The Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann

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De Gruyter

ISBN 978-3-11-025417-4
e-ISBN 978-3-11-025418-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nicolai Hartmann Society. International Conference (1st : 2010 : Rome, Italy)
The philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann / edited by Roberto Poli, Carlo Scognamiglio, Frederic Tremblay.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-3-11-025417-4 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Hartmann, Nicolai, 1882–1950 – Congresses. I. Poli, Roberto, 1955– II. Scognamiglio, Carlo, 1976. III. Tremblay, Frederic. IV. Title.
B3279.H24N55 2010
193–dc23
2011027405

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
∞ Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Foreword

Nicolai Hartmann was one of the most prolific and original twentieth century German philosophers. Yet, he did not compromise clarity and rigor for proficiency and originality. Brought up as a neo-Kantian, he turned his back on neo-Kantianism to become one of the most important critics of German idealism and one of the most resolute proponents of ontological realism. He developed what he called the "New Ontology," which lies at the core of a systematic opus branching out in all of the main areas of philosophy. He proposed innovative and promising solutions to old and new problems in the various areas of philosophy. Although he is little known today, his work had a major influence in philosophy as well as in several sciences, and he remains a key figure of the history of philosophy, especially for his central role in the overcoming of the idealistic phase of German philosophy.

Hartmann worked in a systematic fashion, but he carefully avoided letting his philosophical analysis get trapped in the straightjacket of a closed system. He opposed the view that philosophical activity must terminate in a complete and closed system. Such a system would preclude further research. He rather embraced the open-ended approach of aporetical philosophy. Hartmann, who can be considered to have revived the then lost art of aporetics, also developed the aporetical method to new heights of completion and clarity. This aspect of Hartmann's work is discussed in the present volume by A. Schlittmaier and N. Rescher. Schlittmaier looks at Hartmann's conception of aporetics, the solutions he proposed to overcome some of the main aporias he was concerned with, and the place of Hartmannian aporetics within the history of philosophy. Rescher discusses further implications of Hartmannian-style aporetics.

Hartmann's philosophical talent was complemented with a solid and broad mastery of the history of philosophy. The papers of C. Luchetti, A. Pietras, and G. D'Anna explore the historical dimension of his work. Hartmann paid especial attention to Plato, from whom he learned to frame the ontological problem of ideal being. Luchetti examines Hartmann's interpretation of Plato. As a neo-Kantian, his interpretation of Kant is also important. Pietras discusses Hartmann's interpretation of Kant, and the difference between this interpretation and Heidegger's reading of Kant. Hartmann conceived his "New Ontology" to be, in some respects, a rehabilitation of the Wolffian ontology. D'Anna's paper deals with the relation of Hartmann's work to that of Christian Wolff, with which Hartmann was acquainted through H. Pichler's work, as well as the relation of Hartmann's work to A. Meinong's theory of objects.

More than anything else, however, Hartmann was an ontologist when most philosophers thought that ontological problems were either meaningless or linguistic mistakes in need of clarification. Although he claimed to operate a return to classical ontology, he broke with many of the traditional ways of understanding ontology. He proposed a new division of the spheres of being (real and ideal) and modes of being, he worked out an extensive and refined theory of categories, and developed a theory of levels of reality. In the present volume, R. Poli presents aspects of Hartmann's theories of categories. J. Dziadkowiec takes elements from Hartmann's theory of levels of reality and combines them with elements of Whitehead's process philosophy in the attempt to develop a basis for a processual theory of levels. And D. Jacquette discusses the issue of mathematical objects in Hartmann's theory of ideal being.

The pervasive influence of German idealism had been hindering the development of philosophies of nature in Germany for about a hundred and fifty years. But Hartmann's realist ontology suddenly supplied a new metaphysical foundation for the philosophy of nature. Hartmann's own philosophy of nature provides new solutions to traditional problems such as the problem of the definition of 'species', but also criticizes some of the recent developments in the natural sciences. This philosophy of nature influenced many German-speaking scientists of the time and is still relevant for the contemporary philosophy of science and philosophy of biology. Hartmann's treatment of the concept of 'species' is analyzed in this volume by F. Tremblay.

German idealism had also changed the way philosophers dealt with the problem of the mind and of psychical activity. Psychical activity had become the ultimate foundation of all phenomena. But this view had proven to be no more than an improbable hypothesis motivated by a desire for absolute freedom. As with the philosophy of nature, Hartmann was the first German philosopher after the neo-Kantian era to replace the study of the mind and psychical activities within metaphysics. Psychical categories now had to depend on organological categories. The papers of C. Scognamiglio and R. Zaborowski deal with this important portion of Hartmann's work. Scognamiglio takes a look at Hartmann's views on the psyche and psychic activity in the attempt to reconstruct his theory of the psyche. And Zaborowski tries to extract from Hartmann's work some ideas that can be used to solve problems that clog the current debate in the theory of emotions.

Hartmann also wrote extensively on the theory of values, moral phenomena, and ethics, articulating with his contemporary M. Scheler an innovative conception of objective values and their individual and social acceptations. Inspired by Plato's theory of intelligible forms, Hartmann thought that values have an objective reality and exist in the realm of ideal being along with the laws of logic and mathematics. Besides developing one of the most sophisticated virtue-ethics ever conceived, Hartmann distinguished between the constancy (immutability) of values and the variability of the individual and social recognition of values. The papers by A. Kinneging and E. Kelly discuss Hartmann's theory of values and ethics. Kinneging examines the similarities and divergences between the theories of values of Plato and Hartmann. And Kelly takes a look at Hartmann's method of discovering and synthesizing values.

In the nineteen-twenties, Cologne was the host of a new kind of philosophical anthropology emerging around M. Scheler, H. Plessner, and later E. Rothacker and A. Gehlen. Despite the fact that he did not write on this topic, Hartmann nevertheless had a major influence on that new movement. J. Fischer explains how Hartmann's influence contributed to shaping the movement in two main respects: first, through his presence in Cologne from 1925, which allowed direct interaction with Scheler, Plessner, Rothacker and Gehlen; second, through his work, especially through his theory of levels of reality, which contributed to shape Scheler and Plessner's theses.

Most of the chapters in this volume have been selected from the papers presented at the First International Conference of the Nicolai Hartmann Society (Rome, 19–21 July 2010). Other papers, namely those of D. Jacquette, N. Rescher, and A. Schlittmaier, have been invited to address essential topics that were not covered at the conference in the hope that they would contribute to providing a more systematic presentation, discussion, and, on occasion, criticism of Hartmann's work.

Roberto Poli
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Frederic Tremblay

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Chapter 1: Hartmann's Theory of Categories: Introductory Remarks

Roberto Poli

1.1 Introduction

Aristotle's theory of categories – and in particular the sub-theory of accidents – had an enormous influence for more than twenty centuries. After this long period of influence, during the past two centuries quite a few radically new theories of categories have been advanced. Following the two well-known transformations of the theory of categories brought about by Kant and Hegel, six further major reforms were proposed in a period that spanned hardly more than nine decades, notably by Brentano, Husserl, Ingarden, Hartmann, Peirce and Whitehead, who published their work approximately between 1860 and 1950. Apart from these main reforms, a large number of minor ones, occasionally able to furnish deep insights into the categorial nature of specific types of entities, were advanced as well. While the theories of Husserl, Peirce and Whitehead appear to be reasonably discussed, those of Brentano, Ingarden and Hartmann are much less discussed. In some of my previous papers I have already considered the categorial frameworks of Brentano (Poli, 2004) and, to a lesser extent, Ingarden (Poli 1998a and 2010a) and Hartmann (Poli, 1998a, 2001a and 2010b). In this paper, I shall present Hartmann's theory of categories more systematically. My purpose here is eminently reconstructive, leaving comparison with other frameworks and critical evaluation to subsequent occasions. Even within these limitations, the present paper reconstructs only a fragment of the overall framework developed by Hartmann. Here I specifically deal with (some parts of) the third volume of Hartmann's ontological quadrilogy, *Der Aufbau der realen Welt*.

I can justify my choice not only by citing merely pragmatic reasons – Hartmann's theory of categories is much too rich, complex and articulated to be compressed into a single paper – but also by referring to the method itself devised by Hartmann, and in particular to the distinction among phenomenology (the descriptive attitude), aporetics (analysis of the problems – often in the form of *aporias* – resulting from the previous descriptive phase), and theory (or the systematic coordination of the outcomes from the first two phases through as few as possible metaphysical assumptions) (Hartmann 1921, 1931). In applying Hartmann's philosophical method to Hartmann's thought itself, I start with a description of his theories (or parts of them). The identification and discussion of the tensions internal to his philosophy and comparison with other perspectives are for the most part left for other occasions. Only some explicit remarks are made on points of tension that cannot be entirely postponed.

Hartmann exhibits a thorough mastery of the history of philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel are his workfellows. To keep this paper within acceptable limits, I avoid any reference to the rich and often brilliant and deeply enlightening discussions that Hartmann has with the great philosophers of the past.

1.2 The problem of knowledge from an ontological viewpoint

Ontology is knowledge of being and knowledge is an epistemological problem. Epistemological categories – the categories of knowledge, be they perceptions, intuitions, experiences or even conceptualizations – are the medium through which real categories can be apprehended (Hartmann 1940, 201).

However, in order to ground the ontological apprehension of being, it is mandatory to clarify the connection between the epistemological problem of categories and the ontological problem of categories, or the question – as Kant puts it – of the objective validity of the categories (Hartmann 1940, 6). This problem admits of an ontologically acceptable solution only if knowledge is correctly defined. The basic ontological assumption concerning knowledge is that it does not create or generate its objects. Ontologically speaking, knowledge grasps objects. If knowledge does not generate its objects, objects precede any effort to grasp them.

This means that knowledge is not entirely internal to consciousness, but is grounded in emotional transcendent acts (analyzed in detail in Hartmann 1935). It is important to distinguish here between the natural and the reflected direction of knowledge. The natural direction of knowledge (*intentio recta*) goes toward its object, while the reflected direction of knowledge (*intentio obliqua*) is knowledge directed toward other knowledge, knowledge that reflects upon itself. The two cases can be systematically distinguished because the determinations of the objects are different from the determinations of knowledge. In particular through the vast array of emotional transcendent acts, we happen to know a variety of determinations before the beginning of any philosophical reflection. Put differently, while categories of knowledge are the initial conditions of knowledge, i. e., what makes knowledge possible, knowledge of the categories of knowledge are among the things we know last. Knowledge of categories is an enormously complex form of knowledge, because it goes backward from the totality of experience to its conditions (Hartmann 1940, 12).

If knowledge is grounded on transcendent acts – as Hartmann claims – this implies that the connection between knowledge and propositions is secondary, in the sense that the connection is eventually supervenient over the originally epistemological character of perception and the intuitive apprehension of objects. Shortly, thinking is not identical with knowing because it does not need to refer to a transcendent entity (Hartmann 1940, 176). Properly understood, however, phenomena – if they are authentic phenomena – are the appearances of beings, of entities. A phenomenon without a being appearing in it is an empty appearance. This is not the correct understanding of phenomena. We cannot know phenomena without to some degree knowing their underlying beings, without implying that at least some determinations of a phenomenon are determinations of being (Hartmann 1940, 210).

The relation of knowledge is not one of the fundamental ontic relations, however. It does not divide being into the world of the subject and the world of the object, which implies that the subject-object relation is an ontologically secondary relation. In fact, there is no need for an entity to become an object, i. e., the correlate of a transcendent act. Entities are super-objective. On the other hand, objects and subjects are both entities. Both the object and the subject have the same type of actuality: both are temporal, both are contingent and both are individual (Hartmann 1940, 172).

Everything real changes. Change, however, is different from coming-into-being and passing-away. Change is the passage from one state to the next. This passage from state to state may follow rules, patterns or require something that remains constant in it (Hartmann 1940, 366). This is Hartmann's way of reading the category of substance. Substance for him is something that is within the real process and persists through it. Apart from that, there is no valid argument in support of an absolutely persisting something (Hartmann 1980, 291; Werkmeister 1990, 115).

Objects are indifferent from their being known. Knowledge captures or explicates an object. While these activities are relevant for the knower, they are of absolutely no importance for the object itself. Knowledge improves, uncovers aspects, brings to light dimensions and properties of objects. The side of knowledge on which progress is possible is only made possible by distinguishing the transcendent from the immanent aspects of objects. The German language distinguishes between '*Gegenstand*' – what stands against us, what resists us – and '*Objekt*' – the object as known. English wavers in this regard. What is 'Gegenstand' in German, in English is the result of a referential act (or reference, for short), while what is '*Objekt'* in German does not seem susceptible to a uniform translation in English. While sometimes '*Objekt'* is understood as the result of a characterizing act, the closest approximations to the German '*Objekt'* are 'idea' or 'image'. Unfortunately, the latter terms are more epistemologically than ontologically oriented. Even more unfortunate is the eventual translation of the German '*Objekt'* with the English 'object'.

Knowledge introduces a divide between that part of the object which has been captured by knowledge and that part which remains to be known. The former is usually typified and then represented by concepts.

The divide between the full ontological object and the part that has been apprehended shifts as knowledge develops. However, Hartmann does not claim that the divide constantly shifts in only one direction. Knowledge may develop as new aspects of the object are captured, or it may decline when what was previously known is subsequently forgotten, or it may exhibit more complex patterns according to the possibilities embedded in different cognitive strategies.

Hartmann's theory of categories entirely breaks with Kant's or Hegel's theories of categories by explicitly denying that categories are concepts. If categories were concepts, they could be straightforwardly interpreted as fictions or forms of representation more or less suitable to the manipulation of things (Hartmann 1940, 6). While we need concepts in order to refer to categories, they never capture categories entirely. There is always a difference between categories and their concepts.

Hartmann explicitly states that the philosophical problem of categories remains alive only if the following three conditions are fulfilled:

1. Categories can be represented by predicates;
2. Predicates are not identical with the categories they represent, and
3. Detailed analyses are needed for further specifying the relation between a given predicate and its category (Hartmann 1940, 41).

1.3 Hartmann's ontological framework at a glance

The overall architecture of Hartmann's ontology was set out in four books (see the references for the corresponding German titles): *Foundations of Ontology* (1935), *Possibility and Actuality* (1938), *The Structure of the Real World* (1940), and *Philosophy of Nature* (1950). Hartmann dealt with specific aspects of the overall framework in a variety of other books. *Plato's Logic of Being* (1909) paved the way for his understanding of the sphere of ideal being, while *The Problem of Spiritual Being* (1933), the three volumes of *Ethics* (1926) and the *Aesthetics* (1953) dug deeply into the many intricacies of the spiritual level of reality, an inquiry prepared for by systematic analysis of German Idealism (*The Philosophy of German Idealism*, 2 vols., 1923 and 1929). Hartmann addressed the problem of knowledge and the connections between epistemology and ontology in *Metaphysics of Knowledge* (1921).

The first tasks of ontology are (1) the clarification of the problem of being *qua* being; (2) the distinction between the spheres of being (reality and ideality) and analysis of the relations between them; (3) the articulation of the theory of categories (Hartmann 1935; Hartmann 1940, 1; for a different way to read the expression 'being *qua* being' see Poli 1998b).

The problem of being *qua* being results in the difference between *Dasein* and *Sosein*, which can only imperfectly be translated as *existence* and *being-thus* (or determination). Spheres of being, in contrast, are the spheres of real and ideal being. All entities – either real or ideal – have *Dasein* and *Sosein*, albeit in different ways. For instance, real existence (i.e., the existence of a real being) is a temporal determination, while ideal existence is compossibility. Furthermore, apart from the two principal spheres of real and ideal being, Hartmann discusses the two secondary ones of logical being and knowledge: the former is a type of ideal being, the latter a type of real being, and specifically a function pertaining to the level of spiritual being (Hartmann 1940, 209).

The difference between *Dasein* and *Sosein* – and every other articulation that ontology is supposed to present – is characterized categorially. As a matter of fact, categories are the only tools available to an ontologist. Ontology, therefore, is a thoroughgoing theory of categories. Thus, the difference itself between the spheres of being – both the principal and the secondary spheres – must be articulated categorially, which is the task of the modal analyses (developed in detail in Hartmann 1938).

The main thesis defended by Hartmann in the *Foundations of Ontology* is the claim that no ontological distinction makes a difference from the point of view of being. All the differences are articulations of being, not differences between being and non-being. Parts and wholes are both authentic aspects of being; independent and dependent entities are similarly being; physical, biological, psychological and spiritual types of being are all manifestations of being, without any of them being "more being" than any other. From the point of view of ontology, no part, aspect or moment of reality is "more being" than any other part, aspect or moment of it. The fact that, say, the existence of biological entities depends on that of physical entities does not imply that physics is "more ontologically real" than biology. Existentially dependent entities are as ontologically genuine as existentially independent ones. All entities, whatever their type, demand the same careful ontological scrutiny.

1.4 Ontological categories

All ontological distinctions have the form of categories (Hartmann 1940, 1). The theory of categories shares with the sciences the fundamental ontological attitude of the *intentio recta*. Hartmann explicitly defends the idea that science is ontological in all its ramifications (Hartmann 1935, 235). This is rather at odds with the mainstream reading of science as an eminently epistemological affair. This is one of the issues on which Hartmann firmly departs from the Kantian – to be precise, the Neo-Kantian – legacy. From the claim that the main orientation of science is ontological, it immediately follows that scientific categories are further specifications and subdivisions of ontological categories. In other words, the contact with science is a characteristic feature of the theory of categories, and therefore of ontology (Hartmann 1940, 2). The philosopher's task is to unfold the first and most general articulations of the theory of categories, while scientists deal with their subsequent further specifications.

Categories articulate what is universal and necessary, what remains identical (Hartmann 1940, 25). Categories articulate in particular the *So-sein* of entities; they specify conformations, structures and contents, not forms of existence (Hartmann 1940, 15). Categories articulate the fundamental determinations of being, they are principles of being (on principles see Sections 6 and 8 below). As fundamental determinations of being, categories form the interior of entities. In this sense, categories are immanent to the world: they do not form a second world (Hartmann 1940, 160). The categorial interior of entities has a layered organization: the most fundamental categories structure the innermost core of entities, while other categories, such as scientific ones, add progressively more superficial layers. Ontological categories are the lowest layer of being. They form the network of internal, dynamic determinants and dependencies which articulate the furniture of the world. The solution of the many enigmas that plague categories is the condition for being able to delve deeper into the nature of things (Hartmann 1940, 3). One of the most interesting aspects of the theory of categories is that categories do not form a homogeneous continuum, but appear to be organized in groups (Hartmann 1940, 30; see below for details). Some categories belong to all the levels, to the entire real world. They are called fundamental categories; they form the unitary base of the world and they are the specific subjects of the general theory of categories (Hartmann 1940, 200).

We come to know ontological categories through the objects that we come to know. Our knowledge of ontological categories is even more provisional than our knowledge of objects. While our knowledge of objects is grounded in the *Gegenstand/Objekt* divide, our knowledge of ontological categories follows a different pattern. We discover ontological categories through the objects that exemplify them. In other words, ontological categories are intrinsic to objects. The difference between knowing objects and knowing categories explains why ontological categories are often confused with concepts. The problem is that categories do not allow direct acquaintance as objects do.

On the other hand, as far as ontological categories are concerned, the difference between the ontological and the cognitive sides of categories is even more important than it is in the case of objects. At best, concepts are names of ontological categories, which implies that concepts are partial, static, separate representations of something that in itself is both essentially dynamic and inseparable from other ontological categories. Furthermore, the names assigned to the various categories are only partially adequate. Historically speaking, categories have been given different meanings. The analysis of categories and their mutual relations must be done carefully to adhere to the contents that are explicitly given to them (Hartmann 1940, 231–232).

Similarly to the knowledge of objects, the knowledge of ontological categories changes as well – when ontology develops, our understanding of ontological categories develops too toward a deeper and better grasping of their articulation and subtleties. Some categories present numberless variations, others only minor variations. There are many different types of unity and multiplicity, but only slight variations in the case of the paired categories of principle and *concretum* (see Section 8 below). The most general and schematic categories are those that present the most meager content and therefore those that change less (Hartmann 1940, 267).

Categories are never knowable *a priori*, though. Only objects – or, better, some moments of real objects – are knowable *a priori*. The problem of *a priori* knowledge brings to light the presence of ideal categories within real entities. In fact, what can be known *a priori* relies on categories, precisely ideal categories. The *a priori* is given by the occurrence of ideal moments within real entities (Hartmann 1940, 119).

1.5 Categories and essences

Are categories essences? Hartmann openly denounces the identification of categories with essences as a grievous error. While categories are close to essences, they do not coincide with them (Hartmann 1940, 52). As to the reasons for the similarity between categories and essences, it is sufficient to note that both categories and essences are the general and the identical in the multiplicity of cases (Hartmann 1940, 48), do not exist in time, and are independent from their real instances, although both are apprehensible only in them (Hartmann 1940, 43). The differences between categories and essences are partially summarized by the following reasons.

Firstly, categories and ideal beings have different contents. While ideal beings exhaust their contents in forms, laws and relations, categories contain further moments of content which are entirely lacking from the sphere of ideal being, notably dimensional moments and moments with the character of substratum (see Section 9.3 below). That real categories are not limited to forms, laws and relations was already understood by the ancients, who had to add the category of matter. The problem is that forms alone are unable to completely determine real entities; for instance, forms are unable to determine *Daseins*. On the other hand, ideal entities do not need any kind of matter, because for them form is enough (Hartmann 1940, 50).

Secondly, ideal being has its own special categories. Ideal being is a widely ramified realm whose categories do not work as principles (see Section 6 below). Furthermore, the specifications of ideal beings do not descend to the level of individuals. While ideal categories can inform real entities, they never exhaust the real. In this regard, Hartmann speaks of the ideal as an incomplete being (Hartmann 1935, 282; Hartmann 1940, 312 and elsewhere).

Thirdly, real and ideal categories do not coincide perfectly, because they have partially different contents (Hartmann 1940, 59). Similarly, the categories of real and ideal knowledge (i. e., of knowledge of real and ideal entities) do not coincide perfectly. Both coincide only partially (Hartmann 1940, 49).

Modal differences are also worth considering. Ideal necessity is the subordination of the specific to the general; real necessity, in contrast, is the necessity of the individual case with its unique actuality given by the total disposition of the present circumstances (Hartmann 1940, 60–61). Even more relevant is the difference between ideal actuality and real actuality. The former is given by sheer lack of contradiction, while the latter requires full interpenetration of real necessity and real possibility. Numberless ideal possibilities are in fact impossible in the real sphere (Hartmann 1938, Chapters 18–21, 24, 41–44).

1.6 Categories as principles

The two most relevant aspects of categories are their generality and their character of determination. The latter is the feature that makes them principles. Principles exhaust themselves in this determining role. Principles are nothing in themselves. They only are for something else; they are something only with respect to the *concretum* they determine and are "in" it. Principles are nothing without their *concretum*, and the *concretum* cannot exist without its principles (Hartmann 1940, 42, 77–78, 160 and elsewhere).

The moment of principle of the categories consists in some kind of determination of their *concreta.* It is apparent that principles do not determine their *concreta* as causes, reasons, or ends. Apart from denying these patently inadequate characterizations, it is difficult to specify any positive feature of the relation of determination, because it appears to be a *sui generis* relation. A positive unfolding of the moments characterizing the relation between principles and *concreta* is a task still to be accomplished (Hartmann 1940, 66).

Categories as principles are independent from their *concreta*, not from other categories (Hartmann 1940, 122). We will see that principles imply one another and all the categories characterizing a level of reality work together (Hartmann 1940, 154–155; see section 11 below).

Categories are far from being the only principles of entities. There are also highly particular principles structuring specific domains of being – such as natural laws or psychological laws – which are *concreta* with respect to general categories (Hartmann 1940, 254). There is a gradation of principles from the most general categories to specific real cases. Empirical laws are *concreta* with respect to general principles, and principles with respect to individual instances.

Last but not least, the essence of every category is determined by the connections that a given category has with other categories (Hartmann 1940, 452). Laying bare the relations linking and determining categories one to another is a rich source of information on their nature.

1.7 Categorial groups

There are three groups of categories: those that pervade all entities, those that (either primarily or exclusively) are present in the entities of one sphere of being only, and those that are present in specific families of entities. The first group of categories is analyzed in detail in *Possibility and Actuality*; as far as real being is concerned, the second group is analyzed in *The Structure of the Real World*, while the third group is analyzed in the *Philosophy of Nature.* The categories of the first group are termed 'modal categories', those of the second group are called 'fundamental categories', and those of the third group 'special categories' (See Table 1 below). Modal categories – because of the methodological difficulties of modal analysis – form a special philosophical sub-discipline.

They articulate spheres of being and their relations. Modalities do not determine the effective structure of the real world (Hartmann 1940, 204). I will not discuss modal categories here. Fundamental categories comprise (1) categories organized in pairs of opposites, such as principle-*concretum*, mode-structure, form-matter, determination-dependence, and quality-quantity; (2) *level* categories, such as those that distinguish inanimate, living, psychological and spiritual beings; and (3) the categories of intercategorial connections, or the group of categorial *laws*, such as the laws of coherence, stratification, and dependence among categories (see Section 13 below). Each group of fundamental categories is internally stratified (Hartmann 1940, 203). Finally, categories such as space, time, causality, process, individuality, and substance primarily are characteristic of inanimate being.

Table 1. Classification of the different families of categories.

Categories that pertain to both the real and the ideal spheres of being

- Modal categories (e. g., necessity, possibility, actuality)

Categories that pertain to the real sphere of being only

- Paired Categories (e. g., principle-*concretum*, substratum-relation, element-complex)
- Level categories (those that distinguish the inanimate, living, psychological and spiritual levels of being)
- Categorial laws (e. g., laws of validity, coherence, stratification and dependence)

Categories characterizing inanimate being

- Special categories (space, time, causality, process, individuality, substance)

The two preeminent pairs are the principle-*concretum* and the mode-structure pairs. *Concretum* for Hartmann is the entity in which categories are embedded as its determinations. The *concretum* is not limited to real entities, but includes ideal ones as well. Furthermore, the *concretum* for Hartmann is not to be understood as limited to the individual instances of a principle because there can be different levels of *concreta*. For instance, level categories are *concreta* with respect to general categories. Both the *concretum* and its principles are categories. Starting from *concreta* is the simplest way to distinguish the various groups of categories (Hartmann 1940, 60).

Mode and structure are the connections between the modal articulation of a *concretum* (e.g., as a real as opposed to ideal entity) and the determinations that specify its attributes. Here, we find again the previous distinction between *Dasein* (mode) and *Sosein* (determination). This is a general categorial law: ontological categories are mutually connected and form a network of reciprocal dependencies.

1.8 The principle and its *concretum*

Categorially speaking, the most general relation is one between principles and *concreta. Concretum* is what is determinate. For Hartmann, the *concretum* should not be understood as the opposite to the general, as the individual instance. The thesis that the relation between principle and *concretum* is a relation *sui generis*, different from any other relation (Hartmann 1940, 42), does not appear to be equivalent to the claim that principles and *concreta* are related in the same way in which the general is contained within the individual (Hartmann 1940, 162). The general-individual pair and the principle-*concretum* pair are two different kinds of pairs.

Real categories contain all the universal determinations of their *concreta*; they contain what is needed for the structure of the *concreta.* A complete system of categories – not the incomplete one we can grasp – completely determines its *concreta* (Hartmann 1940, 60). As natural laws exist only in the real processes of nature and are nothing outside of them, real categories exist only as structural relations within the real world and are nothing in themselves (Hartmann 1940, 162–163).

The principle-*concretum* determination is only one among a variety of types of determination and in no way the most relevant in the real world. In fact, each real level has its own specific types of determination, such as the specific linear nexus (causal, final, etc.) that unifies the phases of the processes that unfold within a *concretum.* The following three moments characterize the essence of principles, and three corresponding moments the essences of *concreta:*

1. *The epistemological relation:* The principle is that through which the *concretum* is grasped.
2. *The first ontological relation:* The principle is the *archè* of the *concretum*, the condition of its possibility or that on which the *concretum* rests.

3. *The second ontological relation:* The principle has unconstrained validity for all the *concreta* that fall within its range (Hartmann 1940, 270).

The relation between principle and *concretum* is extraordinarily stable. In fact, it presents only one main variation, localized within the highest level. The human ethos is the only case in which there are principles that do not determine their *concreta:* values are principles with the nature of requirements, exigencies; in no way do they determine the corresponding *concreta*, not least because in the real world there also are disvalues and most of the time values themselves are at best only partially realized (Hartmann 1940, 274).

1.9 Paired categories

Paired categories are the most general *structural* moments of being. As structural moments they have content, and there are composite relations among them (Hartmann 1940, 219). Both the categories of a paired opposition are positive, which means that they are contrary, not contradictory categories. Most pairs exhibit transitions between their two opposed categories in which a series of intermediate grades extends between them (Hartmann 1940, 223).

Hartmann organizes the various pairs into two groups of six pairs, without implying that the list of paired oppositions is definitive. Neither the two groups nor their internal order have the meaning of a hierarchical order because there is no intrinsic order among the pairs (Hartmann 1940, 230).

The principle-*concretum* relation, discussed in the previous section, is one of the elementary oppositions. Many other paired structural elementary categories, such as unity-plurality, form-matter, quality-quantity, and continuity-discreteness, have been well known since antiquity.

Elementary oppositions do not have common genera; the pairs are not like "warm" and "hot", which are species of temperature. As a matter of fact, if common genera were available, they would be the proper fundamental categories, and the pairs of opposed categories would become secondary categories (Hartmann 1940, 244). Elementary oppositions cannot be divided into categorial elements. For this reason, we can only show their differences and the links that connect them; we can unfold them only through the relations they have with each other. These relations among the various oppositions determine the essences of the categories (Hartmann 1940, 241).

Hartmann organizes the series of paired categories into the following two groups.

- Group 1. Principle-*concretum,* structure-modus, form-matter, inner-outer, determination-dependence, quality-quantity.
- Group 2. Unity-manifoldness, harmony-conflict, opposition-dimension, discreteness-continuity, substratum-relation, element-complex.

It is apparent that some of these are easier to grasp than others (Hartmann 1940, 219–220). For all of them, however, the history of philosophy has introduced many errors. The contentual moments of categories are due to their reciprocal relations.

Categories are connected by a variety of relations, both within and among the pairs. A relevant case of the former is represented by transitions between the opposed categories. While some transitions are continuous, others – such as the principle-*concretum* and the structure-*modus* ones – do not include a continuous transition between the opposed categories (Hartmann 1940, 248–249). Apart from these two pairs, the remaining oppositions exhibit three different types of transition:

1. Alternation of the two opposed categories – *Dasein* and *Sosein*, matter and form, element-complex, unity and multiplicity, opposition-dimension, discreteness-continuity behave in this way. The form of a matter is the matter of some higher form, etc.
2. Unilateral transition toward a fixed point; one of the two opposites remains stable and the other gradually changes and comes closer and closer to the unchanging category – e. g., relation-substratum with substratum as the fixed point.
3. Bilateral transition without fixed points – harmony and conflict (Hartmann 1940, 248–255). As a side-remark, it is worth noting that bilateral transitions are structural moments of modal relations as well.

Beyond the above simple implications, there is a huge variety of other relations among the members of the different pairs, too numerous to be described (Hartmann 1940, 451).

To give a flavor of Hartmann's analysis, I shall now shortly describe some of the pairs.

1.9.1 Matter and form

Forms have content; they determine the structure of entities and therefore constitute the *Sosein* of entities. In this sense, forms are some of the fundamental moments of the principles of being. Other constitutive moments of principles include substrata and the fact that the categories of a level work together (Hartmann 1940, 105). Matter and form respectively refer to what can acquire form and what can give form. The demise of the old doctrine of substantial forms and the beginning of modern science paved the way for a better understanding of the relation between matter and form (Hartmann 1940, 278). The relation between matter and form is called superforming. This relation breaks at the cut between life and mind and mind and spirit (Hartmann 1940, 287; see Section 12 below).

1.9.2 *Modus* and structure

Modus determines intermodal relations and in particular the special form of *Dasein*; structure refers to the *Sosein* and all the moments of its determination. All the remaining twenty-two oppositions are articulations of structure. Like the most general relations, the relation between principle and *concretum* is a structural relation (Hartmann 1940, 232).

1.9.3 Substratum and relation

All entities are determined by relations, both internal and external. This is why every isolation is secondary and exclusively due to acts of abstraction. Without relations, there is neither unity nor multiplicity; form and quality depend on relations (Hartmann 1940, 279–280). While relations can have other relations as their arguments, at some point the series of relations within relations within relations etc., must end. Sooner or later, there must be a non-relational substratum, a substratum that is not the result of a relational construction (Hartmann 1940, 251). A substratum, for Hartmann, is the argument of a possible relation (Hartmann 1940, 278). The term 'substratum' implies that what is at stake is the source or domain of an asymmetrical relation. Real categories are constituted by material moments. Moments with the character of substratum do not pertain to the mode of being of ideal entities (Hartmann 1940, 59).

Hartmann distinguishes three main species of relation: fixed relations, those that constitute the constancy of a type; flexible relations, which change from case to case and constitute individual cases; and relations of encapsulation, which connects entities at different levels of reality. The latter can be either fixed or flexible (Hartmann 1940, 283–286; the term 'encapsulation' translates Dooyeweerd's 'enkapsis', see Poli 2009a). Within the sphere of ideal being, fixed relations dominate. Knowledge, too, has a preference for fixed relations (Hartmann 1940, 284).

Processual laws are a special class of relations. The dimension of possible determinations has the character of substratum (Hartmann 1940, 52). A dimension is a locus for elements and the laws of their ordering. The connection between substratum and dimension determines the relation between elements and continua (Hartmann 1940, 234).

Categories have an irrational moment and this moment is particularly relevant for the category of substratum (Hartmann 1940, 281). Substrata evade our capacity to understand them, even if moments with the character of substrata can be detected. This is one of the reasons why categories include irrational moments (Hartmann 1940, 127 ff, which discusses other irrational moments and the methodological consequences arising from them).

1.9.4 Quality and quantity

The quality-quantity pair is one of those where the character of opposition between the two constituting categories is less apparent. Hartmann sees quantities as determinations of real being and qualities as (within limits) determinations of the secondary sphere of knowledge (Hartmann 1940, 391). Three pairs of opposition are included under quality, namely positive and negative, general and individual, and identity and difference. Three other pairs of opposition are included under quantity, namely one and many, part and whole, and finite and infinite.

1.9.5 Element and complex

Complexes are relational entities. (Hartmann 1980, 450) explains that he prefers the term 'complex' (*Gefüge*) to the 'consumed' (*verbrauchten*) term 'system' (*System*). The elements of a complex are members, not substrata. Elements are determined by the complex of which they are members (Hartmann 1940, 247). Complexes have their own type of determination; but in each case, the determination extends across the complex's elements and transforms them. A complex of elements is always a complex of relations and determinations. Elements are essentially determined by the positions they occupy within the complex's total series of relations (Hartmann 1940, 330). This explains why elements have functions within the complex. Within a complex, what matters are not the elements, but the relations that they maintain among themselves and with the complex.

The main difference between complex and class (*Ganze*; below I shall give different meanings to the terms 'whole' and 'totality') is that a complex has some autonomy *vis-à-vis* its members, while a class has no autonomy *vis-à-vis* its parts. Classes depend on their parts, while elements depend on their complex. The two dependence relations proceed in opposite directions. This is not entirely correct, however. To some extent, a complex depends on its elements as well. A better formulation of the difference between classes and complexes runs as follows: within limits, if a class loses one of its parts, the class becomes different but the lost part remains the same; if a complex loses one of its elements, the complex remains the same but the element becomes different (Hartmann 1940, 330).

An irregularly shaped stone, a grain of sand, a puddle, a mountain are not independent complexes, but fragments and parts of much wider formations that come into existence before them and within which they exist as subordinate moments (Hartmann 1940, 334). It may turn out that a rigid complex is weak, while a flexible complex may be able to resist perturbations (Hartmann 1940, 332).

All natural complexes are complexes of forces and processes. There is no reason to view elements as simple or as analogous to material particles. If we assume that inorganic parts are elements of an organism, this way of understanding an organism is radically different from the idea that an organism is a dynamic complex able to survive the continuous substitution of its elements (Hartmann 1940, 337). The former refers to a physical complex, while the latter refers to a biological complex, and the two are authentically different complexes. Both the individual organism and the biological species are complexes of processes. The inside of the complex of processes that constitutes an organism is the capacity of the complex to maintain its working conditions, what Hartmann calls the self-determination of the organism (Hartmann 1940, 346).

1.9.6 Inner and outer

Not everything has an inside, and not everything is what results from its inner structure. Force does not need to be the exteriorization of anything else, and effects do not need to be the exteriorizations of causes. Only entities that have some ontic autonomy have an inside. Within nature, dynamic and organic complexes are the most well-known cases. Outer forces of nuclei are inner forces of atoms (Hartmann 1940, 345–346). Outer forces of lower-order entities are inner forces of higher-order entities. Determinations do not need to be internal to things (or constitute their interiors). Most real nexuses are external determinations. Causality is the most obvious case (Hartmann 1940, 239).

For all complexes, the inside of the complex is constituted by the relations among its members, while the outside of the complex is constituted by the relations between the complex and other complexes. Every outside can become the inside of a higher-order complex (Hartmann 1940, 249).

This serial organization characterizes the pairs matter-form, element-complex, and inner-outer. This organization is a fundamental law of the real world, valid for all the levels of reality. Furthermore it extends its validity to many other categories, starting from the fundamental opposition between *Dasein* and *Sosein* (see Section 9 above).

Apart from the relations within each categorial pair, there are relations among the members of a pair and those of others (Hartmann 1940, 255). The collection of these external relations is also a constitutive element of the categories, on a par with the relations internal to the different pairs.

Two cases are particularly relevant: the relation of the different paired categories to their common *concretum*, and the transversal relations among the contents of the different categories (Hartmann 1940, 256).

1.10 On the variety of determining moments

There are many real moments without corresponding ideal moments. The most obvious case is represented by causality. If causality were nothing more than a law, it would be entirely legitimate to view the law of causality as an essence and therefore as an ideal entity. According to Hartmann, however, causality is the nexus that connects the phases of a process, the dynamic series of the production of the stages one from the other within the unity and the irreversibility of the process. Whatever kinds of determination and dependence are valid for ideal entities, causality is not one of them (Hartmann 1940, 62).

The real sphere contains two different types of determinations: the hierarchical type of determination – the genus-species structure – is shared with the ideal sphere, while the horizontal type of determination connects individuals with individuals and in particular the successive stages of real processes one to another. All the moments resulting from the *hierarchical* nature of categories – including their moments with the character of substratum and all the dimensional moments – will never exhaust the fullness of an individual being. A second series of moments is needed: the *horizontal* series articulating the totality of the actual reality (Hartmann 1940, 312). This implies that the principle-*concretum* type of determination is far from being the only determination shaping the whole of reality; a second type of determination – of a non categorial nature – should be included: a determination of the *concretum-concretum* type (Hartmann 1940, 430). The ideal sphere does not contain the latter type of determination.

Among all the different kinds of real determination, only two are directly accessible to us: the causal nexus between inanimate entities and the final nexus between spiritual entities (Hartmann 1940, 314). The various causal chains do not unfold as isolated and mutually irrelevant processes. On the contrary, they influence each other in the totality of the transversal nexus that connects them. Things become remarkably more complex with the final nexus, because it includes values and their character of demand. Further levels of complexity arise with history and the life of collectivities.

Substance is another case of a real determination without corresponding ideal moments. Hartmann views substance as what remains constant through changes, what in the flow of events resists their succession. It follows that only in the real world can there be substances. Even more importantly, the category of substance presupposes time and the dynamic flow of events. Again, ideal being does not contain any of this. In one sentence, temporality is what radically distinguishes real categories from ideal categories. The interplay of change and persistence, causing and being caused by, exists only within the flow of time (Hartmann 1940, 62).

Apart from time, individuality is the second moment distinguishing real being from ideal being. Everything ideal is general, and everything real is individual. The latter must be assumed in the most rigorous sense: everything real is unique and it exists only once. There are things that we are unable to discern; we may not be able to distinguish one real entity from the next; but it would be a mistake to take the limitations of our perceptual and cognitive capacities as if they were universal laws of the sphere of real being.

The general in reality is real only "in" individuals (Hartmann 1940, 65). While the general is a dominant category in the ideal sphere and a subordinate category in the sphere of the real, individuality is a category of the sphere of real being only. In the realm of essences there is no individual.

There are real categories with the same generality of elemental oppositions that do not come as pairs. The most relevant are time, process, change and individual (Hartmann 1940, 206). The differences between this group of general categories and the general categories that come in pairs are not limited to their formal organization (singletons as opposed to pairs). Moreover, the former appear to be more special than paired categories. The most relevant difference between the two groups, however, is that paired categories range over both the real and the ideal spheres of being, while the singletons range over the real sphere of being only. They are precisely the general categories that mark the irreducible difference between real and ideal being.

From a categorial point of view, one can say that temporality and related categories are less fundamental than elemental oppositions because they are *only* real categories. Hartmann devotes the whole fourth book of his quadrilogy to a detailed analysis of this rather special group of general categories.

The last form of determination to be mentioned is categorial coherence, their mutual dependence and implication. The scheme of the series is one of the most relevant types of dependence within pairs (Hartmann 1940, 309; see Section 9 above on the types of transition between paired categories).

1.11 Levels of reality

The next group after that of general categories is the group of the categories of levels of reality. Like everything else, levels of reality are characterized (and therefore distinguished) by their categories. By definition, the categories characterizing levels of reality are not general, in the sense that they do not pertain to reality in its entirety, but only to specific families of real being. On the other hand, fundamental categories are the most general and simple categories, and for this reason they are contained in the special categories of levels of reality (Hartmann 1940, 202). Levels of reality are structural aspects of the world. While each of them has its own structures and its own forms of determination, their mode of real being remains constant (Hartmann 1940, 275, 311, 556). Levels are the true constructive framework of the real world, which has unity, but it is neither the unity of a principle nor a centre. The unity of the real world is the order of the levels of reality (Hartmann 1940, 472).

Four main levels of reality are distinguished by Hartmann: the inanimate, the biological, the psychological and the spiritual. This last includes all historical realities (history, language, customs, law, art, etc). The underlining intuition is that, say, historical and other spiritual processes are in no way less real than natural processes. Their structure and their laws are different, however (Hartmann 1940, 189). The same intuition applies to the other levels as well: biological and psychological processes are as real as any other process, and they have their own specific groups of categories.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Hartmann's theory of levels of reality is the question of what kinds of relation connect the levels to each other. From a categorial point of view, however, the problem of what relations connect levels can be easily solved. Leaving general categories aside, two main categorial situations can be distinguished: (a) Being A and B are categorially different because the categories upon which the former is founded are partially different from the categories upon which the latter is founded, in the sense that the latter is founded on new categories (which implies that the latter includes at least a *novum*, a new category not present in the former); (b) Being A and B are categorially different because the categories upon which the former is founded and those upon which the latter is founded form two entirely different (disjointed) groups of categories. Following Hartmann, the two relations can be termed as respectively relations of super-formation (*Überformung*) and super-position (*Überbauung*) (Hartmann 1940, 489).

Occasionally, Hartmann admits that there are never *pure* relations of super-position; all the relations between levels contain some moment of super-formation (Hartmann 1940, 564).

Super-formation (the type (a) form of dependence) is weaker than super-position because it is partly grounded on already actualized categories, those of the level below. Suffice it to consider the super-formation between molecules and cells, i. e., between the physical and the biological levels of reality. In this regard, one can mention that even if organisms are unquestionably more complex than mechanisms, they nevertheless contain the laws of the mechanical (Hartmann 1940, 480–481).

On the other hand, the psychological and spiritual levels are different, because they are characterized by an interruption in the categorial series and by the onset of new categorial series (relative respectively to the psychological and spiritual levels). The relations between the biological level and the psychological level, on the one hand, and the relation between the psychological level and the spiritual one, on the other, are both relations of super-position. By way of example, the group of categories embedded in psychological entities is different from the group of categories embedded in biological entities. Similarly, the group of categories embedded in spiritual entities is different from the group of categories embedded in psychological entities.

The category of the spirit is divided into personal, objective and objectivated spirit. Personal spirit is the spirit of the individual, objective spirit is the living spirit of communities and objectivated spirit characterizes the products of spirit. The categorial moments of personal spirit are consciousness, will, foresight and teleological activity, liberty. None of them pass to objective spirit. There is no consciousness apart from individual consciousness, and the same is true of the other moments.

There are laws that are valid for all the levels: higher levels rest on lower ones; the lower level is the conditioning one; the higher level is independent from the lower one as to its conformation and its own laws. This relation amounts to the authentic unity of the real world: the real sphere has the unity of a stratified complex (Hartmann 1940, 199).

When the connecting relation is a relation of super-formation, some categories of the lower level return in the higher one. Returning categories interact with the categories of the higher level and are, so to speak, contaminated by them; some of their moments become different. Higher levels are never characterized by returning categories. Each level