A. Bogusławski

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF AN ITEM
IN LINGUISTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Once again I have the honour and pleasure of addressing Jurij Derenikovitch, in my incessant deepest admiration; this time on the occasion of His becoming an octogenarian. We wish all of us many happy returns of the day!

In my 2003 paper which was concerned with certain ideas of His I recalled one perhaps not quite uninteresting coincidence.

It was in the great 1964 Moscow «InJaz» symposium (where He was one of the most brilliant speakers and I, unbeknownst to Him, a silent participant) and in the memorable 8th issue of *Mašinnyj perevod i prikladnaja lingvistika* with the equally memorable article by I. Mel'čuk and A. Zholkovskij that a new important stream of linguistic research began to assume its growingly distinct, ripe and influential shape. Young, and not so young, Russian scholars acknowledged, with much clarity, the fact that no viable account of how language works can be given without an understanding of 'senses' behind the words, as well as of the interaction between the senses, more often than not, of compound senses, i. e. senses consisting, in a regular compositional way, of certain microsenses; moreover, in a certain way did they acknowledge the fact that that understanding can be achieved in no other way than by gaining knowledge of what knowledge itself, knowledge of just whatever, consists in.

To my mind, they made no reference to Leibniz, the most important and representative thinker among those insisting on the necessity of an ultimate recourse, in both scientific and philosophical reflection, to the «alphabet of human thought» (*alphabetum cogitationum humanarum*, as Leibniz dubbed it) and making some steps on their ways that would, as they hoped, lead to ultimately putting their fingers on it. Nor did the Russian colleagues, as far as I remember, make any reference to Hjelmslev [Hjelmslev 1953] and his Copenhagen school (with H. S. Sørensen in particular, cf. his [Sørensen 1958]) where the leader's idea of «figures of content» marked a revival of the old program.

Those kinds of reference were made, on the other hand, in certain attempts undertaken in Poland to start a systematic reflection in the same general mould, otherwise known, in its fundamental traits and motivation, ever since old times, notably, from Aristotle on. Later on, this reflection evolved into a huge scholarly output belonging to Anna Wierzbicka (beginning with Wierzbicka [Wierzbicka 1969; 1972]) and her

(at bottom, Australian) school (with, as I once put it, Cliff Goddard in the capacity of the «second-in-command»).

The coincidence affecting the two trends I have mentioned lay in the fact that both the Russian and the Polish endeavour began in the same years immediately preceding the mid-sixties. Their roots and routes were nonetheless initially independent. And they are still internally different (Jurij Derenikovitch [Derenikovitch 1994] made it abundantly clear), their fruitful co-operation (which quickly developed) notwithstanding: the differences between the two streams productively stimulate their partners' research efforts.

It is immediately clear that elucidation of the sense structure underlying all speech cannot be indifferent to what people are interested in beyond their concern with language-internal properties, relations and problems. No one can deny that at least very much of what happens in speech is related to things other than speech itself, to things any speaking person *as a speaking person* accepts as *indisputably* given to them before they start to speak, e. g., given to them as infants. Moreover, everybody is ready to claim that whatever speech products there are of the kind of the Spanish *o le!*, products that are self-contained and in a way alien with regard to those external things, they can only exist because otherwise, completely independently, utterances exist that are approached basically as loaded with either 'truth' or 'falsity', i. e. with possible knowledge of those independent things (recall Plato's words in *Phaidros*: to speak and not to touch upon truth has never been and will never be practicable). And this property of speech is in no way limited to some particular subject matter or another; it is related to *everything*.

Now, 'everything' is no doubt a matter to be dealt with in one special kind of human reflection: in philosophy. Thus, language in its semantic side must be an object of both linguistic and philosophical investigation. This applies, notably, to the research domain where we reach the *bottom* level of 'senses': these are equally pertinent to both falsity *and truth* (in the latter's all-embracing scope). Therefore, adequate cognition of that level is really indistinguishable from what one can know about the most general features of the Reality (as a whole).

Perhaps what has been characteristic of the Polish part of the Russian-Polish alliance (as referred to above) is, apart from some other *spécialités de deux maisons*, the fact that, in addition to the Poles' purely linguistic concerns, they somehow have been more keenly interested in the philosophical aspects of the semantic research. This must not be overemphasized: e. g., V. Ivanov's, B. Uspenskij's, V. Uspenskij's, Arutjunova's and her collaborators', Padučeva's and colleagues', Apresjan's, Mel'čuk's and their followers', Chrakovskij's and St. Petersburg school's representatives', Šatunovskij's and many other Russian scholars' deep linguistic insights that may be valuable to philosophical matters can in no way be overlooked (I apologize for my perhaps not quite competent enumeration).

Be it as it may (I mean the above comparison of the two milieus), I am going to concentrate here on a concise *synopsis* of what I have managed to state as a set of the main conclusions of my personal exercise in the kind of contemporary philosophical thought known as *linguistic phenomenology* (this label has come from J. L. Austin) and at

the same time in an implementation of the abovementioned «semantic primes» research program. I am drawing on my various publications, in particular, on my [Bogusławski 2007; 2008]. Let me emphasize that what I can achieve here is just compiling a list of my central claims, with no more than some hints at how they are derived.

I shall divide the entire body of statements making up my reasoning (to be merely sketched out) into two parts: the methodological part and the substantive part.

Methodology of Investigation

1. The object: (the whole of) the Reality = everything that is or may be known.

The equation is motivated thus: whatever is said without a knowledge claim appended to it loses its possible status of tentatively corresponding to some part of the Reality.

2. The aim: knowledge of whatever is pertinent to the Reality *as a whole* and has a correspondingly general character (as opposed to whatever pertains to certain *particular* domains of the Reality only).

[Comment on 1, 2. The «Unitarian» and holistic approach to philosophical matters voiced in 1, 2 is, basically, common ground in philosophy.]

Conditions of how the aim can be attained.

3. The Reality (as a whole) cannot be shown. It can only be spoken about. It can be spoken about in that 'knowledge' can be spoken about.

4. Knowledge consists in *distinguishing comparable* states of affairs in contradictory pairs. Therefore, knowledge of the Reality can only be stated about *constituents* of the Reality, never: about the Reality itself, i. e. the whole of it, as just one subject on a par with all the others. The reason is that the Reality is *not a member in a contradistinction* to anything: it covers everything.

A postulate concerning the way the aim is to be attained.

5. Knowledge about constituents of the Reality must be established by disengaging *content constituents of **sentences***.

This postulate is a consequent in an entailment whose antecedent is equal to the conjunction (1 ∧ 2 ∧ 3 ∧ 4) above; the conjunction is taken to be true; thus, *modus ponens* does apply here.

The claim that the aim can be attained and its justification.

6. With respect to 'knowledge', sentences are true, false, absurd, nonsensical, unclear.

True sentences exist necessarily (a proof of this claim, as well as of the more basic claim that, necessarily, 'someone knows something', is forthcoming [but is not given here]).

Therefore ***common*** content constituents to be found in the totality of sentences, and thus in ***true*** sentences as well, truthfully represent the general constituents of the Reality. To fix those common content constituents just *i s* to fix the *general* knowledge of the Reality that is sought for (nothing else can possibly count as such *general* knowledge).

Conditions of how the possibility stated in 6 can be materialized.

7. The way of how to fix content constituents of sentences must correspond to the properties of the functor 'know that'.

This functor requires a real **multiplicity** of (a) epistemic subjects, (b) epistemic objects, (c) contradictory contrasts of the attributes of the objects, in each of these categories and in mutual relations of their elements. This multiplicity (= separability = existence) of the elements can only be guaranteed by eliciting the corresponding ***proportions*** (these being implied by the functor 'know that' as constituting its very nature).

Program.

8. The conjunction (6 ∧ 7) entails the following program.

Content constituents of sentences are being fixed unequivocally in the course of a thoroughgoing search for **basic semantic-syntactic structures** (in accordance with the requirements of the functors 'know that' and 'say that').

Main substantive results

1. There are two strictly parallel 4-argument **basic indefinable semantic-syntactic structures** (in their *full* forms) which can be recovered in all languages and which ultimately subsume all states of affairs:

> *someone **knows about** _ that _, not: _*
> *someone **did with** _ so that _, not: _.*

Accordingly, there are 4 basic primes jointly covering the whole of the Reality. In addition to the above 2 functors, there are the two referential, and necessarily singular only, primes: 'someone' and 'something' (it was Wierzbicka's great achievement of 1972 to put them in place of the idle *unique* 'object', or Kant's *Ding*, or Bolzano's *Etwas*, or H. Cohen's *Ichts*). Both of them appear in a multiplicity which can be represented by subscripts, e. g., *someone$_i$, someone$_j$*; it is this multiplicity that secures the necessary proportions (as mentioned above). Both of them can appear in the places for epistemic objects and patients, respectively, as marked by the blanks «_» next to *about* and *with*, respectively. But only objects called *someone* are both knowers and agents. The contrasting attributes (next to *that*) are in the scope of 'something'.

The prime 'someone' covers all organisms. This is because wherever a subject is described in terms of the above basic functors, it must be called *someone* (cf. * *something knows that* …, but: + *That fly knows that there is honey on the plate.*, where necessarily admissible pronominalization *must* be in terms of *someone*).

The prime 'something' covers everything else in the mutually irreducible categories: inanimate / spatial objects, attributes, events, states of affairs, expressions, the Reality.

The first of these categories, inanimate objects, and thus 'space', is necessary throughout. The reason is as follows: the structures in question are finite; embeddings such as *a knows that b knows that c did* … or *a did with someone b so that someone b did* … etc., involving only objects called *someone* and the two functors, cannot by themselves warrant the necessary finiteness of all particular states of affairs; it is only where ultimately

some object(s) in the category 'something', i. e. inanimate object(s), co-constitute(s) a given state of affairs as known to someone, the finiteness becomes warranted.

2. All states of affairs, *including states of knowledge*, are real in so far as they are known to someone, in their contradistinction to what is contradictory to them (and what thus represents unreal states of affairs). Therefore, the Reality includes, of necessity, omniscience in its contradistinction to limited knowledge combined with ignorance (the exact proofs are rather involved and are omitted here).

These properties, both ordinary knowledge and omniscience, can only be real if they are separable in a proportional arrangement (which, let me repeat it once again, is implied by the nature itself of 'know that'). Their separability is secured by the fact that knowledge is always concomitant to, but also distinct from, 'doings' (while at the same time being distributed in the multiplicity of epistemic subjects / agents, and thus being separated from them, too). (A terminological reservation. Although 'doing', in its perfective sense, cf. *did*, must be kept distinct, above all, from such 'actions' or 'reactions' as those characteristic of, say, billiard balls, which ***are not doings***, henceforth I shall use the word *act* instead of the word *doing*; I shall do so for purely stylistic reasons.)

Limited knowledge is combined with non-omnipotent acts. Omniscience is combined with omnipotence, i. e. with omnipotent acts each of which in particular is finite, but whose total scope is not in any way limited (and necessarily involves, owing to the proportionality principle, generation of more universes than one). This truly «creative» act gives origin to the necessary spatial boundary conditions for the otherwise equally necessary *category* of non-omnipotent subjects and their acts (each *particular* subject or act in that category of course is *not* necessary).

The subject of omnipotence / omniscience (as a necessary entity) is in a way recognized (and *called* 'God') also by those who overtly reject His existence. He is so recognized, that is, to the extent that the following conditions are satisfied. First, the persons in question recognize the semantic / logical facts consisting in the circumstances (i) — (ii), viz. (i): acts (which anyway make up an undeniable huge part of the Reality) are distinct from spatial events and cannot be brought about by the latter, (ii): any act instantiates the structure with an agent who at the same time is a «knower» (notice that I do not mention here anything «esoteric» in the way of «mind», «intellect» or the like) and in that double capacity is called *someone* (this is simply how the word is commonly understood). Second, they comprehend the *question* itself about the omnipotent agent and know that there is no real similarity between this question and «questions» (or pseudo-questions) about unicorns, trolls etc.

The substantive *core* of the image of the Reality deriving from our linguistic-phenomenological consideration lies in the concept 'did' (cf. Goethe's *Im Anfang war die Tat*; also echoed by Fichte).

The otherwise traditionally most favourite philosophical words: *(there) is*, *exist*, *being*, and others of their ilk, appear to be redundant and philosophically void, even if they are extremely handy for certain practical speech purposes. (It may be of some

interest that Wierzbicka's [Wierzbicka 1972] first list of semantic primitives did not include any «existential» expression; this can be seen as a striking manifestation of her brilliant intuition; but, on the other hand, her first list did not have slots for 'knowledge' or 'doing', either; and later on, apart from my two candidates, she even incorporated, in her ca. 60-item lists, a couple of «existential» expressions.) The emptiness of the words can be seen, among other things, in the fact that one is free to say, awkward as it admittedly is, e. g., *The existence of her proficiency certificate as claimed by John exists / is not non-existent (*or: *is non-existent)* or even *The non-existence of her proficiency certificate as claimed by John really exists / is not non-existent*. In fact, *exist* often plays the part of just a kind of full stop, purely technically closing something that is anyway closed in terms of its meeting all the requirements of a certain linguistic structure with its truth claim (but without comprising the word *exist* or its synonym). In this context, it may be instructive additionally to pay attention to the fact that the phrases *someone exists*, *something exists* (with our two all-important primes which are mutually incompatible and thus display a full discriminatory force) are crucially vitiated, inter alia, by the anomaly of their negations **someone does not exist / *no one exists*, **something does not exist / *nothing exists* (in my [Bogusławski 2007; 2008] I have discussed this [Leibnizian] problem at length). (Otherwise one must concede that it is also possible to disfigure the concept of action in a similar way. Such was the case of Spinoza with his God-Nature described by him, in cross violation of word semantics, as the *only* real agent; this in fact made his concept of 'agency' not real, but spurious [because of its failing to comply with the proportionality requirement]. The important point, however, is that the *normal* understanding of the word *did* is inalienably linked to the idea of a real *multiplicity* of both acts *and agents* [as argued for long ago, in particular, by Epicurus], whereas the concept of 'existence' is far from being sufficiently telling in the same manner.)

To clarify our crucial issue a little more, let me add a gloss on certain selected ways of approaching the presumable core of the Reality, i. e. 'existence' and 'doing', in philosophical literature.

Hartmann [Hartmann 1925] says, in accord with so many earlier philosophers, that a material object is «indifferent» to any action or knowledge and may confine itself to just «being there». This widespread attitude cannot help verging on incomprehensibility: should Hartmann say it *in earnest*, he could not deny that what he presented was a situation of at least *his own* k n o w l e d g e, after all. Schrödinger [Schrödinger 1959] would no doubt appraise such pronouncements in similar terms: the outstanding physicist-philosopher strongly rejected the idea of the world being «a play before empty benches». Even most radical materialists were unable to think of ordinary objects or elementary particles in isolation from some «world process» *they* had to do with. Furthermore, when Hartmann conceives of 4 quite different, mutually *irreducible* and separable spheres of the reality (including a separate realm of national spirituality), merely within the span of his empty 'existence' and merely with one reservation: that the «lowest», physical,

sphere is necessary before the remaining ones can arise (as *independent* domains), he somehow gives up the most powerful idea of the Reality making up a true unity. When, finally, the same philosopher rightly enhances the role of (multiple!) individuals as true embodiments of «the real», he in fact switches (laudably!) to addressing referents, *not* of 'existence', but of 'someone' and 'something', as well as, by implication, of our 'acts'.

Herman [Herman 2008] tries, for his part, (again, praiseworthily) to uphold the primordial insight emphasizing the unity of the Reality (I have mentioned it a while ago). To this end he uses the key word 'freedom' and the phrase «source experience of freedom from which the idea of infinity, rather than that of pure limitlessness, originates» (p. 246). His move can be seen, in a simultaneously interpretative and approving manner, as a way of actually grasping the unity of the Reality in its *true* core, or source, phenomenon of 'doing / act'. However, his choice of the word 'freedom' is less than fortunate. The word is far from representing a simple and sufficiently general concept (covering, e. g., animals' or plants' acts as well), a concept that one is in search for (and that would at the same time escape vacuosity by which 'existence', unlike 'did', is plagued). The word is, moreover, pregnant with either metaphoricity or anthropomorphistic, mentalistic overtones which are quite inappropriate in a sober *Weltanschauung*. Finally, we badly need a description of the Reality in *sentential* terms, in terms that are apt at representing *states of affairs*, whereas 'freedom' is a nominalization, and a nominalization, to boot, far removed from any workable sentential transformation that could serve well the present research goals (let me add that questions impose themselves here such as: what could one possibly gather from an utterance that would barely read: *«Freedom.»*, with a full stop at its end? or: what natural sentences of more relevance to the subject matter at hand based on that word can one figure out?).

3. The property 'know that' which is **common to *all* organisms** carries with it the **possibility**, **but not necessity**, of the rise of language. The point is that there is in the structure of 'know that' (see above) no exclusion of *attributes* (i. e. of what follows the word *that* in the structure) *becoming epistemic objects* (i. e. what follows the word *about* in the structure). But this engenders the appearance of special means of «incarnation» of attributes, viz. expressions. It is this shift in the structure of 'know that' that gives rise to «mapping of knowledge» (as Wittgenstein [Wittgenstein 1922] pictured it) which constitutes the essence of both «language faculty» and Saussurean *langues* as products of agents endowed with that faculty. However, the appearance of all this is not necessitated by any ordinary phenomena. On the other hand, there is no getting round the fact that the world does harbour speaking beings, after all, alongside non-speaking ones.

First, we have acts called *said that* which are wholly reducible to a (very special, to be sure) combination of the functors 'did' and 'know that' and where mapping I have just mentioned materializes (perhaps this should be formulated more exactly by using the phrase [Fregean in its spirit] «someone said that such and such *in earnest*»; i. e. «someone said something in strict coherence with appropriate concomitant actions or readiness to act»).

In addition, as logically secondary items, acts expressed in terms of (quotative) *said:* and, furthermore, the entire subrealm called «culture» make their appearance (I shall add, just to stress the all-important point of my view: culture is dependent *exclusively* on language, and thus, in the last resort, on 'saying that').

No biological *evolutionary* way of the *possibility* of language *coming true*, of its turning out to be an accomplished fact in the end, is so much as imaginable. Life without speech has its own «hardware». Speech needs a *special* kind of «hardware». There is a gulf between speechless life and «spoken life». The «hardware» of the former is by far not in a position to perform the necessary leap over the gulf. Even less so in terms of infinitesimal steps, as required by classical evolutionism (Chomsky has made us, outspokenly, alert to this fact).

I am fully aware that the above brief report on the results of my analysis does not answer a number of valid questions and does not contain all the necessary comments. I can only bring my apology to the Readers and perhaps point to the rigid limits of space as a partial excuse.

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A. Bogusławski
Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland

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