

Vocabulary of European Philosophies, Part 2

Following the publication of ‘Subject’ in *RP* 138, we present here a trio of related entries from Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (Editions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2004): ‘Gegenstand/Objekt’, ‘Object’ and ‘Res’. Within the *Vocabulary*’s reconstruction of the complex, multilingual translational history underlying the diversity of modern philosophical uses of ‘subject’ – at once philologically meticulous and philosophically polemical – the opposition of subject to object appears as part of only one of three main groups of meanings associated with the term ‘subject’. Furthermore, in its most basic sense of subjectness (*subjectité* in French, *Subjektheit* in German) – derived from Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* via the Latin *subiectum* – the meanings of ‘subject’ are shown to overlap with those of ‘thing’ and ‘pragma’ (*res* and *causa*). We are thus alerted to a fundamental difference between the philosophical histories of ‘object’ and ‘thing’ that is often suppressed in English, in which the terms are frequently used synonymously, even in philosophical discussions of texts that are structured around this very difference. Grouping together the *Vocabulary*’s entries for ‘Gegenstand/Objekt’, ‘Object’ and ‘Res’ allows something of the contradictory richness of this dual history to appear. And once again, as was the case in ‘Subject’, Kant is a pivotal figure.

Kant’s profound, epochal transformation of the concept of objectivity was dependent upon a conceptual distinction internal to the general notion of an object that is marked in German by the difference between the terms *Gegenstand* and *Objekt*, in their mutual distinction from *Ding* – the term used in the Wolffian school of rationalism to determine metaphysical thinghood. (Disappointingly, there is no separate entry in the *Vocabulary* for *Ding*. The mark of the ambiguous residue of metaphysical realism in Kant’s critical idealism, it later became an important word for both Heidegger and Lacan.)

In English, the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* is annihilated in Norman Kemp Smith’s famous translation of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929, reissued 2003), in which the terms are translated indifferently

as ‘object’. Yet as Dominique Pradelle shows, the distinction involves ‘an etymological reawakening’ upon which Kant’s critical revolution depended. Like that revolution itself, however, the precise contours of the distinction remain in dispute. Pradelle argues that ‘terminologically the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself corresponds to the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* in the original text’, thereby directly aligning *Objekt* with *Ding*, on the basis of Kant’s use of the expression ‘object in itself’. Others have placed more emphasis on the threefold nature of the chain, *Gegenstand–Objekt–Ding*, and hence upon the intermediate status of *Objekt* in Kant’s discourse.

Nonetheless, this intermediate status is given its due in Pradelle’s brilliant exposition of the ‘degrees of phenomenal objectivity’ in Kant. This also functions as a conceptual transition to the Husserlian lexicon, in the second half of the entry, within which these degrees are transformed into a ‘multiplicity of types of object’, the ontological status of which is bracketed. In Husserl, it is *Gegenständlichkeit* that poses the main translational difficulty. (One question raised by this account for the ‘Subject’ entry concerns the contribution of Husserlian phenomenology to the concept of the subject. Husserl is strikingly absent there, along with Hegel.)

The entries by Olivier Boulnois on ‘Object’ and Jean-François Courtine on ‘Res’ underline the strength of the *Vocabulary*’s treatment of medieval philosophy, in identifying both new conceptual productions and transformations of Greek concepts, respectively. In the latter case, Courtine’s entry is especially effective in showing the mediating role of Arabic philosophy in this process, and the enduring philosophical significance of the developments, particularly in the seventeenth century (‘the golden age of Scotism’). Each indicates something of the extent to which, given its profound historical deficit, Anglo-American philosophical culture would benefit from the presence of the *Vocabulaire* as a whole in English.

The translations that follow are once again by David Macey, edited by Barbara Cassin and Peter Osborne.

Gegenstand/Objekt GERMAN

► OBJECT, and *CHOSE*, EPOKHÊ, ESSENCE, GEFÜHL, INTENTION, PERCEPTION, REALITY, REPRESENTATION, RES, SACHERHALT, SENS, SUJET, THING, TRUTH, WERT

It is really in the so-called transcendental philosophies, which regard objective meaning or objects as the product of acts on the part of the subject, that the translation difficulties pertaining to the register of objectivity arise. They relate for the most part to distinctions between levels of objectivation, or in other words to stages in the production of objective meaning. This leads to a real lexical proliferation that is difficult to translate into English, or into anything other than the original language. Two noteworthy distinctions do however emerge. By splitting the object into a ‘phenomenon’ [*Erscheinung*] and a ‘thing-in-itself’ [*Ding an sich*] Kant divides the lexicon of objectivity into two, whilst Husserl’s rejection of the notion of a thing-in-itself does away with that duality. Levels of objectivation are, for Kant, also related to the doctrine of the faculties and synthetic categories (the table of categories) and, therefore, to the structure of the subject, whilst Husserl’s rejection of the Copernican revolution and the doctrine of faculties relates them only to the stratification of objective meaning unveiled by essential intuition [*Wesenchau*].

I. Kant: *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*, between phenomenon [*Erscheinung*] and thing-in-itself [*Ding an sich*]

Where the theme of objectivity is concerned, the transition to critical idealism was an etymological reawakening. *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* were introduced to translate the Latin *objectum*, which comes from *objicio* (‘throw in the way of’, ‘expose’). The German *gegen* adds the idea of ‘directing towards’ to that of manifestation. It also introduces the idea of resistance: the primary meaning of *entgegenstehen* (the noun is *Gegenstand*) is *oppositum esse*, and the Old High German *gaganstentida* has the meaning of *obstacula*; and *Stand* (= *stans*) means ‘that which stands’ and then ‘that which subsists, that which lasts’. The philosophical term *Gegenstand* is thus heir to three registers: *das Gegenüberstehende* (‘that which stands in front of me’, ‘that which is op-posed to me’); the *terminus ad quem* of a faculty (*Gegenstand der Empfindung der Wahrnehmung*; ‘object of sensation, of perception’); and substance or substantiality. In the pre-critical period, Kant, following the tradition of classical thought, makes the register of op-position (phenomenality) overlap with that of substance (reality in itself). The turn to transcendental idealism represents an attempt to find the two earlier meanings beneath that of an ‘object subsisting in itself’ and to think them as a systematic unit: the object is the ‘op-posite’ [*vis-à-vis*] constituted by acts of objectivation on the part of the faculties (sensibility, imagination, understanding) and their functions, but the thing-in-itself is still its unknowable epistemological foundation.

A. The split between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself

In the Latin of the *Dissertatio* of 1770, we find two series of antinomic ontological equations: *objectivum = reale = subjectum irrelativum*, *subjectivum = ideale = sensibile = subjectivum relativum*. *Objectivum* is the opposite of the *subjectivum*, of that which resides in or is related to the subject and is therefore identified with the intelligible (which, unlike the sensible, does not vary from one individual to another) and with *realitas* (as opposed to *idealitas*, which is a characteristic of subjective representations or ideas, but not of existing objects). Kant therefore contrasts *lex subjectiva*, *lex quaedam menti insita* or even *conditiones subjecto propriae* (‘subjective law’, ‘situated in the mind’, ‘conditions specific to the subject’: space and time, § 29), with *conditio objectiva*, such as *forma objective sive substantiarum coordinatio* (the objective condition, objective form as coordination of substances). He also refuses to accord time and space the status of ‘*objectivum aliquid et reale* [something objective, or in other words the real]’ (§ 14–15), and makes them a ‘*coordinatio idealis et subjecti* [an ideal, or, in other words, subjective coordination]’. Hence the twofold meaning of *objectum*, which corresponds to the two etymological registers: on the one hand *res*, ‘*existens in se*’, ‘*objectum intellectus*’ (thing-in-itself, the intelligible cause of sensible affections); on the other, *phaenomenon*, ‘*objectum sensuum*’:

*Phaenomena ceu causata testantur de praesentia
objecti, quod contra Idealismum.*

[‘Phenomena ... being caused, witness the presence of the object, contrary to idealism.’]

§ 4.

Quaecunq̄ue ad sensus nostros referuntur ut objecta, sunt Phaenomena.

[‘Everything that is related to our senses as object is a phenomenon.’]

§ 12, trans. amended.

Despite this amphibology, the term *objectum* already tends to be reserved for the phenomenal object and to be divorced from the register of ‘existence in itself’; Section IV, which deals with the formal principle of the intelligible world (and therefore objects in themselves), replaces the term *objectum* with the terms *res*, *substantia*, *aliquid*, and *omnia*. That is why it would be preferable not to translate *quaecunq̄ue* as ‘all things’ (*toutes les choses qui...* in Mouy’s French translation), which implies a reification of phenomena, and to reserve *chose* (thing’) for the *res intelligibilis*.

This amphibology is more pronounced in the critical period, but there is one major displacement. ‘Object’ still has, of course, its double meaning of ‘thing-in-itself’ (designated by the expressions *Ding an sich*, *Objekt an sich*, *Gegenstand an sich*, *Noumenon*, *das Erscheinende*, or in other words ‘thing-in-itself’, ‘object-in-itself’, ‘noumenon’ and ‘appearing’) and ‘phenomenon’ (*Objekt*, *Gegenstand*, *Erscheinung*). But the transition to transcendental idealism brings about a decisive displacement: things in themselves are unknowable to the finite subject, and even to that subject’s intellect; ‘object-in-itself’ therefore ceases to mean purely intellectual reality, as opposed to sensible reality, and comes to designate that which relates to neither sensibility nor the intellect. In critical idealism, ‘phenomenon’ monopolizes the meaning of objectivity for all finite subjects, and sense-intuition, which now becomes the minimal condition for possible experience, is also a condition for all objective validity and all denotation:

Also beziehen sich alle Begriffe und mit ihnen alle Grundsätze [...] auf empirische Anschauungen, d.i. auf Data zur möglichen Erfahrung. Ohne dieses haben sie gar keine objective Gültigkeit.

[Thus all concepts and with them all principles ... are nevertheless related to empirical intuitions, i.e. to *data* for possible experience. Without this they have no objective validity at all.]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 239, B 298.

(‘Objective validity’ is equivalent to meaning, signification, ‘relating to the object’ or, to adopt Frege’s terminology, denotation. See SENS.)

Objectivity thus appropriates the etymological meaning of ‘manifested to’, as ‘appearing to’ sensibility through feelings: *Objectum* = *Gegen-stand* = *phaenomenon* = *ob-jectum* = *Dawider* = op-posed [*vis-à-vis*] to the *intuitus derivatus*.

• see box 1

B. Different concepts of objectivity in itself

Does this mean that ‘phenomenon’ monopolizes all the meanings of objectivity? No, because, even though it does not designate any object that can be known, the concept of the thing-in-itself still has several essential functions in transcendental idealism. This concept is, as it happens, deceptive, as the ‘in-itself’ implies the exclusion of all relations, but, far from thinking it solely on the basis of its ontological subsistence, Kant defines it in terms of the Copernican revolution as the *terminus ad quem* of the faculties (infinite intuition, understanding, pure reason and practical reason). From that perspective, the ‘correlation’ opened up by the Copernican revolution has the effect of giving it several meanings.

The first concept of the object-in-itself corresponds to the positive meaning of noumenon, to the pure object of the understanding, as given to intellectual intuition or to an *intuitus originarius* that creates its object:

Wenn ich aber Dinge annehme, dies bloss Gegenstände des Verstandes sind, und gleichwohl, als solche, einer Anschauung obgleich nicht der sinnlichen (als coram intuitu intellectuali) gegeben werden können; so würden dergleichen Dinge Noumena (Intelligibilia) heissen.

[If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless can be given to an intuition, although not to sensible intuition (as *coram intuitu intellectuali*), then such things would be called *noumena* (*intelligibilia*).]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 249.

Noumena and phenomena are therefore defined in relation to infinite/finite, creative/receptive and primary/derivative intuition. Playing upon the contrasting particles *ent-* and *gegen-*, Heidegger characterizes them as *Entstand* (being-as-taking-its-origin-from-original-intuition) and *Gegen-stand* or *Dawider* (being opposed to derivative intuition) (see *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 82 ff). Given that our intuition cannot be other than sensible and that we cannot demonstrate the possibility of intellectual intuition, such a concept has no objective reality; or, in other words, no denotation and no content.

The second concept of the object-in-itself is the negative concept of the noumenon, which corresponds to the terms ‘transcendental object’ (*transzendentes Objekt*), ‘object in general’ (*Gegenstand überhaupt*) and ‘something in general’ (*Etwas überhaupt*). We can know nothing about the noumenon, but if we wish to avoid Berkeleyan idealism we must attribute to phenomena, in so far as they are mere representations, a relationship with something that is not a representation but the ontological cause of intuitions; this ‘object’ has the twofold function of restricting sensibility’s claims to give objects-in-themselves (and therefore to guarantee the transcendental ideality of phenomena) and to guarantee that they denote empirical reality:

Da Erscheinungen nichts als Vorstellungen sind, so bezieht sie der Verstand auf ein Etwas, als den Gegenstand der sinnlichen Anschauung; aber dieses Etwas ist insofern nur das transzendente Objekt. Diese bedeutet aber ein Etwas = x, wovon wir gar nichts wissen.

[Since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding relates them to a something, as the object of sensible intuition; but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object. This signifies, however, a something = X, of which we know nothing at all.]

I, A 250.

This object is defined elsewhere as ‘*die bloss intelligible Ursache der Erscheinungen überhaupt* [the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general]’ (ibid., A 494, B 522) and as ‘*das, was in allen unseren empirischen Begriffen überhaupt Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand, d.i. objective Realität verschaffen kann* [that which in all our empirical concepts in general can provide relations to an object, i.e. objective reality]’ (ibid., A 109).

To the extent that no category can be applied to it in order to determine it, this transcendental is, of course, not a definite ‘object’: it is a pure X, ‘the concept of an object in general [*der Begriff eines*

Box 1 Translating Kant’s doublet

The classic problem facing Kant’s translators is that posed by the *Gegenstand/Objekt* doublet. Existing French and English translations collapse the terms by translating them both as ‘object’. Is it desirable, or even necessary, to emphasize that terminologically the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself corresponds to the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* in the original text? E. Martineau raises the problem in the introduction to the French translation of Heidegger’s lectures on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and suggests the adoption of *ob-jet* (ob-ject) for ‘phenomenon’ (the hyphen suggests resistance to intuition by isolating the ‘ob’) and ‘*objet*’ for the thing-in-itself. The problem is that, as the French translators of Eisler’s *Kant-Lexicon* note (p. 750), Kant very often uses the terms synonymously to refer to both the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself: no distinction is made between the expressions *transzendentaler Gegenstand* and *transzendentaler Objekt* (transcendental object) or between *Gegenstand in sich* and *Objekt in sich* (object in itself). However, Kant often uses the terms simultaneously to produce a contrast, as in the *Prolegomena* § 19: ‘*Das Objekt bleibt an sich selbst immer unbekannt* [The object in itself always remains unknown]’, but when the sense-representation relationship is determined by the categories, ‘*so wird der Gegenstand durch dieses*

Verhältnis bessimt [then the object is determined through this relation]’. The *ob-jet/objet* doublet would therefore have to be used on a contextual basis, and should not strictly correspond to the *Gegenstand/Objekt* doublet. The use of this doublet is problematic because Kant sometimes uses the term *Gegenstand* to refer to a genus comprising the species ‘phenomenon’ and ‘thing-in-itself’, as in the passage Martineau cites to exemplify his distinction:

Die Transzendentalphilosophie betrachtet nur den Verstand, und Vernunft selbst in einem System aller Begriffen und Grundsätze, die sich auf Gegenstände überhaupt beziehen, ohne Objekte anzunehmen, die gegeben wären (Ontologia); die Physiologie der reinen Vernunft betrachtet Natur, d.i. den Inbegriff gegebener Gegenstände (sie mögen nun der Sinnen, oder, wenn man will, einer anderen Art von Anschauung gegeben sein).

[Transcendental philosophy considers only the understanding, and reason itself in a system of all concepts and principles that are related to objects in general, without assuming objects that would be given (*Ontologia*); the physiology of pure reason considers *Nature*, i.e. the sum total of given objects (whether they are given by the senses or, if one will, by another kind of intuition).]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 845, B 873, trans. amended.

Gegenstandes überhaupt], ‘the totally indeterminate thought of something in general [*der gänzlich unbestimmte Gedanke von Etwas überhaupt*]’. It is the ‘ob-’ in ‘object’, and it guarantees the unitary denotation of our representations as a correlate of transcendental apperception, which is the formal unity of self-consciousness.

The third concept is that of the idea of reason. This is a ‘purely intelligible object’, or an ‘object of pure thought’ (*‘bloss intelligibler Gegenstand’*, *‘Gegenstand des reinen Denkens’*, *ibid.*, A 286–7 ff, B 342–3), or in other words the suprasensible object of *metaphysica specialis* (the soul, the world, God). Reason claims to be able to determine them with the help of the categories alone, in the absence of any sense-data. As sensibility is a precondition for any relationship with an object, the categories, being pure forms of thought, can define only *entia rationis*, *leere Begriffe ohne Gegenstand* (‘concepts void of any object’, *ibid.*, A 292, B 348), *hyperbolische Objekte*, *reine Verstandeswesen (besser: Gedankenwesen)*, (‘hyperbolic objects’, ‘pure beings of understanding (or, more accurately, of thought)’, *Prolegomena*, § 45, *AK*, 4, p. 332), or in other words suprasensible objects with no objective reality or denotation.

The final concept of the object is a correlate of practical reason. Suprasensible ideas have no denotation for speculative reason, but they do have one for practical reason because they are necessary preconditions for the observation of the moral law. The immortality of the soul and the freedom and existence of God thus have an ‘objective reality’; they are ‘objects’ in so far as they are necessary correlates of rational faith, even though no intuition guarantees their objective reality:

Nun bekommen sie durch ein apodiktisches praktisches Gesetz also notwendige Bedingungen der Möglichkeit dessen, was dieses sich zum Objekte machen gebietet, objective Realität, d.i. wir werden durch jenes angesprochen, dass sie Objekte haben, ohne doch, wie sich ihr Begriff auf ein Objekt bezieht, anzeigen zu können.

[They acquire objective reality through an apodictic practical law, as necessary conditions of the possibility of this law, which requires they be made objects, i.e. they show by this that they have objects, but we cannot indicate how their concept refers to an object.]

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, *AK* 5, p. 135.

‘Objectivity’ and ‘objective reality’ certainly mean ‘that which subsists and exists independently of our knowledge’, but they exist as necessary correlates of the practical reason that postulates their existence.

C. Degrees of phenomenal objectivity

In so far as it is a phenomenon, the object is thought as a correlate of the objectifying functions of thought. In general terms, the critical problem is that of the transition from purely subjective representation, which is only valid for me (*bloss subjective*), to a representation that has both a relationship with an object (*Gegenständlichkeit, Beziehung auf ein Objekt*) and an objective representation that is universally valid (*Objektivität*). The blanket use of ‘objectivity’ masks both the distinction and Kant’s solution, which is to assimilate *Gegenständlichkeit* (which can also be translated as ‘objectuality’) to *Objektivität* (for which we will reserve the term ‘objectivity’), in the sense of necessary validity (*notwendige Gültigkeit*) and universal validity (*Allgemeingültigkeit*):

Es sind daher objective Gültigkeit und notwendige Allgemeingültigkeit (für jedermann) Wechselbegriffe, und ob wir gleich das Objekt an sich nicht kennen, so ist doch, wenn wir ein Urteil als gemeingültig und mithin notwendig ansehen, eben darunter die objective Gültigkeit verstanden.

[Objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts, and although we do not know the object in itself, nonetheless, if we regard a judgement as universally valid and hence necessary, objective validity is understood to be included.]

Prolegomena § 19, *AK*, 4, p. 298.

Objectivity is therefore no longer the opposite of subjectivity as such, but of the ‘mere subjectivity (*blosse Subjektivität*)’ and ‘purely subjective validity (*bloss subjektive Gültigkeit*)’ of sensible changes in the subject; it is identified with the *a priori* aspect of the subject, namely the pure intuitions and categories that supply the relationship with the object:

Dass es a priori erkannt werden kann, bedeutet: dass es ein Objekt habe und nicht bloss subjektive Modifikation sei.

[The fact that (which is given by experience) can be known a priori means that it has an object, and is not just a subjective modification.]

Reflexionen, 5216.

The concept of ‘object’ is, however, a generic concept the many meanings of which depend upon the levels of objectivation that guarantee the denotation, universality and necessity of the phenomenon. The plurivocal concept of ‘objective reality’ is therefore divided into levels bound up with the transcendental (formal, material and general) conditions that define the modalities (possible, actual or necessary) and cor-

relate to the various scholastic–Cartesian concepts of ‘reality’ (*quidditas* or *realitas objectiva*, *quodditas* or *realitas actualis*, *necessitas* or *ens causatum*). Each successive level eliminates anything that is purely subjective (*bloßs subjektiv*): the quality of sensation, the *ens imaginarium* and contingency.

– At the mathematical level, *realitas objectiva* (*essentia*, *possibilitas*) is not an object that is simply present there-before-us (*da-seiendes*) but stripped of its secondary qualities, and constituted solely by its prime qualities (magnitudes) as conditions for the construction of space and time. It is in other words a possible object; this is the sense of ‘object’ (*gegenständlicher Sinn*), as opposed to the *nihil negativum* which is empty object without concept (*‘leererer Gegenstand ohne Begriff’*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 292):

[die] Bedingungen des Raumes und der Bestimmung desselben [...] haben ihre objective Realität, d.i., sie gehen auf mögliche dinge, weil sie die Form der Erfahrung überhaupt a priori enthalten.

[the conditions of space and of its determinations [...] have their objective reality, i.e. they pertain to possible things, because they contain in themselves a priori the form of experience in general.

Ibid., A 221, B 268.

– At the dynamic level, *realitas actualis existentia* is actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), or the object given by perception with a sensible content that guarantees its empirical reality or denotation (*Gegenständlichkeit*, *Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand*), as opposed to the *ens rationis* and *ens imaginarium*, which is an intuition or concept without an object.

[wir müssen] immer eine Anschauung bei Hand haben, um [...] die objektive Realität des reinen Verstandesbegriff darzulegen.

[We must always have available an intuition for it to display the objective reality of the pure concept of the understanding.]

Ibid., B 288.

Finally, the *ens creatum sive causatum*, when stripped of all its theological meanings, corresponds to ‘material necessity in existence’ (*materiale Notwendigkeit im Dasein*), or in other words to submission to the principle of causality and the necessary rules of the understanding in the apprehension of phenomena:

Dasjenige an der Erscheinung was die Bedingung dieser notwendigen Regel der Apprehension enthält, ist das Objekt.

[That in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object.]

Ibid., A 191, B 236.

The idea that time has a causal order prescribes a rule for the subjective process of apprehension, and allows us to move from a subjective sequence of representations to the representation of an objective sequence, from *Erscheinung* to *Objekt*; in this sense, ‘object’ does not simply designate an existing object, but that which has a universal and necessary validity. Objectivity as objective validity is therefore not fully identified with denotation, and introduces a further demand: the demand for the principle of reason or causality, which inserts all objects into the necessary order of the causation of phenomena and which allows the natural science to constitute a reality that is identical for all subjects (*allgemeingültig*). Care must be taken not to confuse this intersubjective validity with the mere *claim* to *subjective universality* characteristic of judgements of taste, because taste is no more than a universal consent that is devoid of any concept, and therefore of objectivity (*Kritik der Urteilskraft* § 8, AK. V, pp. 213–16; *Critique of Judgement*, § 8).

– A final concept of objectivity emerges at the practical level, which also raises the critical question of the objectivity of our principles of action. There is such a thing as a phenomenal object of practice, namely the object of desire as actualization of the will; but whilst the principle of the determination of action is an empirical object, namely the feeling of pleasure or pain or the distinction between good and bad, action has no objective validity because its object is an *a posteriori* material object (*Critique of Practical Reason*, AK, 5, p. 21: *Objekt = Materie*) and is therefore purely subjective. If it is to have an objective validity, its object must be an object that is *necessary* to the faculty of desiring, and therefore an object whose intersubjective validity is guaranteed by its formal, *a priori* character – i.e. the form of the law – which is the principle that distinguishes good (*Gut*) from evil (*Böse*). As in the case of pure reason, a distinction therefore has to be made between *Gegenständlichkeit* and *Objektivität* (‘objectuality’ and objectivity), the latter being guaranteed by a priority or in other words necessity and universality.

Unter einem Begriffe eines Gegenstandes der praktischen Vernunft verstehe ich die Vorstellung eines Objekts als einer möglichen Wirkung durch Freiheit.

[By a concept of an object of practical reason I understand the representation of an effect possible through freedom.]

Critique of Practical Reason, AK, 5, p. 57.

Die alleinigen Objekte einer praktischen Vernunft sind also die vom Guten und Bösen. Denn durch

das erstere versteht man einen notwendigen Gegenstand des Begehrens, durch das zweite des Verabscheuungsvermögens, beides nach einem Prinzip der Vernunft

[The sole objects of a practical reason are those of the *good* and the *evil*. By the former one understands a necessary object of the faculty of desire, and by the latter, a necessary object of aversion, both according to a principle of reason.]

Ibid., p. 58.

II. Husserl: from object to *Gegenständlichkeit*

Husserl's lexicon of objectivity presents the same kind of difficulty as Kant's in that it is technically extensive and made more complex by the distinction between types of object and objectivation. At the same time it is simpler than Kant's because the *epokhê* [ἐποχή] disposes of the dissociation of the object into a phenomenon and a thing-in-itself, and reduces 'object' to meaning 'phenomenon'.

A. Multiplicity of types of object

Husserl's slogan is *Rückgang auf die Sache selbst*, which is translated as 'back to things themselves'. And yet '*Sachen sind nicht ohne weiteres Natur-sachen* [things are not simply mere things belonging to nature]' (*Ideen* I, § 19, *Hua* III/1, p. 42; *Ideas* I, p. 36), but anything that can be given to intuitive self-evidence (*Selbstgegenbenheit*), as opposed to that which is simply intended ('*bloss vermeint*'). It follows that there are many thematic types of object. Husserl uses both *Gegenständlichkeit* and *Gegenstand*. The former term is best translated into French as *objectivité* (Suzanne Bachelard, Elie-Kelekl-Schérer) rather than as *objectivité* (Ricoeur), and into English as 'something objective' or 'objectivity', rather than 'objectivity' (used by Boyce Gibson and Kersten) or 'objective correlate' (Findlay), as this avoids any confusion with the character of that which has objective validity (*Objektivität*, see *infra*):

Ich wähle öfters den unbestimmteren Ausdruck Gegenständlichkeit, weil es sich hier überall nicht bloss um Gegenstände im engeren Sinn, Sondern auch um Sachverhalte, Merkmale, um unselbständige reale oder kategoriale Formen, u. dgl. handelt.

[I often make use of the vaguer expression 'objectivity' (*Gegenständlichkeit*), since we are here never limited to objects in the narrower sense, but have also to do with states of affairs, properties and non-independent forms etc., whether real or categorial.]

Hua XIX/1, p. 45; *Logical Investigations*, Book II, Investigation 1, § 9, n4, trans. amended.

A number, value or nation is therefore an 'objectivity', just like a tree. Let us analyse this differentiation of the 'object' lexicon.

1. Natural things and grounded objectivities

Objectivities designate forms of object that are grounded in the infrastructure of material nature and that have superstructural layers of meaning. These are the 'new types of objectivity of a higher order' (*Ideen* § 152, *Hua* III/1, p. 354) that Husserl describes as *Gegenstand*, *Objekt*, *Gegenständlichkeit*, *Objektivität* (*Ideen* I, § 152, *Hua* III/1, p. 221): animate beings (*Animalien*), objects of value (*Wertobjekte* or *Wertobjektivitäten*; see *WERT*), use objects (*praktische Objekte* or *Gebrauchsobjekte*), cultural formations (*konkrete Kulturgebilde*: state, law, ethics, etc.). The difficulty lies in the distinction between the natural infrastructure of an object with value (*wertiger Gegenstand*), the abstract layer grounded in it (*das Wert*, or value as correlate of an evaluation, 'objectified value') and the concrete objectivity that results from their fusion (*Wertgegenstand*, where the *Naturobjekt* fuses with the *Wert*, the 'object with value'):

Wir sprechen von der blossen 'Sache', die werte ist, die Wertcharakter, Wertheit hat; demgegenüber vom konkreten Werte selbst oder der Wertobjektivität.

[We shall speak of the mere 'thing' which is valuable, which has a value-characteristic, which has value-quality; in contradistinction, we speak of concrete value itself or the value-objectiveness.]

Ideen I § 95, *Hua* III/1, p. 221; *Ideas* I, p. 232.

I initially see a primitive object in a museum as just a thing. I then realize that it has a use-value (*Gebrauchssinn*), incorporate that value into it, and perceive as a use-object (*Gebrauchsobjekt*). The French and English languages do not share German's ability to create compound words to capture this fusion: there is a danger that *objet-valeur* ['value-object'] will be confused with the (abstract) objectivated value of an object with value [*objet portant valeur* (Ricoeur)]; the expressions *chose-évaluée* and 'evaluated-thing' do more to capture their fusion. In general terms, different levels of objectivation and the distinction between abstract and concrete objectivities create a problem for the French and English languages.

2. Singular objects and essences

Husserl also extends the domain of objectivities by including essences as objects of a specific intuition alongside singular objects:

Das Wesen (Eidos) ist ein neuartiger Gegenstand. [...] Auch Wesenerschauung ist eben Anschauung, wie eidetischer Gegenstand eben Gegenstand ist.

[The essence (*Eidos*) is a new sort of object. [...] Seeing an essence is also precisely intuition, *just as an eidetic object is precisely an object.*]

Ideen I § 3, Hua III/1, p. 14; *Ideas I*, p. 9.

The difficulty is not how to translate the term *Gegenstand* here, but how to understand it: if we render it as ‘object’, we must keep in mind ‘the generalization of concepts of intuition and object’ (*Verallgemeinerung der Begriff ‘Anschauung’ und ‘Gegenstand’*). This is not an analogy based upon the model of sense-objects; singular objects and essences are understood to be kinds of ‘anything whatsoever’, of ‘the universal concept of object, of the object as anything whatsoever [*des allgemeinen Gegenstandsbegriffs, des Gegenstand als irgen etwas*]’ (*Ideen I* § 22, Hua III/1, p. 47; *Ideas I*, p. 41). Husserl generalizes the state of being an object (*Objektheit*) to fields other than singularities, and at the same time denounces those who confuse real and ideal objectivities:

Besagt Gegenstand und Reales, Wirklichkeit und reale Wirklichkeit ein und dasselbe, dann ist die Auffassung von Ideen als Gegenständen und Wirklichkeiten allerdings verkehrte ‘platonische Hypostasierung’.

[If *object* and *something real*, *actuality* and *real actuality* have one and the same sense, then the conception of ideas as objects and actualities is indeed a perverse ‘Platonic hypostatization’.]

Ideen I § 22, Hua III/1, p. 47; *Ideas I*, p. 41.

The term *Wirklichkeiten*, which corresponds to the generalized concept of an object, does not refer to *réalités* (Ricoeur) or *realities* (Boyce Gibson) in the sense of ‘natural realities’, but to anything with the characteristic of *Wirklichkeit*, and encompasses different types of ideality (*vielerlei Ideales*: the tone-scale, the digit 2, a circle, a proposition, etc.)

3 Syntactical objectivities

To turn to essences: the idea of a formal ontology extends objectivity to the domain of syntax. Material ontologies consider kinds of concrete objects (things, animals, men, etc.), whilst formal ontology considers the formal region (*formale Region*) of any object whatever ‘the empty form of any region whatever [*dies leere Form von Region überhaupt*]’ (*Ideen I* § 10, Hua III/1, p. 26; *Ideas I*, p. 21). ‘Object’ in the logical sense refers to any subject of possible predication and is not restricted to concrete individuals as proto-objectivities (*Urgegenständlichkeiten*) or ultimate substrata (*letzte Substrate*); it includes ‘syntactical or categorical objectivities [*syntaktische oder kategoriale*

Gegenständlichkeiten]’ (*Ideen* § 11, Hua III/1, pp. 28–9; *Ideas I*, p. 23, trans. amended) derived from the former by syntactical constructions:

‘Gegenstand’ is ein Titel für mancherlei, aber zusammengehörige Gestaltungen, z. B. ‘Ding’, ‘Eigenschaft’, ‘Relation’, ‘Sachverhalt’, ‘Menge’, ‘Ordnung’ usw, die [...] auf eine Art Gegenständlichkeit, die sozusagen den Vorzug der Urgegenständlichkeit hat zurückweisen.

[‘Object’ is a name for various formations which nonetheless belong together – for example, ‘physical thing’, ‘property’, ‘relationship’, ‘predicatively formed affair-complex’, ‘aggregate’, ‘ordered set’ [...] which] point back to one kind of objectivity that, so to speak, takes precedence as the *primal objectivity*.]

Ideen § 10, Hua III/1, p. 25; *Ideas I*, p. 20.

Such ‘objects’ are purely logical basic concepts, or the formal determinations of the object as something in general (*ein irgend Etwas*) when taken as the substratum of a statement. They are objects of a higher order because they are derived from the ultimate substrata known as perceptive objects. Thus, the state of things ‘snow is white’ is an object in the same sense that snow is an object, but it is of a higher order because it implies an awareness of the substratum, the property and the relation between the two. It is the total or aggregate object of polythetic consciousnesses (*Gesamt-Gegenstand polytheischer Bewusstseins*). It is a mistake to translate *Sachverhalt* (see *SACHVERHALT*) as *état-de-chose* or ‘state-of-things’, as it is not a nature-thing (*Naturding*), and can refer to any logical subject at any level. The English ‘predicatively formed affair-complex’ does much more to capture its predicative origin and general character and even improves upon ‘state of affairs’.

B. Doing away with the object in itself; levels of meaning of intentional objects

The *epokhê* does away with the Kantian amphibology of the object (*Erscheinung* and ‘*Ding an sich*’) because shortcircuiting (*ausschalten*) the natural thesis means bracketing (*einklammern*) any object it posits, and therefore any ‘in itself’. The object is thus shown to be an ‘intentional object’ or ‘noema’; the terms refer to the object-meaning intended and constituted by consciousness:

Ähnlich wie die Wahrnehmung hat jedes Erlebnis [...] sein ‘Intentionales Objekt’, d.i. seinen gegenständlichen Sinn.

[Like perception, every intensive mental process [...] has its ‘intentional object’ i.e. its objective sense.]

Ideen I § 90, Hua III/1, p. 206; *Ideas I*, p. 217.

An intentional object is not an object in the sense that it exists in itself, but an object in the sense in which we speak of ‘the object of attention’. It is the correlate of an activity or its *terminus ad quem* (or *Worau* – towards which – as Heidegger puts it). It is not an actual thing (*das wirkliche Ding*) but a being-sense (*Seinsinn*) that is constituted when consciousness bestows sense: the noema ‘Tree’ does not burn! As the term *gegenständlich* refers to a relationship with an object, we will translate it in French as ‘objectal’ or ‘objectuel’ and in English as ‘objectal’ or ‘objectual’, so as to distinguish it from ‘objective’, which describes something with an intersubjective validity. Any object that has been reduced to an object-sense correlative to a conscious intention, reduced to a noema correlative to a noesis, therefore just as the same noesis can be broken down into a plurality of partial intentions, an analogous distinction can be made within a noema between different levels of objective sense corresponding to different degrees of objectivation; just as we also found, in Kant, a stratification of the object of sense and of objectivity that relates to the constituent operations of the transcendental subject.

1. The double meaning of the concept of reality: *Reell* and *Real*

The reduction of objectivity to the intentional object must not mask the fact that the meaning of the concept of ‘reality’ is split. The two senses of ‘being’ are designated by the German adjectives *reell* and *real*, or *immanent* and *transcendent*. *Reell* applies to that which has consciousness’s mode of being and which is given in the absolute sense; anything with a material nature (*Naturding*) is *real* (in German) and given by adumbrations of foreshadowing: the tree I perceive is *real*, but my perception of the tree is *reell*, included in my consciousness and therefore *irreal* or not included in material nature. If we translate both *real* and *reell* as *réel* (Ricoeur, S. Bachelard) and *real* in English (Boyce Gibson), we will fail to grasp the essential distinction between the modes of being of consciousness and of objects, of mental process (*Erlebnis*) and the thing (*Ding*), ‘*des reellen Bestands der Wahrnehmung* [the real content of perception]’ and ‘*des transzendenten Objekts* [transcendent objects]’ (*Ideen* § 41, Hua III/1, p. 83; *Ideas* I, p. 89). It would be an error to translate *irreal* as *irréel* in French or as ‘unreal’ in English because that might suggest that mental processes are unreal, whereas they are absolute givens. *Irreal* refers to anything that does not have the mode of being of an object in the world, and should be translated into English as ‘irreal’, whilst *irreell* should be translated as

‘not-really immanent’ and not as ‘not-really’. Husserl is using a lexicon inherited from German idealism, in which *Realphilosophie* referred to the philosophy of labour, nature and the family (cf. Hegel’s Jena *Realphilosophie*). *Real* is the opposite of anything metaphysical or to do with the philosophy of mind; it extends the concept of the *real* to anything belonging to the world, and contrasts it with ideal and syntactical objects (see TRUTH).

2. Immanent objectivities

Whilst the vocabulary of objectivity becomes more complex as we move upwards to include higher-order objects, it also becomes more complex as we move downwards to examine the abstract components of concrete objects: these are immanent objects, or in other words not objects that are situated in the world, but unities identified by consciousness. Thus, the time of consciousness is not Heraclitean or formless, but already informed by permanent units:

Das Erlebnis, die wir jetzt erleben, wird uns in der unmittelbaren Reflexion gegenständlich, und es stellt sich in ihm immerfort dasselbe Gegenständliche dar: derselbe Ton.

[The mental process which we are now undergoing becomes objectual to us in immediate reflection: the self-same tone which has just existed as an actual ‘now’ remains henceforth the same tone.]

Die Idee der Phänomenologie, Hua II, p. 67; *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 52, trans. amended.

This tone is certainly an ‘object’ in the sense that it is a unit apprehended by consciousness, but it is not a natural object (*Reales, Naturgegenstand*). This is why it is so difficult to translate expressions that designate immanent ‘objects’ such as *Zeitobjekt*.

In der Wahrnehmung mit ihrer Retention konstituiert sich das ursprüngliche Zeitobjekt.

[The original time-object is constituted in perception, along with the retention of consciousness of *what is perceived*.]

Die Idee der Phänomenologie, Hua II, p. 71; *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 56, trans. amended.

The term should be translated into French as *tempo-objet* (Granel) or *objet de temps* and not as *objet temporal* (Dussort, Lowit), and into English as ‘time-object’ ‘tempo-object’ or ‘object-of-time’, and not as ‘temporal object’ – because, whilst all natural objects are ‘temporal’ in that they are inserted into objective time, a melody is an immanent given of consciousness, and therefore a ‘tempo-object’, or a pure thing that lasts but has no spatial or causal characteristics.

The same applies to the abstract stratum of spatiality, which defines concrete objects in relation to itself but abstracts from the natural things: *res extensae*. Once again, *res extensa* should be translated into French as *spatio-objet* or *chose-spatiale* (with a hyphen), and not as *chose étendue* or *chose spatiale*, and into English as ‘spatio-object’, ‘object-of-space’ or ‘spreading-object’, and not as ‘spatial object’ – because, whilst every *Naturding* is extensive, *res extensa* is nothing more than extension, if we ignore its materiality and its insertion into the causal order of nature: a ghost or a rainbow is pure appearance. These levels are in their turn dissociated into more abstract levels. *Res extensa*, for example, is dissociated into ‘things’ relating to each of the senses (*Sinnendinge: Sehdinge, Tastdinge*, etc.). These are not *choses sensibles* or *choses sensorielles* (Ricoeur), ‘sensory things’ or ‘things of sense’ (Boyce Gibson) – any *Naturding* is sensory – but ‘things pertaining to the senses’ (Cairns), ‘things-of-the-senses’ or things pertaining to each sense. We can translate it by using the Latin *sensualia* (as in Escoubas’s French translation of *Ideen* II). *Sehding* can be translated into Latin as *visuale* (Escoubas) and into French as *chose-visuelle* ‘(with a hyphen) or even *chose-de-vue*, but neither as *chose visuelle* (without a hyphen) nor *chose visible* (Ricoeur). In English, it can be rendered as ‘visual-thing’, ‘thing of sight’, or ‘merely visible thing’, but not as ‘visual thing’ or ‘visible thing’. Any *Naturding* is visible (and tangible, audible and so on), but the *Sehding* is a pure thing-of-sight which has only visual properties (for example, the patch of red I see when I close my eyes).

3. Objects ‘simpliciter’ and complete objects

An analysis of intentional objects and of the ways in which they are given allows us to make a distinction between the broad and narrow meanings of noema: the central kernel or pure objective sense, or the central noematic moment (*zentraler Kern, purer gegenständlicher Sinn*) is contrasted with the full intentional object or the object in the how of its modes of givenness (*volles intentionales Objekt, ‘Gegenstand im Wie seiner Gegebenheitsweisen’*). The same tree can be seen from different angles and in different seasons; its predicates may change, but it is still the same tree. It can be perceived, remembered, imagined and named: the ‘same’ is its minimal objective sense (*gegenständlicher Sinn*), ignoring the acts of apprehension (perception, memory, etc.) that give the tree the *Aktcharaktere* of the ‘perceived’ ‘remembered’ and so on, and it is contrasted with the *Objekt in Wie*: the perceived tree, remembered tree, etc.

[...] *dass verschiedene Begriff von unmodifizierten Objektivitäten unterscheidbar sein müssen, von denen der ‘Gegenstand schlechthin’, nämlich das Identische, das einmal wahrgenommen, das andere Mal direkt vergegenwärtigt, das dritte Mal in einem Gemälde bildlich dargestellt ist u. dgl. nur einen zentralen Begriff andeutet.*

[... we must distinguish different concepts of *unmodified objectivities*, of which the ‘object *simpliciter*’, namely the something identical which is perceived at one time, another time directly presentiated, a third time presented pictorially in a painting, and the like, indicates only *one* central concept.]

Ideen I, § 91, Hua III/1, p. 211; *Ideen* I, p. 222.

The expressions ‘pure objectual sense’ (*purere gegenständlicher Sinn*), noematic core or nucleus (*noematischer Kern*) and central core (*zentraler Kern*) thus refer to a layer of meaning in the full object, namely the level we reach if we ignore the determinations inherent in the ‘how’ of subjective intentionality; here, the concept of ‘objectivity’ therefore means the absence of subjective modifications, and ‘pure object’ means a correlate existing prior to any change of meaning relating to the character of acts.

4. The distinction between noematic meaning and determinable ‘object’

We said earlier that Husserl reduces objectivity to intentional meaning or the noematic object and excludes the thing-in-itself, and that the kernel of the noematic sense was the specifically ‘objective’ moment, which we obtain by eliminating the inherent characteristics of the how of the subjective intention (remembered, imagined, etc.). The archifoundational meaning of the object is, however, not reducible to either the noematic sense or the noematic core, but to an ultimate noematic layer: that of the object as pure ‘X’, a pure ‘something’ or the unchanging substratum of variable determinations:

Es scheidet sich als zentrales noematisches Moment aus: der ‘Gegenstand’, das ‘Objekt’ das ‘Identische’ das ‘bestimmbare Subjekt seiner möglichen Prädikate – das pure X in Abstraktion von allen Prädikaten – und es scheidet sich [...] von den Prädikatennoemen. [...] derart, dass der charakterisierte Kern ein wandelbarer und der ‘Gegenstand’ das pure Subjekt der Prädikate, eben ein identisches ist. [...] Kein ‘Sinn’ ohne das ‘etwas’ und wieder ohne ‘bestimmenden Inhalt’.

[It becomes separated as central noematic moment: the ‘object’, the ‘Object’, the ‘Identical’, the ‘determinable subject of its possible predicates’ – the *pure X in abstraction from all predicates* – and it becomes separated [...] from these predicate-

noemas. [...] the characterized core is a changeable one and the ‘object’, the pure subject of the predicating, is precisely an identical one. [...] No ‘sense’ without the ‘something’ and, again, without ‘determining content’.]

Ideen I, § 131, Hua III/1, pp. 302–3;
Ideas I, pp. 13–15.

What does this tell us about the meaning of the ‘object’ concept, which is usually signalled by the use of inverted commas? How does it differ from the usual concept of the intentional object, and from the concept of the *object simpliciter* or noematic core? It is the noetico-noematic parallelism that allows us to understand this: just as any intention towards an object can, at the analytic level, be broken down into partial intentions, any noematic sense can be broken down into different strata of partial sense – the fundamental stratum being that of the noematic core (the same church, irrespective of whether it is perceived, remembered, etc.) or, more profoundly, that of the ‘pure object’ (the same church as material thing, irrespective of its spiritual properties). Conversely, at the synthetic level, no intention, whatever changes may affect the subject, is limited to one or another state of the object; it intends the *same* object (if the church has been destroyed, or if the tree is on fire, the rubble or ashes are still the remains of the object, even though it is no longer recognizable). Any intentional object is therefore grounded in a minimal pure intentionality of a pure, permanent substratum which guarantees the identity of the object. The ‘object’ concept is a pure *hupokeimenon* [ὑποκειμένον], a pure ‘this-there’ or ‘something’ existing prior to any determination, and defined only by its permanence and determinability. This brings us back to the function of Kant’s concept of a transcendental object or *Objekt überhaupt*, or category of substance; in the absence of the object’s transcendent existence, it founds the identity of the objective correlate thanks to the permanence of an empty intention; that there can be no meaning without ‘something’, means that the undetermined relationship with object X (the first chapter of Part IV of Husserl’s *Ideas I* is entitled ‘The Noematic Sense and the Relation to the Object’) precedes any relationship with a determinate object, and that formal ontology, or the theory of the pure ‘something’, has a foundational status for material ontologies. Strictly speaking, this incidence of the concept should, as in Kant, be translated as ‘ob-ject’ in order to signal that it is permanently op-posed to (*vis-à-vis pour*) consciousness in order to distinguish it from an object with a determinate noematic sense.

5. The Double Meaning of ‘Objectivity’:

Objektivität and *Gegenständlichkeit*

Unlike *Gegenständlichkeit*, the concept of *Objektivität*, which is translated into English as ‘objectivity’, does not refer to a relationship with an objectivity, but to the highest level of objectivation, namely intersubjective validity. The objective thing (*objectives Ding*) is the ‘intersubjectively identical thing [*das intersubjektiv identische Ding*]’ (*Ideen I*, § 151, Hua III/1, p. 352; *Ideas I*, p. 363), which is a ‘constitutive unity of higher order’ (*eine constitutive Einheit höherer Ordnung*) in so far as it is a constituted intersubjectivity relating to an indefinite plurality of subjects bound together by a reciprocal comprehension ‘for which *one* thing is to be intersubjectively given and identified as the same actuality [*für welche ein Ding als dasselbe objektiv Wirkliche intersubjektiv zu geben und zu identifizieren ist*]’ (*Ideen I*, § 135, Hua III/1, pp. 310–11; *Ideas I*, p. 323, trans. amended). The highest level of objectivity, pertaining to an infinitely open community, is therefore ‘the true thing’ (*das wahre Ding*) that Husserl calls the *das physikalische Ding* (*Ideen I*, § 42, Hua III/1, p. 85; *Ideas I*, p. 90), which is not simply Ricoeur’s ‘*chose physique*’ or ‘Boyce Gibson’s ‘physical thing’, but the thing as conceived in physics, just as *das physikalische Wahre* refers not to the ‘physical truth’, but to the truth sought by the science of physics, which strips nature of its subjective–relative qualities. The ‘true thing’ is not the thing in itself as the intelligible cause of all apprehension, but the superstructural mathematical thought built on the world of phenomenal objects.

Dominique Pradelle

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Object, objective being

| | |
|-------|---|
| Gr. | <i>antikeimenon</i> [ἀντικείμενον] |
| Lat. | <i>objici, objectum; esse objective</i> |
| Fr. | <i>objet</i> |
| Germ. | <i>Objekt</i> |

► BEING, CHOSE, ERSCHEINUNG, ES GIBT, GEGENSTAND, INTENTION, PERCEPTION, PHENOMENON, REALITY, REPRESENTATION, SEIN, SUBJECT, TATSACHE, THING, TRUTH, VORHANDEN

The word *object* has not always existed, and nor has the concept to which it refers, but we constantly project it onto texts in which it does not appear.

I. Antikeimenon, or thought without an object

Do we have to accept that, even though the word itself is not always there, the ‘object’ concept is as old as philosophy? In reality, Plato and Aristotle constantly analyse the relationship between the faculties and their terminus but do not have an autonomous term to describe it. Although ‘object’ is not present in the original Greek, translators constantly introduce it and, thanks to a retrospective illusion, project onto the ancient authors the Latin vocabulary we have inherited from medieval philosophy.

When Plato talks about the faculties and ‘what they refer to’, he always uses an involved periphrasis. He does of course mention the relationship between the ability to know or to desire and the order of things it desires or knows. But he can only do so thanks to the play of syntax: thirst ‘will never be for anything other than what it is in its nature to be for, namely drink itself’ (*Republic* IV 437e; trans. G.M.A. Gaube, rvd. C.D.C. Reeve). Chambry’s French translation (*Les Belles Lettres*, 1931, 10th edn, 1996, p. 34) has ‘*elle ne saurait être le désir d’autre chose que de son objet naturel* [could not be anything but its natural object]’ (emphasis added). Similarly, knowledge in itself ‘is knowledge of what can be learned itself’ (IV, 438c). Chambry has ‘*ou de l’objet, quel qu’il soit qu’il faut assigner à la science*’ (p. 35, emphasis added), whilst ‘In the case of power, I use only what it is set over (*eph’ hōi*) and what it does’ (*Republic* V 477d) is rendered in French as ‘*je ne considère que son objet et ses effets* [I consider only the object and its effects]’ (p. 94). The link established by Plato’s Greek is extremely supple, as it is restricted to a relative pronoun; a literal translation is heavy and awkward; it is much lighter if the term *objet* is projected on to Plato in order to explain the meaning of Plato’s text, the only problem being that such a translation

introduces a concept for which there is no semantic support. For Plato, the corresponding terms are ‘twin births’ (*Theaetetus* 156b 1; trans. M.J. Levett, rev. M. Burnyeat). The powers of the soul and what they are set over are correlates, but there is in their correlation what Plato calls a power (*dunameis*; δύνουμαις), which has no terminological correlate in the order of things. What the French translations – anachronistically but, to the modern mind, inevitably call an *objet* – has no name in Plato.

Being more concerned with classification, Aristotle groups powers and what they take as their themes into the broader category of opposites. Powers (*dunameis*) are defined in terms of their activities and actions, which are in turn defined by their differentia (*antikeimena*): ‘if we are to express what each is, viz. what the thinking power is, or the perceptive, or the nutritive, we must go further back and give an account of thinking or perceiving’ (*De Anima* II, 4, 415a 20). If the analysis is to begin with ‘their opposites (*antikeimena*)’ and ‘if the investigation of the functions precedes that of the parts, the further question suggests itself: ought we not before either to consider the opposites (*antikeimena*), for example, of sense or thought?’ (*ibid.*, I, 1, 402b 15). The French text reads ‘*on pourrait se demander si la recherche de leurs opposés (antikeimena) ne devrait pas encore les précéder, par exemple le sensible avant la faculté sensitive, et l’intelligible avant l’intellect*’ and a note added to the new (1982) edition remarks ‘Here, the word *antikeimena* therefore means the objects of sensibility and the intellect’. The first meaning of *antikeimenon* is ‘opposite’ in a positional sense, as *On the Heavens* reminds us: ‘fire and earth move not to infinity but to opposite points’ (I, 10, 277a 23; trans. J.L. Stocks cf. II, 2, 284b 22 and see Bonitz’s comments, 1870, 64a 18). Each faculty differs from the others because the activity precedes the faculty and gives it its specificity: ‘the activity of the sense-object and that of the sense-organ

are one and the same, but what it is for each to be is not the same' (*On the Soul*, III, 2, 425b 25). But every activity is first defined with reference to its opposite, that is to say the type of property that affects every faculty of the soul: they are what Jacques de Venise's accurate translation calls *opposita* (*circa* 1130).

Are we therefore to conclude that Aristotle has found a name for something that remained nameless in Plato? Does *antikeimenon* have to be interpreted as meaning an opposition between object and power? This is a retrospective illusion, but it would be easy to succumb to it. Yet Aristotle's thought does not prefigure the medieval and modern concept of 'object'. It is not as though the secret recesses of his very general language contained subsequent developments and prepared the ground for later distinctions, or as though later interpreters had succeeded in discovering a latent meaning that was already secretly present and which they have inherited.

First of all, Aristotle simply does not integrate Plato's terminology into a more precise vocabulary; he merely inscribes the relationship of correlation observed by Plato within a much more general classificatory concept. *Antikeimenon* is in fact a very broad class whose correlates are no more than a particular case: 'We call opposites contradictories, and contraries and relative terms, and privation and possession, and the extremes from which and into which generation and dissolution take place' (*Metaphysics*, Delta 1018a, 20-21; trans. W.D. Ross). Relational terms are a genus which has its own species: 'the measurable to the measure, the knowable to knowledge and the perceptible to perception' (Delta 15, 1020b, 31-2). Far from containing *in nuce* the distinctions with which the concept of *objectum* is laden, the Aristotelian notion of *antikeimenon* simply allows things to be grouped together: it puts cognitive correlation into a hierarchy of more general terms.

What is more, a correlative relationship is symmetrical and can be inverted: knowledge can in its turn become the opposite of the knowable (*Categories*, X, 11b, 29-30; VII, 6b, 34-6; trans. J.L. Ackrill). The medieval and modern concept of 'object' is asymmetrical: it can never be said that knowledge is the 'object of what is known'. The meaning of 'opposite' is much broader than that of the later 'object': the opposition signifies a general reciprocal relationship which is much broader than the particular case of the powers of the soul and their theme and it therefore does not define the status of the faculty's goal. What a faculty knows is primarily the thing itself in the manifestation of its essence and its properties, and not an object

defined solely by its correspondence to the faculty: the faculty is governed by being, and it is not the object that defines the faculty (*Metaphysics*, Delta, 15, 1021a, 26b 3; Iota 6, 1057a 7-12).

II. *Objectum*: an obstacle to sight

The very word *object* designates the act of 'standing opposite', *objici* (Latin). Once again, have we to accept that the word designating it, and therefore the concept that comes with it, was already in use in Ancient Rome?

Classical Latin certainly used the past participle of *objicio* ('to put before, hold before, as protection or obstacle') and in the *Germania* (VIII, 1) Tacitus nicely describes women urging on an army by 'thrusting their bosoms before them' [*objectu pectorum*] (*On Britain and Germany*, trans. H. Mattingly). Latin also uses the masculine noun *objectus*, which derives from *objectum*, to mean 'that which is put before' or 'obstacle' (or an *obstant*), 'spectacle' and, more specifically, 'apparition' or 'phenomenon'. But the coining of the neuter *objectum* corresponds to a new conceptual demand.

The new demand comes from the theory of perception, where it implies activity on the part of the faculties of the soul. According to Augustine, who follows Plato's theory of vision, vision is the product of the encounter that takes place between the gaze that springs from the eye, and the colour that emanates from a thing. The eye emits a ray 'by which we touch all that we see ... If you wish to see further and if some object is interposed [*interponatur*], the ray breaks against the body thrown in front of it [*corpus objectum*], and it is not permitted to go further towards that which you wish to see' (Augustine, *Sermo* 267, ch. X, 10; PL, t. 38, col. 1262). Here, the *objectus* is the the *obstans*, the body that is interposed between the seeing and the seen [*la visée et la vue*], the obstacle that puts what I am aiming at – the terminus of my operation – out of reach. The *objectus* is a hindrance to the activity of vision; it is not its objective. The past participle *objectum* does not designate the thing I am looking at, but that which, because it stands before the seer, breaks the axis of the gaze and obfuscates the transparency of its vision.

This active theory of vision has a paradoxical effect: its terminus is always an obstacle whose shadow limits the pure light cast by the gaze and, conversely, the obstacle is an *objectum*. The pseudo-Robert Grosseteste, commenting in *circa* 1230 on Augustine's text, turns the past participle into a noun: 'The spiritual ray that leaves the eye is not affected by the external object

[*non immutator ab objecto extra*]’ (Ludwig Baur, ed., *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, p. 255, ll. 15–19). *Objectu* is no longer an adjective describing a quality but, in all probability, a grammatical neuter and subsisting term. The counter-position is no longer an accident affecting or frustrating perception: it refers to a positive property of the visible.

The ‘object’ concept is constructed when the term *objectum* superimposes two determinations: the old etymological sense of interposing, and the new meaning, derived from Aristotle’s problematic, in which the terminus of the faculty is relative. The usage is clarified and established by the pseudo-Grosseteste:

But they add that there are different objects and different motors for both the natural appetite and the deliberative faculty. There are therefore also different acts and different powers.

pseudo-Robert Grosseteste, in L. Bauer, *ibid.*, p. 265, l. 42–4.

Even though the pseudo-Grosseteste is the sole author of the embryonic concept of an object, if we look at his sources (Augustine and Aristotle), we cannot rule out the possibility that it is a tool that was forged in the Faculty of Arts and popularized anonymously shortly before he described it. (A number of attestations between 1225 and 1230 suggest that this is the case: *Summa Duacensis*, ed. P. Glorieux, pp. 43, 40; *De anima et de potentiis eius* [1225], first in French in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66, 1982, pp. 223, 232, 244, 250; it first appears in the title of the anonymous *De potentiae animae et objectis* [between 1220 and 1230], in D.A. Callus, ed., *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 19, 1952, pp. 147–8).

It is in Philippe le Chancelier’s *Quaestiones de anima* that the concepts of subject and object are first related to one another:

Una [potentia] enim simpliciter est quae est una in subjecto et objecto, duplex quae est una in subjecto, duplicata in objecto.

[It is indeed an absolutely unique [‘power’], which is in the subject and in the object; it is the double of that in the subject, but reduplicated in the object.]

Quaestiones de anima, ed. L.W. Keeler, p. 39.

The object is no longer just an interposed obstacle, and is clearly recognized as being the theme specific to the act of knowing. It may even help us to distinguish the various faculties, as it pre-exists them. This is why pseudo-Grosseteste feels entitled to cite the text of the

De Anima and to translate *antikeimena* as *objecta*, and not as ‘opposites’, as Jacques de Venise rendered it. This translation becomes standard in the second half of the twelfth century, even in Guillaume de Moerbeke’s new version of the *De Anima*.

A decisive turning point is reached when Aristotle’s psychology fuses with Augustine’s theory of vision: the faculties of the soul are no longer simply open to the motor and multiform being with which they identify in the act of cognition, but are determined by the prior nature of their specific object. What is known is no longer the face of the thing itself, but the obstacle standing in the way of the soul’s gaze, and which takes away the act’s transparency. Knowledge is no longer the mere reception of an actualized being whose potential has been set in motion, but the ricochet of a beam that is emitted by the intellect and that returns to the intellect after having rebounded off its terminus. It is no longer a direct face-to-face encounter between the thing that is known and the knowing intellect, which are united in a common act, but the reverberation of the intention on the ‘objectivity’ that gives the thing a characteristic stratum. The truth is now metamorphosed into being the adequacy of the powers of the soul to the corresponding objects.

Quidam habitus sunt in anima et in ratione habituum [...] alii sunt qui inel in ratione obiectorum, et sicut veritas et falsitas quia obicuntur intelligente.

[Some habitus exist in the soul as habitus, and they are therefore in themselves either in the soul or in man; others exist there as objects, and such are truth and falsity, because they are thrust before the intellect.]

Roger Bacon, *Questiones supra libros prime philosophie Aristoteles*, in *Opera ... Inedita Rogeri Bacon*, ed. R. Steele and F. Delorme, vol. X, p. 193.

III. *Esse objective*, or the ontology of objects in general

The concept of *esse objective* (objective being) lexicalizes this development: what is present to pure thought is not imprinted on it as a perception that is passively received by the senses, but as the product of an intention; it is present as the object of our representation: ‘Once this thing is known as it exists in nature, it objectively shines inside [*intus objective lucet*] the intelligence itself’ (Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* V, quest. 26, f. 205 N; cf. V, quest. 14, f. 175). ‘Objective being’ refers to the being of the thing that is the object of the intention, and therefore in so far as it is both immanent (represented) and transcendental (representing). When

it encounters an external object, the agency of the intellect produces that object within the intellect as a real accident in the soul. It then gives it a universal status: the form 'man' can be applied to all men. 'We have an internal object for our act of intellection, even though we need an external object in order to feel' (*Quodlibet*, XIII, art. 2 § [20] 60, ed. F. Alluntis, p. 470). And Duns Scotus stresses that the being of the thing remains the same, regardless of whether or not its object exists: the objective being of Caesar remains identical, regardless of whether or not Caesar exists, just as the statue of Caesar continues to represent him both in his absence and in his existence. Objective being is universal, abstract and immanent to the mind.

Duns Scotus thus establishes the main features of the modern theory of objective being or of objective reality that is handed down to Suárez, Descartes and Kant: 'That which constitutes an idea or a mental representation, and not a substantial and independent reality, is objective or exists objectively' (Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, 'Etre objectif', 1968, p. 695).

The coining of the term *object* and its compounds demonstrates that it is a complete illusion to suppose that concepts are eternal. It demonstrates that the retrospective illusion of the interpreters and translators who slip the new concept into old texts is at once dangerous and constantly recurrent. It also demonstrates the extent to which the basic concepts of metaphysics are bound up with the evolution of the vocabulary that allows us to name them.

Olivier Boulnois

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AMSTERDAM

Res, Ens LATIN – Eng. thing, something

| | |
|-------|---|
| Arab | say' [شيء] <i>ma'nā</i> [المعنى] |
| Fr. | <i>Chose, quelque chose</i> |
| Gr. | <i>khrēma</i> [χρημα], <i>pragma</i> [πρᾶγμα] <i>ti</i> [τι], <i>ousia</i> [οὐσία], <i>on</i> [ὄν], <i>onta</i> [ὄντα] |
| Germ. | <i>Ding, Sache, etwas</i> |
| Ital. | <i>cosa, qualcosa</i> |
| Span. | <i>cosa, algo</i> |

► *CHOSE* and *BEING*, ESSENCE, GEGENSTAND, HOMONYM, INTENTION, LOGOS, EGO, *NEGATION*, *NOTHINGNESS*, OBJECT, REALITY, SACHVERHALT, SEIN, SENS, SIGN, SIGNIFIER, THING

Nothing, apart from its remarkable indeterminacy, predestined the Latin word *res* to enjoy such a long philosophical career. Its history stretches from Cicero via the Latin scholastics and the German metaphysical scholastics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and on to Brentano's 'reism'. It has migrated from rhetoric to the economic, juridical and logical fields and, finally, to the metaphysical field. It has become not only a possible equivalent for what is regarded as the most common of terms – *to on* [τὸ ὄν], being or existent. It also extends beyond that sense and can come close to meaning, so to speak, either something or nothing (*aliquid/nihil*). It has also become an absolutely primary or supratranscendental term. At a different semantic level, the derivatives *realis* and *realitas* open up the field of formality and possibility

I. The Stoics and Aristotelian semantics: *pragma*, from the thing itself to the incorporeal

There is probably a close parallel between the philosophical history of the word *res* and that of the Greek term *pragma* [πρᾶγμα], whose primary meaning is juridical and rhetorical (Aristotle, *Topics* 1, 18, 108a; *Rhetoric* 3, 14, 1415b 4). *Pragma* refers to the fact or matter that is to be discussed, debated and judged in a trial (*die Streitsache, um die es vor Gericht geht*; W. Wieland, *Die aristotelische Physik*, p. 170) and not simply to a material and individual reality that is either given or immediately present. That is why the same term can be used to characterize what is meant by a word or proposition, or the meaning or the state of what is being discussed. This is certainly the way Plato uses the term in *Letter VII*, 341c: *to pragma auto* [τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτό] does not mean 'the thing in itself', but the subject or matter in hand, 'the problems with which I am concerned' or the 'matter' that is in dispute. And it is possible to see this passage from Plato as the ultimate anchoring point for the phenomenological maxim, in both its Husserlian and its Heideggerian forms: *Zu den Sachen selbst, Zur Sache selbst*. Latin translators from Boethius to Guillaume de Moerbeke had no difficulty in using the term *res ipsa* to capture all these meanings.

The *logos-pragma* [λόγος/πρᾶγμα], or *onoma-pragma* [ὄνομα/πρᾶγμα] dichotomy is easily transposed into Latin, thanks mainly to Boethius's translations of the *De Interpretatione*, but the term *res* does not refer

exclusively to a singular material reality, external to discourse and transcending discourse. It will also be recalled that in the famous opening of the *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle makes a distinction between *pragmata* [πράγματα] and *pathēmata tēs psukhēs* [παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς], or between the affections in the soul that reflect them; their symbols and signs are 'spoken sounds' (*phōnai* [φωναί]). *Pragmata* have more to do with states of things than with material and singular things (see SIGN). Cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Delta 29 (trans. W.D. Ross): the fact that 'the diagonal of a square is commensurate with the side' or that 'you are sitting' are examples of statements of a state of things, of a 'being such-and-such' that must be always false or sometimes true and sometimes false (see L.M. De Rijk, 'Logos and Pragma in Plato and Aristotle', in L.M. De Rijk and H.A.G. Baakhuis, eds, *Logos and Pragma. Essays on the Philosophy of Language in Honour of Professor Gabriel Nuchelmanns*, Aristarium Supplementa III).

This comment allows us to correct in passing the all-too-common interpretation of the famous passage in the *Sophistical Refutations* where the Stagirite points out that the things themselves that are being discussed cannot be introduced into the discussion and that words have to be used in their place as symbols: 'ἐπεὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα διαλέγεσθαι φέροντας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀντὶ τῶν πραγμάτων χρώμεθα ὡς συμβόλοις [It is impossible in a discussion to bring in the actual things discussed; we use their names as symbols instead of them]' (*Sophistical*

Refutations 165a 6–16, trans. W. Pickard-Cambridge). ‘Actual things’ does not refer primarily to an extra-mental or a-semantic reality (a stone, bull or ass), which would indeed be difficult to introduce into the discussion, but to the matter under discussion (*die Sache, um die es in der Aussage geht; [...] etwas, worum es in der Rede geht*, Wieland: 159–60) [Contra, see HOMONYM B 3, and Box 1 below].

According to Sextus Empiricus (*Adversus mathematicos* VIII, 11–12; SVF II, 166; A.A Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* vol. 2, 33B, p. 191), the Stoics made a distinction between three different entities: the ‘signifier’ (*to sêmainon* [τὸ σημαίνον], meaning the vocal form or voice (*phônê* [φωνή], ‘utterance’, in Long and Sedley); what is signified (*to sêmainomenon* [τὸ σημαινόμενον], ‘the signification’ in Long–Sedley), which is the *pragma*, the conceptual content or the intentional object indicated by the voice, (‘the actual state of affairs revealed by an utterance’, the intension, De Rijk); and its extra-linguistic correlate, the external substrate, *to ektos hupokeimenon* [τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον], namely the event, *to tugkhanon* [τὸ τυγχάνον] (the ‘referent’, De Rijk; the ‘name-bearer’, Long and Sedley, vol. 1, p. 197; see SIGNIFIER). Max Pohlenz points out that in Hellenistic usage, *ta tugkhanonta* [τὰ τυγχάνοντα] should be understood to be an abbreviation for *ha tugkhanai onta* [ἃ τυγχάνει ὄντα], that which is, that which is encountered, which finds itself there’ (*Die Stoa*, vol. 2, p. 22) (see Pierre Hadot, ‘Sur les divers sens du mot *pragma* dans la tradition philosophique grecque’, in *Études de philosophie ancienne*, pp. 61–76).

• See box 1

II. The Latin juridico-economic heritage: *res/bona, res/causa, res/verba*

Whilst the term *res* does have a specifically Latin and pre-philosophical history, it probably relates to the sphere of goods (*bona*), property, wealth and self-interest, as we can see from Latin comedy (e.g. Plautus, *Pseudologus*, 338: ‘It is not in your interest [*ex tua re non est*]’), and from normal expressions such as *rem augere* (‘to increase one’s fortune’) or *in rem esse alicui* (‘to be in someone’s interest’). The latter meaning is probably etymologically correct if it is true that, as Ernout and Meillet (*Dictionnaire étymologique*) claim, the term is related to the Sanskrit *revan* (wealth). This juridico-economic meaning is implicit in many compound expressions, such as *res sua, alienate, privata, publica, venalis, extra commercium, mobilis, immobilis, in patrimonio, extra patrimonium*, and even *res corporalis*. Here, the

expression refers to things that are material, sensible and tangible, as distinct from *res incorporales* such as property rights (Gaius, *Institutiones* II, 12–14). In the legal domain, a distinction is made between *res* (the case in general, the fact or facts) and *causa* (the charge of which the accused will be found innocent or guilty) (*de re et cause judicare*, Cicero, *Partitiones oratoriae* IX, 30; *De Finibus* I, 5, 15; II, 2, 5; II, 2, 6).

In the general context of Latin rhetoric, the term *res* refers indiscriminately to the topic dealt within a speech and to that speech’s object (*re de qua agitur*). The role of the orator is to expound a question or issue (*rem exponere, rem narrare*). If he fails to understand the issue or the *status questionae* (the *res subjectae*, Quintilian *De institutione oratoria* II, 21, 4), there is a danger that rhetoric will degenerate into chatter about this and that (Cicero, *De oratore* I, 6, 20: ‘*Oratio [...] nisi subest res ab oratore percepta et cognita, inanem quondam habet elocutionem et paene puerilem; ...* unless there is such knowledge, well-grasped and comprehended by the speaker, then there must be something empty and almost childish in the utterance’, trans. E.W. Sutton).

The word *res* (like the Greek *pragma*) can, however, also refer to *thoughts*, as in Quintilian’s description of *oratio*: ‘*Orationem ... omnem constare rebus et verbis*’, which correspond to, respectively, the *inventio* (where *res* = thoughts) and the *dispositio*, or the speech in the true sense. Juridical rhetoric makes a classic distinction between the ‘case’ that is to be judged and the *circumstantiae rei* – the study of the *circumstantiae*, as clarified by the questions that follow. They refer back to Aristotle’s categories: *quid, quale, quantum ad aliquid*. The rhetorical tradition also classes *topoi (loci)* on the basis of the *res–persona* distinction (Quintilian *ibid.*, V, 10, 23; Cicero, *De inventione* I, 24, 34).

III. *Res/corpus*

Despite a few passages in Tertullian, who likens thingness to corporeality, *res* does not appear to have initially been understood as meaning *solida* or to have been associated with *corpus*. The way Tertullian uses and defines the word *substantia (ipsa substantia est corpus rei cuiusque)* strongly suggests that, once it lost its initial economic connotations, *res* was essentially indeterminate (cf. J. Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien*, four volumes including a valuable index and glossary). It is probably the indeterminacy of the term that allows clever attempts to transpose or explicate the Greek *ousia* [οὐσία]. ‘*Quomodo dicetur ousia – res necessaria, natura continens, fundamen-*

Box 1 How to say ‘thing’ in Greek

► LEX (box 1, ‘Gnômon’), PRAXIS, SEX (box 1, ‘Masculine, Feminine, Neuter’), VORHANDEN

If we take as our starting point a vernacular term such as the French *chose* or English *thing*, the most common way of translating it back into the Greek is obviously the neuter, and especially the neuter form of substantialized participles, which we render as best we can by adding ‘*chose*’ [thing] or ‘*objet*’ [object] (see for example ‘Aistheton’, SENS, box 1; on the article ‘To’ and ‘auto’, cf. box 2 in I) or even the neuter form of relative pronouns and demonstratives. F. Ildefonse and J. Lallot make the innovatory suggestion that the beginning of Aristotle’s *Categories* should be translated as: ‘*On dit homonymes les items (hôn, óv) qui n’ont de commun qu’un nom*’. (‘Items that have only a name in common are said to be homonyms’; trans. Ackrill). But they are no more than expletive ‘things’ that exist by default or thanks to a projection (see OBJECT). It is the same with the indefinite *ti* (τι) which, when stressed, functions as an interrogative (‘What?’, ‘Which?’); the only equivalent is ‘something’ (*kalon ti*, καλόν τι, ‘something beautiful’), even when, in Stoic doctrine, it refers to the strange and remarkable supreme genus of *quid* (‘something’, *to ti*, τὸ τι), which of course includes both bodies and incorporeals (Seneca Letter XVIII, 24). Cicero also calls this *res*, and Plotinus finds this ‘incomprehensible’ (*Enneades* VI, 1, 25, 6–10).

There are, however, direct and ‘semanticized’ ways of saying in Greek what we understand by ‘thing’ in the full sense of the term. They involve using the Latin *res* and *causa*, even though the two words are not, as we shall see, equivalent. This gives us two competing words, each marked by its etymology: *pragma* and *khrema* (χρήμα).

Pragma derives from *prassô* (πράσσω), which is used by Homer only as an intransitive verb (to go on to the end, to go through), but which is regularly used in a transitive sense (to complete, finish, work on, practise). More concrete than *praxis* (πράξις), which refers to activity in the strict sense, *pragma* refers to the reason for or outcome of that activity: ‘thing’ as it relates to an action, task, matter, a concrete reality or an object. When used in the singular, it refers at once to that which is at stake or at issue (in a trial, for example), that which is actual and real, and that which is the case. In one way or another, what is at stake is the thing itself, ‘*die Sache selbst*’ (*auto to pragma*; αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα)

and the expression is much closer to the original juridical and economic meanings of *res* than to the ‘object of thought’. But the plural *pragmata* is much more concrete: it refers to the ‘realities’ of the external world in which we act, namely to things that have happened, to the ‘facts’ and things we are dealing with, and public or private ‘matters’; it is the term most commonly used in philosophy to refer to objects in the world, including natural realities, to the extent that living and knowing men are involved (‘If exterior things are a plurality and in movement’, Melissus, 30 A 5 DK, I, p. 260, 974a 25, for example). This, incidentally, is why I cannot accept Pierre Hadot’s interpretation of the beginning of the *Sophistical Refutations* (see above); the reason why Aristotle sees homonymy as the fatal flaw in language in this passage is that there are indeed more ‘things’ than there are words, that there are more concrete realities to be discussed than there are words available in natural language (cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 344–7 and n8, pp. 386 f). This work-related ‘reality’ might in one respect be compared with *Wirklichkeit*, which is also related to a *Wirken*, or ‘effective implementation’ (see REALITY, VI); neither *pragmata* nor *Wirklichkeit* are simple or immediate ontological ‘givens’, like *phainomena* (φαινόμενα) or *onta* (ὄντα), which appear and remain without any reference to any operation (see ERSCHENUNG, ESTI and box 1 [*Phôs phainô*] in LIGHT).

The other term, *khrema*, carries even greater implications of the human. It is related to the vast family derived from *khre* (χρή), ‘it must’ in the sense of ‘it is needed’, and centred on *khraômai* (χράομαι), ‘to discover how something is used’, ‘to resort to for one’s own use’. Often understood as being related to *kheir* (χείρ), ‘hand’ (Heidegger himself relates it to *vorhanden*; see VORHANDEN), but also related to *khairô* (χαίρω), ‘to rejoice’ (Chantaine sv ‘Khraomai’, p. 1275), *khraomai* means ‘to use’, in the sense of borrowing something from a neighbour, as well as in the sense of consulting an oracle (whose answer is *khreismos*, χρησιμός). There are underlying implications of ‘lack and desire’ and further implications of ‘relating to someone’, ‘devoting oneself to’ and ‘undergoing’. We get some idea of the term’s thematic breadth if we compare it with the adverb *parakhrema* (‘immediately’; liter-

ally ‘ready for use’), the noun *khreia*, meaning ‘use’ but also a function such as military ‘service’ or grammatical or rhetorical usage (*chrie* = the exploitation of commonplaces in an oratorical exercise). This shows that a *krema* is a thing in so far as it is used and is of importance (the poet is, we read in Plato, *Ion* 534b, ‘an airy thing, winged and holy’ because he is an especially important and functional link in the chain that extends from the god and the muse to the rhapsode and the listener); the plural *khremata* is regularly used to mean ‘riches’ or ‘resources’ (the modern Greek *khrema* means ‘money’). *Khrema* is, notes Gernet (p. 11, and n32) ‘the classical economic notion’. This determination of ‘thing’ by its use and function, in the sense that wealth is determined by expenditure, is very present in Antiphon’s texts (where the miser whose riches were buried beneath a tree has to console himself thus: ‘When it was yours, you did not know how to make use of it’ [οὐδ’ ... ἐχρῶ], 87 B 54 DK; cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 325–6, to Aristotle ‘spending and giving seem to be the using of weath’ *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 4, 1120a 4–9, trans. W.D. Ross, rev. J.O. Urmson).

Khremata is therefore the word that, in both the celebrated fragment from Anaxagoras (*‘homou panta khremata en [ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν]*; all things were together’, B7 B 54 DK) and that from Protagoras (*‘pantôn khrematôn metron estin anthrôpos*; man is the measure of all things’, 80 B 1 DK II, p. 263, 3–4), is always translated as *things* (*alle Dinge*, Diels-Kranz). We have to proceed with some caution here, particularly as it is by no means obvious that we are talking about phenomena and existents. These are the equivalents proposed by Sextus (*Pyrrhoniatarum hypotyposean*

I, 216) and ratified by Heidegger in his attempt to turn Anaxagoras and Protagoras into Parmenidean pre-Socratics. Protagoras merely adds a nice touch of moderation to the unveiling of *alêtheia* [ἀλήθεια] (cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 108–10, 225–36). It seems more accurate to say that man, who lives among *khremata* and who is therefore caught up in a general economy of flows and expenditure, stops the flow through his action, breaks down *pragmata* and causes those *pragmata* to constitute a world. We then take seriously the implications of the words and the way they are used in the texts.

In the singular, the link between *pragma* and *res* is logical, even though the inventive sequel of history belongs to *res* alone. But in the plural, a distinction has to be made between at least two series of ‘things’ in Greek: those which are given and that relate to phenomena and phenomenology, and those which are acted upon and which have to do with human involvement, practice and use. Those things, which are called *pragmata* and *khremata*, escape the history of ontology.

Barbara Cassin

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tum omnium? [How is *ousia* – the necessary thing which by nature comprehends the basis of all things – to be translated?], asks Seneca in the famous Letter 58, which begins by deploring the poverty of Latin’s vocabulary as the author attempts to expound Plato’s philosophy: ‘*Quanta verborum nobis paupertas, immo egestas sit, numquam magis quam hodierno die intellexi* [Today I realized more clearly than ever before our native poverty – dereliction rather – in the matter of vocabulary]’ (*Letters to Lucilius*, tr. T.E. Phillips Barker). In his *Topics*, Cicero also plays on the generality of a term that can refer both to things that exist (*earum rerum quae sunt*), such as *fundus*, *penus*,

aedes, *parietes*, *pecus* ... and intelligible things such as *ususcapio*, *tutela* and *agnation*, which do not have any *substantia corporis*.

[...] *unum earum rerum quae sunt, alterum earum quae intelliguntur. Esse eas dico quae cerni tangi possunt, ut fundus, aedes, parietatem stillicidium, mancipium, pecudem, suppellectilem, penus et cetera; quo ex genere quaedam interdum vobis definienda sunt. Non esse ea dico quae tangi demonstrative non possunt, cerni tamen animo atque intellegi possunt, ut si ususcaptionem, si tutelam, si gentem, si agnationem definias, quarum rerum nullum subest corpus ...*

[...one class comprehend things that exist, and the other things that are apprehended only by the mind. By things that exist, I mean such as can be seen and touched: for example, farm, wall, rain-water, slave, animal, furniture, food, etc.; sometimes you have to define objects of this class. On the other hand, by things that do not exist I mean those which cannot be touched or pointed out, but can, for all that, be perceived by the mind and comprehended; for example you might define acquisition by long possession guardianship, *gens*, *agnation*; of these things there is no corporal substrate...]

Topics VI, 27, trans. amended.

J. Lohmann notes, for his part, that when he translates the doctrine of the Stoics, which he expounds as though it were self-evident and which makes *ti* the most general concept, Cicero naturally uses the term *res*: *res* can easily be divided into things that exist (*quae sunt*) and things that are intelligible (*quae intelliguntur*); it is possible to say that the latter do not exist ('*Vom ursprünglichen Sinn der aristotelischen Syllogistik*', in *Lexis: Studien zur Sprachphilosophie, Sprachgeschichte und Begriffsforschung* I, 1951, pp. 205–36). The linguistic dichotomy on which Lohmann claims to base his argument must be at least relativized if we think of a certain passage in Dionysius Thrax (*Grammatici Graeci* I, 1, ed. G. Uhlig, p. 24, 3): 'A noun is a part of speech that can be declined and meaning a body (*sôma*) or an incorporeal (*pragma*): a body such as 'stone' or an incorporeal such as 'education' (cited in P. Hadot, *Études de philosophie ancienne*). 'We may regret the fact that we are obliged to translate *pragma* as "incorporeal", as that term obviously has nothing to do with the etymology of *pragma*, but all other translations appear to be impossible', concludes Hadot. Not quite impossible, if we think of Donatus's Latin translation (*Grammatici Latini* t. 4, p. 355, 5, ed. Keil), which Hadot himself cites in a note: '*Pars orationis cum casu corpus aut rem proprie communiterve significans ...* [That part of speech which, when declined, means, either in the strict sense or in more general terms, 'body' or 'incorporeal' (*res*) ...]'

The term's generality and indeterminacy explain why *res* can be so naturally used to translate the Greek *onta* [ὄντα] into the plural, and why it acquires a slightly different sense, depending upon which determinant is applied to it or which secondary opposition intervenes in what was originally a neutral usage. It is therefore possible to speak of *res gestae* to describe the events related by a historian, to further specify its meaning by using an adjective that takes on a whole semantic charge (*res publica*, *res divina*, *res familiaris*, *res militaris*, *res navalis*, *res rustica*, *res naturalis*,

res adversae, *res secundae*...), or even to make a distinction between *res* and *sermo*, *res* and *verbum* (on this canonical distinction, see especially Cicero, *De natura deorum* I, 16, ed. A.S. Pease, vol. 1, p. 168 and note). The Augustinian version of this distinction (*On Christian Teaching* II, 1–4) remains standard throughout the Middle Ages, but it could already be found in Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius.

IV. From Augustine to Abelard: *res/signa* and *res/verba*

The remarkable thing about Augustine's distinction is that it is based upon the primary and general sense of *res*: all things, apprehended in a way that is as yet quite indeterminate, and without any distinction as to region, status or mode of being. It is therefore the poorest and most extensive term and can, at first, be grasped only in a negative sense: '*Proprie autem nunc res appellavi, quae non sunt ad significandum aliquid adhibentur, sicuti est lignum ... pecus, atque huiusmodi caetera* [What I now call things in the strict sense are things such as logs, stones, sheep and so on, which are not employed to signify something]' (*On Christian Teaching* I, 2, 2; trans. R.P.H. Green). In other words, this passage is about apprehending things that are no more than things, and that are not also signs like 'the log ... that Moses threw into the bitter waters'.

Everything that can possibly be taught can be categorized on the basis of the primary *res/signa* or *res/verba* dichotomy because the verb is primarily defined by its transitive function of signification (*De magistro* 4, 7), and because it is in the nature of the sign that it should refer to something other than itself or, in the last analysis, to an external reality: '*Res autem ipsa, qua iam verbum non est, neque in mente conceptio* [the thing itself is already neither a word nor a conception in the mind]', according to the (pseudo-Augustinian) *Principia dialecticae* (ch. 5).

The sign itself is of course already a thing-sign ('*ita res sunt, ut aliarum etiam signa sint rerum*') and must have a certain concrete reality (*vox*, *dictio*, *intellectus*), precisely if it is to fulfil its signifying and transitive function. It must refer to something else because of a polarity that probably plays a determinant role: the polarity between inside and outside, which mirrors the relationship in speech between the thing (signified) – *res* – and the linguistic sign. From the Augustinian perspective, the sign is certainly not reducible to a linguistic sign with a phonic or mental reality; because of the secondary and overdetermined dichotomy with *res*, the category of 'sign' also includes natural signs and the *signum sacrum* known as the *sacramentum*.

When used in the plural and associated with *natura*, *ordo* and *proprietas*, the word refers to all things or to the totality of creation (men, animals and material realities) as in John Scotus Erigena's expression *universitas rerum*. But the term's meaning can be extended so far as to refer to 'something in general' (*aliquid*) – 'solemus enim usu dicere rem, quidquid aliquo modo dicimus esse aliquid [We normally say to apply the term thing (*rem*) to anything that we say is something (*aliquid*)]' (Anselm, *Epistula de Incarnatione Verbi* II, ed. F.S. Schmidt, p. 12, 5–6) – or to an 'abstract reality'.

Anselm's distinction between *enuntiatio* and *res enuntiata* also reveals the general tendency to use *res* to refer to a state of things. In the *De veritate*, in particular, Anselm looks at what makes a statement true, even when the enunciation denies that it is true; in this case, the statement can still be described as true because 'etiam quando negat esse quod non est [...] sic enuntiat quemadmodum res est [even when it denies the existence of what does not exist ... it states that the thing exists]' (ibid., II, 177, 17).

When, especially in his *Dialectica*, Pierre Abelard examines the meaning of a proposition (its *dictum*; see *DICTUM*), he describes the objective content of the act of thinking as a 'quasi-res'; thanks to various intellections and the corresponding *dictiones* (for example *cursus*, *currit*), it can refer to the same 'thing', even when the latter is not a singular external *res*. In his valuable *Notes de lexicographie abélardienne*, Jolivet examines in detail several passages in the *Logica ingredientibus* where we can see the word *res* changing its meaning. It thus acquires a remarkable ambiguity as it can, in a 'non-realist' way, designate the signified of universal propositions or terms, as well as a particular and substantial thing; it is possible that there is no *res subjectia* corresponding to the *res propositionis* (J. Jolivet, 'Éléments pour une étude des rapports entre la grammaire et l'ontologie au Moyen Âge', in *Aspects de la pensée médiévale*, pp. 203–32)

V. Avicenna and translations of Avicenna: *wugud*

Leaving aside the analyses of Augustine, Anselm or Abelard, one of the major events in the history of the word *res* in the Latin West is without any doubt the translation, direct or indirect, of Ibn Sina's *Métaphysique du shif'* [الشفاء]. In Chapter 5 of Book I and Chapter 1 of Book V, Avicenna sets himself the task of showing what is meant by 'existent' (*al-Wugud* [وجود], *ens*; see Box A, and *Wugud* in *VORHANDEN*) and 'thing' (*al-say* [الشيء], *res*) and their first divisions

(Ibn Sina, *Al-Shifa*, ed. Al-Ilaiyyat, G.C, Anawati and Sa'id Zayed; Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ed. S. van Riet, with a one-volume Arabic–Latin/Latin–Arabic lexicon). They are 'ideas inscribed in the soul by a first impression', and 'the things most fitting to be represented by themselves'. The existent and the thing (*ens* and *res*) lie at the origin of all representations. Attention should therefore be drawn to them and they should be made obvious; they should not be known in the true sense of that term, as the names or signs used for that purpose would be secondary and more obscure than the things themselves. Turning more specifically to 'thing', it can be described as 'what a statement is about (*res est de quo potest aliquid vere enuntiari*)' (Avicenna latinus, *ibid.*, I, 33, 37–8).

Such a thing does not necessarily have to exist as one concrete subject among others; it suffices for it to be intended or posited in the soul (*potest res habere esse in intellectu, et non in exterioribus*). What defines it is in effect primarily the *certitudo qua est quod est*, or the certainty (*haqiqa* [حقيقة]) that ensures its *esse proprium* (*ibid.*, 34, 55–6; 35, 58). There is therefore a difference between the concept of 'thing' and that of 'existent' or 'actual' (*ens*); the thing (*res*) is in effect always defined by its own *certitudo*, or the *quidditas* (*mahiyya* [ماهية]) that makes a thing what it is. Chapter 1 of Book V, which deals with 'things in general and their mode of being' (*de rebus communibus et quomodo est esse earum*) confirms this analysis by elucidating the original status of the signified as such (the famous *equinitas tantum*, for example). It is neither universal nor singular but indifferent with respect to later specifications, or in other words not subject to conditions of generality or particularity, etc.

Definitio enim equinitatis est praeter definitionem universalitatis nec universalitas continetur in definitione equinitatis. Equinitas etenim habet definitionem quae eget universalitate, sed est cui accedit universalitas. Unde ipsa equinitas non est aliud nisi equinitas tantum; ipsa enim in se nec est multa nec unum, nec est existens in his sensibilibus nec in anima, nec est aliquid horum potentia vel effectu, ita ut hoc contineatur intra essentiam equinitatis, sed ex hoc quod est equinitas tantum.

[For the definition of equity is not the definition of universality, and universality does not enter into the definition of equinity. Equity has in fact a definition that does not require the definition of universality, but universality happens to it. In itself, it is neither one nor several, and exists neither in reality nor in the soul, nor in one of those things which are in potentiality or in act, in the sense that

this would result in equinity, and exists only in so far as it is equinity.]

Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. Van Riet, p 228, 29–36. (On all this, see Alain de Libera, *La Querelle des universaux*, especially pp. 201–2. On the accepted medieval doctrine and the doctrine of ‘indifference of essence’, see Alain de Libera, *L’Art des généralités*, pp. 576 f.)

Avicenna posits (I, 5, 34–5) that ‘for every thing there is a nature through which it is what it is.’ A triangle, for example, has a ‘certainty thanks to which it is a triangle, just as whiteness has a certainty thanks to which it is whiteness’. Essence thus has a being of its own that is distinct from the existence that is asserted in a judgement. Avicenna’s thesis therefore posits an equivalence between certainty proper (*haqiqa*), being proper, and quiddity (*mahiyya*), and contrasts it with being or, more accurately, existence (*al-wujud*) in the sense of assertion (*intentio esse affirmativi*) (cf. A.-M. Goichon, *La Distinction de l’essence et de l’existence d’après Ibn Sina*, pp. 31–5). In Latin, the series becomes: *certitudo propria*–*esse proprium*–*quidditas*, and it is this that makes possible the doctrine of an *esse essentiae*, or the being specific to essence that can be apprehended over and beyond being or non-being (‘outside being’ or *ausserseiend*, to use Meinong’s

terminology; see SEIN). It is thus possible to consider the animal in itself, to envisage its essence per se, ignoring everything that is accidental about it; taken in itself, essence is, as we have seen, neither general or universal, nor particular or singular, and nor (and this is probably the essential point) is it in the soul nor outside the soul. Because of its own being, the animal is ‘neither individual, nor one nor multiple’ but merely animal (*ex hoc esse animal tantum – equinitas est tantum equinitas*). Even though it may, as Alain de Libera suggests (*L’Art des généralités*, p. 58), be based on a misunderstanding, the thesis enjoyed great popularity from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, when there was much discussion of the validity and import of the difference between *esse essentiae* (*esse essentiale, habituale, quidditativum*) and *esse existentiae* or *esse actuale* (Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus...).

• see box 2

VI. Scholastic distinctions: *res a reor, res rata*

To go back to the Latin thirteenth century: medieval philosophers attempted to reduce the dangerous polysemy of the term *res* by making a tripartite distinc-

Box 2 *Say*, thing, and *Say’iyya*, reality

Jolivet convincingly demonstrates (‘Aux Origines de l’ontologie d’Ibn Sina’ in J. Jolivet and R. Rashed, eds, *Études sur Avicenne*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1984, pp. 11–28, and *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études*, [Section IV, Sciences religieuses], vol. 84, pp. 389–94; vol. 85, pp. 381–6; vol. 86, pp. 373–9; vol. 88, pp. 401–5) that the Arabic terms *say*’ (thing) and *say’iyya* [الشئانية] (‘thingness’ or, more accurately, reality) have a history of their own that is quite independent of the history of Aristotle’s *pragma* and bound up with debates within Islamic theology about non-existence. According to Avicenna, we find an echo of this in Sahrastani (‘L’Inexistant est-il une chose ou non?’, in A. Guillaume, ed. Nihaya, 1934, ch. 7, cited J. Jolivet, ‘Aux Origines’, p. 17), but the origins of the debate go back to al-Kindi and al-Farabi, and to the positions of the mu’tazilite *kalam*, for whom a thing is that which is known, and anything non-existent is a thing.

This formal and thing-centred ontology, as elaborated from al-Farabi and Ibn Sina onwards,

develops algebra as a science that is common to arithmetic and geometry, but does so outside the framework of Aristotelian epistemology. It introduces, as an unknown, a thing (*res, al-say*) that can be either a number or a geometric magnitude (R. Rashed, ‘Mathématiques et philosophie chez Avicenne’, in *Études sur Avicenne*, pp. 29–35). We therefore have here the outline of a new ontology in which it is possible to talk about an object with no determinate characteristics, and even to know it, but impossible to represent it accurately. In the Latin translations of Arabic algebra that began to appear in the late thirteenth century, the term that was ultimately used to refer to the unknown is therefore *res (res ignota)*, whilst the word *cosa* appears in vernacular Italian texts on mathematics in later centuries (cf. G. Crapulli, ‘Res e cosa (cossa) nelle terminologia algebrica del sec. XVIe’; P. Costabile-Pietro Redondi, ‘Sémantèse de res/cose/cossa’, in M. Fattori and M. Bianchi, eds, *Res, Ilè Colloquio Internazionale del Lessico Intellettuale Europeo*, Edizioni dell’Ateneo, Rome, 1982, pp. 179–96).

tion, which remained traditional until the seventeenth century among representatives of what has wrongly been called ‘late’ [*tardive*] or even ‘retarded’ [*attardé*] scholasticism. That description is a product of the powerful retrospective illusion that insists that there was a totally uncritical adoption of the thesis of the Cartesian break and of the new *Institution magna*. It tends to be forgotten that the seventeenth century can be legitimately described as the golden age of Scotism.

(a) In his *Commentaire des sentences* (1250–51), St Bonaventure therefore makes a tripartite distinction between the meanings of *res*. It remains a standard distinction throughout the scholastic period:

Dicendum quod res accipitur communiter et proprie et magis proprie – Res, secundum quod communiter dicitur, dicitur a reor, reris, et sic comprehendit omne illud, quod cadit in cognitione, sive res exterius, sive in sola opinione. – Proprie vero dicitur res a ratus, rata, ratum, secundum quod ratum dicitur esse illud quod non tantummodo est in cognitione, immo est in rerum natura, sive sit ens in se, sive in alio; et hoc modo res convertitur cum ente. – Tertio modo dicitur res magis proprie, secundum quod dicitur a ratus, rata, ratum, prout ratum dicitur illud quod est ens per se et fixum; et sic res dicitur solum de creaturis et substantiis per se entibus.

[We will say that the term *res* can be understood in a general sense, in a proper sense and in the most proper sense; the term *res* in general is said to derive from *reor, reris* (count, calculate, think, believe) and it thus encompasses all that comes to knowledge, be it an external *thing* or a thing that is present only in the mind (equivalent to Aristotle’s *doxaston* [δοξαστόν], as distinct from *episteton* [ἐπιστητόν]) (*Second Analytics* II, 33, 88b, 30ff). – But in its proper sense ‘thing’ is termed *ratus, rata, ratum*, from ‘that which is confirmed and ratified’; as we apply *ratum* (ratified) to that which exists not only within knowledge but in the nature of real things, no matter we are speaking of what exists in itself or in something else; and in that sense the term ‘*res*’ can be converted into ‘existent’ (*ens*). – Third, and in the most proper sense, *res* is said to derive from *ratus, rata, ratum*; that which exists through itself and is fixed is said to be *ratum*; and thus only creatures and existents that subsist through themselves can be called *res*.]

Opera omnia, ed. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, II, dist. 37, dub. 1, p. 876a.

This is a remarkable passage, but its fantastic etymologies and the repeated use of differently stressed forms of the term *ratum/ratum* also raise translation problems. The most surprising thing is that the etymology of the word *res* is more or less clear, as it derives from the Indo-Iranian. The etymology of the verb

reor, reris, ratus sum, reri is unknown, but it is not related to *res*. The legists derived *ratahabitio* from *pro rata parte*, which was current in classical Latin; it refers to the ratification that intervenes in, for example, the division of an inheritance. The expression *ratum facere aliquid* became accepted in the sense of ‘ratify’ or ‘approve’ (A. Ernout and A. Meillet, p. 570). It is therefore quite understandable that *ratum* should have acquired the meaning ‘that which is confirmed or ratified by the mind’. The slippage was probably inevitable if we recall that *ratio*, in the sense of ‘counting’ and ‘calculation’, is related to *reor, reris*, even in the common expressions *rationem reddere, rationem habere*. But counting one’s wealth (*res*) and ratifying through thought are obviously two different things! The meaning of *magis proprie*, or of the stressed *ratum*, can then be extended and become a characteristic of that which is fixed and firm (*ratum et firmum*), or of that which is effectively and ‘really’ ratified.

The fate of the tripartite division we have just described is all the more remarkable in that it was probably Bonaventure who introduced or coined the term *ratitudo* to clarify the third meaning:

Res dicitur a reor, reris, quod dicit actum a parte animae; et alio modo res venit ad hoc est ratus, quod dicit stabilitatem a parte naturae; et sic res dicit stabilitatem sive ratitudinem ex parte entitatis.

[*Res* is said to be *a reor, reris* when it refers to an act on the part of the soul’ on the other hand, *res* comes from that which is *ratus* (ratified), that which relates to stability on the part of nature; and *res* therefore applies to stability or ratification on the side of the entity]

Opera omnia I, dist. 25, dub. III, p. 446b.

• see box 3

(b) Henry of Ghent (d. 1293) in his turn makes a distinction between a *res secundum opinionem*, which is purely mental, and a *res secundum veritatem*, which is characterized by an inner certainty, and which takes us from contingency to necessity, from psychology to metaphysics. This again is a *res a ratitudine* corresponding to an extra-mental reality (*aliquid extra intellectum*) which has the certainty that makes it a certain thing (cf. J. Paulus, *Henri de Gand*, pp. 23–5).

The major distinction introduced by Henry of Ghent is as follows:

1. *Res primo modo est res secundum opinionem tantum, et dicitur a reor, reris, quod idem est quod opinor, opinaris, quae tantum res est secundum opinionem, ad modum quo ab intellectu concipitur, scilicet in ratione totius, ut est mons aureus, vel hircocervus, habens medietatem cervi et medietatem hirci [...]*

Box 3 *Res rata, res a reor, ratitudo, Ding a denken*

Medieval thought regards *res* either as a supplementary transcendental or as another name for being.

Thomas Aquinas explain the *ens* (being)/*res* (thing) doublet in terms of the concepts of essence and existence; ‘the term *res* derives from quiddity’ but, given that essence can have either a singular being outside the soul or a being that is apprehended in the soul, ‘the term *res* refers to both: to that which is in the soul to the extent that *res* comes from *reor, reris*, and to that which exists outside the soul to the extent that *res* means a being that is consistent (*ratum*) and firm in its nature’ (*Sententiae* I d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, ed. Mandonnet, Paris 1929, t. 3, p. 612). ‘Being’ thus refers directly to the act of being (*esse*), whilst *res* refers both to quiddity in so far as it is thought (*a reor, reris*) and in so far as it exists (*res rata*). *Res* refers indiscriminately to the thing that is thought and the thing that exists, but does not carry the full weight of Thomist metaphysics, which is oriented towards the existent’s act of being.

With Henry of Ghent, in contrast, it is *res* that comes to the fore. According to Henry, the definition of *res* covers the double determination of possible: that which can be simply thought, that is, logically and in non-contradictory fashion, or that which has a certain consistency in its possibility, or in other words that which is real in so far as it has an essence. The first sense covers everything that is not pure nothingness, all objects of opinion, including chimeras, fictions and possible worlds that can never become real. The second sense refers to that which has an essence – that is to say, which has an idea or a positive model in the mind of God. The two meanings of *res* must be contrasted: *res a reor, reris* (to think, believe, esteem, represent), namely *res* in the etymological sense, refers to any object of opinion, whether or not it has an essence, and *res a ratitudine* (*ratitudo* is a medieval neologism denoting solidity), or in other words a *res* that has a certain consistency and designates an essence with an *exemplum* in God.

The intention of any created thing (*res*) is different to the being of essence; the being of essence is a nature and an essence; and a thing is said to be a thing (*res*) on the basis of ‘I think, you think’ (*reor, reris*) and because of its consistency (*ratitudine*).

Henry of Ghent, *Summa questionum ordinariarum* art. 21, q. 4, ans. 1270 0.

The ambiguity of *res* raises doubts about the interpretation of the nature of metaphysics: should being be regarded as a correlate of our most universal and therefore most primordial representation, or as a possibility because it imitates a divine model and partakes of its essence? Is it simply a representation of what is logically possible (non-contradictory), including fictions, chimera, secondary intentions, etc., or a representation of what is really possible (grounded in a relationship with the nature of the divine)? This basic oscillation between a logic of representation and a metaphysics of partaking, which we also find in Henry of Ghent’s theory of analogy, will be resolved by Duns Scotus.

According to Scotus, a *res* endowed with a real possibility does not derive that possibility from a relationship with God, but from the consistency of quiddity itself, and neither existence nor essence abhors it. What being does the intelligible have? Not pure fiction, which is forged by the imagination, but a real possibility which has a consistent being that is *ratum* (*res a ratitudo*) and not a being that is merely thought (*res a reor*). It is a being that is ‘distinct from fictions from the outset, a thing that does not abhor the being or essence or the being of existence’ (Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d 36 § 48, vol. 6, p. 290). Being is *ratum* only because of its own consistency, because this one is such, and because that one is different. It is formal coherence that founds non-contradiction, and not vice versa; being relayed by the omnipotence of God, it results in production in existence.

Suárez assumes this analysis of the two meanings of *res* when he writes:

Res is predicated quidditatively because it means a veritable and solid quiddity (*rata*) in the absolute sense, and which is not ordered by existence (*esse*).

Disputationes metaphysicae II, 4, 2, *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Berton, vol. 25, p. 88.

The most proper name of being is, precisely, *res*, or in other words the order of quiddities, or of that which does not abhor being. ‘*Res* indicates only the quiddity of the thing in the formal sense, and the solid (*rata*) or real essence of the being’ (*Disputationes metaphysicae* III, 2, 1, p. 107). ‘Reality’ refers here not to actual existence, but to the formal perfection of essence.

More audaciously still, Clauberg's *Ontosophia* (§ 7–8) combines the etymologies by harmonizing the Greek, Latin and German to such an extent as to identify *res* with pure representability:

Aio omne ens posse dici, hoc est, nominari, voce viva vel scripta enuntiari. Hinc, Sache – res – a sagen, dicere [...] Ipsum: res, si non a reor, est a ῥέω, loquor [...] Praetera, omne ens potest cogitari seu intelligi, ideoque cogitabile et intelligibile appellatur [...] Ding – res – et denken – cogitare – eiusdem sont originis.

Metaphysica de ente, quae rectius ontosophia, 3rd edn (1664), cited in J.-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, p. 261.

That this fantastic study in comparative etymology is untranslatable goes without saying.

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In a first sense, it is opinion alone that makes something a *res*, and it is said to be *a reor, reris*, which is the same thing as *opinar, opinaris*, and it is only opinion that makes it a *res*, depending on the way it is conceived by the intellect, namely according to the rationality of a (composite) whole such as the gold-mountain or the goat-deer, which is half goat and half deer...

Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet*, ed. Badius, 5, 2, fol. 154 D 7, 1 fol. 258 B.

Duns Scotus (1265–1308) also attempts to reduce the ambiguity of the term *res*. In the *Quodlibets*, he initially introduces a tripartite distinction but, unlike Henry of Ghent, he distinguishes between two types of *ratitudo*, which plays the role of the *certitudo* Avicenna attributes to quiddities: '*Unaquaeque enim res habet certitudinem qua est id quod est*' (*Ordinatio* 1, 3, 2 ed. Vat, t. 3, p. 184, 14–17). The neologism *ratitudo* enjoyed remarkable good fortune right down to Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* (IV s.2. n2).

Certain writers, such as Pierre d'Auriole (d. 1322) attempt to reduce the series of distinctions to the basic polarity of essence and existence:

Res sumitur dupliciter, uno modo pro re essentiali – et sic non est verum quod esse lapidis sit sua realitas – vel pro realitate actuali, et sic est verum; unde in lapide actualiter existente sunt duae realitates, una quidam essentialis, puta lapiditas, et alia accidentalis, puta actualitas.

[*Res* is understood in two senses, as, on the one hand the essential *res* [a synonym for *essential*], in which case it is not true is that the being of stone is its reality; and, on the other, as actual reality, in which case it is true; there are therefore two reali-

ties in the stone that exists; one is essential, namely its stoniness, and the other is accidental, namely its actuality.]

Pierre d'Auriole, *Peter Aureoli Scriptum super Primum Sententiarum*, ed. Burnyaert, I, dist. 1, q. 21, n60.

Other authors, in contrast, introduce more distinctions in order to allow for the existence of reason or of chimeras.

(c) We find a distant echo of this in the *Exercitationes et Epistolae varii Argumenti* of the Dutch 'Cartesian' J. Clauberg:

Mens quando rem eandem considerat, ut extra notionem in seipsa, et ut est in notione representata, videt hoc aliquid esse fundamentale, notionem autem suam aliquid umbratile et intentionale. Unde res etiam seu ens absolutum rectissime dividitur, quod sit vel fundamentale, quod specialiter et kat' exohkên [κατ' ἐξοχήν] reale dici solet, quod primo et propriissime est et producit aliquid, etc., vel intentionale, quod non est nec facit aliquid solide et proprie sicut reale (fundamentale) et est tamen quasi umbra et similitudo eius, quae nos illud facit cognoscere, unde communiter notio rei vel idea appellatur.

[When the mind considers the same thing, as it is in itself and regardless of the notion, and as it is represented in the notion, it clearly sees that, in the first case, that this something is fundamental, whereas its notion is something shadowy and intentional. That is why, when taken absolutely, the thing or, if we prefer, the being can most properly be divided as follows: either it is fundamental and is usually said to be real in the specific sense and par excellence, and it is this that exists first and most properly,

which produces something, etc.; or it is said to be intentional in that it is not and does not produce anything solid and proper, in the same way as that which is real (fundamental), and yet it is like a shadow and semblance of the latter, and this allows us to know it, and that it is commonly called the notion or idea of the thing.]

J. Clauberg, *Exercitationes XVI*, p. 621, in *Opera omnia philosophica*.

And yet, in the same work the same Clauberg also introduces a quadripartite division:

Res primo sumitur latissime pro omni cogitabili, nam quidquid sub cogitationem nostram cadit, sive verum sive fictum, sive possibile sive impossibile, sive actuale sit, interdum rei nomine appellatur. Nec dubitatur, quin accidens hoc significatu latissimo res dici queat. – Secundo res accipitur minus late pro omni eo quod est aliquid, non nihil, et sic reale ens opponitur enti rationis, nempe ubi Authores sub illa (reali) modalem quoque distinctionem complectuntur, quoniam aliquid est, non nihil, not ens rationis, non figmentum. – Tertio stricte sumitur res pro substantia, atque ita res opponitur modo, distinctio realis opponitur modalis proprie dictae [...] – Quarto strictius adhuc reale opponitur intentionali, quo sensu etiam res et signa rerum distinguuntur, nec interim negatur intentionale ens esse aliquid, prout signa etiam non sunt nihil. Hanc vocis illius acceptionem si respiciamus, dicere possumus, dari nonnulla accidentia, quae non sint realia, sed intentionalia, dari alia plurima, quae realia sunt.

[*Res* is understood first of all in the broadest sense as meaning everything that can be thought, for everything that falls under our thought, be it true or fictive, possible or impossible or actual, receives the name ‘thing’. There is no doubt that in this most expanded sense the accident can equally be said to be a ‘thing’. In a second sense, *res* is understood in a narrower sense as meaning everything that is something and not nothing, as real being is contrasted with the being of reason, as is still the case with those authors who subsume the modal distinction beneath the first (real) distinction. In the third sense, *res* is understood as meaning substance, and is therefore contrasted with the modal distinction, whilst the real distinction is contrasted with the modal distinction in the true sense [...] In a fourth and even stricter sense, the ‘real’ is contrasted with the intentional, in the sense that a distinction is made between things and their signs, though this is not to deny that an intentional being is also a thing to the extent that signs themselves are not nothing. If we consider the last acception, we can say that some accidents are not real but intentional, and that many others are real.]

Exercitationes XVIII, p. 665.

• see box 4

Despite or because of these proliferating distinctions, many thinkers maintain that the fundamental meaning of *res* is the concrete object that exists outside the soul as a singular individual. Such is the *res secundum esse*: the *res posita* or, in other words, the *res singularis* (Ockham, *Sent I*, dist. 2, q.7): ‘Any positive reality [existent] outside the soul is by that very fact singular [*Omnis res positiva extra animam eo ipso est singularis*]’.

VII. *Res* as transcendental and supertranscendental term

The broader definitions of the term *res* and its extension beyond the *ens* that is defined as *ens ratum* (firm, stable and ontologically ratified) tend to make it a transcendental term, or even the first transcendental term. From Gerard of Cremona onwards, *res* is counted as a transcendental term. Aquinas himself sometimes equates *ens* with *res* (*Summa Theologica* 1a, q.48, a.2), even though his thematic exposition makes a careful distinction between the two (*De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1). In his *Disputationes dialecticae*, L. Valla attempts to reduce the six transcendentals to *res*, which is the first and most important of them all: ‘*Ex his sex, quae nunc quasi de regno contendunt non aliter res erit rex, quam Darius*’. *Aliquid* can also be broken down into or further specified as ‘*alia res*’ and *unum* into ‘*una res*’, etc. When *res* is defined in this transcendental sense as subsuming all other convertible properties, it is no longer contrasted with anything, except of course the void or nothingness: ‘*nihil habet repugnans nisi ipsum nihil*’ (I, pp. 646–8).

Even though they are openly critical of Valla’s anti-Aristotelian thesis, many writers, like Fonseca (1528–1599) or Suárez, do not hesitate to make *res* a transcendental term just like *ens*, or even to make the two completely synonymous: ‘*Sex porro transcendentia esse dicuntur, Ens, Unum, Verum, Bonum, Aliquid, Res*’ (Fonseca, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo*, ed. J. Ferreira Gomes, Book I, ch. 28, p. 62). Having recalled the common thesis of the five transcendentals or passions that are convertible with being, Suárez notes, however, that ‘There are many who think that *res* is a more essential predicate (*magis essentielle praedicatum*) than being itself’ (*Disputationes metaphysicae*, III, 2, 1), and does not signal that he has any serious disagreements with that thesis because, as he himself contends, ‘*res* is no more than a formal expression of the quiddity of the thing, or in other words its real and ratified essence (*solum dicit de formali rei quidditatem, et ratam seu realem essentiam entis*).

Box 4 Res in Goclenius's *Lexicon*

The famous *Lexicon philosophicum* of R. Goclenius (1547–1628) brought the main ancient distinctions together in 1613:

In philosophia res sumitur communissime, communiter et strictissime seu appropriate:

– *Communissime ut includat etiam modum rei, pro omni eo quod non est nihil. Hoc autem potest intelligi dupliciter:*

(a) *Primum enim illud est nihil quod includit contradictionem et excludit omne esse et extra intellectum et in intellectu. Quod enim sic includit contradictionem, sicut non potest esse extra intellectum seu animam; ita non potest esse aliquid intelligibile, id est aliquid ens in intellectu seu anima, quia numquam contradictorium cum contradictorio constituit unum intelligibile, neque ut objectum cum objecto, neque ut modus cum objecto.*

(b) *Secundo dicitur nihil quia nec est, nec esse potest aliquod ens extra animam. Id est primo modo Res accipitur omnino communissime, ut extendat se ad quodcumque non includens contradictionem, sive sit ens rationis (quod praecise habet esse in intellectu considerante) sive sit ens reale (quod praecise habet aliquam entitatem extra intellectum considerationem).*

– *Altero modo minus communiter pro ente, quod habet vel habere potest aliquam entitatem citra considerationem intellectus. Primo modo dicimus intentiones logicales esse res rationis. Relationes rationis esse res rationis et tamen ista non possunt esse extra intellectum: Non igitur nomen rei ex usu loquendi astringitur seu contrahitur ad rem extra animam. Ac in hoc intellectu communissimo (ut res dicitur quodlibet conceptibile non includens contradictionem) sive ista communitas sit analogiae, sive univocationis, posset res poni primum objectum intellectus, quia nihil potest esse intelligibile, quod non eo modo rationem entis includat, quomodo etiam quaecunque scientia, sive sit realis, sive rationis, est de Re.*

In secundo membro primi istius membri dicitur res, quae habet vel habere potest entitatem extra animam: hoc modo accipit Avicenna in Metaph. c. 5.

– *Res strictissime per synecdochen accipitur pro ente potissimo, id est, cui per se et primo convenit esse, quod est substantia sola. Ita igitur accidentia excluduntur. Sic virtus non est res seu ens, nisi quia est rei seu entis.*

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 1, 1028a 15–25.

[In philosophy, the term *res* is understood to mean most commonly, commonly, and in the strictest or most appropriate sense:

– In the most common sense, it is understood as including the mode of all that is not nothing. This can be understood in two ways:

(a) first, it is ‘nothing’ that implies a contradiction and that excludes any being both outside the intellect and in the intellect. Indeed, that which implies a contradiction and which cannot be outside the intellect or soul, cannot be something intelligible, that is something in the intellect or soul, because the contradictory plus the contradictory (an object plus an object, or a mode plus an object) can never constitute something intelligible.

(b) second, it is ‘nothing’ because it neither is nor can be outside the soul. In an absolutely common sense, *res* is therefore extended to mean everything that does not imply a contradiction, be it a being of reason (which has, precisely, being in the intellect that considers it), or an actual being (that has some being outside the consideration of the intellect).

– *Res* is also less commonly understood in a different sense as meaning a being that has or may have some entity independently of the consideration of the intellect. In the first sense, we say that logical intentions are ‘*res rationis*’ or ‘things of reason’. Rational relations are things of reason, and yet they cannot be outside the intellect; according to linguistic usage, *res* is therefore not restricted to reality outside the soul. And according to this most general understanding (as applied to everything that is conceivable and does not imply any contradiction) – and whether this shared characteristic is analogical or univocal is of little importance – *res* can be the first object of the intellect, because nothing can be intelligible unless it includes, ipso facto, its *raison d’être*, just as any science, real or rational, must deal with some thing.

In the second division of this first part, *res* is said of that which has or can have an entity outside the soul; that is the meaning accepted by Avicenna in his *Metaphysics* (*Liber de philosophia prima, sive scientia divina, Tractatus primus* c. 5, ed. S. Van Riet, I, pp. 34–5)

– In the strictest sense, *res* is understood, by synecdoche, to mean a primary being, or in other words the being that befits being in itself and primarily, namely substance alone. And in that sense, accidents are precluded. Quality is therefore neither *res* nor being, except in so far as it is a quality of the thing or being.

In his *Tractatus de transcendentibus*, which is part of a *Totius philosophiae compendium* published in Lyons in 1563 (I, p. 460, col. 1), Chrysostome Javelli, on the other hand, still makes a more truly Thomist distinction: ‘*Ens sumitur ab esse, Res autem a essentia*’ (‘The participle “being” comes from the verb “to be”, and the “thing” comes from the “essence”’). He then reaches the somewhat curious conclusion that *ens* can be applied to both *de ente reali et de ente rationis*, whereas *Res* applies only to *entia realia*, or those *entia* that ‘have essence or quiddity’. *Res* can be identified with being (*ens*) only if the latter is understood in the nominal sense, or in the sense of ‘*ens nominaliter sumptum*’ (which is of course the basis of Suárez’s argument with Cajetan). In the *Disputationes*, Suárez brings out the full implications of the distinction between the two acceptations of ‘being’: *ens* taken as participle and *ens* taken as noun – a distinction which, it should be noted, is no more comprehensible in Latin than it is in English or French (at least where the present participle of the verb ‘to be’ is concerned, whilst a distinction has, at least since Vaugelas, been made between the participle as an invariable verbal form, and the participle as a qualifying or verbal adjective, as in the French *différant/différent, excellent/excellent, divagant/divagant*; cf. differing/different, excelling/excellent, etc.).

To the extent that it derives directly from the verb *sum*, *ens* is to be understood as a participle that names the *actus essendi* or fact of existence: ‘to be’ and ‘to exist’ are one and the same, as the meaning of the term *ens* (‘being’) indicates; it in fact derives from the verb *sum* (I am), and is the verb’s participle. But the verb *sum* (I am), as understood in the absolute sense, means the act of being or existing (‘*Quae opinio fundata est in significatione vocis entis; derivatur enim a verbo sum, estque participium eius; verbum autem sum, absolute dictum, significant actum essendi, seu existendi; esse enim et existere idem est*’, Suárez, *ibid.*, II 4, 1). The same term can certainly also be clarified as *ens nominaliter sumptum* (*ens ut nomen*), if we note that this time its proper and adequate meaning is *id quod est* (‘that which is’). But the *id quod est* can in its turn be understood as meaning ‘that which has or, more accurately, exercises the act of being or existing’ or, in other words, ‘that which is being’ in the sense of ‘existing’: that which is *actu* (actually); or as meaning what is *potentia* (potentially), what is being because it can be, because it is already the possible subject of a real predication. We say of man in general that he is an animal, leaving aside the question of whether or not he is *actu*, if he *exists* or *is being* (‘*significat ergo*

adaequate “ens”, id quod est [...], id est, quod habet actum essendi seu existendi, ut idem sit ens, quod existens; dicit ergo ens de formali esse seu existentiam, quae est extra rerum quidditatem’.) Yet Suárez rejects the thesis (attributed here to Dominique Soto) that ‘being’ cannot predicate the *in quid* (quidditively or essentially) of all things, because it always implies a reference to being (‘*habitus ad esse*’), understood this time as *actus essendi*. The *actus essendi* can partake of the created being, but it still remains external to its essence:

Dicit ens semper esse participium verbi sum sicut existens, verbi existo, et de formali significare esse, de materiali vero, quod habet esse postea vero declarat, ens non solum significare quod actu est, sicut existens, sed quod est actu vel potentia, quia de homine non existente vere dicitur esse ens, sicut esse animal vel substantiam, et nihilominus concludit ens non dici quidditative de rebus, praesertim creatis, quia dicit habitudinem ad esse, quod est extra essentiam creaturae.

[As being is, according to him, always used as the participle of the verb *I am*, just as ‘existent’ is the participle of the verb *I exist*, and just as its formal meaning is ‘being’, but its material meaning is ‘that which has being’; he then clarifies his thesis by saying that ‘being’ means not only what actually is, in the sense of existing, but that which is, either actually or potentially, because it can truthfully be said of a man who does not exist that he is a being, just as he is an animal or substance, and he nonetheless concludes that the quiddity of things, and especially of things created, is not said to have being, because it signifies a relationship with being that is external to the essence of the creature.]

Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* II, 4.

If we replace the *habitus ad esse* within the nominal meaning of ‘being’, we necessarily contrast it with *ens* and *res*: *res*, unlike *ens*, can be predicated *in quid* of all that is (i.e. also of that which has not been actualized), because it means nothing but quiddity itself in its absolute truth and as ratified by the understanding, without the intervention of some constraint to be or to exist. The same is not true of ‘being’, which never means quiddity in the absolute sense, and always means quiddity *sub ratione essendi*, or in other words ‘in as much it can be’ (*id quod est potentia*) in the sense of that which can receive *esse* (‘*et in hoc consistit differentia inter ens et res, quod res quidditative praedicatur, quia significat quidditatem veram et ratam absolute, et sine ordine ad esse; ens autem non praedicatur quidditative, quia non significat absolute quidditatem, sed sub ratione essendi, seu quatenus potest habere esse*’, *Disputa-*

tiones metaphysicae II, 4, 2). Suárez does not follow his argument to its logical conclusion, which would be to make the *res* an agency (one hesitates to say ‘a being’) that is greater than existence, as it would encompass both existence and quiddity – the *esse essentiae* of the (pseudo-)Avicennan tradition – to abandon the convertibility of the transcendentals, and to make ‘thing’ a super-transcendental term. As it is he simply identifies *ens* with *res*: the difference between the terms is purely nominal and due to their linguistic origins (*in etymologica nominum*):

Unde obiter colligo, ens in vi nominis sumptum, et rem, idem omnino esse seu significare, solumque differre in etymologia nominum; nam res dicitur a quidditate, quatenus est aliquid firmum et ratum, id est non fictum, qua ratione dicitur quidditas realis; ens vero in praedicata significatione dicit id, quod habet essentiam realem; eandem ergo omnino rem seu rationem realem important.

[I therefore also conclude that ‘being’ taken as a word and ‘being’ taken as thing (*res*) are absolutely identical and mean the same, and that the only difference lies in the etymology of the two terms. For *res* is said of quiddity in so far as it is something firm and ratified, or, in other words, non-fictive, which is why it is called real quiddity; whereas ‘being’ (*ens*) applies, in the meaning under consideration here, to that which has a real essence; they therefore refer to the same *res* or to the same real reason.]

Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* II, 4, 2.

It is Henry of Ghent’s analysis that provides the real basis for this tendency – which has been described as ‘essentialist’ (E. Gilson) – to make *ens* a transcendental term, and this tends to make it an absolutely general term that is identical with *etwas*, *something* or *aliquid* in the sense of *non-nihil*. Clauberg sees this very clearly when he interprets *res* in *latissima acceptione* as *Intelligibile seu Cogitabile* (*Exercitationes* XLV, p. 668), or in other words as a supertranscendent or ‘super-transcendental’ term, even though there is no reason to make any distinction between the two adjectives in this case (cf. J.P. Doyle, ‘Super-transcendental Nothing...’).

As Kobusch (‘*Das Seinder als transzendentaler...*’) has clearly shown, the philosophical history of the word *res* clearly makes *ens rationalis* the most general concept defining the sphere of what can be thought (*cogitabile*). Within it, we can identify the field of the *ens reale*, which merges with that of the possible, understood as meaning non-contradictory (*potentiale objectivum*). Whilst, in philosophical terms, the Latin *res* was initially a translation of the Greek

pragma, most writers of the late scholastic period and of *Schulmetaphysik* see it as a transposition of the indeterminate *ti*. This is why certain authors are not content to count it as a transcendental, or to make it the first transcendental, and imagine the new and still more general category of super-transcendental terms. The English *thing* or *something*, French *chose*, the Latin *aliquid* and the German *etwas* are exemplary illustrations.

Jean-François Courtine

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