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Rationality and Irrationality
from the Analogical Hermeneutics Perspective[*]

ABSTRACT. This essay tries to draw attention to a different model of the usual modern one of reason, which is univocal. This model, however, does not fall into the postmodern view of reason, which is quite equivocal. It is rather an analogical rationality, or reason, such as that proposed by Aristotle, which followed strongly the scheme of *phronesis*.

KEY WORDS: reason, analogical rationality, Aristotle, *phronesis*, virtue

Introduction

I will raise a philosophical problem here, to which I will try to provide some solution, also from the angle of philosophy, following a certain direction. The problem I want to consider is related to both philosophical anthropology (the philosophy of man) and epistemology (or gnoseology): it is the very nature of human rationality. This is a major problem, for not in vain is man defined as a rational and not intuitive animal, in which case there would be no problem. But above all, this is so because we notice that the notion of rationality has changed over history, and today, in the so-called late modernism or postmodernism, rationality no longer looks the same as it was previously. Even now there are many movements incurring in irrationality that are just to be against the "modern" reason. This will make us question whether there are various types of rationality or just

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a single one; I will try to answer this question from a philosophical stance, that of hermeneutics.

But I will not just respond with hermeneutics, I will also respond more specifically from the point of view of an Analogical Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics being an instrument for interpretation, will help us to interpret man, and his rationality, which is so essential to him. An Analogical Hermeneutics combines elements that seem dissimilar, even opposite in a certain harmony. Thus, we will have a proportional balance that will make us avoid univocal hermeneutics as much as equivocal hermeneutics. If the first held extreme science as rationalism, the latter now promotes an equally excessive irrationalism. What we have to seek is mediation.

The problem of reason

The problem of rationality arises inevitably from the hermeneutics' perspective, as it implies a certain change from the classical modern rationality, for example that of Descartes. The latter focused too much on deductive and explanatory rationality. However, hermeneutic rationality admits understanding, taking note that understanding and explanation become attached, because very often to understand is to explain [Ricoeur, 1982, pp. 145ff].

This is why the problem is already settled from the point of view of rationality itself. What is rationality? Does it allow only one kind, or several kinds of it? From here we may passage to the specific problem that concerns us: how should the rationality of the starting Millennium look? Should it be a unique and closed rationality or an open and multiple one?

This is the approach to the problem. I shall begin by gathering data and the elements to answer it and to structure arguments to support my solution. I will develop my approach from hermeneutics, interpreting the facts of rationality in history and, above all, in our times. It will thus be a hermeneutics of facticity, as Heidegger used to call ontology. It is not done from sole hermeneutics but from a hermeneutics that will be analogical, as we shall see.

It is so important to have a good approach to a problem that Aristotle said that a well-posed problem was already half the solution or answer [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 1, 995a27]. This is why hermeneutics starts from an interpretive question or hermeneutic *aporia;* it launches hermeneutical interpretive hypotheses and tries to reach an interpretive solution or hermeneutical judgement.

Besides, since the Greeks, reason has always been linked to intelligence (or to the intellect). The latter is intuitive, direct and immediate, and captures things, whereas reason is mediate and progressive, advancing step by step to the inference's development. It is reasoning (or discourse) which, unlike the intellectual capture, is a gradual process [Beuchot, 2011, pp. 32-33]. Intuition, moreover, is pleasant; reasoning is heavy and arid. The process begins with an intuition, which goes to reasoning, and is finished into another intuition that is the beginning of another process. That is, both the premises and the conclusion to problems are immediate judgements captured by intelligence; reasoning is precisely the passage from premises to conclusion, from the antecedent to the consequent. This difference between judgement and reasoning is usually made in logic. Judgement is immediate (it is meant to capture the link between subject and predicate) and reasoning is a concatenation of judgements, so that some are followed by others (reasoning consists in this illation). If you want, you can see the simple judgement as immediate, and reasoning as a mediate judgement, that is, as a conditional where the syllogistic middle term works as a mediator.

The many faces of rationality

Rationality is seen by some, in Wittgenstein's line, as following the rules of inference [Peña, 1987, p. 43]. Since reasoning is basically inference and inference obeys rules, rationality consists in following or knowing how to comply to such rules. Others have added, following Weber, that there is also a comprehensive rationality and an evaluative one as well. But ultimately, there is a certain process; inference rules are fol-

lowed in all of them. Ignoring the big problem that Wittgenstein left, to define what it is to follow a rule [Tomasini, 2003, p. 157ff], let us assume that rationality is to follow the rules of inference; and the best known rule is *modus ponens* (we shall see other types of rationality, like the teleological or evaluative one).

Rationality has a companion, which is that which gives it the materials on which it will reflect and to which it will apply the rules of inference aforementioned. This companion is the intellectual intuition, or the intellection, the comprehension of things in order to explain them, to assign their cause, proceeding to argue for that assignment.

There is a difference between intellection (intuition) and reasoning. Aristotle gave *nous* to the intellect and *logos* to reason, but mainly he called reason *diánoia* because reason is discursive and performs the episteme or science. The intellection or intuition is direct, immediate, and even joyous; it corresponds to Archimedes' *Eureka,* which occurs when we perceive something, when we understand or comprehend it, enjoying that comprehension. But this satisfying comprehension is reached through reasoning. Reason, on the other hand, is laborious and tiring, walking hardily and slowly, even with difficulties. In addition, reasoning begins with partial intellections, with causing surprise data and posing problems, and with statements that try to answer them.

This is why there is here a launching hypothesis process, which attempts to solve the posed problems and to explain phenomena which have surprised us. Peirce named abduction the launching of a hypothesis, to distinguish it from deduction and induction [Peirce, 1970, pp. 65–69].

Deduction is the procedure that goes from general premises to a particular conclusion and is what is best known in the logic manuals. Induction consists in starting from particular phenomena or data to reach more general conclusions. It was the procedure that was thought suited to empirical science, but abduction, the launching of a hypothesis, has now been imposed on it. Peirce thought these hypotheses were verified by induction; Popper thought they are not verified, but falsified at most.

We see that intellection and reason come together in abduction, because very often the launch of a suitable hypothesis comes from intuition.

Intellection and reasoning also come together in deduction. If induction is just reasoning or only inference, it becomes misleading, because it raises the problem of the passage from insufficiently enumerated individuals to the law that explains them, and we will always have the problem of how many cases are sufficient.

Reasoning operates in deduction, as it is to infer more particular statements from more general principles or premises; it works on the opposite side of induction.

Aristotle raised certain differences or classes in deduction itself [Beuchot, 2004, pp. 105–113]. One was Analytical Logic, totally accurate, which is now called axiomatic; it proceeds by axioms and rules of inference. Another one is the Topical Logic which proceeds not by principles or axioms but from commonplaces and inference rules (sometimes it is said that just by inference rules alone). Aristotle divided it into Dialectics and Rhetoric, the latter being weaker than the former. However, the inferential strength of these three types of logic or deduction is the same: given certain premises, it necessarily leads to the conclusion.

They have the same kind of necessity in their consequence, but not in their premises and therefore, not in their conclusion. Analytical Logic starts from necessary premises, which truth is evident; Dialectic Topic starts from probable premises; and, finally, Rhetoric only calls for plausible or verisimilar (not true) premises. As we can see, the epistemic force is decreasing from the apodictic or necessary truth of Analytical Logic, to the probable truth of the Dialectics or Topical Logic, up to the very verisimilitude of Rhetoric.

Well, nowadays Analytical or Axiomatic Logic has been left aside, and a Topical Logic is adopted, but most of the time only a Rhetorical, merely plausible, Logic is taken into consideration. This is why it has been preferred, following Chaïm Perelman [Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1956, p. 23], to talk about the "reasonable", rather than speaking of the "rational" or "logical", indicating thereby that the requirement of rationality has been weakened in our present times.

We are closer to a prudence or *phronesis* rationality than to an *episteme* or scientific rationality. Even *phronesis* is different from *techne* or technique, which works by rules of procedure. *Phronesis* operates weigh-

ing the pros and cons of an action, in relation to a particular context or circumstance. How curious is it that *phronesis* and rhetoric alike have deliberation. Deliberation, which is weighing the pros and cons of the action, is a part of *phronesi*s, and it is also a form of rhetoric, the deliberative genre [Beuchot, 2007, pp. 22ff].

Phronesis is a rhetorical type of rationality, not as accurate as the axiomatic, but complex and accurate enough. It is the wisdom of the contingent, mutable and particular. It always depends on context, which is what happens in hermeneutics, which is why hermeneutics has, according to Gadamer, *phronesis* as a framework (or as model or structure). But *phronesis* is something very analogical, because analogy is proportion, and *phronesis* is also proportion, assimilated proportion and living analogy.

Phronesis is such certain rationality that Plato and the Stoics saw it as wisdom, even as a purely theoretical wisdom. Aristotle was the one who saw it as a theoretical virtue, but having to do with praxis. It is the wisdom of the particular, contingent, shifting and temporal, whose goal is *kairos*, that is, the appropriate time. So it has deliberation as a very important part and it is related to the practical syllogism. Theoretical syllogism has an antecedent and a consequent, or two premises and a conclusion; once the antecedent is given, the consequent follows of necessity. Practical syllogism, however, has an end as the first premise and the second premise refers to the means to obtain it. The conclusion is the carrying out of a certain action according to the means to achieve an end. *Phronesis* is connected to the practical syllogism, because both of them deal with means leading to an end. It is the wisdom or the ability to adjust means to ends, to achieve the proposed goals.

Max Weber also spoke of an evaluative rationality [Freund, 1969, pp. 25ff]. This has to do with practical reason because the ends we propose to ourselves are valuable to us. The ends are goods, and goods are valuable; they are values. Therefore an evaluative rationality is at the center of practical rationality, which is moved by ends, and ends are goods or values for those ends which try to obtain them. It is, again, the ability to provide the means to reach such purposes or those values. We try to attain these proposed values and we achieve that which is of most value to us.

An analogical rationality

Various types of rationality have been presented to us, so rationality is not a univocal term. Neither can it be equivocal, since there is no more opposite to the equivocal than reason. We just use reason to decrease as much as we can ambiguity, vagueness and equivocalness. It is reason that allows us to elude the equivocal, although we will not reach the univocal. This is why a rationality neither pretending univocal rationality nor having the inconsistency of an equivocal "rationality", is proposed. It is an analogical rationality, according to the analogical side of reason, that is, with a multiple but not-equivocal ways in which reason is fulfilled and performed. Thus, human rationality is analogical; it calls for an Analogical Hermeneutics that is also consistent with it. Human rationality has tried to be univocal, as in the scientism of modernity; but not always achieving this univocal side, it has lately slipped (in Postmodern times) into an equivocal side (or extreme relativism) which is not another thing but irrationalism.

Thus, Analogical Hermeneutics helps us to avoid a univocal rationality like that of modernity, like both rationalism (deduction) and empiricism (induction). An Analogical Hermeneutics leads us to something more hypothetical (abduction). We decide which one is better between one hypothesis and another not so much by Formal Logic but by *phronesis* or prudence, considering which of them is most fertile, rich or embracing, more close to the facts, etc. [Beuchot, 2015, pp. 34–35]. Analogical hermeneutics also helps us to avoid equivocal rationality, like many in the postmodern times who remain without any methodological procedure nor any criteria of epistemic validation, and all open too much, falling into an extreme relativism which leads to subjectivism and, ultimately, to skepticism.

Analogical Hermeneutics gives us an open analogical rationality but one that is rigorous and objective enough to account for the texts we read and the facts we try to explain. It is neither a rationality involved with a univocal hermeneutics (which is too rigid and reductionist), nor a rationality involved in equivocal hermeneutics, (which is too open and irreducible). It is a proportional balance, a mediation between the two mentioned

before. This is the rationality which I think is needed for our time. Certainly there is rationality, not univocal but analogical. It admits diverse forms. So far, it has an abductive, inductive and deductive form. Rationality admits cases where understanding and explanation come together. Thus, it is more open than the modern univocal rationalism, but not as open as the postmodern equivocal relativism. These two extremes lead to the death of reason; in one case by stagnation, in the other by disintegration.

Besides, an Analogical Hermeneutics goes along quite well with practical rationality, as *phronesis*, which is the main instrument for *praxis*; it is proportionate and proportion is analogy. Therefore, rationality in accordance to *phronesis* must be eminently analogical, since it is based on proportion. Indeed, *phronesis* has to do with the disposition of the means to achieve ends, to finding the proportionate means in order to reach the desired end. In addition, *phronesis* is sensitivity to the middle term and to the balance of actions; it requires a sense of proportion. If *phronesis* is the wisdom of the concrete, contingent and changeable, it is also the awareness of context, for which proportion is required. It is also analogy that guides deliberation, as it is balancing the pros and cons to find the best course of action. Finally, deliberation, as part of rhetoric, takes the argument from analogy as its main instrument, arguing from examples and paradigms as well, all of which are iconic, and the iconic is analogical. We have, therefore, a strong presence of the Analogical Hermeneutics in *phronesis*, and this confirms the relevance of an analogical rationality, both for the theoretical reason and the practical reason

Application to a serious problem:
the nature of man

Leaving aside the (logical and methodological) epistemological part of reason, let us go to the anthropological part. Indeed, rationality connects us to the theme of man, since it has been defined as a rational animal. We will consider here the problem of philosophical anthropology or philosophy of

man, namely, human nature. We will try to answer this question from the point of view of Analogical Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics as an instrument for interpretation will help us interpreting man, and being an Analogical Hermeneutics it will lead us to combine man's elements and features that seem dissimilar and opposites, in a certain harmony [Beuchot, 2002, pp. 28ff].

Hermeneutics, which has always been a part of the phenomenological school, has learned to see man as a core of intentionalities. Man has a cognitive, volitional-emotional and even an ontological intentionality: to be or to exist.

Cognitive intentionality is deployed from sensitive knowledge, which is the most rudimentary, passing through the imaginative knowledge until it reaches the intelligible and rational one. Intelligence is distinguished from reason: the first is intuitive, the second discursive, and it advances more haltingly. This is why intellectual intuition provides us with understanding, and discursive reason gives us the explanation of things (although in some cases they can match, as Ricoeur points out).

The affective-volitional intentionality covers, of course, the will. It also includes the appetites, passions, emotions or feelings which constitute the emotional part of man, going beyond consciousness and based in the unconscious. Like knowledge, they have their object and tend towards it in order to appropriate it (in order to transform themselves psychologically in it, according to Aristotle and Brentano).

Analogical Hermeneutics neither makes us see human being as purely cognitive (which would be typical of a univocal hermeneutics) nor trapped by his volitional-emotional side (at the mercy of an equivocal hermeneutics). Analogy makes us see a kind of dialectic between these different and sometimes opposing elements which nevertheless reach a harmony or concord.

That harmony is due to proportion, to proportionality, which is analogy. This gives us a view of human beings as the epitome of all the elements of the universe; in fragile harmony, despite opposition; conflicting, despite harmony. Thus man is seen as the microcosm, the analogue or icon of the macrocosm, the summary and harmony of all that exists.

Luis Vives wrote a book on concord and discord [Vives, 1954]. He was a Renaissance humanist who knew how to appreciate harmony, that is, proportion, the analogy between different kinds of things. He did appreciate harmony especially among men, seeing the misfortunes and calamities that happened during his times, shaken by wars of religion and other intolerances. A great sense of analogy, proportion or harmony should prevail among entities at the cosmic level. This is why man was a reflection of the cosmic melody, the macrocosm, especially society, in which man lives and which has to express the full of beauty music of the spheres.

This is why an analogical rationality is needed, a reason capable to capture the correspondences among things and, above all, a reason able to design those correspondences into civil society and politics; it is here where it is most needed and where more good is obtained. We should not only contemplate the cosmic order, but to realize order in society, which is a smaller cosmos than the universe, though perhaps more important since it is men's universe [Beuchot, 2006, pp. 152ff].

Conclusion

We have thus seen that hermeneutics gives us a certain way of stating problems and reaching solutions, exemplified by the issue of the rationality for this new millennium. Human reason has two sides: intellection and reasoning. The intellect is intuitive and immediate, direct and even enlightening or blissful; reasoning or discursive reason is mediate, slow, laborious and exhausting. Intellection gives us understanding, and reasoning gives us explanation; hermeneutics teaches us that often these two processes coincide, and understanding is in such a case to explain. One can even say that, to some extent, hermeneutics has challenged modern rationality, especially the Positivist one, which has been criticized in a similar way to the pragmatist line. It is so because hermeneutics has to attend more to practical reason and to the comprehension obtained by the intellectual intuition, especially abduction, just to not be left only with deduction and induction.

Rationality is ciphered in the inference rules that follow it, since to infer is proper to reasoning. There is deductive, inductive, and abductive or hypothetical reasoning. Furthermore, besides logical rationality there is an evaluative or teleological one, on the side of practical reason. On the other hand, hermeneutics is placed on a rationality that is not just reasoning, but also intuition, as seen in *phronesis* or prudence; no wonder Gadamer put this virtue as the model, structure or schema of interpretation. And this procedure is highly analogical, as it consists in proportion, brought to the middle term of actions. Analogical Hermeneutics helps us to avoid the closed reason of rationalism and empiricism, both univocal; it helps also to avoid relativism and subjectivism, both equivocal, which takes us, out of hand, to skepticism. Thus analogical hermeneutics can help us to reach a multiple, rich rationality that does not sink into the sea of too ambiguous rationalities. It puts an analogical limit to the unreached pretensions of rationality, and also gives an opening to our notion of rationality so that it covers the needs of knowledge that we have in our very complex world.

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