

12. LOGIC & THE THREE FORMS OF LIFE

How do you address the insistence of a man who, against your careful reasoning, says, “My dog is intelligent, and I won't listen to anyone who says otherwise” ? (People get very attached to their pets !) You can only do so if you have some grasp of the principles of Logic.



Logical Doctrine of Analogy

In Logic we frequently refer to what are termed 'predicates'. Those who studied English grammar 50 years ago will be familiar with the term. In a sentence involving the attribution of some quality, or character, or perfection, you had *a subject*—the person or thing you are talking about—*the verb*, and *a predicate*, which was the quality, character or perfection attributed to the subject. (I am using 'quality' here in a general sense, not necessarily philosophically.) 'The subject was something singular, the predicate something more universal. For instance : 'The dog is black.' 'Dog' is the subject and 'black' the predicate. Black is more universal than dog. 'Tom is a boy.' Tom is the individual subject and 'boy' the universal predicate. In logic, a predicate is *something said about* a subject. Now you can use predicates in one of three ways.

I went recently to an art show in Taralga in country New South Wales where John Pat and the girls had some items on show. Possibly the best picture on show was a painting of three famous individuals, *Black Caviar*, the champion Australian sprinter ; *Makybe Diva*, three-time winner of the great endurance race, the Melbourne Cup ; and *Sunline*, the New Zealand champion mare : three horses. 'Horse' is a predicate said of these three individuals. And it is attributed to them equally, that is, in the same sense in each case. In the same way we can say of *Merry*, of *Spot* and of *Manzo* that each is a dog. The predicate is applied to the three to indicate that they possess the identical perfection, 'dog-ness'. When we use a term in this way, we are using it univocally, that is, with a single voice—*univocal* attribution.

It is otherwise with other predicates. When we use a term like 'cricket' to speak of the game and of the insect, the predicate signifies something in each subject which is completely different. The only thing the two seem to have in common is the name, though I suppose you might encounter cricket, the insect, while you are playing cricket, the game. The same goes with 'jumper', when we use it to mean a garment, and 'jumper' referring to a horse ; the same with 'board' when we mean a plank of wood, or 'board', meaning a group of men and women who manage a company. The use of such a predicate in each of these cases is called *equivocal*, where the one term signifies completely different realities. One voice applied equally to totally different things—*equivocal* attribution.

Then there is a third category of predicates. Consider the term 'healthy' when used of certain food, of fresh air, of exercise, of rosy cheeks, of Julian or Catie, or when used of this definition, 'normal organic constitution'. Here are the differences in use with the various reasons we might use the predicate :

food	producing health
fresh air	conducive to health
exercise	maintaining health
rosy cheeks	sign of health
Julian or Catie	possessing health
normal organic constitution	essence of health

Or, think of the predicate 'good' when said of a dog, of a win in the lottery, of a meat pie, of John Pat or of God. Here are the differences and the reasons why they differ :

a dog	efficient rounding up sheep
win in the lottery	enable me to buy goods
meat pie	pleasant to taste, nourishing
John Pat	morally good
God	Goodness its very self

Here is another, the predicate 'being' said of a plant, of the up-side-down-ness of a child hanging from a tree branch, of the blueness of the sky, of Elizabeth, and of God.

plant	be-in-self (substance—be-in-self)
up-side-down-ness	be-in-other (accident—be-in-other)
blueness	be-in-other (accident—be-in-other)
Elizabeth	be-in-self (substance—be-in-self)
God	Be its very self (be by essence)

Terms such as 'healthy', 'good' and 'being' are called *analogous* predicates because they signify in the many to which they are applied some sameness and some un-sameness. In the first instance, 'healthy', the predicate is said truly, literally if you like, about only one of those to which it is applied, *normal organic constitution*, because only this one *is* health. The others are either signs of health, effects of health or causes of health. Are the terms used of the various subjects, do you think, closer to univocal or to equivocal predicates ?

Let's look at the next one, 'good'. 'Good' cannot be defined because goodness is one of the fundamental realities. You can only describe it. *Good* is that which all things appétise, or desire, or tend towards. Now we can get a good idea of the answer to our question if we compare the goodness of a pie with the goodness of a man. What similarity is there between the two ? Very little. It is clear we are using the term 'good' very widely. There is some sameness, it is true, but there is much more un-sameness between the two. So *analogical* attribution involves the application of a predicate to two or more subjects with some sameness and some un-sameness, but more un-same than same.

Having considered this threefold logical distinction we can begin to see how to answer the man who insists "my dog is intelligent". The predicate 'intelligent' can be used *univocally* as, for instance, when we apply it to Matthias and to Naomi, two instances of the rational animal, man. But it can, and is

more often, used *analogously*, as in the following instances ; of Julian, of a computer, of a map, of a dog, of a killer whale or a dolphin, of God, that each is 'intelligent'.

Julian	possesses the power of intellect
computer	shows the marks of intelligent design
a map	reflects an intelligent map-maker
a dog	behaves intelligently
killer whale, dolphin	behaves intelligently
God	is intelligence its very self

Now, following the rule about analogical attribution we can say that each instance involves use of the term in a fashion somewise same and somewise unsame, and more unsame than same. There is no problem saying that your dog is intelligent provided you understand that you are using the term 'intelligent' in an analogical fashion. Which brings us back to the living things in the tree of Porphyry.

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The Three Forms of Life

You will recall the quote from St Thomas last lesson delineating the way in which things manifest God's perfections.

“[S]ome things are like to God first (and most commonly) because they exist ; secondly, because they live ; and thirdly, because they know or understand...” [*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93. a. 2]

Here are instances of these four categories, a rock, a plant, a kitten (which knows singular things), and over there, John Pat, who knows not only singular things but universal realities. Three of the four are living things. The four categories are 1. the *hetero-motive* (minerals) ; 2. the *auto-motive* singly (vegetative) ; 3. the *auto-motive* doubly (brute animal) ; and 4. the *auto-motive* trebly (rational animal, man). The *hetero-motive* are (as indicated by their name) moved only by other things. The *auto-motive* move themselves, but at three different levels.

The first of the three in the *auto-motive* category, the vegetative, you will notice is very like any item in the category of the *hetero-motive*, the non-living, rocks, water, air, etc. Things happen to trees as they happen to rocks, water, and the air, and there is nothing much the tree can do about it, or—if it could entertain any wishes—anything it could do about it.

Let us go back to our last lesson and lay out again the three factors that characterise any action and align with the three factors the conduct of each of the three forms of life. In doing so we will take an action that each of the three has in common, the act of *nutrition*.

	<i>Execution</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>End</i>
Plant	INGESTION	Contact	Life
Animal	CONSUMPTION	SENSE KNOWLEDGE CONTACT	Life
Man	CONSUMPTION	UNDERSTANDING SENSE KNOWLEDGE CONTACT	LIFE

The distinction between the three forms of auto-motive-ness turns upon the extent to which each is able to move itself. Plants (vegetative life) move themselves only in respect of the *execution* of the act of nutrition. Brute animals, in contrast, move themselves not only as to the *execution* of the act but also the *form* of it, the form of sense knowledge. The basic contact between a living thing and the food that will sustain it is present in both, but the animal achieves this contact through knowledge. Its power of local movement is not the cause of its difference from the plant so much as a consequence. Because it knows singular things, nature equips it with the power to move itself locally for were it otherwise the power of knowing would be in vain and “nature does not default in necessities”. In the order of reality, the *ontological* order, then, the power of knowing precedes the power of local motion.

In the plant both the *form* of its operation and the *end* of its operation are determined for it by nature. It is constrained—programmed if you like—to ingest nutriments, water, carbon dioxide and oxygen under the influence of sunlight. It has no other way to move itself. If any of these are lacking, such as sunlight where a seed has fallen into a cave, the plant will suffer and die. In contrast, the animal can search out food by its senses—limited in some creatures like shellfish ; fully developed in others like dogs, cats and cattle—so as to keep itself alive. But the *end* of the brute animal's activity, the flourishing of its own life and that of its species, is likewise determined by nature.

With the rational animal, man, there is the ability to move itself (himself/herself) not only about the *execution* and the *form* of his acts, but also about the *end*. Take the business of nutrition. A horse or a dog cannot help themselves if they are hungry. They must eat. Their natures compel them, unless some sickness or disability (as when a dog pines for its missing master) intervenes to prevent them. They are not free to do other than as they are made. But a man can choose not to eat, even if he is hungry, for a reason. So he moves himself about the *end* of the act of nutrition as well as about the *forms* (contact and knowledge) and the *execution* of the act.

Let us close with words of St Thomas on the distinctions we have addressed :

“The being of things whose actuality is soul, i.e., of the animate beings that exist on this earth... includes two factors : one, material, in which it resembles the being of all other material things ; and the other, immaterial, by which it has something in common with the world of the higher substances. Now there is this difference between these two divisions of being, that insofar as a thing is material it is restricted by its matter to being *this particular thing* and nothing else, e.g., a stone ; whilst insofar as it is immaterial a thing is free from the restrictions of matter and has a certain width and infinity, so that it is not merely *this particular subject* but, in a certain sense, it is other things as well... But in the lower terrestrial natures there are two degrees of [such] immateriality. There is the perfect immateriality of intelligible being ; for in the intellect things exist *not only without matter but even without their individuating material conditions*, and also *apart from any material organ*. Then there is the half-way state of sensible being. For as things exist in sensation they are free indeed from matter, but are *not without their individuating material conditions*, nor *apart from a bodily organ*. For sensation is of objects in the particular, but intellection of objects universally. It is with reference to these two modes of existence that the Philosopher [i.e., Aristotle] says in Book Three [Lecture XIII, 787, 788] that the soul is in a sense all things.” [In II De Anima, 5, 282-4]

I have added the emphases in italics to assist you to understand the points he is making.
