

SOME DILEMMAS

Let's look at some dilemmas and see how they are resolved using the twin principles we have studied.

Be & Become

In our first year of studies (Lesson 17) we mentioned in passing the contrasting stands taken by two Greek philosophers, Parmenides (c.515—440 BC) and Heraclitus (c. 545—480 BC). Parmenides argued—

What is does not become.

But everything is.

Therefore nothing becomes.

He was asserting that all change was illusory.

Heraclitus, in contrast, had earlier argued—

What becomes is not (for it is always changing).

But everything becomes.

Therefore nothing is.

He was asserting that fixity in being was illusory. "We never," he said, "step into the same stream twice."

They were both right in some measure. They were both wrong in some measure. Rule 1 states: *accept the truth in each proposition*. The truths are—

1. what is does not become (for it already is). In other words, things exercise existence; they 'be';
2. what becomes is not (for it is not yet). In other words, things come to be. Becoming is be coming.

We solve the dilemma, following the lead given by Aristotle, by invoking Rule 2: *Look for a distinction in one term or the other, or both*. 'Be' signifies 'does be': 'become' signifies 'can be and is on the way to be'. Not all things 'become'. Water does not become water if it is water already. But water can become hot-water by a change in its possession of the *quality* heat. That is, there is something in water which enables it to become hot. If it did not have that faculty, that 'can-be-ness', it could never become hot. The distinction this analysis reveals is between—

'does-be-ness', which Aristotle named *act*,

and

'can-be-ness' which he called *potency*

So, against Parmenides and Heraclitus, neither change nor fixity in being is illusory. The analysis of intellect agrees with the testimony of our senses. Change occurs in things which have potency. Fixity in being occurs in things which are in act. So we can recast Parmenides' argument in this way:

What is *in act under some respect* does not become *in that respect*.
But everything *in act* is *in that respect*.
Therefore nothing *in act under that respect* becomes.

And we can change Heraclitus' argument too:

What becomes *under some respect* is not.
But everything *in potency in some respect* becomes *under that respect*.
Therefore nothing *in potency* is *yet*.

Intelligent & Intelligent

Here is another dilemma, one we have addressed before when dealing with analogy. It is one that troubles our atheistic friends because materialism precludes them from making the necessary distinctions.

My son *Tom* is intelligent; he has intellect.
My dog *Shep* is intelligent too; therefore he too has intellect.

Rule 1. *Accept the truth in each proposition.* Is *Tom* intelligent? Yes. Is *Shep* intelligent? Well, yes and no! Some things he seems to understand—those that address things he is familiar with, food, playing, going for a walk. Others he misses completely, things which *Tom* always gets, like, “Where did you put the hammer?” *Tom* will give me an answer; *Shep* never will.

Rule 2. *Look for a distinction in one term, or the other, or both.* The distinction is between possessing *the power of* intellect—which *Tom* does, and between possessing *the marks of* an intellectual Author, which *Shep* does. ‘Intelligent’ is said of *Tom simpliciter*—simply speaking. ‘Intelligent’ is said of *Shep secundum quid*—in a secondary fashion only.

Equality & Inequality

Here is a third dilemma.

All men are equal.

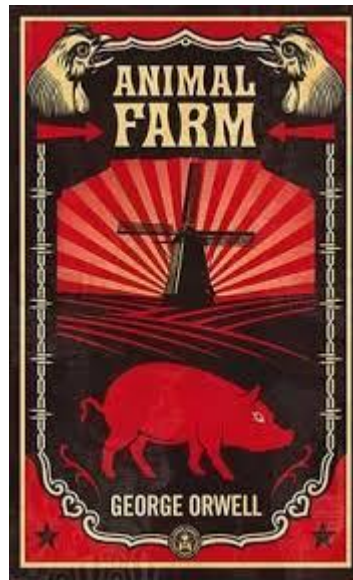
All men are unequal.

Which is true?

Both statements are true and both can be accepted in accordance with Rule 1 provided careful distinctions are made about the terms.

When the term *men* signifies those who fulfil the definition ‘man’ (the *rational animal*) it connotes the dignity that attaches to each man as a person made in the image and likeness of God, the possessor of an infinite dignity. In this sense all men are equal, equally possessed of an infinite dignity. Men are unequal, however, when one considers the immense variety of talents of intellect and will to be found among them—and here we are using *men* to signify both men and women. This wealth of talents is what inclines them to live in society so that each member can profit from the talents of the others.

However, if one treats the term *men* as signifying no more than the likeness of individuals, as one might look at ants in an ant nest, the equality claimed is no more than a physical likeness. This defective approach, which looks at men only materially, was one of the evils embraced by Karl Marx whose teachings form the ground of Communism. It allowed no scope for the second claim, 'All men are unequal', and denied, as a result, the reality of their immense diversity.



Communism denied the definition of society as *a union of the diverse* for it denied, save when it suited its ideology, any inequality between men, as it denied the inequality between men and women. (Communism was largely responsible for the aberration of the ideology of Feminism.) One of the effects of this reduction of men to the level of ants was the relegation of intellectuals to menial duties.

Those who exercised power over their fellows, apparatchiks of the Communist Party, regarded themselves as superior through opportunity or brute force. This facet of the weakness of Communistic materialism was mocked by George Orwell in his fantasia *Animal Farm* (London, 1945) which parodied the Communist state with a story of animals combining to oust a farmer and his wife from their farm. The catch cry of his subjects was 'All animals are equal'. The pigs, however, excused their dominance over the others with the sophistic claim 'Some animals are more equal than others'.

Communism had all the intellectual subtlety of a Rugby scrum.
