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

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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:
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-things 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 \((P \subset Q): “mammalians include horses”\).

- 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) → “extended (intentional) mind” related with brain-environment quantum entanglement.

- Triadic nature of a significant token (=sign) according to Peirce’s categorical semiotics → algebra of relations → CT reflected into the triadic character of Stein’s ontology (Object-Something-Being ≈ 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 $\rightarrow$ formal ontology $\rightarrow$ dyadic articulation **Objekt-Etwas** as ontological foundation of semantics in predication
  - Necessity of an irreducibile triadic character of a signifying relation (Peirce): triadic articulation **sign-referent-interpretant** (not interpreter) $\rightarrow$ birth of the algebra of relations developed by Tarski during XX cent. Till the actual CT.

- Relationship with the irreducibile triadic character of Stein’s formal ontology: **Objekt-Etwas-Sein** for the opening of the immanent sphere to the two «horizontal» and «transcendental» spheres of being-for-a-consciousness.
Three ante-predicative foundations (=transcendental) of predication (=categorical)

1. Classical transcendental of being (\textit{ens})
2. Modern transcendental of knowing
3. Post-modern transcendental of language

- Risk of \textit{conventionalism} $\rightarrow$ necessity of attaining to the pre-linguistic level of \textit{semeiosis} (Poinsot-Peirce) for the constitution of \textit{signifying sign or symbol} $\rightarrow$ \textit{triadic character} of this constitution

- \textbf{Realism} in semiotics: analysis of the relationship among three categories of relations: \textit{real} (among things), \textit{rational} (among objects), \textit{linguistic} (among signs): John Poinsot.

- A sign is an intrinsic triadic relation because it is a «\textit{being for}» (\textit{esse per}) an interpretant of a (dyadic) relation (e.g., subject-predicate), and not simply a «\textit{being to}» (\textit{esse ad}) like all the other relations (either real or rational).
John Poinsot'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 (⇄)
     First Cause → Things → Human Intellect (Ontic)
     Human Intellect → Things → 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-intellectual 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 prescinded from being, but being can be prescinded 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 Pierce will denote in further writings as “secondness”, he denotes here as “correlate”, so that “reference to a correlate cannot be prescinded from reference to ground; but reference to a ground may be prescinded 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 fulfills 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 prescinded from reference to a correlate, but the latter can be prescinded 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.