

The Soul and Its Parts

II: Varieties of Inexistence¹

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Introduction

A Brentanian might criticize contemporary philosophy of mind on at least the following counts:

- i. its taxonomy of types of mental act and state is too narrow (thus its repertoire consists, on many standard accounts, in little more than ‘beliefs’ and ‘desires’);
- ii. its treatment of mental acts and states is too slavishly oriented around linguistic factors (thus for example it is standardly suggested that the philosophy of mind is most properly concerned with so-called ‘propositional attitudes’);
- iii. its treatment of the temporal structures of mental acts and states is overly crude (thus in many standard accounts punctual and episodic acts are not distinguished from enduring states and dispositions);
- iv. it presupposes an over-crude theory of the internal structures of mental acts and states and of the corresponding types of parts and unity.

It is with this latter that we shall be principally concerned in what follows, and more precisely with Brentano’s own account of the part-whole structures obtaining in the mental sphere. We shall find, however, that this account will have implications also for our understanding of the other factors mentioned.² A study of the internal structures of mental acts and states will in addition be of some general formal-ontological interest in that it will reveal to us new and subtle possibilities for mereological investigation. It will further be of metaphysical interest, in reflection of the fact that the objects of experience are themselves parts of mind, on Brentano’s view, so that there is a sense in which for him (as e.g. for Leibniz) ontology is a proper part of rational or descriptive psychology.

At the time of the first edition of the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) Brentano is still in possession of little more than the germ of an ontological theory of inexistence

1. My thanks go to Johannes Brandl (Salzburg), for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2. Brentano himself can be criticized under iii. Indeed clarity in relation to the distinction between episodic acts (judgings, noticings, decidings) and enduring states (standing beliefs, etc.) was achieved only with Reinach 1911.

or immanence or inclusion, i.e. of the different types of parts of consciousness and of the ways in which these join together to form larger unitary wholes of different sorts. Certainly he has seen that there are entities – ‘divisives’ or ‘partial phenomena’ – which can exist only in the context of a certain whole. But he does not, at this stage, see the possibility of extending this insight to yield a general account of the types of parts and wholes and of the relations between them.

A more sophisticated theory of parts and wholes is, however, presented by Brentano in his *Deskriptive Psychologie*, a compilation of lectures delivered in Vienna University in 1889/90. Descriptive psychology, as Brentano here understands it, seems indeed to consist precisely in a psychology that will issue in an ontologically sophisticated theory of the different types of parts, of such a sort that the specification of parts will be at the same time a specification of the ways in which these parts are fitted together into wholes.

Excursus on Frege

Before examining Brentano’s theory, however, it will be illuminating to draw a parallel with a similar type of theory that might on a superficial reading be imputed to Frege. Very crudely, we can say that Frege acknowledges two different sorts of part, which he calls *objects* and *functions*, respectively. The former are complete in and of themselves, the latter are in need of completion or ‘saturation’, as Frege also says.³

Examples of objects in Frege’s eyes are Caesar and the Earth, but also thoughts or propositions, i.e. the senses expressed by sentences such as ‘3 is a prime number’ or ‘3 is greater than 2’. These sentences, too, are objects, as are the number 2, and even the numeral ‘2’ which is its name. Examples of functions, on the other hand, are:

- the unsaturated expression ‘() is a prime number’ (where the parentheses are employed to indicate a need for completion by an object)
- the thought-constituent corresponding to this unsaturated expression (which can be saturated, *inter alia*, by the thought-constituent expressed by a name such as ‘3’),
- that to which this unsaturated expression refers (a concept, in Frege’s terminology).

Frege’s theory of saturated and unsaturated entities is properly conceived as a theory of the ways functions are applied to objects (and in principle also to entities of other sorts). One might, however, be tempted to see the theory of saturated and unsaturated entities as yielding also an account of the ways corresponding parts are joined together to form wholes.⁴ Frege himself applies his theory on three distinct levels, seeking to draw attention to what he sees as a common structure present in each. Saturated and unsaturated entities are distinguished on the level of thoughts or propositions, on the level of linguistic expressions, and on the level of *referents* of various sorts,

3. Cf. the chemical notion of unsaturated molecules – entities which can take up more atoms without losing their existing structures.

4. See e.g. Hart 1991.

both concrete and abstract. This third level is in principle unlimited in scope, and thus one might wish to conclude that the Fregean theory can serve not merely as an account of unity on the level of thoughts and expressions but as a formal ontology of types of parts and of unity in general. Closer inspection reveals, however, that, the part-whole-theoretic interpretation of Frege's theory comes unstuck when we move from thoughts and expressions to the corresponding referents. For while an expression or thought represents a *whole* within which saturated and unsaturated *parts* can be distinguished, in regard to the distinctions of saturated and unsaturated entities on the side of the referents, corresponding part-whole relations will not in every case be guaranteed. This is clear if we take a functional expression like 'the capital of ()' and consider its application to the argument 'Denmark'. The resultant saturated expression has parts which refer, respectively, to the given function and to Denmark, and corresponding parts can be distinguished also on the level of thoughts or senses. It would clearly be wrong, however, to see the *referent* of this saturated expression as having corresponding unsaturated and saturated parts: Denmark is not a part of Copenhagen.

While it is true, therefore, (leaving aside for example fictional uses of language), that every constituent expression of Frege's system has a referent, it is *not* true – even when we restrict ourselves to expressions in canonical Fregean notation – that the way in which the expressions are joined together syntactically to form linguistic wholes mirrors the way in which the corresponding referents are joined together to form wholes in reality. As an instrument for ontology, then, Frege's theory is inadequate.⁵

This inadequacy flows, I would argue, from the fact that it is logico-linguistic considerations which predominated in the construction of the theory and which determined the sorts of distinctions between saturated and unsaturated entities which Frege is able to recognize on the level of referents. Frege himself puts the matter as follows: 'An object is anything that is not a function, so that an expression for it does not contain any empty place.' (Frege 1980, p. 32) An entity is an object, in other words, if and only if it is the referent of a complete or saturated expression. Thus the logico-linguistic form of expressions, for Frege, yields the criterion of the ontological form of entities in the world (where normally, and correctly, one would suppose that the forms of language would be derived from our experiences of objects in the world).

Brentano's Ontology of Mind

Frege's notation does not constitute what we might call a 'directly depicting language'. Brentano, now, can be said to seek precisely a language of this sort; one which would be constructed not for the logico-linguistic purposes of analyzing thoughts or propositions but for strictly ontological purposes, and more strictly still for purposes of the ontology of mind. As Brentano himself puts it, he seeks to construct a psychological characteristic, whose letters and words would reflect the different mental constituents or elements, and whose syntax would reflect the relations between these constituents in larger complex wholes. (D.P., p. X) And since the objects of experience are

5. For further arguments in defence of this conclusion see my 1991.

parts of mind, on Brentano's view,⁶ this psychological characteristic can yield also a much more ambitious *characteristica universalis* which might claim to be suitable even for the purposes of general ontology.

The Brentanian directly depicting language has the goal of mapping an instantaneous temporal cross-section through the territory of the mind, a snapshot, as it were, of the different parts of some individual's total consciousness at some given time. The idea of such a language can be recognized also in the idea of a 'mentalese' or 'language of thought' propounded by Fodor and others as part of an attempt to understand the dynamic processes of human reasoning. From the Brentanian perspective, however, as already suggested, the more recent experiments along these lines have operated with over-simplified views of that basic furniture of the mind in terms of which such dynamic processes are to be understood. Brentano will indeed have room for such dynamic processes in what he calls *genetic* psychology. He sees the latter, however, as resting essentially on a descriptive psychology or ontology of the repertoire of mental furniture; and it is with this that we shall be concerned in what follows.

Separable Parts

Wherever there are parts, Brentano holds, there is also separation, or separability.⁷ As we can see by considering a case of simultaneous seeing and hearing, many of the parts of consciousness are really separable, i.e. they are such as to be able to 'be cut loose or separated from one another, in that the part that earlier existed with the second part in the same real unity continues in existence when that other part has ceased to exist' (D.P., p. 12). Other examples are: a seeing and a remembering that one has seen; the thinking of a premise and the thinking of a conclusion, and so on. Consider, now, the relation expressed by '*a* is separable from *b*'. This relation may be one-sided or reciprocal. Seeing and hearing are reciprocally separable, as are the extended parts of a continuum existing side by side. Presentation and desire, in contrast, or presentation and judgment, as well as premise and inference, stand in a relation of one-sided separability only: a desire or judgment, according to Brentano, cannot as a matter of necessity exist without some underlying presentation of the object desired or affirmed as existent, and an inference cannot exist without the thinking of the premise.

The relation of one-sided separability imposes upon consciousness a certain hierarchical order, with ultimate or fundamental acts or mental elements constituting the ground floor. Such elements are one-sidedly separable from other parts of mind, but they are themselves not such as to have any separable parts. The ultimate acts, Brentano here insists, are always acts of sensation: the (primary) objects of ultimate or fundamental acts as opposed to acts higher up the hierarchy must, he claims, be sensible phenomena (immanent general objects derived from one or other of the

6. See my 1988.

7. Ps.d.A. p. 55, Eng. p. 37; cf. *Met.*, 1023 b 12.

various classes of sensory qualities). Acts of the given kind must ‘contain as their primary relation a presentation of a sensible concrete content’ (D.P., p. 85).

Distinctional Parts

Let us suppose that, in relation to parts in the domain of consciousness, we have as it were separated out as far as we can go, in such a way as to arrive at ultimate elements. Then we can still, Brentano claims, in a certain sense speak of further parts:

If someone believes in atoms he believes in particles that cannot be dissolved into smaller bodies, but even in the case of such particles he may speak of halves, quarters, etc.: parts which, although not really separable, are yet distinguishable. We can call these latter distinctional [*distinktionelle*] parts. In human consciousness, too, there are also, apart from separable parts, mere distinctional parts. (D.P., p. 13).

Another sort of example may be derived from Brentano’s later study (1976) of boundaries and the continuum. Imagine a disk with four perfectly symmetrical segments which are coloured, respectively, red, green, yellow and blue. What is the colour, now, of that central point of the disk where these four segments meet? If (as we may assume) the disk is everywhere coloured, then the argument of symmetry will dictate that this point participates equally in all four colours, that it is a *beginning to be red* on one side, a *beginning to be green* on another side, and so on. For parts can in this way be distinguished in what is after all an extensionless point; and of course there can be no talk of these very special sorts of parts being really separated from each other.

As we distinguished one-sided and two-sided separability, now, so we can distinguish also, and by parallel arguments, different sorts of distinctionality:

(1) Mutually Pervading Parts (*‘sich durchwohnende Teile’*) (two-sided distinctional inseparability)

Consider, for example, a blue patch (conceived, whether justifiably or not, as a constituent of external reality). Here a colour-determination and a spatial determination can be distinguished, not (of course) as separable, but precisely as distinctional parts and as parts which pervade each other mutually.

But could not the blue patch be moved, resulting in a change of spatial determination, without its ceasing to be blue? And would it not then lose its particular spatial determination while its qualitative determination would remain unchanged? And could the blue patch not be transformed into a red patch while its spatial position remains the same? Brentano answers all such questions in the negative. He claims that when the position of an individual blue patch is changed we have an entirely new blue patch, i.e. a patch with a *new* blueness-determination, ‘which is as different from the first as two spatially distinct but simultaneous blue patches are distinct from one another’ (D.P., p. 16). Certainly something remains identical when a colour moves. But to suppose that the colour-determination can remain identical *as an individual* through changes of location is to suppose that distinctional parts would exist in a merely side-by-side fashion, so that they could, as it were,

exchange their partners. In reality, however, ‘they are connected in a quite different way, they are as it were such as to reciprocally or mutually interpenetrate [*sich sozusagen wechselseitig durchdringen*]’ (D.P., p. 17). A blueness determination cannot exist without a spatial determination; but equally (for Brentano at this time) spatial determination cannot exist without some colour-determination (or perhaps determinations of other sorts) that would fill it. Space *is*, just, what gets filled (we might also say ‘saturated’) by quality. A spatial extension only exists, according to Brentano, to the extent that there are space-filling qualities which this extension is the extension of – a thesis which becomes understandable when one remembers that Brentano is still at this stage interested first and foremost in *phenomena*, in *experienced space*. A chunk of experienced space does not exist outside the context of a given act, where it is always (e.g.) coloured in this or that way and with this or that specific moment of colour.

(2) Logical Parts (one-sided distinctional separability):

Consider, now, a blue and a yellow patch, side by side. Where determinations of quality and space in a single patch of colour are mutually penetrating instances of *distinct species*, the blue and yellow patches share a common species: they are both *colours*. They are separate instances of species of a single common genus. How, now, are we to characterize the nature of the agreement here? In terms, Brentano holds, of part and whole. More precisely, Brentano suggests that there obtains between the colouredness of the blue patch and its blueness-determination what he calls a *logical part-whole* relation. The two individual colour determinations, which are instances of the species *blue* and *yellow*, each contain logical parts which are instances of the common species *colour*. The individual colouredness here is a proper part of the individual blueness. But there is nothing *in addition to* the former (the logical part), which would be needed to make individual instances of sheer *colour* into individual instances of *blue* or *yellow*, respectively. For there are no individual instances of sheer colour; colour exists *only* as a logical part of blue, or yellow, or red. Colour pervades red or yellow or blue. But this relation is one-sided only: the two determinations – *red* and *colour* – ‘determine the thing as it were *from the same side* (the one more, the other less).’ (D.P., p. 20)

The relation of logical parts to their wholes involves aspects also of one-sided separability. Consider, for example, the relation between a presentation of red and the judging that (this) red exists. The component of presentation here can be really separated out: a judging can give way to a mere presentation; the former may cease to exist although the latter remains. Consider, in contrast, the relation between a presentation of red and that logical part of this presentation which makes it a *presentation*. There is no way in which the latter can be separated out. A presentation that is not a presentation of this or that is, as Brentano would say, an *Unding*, as would be a colour that was not red or green. And equally, of course, there is no way that that logical part of a judgment which makes it a judgment can be separated out, for a judgment that is not a judgment of this or that is also an *Unding*, and the same applies to all species of conscious act. (This yields a variant form of Brentano’s thesis of intentionality.)

Moreover, the story does not end here; for as the tradition, from Porphyry to W. E. Johnson, was able to take for granted, logical parts are such as to manifest an onion-type structure of successively distinguishable layers: as colour is a logical part of red, so quality is a logical part of colour, and so on, in a sequence which reflects the way in which the entities in reality are divided into species and genera of successively higher levels of generality. The character *conscious act* is in this respect a logical part of every presentation and judgment (it is a logical part of second order, as it were).

(3) Parts of the Intentional Correlate-Pair (two-sided distinctional separability):

Recall Aristotle's view to the effect that everything in external reality, both form and matter, both what is sensible (sensible forms) and what is thinkable (intelligible forms), belongs to 'sensible spatial magnitudes' (*De anima*, 432 a 4). Non-realia (forms or universals) exist outside the soul only as immanent to realia, they exist only *in* something else, either in what is mental or in what is material. For Brentano too, influenced in this as in all other things by Aristotle: 'Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself'.⁸

Consciousness is intentional. That is to say, consciousness *is* an intentional relation (of presenting, judging, willing). 'And as with every relation so also here we have two correlates. The one correlate is the conscious act, the other that towards which it is directed.' (D.P., p. 21) Here the act is real, its object (the horse insofar as it is thought, the redness insofar as it is seen) is non-real – and Brentano's explanations make it clear that he understands 'non-real' here in exactly the same sense as did Marty, i.e. as 'not such as to have a cause in the proper sense and not such as to exert any effect in the proper sense'. The conscious act – thus for example the thinking of a human being – is caused; and then the immanent objectual correlate of this act, the thought human being, is thereby of necessity co-present also.⁹

'The two correlates are not separable from one another, except in the distinctional sense.'¹⁰ The objectual correlate is, as Brentano says, 'immanent to' or 'resident in' the act (D.P., p. 22); it need not correspond to anything in the outer world and indeed it makes no claim to belong to the outer world. It pertains exclusively to the domain of consciousness,¹¹ and is something general or universal. It differs from universals as standardly conceived, however, in that it is also *temporal*; for there is nothing that exists, according to Brentano, except at a time. In this respect the objectual

8. P.E.S., p. 124, Eng. p. 88. For further details of Brentano's early views in this respect see my 1988.

9. The former is real or energetic, the latter non-real or anenergetic, in Anton Marty's sense. See my 1990 on Marty's theory of real and non-real entities and its relation to Brentano's thinking.

10. Reading the penultimate clause on p. 21 of D.P. as: 'ausser [in dem Sinn, daß sie] distinktionell [Trennbar sind]' and not, with Chisholm-Baumgartner, 'ausser [wenn sie] distinktionell [sind]'.

11. Cf. P.E.S. I, pp. 129ff.

correlate is comparable to a collective whole: as the objectual correlate exists automatically with the beginning to exist of the corresponding act, so, too, the collective exists automatically with the beginning to exist of its members (though it does not, like them, undergo historical changes on its own behalf, except in the sense that it ceases to exist automatically with the ceasing to exist of any one or more of its members).

(4) Parts of the Intentional Directedness (two-sided distinctional separability):

The relation between act and object (between the two parts of the intentional correlate-pair) is one of directedness; this directedness, too, however, is marked by a certain complexity. Our mental life is a matter of energy¹² (it is, as one says, a stream of consciousness). This mental energy is indeed the only sort of energy of which we have evident knowledge. There is, now, a further complication of parts involved in Brentano's account of consciousness, in virtue of the fact that this psychic energy, too, has a two-fold structure (it is indeed called by Brentano the 'psychic dienergy'). It is made up, first of all, of a *primary* stream of consciousness-of-the-object (i.e. of its immanent correlate, as described above). In addition, however, it is necessary to distinguish a *secondary* stream of consciousness, directed to this very primary consciousness itself; for Brentano holds, familiarly, that the consciousness of an object involves of necessity an accompanying self-consciousness 'on the side' (*en parergo*, as Aristotle says¹³). It will not do to argue against this that we are often so deep in concentrated thinking that we, as it were, lose consciousness of the fact that we are thinking. Even in such circumstances, Brentano argues, we are conscious 'on the side' of the acts involved; it is simply that we do not *notice* a given acts – but then there are many cases where we do not notice the primary object of which we are conscious, as for example when it falls on the fringes of our visual field. The secondary relatedness is in itself complex, involving both presentation and judgment, so that every consciousness is in fact such as to manifest (at the very least) an even more complex three-fold structure: primary energy directed towards an object, together with two sorts of secondary energy – *inner presentation* and *inner judgment* – directed, in the end, to this very primary energy itself.¹⁴

But what is the ontological relation between the primary and secondary relatedness that is involved in every conscious act? This is clearly not a relation of logical part to whole, nor a relation of pervading parts (parallel to colour and extension). Rather it is to be understood as follows: since the two wings of directedness have different objects, the relation between them is similar, in some respects, to the mutual separability of a seeing and a hearing; because they are not really separable, however, it is most appropriate to speak here of a mutual distinctional separability, as contrasted

12. Cf. D.P., pp. 80-83.

13. *Met.*, 1074 b 35f.; cf. D.P., pp. 136ff., George 1978, p. 253.

14. Our consciousness may of course also involve phenomena of interest - for example when we enjoy our thinking. This aspect, however, we shall here leave out of account.

with the mutual real separability of seeing and hearing (D.P., p.25) The two wings of the psychic dienergy – the wings of inner and outer perception, as we might say – are *really inseparable*. Here, as in all other cases, Brentanian ‘distinctional separability’ is in fact always a form of real inseparability.

Brentano refers finally to what he calls

(5) Distinctional Parts in the Modifying Sense:

Suppose that someone feels cold. Then it might be said that cold is in the one who *feels*; but it is clearly in the one who feels in a different sense from the sense in which it is in that which *is* cold. Only in the latter case, according to Brentano, is cold a real distinctional part.¹⁵ In the former case we have to do merely with distinctional parts ‘in the modifying sense’ – which is to say with distinctional parts which are not really parts at all.

Recall Brentano’s doctrine of the intentional inexistence of the object of a conscious act. How is this intentionally in-existent object to be understood? What, in particular, is the relation between this object and ‘real’ objects? Suppose, more particularly, that I see a colour. What is the relation between the seen colour on the one hand and any real colour, on the other? If I see red will I or my act *become* red, or will I or my act acquire real redness as parts? Surely not. And what Brentano has to say here is that the seen colour contains a real colour ‘not as a distinctional part in the proper sense, but only as a part that may be carved out by a modifying distinction’ (D.P., p.27).

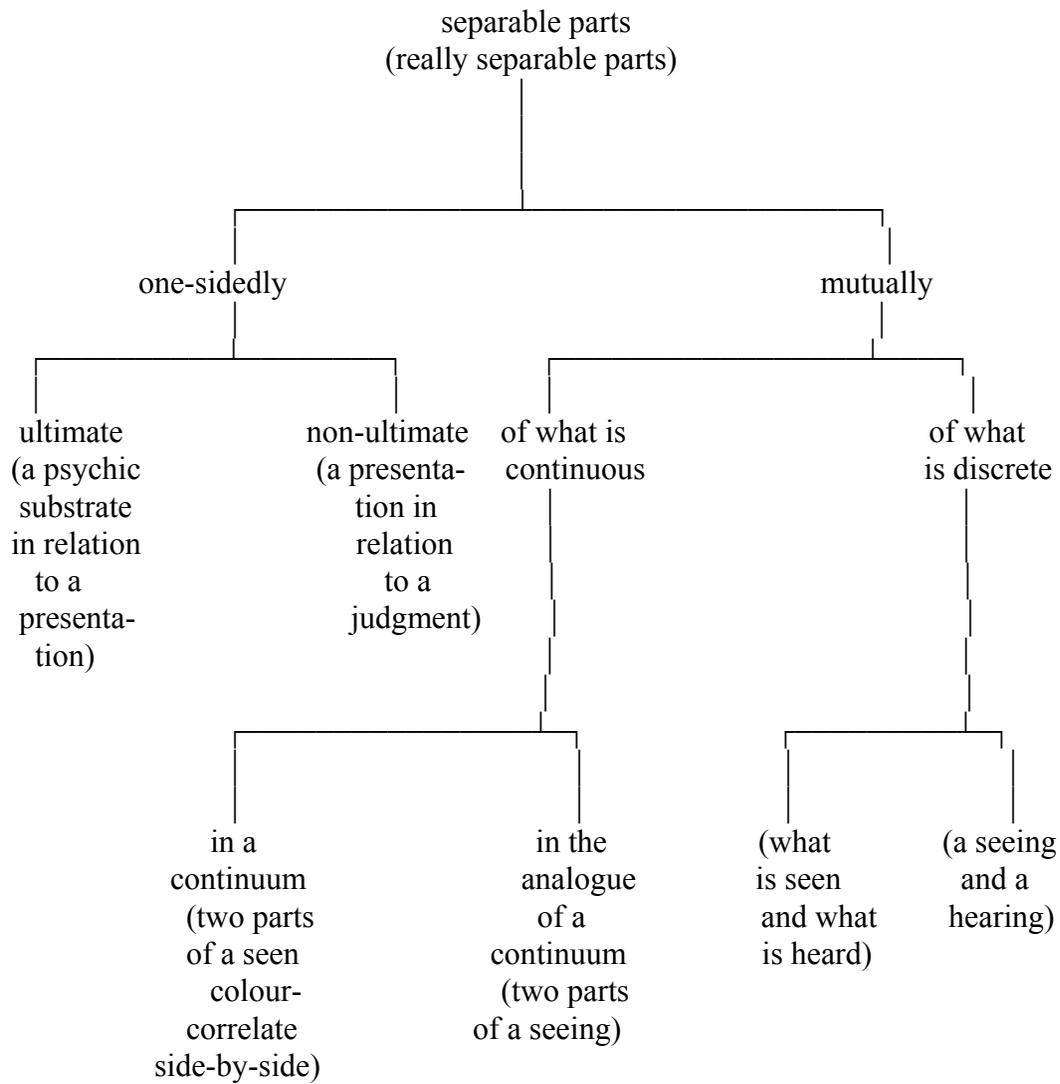
What he means here is that the distinction in question is not a real distinction, carving out *real parts*, not even real *distinctional parts*. As Aristotle expressed it: ‘the one who sees is [merely] *in a sense* coloured’ (*De anima*, 425 b 22, italics added) – in the sense, namely, in which one can say that a handshake is present in that sort of whole we call a declined handshake or in which one can say that a dictator is present in that sort of whole we call a toppled dictator.¹⁶ For this reason, too, there can be no literal talk of correspondence between the object of thought and objects in the world. Such correspondence could be at best a correspondence ‘in the modifying sense’.

The remarks above yield the following taxonomy of different types of parts:

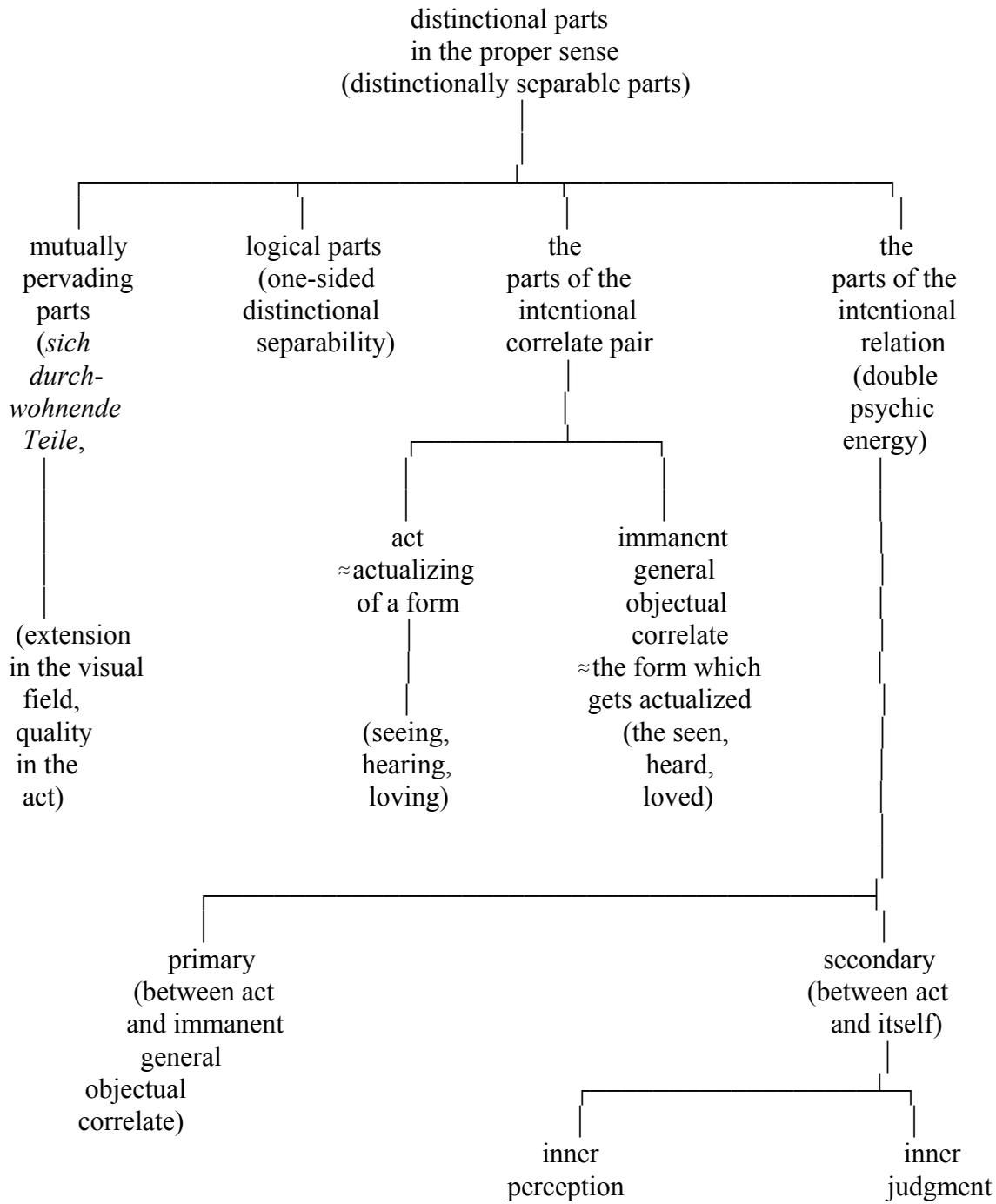
15. Cf. the discussion of Ps.d.A., p. 80 (Eng. p. 54f.) in my 1988.

16. On the notion of modification that is involved here see my 1986a.

I. Separable Parts:

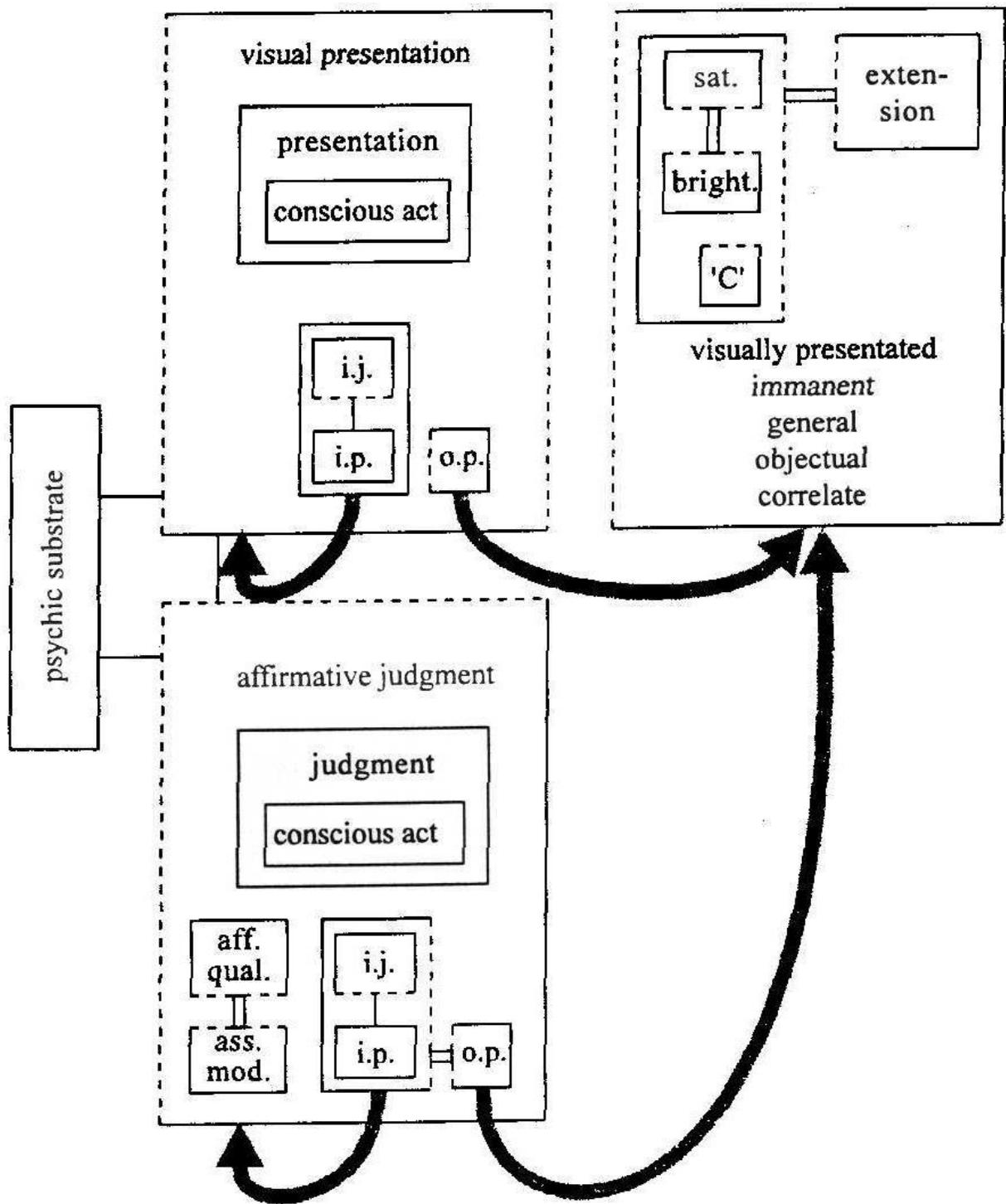


II. Distinctional Parts:



They yield also, in accordance with Brentano’s goal of a directly depicting language for psychology, the following:

Map of Affirmative Judgment:



a diagrammatic representation of an instantaneous temporal section of an act of perceptual judgment of the form ‘there is a red patch’, which is to be interpreted according to the following key:¹⁷

i.j. = inner judgment

i.p. = inner presentation

o.j. = outer judgment

o.p. = outer presentation

aff. qual. = affirmative quality

ass. mod. = assertoric modality¹⁸

sat. = saturation

bright. = brightness¹⁹

‘C’ = colour as distinctional part in the modifying sense (the spurious produce of a mere *façon de parler*)

===== = two-sided dependence of e.g. mutually pervading parts

————— = one-sided separability

██████████ = intentional directedness (the two parts of the psychic dienergy)

The central axis of the diagram from north to south is constituted by the two acts of (outer) presentation and judgment, the latter dependent upon the former. On the left of this central axis is what Brentano calls the psychic substrate. (Brentano differs from Aristotle in allowing something like matter (something unintelligible) on the side of the soul.)²⁰ This quasi-material element is, like each individual place or time not capable of being characterized positively (so that each psychic substrate is for us qualitatively indistinguishable from every other). The psychic substrate is something fixed and stable which underlies the ever-changing stream of thoughts. It is non-spatial and therefore also not such as to have length, breadth, depth, and so on. It is also without colour and without sensory qualities of any sort.²¹ It is most importantly that which, at any given moment, individuates different conscious acts.²² Moreover, Brentano tells us that it is probably such as to perdure when we sleep.

17. The diagram is far from complete, above all in virtue of the fact that logical parts have been indicated only haphazardly. In a complete diagram all the genera of all the concepts indicated in the diagram would be reflected in the diagram in a way corresponding to the onion structure of logical parts discussed above.

18. For Brentano’s discussion of the modality of judgment see D.P., pp. 53, 149f. and also his 1956, pp. 125-30.

19. For Brentano’s discussion of saturation and brightness see D.P., pp. 89f., 115-20.

20. Cf. D.P., p. 81.

21. The last paragraph on D.P., p. 81 should accordingly read:

Somit [hat es] auch nicht Länge, Breite, Tiefe, [ist auch nicht] rund oder eckig u. dgl. Ebenso [ist es] ohne Farbe und andere sinnliche Qualitäten (und ohne Maße).

22. Hence the editors’ insertion on the first line of paragraph 17 of p. 82 should read: ‘[das, was Bewußtsein individualisiert]’.

On the right of this axis is the immanent object of the act of judgment and of its constituent presentation – the *seen colour* – with constituent moments of saturation and brightness, mutually dependent upon a moment of extension. These are ‘creatures of consciousness’, and are the only objects we ever experience. Thus the external world is off the diagram entirely. There is no dependence at all, for Brentano, in either direction, between the soul and what exists in external reality. At best we can assume a simultaneous *cause*, that an experience and an external event are bound together causally, in ways, however, which it is not our business here to discuss.²³

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23. On Brentano’s concessions to the doctrine of Leibnizian parallelism see the final section of my 1986.

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