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September 22, 2012

The Politics of Univocity and Analogy

I want to accomplish a few things in this paper. Mostly, I want to formulate the difference between univocity and analogy. Key terms in the history of philosophy, in the Socratic tradition, Scholastic metaphysics and contemporary ontology, it does not take a genius, a Socrates, to realize that many people are using these words in multiple ways, to solve but also generate problems. Like *pulchritude*, an ugly word for beauty, *univocity* is not univocal, and *analogy* barely manages to encompass all of the diverse uses it ought to correlate. I will not provide a complete enumeration of these words' divergent uses, but neither do I want just to supplement the confusion with yet another horizontal contribution to the conversation. While trying to navigate between these two limits, I will try to say what univocity and analogy mean in the context of fundamental ontology, and suggest a way that, if we want to pit the one against the other, analogy wins the day.

First, it is important to say something about the problem, the basic question, to which these key terms are possible resolutions or answers. The domain of inquiry here is fundamental ontology. I don't think it's all that important to spell out a difference exactly between this domain and, say, metaphysics and natural theology. What's more important is to admit that the puzzle is not about the philosophy of language, at least not as it is tends to be treated by contemporary philosophy. Lonergan, like Thomas and Aristotle, and also like Gadamer and Heidegger, though these two perhaps to a lesser degree, or in a different way, finds in language, in the semantics of inquiry, in questions for intelligence and reflection, the building blocks of metaphysics. Questions are the atomic units of proportionate being. Because we are functionally extroverted to the world in which our questions take place, because questions are more natural to us, more basic for us, than family, friends, and religious commitments, insofar as questions are our primary way into such relationships

in the first place, language in this way is more than metaphysically relevant. It is metaphysically essential. On this score, Lonergan and Gadamer and Heidegger, to provide a kind of argument from authority, agree. So, univocity and analogy are terms of art in fundamental ontology rather than the philosophy of language, where philosophy of language is usually taken to connote problems of reference, verification and use of the throat-noises called words that we mouth about things out there. If you don't take language to be the sort of thing that even invites these kinds of questions, like Lonergan, then there is some sense in which analogy and univocity are indeed language based, but perhaps not linguistic.

Disclaimers aside, I want to argue that univocity and analogy are different and incompatible modalities of what I will call ontological predication. To set this up I will contrast ontological predication with something more familiar, ontical predication. The difference between these two predicative schemes, ontical and ontological predication, correlates to Lonergan's distinction between proportionate and transcendent being. Lonergan, for reasons I am just now catching up to, does not tend to use the words *univocity* and *analogy*. I think, like *substantial form*, which he ciphers for *thing*, univocity and analogy generate about as many problems as they solve. Strictly speaking, though, Lonergan's diction does not let him completely dodge the problem I have in mind since it opens and perhaps even demands these questions, what's the difference between proportionate and transcendent being? To this, Heidegger answers, Dasein. Or, what's the shared meaning between proportionate being and transcendent being? To this, I'll answer, ontological predication. What is the form of relation between them such that they can share the word *being*? To this, I'll answer, not univocity but analogy.

Aristotle is the common authority among those just named, so I would like to suggest his works as a touchstone for what follows. Still, Lonergan's technical vocabulary is enormously helpful to that end and is, I think, worth calling to mind in anticipation of later developments. In this

particular audience it's worth noting that perhaps this strategy proceeds from the familiar, *Insight*, to what may be less familiar, Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. For Lonergan proportionate being is that which is to be known through the totality of human experience. Proportionate being has a heuristic definition, a kind of oblique or indirect account. One can do metaphysics without being omniscient. It's as if to say, I don't have the details or the data yet, but when I do they will conform and correlate in one way or another. In other words, it's like knowing what your question is without knowing its answer. This second-order account finds its integral fulfillment in finality, in the "upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism [of] an ever fuller realization of being." Proportionate being is implicitly defined by finality since the one is the object, and the other the objective. Proportionate being stands to questions as finality stands to answers; or, to try another formulation on for size, the relation of proportionate being to finality is the objective parallel to the pure desire to know and its fulfillment.

[Excerpted a section on ecosystems of becoming.]

Still, all of this enormously differentiated world-historical process remains open to a future that cannot be guaranteed in advance. I love those lines in *Insight* when Lonergan admits that what only has a one-in-a-billion chance of taking place will tend to happen a billion times in a billion billion years. "So you're telling me there's a chance," goes the line from *Dumb and Dumber*. A longer view indeed. What are just anticipations may be met with actual deviations from ideal frequencies such that, within the longer view, aggregates-cum-systems may accede to still higher principles of organization, like the coincidental manifolds they organize and correlate; but they may also disintegrate. So too with the universe of proportionate being, which is not automatically ascendant along the lines of a stepwise mechanism. To nod a bit in the direction of the difference between metaphysics and its completion in the revealed categories of special transcendent knowledge, naturally speaking, we are not transcendentally insulated from collapse, from total loss.

Proportionate being encompasses the first-order predicative acts with which we are spontaneously and mostly familiar. I'll complicate the commonsense picture of so-called speech-acts by formulating the puzzle in Aristotle's language of essence. A coinage that must have flummoxed his Latin translators, at least as much as his others, such as *energia* and *entelecheia*, Aristotle enjambs ordinary words together, what it was to be, *to ti ēn einai*, to answer the question of what something is. Accordingly, a question, *ti esti*, is met with one sure, seemingly tautologous answer, essence, what-it-is. This novel locution expresses a heuristic definition of definition. It takes no first-order position about the answer to the question and maintains instead a second-order perspective about the semantics of inquiry, answering the question of what all questions basically intend at one remove. His definition of definition anticipates only the *form* of any particular, first-order definition but takes no further position about that for which the definer hunts. That's a project left to other empirical scientists, or Aristotle himself in his other works. In this way Aristotle's is merely a transcendental contribution to their hunt, for it will proceed by asking and working to answer questions.

[Excerpted a portion on ecosystems and entelechy.]

By specifying the building blocks in this way, we delimit the *horizonal* range of possible combinations, patterns and relations available, the moves within the game. So we turn from the blocks to the construction feats they condition. A *definition* is an account that signifies an essence. It's important to realize that Aristotle's heuristic here is very carefully constructed. *Signification* confirms something like indirect communication. Like Lonergan Aristotle knows that there is no immediate transaction of meaning, that metaphysical essences have their cognitional correlates in answers, which in turn have a prerequisite, questions. That's why we find this importance on demonstrations in Aristotle's logical works. They're called images in his psychology. A good analogy here is to his account of virtue and the consequent problem of how to verify it in ourselves and others. We know another person is virtuous not by appeal to their intentions or some inner sanctum, a subjective state

of affairs, but instead through their actions. Virtuous people live out virtuous lives. List all the decisions you've made and I'll tell you what you think is important, what you value. The choices of virtuous people tend to *incarnate* or *demonstrate* their best selves.

In a relevantly similar way, I know you have hit on a definition not by direct appeal to the inner words of your thoughts, as if I could get behind your eyeballs, but through the formulation of these into outer words by communication in which I discern that you too have hit on the issue of the day, the solution to the puzzle that bothers us both. I pose questions to you and by your reply you provision outer words as responses to the questions you have—What's he asking me about? Could he mean such and so?—that serve as examples for me to interpret in light of my questions— Do you follow me? Did you get the point?—that motor the whole process. No matter how close we are, no matter how braided together our lives become, the only interface available to us is questions. Lives are shared when questions are likewise. Just to provide a second example of this sort of sharing, you may be working to solve a murder mystery in Tokyo, while I work on the same issue but gather clues in Austin. Since history is conversation, the differences among particular places and times subordinate to the coordinated project we share, namely, solving a mystery.

[Excerpted a portion on functional specialities, Lonergan's hope for puzzle solving in the university of tomorrow.]

Though that which is defined is a whole, the definition itself is not. Definitions are not whole propositions but phrases. To define is to hunt successfully for relations between and among terms to yield a *phrase* that signifies the what-it-is. These are joined with questions that are reformulated as statements. "What's a circle?" now becomes "A circle is," which is then met with the definitive phrase, "a wheel with spokes of the same length." If you say this back to me like a parrot, that's one thing. But if you solve a problem that uses a newly assembled proposition for me

as a premise in a geometry proof, if you, as my math teachers always used to say, "show your work," then you demonstrate mediately that you understand something unmiddled, a definition, just like the virtuous person demonstrates that they know what the good is in a given situation. This whole economy is not discerned by use of one's eyeballs alone, of course. For what is asked about is not a scene but a relation among scenes, a kind of plot or story, that in which decision-making takes place. Analysis for Aristotle, whether existential or logical, an unhappy division this paper works to subvert, is not a matter of the right words but the intelligible relations that meaningfully obtain among them, a phrase of words, again, a definition.

According to this cognitional syntax, here are some examples of ontical predication, which I take to occur within proportionate being. A circle is a round. The weather is warm. I'm hungry. A circle is a plane figure whose boundary consists of points equidistant from a fixed center. Ontical predication, language, is the creative but delimited expression of the pure desire to know. Not just *understanding* the intelligible species, it's the consequence of knowing correctly, of the next-level creativity of commitment to a proposition. Judgment, it seems to me, is inevitably a positive contribution since—and this is something I don't think Lonergan says—even the judgment that something is not the case is the judgment that, in fact, something *is* not the case. To judge no or probably is to judge yes to a negation or to a probability. Judgments of fact and value, whether about the practical domain of commonsense or the wider domain of theory, draw from and relate acts of understanding that install judgment's conditions, its proper content, yes! and its borrowed content, a possible definition, whether descriptive or explanatory.

From here we can state the difference between ontical and ontological predication: propositions are ontological if and only if being is their subject, and ontical, as we have seen, in every other instance, when it isn't. For example: Being is simple; Being is not a being. In this way ontological propositions formulate in outer words what ontical predication covers over, the *to be*.

Ontological propositions are about that which all ontical propositions are about but in a disguised, even disavowed way. Euclid works hard to define a circle; Archimedes exclaims Eureka! to express the release of the tension of inquiry. Neither of them asked about being. They discover and define intelligible, explanatory objects that are notionally *to be included* within the concept of being. But the mode of their inclusion, the relation of proportionate being to finality, is not among their discoveries. Deep thinkers about many things, they're not metaphysicians. So we can account for something like the forgetfulness of being, and the discovery of the distinct science of metaphysics.

Univocity and analogy are two forms of ontological predication that characterize the form of the unity of the *to be* in propositions where being is the subject. Neither is completely wrong nor right; I think there's a complementarity between them not unlike the one that exists among cognitional operations. I take Lonergan to endorse implicitly univocity at the level of proportionate being. Judgments secure the univocity of proportionate being: the yes of one judgment is the same proper content of any other, even though the borrowed content may range from learning how to ride a bicycle, to learning about learning about riding a bicycle. Beings are univocal among themselves because judgment operates in the same way in spite of the really existing differences among those things it judges.

The exception is the reflexive instance of ontological predication. I take it then Lonergan must endorse analogy at the level of transcendent being since it is proportionate being that transcendent being transcends. In other words transcendent being designates whatever lies beyond human experience. Of course, to say *lies beyond* is just to substitute a synonym for *transcendent*, so more will be said if we're not to settle for a circular argument.

I've tried to make the claim that proportionate being is univocal in itself. But a new problem emerges. In the propositions, "being is not a being," or "being is simple," namely, in ontological

predication, how is "to be" used? In what way is "is" there the same as the "is" we find amid the general economy of ontical predication, for example, "Socrates is white."

So we go from latent metaphysics, average everydayness, on through to critical natural theology. Uniquely, theology is a science in reverse. By this I mean two things. First, in the strictest sense, it gathers data about *that about which there are never data*. Second, it starts from its conclusions as revealed categories and works backward to formulate their intelligibility and rationality. Proportionate being is, foremost, available to human experience. Transcendent being is not. It's beyond the horizon of finality. The sense of beyond here is key, not as beyond the horizon of my eyesight, such that if I just had the right prescription in my glasses, I could see out past my otherwise-inhibited range to that which transcends it. Anyway, being is not the same as space and time, so glasses won't help. Transcendent being transcends our questions. It transcends our questions because it transcends what we might call objects of possible experience: it's not data; it's not the kind of thing I can ask about; it's not going to show up as an element within any horizon. In this way transcendent being is the domain of theology, at least natural theology, because like theology it's a designation in reverse, not a positive answer but a question of questions.

What is being? To extrapolate from my experience of understanding, which I do have, for example, through self-affirmation, it would be the content of an unrestricted act of understanding. In this sense being is not univocal with beings. Beings are the objectives of my questions, univocal among themselves. The second-order account of being does not find its univocal fulfillment by going even higher-order. It finds its fulfillment in winnowing away the difference between its notion and its concept. So, being is not a what. If you like, what being is, is not-a-what. Its "to be" is not univocal with the "to be" of proportionate beings. When someone claims, wrongly, that being is univocal to beings, they exaggerate human knowing. They claim to know what being is, which they don't. What's more, their claim that being is univocal to beings is not just an exaggeration. It does

not seem to be open to verification. It dodges two questions then. How could you know that? And, are you sure?

I've tried to claim or, if you like, to demonstrate the non-univocity of transcendent being. The next and final step is a lot like the dialectical move we made about judgments of negation, that they are ultimately positive. Being is non-univocally related to beings. But what is not univocal *is* analogical. The denial of univocity is the dialectical other side to the affirmation of analogy, at least at the level of fundamental ontology. The very failure of the univocity thesis confirms the truth of the analogy thesis. The prefix *ana-* means up, back, or again, as in anamnesis. Ontological predication is analogical because it's a logos of the being of beings, that about which I cannot get in view. Recalling Aristotle's *to ti ēn einai*, being is not an essence. And to know this disproportion, this non-univocity, is to know something by echolocation, that is, by analogy.