



**Introduction à l'ouvrage Gustav Bergmann :
Phenomenological Realism and Dialectical Ontology, B.
Langlet et J.-M. Monnoyer (eds)**

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(Introduction à l'ouvrage collectif *Gustav Bergmann : Phenomenological Realism and Dialectical Ontology*, Ontos Verlag, 2009)

Introduction

The essays collected in this volume were read at the Gustav Bergmann (1906-1987) International colloquium, held in Aix-en-provence, from December 9th to December 11th 2006, for the centennial anniversary of Bergmann's birth. The conference was organized within the framework of the Séminaire de Métaphysique (SEMa), which is hosted by the IHP (Institut d'Histoire de la Philosophie). The (non-official) purpose was to promote some liberal exchanges and debates between some Bergmann's interpreters (American and European) focusing on the "actuality" of his thought; the official one was to greet the first meeting devoted to this philosopher in France, where he is still widely little-known. We publish some of these contributions in French, with the hope of a better understanding of the great influence his philosophy should exert in the next future.

Bergmann's situation within the history of philosophy is somehow difficult to synthesize, as there is always a risk to create a damaging twist of his evolutive research. This major philosopher bears witness of many ruptures spreading out through the last century, with "phenomenalism", "physicalism" or with "representationalism" (still very much alive today). He never ceased to reflect on logic and ontology, and to think about their correct relationship, complicating this task with the hypothetical necessity of linking the assay of entities with honest phenomenology. Thus, he came to present a kind of methodology of the revelation of "uncomplete ontologies" with their own pressing problems. Here lies the significance of the so-called truncated world denounced in *Realism*: a strange world really without minds or without intentional relations, a world in bits, which would be carved in fictitious unities by the resort of our anthropomorphic projections. Nowadays, it is in substance this very world his innovating thinking tried to exorcize, at the level of sociology of knowledge, as well as at the level of epistemology and philosophy of language. From Bergmann we often keep in mind the revival of the doctrine of universals, and his characterization of bare particulars. Yet, by contrast, he will remain in reality the man of complexities that cannot be ultimately reduced — these of "facts", of "circumstances" and "classes" — and also most likely as the thought-upsetting last hero of some drastic approach of fundamental ontology (although this one is theoretically and paradoxically concerned at first with the simplest entities). Gustav Bergmann has never ceased to place himself sidelong and to confront directly the critical core of the American philosophy, which he identified and recognized very well under the canonical form it was to take from the end of the Fifties. He was also the intractable interlocutor of Carnap and the cutting critic of Goodman and Strawson. It would be unfair to say that his own difficult, sometimes delphian, and always inventing way of writing may explain he was often misunderstood. Someone once claimed clarity is not enough: the word fits him as a glove. Bergmann is not only the best chronicler of the « linguistic turn », but above all the sworn enemy of that « linguistic idealism », leading to the semantic nominalism by the way of a kind of subreption (his term) of syntax into semantics which Bergmann used to condemn and, what's more surprising, which he rejected quite early in his philosophical career. To put it somewhat bluntly, Bergmann sees « mean » as a predicate, in the classical sense. Ontology doesn't have to contract itself in the concealed form of an intensional discourse, or as it is sometimes asked for today, in a « meta-ontological » form, nor to stand up in a haughty stance without any

consideration of facts. In short, Bergmann's philosophical program is thoroughly "analytical", and it gave a beneficial updating of the scientific philosophy of the XXth century, by limiting its abusive pretensions.

Without tempting to reconstruct the critical and "rational" history of his exceptional record, which began with the first important articles published between 1941 and 1947, we choose to scrutinize the posterity of some of Bergmann's intuitions. They renew the topics of a "positive" metaphysics and modify the false understanding of the Viennese Legacy, from which metaphysics is righting itself, thanks precisely to Bergmann, and his extensive reading of Brentano and Meinong, and even though it seemed to be definitely condemned by Carnap himself.

A doctor in mathematics (1928), and a latecomer to philosophy, G. Bergmann was from his school-years a close friend to Gödel, with him a member of the Vienna circle, and more later in charge of teaching after emigration (1938), as the Kurt Lewin's assistant in psychology, in Iowa- City, but he progressively changed his mind in a profound way, with the beginning of his work in the USA. Even though he might be judged today as a renegade or an apostate, Bergmann belongs without any doubt to the history of philosophy of the XXth century, and he produced also a very interesting historical contribution in itself. He studied, for instance, the raising of individual accidents in Occam's work, what we call nowadays "tropes". His first strong recommendation was the reading of Russell's *Principia Mathematica* : he never let go his conception of an "Ideal Language" though, for him, the decisive point would be to know how finite classes are to be represented in this very same language, and which psychology has to escort our definite descriptions when we have lost acquaintance with the world. The second step, according to him, is marked by the Quine's Mathematical logic, which he would regard as fixing some kind of orthodoxy, and its too strong and enduring influence on so many philosophers. For this reason, from 1967, as against the prevalence of a diffuse nominalism, Bergmann intended to come back to a "realistic" position, finding part of his inspiration — and at the same time relieving himself — from the legacy of Brentano and Meinong. In his unfinished last work, published in 1992: *New Foundations of Ontology*, clearly presented in this book by F. Nef, Bergmann goes however ahead, as he endeavours to radicalize a part of the ideas of his Viennese masters. In retrospect, we may be allowed to think that he was the unwittingly precursor of so called "meinongian logics". But here again stands another kind of two-sided key to assay the richness of Bergmann's work: on the one hand, Bergmann's intuitions justify to go back to the insights of Brentano and Meinong; in the other sense, these latter can be seen as providing useful entrances into the issues he was to work, and by which, as a happy consequence, Austrian classical themes were to be rediscovered, and debated anew.

Previously, the publication of *The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism* in 1953 disturbed the academic consent. Then, his numerous papers kept challenging the best rivals he could be offered in the American scene, like Goodman and Sellars. His masterwork, *Realism – A critique of Brentano and Meinong* (1967), was received with suspicion. Rehabilitation came first from Herbert Hochberg, with a true verve, and indirectly from the diversified and suggestive works of some of its students, such as Reinhardt Grossmann, Fred Wilson and Nathan Oaklander - and then, somewhat later, from the young Italian school of metaphysics in the early Nineties, the undisputable talent of which should be acknowledged here. The issue of the *Rivista di Estetica* (n° 25, anno XLIV) which came out in 2004 ("Il realismo ontologico di Gustav Bergmann", Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino) gave a first echo of his reception in Europe and a useful bibliography of his works.

The essays in this volume are very diverse in nature, and cover a wide open range of topics in relation with bergmannian themes, problems and influence, both external and internal to his work. They are still only drawing the active flux which is impulsing the real and posthumous *devenir* of the Bergmann's philosophy : around metaphysics of time, of existence, of concreteness and abstraction ; or about very old and technical ontological problems of substrata and particulars ; others essays focused on "connexion" and "exemplification" puzzles, but also in an appropriately related way around Sellars, Aristotle, Brentano and Meinong, as a mark of the freshness of a new wind blowing on the truncated world.

Erwin Tegtmeier, who gave one of the best and briefest accounts on the relationship between Meinong and Bergmann and who directed the edition of the Collected works, was the instigator of this colloquium. He deserves our special gratitude. Two volumes of proceedings concerning Bergmann's philosophy have been already published by Ontos Verlag: *Ontology and Analysis* (2006, Edited by L. Addis, G. Jesson and E. Tegtmeier) and *Fostering the ontological turn* (2008, Edited by R. Egidi and G. Bonino). This third volume provides a complement to these note-worthy, substantial and well-directed studies. The Aix-en-Provence conference happily ended with the founding of the Gustav Bergmann Society (Presidence: F. Wilson ; Secretary : L. Schneider), which will very soon have opportunity to reunite the members in order to draw up the balance sheet of prospective inquiries that Bergmann's thinking leaves for now on borrowed time, in several domains (set theory, cognitive phenomenology, logic of perception).

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