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Transcendental Semiotics and the Paradigms of First Philosophy

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TRANSCENDENTAL SEMIOTICS AND THE PARADIGMS OF FIRST PHILOSOPHY *

by

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I. Exposition**

In order to expose the main purpose of my lecture, I must point out that I do not intend to give a historical account of First Philosophy. I intend rather to display the systematical conception of transcendental semiotics as First Philosophy. I shall try to realize that aim through an ideal-typical reconstruction and critique of some historically given positions of philosophy. In taking the licence of a rather simplified reconstruction of those historical positions of philosophy, I would like to account for the transcendental-semiotical presuppositions of modern (language-) analytical philosophy by claiming that transcendental semiotics may in fact be conceived as a new paradigm of First Philosophy. That is, as the completion of language-analytical-philosophy as the third historical paradigm of First Philosophy. As such, it may in fact supersede, or rather "suspend" and preserve in a Hegelian sense, the two preceding paradigms of First Philosophy, viz. ontology or metaphysics in the Aristotelian sense and critique of knowledge or philosophy of consciousness in the sense of Kant (or even in the sense of modern philosophy from Descartes through Husserl). In order to show this, I shall try to derive a series of possible abstractive or reductive fallacies from the well understood conception of the sign-function or semiosis and thereby ideal-typically reconstruct and account for some of the main shortcomings that are involved in the three paradigms of First Philosophy, and in some of their subparadigms.

II. The Triadic Sign-Relation and its Implication in the Light of Transcendental Semiotics.

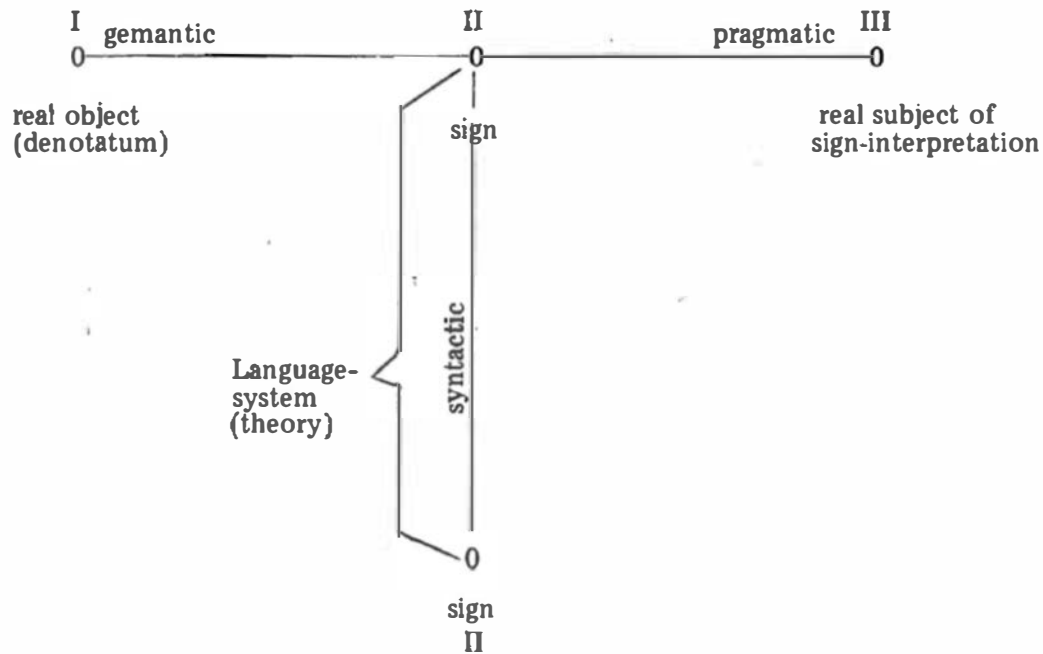
I start out by taking up the Peircean thesis that the sign-function or semiosis is an illustration of an irreducible triadic or three place relation, as it is expressed, e.g., in the following definition of Peirce's:

"A sign, or representation, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity."¹

The three elements or relatives of the triadic relation in this definition are the sign itself, its object which is denoted in some respect, and the addressee or interpreter of the sign. It is this explication of the triadic sign-relation that was taken as point of departure by C.W. Morris in his "Foundation of the Theory of Signs"² where it was made the basis of a three-dimensional semiotics through supplementing the semantic relation between the sign and its object and the pragmatic relation between the sign and its interpreter by the syntactic relation between signs within the frame of a sign-system or language. (See figure I.)

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FIGURE I



My motive for taking this Peirce/Morris-schema of semiosis or semiotics, respectively, as starting and vantage point for exposing the idea of a transcendental semiotics is provided by two interconnected facts of transcendental reflection upon the conditions of the possibility of intersubjectively valid thought.

On the one hand, the triadic sign-relation makes up a minimal basis element of any intersubjectively valid knowledge, since its object-meaning has to be mediated through the intersubjectively valid meaning of language-signs. On the other hand, any argument concerning the validity of knowledge or any other human validity-claim is itself a triadic sign of some sort, notwithstanding the fact that in dealing with arguments in terms of formal logic one usually abstracts from the pragmatic dimension of these signs, as e.g., from the fact that propositions as parts of arguments have to be communicated by somebody through speech-acts. Now arguments at the same time make up that condition of the possibility of intersubjectively valid philosophical thought behind which self-reflective thought cannot go back, since even solitary thought, being the "voiceless dialog of the soul with itself" according to Plato, must participate in the structure of public argumentation. Hence it seems suggestive, or even necessary, to take the semiotic structure of cognition and arguments as starting and vantage point for transcendental semiotics as actual possibility of fundamental grounding in philosophy.

Now from this program it follows that from the outset I have to assign an interpretation to the Peirce/Morris-schema of semiosis that, being transcendental-semiotic, deviates in some respects at least from Morris' interpretation. My

transcendental re-interpretation will refer to all three dimensions of the triadic sign-relation which, on Morris' account, are to be considered as many topics of either empirical-behavioristic or formal-constructive disciplines; viz. syntactics dealing with the relation between signs that makes up the grammatical structure of a language as a sign-system, semantics dealing with the relation between the sign and its real denotatum, and pragmatics, dealing with the relation between the sign and its user or interpreter, be it a speaker or a hearer.

First I have to make clear that talking about the semantical dimension of the sign-function as that of standing for, or denoting, real objects can only be justified by the fact that in what follows we are only dealing with the so called representative or, in Morris' terminology, designative "mode of signifying", or, in other words, with the function of speech as the mediator of cognition, as it is also regarded in the case of Carnap's use of the term semantic within the frame of his (semiotically founded) logic of science. So we can, in the present context, abstract from many other "modes of signifying", as e.g., "appraisive", "prescriptive" and "formative" ones, which also have a semantical dimension, according to Morris' later elaboration of his semiotics,³ not to speak of the later Wittgenstein's questioning the traditional absolutization of the designative or naming function of words in his conception of the diversity of language-games.

Second, I have to point out that, even under the abstractive presupposition of the representative function of signs in the service of cognition, we are not entitled to identify the semantical dimension with the sign's denotation of real objects as long as we abstract from the pragmatological dimension of sign-use, as it is done e.g., in empiric-linguistic semantics of language-systems, especially in F.de Saussure's "linguistique de la langue", and in formal constructive semantics, especially in Tarski's semantical explication of truth. For, as long as we abstract from the pragmatic dimension of people's communication or speech ("parole") in the context of situations we cannot deal with the possibility of identifying designated objects as real objects in space and time and hence are not entitled, in principle, to speak of denotata as objects of the semantical dimension, but only of designata, i.e., of objects of sign-reference within the frame of abstract semantical systems hence, eventually, of scientific theories. The designata as objects of the abstract semantic dimension of language-systems may eventually represent empty classes without a corresponding extension of identifiable denotata, or they may represent classes with a corresponding extension of fictive denotata, as e.g. witches or angels; or, finally, they may represent classes of theoretical entities, i.e., of denotata that may not be directly identified in space and time but whose assumption may only - at best - be indirectly legitimized, so to speak, in connection with a corroboration of the whole theory by way of its identifiable experiential consequences. This point has been recognized in modern logic of science since Carnap's acknowledgment that the problem of verification cannot be settled within the frame of semantics but only within the frame of pragmatics.

Furthermore, it is important to take notice of Peirce's semiotical insight that the function of identifying real objects in space and time cannot be fulfilled by purely conceptual signs or "symbols", in the Peircean terminology, but only by "indexical" expressions, as e.g., "this there", whose semantical reference cannot be

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conceived of independently of the pragmatic context of situation-bound sign-use. So, when in what follows I am talking about the real denotatum as an object of the semantical dimension of the sign-function, as it is suggested also by the diagram (see figure I), I shall always presuppose not the abstract semantical dimension of a language-systems, but the pragmatically integrated semantical dimension.

Thus far, my interpretation of the three-dimensional schema is in accordance, I think, with the general spirit of Morris' conception, as it was accepted by Carnap.⁴ But now I wish to introduce the main point of the idea of a transcendental semiotics which can no longer be covered by the Morris/Carnap-conception of semiotics.

I start out from the consideration that the sign-function through which our cognition of real objects is mediated - or, for that matter, the representative function of the language-systems or semantical frameworks through which the object reference of theories is made possible - cannot itself be philosophically adequate, i.e., thematized as a semantical object of the sign-function but must be rather considered as a condition of the possibility of describing and hence interpreting something as an object of intersubjectively valid theoretical knowledge. This view is not even rejected but, rather, reconfirmed by Carnap's conception of the function of "semantical frameworks" in his famous essay "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology".⁵ From the view-point of constructive semantics in the sense of Carnap and Tarski, one may of course argue that the sign-function or the function of language as a semantical framework of interpretative world-description may itself be made the object of semantical reference in a meta-language and so forth ad infinitum. I think, however, that this argument reconfirms rather than refutes my view. For it suggests that the actual function of language as a mediation of interpretation and intersubjectively valid representation of objects cannot, in principle, be objectified. Hence it turns out to be a transcendental condition of the possibility, rather than a possible object, of sign-mediated knowledge.

Also this view is reconfirmed rather than rejected, I think, by Carnap and his followers; for they themselves suggest that the function of philosophy is to be distinguished from that of empirical science by the circumstance that philosophers have to construct ideal languages or semantical systems as possible frameworks of the language of science. Thus constructive semantics, in a sense, has to practice the "Copernican turn", postulated by Kant, through projecting those quasi-transcendental frames that prescribe the form of possible appearance to the world in as far as it can be made the object of intersubjectively valid description.

However, if my transcendental interpretation of language-systems, i.e., of the syntactico-semantical part of semiosis, is justified, then the same interpretation with respect to the (integrative) pragmatic dimension of the sign-function must hold good; for, without it, the semantical dimension of reference cannot imply concrete denotation of real objects of knowledge in space and time, as we already have pointed out. Just as we cannot consider the semantical conditions of world-description as possible objects of that very description, but must rather ascribe a transcendental function to them, in the same sense we must assign a transcendental function to ourselves in so far as we are constructing and successfully interpreting language-systems as semantical frameworks of possible world-description.

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This seems indeed to be as plausible, in principle, as attributing a *transcendental* function to ourselves in so far as we are bringing forward validity-claims of propositions or arguments to be confirmed or contested by any virtual member of an unlimited community of argumentation. For in both cases we are not primarily playing a role that is empirically relevant in a psychological or sociological sense; we are rather taking over a role that obliges us to be in charge, so to speak, of the transcendental subject of knowledge or thought. This may be shown most convincingly through an examination of the current counterarguments to the possibility of a (transcendental-philosophical) abstraction from the empirical properties of ourselves as subjects of cognition or argumentation. For these counterarguments have at least implicitly to take the form of assertions like "I hereby assert that in making and judging statements we cannot abstract from the fact that we are individuals with specific biographies and socio-historical backgrounds, etc." Now this very argument against the possibility of the idea of a transcendental subject of cognition or thought shows that, by the first "we", in contradistinction to the second "we", it must appeal to ourselves in as far as we are in charge of the transcendental subject of thought.

The fact that we can make our validity-claims explicit by performative expressions like "I hereby state that. . ." gives also a hint as to how it is possible for us to know about the actual sign-function as condition of the possibility of thought which, as I have already pointed out, cannot be objectified, on principal. In fact, our *transcendental-semiotic* knowledge about the actual function of signs or, respectively, language as condition of the possibility of intersubjectively valid thought and hence knowledge may be conceived of as reflective radicalization, so to speak, of that reflective knowledge that is first brought to verbal expression through the self-referential performative parts of constative speech-acts. On the level of transcendental semiotics that reflective knowledge takes the form of propositions that are self-referential by their universal truth-claim. Should it be objected that self-referential speech must lead to semantical antinomies, in the present lecture I can only answer that on my *account* this talk rests on a confusion between formalized semantical systems, which are to be immunized a priori against any possible antinomies and hence must not contain self-referential propositions. The language of philosophy must take the risk and the advantage of the pragmatic self-referentialness of natural language, in order to talk about formalized semantical systems in general. This view is at least strongly supported by the fact that neither B. Russell in his semantical theory of types nor A. Tarski in his semantical (meta-logical) theory of meta-languages or language-stages could avoid using a special (philosophical) meta-language that cannot itself be placed into the infinite hierarchical order of types or, respectively, meta-languages which it is talking about. In fact, I am prepared to deal with the current renunciation (disavowal) of pragmatically self-referential speech and hence self-reflection of thought as being itself one of the abstractive and reductive fallacies to be uncovered and analyzed in the light of a transcendental-semiotic account of the triadic sign-relation.⁶

From this excursion into the problematic of philosophical self-reflection of thought we may come back to the claim that we must assign a transcendental interpretation not only to the syntactico-semantical part of the sign-function but

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also to its actual pragmatic dimension, i.e., to the dimension of our actual language-use, and in that context to the dimension of our constructing and successfully interpreting language-systems as semantical frameworks of possible world-description. Now this means that all philosophical talk about the problems of language-construction and interpretation, even if it is arguing for a purely conventionalist character of all semantical frameworks of possible world-description, fulfills the reflective function of a transcendental pragmatics within the frame of a transcendental semiotics. For, in so far as semantical frameworks are in fact conditions of the possibility of world-interpretation, philosophical talk about our construction and interpretation of semantical frameworks fulfills the function of a transcendental reflection on the subjective-intersubjective conditions of the possibility of world-interpretation. And, in addition, on the subjective-intersubjective conditions of the possibility of conventions lying at the ground of semantical frameworks. In fact, the question as to the subjective-intersubjective conditions of the possibility of conventions appears to me as the most radical question of a transcendental pragmatics, since it eventually brings to bear transcendental reflection even in the back, so to speak, of conventionalism which is usually considered as a radical alternative to transcendentalism.⁷

Now, at this point, my transcendental interpretation of the Morris/Carnap-scheme of three-dimensional semiosis or semiotics, respectively, definitively departs from the usual interpretation accepted in analytical logic of language and science. For, Morris and Carnap and their many followers in analytical philosophy take it as a matter of course that the pragmatic dimension of semiosis, i.e., interpretative use of signs or whole language-systems by human subjects, may be objectified as a topic of empirical-behavioristic pragmatics in principally the same way as the sign-mediated behavior of animals and human beings, i.e., in organisms, as it is investigated, say, by psycho- and socio-linguistics.⁸

Of course, as I already indicated, according to Morris and Carnap, empirical pragmatics, in the same way as empirical-syntactics and semantics, may have a formal constructivist pendant that provides it with a conceptual framework. But formal pragmatics, as it is conceived in analytical philosophy, has nothing to do with a self-reflective thematization of the conditions of the possibility of language-construction and interpretation but rather has been developed in the meantime as a semantization-strategy with respect to primarily subjective and self-reflective aspects of the actual pragmatic dimension (e.g., as in performatives and indexical expressions). These aspects of self-reflective speech-acts, which, in my opinion, may be considered as conditions of the possibility of human self-reflection and hence of human reason, are hopefully made the objects of a semantical reference by the meta-language of pure pragmatics. Eventually, in connection with a semantics of possible worlds which deals with propositional attitudes not as a topic of transcendental-pragmatic self-reflection of human speech and thought, but rather as a topic of epistemic and modal logic that accounts for the meaning of the different self-reflective attitudes in terms of the possible truth of the coordinated propositional contents in those possible worlds where facts were corresponding to the propositional contents.⁹

At best, I could claim a correspondence between my conception of a

transcendental-pragmatic dimension of semiosis and the fact that Carnap conceives of the choice of semantical frameworks, and hence of the pragmatical conventions concerning their construction and interpretation, as a matter of praxis rather than of theory as it is represented for him by the empirical sciences which answer the so-called internal questions that are made possible by the semantical frameworks. However, through his distinction between constructive praxis and empirical theory, Carnap does not renew the transcendental difference in the sense of Kant but rather pleads for a non-cognitivist conception of philosophy.

In the present context I shall not yet argue for the priority of my transcendental interpretation of semiosis and semiotics over the usual one. Instead I shall now turn to the application of the transcendently interpreted scheme of semiosis for the purpose of providing a distinction between and an ideal-typical reconstruction of the three paradigms of First Philosophy.

III. Possible Types of First Philosophy in the Light of Transcendental Semiotics.

If one takes the triadic sign-function or semiosis, as we have thus far, as the necessary mediation of world-interpretation and hence as a condition of the possibility of any cognition of reality, then one may in the first place introduce a rather clear cut distinction between three possible types of First Philosophy, according to whether the foundation of First Philosophy takes into consideration only the first, or the first and the third, or all three places of the triadic sign-relation, in order to account for the primary topic of philosophy. (The presupposed sequence of the places of the sign-relation has been marked by roman ciphers in our diagram; see figure I).

The three possible types of First Philosophy, distinguished according to the proposed semiotical order of succession, may be approximately identified with the three paradigms of First Philosophy as they actually followed one another in the history of philosophy. For it may be said that general metaphysics or ontology in the Aristotelian sense considers real being (I), as it may designate and denotate by naming signs (proper and general names), as the primary topic of philosophy. Furthermore, transcendental philosophy or critique of pure reason in the Kantian sense may be said to consider being (I) only in so far as it is a possible cognitive object of the transcendental subject or consciousness (III) as a topic of philosophy, without considering language or the sign-function as a transcendental condition of the possibility of intersubjectively valid world-interpretation and hence object-constitution. Finally, transcendental semiotics, as it has been outlined in the preceding, may be considered as a third paradigm of First Philosophy that considers being as possible object (denotatum and designatum) of sign-mediated world-interpretation and hence considers the (entire) triadic sign-relation as the primary topic of philosophy.

This first introduction of the three paradigms of First Philosophy stands of course in need of a great deal of further clarification which I shall try to give in what follows.

First I should perhaps make clear that from our schematic derivation of the

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paradigms of First Philosophy it does not follow that, e.g., the first paradigm, (ontology), would completely exclude epistemology and/or philosophy of language, or that the second paradigm, (transcendental philosophy), that considers being as possible object of knowledge would still completely exclude philosophy of language. Such an interpretation of the two first paradigms would not only contradict the historical facts but would also miss the point of the idea of paradigms of First Philosophy. This idea is illustrated by the fact that under the domination of the ontological paradigm questions of epistemology and of philosophy of language are dealt with only as questions of being. And again, by the fact that under the domination of the transcendental epistemological paradigm, questions of language-philosophy can be dealt with only as possible questions regarding certain special objects of knowledge (cognition).

Furthermore, it may strike you that transcendental semiotics itself figures, on the one hand, as a paradigm of First Philosophy and, on the other hand, serves as the basic idea from which the possibility of all three paradigms of First Philosophy is derived. Is there perhaps some sort of question-begging or at least some dogmatic prejudicing present here in the play?

My answer to this question is that the double function of transcendental semiotics in fact expresses the claim that transcendental semiotics is not simply a third type in a (random) enumeration of possible types of First Philosophy. Rather, it takes its place according to a sequential order which it is able to justify such that it may figure itself as a possible and necessary synthesis of the two preceding paradigms of First Philosophy. Thus my conception of a revolutionary succession of different paradigms of thought differs from that of Th.Kuhn¹⁰ in that it implies some sort of a Hegelian idea of possible progress in the history of human thought. Properly speaking, it does not imply any claim of a causally explicable and hence predictable necessity of progress. Rather, it implies the claim that the three paradigms of First Philosophy make up a hierarchical order of levels of critical reflection and also make up an order of necessary succession in the teleological sense without providing any guarantee of its being realized in advance of the facts of history.

Now, after taking a closer look at our schema of the triadic relation of semiosis, one might come to question our suggested derivation of the three paradigms of First Philosophy by the argument that there are still four other possible derivations apparently arbitrarily neglected in our approach thus far. In fact, why should we not be allowed to derive the following four possible types of First Philosophy from our schema? One that considers only real being (I) and signs or language (II) as primary topic of philosophy; one that assigns this dignity only to signs or language (II) and for the subject of sign-interpretation (III); and, finally, two (different) types that restrict the topic of First Philosophy to either signs (II) or to the human consciousness and its contents (III).

Now, I think that it is neither necessary to forbid these derivations nor difficult to coordinate conceivable types or paradigms of First Philosophy to them.

Thus, one may relate the last mentioned possibility to subjective idealism which was hypothetically supposed by Descartes before (previous to) his attempt to prove the existence of an external world and was adopted later by Berkeley and

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eventually refuted by Kant in his argument for the transcendental presupposition of the structure of external objects of experience by the (temporal) structure of inner experience.¹¹

The alternative possibility of distinguishing signs as the only primary topic of philosophy could be called semioticism and may be associated historically with some suggestions of the early Peirce which seem to dissolve the whole world (including nature and the human subject of cognition) into processes of semiosis.¹² In a sense, Carnap's constructive semanticism, which does not recognize either ontological or transcendental-epistemological problems that could not be reduced to empirical ones or be translated into the "formal mode" of dealing with syntactico-semantic frameworks, could also be associated with this type of First Philosophy.

The possibility, then, of a type of First Philosophy that only take signs and subjective sign-interpretation into regard could be called semiological idealism. It has perhaps only been hypothetically or approximately adopted in the history of philosophy, thus, e.g., by the later Berkeley who conceived of the world as a context of natural signs through which God is speaking to us.¹³

Finally, the most interesting of the four newly suggested types is the first one which only takes real being and signs or language into regard. For it must, I think, be considered as more or less realized by the thusfar developed paradigm of (language-) analytical philosophy. For, the early Wittgenstein's immersion of the transcendental subject of sign-interpretation into the transcendental-logical form of language that delimits the world of possible facts for us,¹⁴ transcendental self-reflection of the subjective-intersubjective conditions of sign-mediated world-interpretation has not been renewed in language-analytical philosophy. Instead, some sort of onto-semantics¹⁵ has been developed. Thus, for example, in the turn from Carnap's semanticism Quine's conception of ontological relativity¹⁶ or, in a very different way that sometimes comes close to our conception of transcendental pragmatics or semiotics, in Strawson's conception of the "Bounds of Sense".¹⁷

Having derived and tentatively illustrated the total of seven possible types of First Philosophy in light of our semiological scheme, we must face the question whether this fertility in our vantage-point must not overthrow or discredit our conception of the teleologically intelligible succession of just three paradigms of First Philosophy that would make up the backbone, of the internal history of philosophy, according to a certain developmental logic.

Now, the fact that all seven types could be derived from the transcendently interpreted scheme of semiosis in my opinion should, on the contrary, suggest that it might be possible to adapt the derivation of the last four types to that of the first three types. For example, by showing that the last four types may be understood as sub-types and hence sub-paradigms of the three main paradigms of First Philosophy. In order to show this, we should reflect upon how it actually was possible for us to derive the seven types or paradigms of First Philosophy from the transcendental-semiological presuppositions invested, so to speak, in our triadic or three-dimensional scheme of semiosis. What is the internal relationship of the seven derived paradigms to the presupposed transcendental scheme of semiosis? It seems clear from the outset that this question cannot be answered by any pythagorean-

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mathematical play with the possibilities of combination or isolation of the three places of the triadic sign-relation, unless some deeper interpretation is connected with the schematical heuristics. Nonetheless, let us facilitate the business of schematical heuristics by symbolizing the seven possible types of First Philosophy with the aid of the seven possible combinations of the three roman ciphers. Thus, we get the following seven items: (I), (II), (III), (I/II), (I/III), (II/III), (I/II/III).

As an interpretative answer to the question of the relationship between the seven paradigms and the triadic scheme of semiosis, I then would suggest first that besides the paradigm of transcendental semiotics which reflectively takes into regard all three places of the sign-relation as conditions of the possibility of a meaningful world, all the other six types are constituted by some abstraction. The abstraction by which each of these six types is constituted may easily be read from the pertaining symbolizations. Now, abstraction in First Philosophy may be methodologically justified so long as it is under control of transcendental reflection as abstraction from a dimension of semiosis; otherwise, I would suggest, an abstractive fallacy must come about. From this point of view one may consider all six possible types of First Philosophy besides transcendental semiotics as based on some type of abstractive fallacy.

But this formal-systematical consideration does not yet account for the privileged status of those three types I have distinguished as main paradigms of First Philosophy (viz. (I), (I/III), and (I/II/III)) in contradistinction to the other four types which were considered as mere sub-paradigms (viz. (II), (III), (I/II), (II/III)). Why, for example, should it not be plausible to regard ontology (I), semioticism or semanticism (II) and subjective idealism (III) as the fundamental paradigms of First Philosophy? Could they not have historically followed and replaced one another in this very order of sequence?

This last question compels us to connect the view-point of historical *ex post facto* understanding with the formal-systematical distinctions. Thereby, I think, it becomes clear, that to begin with, the sequence (I), (II), (III), even if we equate it for the moment with the sequence (I), (I/II/III), (I/III) and hence take the positions (II) and (III) as sufficient representations of transcendental semiotics and transcendental epistemology, does not make up a plausible order of historical succession for the paradigms of First Philosophy. The reason for its implausibility is that it suggests the following dialectics of critical self-reflection in the history of philosophy: the first step after the aporetic or skeptical discussion of the problems of being and nothing, would not have been the question whether or how it is possible at all to know the objective truth about being; but, rather, whether or how it is possible at all to communicate one's cognition through intersubjectively meaningful signs and thereby make possible intersubjectively valid knowledge.

Now, I think, not only the factual succession of the three paradigms of First Philosophy, but also the developmental logic of a possible radicalization of critical self-reflection in philosophy speaks against this order of succession. For, notwithstanding the fact that semiotical or language-analytical problems had to be dealt with from the beginnings of a propositional logic, it nevertheless seems to be only after the Kantian question as to the subjective conditions of the possibility of objectively valid knowledge that the question as to the semiotical conditions of the

possibility of intersubjectively valid (i.e. primarily intersubjectively meaningful) mediation of intersubjectively valid knowledge can be raised in its full critical significance.

This consideration becomes still more persuasive if we compare the anti-metaphysical suspicion of Kantian critique of knowledge and Wittgensteinian or Carnapian critique of language, respectively. For then it seems rather plausible to consider the idea that some or even all questions of metaphysics should be meaningless (or non-sensical) due to semantical confusions as a subsequent radicalization of the Kantian thesis that metaphysical questions are necessary but unsolvable for a finite reason (intellect) than the other way around. In other words, the idea that our questions may be meaningless for semiotical reasons seems to presuppose the consideration that answers cannot be given to certain questions for epistemological reasons.

To resume this point of developmental order, I think that already the Greek sophist, Gorgias, in his famous three theses, which he set up in reaction to the Eleatic dialectics of being and nothing, not incidentally set the stage for the subsequent succession of three paradigms of First Philosophy. For Platonic and Aristotelian ontology, Kantian or, for that matter, modern epistemology, and twentieth century language-analytical philosophy may be understood as responses on the challenge of Gorgias' three theses: First, there is nothing; second, even if there were something it could not be known; and even if it could be known, it could not be communicated.

But what about the justification of our claim that the developmental order of paradigms of First Philosophy is primarily represented by the type-sequence (I), (I/III), (I/II/III), i.e., ontology, transcendental epistemology, transcendental semiotics, rather than by ontology (I) being followed by other possible types that also have an affinity with epistemology and semiotics respectively, such as e.g., subjective idealism (III) and semioticism/semanticism (II), or semiotic idealism (II/III) and onto-semanticism (I/II)? This question becomes even more intriguing and urgent in view of the circumstance that within the factual course of the history of European philosophy, Berkeley's subjective or semiotic idealism in fact preceded Kant's transcendental idealism which included empirical realism and, last but not least, in view of the circumstance that the present stage of (language-)analytical philosophy is characterized by semanticism (Carnap, Tarski) and onto-semanticism (Quine, or for that matter "semantics of possible worlds") rather, than by the general adoption of something like transcendental semiotics, including the transcendental pragmatics of language.

In order to answer this question I should first remind you of my former thesis that the very fact that transcendental semiotics provides a basis for the derivation of the other six possible types of First Philosophy indicates its systematical priority as an all-embracing paradigm of First Philosophy. Thusfar we have elucidated this view-point only with respect to the claim of transcendental semiotics to suspend and preserve the functions of ontology and transcendental epistemology as preceding main paradigms of First Philosophy. It remains, then, to show, from the same point of view, that transcendental semiotics should also be capable of proving its priority as a fulfilled paradigm of First Philosophy with respect to its

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semiotical rivals, viz. semanticism and onto-semanticism. The preceding fulfilled paradigm of First Philosophy, transcendental epistemology, in a similar sense should be capable of proving its priority with respect to ontology as preceding the main paradigm and with respect to its epistemological rivals, viz. subjective idealism (or, for that matter, Humeian positivism) and semiotic idealism.

Now, by these theses, I have set up (designated) the main tasks of a critical reconstruction of the informal history of First Philosophy in the light of transcendental semiotics. At present I wish only to sketch roughly the strategy of my envisaged answers, because there is still a further objection to be dealt with against the sufficiency of the whole approach.

Regarding the priority of transcendental semiotics over its semanticist and onto-semanticist rivals with respect to the status and function of the fulfilled third paradigm of First Philosophy, I can only say this much at this point: Semanticism and Onto-Semanticism along the lines of the early Wittgenstein, B. Russell, Tarski, Carnap, Popper and Quine and even the language-pragmatical philosophy of the later Wittgenstein (in as far as it sticks to the pluralism of factual language-games and does not answer the question as to the conditions of his own capability of dealing with all of them) are positions of (language-) analytical philosophy that may be shown to be only provisory stages of the third paradigm of First Philosophy. For, they are based on abstractive fallacies with respect to a transcendental reflection of the integrative pragmatical dimension of semiosis.

Regarding the priority of transcendental epistemology as the fulfilled second paradigm of First Philosophy in comparison with its rivals, viz. subjective idealism and positivism, I must say a bit more at this point. I start out from the thesis that, in a sense Kantianism is able to supersede and save the functions of ontology by speaking of beings as possible objects of knowledge and especially by showing, against subjective idealism and positivism, that there is a crucial difference to be accounted for between the objective order of appearances in the sense of empirical realism and the subjective succession of ideas in a private consciousness. Moreover, the latter presupposes the former, rather than the other way around, as is supposed by subjective idealism since its hypothetical assumption by Descartes.

As a supplement to Kant's "refutation of idealism", one may also show that D. Hume's or even E. Mach's positivism, must in order to give meaning to its conception of sense-data or neutral elements of experience, necessarily presupposes some version of that very unity of consciousness which it denies in order to surmount the metaphysics of subjective idealism. Thereby it also may be shown to be only a deficient sub-paradigm of the modern philosophy of consciousness which has its paradigmatic form in a transcendental idealism that includes an empirical realism of objective beings.

Yet in regard to this Kantian claim which, in a sense, is equivalent to the claim of preserving or saving the indispensable functions of ontology by transcendental epistemology, a reservation must be expressed at this point. By his distinction between objects of experience as mere appearances and unknowable things-in-themselves, Kant has shown, against his intention, I think, that transcendental epistemology (by its combination of transcendental idealism and empirical realism) is not definitely capable of completely doing justice to and saving the functions of

ontology as a paradigm of First Philosophy. For, in order to enter into his system of philosophy, Kant has to presuppose unknowable things in themselves as causally affecting our senses. Thereby he is in fact presupposing a piece of preKantian ontology that he can neither satisfy nor supersede by his own conception of transcendental idealism conjoined with empirical realism. For the causally effective function of things-in-themselves, according to Kant's presuppositions, cannot be conceived of as a function of the category of causality with respect to the formal constitution of the objects of experience but must rather be presupposed as a metaphysical-ontological cause of the material constitution of experience in general. I think that this central aporia of the Kantian system, again and again recognized since the day of Fr.H.Jacobi,¹⁸ cannot be overcome, in principle, within the frame of transcendental epistemology as paradigm of First Philosophy. But may be dissolved within the frame of transcendental semiotics, which has to be shown.

Within the present context I must, however, take into consideration still one other possible objection against the whole approach of a transcendental semiotics that stands in close connection to the residual problematics of metaphysical ontology, as it has been identified as implied in Kant's doctrine of unknowable things-in-themselves.

This residual problematics may be brought to bear on transcendental epistemology not only with respect to the being of things-in-themselves behind the possible objects of experience but also with respect to the being of (the same?) things-in-themselves behind the transcendental subject of knowing. In fact, Kant himself makes use of such a metaphysical presupposition first in his solution of the antinomy of freedom of the will versus causal determinism and again in his supposition of the autonomous legislation of the will of the "intelligible I" in his Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals. But still in an other and more radical sense, one may claim that any type of transcendental epistemology or philosophy of consciousness must tacitly presuppose some answer to the question of the being of the transcendental subject or consciousness and its functions. Now, this very question may also be raised with respect to the ontological conditions of the possibilities of sign-interpretation and hence may also be considered a serious objection against the priority of the (third) paradigm of transcendental semiotics over the (first) paradigm of ontology. For it seems to be an argument against any priority-claim of the transcendental philosophy of the conditions of the constitution of being over ontology as the philosophy of being itself.

This objection may be connected with, and further illustrated by, another objection that concerns the fact that until now I have not really shown that all historical paradigms of First Philosophy (ie., all great philosophies that have represented that claim) may in fact be derived as possible paradigms or sub-paradigms from the transcendentially interpreted scheme of semiosis. This was not shown with respect to the modern philosophies of being represented by Hegel, Marx and Heidegger. These modern philosophies of being, notwithstanding their differences, may be characterized precisely by the fact that they ask and try to answer the question of what being is with respect to the subject or the united subjects of knowing and of communication. Must not their approach necessarily transcend that of a transcendental semiotics as well as that of a transcendental

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epistemology?

At the conclusion of this lecture, I can only point, by some programmatic remarks, to the envisaged strategy of answering these last two interconnected questions as to the ontological status of semiosis and to the possibility of doing justice also to the modern philosophies of being from the vantage-point of transcendental semiotics.

First, I would like to point out that the modernity of the philosophies of Hegel, Marx and Heidegger as philosophies of being lies in the fact that they are dealing with the history and the historicity of being including the being or substance of the human mind or consciousness. Now, with respect to this problematic, I first of all wish to state my systematical claim that it can be shown to be impossible a priori to deal philosophically with history without doing justice to the transcendental status of the theoretical truth-claims and normative practical validity-claims of the human subjects of history and of cognition of history. For, history cannot be adequately conceived of as simply a natural process of change to be completely objectified and eventually nomologically explained as a reality (that is) independent of its being continued and continuously altered by human theory and subjective praxis. Rather, it must be defined from the outset as an (irreversible) process of continuous dialectical mediation of theory and praxis. That is, as a process that comprizes, in principle, the human attempts of recognizing and rightly continuing this very process. Hence it can only be adequately dealt with by those philosophies that are able to cope with their own validity-claim as a possible (if not necessary) result of history. Therefore, it may be further postulated that an adequate philosophy of the history of being cannot contradict the type of transcendental philosophy that does not prevent us from considering the human subjects of knowledge and action (notwithstanding their transcendental status as carriers of truth-claims and normative validity-claims) as the real beings belonging to real history. Now, it is precisely this possibility that is opened up by transcendental semiotics, in so far as it poses the transcendental language-game, which prevades all factual language-games due to the communicative and virtual argumentative competence of man, in the place of an extra-mundane pure transcendental consciousness and thereby surmounts "transcendental idealism" in the Kantian sense.

This general thesis may be provisionally elucidated by some remarks about the merits and limitation of Hegel's, Marx's, and Heidegger's philosophies from the perspective of our approach.

Hegel, in a sense, can be considered as the very father or inaugurator of that philosophy of history that, as I claimed, must account for its own transcendental status as the possible (or even necessary) result of history. Thusfar his conception of the history of being or substance as possible subject of its own cognition does not at all overthrow transcendental philosophy as such. Rather, for the first time it claims to show the possibility, and moreover even the actuality, of a complete mutual mediation of transcendental idealism and quasi-Aristotelian ontology of substance. With respect to transcendental reflection upon the conditions of the possibility of cognition (knowledge), Hegel goes even beyond Kant by taking into regard the knowledge-claim of critical-reflective philosophy itself up to the point of knowledge of knowledge. Although he simultaneously criticizes so called "philos-

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ophy of reflection” including Kantianism, he does so by understanding his own reflective science of the appearances of consciousness (in the Phenomenology of Spirit) as self-movement of the idea in its development from being in itself through “being for itself” to “being in itself and for itself”. I think that a true core of this approach of a dialectical mediation between transcendental idealism and ontology of history may be preserved by transcendental semiotics.

The weakness, though, of Hegel’s approach, which made it appear to the Young Hegelians as the conclusion of theoretical metaphysics that had to be surpassed by something beyond philosophy, lay in Hegel’s claim, or suggestion of a total mediation of ontology and transcendental idealism of consciousness, and hence of the material of objective experience and the form of conceptual understanding. And a total mediation of reflective theory and subjective praxis, from the vantage-point of an a priori conceptual understanding that has already attained the point of ultimate and hence absolute knowledge. By this suggestion of an absolute theoretical standpoint at the end of history, Hegel speculatively played over the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical reason. That is to say, the problematic to be faced by the freedom of decision and of existential engagement with respect to the unknown future. It was this a priori of an absolute theoretical metaphysics of history that urged the Young Hegelians, and among them Kierkegaard and the young Marx, to project philosophies of existential or social praxis that sometimes were considered as transgressing the very idea of philosophy.¹⁹ At the same time, it became clear that Hegel’s speculative anticipation of the theoretical truth of the whole of historical being could not do justice to the difference of transcendental philosophical reflection and empirical cognition by sensual experience as it was supposed by Kant and was to become the breaking off point from Hegelianism by the empirical sciences in the name of positivism.

Regarding these shortcomings of Hegel’s system of total mediation with respect to sensuous experience and the need for practical engagement toward the future, I consider it possible to show that transcendental semiotics may provide a sort of preserving correction of Hegel’s approach in three respects. First, with the aid of Peirce’s analysis of different epistemological (cognitive) sign-functions it can be shown that the truth about indexical expressions testifying to sensuous certainty mediates between Hegel’s position in his famous opening chapter of the Phenomenology of Spirit and Feuerbach’s critique of it (and thus between idealism and materialism or, respectively, positivism). Second, with the aid of some ideas of C.S. Peirce and J. Royce about the indefinite community of interpretation, to be postulated, in a sense, as the transcendental subject of valid cognition of the level of transcendental semiotics, it can be shown that Hegel’s speculative Aufhebung of the truth of the whole history of being into the reflective monologue of one finite philosopher may in fact be corrected in favor of the dialog of all²⁰ rational beings,²¹ that is to be mediated through the progress of empirical science. But this correction of Hegel can even preserve and reconfirm Hegel’s idea of a necessary anticipation of the absolute truth by transforming it into a transcendental-semiotical postulate of the possibility, in principle, of coming to consensus about meaning and truth within the frame of the infinite dialogue of the indefinite

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community of interpretation. Finally, it can be shown that the introduction by transcendental semiotics of an ideal community instead of a self-sufficient I as transcendental subject brings about a radical new perspective with respect to the problems of practical reason, or of the mediation between theory and praxis. But this last point may be provisionally illustrated by some remarks about the post-Hegelian philosophies of the mediation, or separation, between scientific theory and subjective-intersubjective praxis.

The dissolution of the Hegelian system of absolute (speculative-theoretical) mediation of theory and praxis in the nineteenth century finally led to a kind of complementarity system of positivism or scientism without practical reason and irrational existentialism of private praxis which was to become the basic ideology of the bourgeoisie in the western world of the twentieth century. On the other side, Marx's ingenious conception of a critical philosophy of praxis (or of dialectical mediation between critical theory and subjective praxis) partly under his own hands and definitely under the hands of Engels and Lenin, turned into a dogmatical ontology of historical being that is supposed to be capable of totally mediating between scientific theory and the subjective praxis of mankind even with regard to the unknown future. Seen as a theoretical philosophy from the point of view of our account of the intelligible succession of three paradigms of First Philosophy, Marxism by its objectivist-scientistic transformation into ontological "Diamat" underwent a regression into a pre-Kantian type of First Philosophy, that is to be considered as anachronistic on our account.

The same is true with respect to those sociologist-naturalist and, for the matter, "Structuralist" accounts of history that understand themselves as overtaking or making obsolete First Philosophy from an empirical-theoretical perspective outside of philosophy. This has to be shown in more detail through a systematical derivation of naturalistic fallacies as abstractive and reductive fallacies in the light of our scheme of semiosis as precondition of object-constitution.

As a philosophy of historical being even with respect to future being, Marxism has to be valued also as practical philosophy that is to be confronted to the practical aspect of the Western complementarity system. In this respect, it may be shown that, by claiming to solve ethical problems of human praxis by a theory of the necessary course of history into future, Marxism became a dogmatic counterpart of the Western ideological complementarity system of positivism/scientism and existentialism by settling down as the Eastern integration-system of "Diamat".

Now, it may be shown that this ideological East-West-constellation in the twentieth century amounts to a philosophical dilemma with respect to the problem of ethics in the age of science;²² for the alternative of the Western complementarity system and the eastern integration-system turns out to be an alternative between personal freedom and free science without intersubjectively binding ethical norms, values, or aims, on the one hand, and the dogmatic, fixed and institutionalized mediation of theory and praxis without a change of mediation through the free decisions of conscience of single human persons as citizens on the other hand. In view of this dilemma, I think it possible to show that on the basis of transcendental semiotics, or, for that matter, of transcendental pragmatics, an

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ultimate foundation of intersubjectively binding ethical norms may be provided through surmounting the methodical solipsism of traditional philosophy of consciousness in favor of the transcendental a priori of the communication-community: Furthermore, it can be shown, I think, that a dialectical philosophy of the undogmatic reconstruction of social history and an ethical strategy for the radiation of theory and praxis with respect to the future may be outlined by starting from the teleological postulate that the ideal communication-community has to be realised within the real one under the historical conditions of the survival of mankind as a real community. And within the frame of this program a critical-emancipatory theory of social reality of neo-marxist inspiration may find its place.

From this programmatical point of view, I may finally say some words about the relationship between transcendental semiotics (which includes transcendental pragmatics and transcendental hermeneutics²³), and the last great attempt of a foundation of First Philosophy as a philosophy of the history of being, as it has been displayed by Martin Heidegger. Having myself started out in philosophy from interpreting Heidegger's transformation of the Husserlian phenomenology as a hermeneutics of speech and of language, respectively²⁴ I would like to point out that I still see the great achievement of this philosophy in its account of the historical events, not to be disposed of scientifically, but rather achieved by the pre-scientific workings of mythos, poetry, and the arts, of the disclosure of meaning as the precondition of possible truth and falsehood of propositions.²⁵ I even think that these Heideggerian perspectives may be liable to be further displayed in the future, along with Cassirer's philosophy of "symbolic forms" and together with a reconstruction of topics along the lines of G. Vico and the modern conceptions of a historical-philosophical topics,²⁶ within the hermeneutical part of semiotics.

However, I also have come to the conviction that the normative problems of the conditions of the possibility of intersubjective validity within the realm of theoretical and practical reason cannot be thematized, let alone solved, along the lines of a Heideggerian philosophy of the "fate of being" (*Seinsgeschick*) which claims to supersede the Western philosophy of subjectivity (*Subjektivität*) including the autonomy-claim of human reason through an "attentive" (*andochtiges*) thinking that justifies its validity-claims by its belonging to (*Zugehörigkeit* or even *Hörigkeit*) - the fate of being. I am afraid that this type of thought, along with certain stripes of Marxism, of structuralism, and of functionalistic system-theory, may succeed in rendering obsolete (together with the bourgeois illusion of a theoretical and practical autonomy of the solipsistic subject) the very idea of a human subject of theoretical and practical validity-claims and of solidary responsibility. In view of this situation, I have come to think that, instead of trying to overcome (*verwinden*) the philosophy of the "transcendental subject" together with pre-Kantian metaphysics, (or, for that matter, trying to dissolve human subjectivity into anonymous structures) we should rather try to think of the transcendental subject of human cognition and of human praxis as something superindividual, but interpersonal. That is, as an instance of intrinsic solidarity that we must counterfactually presuppose but still have to realize as ideal communication-community.

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Thus I would indeed claim that transcendental semiotics as transcendental pragmatics and transcendental hermeneutics may also cope with the challenge of Heidegger's philosophy of being (and of structuralism, for that matter) from the vantage-point of a transformed idea of transcendental subjectivity.

Notes:

*The present lecture is essentially identical with the first of my Ernst Cassirer-lectures about "Transcendental Semiotics as First Philosophy", delivered at Yale University in March 1977. This circumstance may explain and eventually provide an apology for the rather schematic and programmatic character of my arguments. They have in fact the function of an introductory exposition of those topics that are to be dealt with in more detail in the following lectures. The Ernst Cassirer-lectures as a whole are to be elaborated for publication with Yale University Press.

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¹ C.S. Peirce, Collected Papers, ed. by Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Harvard University Press, 1931-35, 2nd. ed. 1960, vol. II, § 228.

² C.W. Morris, Foundation of the Theory of Signs, Internat. Encyclopædia of Unified Science, vol. 1, No. 2, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938.

³ Cf. C.W. Morris, Signs, Language, and Behavior, New York: G. Braziller, 1946.

⁴ Strictly speaking, this assessment of concordance is already doubtful. For it seems clear to me that the fact that the real object of cognition can only be considered to be the object of the pragmatically integrated semantic dimension of the sign-relation implies already that the idea of a satisfactory explication to "truth" to be provided by pure semantics must amount to an abstractive fallacy. This does not mean to equate the problem of truth-explication with that of verification but, rather, to postulate a truth-explication on the basis of (a transcendental semiotics of) the triadic sign-relation.

⁵ R. Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology", in: Revue Intern. de Philos., 4 (1950), 20-40; repr. in R. Carnap, Meaning and Necessity, Univ. of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. 1956.

⁶ Cf. my essay "Types of Rationality to-day: the Continuum of Reason between Science and Ethics", Proceedings of the International Symposium Rationality To-day, Ottawa Oct. 1977, ed. by T. F. Geracts, Ottawa University Press.

⁷ Cf. my essay "Sprechakttheorie und transzendente Sprachpragmatik zur Frage ethischer Normen", in K.-O. Apel (ed.), Sprachpragmatik und Philosophie, Frankfurt a.M. : Suhrkamp, 1976, 10-173.

⁸ For a critical examination of this approach see my Introduction into C.W. Morris, Zeichen, Sprache und Verhalten, Dusseldorf: Schwann, 9-66.

⁹ Even if the program of dealing with the epistemologically relevant problems of pragmatics within the frame of a semantics of possible worlds should be

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successful - as an extension, so to speak, of that projection of actual thought ("Thirdness" in Peirce's terminology) into the realm of structural possibilities ("Firstness" of "Thirdness") that always was the business of mathematics and formal logic - , even then the question of the transcendental (subjective-inter-subjective) conditions of the possibility of the constitution of the notion of "possible worlds" remains to be answered. - Cf. on this question Z. Vendler, "On the Possibility of Possible Worlds", in: Canadian Journal of Philos., V, 1, 1975, 57-71.

- ¹⁰ Cf. Th. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, University of Chicago Press, 1962
- ¹¹ Cf. I. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 2nd ed. 274-9 Cf. also P.F. Strawson, The Bounds of Sense, London: Methuen, 1966, 125 ff.
- ¹² Cf. e.g. C.S. Peirce, Coll. Papers, V, § § 285 and 313 f.
- ¹³ Cf. e.g. G. Berkeley, New Theory of Vision, § § 51, 159; further The Principles of Human Knowledge, § 44; further Siris, § 254.
- ¹⁴ Cf. L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus logico-philosophicus, 5.62, 5.632, 5.64, 5.641.
- ¹⁵ Cf. G. Janoska, Die sprachlichen Grundlagen der Philosophie, Graz 1962, and E.K. Specht, Sprache und Sein, Untersuchungen zur sprachanalytischen Grundlegung der Ontologie, Berlin 1967.
- ¹⁶ Cf. W.V. Quine, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969.
- ¹⁷ P.E. Strawson, The Bounds of Sense, loc. cit. (see note 11).
- ¹⁸ Cf. F.H. Jacobi, Gesammelte Werke, Leipzig 1812-25, vol. II, 304 Cf. also Strawson, The Bounds of Sense, loc. cit, esp. Part Four.
- ¹⁹ Cf. for an overview K. Löwith, Von Hegel zu Nietzsche, Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1941, esp. I Part, II and III.
- ²⁰ Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960, 351; cf. also K.-O. Apel, "Szientismus oder transzendente hermeneutik", in R. Bubner et alii (eds.), Hermeneutik und Dialektik, Festschrift für H.-G. Gadamer, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1970, vol.I, 105-44.
- ²¹ Cf. C.S. Peirce, Coll. Papers, VIII, § 13.
- ²² Cf. my essays "Das Apriori der Kommunikationsgemeinschaft und die Grundlagen der Ethik" (in K.-O. Apel, Transformation der Philosophie, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, vol. II, 358-436) and "Conflicts of Our Time and the Problem of Political Ethics", in W. Dallmayr (ed.), From Contract to Community: Political Theory at the Crossroads, Marcel Decker, 1978.
- ²³ Cf. my essay quoted under note 20.
- ²⁴ Cf. the "Einleitung" of my book Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante zu Vico, Bonn: Bouvier, 1963, 2nd ed. 1975.
- ²⁵ Cf. E. Tugendhat, Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger, Berlin 1967,

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and Heidegger's subsequent self-correction in Zur Sprache des Denkens,
Tubingen 1969, 76 f.

²⁶ Cf. my book quoted under note 24.