



Uniwersytet
Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego
w Warszawie

From the Modern Transcendental of Knowing to the Post-Modern Transcendental of Language

Unit 12: An unexpected outcome: the triadic structure of E. Stein's formal ontology as synthesis of Husserl and Aquinas



By

GIANFRANCO BASTI

Full Professor of Philosophy of Nature and of Sciences
At the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical Lateran University

E-mail: basti@pul.it

Address: Pontifical Lateran University – Piazza S. Giovanni Laterano, 4 – 00184 Rome

Phone: +39 06 69895656

Cell.: +39 339 5760314

Web: www.irafs.org

Bibliography

References

- For deepening the contents of the present unit and the relative bibliography, see the Third Volume of the Lecture Notes of this Course:
 - Basti G., *Lecture Notes to the Course Vol. III*, pp. 51-66 [[attached](#)]
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Semiotics and Phenomenology

The Frutfulness of a Semiotic Approach to Phenomenology for Truth Foundation

Truth as conforming to things

- For avoiding the nihilist outcome of post-modern thought it is necessary to give back humans their proper role of **humble servants of God in the universe**, of “administrators” and not of “masters”, against the Renaissance and Modern false pretension of making of humans the center of the universe and of the **transcendental subject the “legislator of nature”** (Kant).
- For this it is essential to give human self-consciousness its proper role in the **foundation of truth (= the transcendental issue)**, that is, **making humans aware of truth (differently from animals and automata)**, so to disclose humans the amazing realm of “**objects-for-a-subject**” (as distinguished from “real things”), and then of **abstract (logical, metaphysical, ethical, mathematical, aesthetical, mystical...) thought**.
- Truth, however, **is elsewhere founded in the pre-conscious self-conforming (*adaequatio* as a process not as a state) of actions to things (not to objects)**. This, in the case of linguistic action (language), consists in **mirroring the ontic (causal) structure** of things (genus/species, species/individual) in the **converse** logical structure of predicative sentences (subject/predicate).

Toward a Semiotic Interpretation of the Phenomenological Inner Discourse

- Truth-as-conforming-to-thing definable as the **homomorphic mapping (functorial induction) of the thing structure over the sentence structure.**
- E.g., if we think at the semantics of a material implication if...then ($p \supset q$) (e.g., “if horse then mammalian”) it is made **locally true** by the **reversal** of the connective between the respective sets ($\mathbf{P} \subset \mathbf{Q}$: “mammalians include horses”).
- This is **modeled in Category Theory (CT) logic** in the coalgebraic modeling of “dissipative brains” in **cognitive neuroscience** in the framework of quantum field theory (QFT) \rightarrow “extended (intentional) mind” related with brain-environment **quantum entanglement**

$$\square_{n|\forall n(n>m)} \left(\underbrace{\text{horse} \in \text{mammalian}}_{\text{Algebra}(\Omega^*)} \xleftrightarrow{\text{Bounded Morphism}} \underbrace{\text{horse} \ni \text{mammalian}}_{\text{Co-Algebra}(\Omega)} \right)$$

- **Triadic nature of a significant token (=sign)** according to Peirce’s categorical semiotics \rightarrow algebra of relations \rightarrow CT reflected into the **triadic character of Stein’s ontology (Object-Something-Being \approx Peirce’s triadic categories (Secondness (correlate)-Firstness (quality)-Thirdness (interpretant)).**

The common background to Peirce, Husserl, and Stein

- **Common standpoint to Husserl and Peirce:** the criticism to the **contentless formalism** of Schroeder «Algebra of Logic»:
 - Reference to **object-for-an-intentional subject (Husserl):** formal apophantics → formal ontology → **dyadic articulation *Objekt-Etwas*** as ontological foundation of semantics in predication
 - Necessity of an **irreducible triadic character of a signifying relation (Peirce): triadic articulation *sign-referent-interpretant*** (not interpreter) → birth of the **algebra of relations** developed by Tarski during XX cent. Till the actual CT.
- Relationship with the **irreducible triadic character of Stein's formal ontology: *Objekt-Etwas-Sein*** for the opening of the **immanent** sphere to the two «horizontal» and «transcendent» **spheres of being-for-a-consciousness.**

Three ante-predicative foundations (= transcendental) of predication (=categorical)

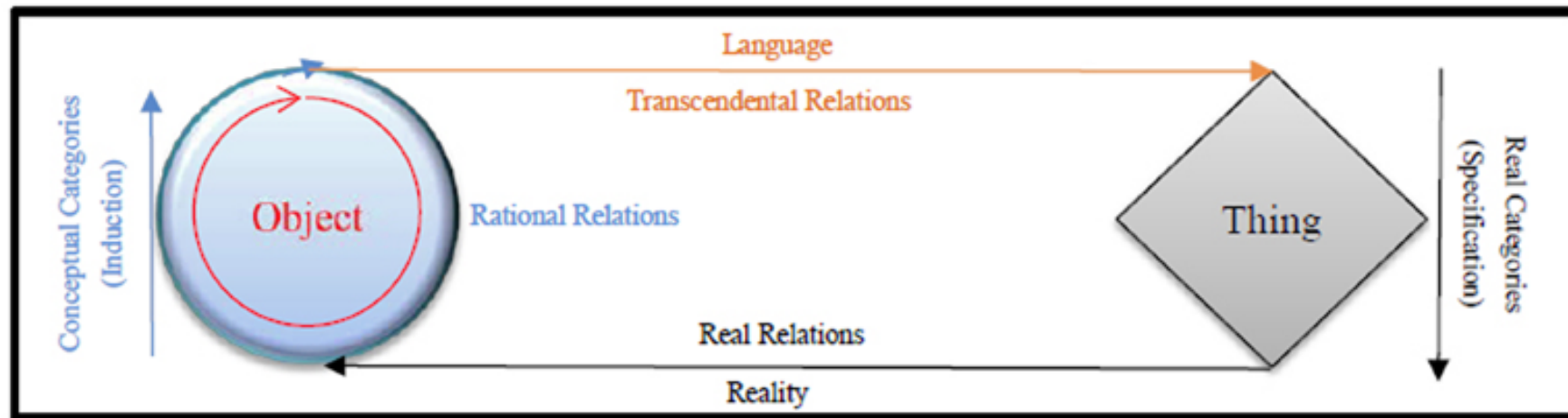
1. Classical transcendental of **being** (*ens*)
2. Modern transcendental of **knowing**
3. Post-modern transcendental of **language**
 - Risk of **conventionalism** → necessity of attaining to the pre-linguistic level of **semeiosis** (Peirce) for the constitution of **signifying sign or symbol** → **triadic character** of this constitution
 - **Realism** in semiotics: analysis of the relationship among three categories of relations: **real (among things), rational (among objects), linguistic (among signs): John Peirce.**
 - A sign is an intrinsic triadic relation because it is a «**being for**» (*esse per*) an interpretant of a (dyadic) relation (e.g., subject-predicate), and not simply a «**being to**» (*esse ad*) like all the other relations (either real or rational).

John Poincot's (1589-1644) relational (semiotic) interpretation of Aquinas, vs. Cajetan's (1469-1534) conceptualist interpretation (J. Deely)

- The background (*Quaestiones De Veritate*):
 1. Q.1, Art. 1c: *Ens primum cognitum, but cognitio est effectus quidem veritatis*
 2. Q.1 Art. 2c: “Human Intellect measured by things not by the Divine Intellect” (vs. ontotheology)
Compositionality of onto-logical truth with reversal of arrows (\Leftrightarrow)
First Cause \rightarrow Things \rightarrow Human Intellect (Ontic)
Human Intellect \rightarrow Things \rightarrow First Cause (Logic)
 3. Q.1 Art. 9c: Human self-conscious way of knowing truth: “*It is therefore in this sense that intellect knows the truth as far as the intellect is able to reflect upon itself*” vs. non-intellective way of saying truth without knowing truth: “*However, truth is not in the sense as far as known by the sense itself: indeed, though it judges in a true way as to things, nevertheless it does not know the truth by which it judges in a true way.*”
- The “objective” (i.e., subject-related, self-conscious way) of knowing truth discloses human knowledge the wonderful world (Popper “Third World”) of **abstract truths (abstract logic, mathematics, metaphysics, and ethics)**, but it is not necessary for “saying” the **contingent or local truth of adequacy to things** before all in **practical moral judgements** (vs. Kant’s formal ethics).

Poinsot's semiotic interpretation of Aquinas. A *Holzweg* at the beginning of modernity

- Novelty of Poinsot's *De Signis* as to Augustine's theory of signs as to things. Augustine is lacking of Aquinas' distinction between *object* and thing → Suarez systematic substitution in his transcendental table of *thing* with *object* at the beginning of modernity → transcendental of knowing.
- Poinsot adds to *real* and *rational* relations the *transcendental* relations in language



Formal ontology of the sign in Peirce

- *On the Definition of Logic.* Logic is *formal semiotics*. A sign is something, *A*, which brings something, *B*, its *interpretant sign*, determined or created by it, into the same sort of correspondence (or a lower implied sort) with something, *C*, its *object*, as that in which itself stands to *C*. This definition no more involves any reference to human thought than does the definition of a line as the place within which a particle lies during a lapse of time. It is from this definition that I deduce the principles of logic by mathematical reasoning, and by mathematical reasoning that, I aver, will support criticism of Weierstrassian severity, and that is perfectly evident. The word “formal” in the definition is also defined (Peirce, *The New Elements of Mathematics* 54).
- The unity to which the understanding reduces impressions is the unity of a proposition. This unity consists in the connection of the predicate with the subject; and, therefore, that which is implied in the copula, or the conception of *being*, is that which completes the work of conceptions of reducing the manifold to unity (Peirce, *On a New List of Categories* 288).

Firstness (Peirce) as Etwas (Stein) because Peirce does not start from consciousness

- The novelty of Peirce semiotic analysis on this regard is that the unifying function of “being”, as copula between a subject, as “a term expressing a substance”, and a predicate, as “a term expressing a quality”, is that “quality, therefore in its widest sense is the first conception in order in passing from being to substance” (Peirce, *On a New List of Categories* 289). **This primacy of quality**, as to different implementations of the same quality into different substances, makes that what Peirce will denote in further writings as “**firstness**”. This is defined in such an original paper as “ground”, so that “reference to a ground cannot be prescindend from being, but being can be prescindend from it” (Peirce, *On a New List of Categories* 291).
- Peirce’s **firstness as a relation to a “qualitative ground”**, destined to play the role of “predicate” in the further proposition constitution, has thus an evident connection with Stein’s **second form of “Was”** of her formal ontology.

Secondness (correlate) in Peirce as Objekt in Stein

- Now, such a reference to a **ground** is introduced through a reference to a “correlate”, i.e., the thing or “substance” implementing such a quality. Therefore, what Peirce will denote in further writings as “**secondness**”, he denotes here as “**correlate**”, so that “reference to a correlate cannot be prescind from reference to ground; but reference to a ground may be prescind from reference to a correlate” (Peirce, *On a New List of Categories* 291).
- Peirce’s *secondness* as “**relation to a correlate**”, destined to play the role of “subject” in the further proposition constitution, has thus an evident connection with Stein’s **first form of “Objekt”** of her formal ontology.

Thirdness (interpretant) in Peirce as Sein in Stein

- Furthermore, the reference to a correlate in relation with a ground happens in occasion of a “comparison” between correlates relating (or not) themselves with the same ground. Therefore,
- Every comparison requires, besides the related things, the ground and the correlate, also a *mediating representation which represents the relate to be a representation of the same correlate which this mediating representation itself represents*. Such a **mediating representation** may be termed an **interpretant**, because it fulfils the office of an interpreter who says that a foreigner says the same thing which he himself says. (...) [Therefore] reference to an interpretant cannot be prescindend from reference to a correlate, but the latter can be prescindend from the former (Peirce, *On a New List of Categories* 292).
- Peirce’s *thirdness* as “**relation to an interpretant**”, destined to play the role of “copula”, because expressing the contextual (or interpretation-relative) subject-predicate dynamic “congruity” in the further proposition constitution, has thus an evident connection with Stein’s **third form of “Sein”** of her formal ontology.