

It was the 15th of December

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The IAFOR International Conference on Education – Dubai 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

A reflection on the merits of an a priori poeto-epistemology in relation to tacitly held assumptions about the a fortiori validity of computational logic to transcend the limits of contradiction and infinite regression and establish a valid ontology.

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The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

“IT WAS THE 15th OF DECEMBER, 11 am, just got out of bed... ahhh... ordered myself an espresso... there’s this beautiful waitress, with enormous sunglasses — it’s still good, it’s still good weather... Smoke cigarette—as I said I ordered my breakfast; I wait, and I wait, and after about three quarters of an hour, there is no, breakfast yet... in some kind of urge I just get up from my chair, walk to the waitress, take off her sunglasses, and I realize this is—like—at the verge of sexual harassment, so I put her sunglasses back on, retrieve myself to my chair, and wait see what happens...

“To my astonishment, the breakfast comes, but with it, the waitress comes, although she’s working she’s sitting next to me, and she stays there, she stays put... I don’t know what to do! I just eat my breakfast, and all of a sudden I just—because I have to say something because she stays sitting there... I say, listen, I just back from Chicago, last night I met my redhead Jewish friend who was this sort of like, big real-estate broker... you know, this hotel, the Maritime Hotel, since it’s the Maritime Hotel, has circular windows, and maybe, my friend and I, want to buy this place, and then, all the windows will be square...”[†]

—— Luc Tuymans, Belgian artist

The above prelude is meant not to describe the contents of this paper — which, like the breakfast, are yet to come — but as a signal to draw our attention to a type of proto-logic that conditions everything that comes after it, whether it be (non-) sequitors in an infinite regression of contractions looping back to a non-starter or something that genuinely does begin, like a breakfast with a pretty de-spectacled waitress who now sees clearly the complexity of an artist struggling to ‘de-calculus’ a porthole into a square in downtown Chicago with the aid of a big Jewish redhead real-estate broker who ostensibly would be adept at ‘brokering’ a continuity of rotund symbols into block abstractions from the vantage of an Archimedean point somewhere near sky-lab...

[3, 032 words: Universals, contradiction, paradox, Parmenides, Bertrand Russell, R. D. Laing, Bergsonian duration, quantum mechanics, relativity theory, nominalism, essentialism, necessity, nature, vacuum, infinitesimal mathematics, Wittgenstein, language games, Pythagorean numbers, sublimation, incarnation, chunks.]

It was the fifteenth of December and I was sitting at the counter of a lovely cafeteria in a downtown Woolworths not too far from the University of Chicago which had closed suddenly due to a fatal shooting of a student who perhaps may have disagreed with an illustrious professor from the Committee of (‘Black Sheep’) Thought — from the fifteenth chapter of his fifteenth book no doubt, which made it such an ominous day in the annals of academia, which perhaps had its origin in another fateful day on the shores of the Mediterranean where a man, a writer of constitutions — no less — gave a fateful lecture on the way of Truth versus Opinions to an audience which included a twelve year old boy well before his stature would be assured as one of history’s greatest practitioners of a now defunct art of dialectical reasoning at the service of something called ‘universals’ with a capital U. And in the case of both the constitution writer and the young disciple, these Universals issued from the mouths of women, the first a goddess whose name has remained unknown, and the second someone named Diotima whose reference remains unknown to history...

[†] <https://youtu.be/kGBPJNtK0Sw>

All of this to pose the question of whether (Pythagorean) numbers don't exist in the same manner that lexical universals don't exist according to the hoi polloi. And could this be extended to include (Jungian) archetypes, Orphic notes, Jewish letters, Christian logoi and so on...

It appears that for a long time people have been discussing 'things' that don't exist. And perhaps with good reason because we ourselves now in our judiciary cannot do without universals, even though in the academy we may deny them. For example, what is a human Right, ontologically speaking? And if Bertrand Russell solved the problem by mediievally drawing a distinction to get out of the contradiction (i.e. subsistence to replace existence) is not the same trick applicable to all the other universals including God?

That would mean that 'subsistence' is more of a predicate than existence, especially if we are embarking on a true 'starter' instead of defaulting back into an infinite regress of terms adopted simply for the psychological comfort of avoiding a contradiction. In this case, the true enquiry here would be to unpack the nature of contradiction itself (which might be the starting point for a different sort of logic that could well lead to the 'ontos' of Right and Wrong — or as Parmenides put it, thinking in Black and White (categories) which are the same and not the same (probably at the same and not the same times).

However, how would anyone unpack a contradiction unless it was not purely an abstraction? I'm not sure if the term 'concrete contradiction' has ever been used in the history of philosophy (to accompany concrete universal?) but it must have surely befuddled and bedeviled anyone who ever tried to engage with it 'concretely', not least of which, the characters in R. D. Laing's Knots. (It also did quite an asylum number to some of those who tried it in the abstract, like Cantor.)

Squaring windows or rounding squares in abstracto to calculate a perfect arch in the concrete is safe fair, but who would of thought of unpacking a concrete contradiction as the road to bergsonian duration? And why?

If saving our dignity by proving that Rights really exist isn't enough, we could also add “ ... a bridge from the method of techno-science to the method of museo-history...” For example, at the frontiers of our normal spacio-temporal framework, we all know, since Einstein, that the classical laws of physics had to be radically extended to include phenomenae beyond its boundaries in the para-normal skies and in the sub-atomic fields. Everything else inside the framework can be faithfully re-peated, but the skies are contaminated by the time it takes for light to travel to us (the past) and sub-atoms are contaminated by spooky relations at a distance that are not loyal to any principles of non-contradiction, excluded middles or locality (substances that are not only invisible but also in-consistent). The first contaminant led to relativity theory and the second to quantum mechanics. And we have yet to discuss the contaminant of the (non-epiphenomenic) Mind, which we have now discovered thanks to Dr. Bruce Greyson;* and the laboratory of (open-source) Nature; Which begs the question of what it is that repeatable experiments actually confirm.

How much of the universe is amenable to isolation in controlled conditions long enough to confirm the sort of hypothesis that would be hypothesisable by someone obsessed with 'stealing' Nature's thunder (the light of understanding?) rather than becoming her disciple?

* <https://youtu.be/9kUyFeSizr0>

The former's modus operandi in discovering the cause of the superior longevity of women over men the world over, would be to pour over statistical data: men do more dangerous jobs, live with more stress, smoke and drink more, etc... The latter's modus operandi? You can't test a hypothesis that you have yet to conceive, nor can any test of the above statistically derived hypotheses prove definitive (they may only be supporting factors). And what if the postulation of the 'correct-to-be' hypothesis coincides (by necessity, not accident) with a eureka moment of insight that is-to-be true by necessity (i.e. women outlive men by virtue of their contact with children)?

But it behoves us now to explain what is necessity and why is it necessary even if it is at the antipodes of an epistemology that includes at the opposite end of the boxing ring a technology qua science that bases itself on reproducing 'accidents' and elevating them to the rule (without ever looking to the law of which they in turn are the exception which proves the latter).

(And what kind of language accompanies the former to the latter?)

The latter to the former? Can a nomenclature associated with naming sensible things and events elevate itself to include the naming of universals which are not as empty shells but something beyond nominalism? If nobody knows for sure what the thoughts in their head really are, substantively, how can they know the inner workings of universals — should they ever encounter one — outside a church? Do (unapplied) numbers exist?

If the techno-scientist names things and events and in-visible phenomenae (either directly or indirectly) then universals, I respectfully submit to you, may name themselves through their own "channel" usually identified with spontaneously combustible fire or transfigured light — and for very good reason...

(Because necessity abhors a vacuum.)

2.

Likewise with something like the converse: nihilism disdains obligation. How difficult is it for western educated youth to accept the platonic wisdom that you don't really know anything if action doesn't follow from it (because, to their way of thinking, it pre-empts the privilege of choosing to do it, which seems on the surface to be a more valuable power than the obligation to do what you now 'know').

The issue here is framed as a freedom of choice vs. an obligation to act. The former is perceived as a power (liberty) and the latter as an impower (pre-destiny) — at least for youth and for those who wish to exploit these values for their manipulative power over the population.

However, the converse may also be true: random ex-nihilo choices based on a hidden pre-conditioned facticity may be masquerading as freedoms; And knee-jerk reactions in times of crisis may be masquerading as real power. All of this pivots on the nature of the prior blank slate 'emptiness' that is necessary for true freedom and the fullness of our dignified ideas that are a pre-requisite for convincing action. The former escapes the blind conditioning of our animal nature and the latter escapes the impotence of abstractions on the part of a self-programmed man — at least that was the hope of modern science.

But in order to maintain the Enlightenment's illusion of success a novel jiu-jitsu had to be created here to bypass the contradictory-redundancy that Wo-Man had already to be free (a priori) to properly discover the truth of her freedom; concomitant to the paradox of (Augustinian) theology that had to scale the problem of a sin that is based on a lack. It seems that everyone has had a problem with finding or escaping 'substance' when they needed to.

Furthermore, according to physicists who are in agreement with Blaise Pascal, "Nature (also) abhors a vacuum." So wo-man is hit with a double wammy: both the spiritual and physical realms seem to conspire against her in making 'substances' appear and disappear, both when they are needed and not needed, and / or vice-versa, depending on the observer's frame of mind, if s-he has one, either at the same or different times, at the same time or at different times... ad infinitum.

Of course, all of this, I respectfully submit to the reader, is based on the 'illusion' that 'mental' abstractions concomitantly exist empirically in an 'exoteric' 'physical' world. In other words, a number really exists — not in the pythagorean sense, but in the technologist's sense.

Likewise with events: they really happened 'discretely' without any contradiction between movement and existence, not unlike the way a film strip made up of discrete frames can be used to produce a fluid reality in a movie theatre. And any contradictions that arise (if we were to slow down the projector) can be smoothed over by an infinitesimal mathematics that itself is not prone to the same contradictions (outside the padded room hotel).

The ultimate metaphysical question here then becomes: "How do you truly begin (with action that is not a re-peat — the very opposite value of techno-science) and how do you truly know whether your knowledge bears any (non-arbitrary) substance?"

Technology cannot solve this metaphysical and existential problem (of epistemology). The methods of techno-science do not, and can not, address it. It rests entirely outside its domain. And in fact, the answer here is reducible to simply "I am that I am." No questions needed. "What is, is." "It is good." "Yes!" But I'm getting ahead of myself here.

3.

The great challenge for the thinking man's doctor is to explain, regardless of whether we take a bottoms up (evolutionary) or top down (confessional) approach, how we get a world if the vocabulary of both the doctors of the church and the polytechnical academy issues out of the mouths of nominalists (of both the dancing on the head of a medieval pin, or of the post-Wittgensteinian players of language games, variety).

(How do we get a world without content to begin with? Or with only content to begin with?)

To give a more modern example of the former, if the 'contents' were only cyphers, as many statisticians believe and many, if not all, our western school children are taught to believe, how do you get a unique individual?

This problem was underscored in recent memory when a quintessential Canadian writer named Pierre Burton, for the sake of an official event, was asked — purely as a formality — to prove that he was a Canadian; to which he steadfastly refused, since to the popular

Canadian psyche, one can say that Pierre Burton is not an example of Canadiana, but its defining standard. This was an extraordinary example of old world essentialism vs. technocratic nominalism, though the philosophico-historical context was lost on the 'semilliterate' (if the reader would kindly excuse my double-entendre) media.

And now to give a more modern example of the latter, if the 'contents' were only concrete individuals, like sheep that don't need to be counted because the shepherd only knows each of them individually so that he would be obliged to count on his fingers and toes if ever it came to that; how would you get an abstraction if you needed one? For example how would you derive a total price for (some of) the herd, especially if some sheep — if that was even possible — were 'worth' more than others to you?

It would be difficult to do if you only had one number that had to be used over and over by counting on your fingers, toes, etc... (the very very ancient Greeks conceived of using 'match sticks'). In this way, a whole continent could be sold or bought for some ridiculously low price...

Traditionally, the problem of the former was the mystery of incarnation and that of the latter the mystery of ascension — perhaps by 'spiritual' sublimation, each involving an inverse movement of change in the opposite direction. Perhaps for this reason, the word sublimation has acquired both meanings referring to movements towards higher supra-consciousness and lower sub-consciousness.

4.

Now it is not only the apotheosis of number that causes a problem for an animal after he evolves into an ensouled or enthused wo-man, but also the apotheosis of words: i.e. Justice, Love, Right, Courage, Beauty, Fidelity... ad infinitum.

Somewhere in media res between beast and gods, both the concrete referent and the ideal universal got lost (forever)... Replaced by a label, icon, logo, reified, opaque, stained-glass-bullet-proof-stereotyped-diabolical-blood-fined CHUNK! What can we call the present day wo-man raised on gross images and fully brainwashed by industrialised schools, televised ministries super hyberbolised techno-babble and super-sentimentalised music in an ultra-monde that has gone super-nova! (Will a transgender pope from Mars one day apologise to cave men for desecrating their earthly cave paintings?)

The CHUNK in media res is a by-product, I respectfully submit to the reader, of the unpacked concrete contradiction I wrote of earlier. It is as much a simulacrum as any cinematic image and as much a counterfeit as money without a standard. It only commands belief because men and women cannot live without it: (being half spiritual and half natural they also abhor vacuums). — Even the great Guy Debord survived his brand of critical theory nihilism through alcoholism until he blew out his chest with a shotgun.

It is only by-product because an inverse product is produced esoterically to balance the exoteric projection. And here this subtle movement — which defies normal awareness — splits (as with 'sublimation') the meaning of the word daimon / daemon / demon into a valedictory and a notorious meaning as with 'genius' in the former and 'demonic' in the latter ('genius' being the Latin translation of the Greek word that made it into English).

Indexed References

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