

REMARKS ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PREJUDICATIVE RELATIONS

Alexandru Surdu*

ifilosofie.uv.ro

Abstract: *The main point of the text is that prejudicative relations, although of a logical nature, can help solving some important philosophical nature, like the relation between subsistence, being, and existence, the problem of universal or the matters pertaining to essence, quiddity or Porphyrius' five voices.*

Keywords: *prejudicative, in re, in mente, in voce, five voices.*

The theory of prejudicative forms is a logical discipline, not an ontological one, despite the fact that the *entities* that prejudicative *relations* presuppose are of an ontic nature. Basically, three types of entities are in question: *in re*, *in mente* and *in voce*, i.e. things (objects, properties, relations, determinations), thoughts and words. These, conceived as isolated, are reported to one another by means of prejudicative relations. In theory of judicative forms (traditional logic) this does not happen, since judgements and sentences are composed only of entities *in mente* (thoughts) and their expressions *in voce* (words), respectively. The theory of prejudicative forms builds a bridge between the domain of pure existence and that of thinking and its expression.

Considering that the world is not composed of object (*Dinge*), but of facts (*Tatsache*), Wittgenstein sets prejudicative relations (among objects and properties, etc.) as a ground for the judicative ones, placing them at the level of prime substance. But this one, being characterised by *non dicitur de* and *non inest*, proves to be independent or even anterior to prejudicative relations, and thus to facts. Moreover, by analogy Aristotle considered that the prime substance has, at its turn, a subsistent it refers to, which completes the image of the reference frame of prejudicative relations not only by adding what follows them (judicative forms), but also what precedes them (ontic forms).

1. Subsistence, existence, being

In book Z of *Metaphysica*, Aristotle refers to prime subsistent, which is one of the meanings of substance, but different from the prime substance. The *matter* is in question. This one, together with material form (*morphe*) composes the individual thing, which is par excellence the prime substance.

In the same context, Aristotle identifies material form and properties, actions and potencies, determinations that matter as prime subsistence does not have, but that belong to prime substance as existence in general.

But properties, determinations, and relations (we find here all the categories) are noting more than the *referens* entities of prejudicative relations, meaning that prime substance, that has them and in addition the prime subsistent or matter (as *referendum*), coincides with the state of facts, with what is the case, as Wittgenstein puts it, or existence as such.

Subsistence cannot be identified with the matter without form, despite the fact that it does not yet constitute a state of facts characterised in a prejudicative manner.

* Academician Alexandru Surdu- vice-president of the Philosophy section of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest.

Aristotle's reason to accept this separation is a gnoseologic one. Matter and material form are inseparable, but perceivable forms are received by the organs without keeping their matter, such as wax receives the seal of the ring without keeping the gold. The residence of perceivable forms, of sensations is within the soul. But forms are not only perceivable, but also intelligible; not only sensations, but also thoughts.

Subsistence, without being matter without material form, is deprived of sensation and thought. In other words, it is not a thing lacking properties and determinations, but something whose properties and determinations were not yet understood. Something that has a material form, but this one is not yet perceivable and intelligible.

Unlike what only *sub*-sists, what *ec*-sists manifests outside, exists out from (*ec*, *ex*) sistance, from itself, shows itself to the senses and thought as having properties, determinations, and relations, and composes, together with those, states of facts and situations.

This means that, from an Aristotelian viewpoint, neither prime substance, nor states of facts are the prime factor of world and knowledge, which does not mean that states of facts are preceded by objects without properties or matter without form. This situation denies Wittgenstein's thesis according to which the objects that compose the substance of the world are simple, lacking material properties (*Die Gegenstände sind farblos*) and that they are represented only by means of sentences. On the contrary, one can prove that material properties belong to the objects not only before judicative acts, but even before the prejudicative ones.

One must make a distinction among different hypostases of the object. Inside subsistence one refers to the object in itself (*Ding-an-sich*), which Aristotle takes just as a mere possibility. Subsistence is diffuse, undifferentiated and unlimited. The object in itself, *the pure eon* cannot be characterised, not even by means of negative determinations. For this it has to stand in front of (*anteton*, *Gegenstand*) the epistemic subject, to become, in Aristotelian terms, *esteton*, object of sensation (*aistheton*) and thought (*noeton*).

One must differentiate the *thing* (*pragma*, *Sache*) from these meanings of the object, the former being a result of human activity and as such cannot be in itself. Aristotle's example of a statue whose matter is copper and form is the image from the sculptor's mind, is obviously referring to the thing, not to the object. Even the piece of copper, which will be used for making the statue, is not an object, but a thing (a processed object).

From object's perspective, one must distinguish not only the *subsistence*, having the *eon* (object in itself) as correspondent, from the *existence*, that has the *esteton* (the object of perception) as a correspondent, but also *being*, that has the *noeton* (the object of thinking) as correspondent.

Subsistence cannot be represented in a prejudicative manner, since it is limited neither by different objects (that can be characterised by means of prejudicative relations *inter esse*, *includitur in*, and *pertinere ad*), nor by any perceivable features, properties, and determinations (that can be characterised by means of *cum esse* and *in esse*). All these occur at the level of existence and are applicable both to *esteton* and to thing. The last one, once elaborated by *somebody*, becomes a perceivable object for *somebody else*. In the frame of existence all entities are individual; firstly: individual objects, individual beings, individual things; secondly: individual relations, individual properties, and individual determinations. Or, all these belong to the domain of the ineffable, which cannot be characterised by means of prejudicative relation *dicitur de*.

The domain of existence is not reduced to the individual. The relations, properties, and determinations that are common to many individuals are considered *among*, *in* or *together with* those. Grasping common entities is due, on the one side, to the

resemblances among individual entities and, on the other hand, to the imperfection of human organs of perception, that allow the identification of what is relatively similar. It is obvious that effective existence has only the individual.

Thus, prejudicative relations among individual entities are existential states of facts in their own right. They can be also approximated by means of prejudicative relations that comprise common entities. The latter are not only perceptible, but also intelligible, and, as such, expressible. Since they do not have an effective existence, they can be taken more as *being* than existing. What they determine, thoughts and ideas about them, and their expression, even if their support is material (psychological, and sonorous), no longer belong to the domain of existence, but of that of *being* as such. In Aristotle's works one meets oscillations regarding the statute of the entities from the domain of *being*, with the identification of thoughts and words by means of the term *logos*, and even characterising them by means of prejudicative relation *in esse* (*in mente, in voce esse*). Accepting them creates difficulties of interpretation of prejudicative relations (identification of prejudicative relations *dicitur de* and *inesse*, which, in principle, must be mutually exclusive, and also of mental and verbal entities). This is why one has to give up the prejudicative characterisation of mental entities by means of *inesse* and, in general, the accepting them as prejudicative entities. In other words, the exclusion of the *noeton* from these discussions and the maintaining of its denomination (*onoma*). The domain of being can be characterised in a prejudicative manner by means of *dicitur de*.

At a cosmic level, the subsistence can be considered as the far away original, impossible to perceive as such, whose pulsations determine projective representations in the field of its perceivable existence and a series of interpretations in the field of its intelligible being, which can be, at their turn, expressed either orally or in writing. At a micro-cosmic level, the subsistent is that which, although unobservable, leaves traces on Wilson's camera (manifests its existence) and about which sometimes contradictory theories are further elaborated (at the level of being).

2. The five voices, essence, and quiddity

In an Aristotelian manner, being can be characterised by analogous denominations, as that of substance, or second substance, also called formula (*eidike, kata to eidos*) or notional (*kata ton logon ousia*), different from the corporeal one, perceivable or physical (*somatike, aesthete, kata physin*), by which existence can be characterised. Accordingly, all that can be rendered by *dicitur de* and *non est in* besides the fact that *is not* an individual perceivable existent, but it is not something of an individual or common perceivable nature, immediately linked to this one. *Dicitur de* characterises entities from the domain of being.

The singular— with its subspecies (personal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, personal name, circumstantial name, name as such) – proves to be the closest from the individual (this is why they were often identified with each other). But the individual belongs to the domain of existence (it effectively exists), while the singular belongs to the domain of being (being and being uttered about the former).

As a linguistic expression, both as use (in an accidental or circumstantial prejudicative relation *dicitur de* with other individuals) and as structure (when it is composed of more words with common signification) the singular already contains a certain degree of generality. Those that, besides being uttered about more individuals, cannot be uttered about one *only*, are indeed general. Or, these are par excellence the categories, divided by Aristotle in ten glasses. O more suitable classification – depending on the individuals they are uttered about – can be the one we have proposed, in general expressions that refer to the individual as such (object, being, thing) or to its properties, relations or determinations.

Depending on the accidental or necessary character of general expressions faced with the individual they are uttered about – as the denominations of properties, relations, and determinations can be uttered about the individual that corresponds to them (usually, in a paronymic manner: we say “coloured” about the thing that has the property named “colour”) – the expressions can be divided into essential and unessential.

The essence (*to ti estin*), as most of Aristotelian terms, has three significations: *in re*, *in mente*, and *in voce*. *In re* refers to the totality of properties that an individual must have to be what it is; *in mente* refers to the totality of ideas that correspond to these properties, and *in voce* refers to the linguistic expressions of the same ideas, which are uttered about the properties and individual they belong to. At a linguistic level, Aristotle often identifies essence with *genus* of expressions that are, faced to the latter, species and are uttered, in what concerns essence, about more individuals (*kata pleionon en to ti esti legesthai*). Or, faced to subordinated species, genus is a sort of totality of them. But one cannot say that the species is in the genus, as genus is not an individual, and species is not one of its properties; and one cannot say that the species pertains to or is included in the genus, either, as genus is neither a class, nor a class of classes of individuals, and species is neither an individual, nor a class of individuals. Prejudicative relation between genus and species (which are both expressions) is *dicitur de*, the species being *referendum* and the genus, *referens*.

The *specific difference* is of the essence’s nature. It may be considered, in this context, as species of a genus (to be more specific, of its proximate genus), by means of which a species, faced to which the former is genus, *differs* from the other species. Let us say we refer to *man* (species for certain men). The proximate genus of this is *living being*, and the specific difference by which man differs from the other living beings is *rational*.

Proximate genus and specific difference are those that compose what Aristotle calls *quiddity* (*to ti en einai*). Like essence, this has three meanings: *in re*, referring to essential properties about which proximate genus and specific difference are uttered; *in mente*, as idea of quiddity (*ho tou ti en einai logos*) or thought (*noema*), referring to these properties and *in voce*, as *definition* (*horismos*) or linguistic expression of quiddity. From a prejudicative viewpoint especially the last meaning is important. Prejudicative relation of definition with defined species or individual subordinated to these species is *dicitur de*, the definition being *referens*. *The fact* that definition is uttered about species was often mistaken for the statement in which species or singular appears as subject and definition as predicate. But the fact that “rational living being” is uttered about “man” or about “Socrates” is completely different from the statement that “Man (or Socrates) is rational living being”. Aristotle highlights the fact that quiddity, i.e. definition, realises a unity (behaving like the composed word) not only at the linguistic level (*in voce*), but also *in mente*, because it is a single notion (*horismos logos tis estin heis*).

The unessential expressions are *proper* and *accident*, as *the ability of laughing* for man or *neighing* for a horse (as example of proper) and the fact that *he/she walks* or *it gallops* at a certain moment (as examples of accidents). The last two, together with genus, species, and difference represent the *cinque voces*, Porphyrius referred to.

3. The problem of universal (general)

Without further details regarding the disputes of universals, which, generally speaking continues today, even if they are oversimplified and even vulgar, we remind only the main orientations that became classic regarding the questions: what is universal and which are its attributes?

The first problem refers to the question whether universal is an entity (as individual is) or not, and if the term must be used only as an adjective. We mean that, without being an entity, it can be the attribute of an entity (a property or a determination of an entity). But, before any remark, one must say that the term of “universal” has, in logic, a precise technical use at a judicative and syllogistic level, where it opposes to particular. Judgement and premises are universal, affirmative or negative (“All *S* are *P*”; “No *S* is *P*”) and particular (“Some *S* are *P*”; “Some *S* are not *P*”). this is why we’d rather use the term “general” as opposed not to particular, but to individual and singular.

If we take into account his way of putting things, Aristotle considered that general is an entity. The characteristics of this entity – especially studied by Athanase Joja¹ - prove that, just like in the case of essence or quiddity, Aristotle used the same denomination for *different* entities, taken from three domains of existence: *in re*, *in mente*, and *in voce*, which obviously exclude one another.

As *in re*, the general proves to be different from the determined individual. It is called property and considered as belonging by nature to more individual things, being common for them. In other words, the general as *in re* is nothing more than *common property*, characterised, in a prejudicative manner, as *referens* of *in esse* relation. Taken as such, the general is nothing more than a determinative of property and must be replaced with the term “common”, bearing an adjectival meaning.

However, Aristotle characterises the general by means of prejudicative relation *dicitur de*, specifying that the general, unlike the singular, is uttered about more individuals. But those that are uttered about many are nothing more than *general expressions*, thus the five voices, the categories or the denominations of common properties, relations, and determinations of more things.

From a prejudicative viewpoint, the incompatibility of the two types of entities (*in multis* and *de multis*) clearly appears². Accepting it means restating the contradictory entity of “universal accident”.

As *in voce*, the general *de multis* is nothing more than the general expression and, as such, is reduced to a mere determinative of expression, to “general”, bearing an adjectival meaning.

Finally, as *in mente*, the general is nothing more than the notion, which cannot be characterised in a prejudicative manner.

If, reporting it to the individual, one adds to the *in voce* and *de multis* general expression the determination *ante rem* (we refer to the logical anteriority of general) and *post rem* (we refer to perceivable anteriority of individuals faced to the general), one reaches to the complete picture of the main orientations referring to the problem of universal: (1) *in re*, respectively *in multis*; (2) *in voce*, respectively *de multis ante rem*; (3) *in voce, de multis post rem; in mente, ex multis* (if one considers, in an Aristotelian manner, that the notions are obtained by abstracting it from more individuals).

Therefore, one cannot speak about an entity that corresponds to the general and, as such, the quarrel of universals is, in fact, missing the point. In a prejudicative manner, one can consider that it is based on the pseudo-entity “universal accident”, simultaneously characterised by prejudicative relations *dicitur de* and *in esse*.

¹ Ath. Joja, *Universalul la Aristotel* [The Universal in Aristotle’s Works], in *Studii de logică* [Studies on Logic], vol. III, Bucharest, 1971.

² Al. Surdu, *Problema universalului la Aristotel din perspectiva lucrării Categoriae* [The Problem of Universal in Aristotle’s *Categoriae*], in *Probleme de logică* [Problems on Logic], vol. V, Bucharest, 1973, p. 296-297.