the possibility to give a clear answer to the problem of how the construction of the universe began. He conceives an inedited reality on three levels of existence:

1 - the total reality called All, as a continuous substance, without structure, time and space.
2 - the local reality that is the Universe, this being just a cavern surrounded by All.

3 - the ultimate reality represented by the human being as a paradox of the aesthetically sublimed Deity.

His contributions in the field of logic focus on the study of logical, linguistic and deontological paradoxes from antiquity. He offers solutions to solve some, discovers and invents other antinomies, thus widening the log of contradictions of thought. In this context, he argues that thinking evolves negatively in the process of knowing even if it has positive results. This unnatural effect of working logic is reflected by the phases of the following process:

- The innocent reason that contemplates the lack of coherence of reality (the aporean stage)
- The vexed reason that refuses the contradiction created by itself (the paradoxical stage);
- The perverse reason that cultivates the confusion of the pleasure of the demonstration (the sophisticated stage)

In the field of aesthetics, through a logical-intuitive analysis of its categories, he builds the definitions of the Beautiful and the Ugly. The Beautiful is considered a subjective maximal existence and the Ugly is an objective maximum existence. He considers the artistic creation an aesthetic reincarnation of man that takes place during life. This new personality is the Aesthetic Nonentity that becomes our accompanying shadow in the material world. Aesthetic Nonentity is the only spiritual sediment that remains at the death of the individual, the proof of its existence perceived as a sensible truth. He is a member of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, UK, Association for Informal Logic & Critical Thinking, USA and British Society of Aesthetics.

Introduction

The study of Aristotelian logic in my young years aroused a strong passion for insoluble arguments. This logical approach is the most convincing proof of the wit engaged in its own questioning. Reasoning a paradox equals the critique of pure reason as Kant would put it in a broader framework. The main feature of classical discourse relies on the fact that the beauty of the science originating with Aristotle cannot be surpassed by new formalizing and abstract logic. Symbolic logic suppresses the word and its role in the building of a flexible imaginative thinking, wrapping up ideas in the sterile convention of signs. Therefore, my effort envisions finding the valences of a text, known or unknown, which represents a logical contradiction and belongs to the universal wealth of impossible arguments. In two millennia of constant intellectual effort, from Socrates to Russell, there has been created a handful of insoluble arguments; my own research over three decades, doubled this number. As shown in the structure of the chapters in my book the research has been oriented in three directions. The first chapter deals with the most known arguments, the second with those ignored by most texts, and the third with my own contribution. The reason for studying the insoluble arguments is simple: the need of coherence in the rational discourse and in relation with its materiality. Insoluble logic reveals through contradictions, errors and logical inconsistencies which must be avoided, corrected or eliminated through analysis.

The most appropriate way of presenting a book about the insoluble logic is to render illogical the very discourse about the reasons of convincing writings. Below I will expose the contradictions between "foreword" and "afterword", texts that until now have been wrongly positioned in the structure of a book.

Language is a means of communication with our kind based on an agreement with our surrounding reality or our own

thoughts. Without a semantic or semiotic agreement grammar will not be possible, enabling thus discourse. Not always though the semiotic agreement corresponds to semantics leading to confusion especially in the compound words. It's the case of the word "foreword" composed of the word "fore" before and the word "word" together suggesting "before writing." The "foreword" of a book has the role to inform the reader about the content of the book, to highlight points or bring critical notes about the writing. The "foreword" is the first text of a writing that a reader stumbles upon. If we look carefully and reject the superficial linguistic agreement, we will learn that the "foreword" is and it is not the first text of a book. The word "fore" will bring "word" before itself so we will have two words, that is the first and the second text. Other similar phrasing is "preface", "preamble", "prologue".

Let's see now what is the position of the "afterword" in the book. If the "foreword" is and it is not the first text, the "afterword" is then the content of the book. In this case we will have the paradoxical situation in which a book has only "foreword" and "afterword". Moreover, the "foreword" will be the introduction to the "afterword". The paradox of "foreword" "afterword" can be eliminated by using other formulas like introduction, prologue, proimion. For the "afterword" we can use "final chapter" or "end" because "epilogue" creates again contradictions. "Epi" in Greek means "above" so this will be above discourse, that is the title of the book. Summing up with a conclusion of the philosopher and logician Willard Van Orman Quine: "The argument that supports a paradox can expose the absurdity of a buried premise or of a preconception considered before as essential for the physical theory, mathematics or reasoning. The catastrophe, therefore, can wait in the most innocent paradox. Many times in history the discovery of a paradox was an opportunity for a major restructuring of thinking."

CHAPTER I

Insolubles well-known

1.1 Insolubilia

Since Antiquity philosophers have been interested in those contradictions in the reasoning of human Being when practical experience or the intuition related to the most profound reasoning do not lead to an orthodox solving of the problems analyzed. This kind of contradictions surpasses in an exceptional way the normal framework of our inferences which contradicts but not cancels forcing reason to find solutions that are canceling each other. Scholastics named all these unusual cases of defiance of the laws of reasoning with the term *insolubilia.* There are three classes of *insolebilia.*

1. *Insolublilia that cannot be solved or "impossible words" (vox invisibilis);*
2. *Insolubilia that even if can be solved due to a certain difficulty are not solved,these being called "the hidden rock" (lapis asconditus in terra invisibilis);*
3. *Insolubilia that are difficult but can be solved (difficile salutur).*

We must admit despite all odds that *insolubilia* cannot be solved because they reflect the contradictions of the absurd reality with the natural form of thought based on a conventional reality. It is believed that *insolubilia* originate exclusively from language and related to this, reality is not contradictory. False. We will deem logical the fact that any agreement is not contradictory for the very fact that it would be meaningless to illogically build what we can understand. So any discourse of reason of human Being is

correct per se regardless the relation with the reality beyond it. But this is not possible and all evaluation of reality becomes a source of contradiction for the reason.

Surrounding reality as Universal Being is "virussed" and it is the cause if suppression of reasoning in all cases of insolubilia. On the other hand, the formal construction of the agreement with ourselves versus the superior instances of the Universal Being (Divinity, Being, Past) determines the cancellation of reasoning due not to any contradiction but to an inability of conceiving a construction of such magnitude of thought. Now from a logical perspective let's see the situations in which we are compelled to suppress reasoning according to scholastics.

- the stage of contradiction when even if we have arguments these are equally defended without being able to opt for a solution or to refute them;
- the stage of infinite regression that holds that something used as a proof to something else needs in its turn its own proof and so on, ad infinitum without the possibility to start the demonstration somewhere;
- the stage based on relation when something exterior appears related to the reasoning being and things are considered together which is confusing with respect to its real nature;
- the stage based on guessing that starts with the undemonstrated supposition but has to be absolutely accepted as a principle;
- the stage of the vicious circle that occurs when the object needed in order to reinforce the research needs confirmation from the very researched object;

After exposing and commenting on the arguments of medieval scholars we can state that there are three basic conditions for constructing insolubilia:

a) the existent of the paradoxical Being as unfulfilled non-Being (the stage that surpasses the contradiction is aesthetic non-Being);