‘Formal Ontology’ in Logical Investigations

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In Logical Investigations, Husserl claims abstract notions also exist in another way, and shows how they relate and depend on each other. In this poster session, I would like to call this structure in Logical Investigations formal ontology. In this poster session, the whole structure of the ontology that remains implicit, and evaluation of the ontology are focused on.

1. Categorical Intuition and its Founded Character

It is necessary to identify categorical intuition and to distinguish it from sensible intuition before taking up formal ontology. Categorical intuition means intuitions that have no element of sensibility in expressions (XIX/2, 659; 661; 667). For example, to intuit what is expressed in expressions like ‘be’, ‘and’, ‘all’, and ‘some’ is categorical intuition.

What is important here is the ‘founded’ character of categorical intuition. X being ‘founded’ by Y means that X could not exist without Y. Categorical intuition is founded by sensible intuition. From this point of view, Husserl characterizes categorical intuition as ‘higher’ act than sensible intuition. When you intuit something categorically, you intuit something (else) sensuously at the same time.

2. Three Kinds of Abstractions

We have to set the following as a premise of the discussion. ‘Categorical intuitions are finally based on sensuous intuitions’ (XIX/2, 712). On top of that, Husserl distinguishes three kinds of abstractions. ‘We call schlicht act of intuition as sensuous act, and founded act which is reduced to sensuous act mediate or immediately, as categorical act. However what is even more important is to distinguish purely categorical act from act of understanding which is mixed up with sensuousness in categorical acts’ (XIX/2, 712).

Husserl says that sensible abstractions that give purely sensible things, for example, give colors and houses, sensible abstractions mixed up with categorical abstractions give some axioms in geometry and the character of having colors, and purely categorical abstractions that give purely categorical forms give collections, relations, concepts and so on (XIX/2, 713).

3. The Model of Founding Relations in Logical Investigations

Now that three kinds of abstractions are made clear, it is necessary to make the model of founding relations in Logical Investigations explicit. Each kind of the abstractions is in founding relations each other as follows.

Fig. (arrows mean founding)
A. Sensuous Abstraction
B. Categorical Abstraction mixed up with Sensuousness
C. Purely Categorical Abstraction

It matters that, at least in Logical Investigations, C can be said to be characterized as different abstraction from B. It is sure that when you intuit mathematical-logical thing, that categorical intuition C has to be founded by B. However C does not totally depends on B while C is founded by A through B. This is because B includes some elements of sensibility and the B founded only by sensible intuitions, not by categorical intuitions. According to Haddock (Haddock 1987), I would like to call B like this ‘premoderial’ B. C does not includes that kind of abstraction. It is sure that C is founded by premoderial B, but C itself has nothing to do with A. That is why C can abstract higher, mathematical-logical objects, and intuit them freely from the boundary of sensibility. This so called ‘gap’ between B and C comes from Husserl’s underlying view to categorical forms.

4. Where is the Gap from?

In Logical Investigations, Husserl claims that purely categorical objects exist against us (gegenueberstehen) (XIX/1, 51). However details about the ontological entity of the objects are not spoken of. For example, Husserl revisited this theme, and he contemplates the problem over and over again (XX, 364; 369).

Husserl’s position on the purely categorical notions themselves and categorical notions mixed up with sensuousness is still vague in Logical Investigations. This results in making the ‘gap’.

References