

ANDRZEJ NOWAK

Peirce's Phaneroscopy and Husserl's Phenomenology¹

Is phaneroscopy, in a shape given by Peirce, phenomenology? – the following remarks are based on this question. As is well known, Peirce was a chemist, he esteemed Hegel and knew Husserl, although judged him sternly. And after taking these facts into consideration, it is easy to be at a loss. Is it not possible that Peirce's conception of phenomenology can be perceived as if drifting among the three poles, brushing the sense entangled in a conception of the macroscopic thermodynamics², sounding with an echo of the phenomenology of Spirit, approaching the Husserl's conception of the a priori science about the contents of pure experiences' ideas? The situation is not made easier due to Peirce's terminological indecision, as he wrote not only on one occasion about phenomenology and on another about phaneroscopy, but also about ideoscopy and the universal theory of categories – *categorycs*.

The reasons for this state of affairs and possible solutions to the associated problems were analysed by Herbert Spiegelberg and William Rosensohn³. And here it is enough to state the following: Peirce used the term *categorycs* in the manuscript MS L75 (cf. also C.P.1.280⁴), because indeed his phenomenology is realized in the

¹ The text is an English version of the Polish one. This is included in: A.J. Nowak, *Świat Człowieka*. Kraków 2002.

² This thermodynamics is contrasted with the statistical one.

³ Cf. e.g.: (a) H. Spiegelberg, "Husserl's and Peirce's Phenomenologies: Coincidence or Interaction" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XVII 2, 1956; (b) W. Rosensohn, *The Phenomenology of Charles S. Peirce*. Amsterdam 1974.

⁴ The reference was prepared in accordance with the international standard; its basis is: Ch.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* 6 vols. Ed. Ch. Hart-

universal theory of categories. It is also not unlikely that the principle of observableness is here a distant echo of conceptions based on the natural science. And, formally speaking, the idea of the three stages of thoughts, characteristic of Hegel, resembles Peirce's triadic scheme of categories; however, in this case, he distanced himself from the German idealist (C.P.8.298). Finally, it seems that Husserl might have accepted, at least as a preparatory definition of phenomenology, the following description, in which Peirce established that "Phanerescopy is the description of the *phaneron*; and by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not" (C.P.1.284). What is more, it does not seem probable that the author of *Logische Untersuchungen* could have had a grievance against the author of *On a New List of Categories* on account of the following comment: "phenomenology might rather be defined as the study of what seems than as the statement of what appears. It describes the essentially different elements which seem to present themselves in what seems (...) It can hardly be said to involve reasoning; for reasoning reaches a conclusion, and asserts it to be true however matters may seem; while in Phenomenology there is no assertion except that there are certain seemings; (...) Phenomenology can only tell the reader which way to look and to see what he shall see" (C.P.2.197). It does not result from this quotation that Peirce's phenomenology, i.e. phanerescopy, had nothing to do with truth and was concerned only with free seemings. It is only that, in Peirce's opinion, phenomenological principles do not express factual truths. And not only Husserl but also an ordinary physicist, would have agreed with that the moment they would have realized that the simple equation of gaseous state, formulated for the ideal gases, does not express empirical facts, unless it is a pure fantasy.

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In any case, the fact is that the relation of Peirce's views to Husserl's is the crucial matter due to the fact that, as Joseph Ransdell has rightly remarked, Husserl's conception acquired status of a fundamental solution totally independently of whether the solu-

sorne, P. Weiss. Cambridge, Mass. 1958. "C.P.1.280" should be read: *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 1 § 280.

tion alone is accepted or not⁵. It enables us to essentially narrow down the field of the problem. Unfortunately, the considerable simplification of the matter does not follow. As far back as in 1947 Roman Ingarden wrote: "The term «phenomenology» has got different meanings according to Husserl and his disciples, meanings that have never been precisely worked out. The researchers distancing themselves from phenomenology used (...) this term with so fantastic meanings that they had very little or even nothing to do with Husserl's conception of phenomenology"⁶.

Despite the indefiniteness, one thing remains obvious. Husserl's project is connected with the idea of *epoché*. Can anything similar be said about Peirce's idea? – Is it based on the reduction's requirement interpreted in one way or another? Ransdell recognized that it is not⁷. However, he did not tempt to specify beforehand, in view of the negative answer, the sense of bracketing. All the same, Husserl probably understood the reduction in three ways: as (a) the phenomenological reduction, (b) the transcendental reduction, (c) the eidetic reduction. The phenomenological reduction simplifies the world of transcendental objects to the one of immanent phenomena. Suzanne Cunningham recognized that it means the reduction of real transcendental objects to real immanent objects by the means of bracketing the three-dimensional existence of the first ones⁸. The phenomenological reduction, due to immanence, internalization of the objects of experience, reveals the basic shape of the objective pole of consciousness – the shape of the focus of senses' bearers; the transcendental reduction, on the other hand, reveals the undeniable subjective pole of consciousness – transcendental *ego*. Moreover, just like the phenomenological reduction, the transcendental one reveals the objects of exper-

⁵ Cf. J. Ransdell, "Peirce est-il un phénoménologue", *Études Phénoménologiques* 9–10, 1989. Incidentally, the question from the title of Ransdell's text is not a surprising one as it could have been formed even in connection with Roman Ingarden; cf. K. Okopień, "Czy Ingarden jest fenomenologiem?", *Studia Filozoficzne* 5, 1989.

⁶ R. Ingarden, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*.

⁷ Cf. J. Ransdell, "Peirce est-ill..." *op. cit.* p. 23.

⁸ Cf. S. Cunningham, *Language and the Phenomenological Reduction of Edmund Husserl*. The Hague 1976, p. 7; this conception will be questioned.

ience in the basic shape of a giver of any sense and of a factor indicating the objects of consciousness as so and so existing⁹.

These two briefly discussed reductions – if they really are two processes¹⁰ – limit the field of consciousness into the sphere of separate phenomena. However, this sphere is not an enchanted circle, as the conscious subject can achieve two things. First of all, it is able to parametrise and take its object as a constant of the experience, changing at the same time the methods of its conscious formulations. In this way the conscious subject reveals what is absolutely necessary in the object. Then it is given an opportunity to act in reverse. At that point the *modus* of the act is firmly established and its object undergoes the process of change. As a result, everything that is absolutely necessary for a given act becomes evident. When following a given way, the conscious subject makes the eidetic reduction, eidetic one because leading towards the ideal, that is timeless, world of pure abilities or beings. They are pure because they consist only of necessary conditions, conditions not so much of being independent objects but being phenomena experienced¹¹. In Peirce's own words, the eidetic reduction is to expose absolutely necessary elements, without which nothing is able to enter the relation of to *know to a knower*.

Peirce, who repeated often enough, that it is not about abstaining from hypostatisation but about hypostatising well, certainly would have called the eidetic reduction a beautiful model of a hypostatic abstraction. A beautiful one, but at the same time unacceptable for him. Why? First of all because of the vapidness of even its best applications. Husserl thought that through the reductions all things that are absolutely universal, necessary and exact are made available to the man. Peirce, however, wrote: "I object to absolute universality, absolute exactitude, absolute necessity, being attributed to any proposition that does not deal with the Alpha and the Omega, in the which I do not include any object of ordinary knowledge" (C.P.6.607). Briefly, and in Peirce's manner of speaking, it is impossible to achieve the aims of the eidetic reduction established by Husserl, even if it is possible to use this reduction as a certain (but not never-failing) technique of experiencing.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.* p. 8.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.* p. 9–10.

But – secondly – is the latter possibility really relevant here? And here the answer has to be negative, at least from the Peirce's point of view. It can be clearly observed that the eidetic reduction cannot take place without categorial intuition, both in the wide and in the narrow sense of the word, already presented in the passage dedicated to Heidegger's views. At the same time Peirce strongly refuted the conception of intuition as a credible witness of cognition. However, he had described it precisely beforehand: "*Intuition* [is] nearly the same as «premiss not itself a conclusion»; the only difference being that premisses and conclusions are judgements, whereas an intuition may (...) be any kind of cognition whatever. But just as conclusion (good or bad) is determined in the mind of the reasoner by its premiss, so cognitions not judgements may be determined by previous cognitions; and a cognition not so determined, and therefore determined directly by the transcendental¹² object, is to be termed an *intuition*" (C.P.5.213).

From the words quoted the following can be concluded. Intuition is not a separate type of cognition, but the epistemic character which, if it at all can belong to any cognition, belongs to them regardless of their type: cognition of judgement, insight or premiss etc. And each cognition, if it exists at all, that is not determined by the logically previous one is marked with this character. However, contrary to the common opinion, Peirce did not state that intuitions do not exist at all¹³. On the contrary, he wrote: "Every cognition, as something present, is, of course, an intuition of itself" (C.P.3.214)¹⁴. To him this was not a problem. However, he noticed

¹² In Peirce's opinion, *intuitus* appeared as a technical term for the first time in St. Anselm's "Monologium" when he quoted St. Paul's famous words: *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ac faciem*; cf. C.P.5 p. 135 § 1.

¹³ Cf. e.g. T.M. Olszewsky, "Realism and Antifoundationalism", in: *Living Doubt Essays concerning the epistemology of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Ed. G. Debrock, M. Hulswit; Dordrecht–Boston–London 1994.

¹⁴ What is more, one can read that: "Intuition is the regarding of the abstract in a concrete form by the realistic hypostatisation of relations; that is the one sole method of valuable thought. Very shallow is the prevalent notion that this is something to be avoided (...) The true precept is not to abstain from hypostatisation but to do it intelligently" (C.P.1.383). As can be seen, Peirce allowed and respected intuition. But it is also evident that this is not what Husserl and his disciples thought it to have been. Peirce's intuition, bound with realistic

the problem somewhere else. He thought, not without being right, that the human being could have depended on intuitions, if he were able to intuitively, that is unmistakably, differentiate them from cognitions determined by previous cognitions (C.P.5.214). And as he believed that intuition of intuition does not exist, for him intuition was not a differentiated, as far as the values are concerned, method of cognition¹⁵.

This, as a matter of fact moderate attitude, could have become more severe if Peirce had been asked about the existence of categorial intuition in a strict sense. Then, maybe, he would have answered with a stern negation. At least at such reaction points the following reasoning. A situation about someone who states: "This is red" is considered. He or she who states it is asked to reveal the reasons for making such a claim. It is very easy to imagine that a spontaneous reaction would be the words such as "I saw that it was red". And for that *dictum* Peirce's answer is as follows: "Not at all. You have not seen anything like that. You have seen an image. There was no object and no predicate in it." There was not also – it is allowed to add – any copula 'is' there nor any entity that could correspond to it. It is clear that in favourable circumstances the sentence "This is red" is a true one. But, unlike Husserl, Peirce did not demand require that those conditions should involve the presence of all correlates of all the morphemes of the true sentence. He did not demand that because he would have considered such a demand as a nonsense. At the same time, as is already known, in

hypostatisation, has to have hypothetical nature. It cannot be, as Susan Haack would have formulated, epistemically safe, not even mentioning apodictic exactness. Cf. S. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity" *Synthese* 41 (1979) and the polemics: P.L. Mott, "Haack on Fallibilism" *Analysis* 40.1 (New Series No 188) October 1980. Obviously, these remarks do not solve the problem; especially when it is in the context of Husserl's ideas. Dagfinn Føllesdal states that the founder of phenomenology was not a fundamentalist himself, that: "Husserl embraced what [John] Rawls has called the method of «reflective equilibrium»" and that method postulates among many others the idea of total corrigibility of knowledge; D. Føllesdal, "Husserl on Evidence and Justification", in: *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition* Ed. R. Sokolowski. Washington: 1988; p. 107; cf. also pp. 117, 121–128.

¹⁵ Peirce's wide argumentation can be found in the essay "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for a Man"; see C.P.5.213–263.

Husserl there exists such a demand and it leads to the theoretical project of categorial intuition in a strict sense. This comparison speaks for itself. If he had had to, Peirce would have opposed of this kind of conception, so at the same time the eidetic reduction.

For different reasons, the transcendental reduction would have shared its fate. It has been already stated that the transcendental reduction is to lead to the revelation of the necessary, subjective pole of consciousness. 'Necessary' also means 'being the source of every sense' or 'being the subjective centre of the formation of objects' meanings'. In the article already referred to, Ransdell properly noticed that subjective formation of the meanings could not be applied to Peirce's views in any way. To make things perfectly clear, it is enough to add the following words of the founder of the modern semiotics: "A sign (...) does not affect its object, but it is being affected" (C.P.1.538). This sentence means that it is the object that defines the method of being represented by the sign, so it defines the interpretant of the sign, that is its meaning (but not its logical value)¹⁶. As so described, it cannot be the result of the subjective constitutions. It is enough to state that Peirce's phenomenology has nothing in common with the transcendental reduction.

We are only left with the problem of the phenomenological reduction. Its interpretation, given by Cunningham, is not false, as this process does not lead the reducer beyond the sphere of reality; and for Husserl all that is defined in time is real – and so are phenomena. Nevertheless, the limitation of this reduction's range to the three-dimensional world is somewhat doubtful. Obviously its core is the peculiar principle of immanence of the transcendental objects, as has been stated. This rule is peculiar, because it does not recommend some, naturally ridiculous, *introjection* – putting reduced objects into the contents of consciousness, understood as an odd container. But consciousness is not a container. At this point Husserl's and Peirce's views are not so different¹⁷. For both philo-

¹⁶ It is possible, because in Peirce's opinion the object of the sign has itself the character of the sign or of the thought.

¹⁷ And not accidentally. Richard Stevens presented how far Husserl's view is similar to William James'; cf. R. Stevens, *James and Husserl: The Foundation of Meaning*. The Hague 1974. On the other hand, James added the last thought to his view after getting acquainted with Peirce's harsh criticism; cf. C.P.8.279–301. And Peirce himself wrote that: "saying about an object that it exists in the mind is

sophers the sentences "Something is in the consciousness", "something is in the mind" mean only that "something exists in relation *known/cogitatum – knower/cogitans*. The object, whose existence was described in a way limited to its occurrence, was described immanently.

It is only necessary to be careful and not to understand sole "exist in" in the spirit of the scholastic *in mente esse*. It would be a fatal mistake. The aim of the phenomenological reduction is to suspend metaphysical presuppositions and not to replace the first ones with the latter. In brief, this aim is to consider the object as appearing "quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not". Such consideration, according to Husserl, is to lead to the discovery of the self-explanatory substances. This, however, is negated by many Peirce's statements, one of them being the one already cited that states that phenomenology is about what seems and not about what is. However, one is allowed to think – contrary to Ransdell's conclusions – that the weakest version of the phenomenological reduction is written in the Peirce's project of phenomenology *qua* phaneroscopy, though it was not given a name. It is the weakest one, because it is limited to two principles: a) immanence of the objects of consciousness b) relative non-assuming¹⁸.

a metaphorical expression of the opinion that this object is connected with the intellect through the same relation that takes place between the known and the knower." (C.P.8.18). He added that: "A realist cannot imagine the mind as such a container that when an object is in it, it at the same time cannot be beyond it." Finally, a realist "does not differentiate between the existence beyond the mind from being in the mind as two non matching methods »of existence«"; both quotations come from C.P.8.16. A very important inference can be drawn from the words quoted: although the phenomena according to the definition exist in the mind, they do not necessarily have to be mind's entities in the traditional meaning of the word; 'phenomen' ('phaneron') is neither a metaphysical nor psychological term.

¹⁸ Compare the following remark about Adam's terminal character of the *Firstness* category: "What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own experience – that is *first*, present, immediate, fresh, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious evanescent. Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it". Quoted by: A.W. Levi, "Peirce and Painting", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XXII 1, 1962, p. 34.

The meaning of the first principle has already been explained. The second is its consequence; it consists of (in its contents) the demand for resignation from the not necessary assumptions for an immanent description of a phenomenon, mainly metaphysical, psychological ones and those connected with natural science. Undoubtedly, Peirce, as a phenomenologist, accepted and required that and only that type of non-assuming¹⁹. Husserl's example seems to be more complicated, though, Cunningham correctly recalled Spiegelber's and Marvin Farber's opinions in this context²⁰. They both agreed that those are mistaken who understand Husserl's ideal of non-conditioning as an absolute freedom of thoughts from all assumptions. And they were probably right. If it had been differently, what than could mean the Husserl's famous words about solely phasic character of even the most radically conducted research?

As can be guessed now, phaneroscopy and phenomenology are connected by the strong anti-psychological tendency²¹. Astoundingly, this relation is made visible in Peirce's short but harsh criticism towards Husserl. The first thought about the latter much the same as Leon Chwistek about Roman Ingarden – that beyond the externals of antipsychological rhetoric he hides his psychologism of the clear water (C.P.4.7), a basic mistake that involves blending of what is logical with what is psychical. Who was right is the least important thing here. It is only worth mentioning that this opinion noted in a quite extraordinary way uncovers the partial connection of those two projects discussed.

The peculiarity of Peirce's project lies in the fact that antipsychologism pushed him towards formalism more visibly than it pushed Husserl²², which can be seen in the following confession: "So far as I have developed this science of phaneroscopy, it is oc-

¹⁹ Cf. J. Ransdell, "Peirce est-ill...", *op cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰ S. Cunningham, *Language and...*, *op.cit.*, p. 3; the author used the following works: (a) H. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, The Hague 1960, (b) M. Farber, "The Ideal of a Presuppositionless Philosophy", in: *Phenomenology*. Ed. J.J. Kockelmans. New York: Garden City, 1967.

²¹ Cf. e.g. C.P.1.285.

²² It is impossible to think even about some materialistic *quasi-apriori* [formalism], while being at Peirce's ground of phenomenology. However, Husserl's phenomenology allows this kind of a concept.

cupied with the formal elements of phaneron" (C.P.1.284). All that has been already said was long time ago summed up by Jakobson, who called Peirce a structural phenomenologist²³. It is a good name, although the conclusion of the Ransdell's article is also good: if phenomenology had gone towards the direction shown by the American philosopher, it would have lost many features characteristic to its continental shape.

Let us conclude citing the note about the feature that was saved in phaneroscopy only because Peirce did not follow in Husserl's steps – its relation to the mathematics. The spirit of the mathematics that had discreetly but permanently invaded the *Logische Untersuchungen*, and later on even *Formale und transzendetale Logik*, later on clearly, though gradually, abandoned Husserl's thoughts. And in the essays written by his disciples, phenomenology and mathematics were ultimately separated, with not a very good result for the first one (but who today estimates it like that?). Phaneroscopy, on the other hand, remained faithful to the mathematics. Why? – let Peirce's words be the answer: phenomenology²⁴ "which does not depend upon any other *positive* science²⁵, nevertheless must, if it is to be properly grounded, be made to depend upon the Conditional or Hypothetical Science of Pure *Mathematics*²⁶, whose only aim is to discover not how things actually are, but how they might supposed to be, if not in our universe, that in some other" (C.P.5.40). This comment reveals the fundamental, almost dramatic difference between the epistemological status of phaneroscopy and phenomenology – therefore it is necessary to retain not only this terminological distinction. And, apart from this, the answer to the question appearing in the title of Randell's essay *Peirce est-il un phénoménologue* should be positive: in the systematic sense, Peirce is a phenomenologist.

²³ Cf. R. Jakobson, „Kilka uwag o Peirce'ie poszukiwaczu dróg w nauce o języku". Transl. S. Adamski, in: R. Jakobson, *W poszukiwaniu istoty języka*. Vol. 2. Ed. M.R. Mayenowa. Warszawa 1989.

²⁴ Which can be read as phaneroscopy.

²⁵ The word "other" appears here, as for Peirce phaneroscopy is a positive one science.

²⁶ What is pure mathematics for Peirce cf. C.P.4.233.