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| http://www.ebi.ac.uk/QuickGO/IS?u=g58rf0n5&id=8987 So the actions are: 1) Fix the typo 2) Include the SEM axioms  https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif |
| Basic Formal Ontology 2.0 |
| DRAFT SPECIFICATION AND USER’S GUIDE |
|  |
| **Corresponding author: Barry Smith** |
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5/17/2012 11:09 PM

**Summary of most important changes in BFO 2.0** as compared to BFO 1.1

* **Clarification of BFO:*object***

The document emphasizes that *Object*, *Fiat Object Part* and *Object Aggregate* are not intended to be exhaustive of *Material Entity*. Users are invited to propose new subcategories of *Material Entity.*

The document provides a more extensive account of what '*Object*' means (roughly: an object is a maximal causally unified material entity); it offers three paradigms of causal unity (for cells and organisms, for solid portions of matter, and for engineered artifacts)

* **Introduction of reciprocal dependence**

The document recognizes cases where multiple entities are reciprocally dependent on each other, for example between color hue, saturation and brightness; such cases can also involve reciprocal generic dependence as in the case of a disposition of a key to open a lock or some equivalent lock, and of the lock to be opened by this or some equivalent key.

* **New simplified treatment of boundaries and regions**

In BFO 1.1 the assumption was made that the external surface of a material entity such as a cell could be treated as if it were a boundary in the mathematical sense. The new document propounds the view that when we talk about external surfaces of material objects in this way then we are talking about something fiat. To be dealt with in a future version: fiat boundaries at different levels of granularity.

More generally, the focus in discussion of boundaries in BFO 2.0 is now on fiat boundaries, which means: boundaries for which there is no assumption that they coincide with physical discontinuities. The ontology of boundaries becomes more closely allied with the ontology of regions.

* **Revision of treatment of spatial location**

We generalize the treatment of ‘located\_in’ and remove the relation ‘contained\_in’.

* **Treatment of process predications under the heading ‘process profiles’**

The document introduces the idea of a process profile to provide a means to deal with certain sorts of process measurement data. To assert, for example, that a given hart beating process is a 72 beats per minute process, is not to ascribe a quality to the process, but rather to assert that there is a certain structural part of the process, called a 'beat profile', which instantiates a certain determinate universal.

* **New relation exists\_atadded**
* **Relation of containment depracated**

We provide a generalization of the **located\_in** relation as compared to earlier versions of BFO; the **contained\_in** relation is now depracated.

* **Relations of parthood disambiguated**

Hitherto BFO has distinguished parthood between continuants and occurrents by means of the **at** *t* suffix used for the former; henceforth we will use the explicit distinction between **continuant\_part\_of** and **occurrent\_part\_of** (still using the **at** *t* suffix for the former).

* **For the future**

Treatment of frame-dependence of regions of space and of regions of time.

Treatment of boundary\_of relations (incl. fiat\_boundary\_of)

Exhaustive treatment of instance-level relations; definitions of type-level relations; rules for quantifying over universals.

Explicit treatment of the two kinds of causal relations (1) causal dependence, for example between the pressure and temperature of a portion of gas; (2) causal triggering, where a process is the trigger for a second process which is the realization of a disposition.

*Portion of energy* (potentially to be treated as child of *material entity*)

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Use of **boldface** indicates a label for an **instance-level relation.** Use of *italic* indicates a BFO term, which is a singular common noun or noun phrase representing a universal.

This document is both a specification and a user’s guide to BFO. Those parts of the BFO document which belong to the specification are indicated by the following formatting:

Elucidation: This style of formatting indicates that this text forms part of the BFO specification. Other text represents further explanations of the specification as well as background information. [000-000]

The remaining part of the document provides guidance as to how BFO should be used, and also arguments as to why specific choices have been made in the BFO architecture. The identifier in brackets is included to enable cross-references back to this document for implementations of BFO in various languages and formats. The part of the identifier before the hyphen represents a sequential numbering of elucidations, definitions, axioms, and theorems, while the part after the hyphen represents a version indicator to distinguish between changes in the elucidation, etc.

BFO 2.0 will exist in various implementations, including FOL, CLIF and OWL. This document provides the basis for the FOL implementation and thus, indirectly, for the other implementions mentioned.

Literature citations are provided for purposes of preliminary orientation only. Thus axioms and definitions included in cited literature are not necessarily in conformity with the content of this document.

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# Introduction

This document is a guide for those using Basic Formal Ontology (BFO) as an upper-level ontology to support the creation of lower-level domain ontologies.

A *domain* is defined informally as a portion of reality that forms the subject-matter of a single science or technology or mode of study; for example the domain of plant anatomy, of military targeting, of canon law. (We also use ‘Domain’ in the specification of BFO relations in what follows to refer to the type of entity which can serve as the subject – first term – of a relation.) BFO is designed to be neutral with regard to the domains to which it is applied in order to support the interoperation of domain ontologies defined on its basis and thus to support consistent annotation of data across different domains. BFO also supports formal reasoning, and is associated with a set of common formal theories (for example of mereotopology [5] and of qualitative spatial reasoning [18]) which do not need to be redeveloped for each successive domain. For such benefits to be achievable, however, BFO must be capable of being applied to lower-level domains, and in what follows we document how such application is to be effected. We describe the conditions which must be satisfied by entities of given sorts if they are properly to be categorized as instantiating the different universals or types (we use these terms interchangeably in what follows) recognized by BFO, and we provide a summary of the associated relations. We use ‘category’ to refer to those universals at the most general and domain-neutral level. BFO treats only of categories in this sense. A *category* is a formal universal, as contrasted with the material universals represented in one or other domain ontology. BFO:*fiat object part* is a category in this sense; not however *organism* or *weapon*.

To specify these conditions we will utilize a semi-formalized English that has approximately the expressivity of first-order logic (FOL) with identity.

In the formulations below, we will use ‘*a*’, ‘*b*’, etc., for instances (spatio-temporal particulars), and ‘*r*’, ‘*r*′‘*t*,’ ‘*t*′’, etc., for regions (instants or intervals) of space and time, respectively. We use ‘*A*’, ‘*B*’, ‘*C*’, ‘*P*’, etc. for universals. We use ‘**has\_participant**’ and similar **bold-face** expressions to express relations involving instances, and ‘*part\_of*’ and similar *italicized* expressions to express relations exclusively involving universals. We also use*italic* tomark outBFO terms.



Figure 1: The BFO 2.0 *is\_a* Hierarchy

# 1. Entity

An entity is anything that exists. BFO assumes that entities can be divided into instances (your heart, my laptop) and universals or types (*heart*, *laptop*). On BFO’s usage of ‘instance’ and ‘universals’ see [19, 25]. BFO does not claim to be a complete coverage of all entities. It seeks only to provide coverage of those entities studied by empirical science and which affect or are involved in human activities such as data processing, planning and organization – coverage that is sufficiently broad to provide assistance to those engaged in building domain ontologies for purposes of data annotation and reasoning. We leave open the question of how, if at all, BFO would deal with numbers, sets, and other mathematical entities, and with propositions (conceived in the sense of ideal meanings). We foresee two avenues of future development in regard to these and other varieties of entities not currently covered by BFO. First, incremental expansion of BFO in future versions. Second, drawing on resources at lower levels in the ontology hierarchy. Thus BFO already provides (through the Information Artifact Ontology and the Ontology for Biomedical Investigations) the resources to deal with numerical measurement results and with certain other mathematical entities, and also with hypotheses and other logical entities generated in the course of empirical scientific research.

Entities are linked together in relations, at the level of both instances and types [16]. For example

**I: Instance-level relations**

Your heart (instance-level) **continuant\_part\_of** your body **at** *t*

Your heart beating (instance-level) **has\_participant** your heart

**II: Type-level relations**

Type: human heart *continuant\_part­\_of* human body

Type: human heart beating process *has\_occurrent\_part* beat profile

**III: Instance-type relations**

John’s heart **instantiates** *human heart.*

In this document we discuss relations of all three sorts; however, BFO 2.0 itself deals only with relations of sort I.

Note that relations of none of these sorts are first-class entities(to see why not, see the discussion of the Bradley regress in [20]). However, there are first-class entities, such as *relational qualities* and *relational processes* (see below), which are relational in the sense that they link multiple relata.

We use terms (such as ‘BFO:*object*’ or ‘Patrick Hayes’) to refer to entities, and relational expressions (such as ‘**has\_participant**’) to assert that relations obtain between such entities.For both terms and relational expressions in BFO we distinguish between *primitive* and *defined*. ‘Entity’ is an example of one such primitive term. Primitive terms in a highest-level ontology such as BFO are terms which are so basic to our understanding of reality that there is no way of defining them in a non-circular fashion. For these, therefore, we can provide only elucidations, supplemented by examples and by axioms.

a(entity)[Elucidation: An *entity* is anything that exists or has existed or will exist. [001-001]]

as(entity)[Examples: Julius Caesar\, the Second World War\, your body mass index\, Verdi’s *Requiem*]

**Exists\_at**

a(exists\_at)[Elucidation: *a* **exists\_at** *t* means: *a* is an entity which exists at some temporal instant or a temporal interval *t.* [118-001] ]

a(exists\_at)[Domain: *entity*]

a(exists\_at)[Range: *temporal region*]

‘Exists’ here includes the case where *a* is occurring at *t.*

axiom(exists\_at)[All entities are either particular or universal.] [19, 22, 23, 109]

axiom(exists\_at)[No entity is both a particular and a universal. ]

Whether an entity is a particular or a universal is not a matter of arbitrary choice or of convenience.

In the [Information Artifact Ontology](http://code.google.com/p/information-artifact-ontology/), where universals are included among the targets of the IAO:**is\_about** relation. In this specification, however, we concentrate on particulars and on the instance-level relations that link them together [16]. That is, the categories referred to in this specification are in every case categories of particulars. A future version of BFO will provide a complementary treatment of universals.

***Is\_a* overloading**

In ordinary English the following assertions are equally grammatical:

a) a human being is a mammal

(b) a professor is a human being

(c) John is a human being

(d) a restaurant in Palo Alto is a restaurant

However, as Nicola Guarino has pointed out, the meaning of ‘is a’ is quite different in each case, and ontologies which do not take account of these differences are guilty of what he termed “‘*is a*’ overloading” [80]. Here only (a) and (b) are properly to be treated in terms of the *is\_a* relation between universals or types. (c) is an example of instantiation and (d) an example of (roughly) the relation between some collection of particulars and a universal which holds when the former is a subset of the extension of the latter.

The opposition between (a) and (b) concerns the distinction between two kinds of *is\_a* relations:

1. between universals which are instantiated by their instances necessarily (also called ‘rigid’ universals) and thus, for each instance, are instantiated at all times at which the instance exists, for example: John is a human being; such universals are sometimes said to capture the nature or essence of their instances;
2. between universals one or both of which is not rigid in this sense, for example (again): a professor is a human being; these examples are dealt with further under ‘role’ below.

Note, again, that in our specification of BFO 2.0, universals fall outside our domain of discourse (with the minor exception of the elucidation of *generically dependent continuant*). The mentioned dichotomy between rigid and non-rigid universals should not be taken as implying any assertion according to which there might be higher-order universals (for instance *rigid universal*) of which first-order universals would somehow be instances.

**Universals and classes**

Universals have **instances**, which are in every case particulars (entities located in space and time). Universals also have extensions, which we can think of as collections of their instances (such extensions fall outside the scope of this specification).

Universalsthemselvesare those general entities which need to be recognized in order to formulate both scientific laws and analogous general assertions concerning (for example) material, social and informational artifacts.

Examples of universals in each of the mentioned realms include:

*Natural:* electron, molecule, cell, mouse, planet;

*Material artifacts*: vehicle, revolver, pipette, pizza

*Social artifact*: dollar, meter, traffic law, organization

*Information artifact*: database, ontology, email message, plan specification

Universals are most clearly illustrated by considering the general terms – such as ‘electron’ or ‘cell’ – employed by scientific theories in the formulation of general truths [19]. Thus universals include also the general entities referred to by general terms employed in domains such as engineering, commerce, administration and intelligence analysis. BFO was designed to work with entities within the province of the natural sciences, especially biology, but its coverage domain includes also social and psychological entities such as military units and counterinsurgency operations, mortgage contracts and relations of ownership, poems and experimental protocols.

It is not up to BFO to decide what universals exist in any given domain; this decision is made by domain experts [19], for example in forming their terminology. In all domains, types are those general or repeatable entities which correspond to terms that are reused in multiple different sorts of contexts to refer to multiple different particulars and on the basis of multiple different sorts of information.

## The Monohierarchy Principle

BFO rests on a number of heuristic principles which are designed to advance its utility to science. These take the form of simple rules – analogous to the rules of the road – that are designed to promote consistency in the making of both domain-neutral and domain-specific choices in ontology construction. [19] One heuristic principle of this kind – expressing what we can think of as a principle of good behavior in the realm of universals – asserts that the taxonomies of types and subtypes in BFO-conformant ontologies should be genuine trees (in the graph-theoretic sense), so that each node in the ontology graph should have at most one *is\_a* parent. This principle is of value not only because it supports a simple strategy for the formulation of definitions and helps to prevent certain common kinds of error in ontology construction, but also because it brings technical benefits when ontologies are implemented computationally.

The strategy for ontology building that is recommended by users of BFO involves the creation, first, of asserted *is\_a* hierarchies conforming to BFO. This is in reflection of a heuristic assumption according to which the realm of universals is organized by the *is\_a* relation into taxonomic hierarchies of more and less general. Each asserted hierarchy should further be subject to the principle of single inheritance (it is a monohierarchy [19]), so that every node in such a hierarchy has at most one immediate parent. All universals which are the immediate children of any given universal are thereby subject to the the monohierarchy principle. From this principle it follows that no two universals on the same level within an asserted hierarchy should have instances in common. In some cases – for example in constructing an ontology of quarks – we can go further and build ontologies associated with the claim that the representations of universals are such that their immediate children are also *jointly exhaustive*. The monohierarchy principle reflects the general consensus that asserting multiple inheritance is poor ontological engineering practice.

However, once a set of what we can think of as normalized monohierarchies has been asserted, then an ontology developer can use reasoning to infer multiple inheritance [19, 83].

Examples of general terms which are unproblematically such that they do *not* represent universals include:

* thing that has been measured
* thing that is either a ﬂy or a music box
* organism belonging to the King of Spain
* case of pneumonia in man wearing uniform while riding bicycle on small boat with or

without fall from stairs

In some areas, for example government administration, we face the need for BFO-conformant ontologies where the divisions created are indeed subject to overlap. Thus a *professor* in a medical school may also be a *patient*. We shall see, however, that it is still possible to preserve the monohierarchy principal by creating asserted hierarchy of the corresponding *roles*.

**Determinables and determinates**

In some cases universals are ultimate leaf nodes in a taxonomical hierarchy, called determinates (their ancestor universals are then called determinables). Examples are:

37.0°C temperature, 1.6 meter length, 4 kg mass.

Such determinate universals are non-rigid; thus the same instance may instantiate different determinate universals at different times. Thus while John’s weight (a certain *quality* instance inhering in John from the beginning to the end of his existence) instantiates the same determinable universal *weight* throughout its existence, it will instantiate different determinate weight universals, for example (as described, in the metric system of units): *4 kg weight* or *204 kg weight*, at different times. Note that the weights themselves are independent of whatever system of units is used in describing them. Thus the determinate universals here referred to would be insantiated even in the world in which the metric system of units – or any other system of units – had never existed.)

**Specializations**

In all areas of empirical inquiry we encounter general terms of two sorts. First are general terms which refer to universals or types – we provide more detail on what this means below – terms such as:

* animal
* tuberculosis
* surgical procedure
* disease

Second, are general terms used to refer to groups of entities which instantiate a given universal but do not correspond to the extension of any subuniversal of that universal because there is nothing intrinsic to the entities in question by virtue of which they – and only they – are counted as belonging to the given group. Examples are:

* animal purchased by the Emperor
* tuberculosis diagnosed on a Wednesday
* surgical procedure performed on a patient from Stockholmperson identified as candidate for clinical trial #2056-555
* person who is signatory of Form 656-PPV
* painting by Leonardo da Vinci

Such terms represent what are called ‘specializations’ in [81]. They fall outside the coverage domain of BFO 2.0, but they may need to be included in application ontologies developed to interoperate with BFO 2.0 conformant-ontologies. The terms in question may then be defined as children of the corresponding lowest-level universals (for example, here: *animal*, *surgical procedure*, *disease*, *painting*).

**Role universals**

We distinguished above between rigid and non-rigid universals. One major family of examples of the latter involve roles, and ontologies developed for administrative purposes may consist entirely of representatives of entities of this sort. Thus ‘professor’ (defined as: a human being who has the professor role) denotes a non-rigid universal and so also do ‘nurse’, ‘student’, ‘colonel’, ‘taxpayer’, and so forth. (These terms are all, in the jargon of philosophy, phase sortals.) By using role terms in definitions, we can create a BFO conformant treatment of such entities drawing on the fact that, while an instance of professor may be simultaneously an instance of trade union member, no instance of the type professor role is also (at any time) an instance of the type trade union member role (any more than any instance of the type color is at any time an instance of the type length).

In an ontology of employment positions terms should thus be defined in terms of roles, which enables us to do justice to the fact that individuals instantiate the corresponding universals – *professor*, *sergeant*, *nurse* – only during certain phases in their lives.

John **instance\_of** *student* **at** *t*,

is thus a shorthand form of:

John **instance\_of** *person***at** *t* & John **has\_role** *student\_role* **at** *t.*

**Universals defined historically**

Another important family of universals are those defined by reference to historical conditions, for example: *biological father*, *phosphorylated protein*, *retired major general*, and so forth. For such terms, in contrast to role universals, there is no simple rule for formulating definitions. In the case of ‘biological father’, for example, the definition would need to involve reference not only to the fact that each instance is a male organism, but also to the fact that the organism in question was the instigator of a process of fertilization which led to the birth of a second organism.

Why insist on such complex definitions? Why not simply introduce ‘biological father’ as another primitive term referring to a subtype of ‘human being’? The answer turns on the methodology for ontology creation, interoperation and quality control which BFO aims to support, and which is designed to bring it about that the methodology tracks instances in reality in a way that is conformant with our scientific understanding [67]. Briefly, the underlying idea is that users of BFO are constrained in the creation of domain ontologies in such a way as to promote consistency in ontology development [19, 78].

## The instantiation relation

The **instance\_of** relation holds between particulars and universals. It comes in two forms, for continuants (*C*, *C*1, …) and occurrents (*P*, *P*1, …) as follows [16]:

*c***instance\_of***C***at***t* means: that the particular *continuant* entity *c* **instantiates** the universal *C* **at** *t*

*p***instance\_of***P* means: that the particular *occurrent* entity *p* **instantiates** the universal *P.*

Examples are: John **instance\_of** *adult* **at** 2012, this laptop **instance\_of** *laptop* **at** 2012, 2012 **instance\_of** *temporal region*, John’s birth **instance\_of** *process.*

The *is\_a* relation is the subtype or subuniversal relation between universals or types.

*C is\_a C*1means: for all *c*, *t*, if *c***instance\_of***C***at***t*then *c***instance\_of***C*1**at***t*

*P is\_a P*1means: for all *p*, if *p***instance\_of***P*then *p***instance\_of***P*1

where ‘*C*’*,* ‘*C*1’ stand for *continuant* types and ‘*P*’, ‘*P*1’ for *occurrent* types.

Examples are: house is\_a building, symphony is\_a musical work of art, promenade is\_a dance step, promise is\_a speech act

General terms corresponding to types are those general terms which are used to refer to particulars in a way that picks out what is intrinsic to (some would say essential to) the particular in question. Types in the domains of natural sciences are marked further by the fact that the corresponding terms are used in the formulation of general scientific laws.

**Definitions for terms and definitions for relational expressions**

We distinguish between *terms* and *relational expressions*. Definitions of terms are required to be always of the form:

an *A* = Def. a *B* which *D*s

where ‘*A*’ is the term to be defined, ‘*B*’ is its immediate parent in the relevant BFO-conformant ontology hierarchy, and ‘*D*’is the differentiating criterion specifying what it is about certain *B*s in virtue of which they are *A*’*s*.

Examples (taken from the Foundational Model of Anatomy (FMA) [44]) are as follows:

Cell = def. Anatomical structure which has as its boundary the external surface of a maximally connected plasma membrane.

Nucleated cell = def. Cell which has as its direct part a maximally connected part of protoplasm.

Anatomical boundary entity =def. Immaterial anatomical entity which is of one less dimension than the anatomical entity it bounds or demarcates from another anatomical entity.

Anatomical surface =def. Anatomical boundary entity which has two spatial dimensions.

Definitions for relational expressions are statements of necessary and sufficient conditions for the corresponding relation to hold. Examples are provided below, and in [16].

**The dichotomy of ‘continuant’ and ‘occurrent’**

The dichotomy between continuant and occurrent ontologies forms the central organizing axis of the BFO ontology. We can describe this dichotomy as follows, following Zemach [60], who distinguishes between

* non-continuant entities (NCs), which Zemach calls ‘events’, tare defined by the fact that they can be sliced along any spatial and temporal dimensions to yield parts (for example the first year of the life of your table; the entire life of your table top – as contrasted with the life of your table legs – and so forth).

An event, for Zemach, is an entity that exists, in its entirety, in the area defined by its spatiotemporal boundaries, and each part of this area contains a *part* of the whole event. There are obviously indefinitely many ways to carve the world into events, some of which are useful and interesting (e.g., for the physicist) and some of which – the vast majority – seem to us to create hodge-podge collections of no interest whatsoever. [60, pp. 233 f.] Continuant entities, as Zemach expresses it, are entities which

can be sliced to yield parts only along the spatial dimension, yielding for example the parts of your table which we call its legs, its top, its nails. ‘My desk stretches from the window to the door. It has spatial parts, and can be sliced (in space) in two. With respect to time, however, a thing is a continuant.’ [60, p. 240]

Thus you, for example, are a continuant, and your arms and legs are parts of you; your childhood, however, is not a part of you; rather, it is a part of your life. Continuants, as a matter of definition, are entities which have no parts along the time axis; in this sense continuants are extended only along the three spatial dimensions, not however along the temporal dimension.

BFO generalizes from the above by allowing not only *things* (such as pencils and people) as continuants, but also entities that are dependent on things such as qualities and dispositions. And where events, for Zemach, are identified with the entire contents of some given spatiotemporal region, BFO allows that the same spatiotemporal region may be occupied by multiple different processes (as for example when your *running* process and your process of *getting warmer*).

## Relations of parthood

As our starting point in understanding the parthood relation, we take the axioms of Minimal Extensional Mereology as defined by Simons [46, pp. 26-31], assuming, like Simons, the axioms of first order predicate calculus. The axioms (reformulations of SA1-3 and SA6 in Simons’ numbering) are:

**Antisymmetry:** If *x* part of *y*, then if *y* part of *x*, then *x = y.*

**Transitivity:** If *x* part of *y,* and *y* part\_of *z*, then *x* part\_of *z*

**Weak Supplementation:** If *x* part\_of *y* & not *x* = *y*, then there is some *z* such that (*z* part\_of *y* and *z* has no part in common with *x*)

**Unique Product:** If *x* and *y* have a part in common, then there is some unique *z* such that for all *w* (*w* is part of *z* if and only if (*w* is part of *x* and *w* is part of *y*))*.*

Where Simons takes as primitive the relation of proper parthood, we use here and in the remainder of this document a **part\_of** relation that includes also identity as a special case. The proper\_part\_ofrelation is defined in the obvious way as follows:

*x* **proper\_part\_of** *y*=Def. *x* **part\_of** *y* & not *x ­= y.*

We now introduce two subkinds of parthood, namely parthood as it obtains between continuants – called **continuant\_part\_of** – and parthood as it obtains between occurrents – called **occurrent\_part\_of**, as follows.

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Elucidation: *a* **continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t* =Def. *a* is a part of *b* at *t* & *t* is a time & *a* and *b* are continuants. [002-001]]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Domain: continuant]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Range: continuant

The range for ‘*t*’ in this and in all later cases is: temporal region.]

as(continuant\_part\_of)[Examples: Mary’s arm **continuant\_part\_of** Mary in the time of her life prior to her operation\; the Northern hemisphere of the planet Earth is a part of the planet Earth at all times at which the planet Earth exists.

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **continuant\_part\_of** is antisymmetric. [renumber-001]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **continuant\_part\_of** is transitive. [110-001]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **continuant\_part\_of** satisfies weak supplementation. [renumber-001]

More fully:

If *x* **continuant\_part\_of** *y* **at** *t* & not *x* = *y*, then there is some *z* such that (*z* **continuant\_part\_of** *y* **at** *t* & there is no *w*(*w* **continuant\_part\_of** z& *w* **continuant\_part\_of** *x* **at** *t*))

*z* is,as it were, some remainder that results when *x* is imagined to have been removed from *y/*

MoM

Axiom: **continuant\_part\_of** satisfies unique product. [renumber-001] ]

*a(continuant\_part\_of)[*Theorem: **continuant\_part\_of** is reflexive (every continuant entity is a **continuant\_part\_of** itself). [111-001 renumber] ]

]

a(occurrent\_part\_of)[Elucidation: *a* **occurrent\_part\_of** *b* =Def. *a* is a part of *b* & *a* and *b* are occurrents. [003-001]]

a(occurrent\_part\_of)[Domain: occurrent]

a(occurrent\_part\_of)[Range: occurrent]

as(occurrent\_part\_of)[Examples: Mary’s 5th birthday **occurrent\_part\_of** Mary’s life\; the first set of the tennis match **occurrent\_part\_of** the tennis match. ]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **occurrent\_part\_of** is antisymmetric. [renumber-001]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **occurrent\_part\_of** is transitive. [112-001]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Axiom: **occurrent\_part\_of** satisfies weak supplementation. [renumber-001]

Axiom: **occurrent\_part\_of** satisfies unique product. [renumber-001] ]

a(continuant\_part\_of)[Theorem: occurrent\_part\_of is reflexive (every continuant entity is a continuant\_part\_of itself). [113-001 renumber]

Note that ‘part\_of’ in BFO signifies always: ‘proper or improper part’. Thus every entity is, trivially, a part of itself. We appreciate that this is counterintuitive for some users, since it implies for example that President Obama is a part of himself – however it brings benefits in simplifying the logical formalism, and it captures an important feature of identity, namely that it is the limit case of mereological inclusion. Proper parthood can be easily defined, as follows:

For continuants:

a(proper\_continuant\_part\_of)[Definition: *a* **proper\_continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t* =Def. *a* **continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t* & *a* and *b* are not identical. [004-001]]

For occurrents:

a(proper\_occurrent\_part\_of)[Definition: *a* **proper\_occurrent\_part\_of** *b* =Def. *a* **occurrent\_part\_of** *b* & *a* and *b* are not identical. [005-001]]

**BFO relations defined in terms of parthood**

For continuants:

a(has\_continuant\_part)[Definition: *a* **has\_continuant\_part** *b* at *t* = Def. *b* **continuant\_part\_of** *a* **at** *t.* [006-001]]

For occurrents:

a(has\_occurrent\_part )[Definition: *a* **has\_occurrent\_part** *b* = Def. *b* **occurrent\_part\_of** *a­*. [007-001]]

The above are instance-level relations; we will supply the associated type-level relations in a later version of this document, along the lines set forth in [16].

# 2. Continuant

The continuant branch of BFO 2.0 incorporates both material and immaterial continuants extended and potentially moving in space, and the spatial regions at which they are located and through which they move. (The approach is similar to the two-leveled approaches developed in [69, 70], though it avoids the reference to ‘quantities of matter’ or ‘bare matter’ which form their starting point.)

a(continuant)[Elucidation: A *continuant* is an entity that persists, endures, or continues to exist through time while maintaining its identity. [008-001]]

Continuants include also spatial regions. Material continuants can preserve their identity even while gaining and losing material parts. Continuants are contrasted with occurrents, which unfold themselves in successive **temporal parts** or phases [60].

a(continuant)[Axiom: if *a* is a *continuant* and if, for some *t*, *b* is **continuant\_part** of*a* at *t*,then *b* is a *continuant.* [009-002]]

Axiom: if *a* is a *continuant* and if, for some *t*, *b* has **continuant\_part** *a* at *t*,then *b* is a *continuant.* [needs number]

If an occurrent occupies a 2-minute temporal region, then the occurrent is the sum of two non-overlapping **temporal parts** (see below), each of 1-minute duration. *Continuants* have no **temporal parts** in this sense. Rather, continuants have spatial parts.

BFO’s treatment of continuants and occurrents – as also its treatment of regions, below – thus rests on a dichotomy between space and time, and on the view that there are two perspectives on reality – earlier called the ‘SNAP’ and ‘SPAN’ perspectives, both of which are essential to the non-reductionist representation of reality as we understand it from the best available science [30]. At the same time, however, this dichotomy itself needs to be understood in such a way as to be consistent with those elements of our scientific understanding – including the physics of relativity – with which it might seem to stand in conflict. It must be consistent, above all, with what we know from physics about the entanglements of space and time both with each other, and with matter and causality. The starting point for our approach in this connection is well-captured by Simons:

the evidence that relativity theory forces us to abandon the ontology of continuants and events is slight and circumstantial. It is true that Minkowski diagrams represent time as simply another dimension along with the spatial ones, but we cannot argue from a diagram, which is only a convenient form of representation. A closer examination of the concepts and principles of relativity shows that they rest squarely on the ontology of things and events. A *world-line* is a sum of events, all of which involve a single *material body*; any two events on the same world-line are *genidentical.* That which cannot be accelerated up to or beyond the speed of light is something with a non-zero mass. But only a continuant can have a mass. In like fashion, the measuring rods and clocks of special relativity, which travel round from place to place, are as assuredly continuants as the emission and absorption of light signals are events. Nor does relativity entail that large continuants have temporal as well as spatial parts. It simply means that the questions as to which parts large continuants have at a given time have no absolute answer, but depend on fixing which events (such as gains and losses of parts) occur simultaneously. Whether body of gas A detaches itself from a large star before, after, or simultaneously with the falling of body of gas B into the star, may depend on the inertial frame chosen. ([46], pp. 126 f.; compare also [55, pp. 128-32])

**Excursus on frames**

The four dimensions of the spacetime continuum are not homogeneous – rather there is one time-like and three space-like dimensions. This heterogeneity is sufficient, for the purposes of BFO, to justify our division of reality in a way that distinguishes spatial and temporal regions. In a future version, however, we will need to do justice to the fact that there are multiple ways of dividing up the spacetime continuum into spatial and temporal regions, corresponding to multiple frames that might be used by different observers. We believe that all current users of BFO are not dealing with the sorts of physical data for which frame dependence is an issue, and the frames that they are using can be calibrated, where necessary, by using the simple mappings we use when for example translating between Eastern Standard Time and Greenwich Mean Time). We note, in anticipation of steps to be taken in the future, that spatiotemporal regions are frame-independent, and also that very many of the assertions formulated using BFO terms are themselves frame-independent; thus for example relations of parthood between material entities are *intrinsic*, in the sense that if *a* is part of *b* at some time in one frame, then *a* is part of *b* at some time in all frames.

a(continuant)[Axiom: if *a* is a *continuant*, then there is some temporal interval (referred to below as a *one-dimensional temporal region*) during which *a* exists. [011-001]]

Note: *Continuants* may persist for very short periods of time (as for example in the case of a highly unstable isotope).

## Relation of specific dependence

Specific dependence (henceforth: **s-dependence**) is a relation that obtains between one entity and another when the first entity cannot exist unless the second entity exists also. This relation can be either one-sided, in the sense that *a* s-depends on *b*, but not (*b* s-depends on *a*), or recipricol where *a* and *b* s-depend on each other. There are cases where a single entity is s-dependent on multiple other entities in either or both senses of ‘s-dependence’.As a purely terminological matter, only dependence relations involving at least one specifically dependent entity are cases of s-dependence. Thus the relation between a boundary and that which it bounds, or between a site and its host, are not examples of s-dependence. (The nature of boundary dependence will be addressed in a later version of BFO.)

a(s-dependence)[Elucidation: To say that *a* **s**-**depends on** *b* **at** *t* is to say that

*a*and *b* do not share common parts

*&* *a* is of its nature such that it cannot exist unless *b* exists

*& a* is not a boundary of *b* and *a* is not a site of which *b* is the host [64]. [012-001]]

as(s-dependence)[Domain: dependent continuant\; process]

Range:

range(s-dependence)[for one-sided s-dependence: *independent continuant*;]

range(s-dependence)[for reciprocal s-dependence: *dependent continuant*\; *process*]

as(s-dependence)[Examples: The **s-dependence** of a pain on the organism that is experiencing the pain\, the dependence of a shape on the shaped object\, the dependence of a gait on the walking object.]

If *a* **s-depends on** *b***at** *t* we can also say that *a*’sexistencerequires (necessitates) the existence of *b* [66], or that *a* is of necessity associated with some *b* *because* *a* is an instance of a certain universal*.* The s-dependence of an entity *a* on another entity *b* holds for the duration of the existence of *a*.

Thus for continuants *a* and *b*, if *b* is such that *a* **s-depends on** *b* **at** *t*, then if *b* ceases to exist so also does a. The ceasing to exist of **a** occurs as a matter of necessity (it is in a sense immediate and automatic). Thus **s-dependence** is different from the sort of dependence which is involved, for instance, when we assert that an organism is dependent on food or shelter; or that a child is dependent on its mother. Your body is dependent on molecules of oxygen for its life, not however for its existence. Similarly, **s-dependence** is different from the sort of dependence that is involved when we assert that every object requires, at any given time t, some spatial region at which it is **located** at that time. (We use ‘**located\_at**’ for dependence of this sort.)

For occurrents, **s-dependence** obtains between every process and its participants in the sense that, as a matter of necessity, this process could not have existed unless these or those participants existed also. A *process* may have a succession of participants at different phases of its unfolding (thus there may be different players on the field at different times during the course of a football game); but the *process* **s-depends** on all of these players nonetheless.

**S-dependence** is thus just one type of dependence among many; it is what, in the literature, is referred to as ‘existential dependence’ [65], since it has to do with the parasitism among entities *for their existence*; there are other types of dependence, including **generic dependence** which is dealt with below. Other types of dependence not addressed in BFO 2.0 include:

* frame dependence (of spatial and temporal regions on spatiotemporal regions)
* dependence for origin (e.g. an artifact such as a spark plug depends on human designers and engineers for the *origin* of its existence, not however for its *continued existence*; you depend similarly on your parents for your origin, not however for your continued existence; the boundary of Iraq depended on certain decisions made by the British and French diplomats [Sir Mark Sykes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Sykes) and [François Georges-Picot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Georges-Picot) in 1916; it does not, however, depend on Sykes and Picot for its continued existence.

a(s-dependence)[Theorem: an *entity* does not **s-depend** on any of its partsor on anything it is partof. [013-001]]

This follows trivially from the definition.

As we shall see when we consider the parts of *qualities* such as color and tone below, the parts of a dependent entity may reciprocally **s-depend** on each other. This idea has not hitherto been explicitly recognized in BFO, but it is documented at length in the literature on specific dependence [1, 2, 3, 6, 20, 46].

## Relation of specific dependence indexed by time

~~Definition:~~ *~~a~~* **~~s-depends on~~** *~~b~~* **~~at~~** *~~t =~~* ~~Def.~~ *~~a~~* ~~exists~~ **~~at~~** *~~t~~* ~~&~~ *~~a~~* **~~s-depends on~~** *~~b.~~* ~~[014-001]~~

(Replaced by elucidation of s-depends at t above)

Axiom: If *occurrent a* **s-depends** on some *independent continuant* *b* **at** *t*, then *a* **s-depends on some** *independent continuant*at every time at which it exists. [015-001]

Axiom: If *a* **s-depends** on *b* **at** *t* and *a* is a *continuant*, then *a* **s-depends** on*b* at every time at which it exists. [016-001]

Axioms: [need numbering]

If *a* is a continuant and *a* **s-depends on** *b***at** *t*, then  *a* exists **at** *t*

If *a* is a continuant and *a* **s-depends on** *b***at** *t*, then  *b* exists **at** *t*

If *a* is an occurrent and *b* is a continuant and *a* **s-depends\_on** *b* **at** *t,* then *b* exists at some time during the temporal region spanned by *a.*

If *a* is an occurrent and *b* is an occurrent and *a* **s-depends\_on** *b* **at** *t,* then *b* occurs at *t.*

An *s-dependent continuant entity* cannot migrate from one independent continuant bearer to another.

The entities which **s-depend** include

* *dependent continuants*, which **s-depend** in every case on one or more *independent continuants* which are their bearers, and which may in addition stand in **s-dependence** relations among themselves;
* *occurrents*, which **s-depend** in every caseon one or more *independent continuants* which **participate** in them, and which may in addition stand in **s-dependence** relationsto other dependent entities, including *qualities*, *dispositions*, and *occurrents* (see [46, chapter 8; 20, 22] and the discussion of *process profiles*, below).

**Types of s-dependence**

Examples of **one-sided s-dependence** of a *dependent continuant* on an *independent continuant*:

* an **instance** of *headache* **s-depends** on an **instance** of *head*
* an **instance** of *temperature* **s-depends** on some organism
* an **instance** of *seeing* (a relational process) **s-depends** on some organism and on some seen entity, which may be an occurrent or a continuant
* a process of cell death **s-depends** on a cell

Examples of **reciprocal s-dependence** between *dependent continuants*:

* the two-sided reciprocal **s-dependence** of the *roles* of husband and wife [20]
* the three-sided reciprocal **s-dependence** of the hue, saturation and brightness of a color [45]
* the three-sided reciprocal **s-dependence** of the pitch, timbre and volume of a tone [45]

Note that reciprocally dependent entities are in every case also one-sidedly dependent on some relevant bearers. This is why you can’t change a smile, for example, without changing the face upon which the smile depends.

Examples of **one-sided s-dependence** of an *occurrent* on an *independent continuant*:

* the one-sided dependence of a handwave on a hand
* the one-sided dependence of a football match on the players, the ground, the ball

Examples of **one-sided s-dependence** of one *occurrent* on multiple *independent continuants*:

* a relational *process* of hitting a ball with a cricket bat
* a relational *process* of paying cash to a merchant in exchange for a bag of figs

Examples of **one-sided s-dependence** of one *occurrent* on another

* a *process* of answering a question is dependent on a prior *process* of asking a question
* a *process* of obeying a command is dependent on a prior *process* of issuing a command

Examples of **reciprocal s-dependence** between *occurrents*:

* in a game of chess the process of playing with the white pieces is reciprocally dependent on the process of playing with the black pieces
* a process of buying and the associated process of selling
* a process of increasing the volume of a portion of gas while temperature remains constant and the associated process of decreasing the pressure exerted by the gas

An entity – for example an act of communication – can **s-depend** on more than one entity. Complex phenomena for example in the psychological and social realms (such as inferring, commanding and requesting) or in the realm of multi-organismal biological processes (such as infection and resistance), will involve multiple families of dependence relations, involving both continuants and occurrents [1, 4, 28].

As the examples under the heading of one-sided **s-dependence** among *occurrents* show, the relation of **s-dependence** does not in every case require simultaneous existence of its relata. Note the difference between such cases and the cases of universals defined historically referred to above; the act of answering depends existentially on the prior act of questioning; the human being who was baptized or who answered a question does not depend existentially on the prior act of baptism or answering. He would still exist even if these acts had never taken place. A phosphorylated protein molecule might still exist even though it had never been phosphorylated.

## 2.1 Independent Continuant

a(independent continuant)[Definition: *a* is an *independent continuant* = Def. *a* is a *continuant* which is such that there is no *b* and no *t* such that *a* **s-depends on** *b* **at** *t.* [017-002]]

as(independent continuant)[Examples: an atom\, a molecule\, an organism\, a heart\, a chair\, the bottom right portion of a human torso\, a leg\; the interior of your mouth\; a spatial region\; an orchestra. ]

a(independent continuant)[Axiom: For every *independent continuant a* and time *t* during the region of time spanned by its life, there are *entities* which **s-depend** on *a* during *t*. [018-002]

We say ‘during *t*’ since there may be regions *t* such that no entity is s-dependent on *a* exactly in the region *t.* ]

Examples of such entities that are **s-dependent** on *independent continuants* are: qualities, dispositions, processes.

### 2.1.1 Material entity

a(material entity)[Elucidation: A *material entity* is an *independent continuant* that has some portion of matter as proper or improper **part.** [019-001]]

as(material entity)[Examples: a photon, a human being, the undetached arm of a human being, an aggregate of human beings. ]

Every *material entity* is localized in space.

Every *material entity* can move in space.

a(material entity)[Axiom: Every *entity* which has a *material entity* as part is a *material entity*. [020-001]]



Figure 2: Subtypes of independent continuant

a(material entity)[Theorem: every *entity* of which a *material entity* is part is also a *material entity.* [021-001]]

‘Matter’ is intended to encompass both mass and energy (we will address the ontological treatment of portions of energy in a later version of BFO). A portion of matter is anything that includes elementary particles among its proper or improper parts: quarks and leptons, including electrons, as the smallest particles thus far discovered; baryons (including protons and neutrons) at a higher level of granularity; atoms and molecules at still higher levels, forming the cells, organs, organisms and other material entities studied by biologists, the portions of rock studied by geologists, the fossils studied by paleontologists, and so on.

*Independent continuants* are three-dimensional entities (entities extended in three spatial dimensions), as contrasted with the *processes* in which they participate, which are four-dimensional entities (entities extended also along the dimension of time).

According to the FMA, *material entities* may have *immaterial entities* as parts – including the *entities* identified below as *sites*; for example the interior (or ‘lumen’) of your small intestine is a part of your body. BFO 2.0 embodies a decision to follow the FMA here, but this is just a terminological matter, and may be corrected on the basis of community feedback. Thus we allow **continuant\_part\_of** to include such material-immaterial crossings, and recommend the use of the more specific relation of **material\_part\_of** where they need to be ruled out.

**Subtypes of material entity**

In what follows we define three children of ‘material entity’ – namely ‘object’, ‘object aggregate’; and ‘fiat object part’. Those using BFO for molecular biology and related matters may wish to use ‘material entity’ solely, and not concern themselves with these subdivisions. Those using BFO to deal with entities at higher levels of granularity – for example organisms, populations, organizations, institutions, will require the distinction between *object* and *object aggregate*. Those using BFO to deal with what the FMA calls regional parts – for example the wall of the cervical, thoracic and abdominal parts of the esophagus, respectively [44] – will require to distinguish between *object* and *fiat object part*.

Some might argue that the mentioned threefold distinction could be recreated by corresponding upper level domain ontologies according to need, for example the distinction between ‘organism’, ‘population of organisms’, and ‘regional part of organism’ in an upper level ontology for biology. Since this would mean that multiple different domain ontologies would be called upon, in effect, to reinvent the same wheel over and over again, and so we provide the corresponding distinctions within BFO in what we hope is a suitably robust framework.

#### 2.1.1.1 Object

BFO rests on the presupposition that at multiple micro-, meso- and macroscopic scales reality exhibits certain stable, spatially separated or separable material units, combined or combinable into aggregates of various sorts (for example organisms into what are called ‘populations’). Such units play a central role in almost all domains of natural science from particle physics to cosmology. Many scientific laws govern the units in question, employing general terms (such as ‘molecule’ or ‘planet’) referring to the types and subtypes of units, and also to the types and subtypes of the processes through which such units develop and interact. The division of reality into such *natural units* is at the heart of biological science, as also is the fact that these units may form higher-level units (as cells form multicellular organisms) and that they may also form *aggregates* of units, for example as cells form portions of tissue and organs form families, herds, breeds, species, and so on.

At the same time, the division of certain portions of reality into *engineered units* (manufactured artifacts) is the basis of modern industrial technology, which rests on the distributed mass production of engineered parts through division of labor and on their assembly into larger, compound units such as cars and laptops. The division of portions of reality into units is one starting point for the phenomenon of *counting*.

Examples of units of special importance for the purposes of natural science include: atom, molecule, organelle, cell, organism, grain of sand, planet, star. These *material entities* are candidate examples of what are called ‘*objects*’ in BFO 2.0. Such units are sometimes referred to as ‘grains’ [74], and are associated with specific ‘levels of granularity’ in what is seen as a layered structure of reality, with units at lower and more fine-grained levels being combined as parts into grains at higher, coarse-grained levels. Our proposals here are consistent with but are formulated independently of such granularity considerations.

**Elucidation of ‘object’**

The following elucidation documents a set of conditions to be used when deciding whether entities of a given type should be represented as *objects* in the BFO sense. It is provided as precursor to a formal theory (of qualitative mereotopology [5, 22, 36, 37, 39]) of BFO:*object*.

In what follows we consider three candidate groups of examples of objects in the BFO sense, namely:

1. organisms, cells and potentially also biological entities of certain other sorts, including organs
2. portions of solid matter such as rocks and lumps of iron
3. engineered artifacts such as watches and cars.

Material entities under all of these headings are all *causally relatively isolated entities* in Ingarden’s sense [47, 13]. This means that they are both *structured* through a certain type of causal unity and *maximal* relative to this type of causal unity.

We first characterize causal unity in general, we then distinguish three types of causal unity corresponding to the three candidate families of BFO:*objects* (cells and organisms, solid portions of matter, machines and other engineered artifacts) listed above. We then describe what it is for an entity to be maximal relative to one or other of these types, and formulate in these terms an elucidation of ‘object’. (We must bear in mind throughout that the aggregates of those microparticles which form the low-level parts of such causally structured units for limited periods in their existence may survive the loss of causal unity, for example as occurs during phase transitions from solid to liquid to gas.)

To say that *a* is *causally unified* means: *a* is a material entity which is such that its material parts are tied together in such a way that, in environments typical for *entities* of the type in question,

if *b,* a **continuant part** *a* in the interior of *a* at *t*,islarger than a certain threshold size (which will be determined differently from case to case, depending on factors such as porosity of external cover) and is moved in space to be at *t′* ata location on the exterior of the spatial region that had been occupied by *a* at *t*,then *either a*’s other parts will be moved in coordinated fashion *or a* will be damaged (be affected, for example, by breakage or tearing) in the interval between *t* and *t′*.

causal changes in one part of *a* can have consequences for other parts of *a* without the mediation of any entity that lies on the exterior of *a.* [022-001]

Material entities with no proper material parts would satisfy these conditions trivially. Candidate examples of types of causal unity for material entities of more complex sorts are as follows (this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

CU1: Causal unity via physical covering

Here the parts in the interior of the unified entity are combined together causally through a common membrane or other physical covering – what the FMA refers to as a ‘bona fide anatomical surface’ [44]. The latter points outwards toward and may serve a protective function in relation to what lies on the exterior of the entity [13, 47].

Note that the physical covering may have holes (for example pores in your skin, shafts penetrating the planet’s outer crust, sockets where conduits to other entities are connected allowing transport of electric current or of liquids or gases). The physical covering is nonetheless *connected* in the sense that (a) between every two points on its surface a continuous path can be traced which does not leave this surface, and also (b) the covering serves as a barrier preventing entities above a certain size threshold from entering from the outside or escaping from the inside [105, 77].

Some organs in the interior of complex organisms manifest a causal unity of this type. Organs can survive detachment from their surroundings, for example in the case of transplant, with their membranes intact. The FMA [44] defines ‘organ’ as follows:

An anatomical structure which has as its direct parts portions of two or more types of tissue or two or more types of cardinal organ part which constitute a maximally connected anatomical structure demarcated predominantly by a bona fide anatomical surface. Examples: femur, biceps, liver, heart, skin, tracheobronchial tree, ovary.

CU2: Causal unity via internal physical forces

Here the material parts of a material entity are combined together causally by sufficiently strong physical forces, for example, by fundamental forces of strong and weak interaction, by covalent or ionic bonds, by metallic bonding, or more generally by forces of a type which makes the overall sum of forces strong enough to act in such a way as to hold the object together relative to the strength of attractive or destructive forces in its ordinary environmental neighborhood. (Few solid portions of matter in our everyday environment would survive very long on the face of a neutron star, but luckily that is not our everyday environment.) In the case of larger portions of matter the constituent atoms are tightly bound to each other in a geometric lattice, either regularly (as in the case of portions of metal) or irregularly (as in an amorphous solid such as a portion of glass). Examples: *atoms*, *molecules*, *grains of sand*, *lumps of iron.*

CU3: Causal unity via engineered assembly of components

Here the material parts of a material entity are combined together via mechanical assemblies joined for example through screws or other fasteners. The assemblies often involve parts which are reciprocally engineered to fit together, as in the case of dovetail joints, balls and bearings, nuts and bolts. A causal unity of this sort can be interrupted for a time, as when a watch is disassembled for repair, and then recreated in its original state. The parts of an automobile, including the moving parts, constitute an object because of their relative rigidity: while these parts may move with respect to each other, a given gear cannot move e.g., 10 ft., while the other parts do not.

We can now describe what it means for a material entity to be *maximal* relative to one or other of these three types of causal unity, and thereby introduce the BFO primitive *object*, as follows

To say that *a* is *maximal* relative to some criterion of causal unity CU*n* means:

*a* is causally unified relative to CU*n* at *t*

&if for some *t* and *b* (*a* **continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t*& *b* is causally unified relative to the same CU*n*) then *a* and *b* are identical. [023-001]

For example:

* relative to the causal unity criterion CU1: a cell or organism is maximal; your lower torso falls short of maximality; a pair of cells exceeds maximality.
* relative to the causal unity criterion CU2: a continuous dumbbell-shaped lump of iron is maximal; the connecting portion falls short of maximality; a pair of such dumbbell-shaped lumps exceeds maximality.
* relative to the causal unity criterion CU3: an armored vehicle is maximal; the portions of armor of an armored vehicle falls short of maximality; a pair of armored vehicles exceeds maximality.

**Definition of BFO:*object***

We cannot define ‘object’ in BFO simply by asserting that an entity is an object if and only if it is maximal relative to some causal unity criterion. This is because objects under all three of the headings around which our discussions are focused may have other, smaller objects as parts. A spark plug is an object; when inserted into a car to replace a defective spark plug, then it remains an object, but ceases to be maximal. Importantly, however, the spark plug as installed still instantiates a universal many instances of which aremaximal. This suggests that we elucidate ‘object’ as follows:

a(object)[Elucidation: *a* is an *object* means: *a* is a *material entity* which

manifests causal unity of one or other of the types CU*n* listed above

& is of a type (a material universal) instances of which are maximalrelative to this criterion of causal unity. [024-001]]

Objects can be joined to other objects

Each *object* is such that there are *entities* of which we can assert unproblematically that they lie in its interior, and other *entities* of which we can assert unproblematically that they lie in its exterior. This may not be so for *entities* lying at or near the boundary between the interior and exterior. This means that two objects – for example the two cells depicted in Figure 3 – may be such that there are material entities crossing their boundaries which belong determinately to neither cell. Something similar obtains in certain cases of conjoined twins (see below).



Figure 3: [An example of cell adhesion](http://php.med.unsw.edu.au/cellbiology/index.php?title=File:Cell_adhesion_summary.png)

Some instances of any given BFO:*object* universal – for example *cell* or *organism* or *laptop –* are separated by spatial gaps from other instances of this same *object* universal. The spatial gaps may be filled by a medium, for example of air or water. (There are cells not attached to other cells; there are spatially separated organisms, such as you and me. Peas in a pea pod are initially attached to the interior of the pea pod covering. Sperm initially float freely from each other; some sperm become fused with oocytes through a membrane fusion process.)

**Objects may contain other objects as parts**

They may do this, for example,

* by containing atoms and molecules as parts
* by containing cells as parts, for instance the collection of blood cells in your body;
* by containing objects which are bonded to other objects of the same type in such a way that they cannot (for the relevant period of time) move separately, as in the case of the cells in your epithelium or the atoms in a molecule.
* by containing objects which are connected by conduits or tracts which may themselves have covering membranes*.*

Clearly, *objects* may contain also *object aggregates* as parts. Some *objects*¸as we saw, may also have immaterial parts (the lumen of your gut) [34].

**Conjoined twins**

Some objects may change type from one time to the next (a fetus becomes a baby, which in turn becomes a child). Conjoined twins may be successfully separated. Two boats may be combined to form a single multihulled boat.

Whether each one of a pair of conjoined twins is or is not an object is not a trivial question, and the treatment of this case ontologically should be viewed as an experimental matter, with different alternatives tested in use to see which yields the most coherent solution for different sorts of cases. Different types of conjoined twins will need to be treated differently, and that in cases where twins do not share vital organs an identification of each one of the pair as an object will yield a workable solution. Certainly, the maximal CU1-causally unified material entity here is the whole which they together form; accepting each twin as an object even prior to separation, however – thus as an instance of the material universal *human being* – is consistent with our elucidation of BFO:*object*.

#### 2.1.1.2 Object aggregate

In this document we concentrate on the use of ‘aggregate’ as it appears in the term ‘object aggregate’. However, ‘aggregate’ should be understood as being applicable to all continuant BFO categories. Thus for each BFO category X, the user of BFO has at his disposal also the category *aggregate of X* [51].

a(object aggregate)[Elucidation: *a* is an *object aggregate* means: *a* is a *material entity* consisting exactly of a plurality of *objects* as **member\_parts**. [025-002]

More formally:

If *a* is an *object aggregate*, then if *a* exists at *t*, there are *objects o*1, …,*o*n at *t* such that:

for all *x* (*x* **continuant\_part\_of** *a* **at** *t* iff *x* overlaps some *o*i **at** *t*) ]

An entity *a* is an object aggregate if and only if there is a mutually exhaustive and pairwise disjoint partition of *a* into objects [63].

as(object aggregate)[Examples: a symphony orchestra\, the aggregate of bearings in a constant velocity axle joint\, the nitrogen atoms in the atmosphere\, a collection of cells in a blood biobank. ]

The objects which form the proximal parts of an aggregate – those parts which determine the aggregate as an aggregate – are called its **member parts** (sometimes referred to as ‘granular parts’).

Different sorts of examples will be aggregates satisfying further conditions, for example an organization is an aggregate whose **member parts** have roles of specific types (for example in a jazz band, a chess club, a football team); a swarm of bees is an aggregate of members who are linked together through natural bonds.

## Relation of membership

This relation is defined not only for objects but for BFO categories in general, as follows:

a(member\_part\_of)[Elucidation: *a* **member\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t* =Def. there is a mutually exhaustive and pairwise disjoint partition of *b* into entities of category X: *x*1, …,*x*n with *a = xi* for some natural number *i.* [026-002]]

a(member\_part\_of)[Domain: entity in category X]

a(member\_part\_of)[Range: aggregate of X]

a(member\_part\_of)[Theorem: if *a* member\_part\_of *b* at *t* then *a* continuant\_part\_of *b* at *t.* [104-001] ]

as(member\_part\_of)[Examples: trees in a forest\; pieces in a chess set. ]

‘Category’ in the above refers to categories other than entity.

Object aggregates may be defined through physical attachment (the aggregate of atoms in a lump of granite), or through physical containment (the aggregate of molecules of carbon dioxide in a sealed container, the aggregate of blood cells in your body). Object aggregates may be defined by fiat – for example in the case of the aggregate of members of an organization, or via attributive delimitations such as: the patients in this hospital, the restaurants in Palo Alto, your collection of Meissen ceramic plates.

[76] provides a formal treatment of aggregates (there called ‘collections’) that is consistent with the above. However, the formalization provided assumes that membership in a collection is fixed over time. As is true for all material entities (for example: you), object aggregates may gain and lose parts while remaining numerically identical (one and the same individual) over time, and for some aggregates, especially in cases where membership is determined by fiat (for example a baseball team, a congressional committee) membership may change with time.

#### 2.1.1.3 Fiat object part

Clearly not all material entities form separated or separable natural units in the way described above (see and [12]), and so there is – in dealing with limbs demarcated within a body, of mountains demarcated within mountain ranges, and so forth – a need for some way to do justice to those material entities here called fiat object parts.



Figure 4: [Mount Everest from space](http://www.webstuffscan.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/mount%20everest%20from%20space.jpg)

a(fiat object part)[Definition: *a* is a *fiat object part* = Def. *a* is a *material entity* that is a **proper continuant\_part** of an *object* and that is not itself an *object.* [027-001]]

as(fiat object part)[Examples: the upper and lower lobes of the left lung\, the dorsal and ventral surfaces of the body\, the Western hemisphere of the Earth\, the FMA:*regional parts* of an intact human body. ]

Since *fiat object parts* are *material entities*, they are also extended in space in three dimensions (in contrast to *fiat continuant boundaries*, introduced below).

Fiat object parts are contrasted with bona fide object parts, which are themselves objects (for example a cell is a bona fide object part of a multi-cellular organism), and are marked by bona fide boundaries, on in other words by *physical discontinuities* [8, 9], for example between the surface of your skin, or of your laptop, and the surrounding body of air. Most examples of fiat object parts are associated with theoretically drawn divisions, for example the division of the brain into regions, the division of the planet into hemispheres, or with divisions drawn by cognitive subjects for practical reasons, such as the division of a cake (before slicing) into (what will become) slices (**member parts** of an *object aggregate*). However, this does not mean that fiat object parts are dependent for their existence on divisions or delineations effected by cognitive subjects. If, for example, it is correct to conceive geological layers of the Earth as fiat object parts of the Earth, then even though these layers were first delineated in recent times, still they existed long before such delineation and what holds of these layers (for example that the oldest layers are also the lowest layers) did not begin to hold because of our acts of delineation.

**Treatment of *material entity* in BFO**

Examples viewed by some as problematic cases for the trichotomy of *fiat object part*, *object*, and *object aggregate* include:

a mussel on (and attached to) a rock, a slime mold, a pizza, a cloud, a galaxy, a railway train with engine and multiple carriages, [a clonal stand of quaking aspen](http://scienceblogs.com/evolvingthoughts/2007/08/what_is_an_individual.php), a bacterial community (biofilm), a broken femur.

Note that, as Aristotle already clearly recognized, such problematic cases – which lie at or near the penumbra of instances defined by the categories in question – need not invalidate these categories. The existence of grey objects does not prove that there are not objects which are black and objects which are white; the existence of mules does not prove that there are not objects which are donkeys and objects which are horses. It does, however, show that the examples in question need to be addressed carefully in order to show how they can be fitted into the proposed scheme – that the scheme requires additional subdivisions [29, ] or amendments.

Where users of BFO need to annotate data pertaining to such problematic cases, then they may in every case use BFO:*material entity* in formulating the corresponding annotations. In the case of the following examples:

a solar flare, an epidemic, a hurricane, a forest fire, a puff of smoke, a sea wave, an energy wave.

we plan to provide further analyses in the course of developing the next version of BFO.

Already it is clear that BFO or its conformant domain-ontologies will in due course need to recognize also other sub-universals of *material entity*, in addition to *object, object aggregate* and *fiat object part* – for instance: *aggregate of fiat object parts* [29, 82]. Thus the treatment of *material entity* in BFO 2.0 should not be associated with any closure axiom pertaining to the three distinguished categories, and the existing treatment of the three identified sub-universals should not be associated with any claim to exhaustivity.

We will provide a strategy for dealing with such sub-universals in a later version of this document. Briefly, the proposal is that a central repository will be created where users of BFO can create BFO-conformant extensions (extending BFO in ways that meet the criterion that they are formal- rather than domain-ontological). The terms in this repository can then be adopted by others according to need, and incorporated into BFO if adopted by multiple communities of users.

### 2.1.2 Immaterial entity

The roots of BFO’s treatment of ‘immaterial entity’ lie in the application of theories of qualitative spatial reasoning to the geospatial world, for example as outlined in [49], in the treatment of holes by Casati and Varzi [48], and in the treatment of cavities in the FMA [43, 44, 34, 35].

Rosse and Mejino provide the following rationale for including terms for surfaces, lines, and points in the FMA:

Although anatomical texts and medical terminologies with an anatomical content deal only superﬁcially, if at all, with anatomical surfaces, lines, and points, it is nevertheless necessary to represent these entities explicitly and comprehensively in the FMA in order to describe boundary and adjacency relationships of material physical anatomical entities and spaces. [43]

*Immaterial entities* are divided into two subgroups:

1. *boundaries* and *sites*, which bound, or are demarcated in relation, to *material entities*, and which can thus change location, shape and size and as their material hosts move or change shape or size (for example: your nasal passage; the hold of a ship; the boundary of Wales (which moves with the rotation of the Earth) [38, 7, 10]);
2. *spatial regions*, which exist independently of *material entities*, and which thus do not change.

Immaterial entities under 1. are in some cases **continuant parts** of their material hosts. Thus the hold of a ship, for example, is part of the ship. Immaterial entities under both 1. and 2. can be of zero, one, two or three dimensions.

We define:

a(immaterial entity)[Definition: a is an immaterial entity = Def. a is an independent continuant that has no material entities as parts. [028-001]]

#### 2.1.2.1 Continuant fiat boundary

a(continuant fiat boundary)[Definition: *a* is a *continuant fiat boundary =* Def. *a* is an *immaterial entity* that is of zero, one or two dimensions and does not include a spatial region as part. [029-001]]

Every continuant fiat boundary is **located at** some spatial region at every time at which it exists (but not necessarily at the same spatial region from one time to the next).

All material entities are of three dimensions. Intuitively, a continuant fiat boundary is a boundary of some material entity (for example: the plane separating the Northern and Southern hemispheres; the North Pole), or it is a boundary of some immaterial entity (for example of some portion of airspace).

Three basic kinds of continuant fiat boundary can be distinguished (together with various combination kinds [29]):

* fiat boundaries (often rectilinear) which delineate fiat parts within the interiors of material entities – for example the fiat boundary between the northern and southern hemispheres of the Earth; the North Pole; the fiat boundary which separates Utah from Colorado
* fiat boundaries which delineate holes or cavities, for example fiat boundaries of the type referred to by the FMA as ‘plane of anatomical orifice’.

An example of a combination fiat boundary would be the border of Israel, which contains both rectilinear fiat boundaries for example along the border with Egypt and fiat boundaries tracking physical discontinuities for example on the Mediterranean side and along the borders with Syria and Jordan.

Note that boundaries are dependent entities, but they are not dependent in either of the senses (of s- and g-dependence) identified elsewhere in this document.

##### 2.1.2.1.1 Zero-dimensional continuant fiat boundary

a(zero-dimensional continuant fiat boundary)[Elucidation: a zero-dimensional continuant fiat boundary is a fiat point whose location is defined in relation to some material entity. [031-001]]

as(zero-dimensional continuant fiat boundary)[Examples: the geographic North Pole\; the quadripoint where the boundaries of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona meet\, the point of origin of some spatial coordinate system.]

##### 2.1.2.1.2 One-dimensional continuant fiat boundary

a(one-dimensional continuant fiat boundary)[Elucidation: a one-dimensional continuant fiat boundary is a continuous fiat line whose location is defined in relation to some material entity. [032-001]]

as(one-dimensional continuant fiat boundary)[Examples: The Equator\, all geopolitical boundaries\, all lines of latitude and longitude\, the median sulcus of your tongue\, the line separating the outer surface of the mucosa of the lower lip from the outer surface of the skin of the chin. ]

To say that a one-dimensional continuant fiat boundary is *continuous* is to assert that it includes no gaps (that it is a single straight or curved line, with no breaks).

##### 2.1.2.1.3 Two-dimensional continuant fiat boundary

a(a two-dimensional continuant fiat boundary)[Elucidation: a two-dimensional continuant fiat boundary (surface) is a self-connected fiat surface whose location is defined in relation to some material entity. [033-001]]

‘Self-connected’ is to be understood in the (topological) sense; thus an entity *a* is self-connected if and only if: given any two points in *a*, a continuous line can be traced in *a* which connects these points.

From this it follows that a two-dimensional continuant fiat boundary (surface) may have holes, as for example in the case of the surface of one side of a compact disk.

##### 2.1.2.1.4 Site

a(site)[Elucidation: *a* is a *site* means: *a* is a three-dimensional *immaterial entity* that is (partially or wholly) bounded by a *material entity* or a three-dimensional immaterial part thereof. [034-001]]

as(site)[Examples: a hole in the interior of a portion of cheese\, a rabbit hole\, the interior of your bedroom\, the Grand Canyon\, the Piazza San Marco\, an air traffic control region defined in the airspace above an airport\, the interior of a kangaroo pouch\, your left nostril (a fiat part – the opening – of your left nasal cavity) \, the lumen of your gut\, the hold of a ship\, the cockpit of an aircraft\, the interior of the trunk of your car\, the interior of your refrigerator\, the interior of your office\, [Manhattan Canyon](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tonyshi/4385628183/)) ]

The above elucidation will be replaced by a definition when *dimension* and *bounded by* have been defined within the BFO framework.

Note: *Sites* may be bounded by various combinations of boundaries of different sorts [9]. Thus the Mont Blanc Tunnel is bounded by fiat surfaces at either end. Each immaterial entity coincides at any given time with some spatial region, but, as in the case of material entities, which spatial region this is may vary with time. As the ship moves through space, so its hold moves also. As you pinch and unpinch your nose, so your nasal passages shrink and expand.

To say that ‘detergent is pumped into the tank’ is to assert that the detergent is pumped into the cavity which forms the interior of the tank (rather than into the metal which bounds this cavity, or into the contents of the tank – since the tank may be empty).

The region of class A controlled airspace associated with any given airport is a site, since it is a three-dimensional part of the site formed by the sum of this region with the portion of the class E region that is bounded by the surface of the Earth (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: [Airspace classes](http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/varia/controlledairspace/glos_aclass.jpg)

Cavities within what OGMS calls the ‘extended organism’ are sites; they are, following the FMA, parts of the organism if they are part of its anatomical *Bauplan* [43, 44]*.* A cavity formed by a swallowed drug-capsule that is half-filled with powder is for this reason not a part of the organism.



Figure 6: Examples of types of site:

1: the interior of an egg; 2: the interior of a snail’s shell; 3: the environment of a pasturing cow

#### 2.1.2.2 Spatial region

We recommend that users of BFOregionterms specify the coordinate frame in terms of which their spatial and temporal data is formulated. When dealing with spatial regions on the surface of the Earth, for example, this will be the coordinate frame of latitude and longitude, potentially supplemented by the dimension of altitude (height above sea level). Lines of latitude and longitude are two-dimensional object boundaries which move as the planet rotates and as it moves in orbiting the sun; however, they are by definition at rest relative to the coordinate frame which they determine.

Figure 7: Examples of types of site

Given terminology of spatial frames, we can elucidate ‘space’ in a way close to that which was provided in BFO 1.1, as the maximal **instance** of the universal *spatial region*, relative to some frame, as follows:

a(spatial region)[Elucidation: A spatial region is a continuant entity that is a continuant\_part\_of spaceR as defined relative to some frame R. [035-001]]

‘Maximal’, in the above, means that any instance entity including spaceR as proper part is not a spatial region. Space is, in common parlance, the whole of space. The term ‘space’ is the name of a certain particular. As we shall see below, spacetime and time, similarly, are maximal instances of spatiotemporal and temporal region, respectively.

a(spatial region)[Axiom: All **continuant parts** of *spatial regions* are *spatial regions*. [036-001]]

Spatial regions have no qualities except shape and size.

*Object boundaries* and *sites* are distinguished from the spatial regions which they occupy at any given time as follows:

(1) *Object boundaries* and *sites* move when their material host moves, and they change shape or size when their material host changes shape or size.

(2) *Spatial regions* are by definition at rest relative to the pertinent coordinate frame.

##### 2.1.2.2.1 Zero-dimensional spatial region

a(zero-dimensional spatial region)[Elucidation: A *zero-dimensional spatial region* is a point in space. [037-001]]

##### 2.1.2.2.2 One-dimensional spatial region

a(one-dimensional spatial region)[Elucidation: A *one-dimensional spatial region* is a line or aggregate of lines stretching from one point in space to another. [038-001]]

a(one-dimensional spatial region)[Examples: an edge of a cube-shaped portion of space.]

A line is a connected one-dimensional spatial region.

##### 2.1.2.2.3 Two-dimensional spatial region

a(two-dimensional spatial region)[Elucidation: A *two-dimensional spatial region* is a spatial region that is of two dimensions. [039-001]]

as(two-dimensional spatial region)[Examples: the surface of a sphere-shaped part of space\, an infinitely thin plane in space. ]

A surface is a connected one-dimensional spatial region.

##### 2.1.2.2.4 Three-dimensional spatial region (a spatial volume)

a(three-dimensional spatial region)[Elucidation: A *three-dimensional spatial region* is a spatial region that is of three dimensions. [040-001]]

as(three-dimensional spatial region)[Examples: a cube-shaped region of space\, a sphere-shaped region of space, ]

## The located\_at relation

a(located\_at)[Elucidation: a**located\_at**r**at**tmeans that *r* is a spatial region in which independent continuant *a* is exactly located [041-002]]

a(located\_at)[Domain: independent continuant]

a(located\_at)[Range: spatial region]

This is a primitive relation between an *independent continuant*, a spatial region which it occupies, and a time. This is a relation of exact location; the size, shape, orientation and location of *a* fit exactly to the size, shape and location of *r.* Thus for example if there are cavities in the interior of *a* then there are corresponding holes in the interior of *r.*

Clearly, normal usage will involve not assertions of exact location, but rather more liberal statements for example: John is in London, Mary is in her hotel room, Carlo is in his mother’s womb, which will involve assertions of which are formulated using the **located\_in** relation as defined below.

a(located\_at)[Axiom: every *region* is **located\_at** itself at all times. [042-001]]

a(located\_at)[Axiom: if *a* **located at** *r* **at** *t* & *a′* **continuant\_part\_of** *a* **at** *t*, then there is some *r′* which is **continuant\_part\_of** *r* & such that *a′* **located\_at** *r′* **at** t. [043-001]]

## The located\_in relation

The **located\_in** relation links independent continuants which are not spatial regions..

a(located\_in)[Definition: a**located\_in** b **at**t = Def. a and b are independent continuants, and the region **at** which a is **located at** t is a (proper or improper) **continuant\_part\_of** the region **at** which b is **located at** t. [045-001] ]

a(located\_in)[Domain: independent continuant]

a(located\_in)[Range: independent continuant]

as(located\_in)[Examples: your arm **located\_in** your body\; this stem cell **located\_in** this portion of bone marrow\; this portion of cocaine **located\_in** this portion of blood\; Mary **located\_in** Salzburg\; the Empire State Building **located\_in** New York. ]

a(located\_in)[Axiom: **Located\_in** is transitive. [046-001]

*a* **located\_in** *b* at *t* and *b* **located\_in** *c* at *t*, then *a* **located\_in** *c*]

For all material entities *a* and *b*, parthood implies location:

Axiom: if *a* **continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t*, then *a* is **continuant\_located\_in** *b* **at** *t.* [047-001]

Sites and boundaries, too, may stand in the **located\_in** relation, as for example when we say that 5th Avenue is **located in** New York, or that a portion of the Franco-German boundary is **located in** the Rhein valley. Notethat *object aggregates*, *aggregate of sites* can also stand in the **located\_in** relation.

**Problem cases for the located\_in relation**

As pointed out in [52] there are problem cases for this account, in that, for example an insect located near the stem of a wine glass would be counted as **located\_in** the wine glass; similarly crumbs placed in the hole of a donut would be counted as **located\_in** the donut. Briefly, users of **located\_in** should use an intuitive test to the effect that: if *a* is not in the interior of *b* but is rather in some hole or cavity attached to *b*’s outer boundary, then *a* **located­\_in** *b* will obtain only if this hole is a fillable hole in the sense defined by Casati and Varzi [52]. The cup-shaped hole in the wine glass is fillable in this sense; not however the concave spaces around the stem.

**Chaining rules**

a(located\_in)[Axiom: for all independent continuants *a*, *b*, and *c*: if *a* **continuant\_part\_of** *b* **at** *t* & *b* **located\_in** *c* **at** *t*, then *a* **located\_in** *c* **at** *t*. [048-001]]

a(located\_in)[Axiom: for all independent continuants *a*, *b*, and *c*: if *a* **located\_in** *b* **at** *t* & *b* **continuant\_part\_of** *c* **at** *t*, then *a* **located\_in** *c* **at** *t*. [049-001]]

## 2.2 Specifically dependent continuant

a(specifically dependent continuant)[Definition: *a* is a *specifically dependent continuant =* Def. *a* is a *continuant* & for every time *t* during the course of *a*’s existence, there is some independent continuant *b* which is such that *a* **s-depends** on *b* **at** *t*. [050-001]]

as(specifically dependent continuant)[Examples: of one-sided *specifically dependent continuants*: the mass of this tomato\, the color of this tomato\, the smell of this portion of mozzarella\, the disposition of this fish to decay\, the role of being a doctor\, the function of this heart: to pump blood\, the shape of this region of space.]

as(specifically dependent continuant)[Examples: of *relational dependent continuants* (multiple bearers): John’s love for Mary, the ownership relation between John and this statue, the relation of authority between John and his subordinates.]

John’s ownership of the statue is an instance of the ownership relation. It starts to exist at a certain time and ceases to exist at some later time.

as(specifically dependent continuant)[Examples: of reciprocal *specifically dependent continuants*: the function of this key to open this lock and the reciprocally dependent disposition of this lock: to be opened by this key\; the reciprocal dependence of the role *predator* and the role *prey* as played by two organisms in a given interaction\; the reciprocal dependence of proton donors and acceptors in chemical reactions [79]. ]

Question: Are reciprocal specifically dependent continuants always realizables and never qualities?

Sub-types of *specifically dependent continuant* recognized by BFO are:



a(inheres\_in)[Definition: *a* **inheres\_in** *b* **at** *t* =Def. *a* is a *dependent continuant* & *b* is an *independent continuant* & *a* **s-depends on** *b* **at** *t*. [051-001]]

a(inheres\_in)[Domain: *specifically dependent continuant*]

a(inheres\_in)[Range: *independent continuant*]

**Inherence** is a subrelation of **s-dependence** which holds between a *dependent continuant* and an *independent continuant*. Since dependent continuants cannot migrate from one independent continuant bearer to another, it follows that if *a* **s-depends on** independent continuant*b* at some time, then *a* **s-depends on** *b* at all times at which *a* exists. Inherence is in this sense redundantly time-indexed.

For example, consider the particular instance of openness inhering in my mouth at *t* as I prepare to take a bite out of a donut, followed by a closedness at *t*+1 when I bite the donut and start chewing. The openness instance is then shortlived, and to say that **s-depends** on my mouth at all times at which it exists, means: at all times during this short life. Every time you make a fist, you make a new (instance of the universal) fist.(Every time your hand has the fist-shaped quality, there is created a new instance of the universal fist-shaped quality.)

a(s-dependence)[Axiom: If *a* **s-dependent** on something at some time, then *a* is not a *material entity.* [052-001]]

Intuitively inherenceholds only where the **s-dependent** entity or entities have no material parts. The accused in a court of law has an **s-dependent** role, but he himself is a human being, and thus not an **s-dependent** entity.

a(bearer\_of)[Definition: *a* **bearer\_of** *b* **at** *t =*Def. *b* **s-depends on** *a* & *a* is an *independent continuant* & *b* exists at *t.* [053-001]]

a(bearer\_of)[Domain: *independent continuant*]

a(bearer\_of)[Range: *specifically dependent continuant*]

**Bearer\_of** in contrast to inherence, is non-redundantly time-indexed, since if *a* is a bearer of some *b* only at some time during which *a* exists, but *b* cannot similarly inhere in *a* only at some times during which *b* exists.

See also the discussion of **has\_material\_basis\_in** below.

**No s-dependence of higher order**

BFO does not recognize **s-dependence** of higher order. Thus there are no **s-dependence** structures of this sort:

*a*

*b*

*c*

Figure 8: Higher-order dependence

If *a* is dependent on *b* and *b* is dependent on *c* then it must be that there obtains some structure as in Figure 9:

*a*

*b*

*c*

*a*

*b*

*c*

Figure 9: Reciprocal dependence and Transitive Dependence

Another way of formulating this principle is to assert

a(s-dependence)[Axiom: **s-dependence** is transitive. [114-001]]

Here *a* and *b* areboth (one-sidedly) dependent on *c* and (reciprocally) dependent on each other. Thus for BFO there are, for example, no qualities of roles; and similarly there are no roles of qualities; however, there are qualities – such as the quality of pressure and temperature of a body of gas in a certain container – which are both dependent on each other and on their common bearer.

There are no dispositions of qualities and no functions of dispositions. And there are no higher order processes in which processes themselves would change. (See the section on Process Profiles below.) In all such cases, the recommendation on developers of BFO-conformant ontologies is to seek a relevant relatumin the underlying material bearer (the *thing* or *res*).

Axiom: Qualities of qualities are qualities of the underlying bearer. [115-001]

The shape of the redness on John’s arm, for example, is not a quality of the redness, it is, like the redness itself, a quality of a certain (fiat) portion of the surface of the arm.

a(s-dependence)[Axiom: if *a* **s-depends on** *b* **at***t* & ***b* s-depends on *c*****at***t* then *a* **s-depends on** *c* **at***t*. [054-002] ]

John’s *role* of husband to Mary is dependent on Mary’s *role* of wife to John, and both are dependent on the *object aggregate* comprising John and Mary as **member parts** joined together through the *relational quality* of being married.

### 2.2.1 Quality

BFO 2.0 distinguishes two major familiars of *s-dependent continuants*, namely *qualities* and *realizable dependent continuants.* (Again, no claims are made as to the exhaustiveness of this classification.) Solubility, in order to be realized or manifested, requires a dissolving process which has some solid piece of salt or sugar as participant. Their crystalline quality, in contrast, does not stand in need of any realization process of this sort.

a(quality)[Elucidation: a *quality* is a *specifically dependent continuant* that, in contrast to roles and dispositions, does not require any further process in order to be realized. [055-001]]

a(quality)[Examples: the color of a tomato, the ambient temperature of this portion of air, the length of the circumference of your waist, the shape of your nose, the mass of this piece of gold. ]

Note that in the above list of examples we encounter a further type of dependence, turning on the fact that, for example, the color of a tomato depends in some sense on processes involving photons. This type of dependence is not part of the BFO 2.0 specification, but will be treated in the future.

*Quality* is a rigid universal;

a(quality)[Axiom: If an *entity* is a *quality* at any time that it exists, then it is a *quality* at every time that it exists. [105-001] ]

a(quality\_of)[Definition: *a* **quality\_of** *b* **at** *t =* Def. *a* is a quality & *b* is an independent continuant & *a* **s-depends\_on** *b* **at** *t*. [056-001]]

Qualities of spatial regions are restricted to qualities of size and shape. Is this true for qualities of sites also?

#### 2.2.1.1 Relational quality

There are relational qualities, which have a plurality of *independent continuants* as their bearers [6].

a(relational quality)[Definition: *a* is a *relational quality =* Def. for some independent continuants *b*, *c* and for some time *t*: *a* **quality\_of** *b* **at** *t* & *a* **quality\_of** *c* **at** *t*. [057-001]]

a(relational quality)[Examples: a marriage bond, an instance of love, an obligation between one person and another. ]

Note that this definition is not meant to be applicable to relational processes such as kissing or hitting discussed below. It is also not meant to apply to internal relations such as comparatives (*larger-than*, *heavier-than …*). Where internal relations obtain there is, in the jargon, *no extra ingredient of being*. If John is taller than Mary, then this is accounted for exclusively in terms of John’s and Mary’s respective height qualities, and in terms of the fact (not an extra entity in the BFO sense) that each of these heights instantiates a certain determinate height universal and that the totality of such universals form a certain linear order. (If Mary is a *human being*thenthere is similarly no extra entity – for example, no instance of the relation of instantiation – that is needed to make this true.)

### 2.2.2 Realizable entity

a(realizable entity)[Elucidation: To say that *a* is a *realizable entity* is to say that *a* is a *specifically dependent continuant* that inheres in some *material entity* and is of a type instances of which are **realized** in *processes* of a correlated type. [058-001]]

a(realizable entity)[Examples: the role of being a doctor, the function of your reproductive organs, the disposition of your blood to coagulate, the disposition of this piece of metal to conduct electricity.]

Here examples of correlated process types are, respectively: diagnosing, inseminating, formation of a clot, transmission of an electric current.

## Relation of realization

a(realization)[Elucidation: to say that *a* **realizes** *b* **at** *t* is to assert that

there is some *material entity* *c*

& *a* is a *process* in which **has participant** *c* **at** temporal interval *t*

& *b* is a disposition or role of which *c* is **bearer at** *t*

& the type instantiated by *a* is correlated with the type instantiated by *b*. [059-002]]

a(realization)[Theorem: if a realizable entity *a* is realized in a process *p*, then *p* stands in the **has\_participant** relation to the bearer of *a*. [106-002] ]

a(realization)[Axiom: All *realizable dependent continuants* have *material entities* or *sites* as their **bearers**. [060-001] ]

There are reciprocal *realizable dependent continuants* (e.g. husband/wife; complementary dispositions (for example of key and lock), as described in [28, 79]).

**Role (Externally-Grounded Realizable entity)**

a(role)[Elucidation: *a* is a *role* means:

*a* is a *realizable entity*

& *a* exists because there is some single bearer that is in some special physical, social, or institutional set of circumstances in which this bearer does not have to be

& *a* isnot such that, if it ceases to exist, then the physical make-up of the bearer is thereby changed. [061-001]]

as(role)[Examples:

* the priest role \
* the student role\
* the role of subject in a clinical trial\
* the role of a stone in marking a boundary\
* the role of a building in serving as a military target]

‘Role’ is another name for what we might call an extrinsic or externally-grounded realizable entity. An entity has a certain role not because of the way it itself is, but because of something that happens or obtains externally, for example a student is enrolled in an institution of learning, a patient is enrolled in a clinical trial.

There are no relational roles. Thus each role is the role of exactly one bearer.

**Optionality of Roles**

Because a role is not a consequence of the in-built physical make-up of its bearer, roles are *optional* in the sense that the bearer of a role can lose this role without being thereby physically changed. If the role ceases to exist, then it is not the case that the bearer must also cease to exist. The bearer is not existentially dependent on the role.

Roles characteristically involve some form of social ascription or imputation.

**Having a role vs. playing a role**

An entity can play a role, as when a passenger plays the role of a pilot on a commercial plane in an emergency, or a pyramidal neuron plays the role occupied by a damaged stellar neuron in the brain; but neither the person nor the pyramidal neuron have those roles.

#### Disposition (Internally-Grounded Realizable entity)

a(disposition)[Elucidation: *a* is a disposition means:

*a* is a realizable entity

& *a* is such that if it ceases to exist, then its bearer is physically changed,

& a’s realization occurs when and because this bearer is in some special physical circumstances,

& this realization occurs in virtue of the bearer’s physical make-up. [062-001]]

as(disposition)[Examples:

* an atom of element X has the disposition to decay to an atom of element Y\
* the cell wall is disposed to filter chemicals in endocitosis and exocitosis\
* certain people have a predisposition to colon cancer\
* children are innately disposed to categorize objects in certain ways.]

There are no relational dispositions. Thus each role is the role of exactly one bearer.

Unlike roles, dispositions are not optional. If an entity is a certain way, then it has a certain disposition, and if its physical makeup is changed then it may lose that disposition. A disposition can for this reason also be referred to as an *internally-grounded realizable entity*. That is, it is a realizable entity that is a reflection of the (in-built or acquired) physical make-up of the *material entity* in which it **inheres**.

a(disposition)[Axiom: If *a* is a *realizable entity* then for all *t* at which *a* exists, *a* **s-depends** on some *material entity* **at** *t.* [063-001]]

Dispositions exist along a strength continuum. Weaker forms of disposition are realized in only a fraction of triggering cases. These forms occur in a significant number of *entities* of a similar type.

Each disposition type is associated with one or more characteristic realization process types – types which are instantiated by those processes in which the respective disposition instance is realized. Dispositions may also be associated with characteristic trigger process types – instantiated by processes (for example of being dropped on a hard surface) in which they are realized. The term ‘causality’ is often applied to refer to such trigger-and-realization process pairs. BFO does not yet incorporate a theory of causality, though it is presumed that any such theory will take such process pairs – alongside our treatment of types of causality unity above – as its starting point.

Diseases are dispositions according to OGMS [27]. We are referring to disposition also when we consider genetic and other risk factors for specific diseases. These are predispositions to disease – in other words they are dispositions to acquire certain further dispositions. The realization of such a predisposition consists in processes which change the physical makeup of its bearer in such a way that parts of this bearer then serve as the physical basis for a disease.

#### Function

a(function)[Elucidation: A *function* is a disposition that exists in virtue of the bearer’s physical make-up and this physical make-up is something the bearer possesses because it came into being, either through evolution (in the case of natural biological entities) or through intentional design (in the case of artifacts), in order to realize processes of a certain sort. [064-001]]

as(function)[Examples:

* the function of amylase in saliva to break down starch into sugar
* the function of a hammer to drive in nails
* the function of a heart pacemaker to regulate the beating of a heart through electricity]

Functions are realized in processes called functionings. Each function has a bearer with a specific type of physical make-up. This is something which, in the biological case, the bearer is of a type which has naturally evolved to carry this function (as in a hypothalamus secreting hormones). In the artifact case, it is something which the bearer is of a type which is the result of design (as in an Erlenmeyer flask designed to hold liquid) or also (as in the case of penicillin) has been deliberately selected for. The cavity (site) in the interior of the flask does not have a function in its own right, but only by inheritance from its material host.

It is not accidental or arbitrary that a given eye has the function to see or that a given screwdriver has been designed and constructed with the function of fastening screws. Rather, these functions are integral to these *entities* in virtue of the fact that the latter have evolved, or been constructed, to have a corresponding physical make-up. Thus the heart’s function is to pump blood, and not merely to produce thumping sounds. The latter are by-products of the heart’s proper functioning. The screwdriver’s function is in addition bound together with the disposition of the screw: the two are reciprocally dependent on each other (a case of reciprocal generic dependence – see below – since the screwdriver function can be realized with the aid of many different screws).

Like dispositions of other sorts, a function is an internally-grounded realizable entity: it is such that, if it ceases to exist, then its bearer is physically changed. In some cases an entity may preserve its function even while it is physically changed in ways which make it unable to function. For a lung or attic fan to be non-functioning is an indication that the physical make-up of these things has changed – in the case of the lung perhaps because of a cancerous lesion; in the case of the attic fan because of a missing screw. But these entities then still *have their functions*; it is simply that they are unable to exercise these functions until the physical defect is rectified, for example through clinical intervention or mechanical repair. The entities would *lose* their function only if they were changed drastically, for example, in the case of the lung, through the death of the host organism.

We have distinguished two varieties of function, artifactual function and biological function. These are not asserted subtypes of BFO:*function* however, since the same function – for example: to pump, to transport – can exist both in artifacts and in biological entities. The asserted subtypes of function that would be needed in order to yield a separate monoheirarchy are not artifactual function, biological function, etc., but rather transporting function, pumping function, etc.

**Defined relations**

a(role\_of)[Definition: *a* **role\_of** *b* **at** *t =*Def. *a* is a *role* and *a* **inheres\_in** *b* **at** *t*. [065-001]]

a(disposition\_of)[Definition: *a* **disposition\_of** *b* **at** *t =*Def. *a* is a *disposition* and *a* **inheres\_in** *b* **at** *t*. [066-001] ]

a(function\_of)[Definition: *a* **function\_of** *b* **at** *t =*Def. *a* is a *function* and *a* **inheres\_in** *b* **at** *t*. [067-001] ]

a(has\_role)[Definition: *a* **has\_role** *b* **at** *t =*Def. *b* **role\_of** *a* **at** *t*. [068-001] ]

a(has\_disposition)[Definition: *a* has\_disposition *b* at *t =*Def. *b* disposition\_of *a* at *t*. [069-001] ]

a(has\_function)[Definition: *a* has\_function *b* at *t =*Def. *b* function\_of *a* at *t*. [070-001] ]

**Material basis**

Dispositions (and thus also functions) are introduced into BFO in order to provide a means for referring to what we can think of as the potentials or powers of things in the world without the need to quantify over putative ‘possible worlds’ or ‘possible objects’. Whenever a disposition exists, then it is a disposition of some thing, namely its material bearer. Dispositions exist in every case because there is some corresponding portion of reality that is non-dispositional in nature, which we call the material basis of the disposition. This portion of reality is not in every case identical with the bearer of the disposition. The relevant relation can be elucidated as follows:

a(has\_material\_basis)[Elucidation: *a* **has\_material\_basis** *b* **at** *t* means:

*a* is a *disposition*

& *b* is a *material entity*

& there is some *c* **bearer\_of** *a* **at** *t*

& *b* **continuant\_part\_of** *c* at *t*

& *c* **has\_disposition** *d* at *t* because *b* **continuant\_part\_of** *c* at *t*. [071-001] ]

as(has\_material\_basis)[Examples: the material basis of John’s disposition to cough is the viral infection in John’s upper respiratory tract\; the material basis of the disposition to wear unevenly of John’s tires is the worn suspension of his car. ]

### 2.3 Generically dependent continuant

a(g-depends on)[Elucidation: *a* **g-depends on** *b* **at** *t*1 means: *a* exists **at** *t*1 and *b* exists **at** *t*1

& for some type *B* it holds that (*b* **instantiates** *B* at *t*1)

& necessarily, for all *t* (if *a* exists **at *t*** then some **instance\_of** *B* exists **at** *t*)

& not (*a* **s-depends\_on** *b* **at** *t*1). [072-002]]

a(g-depends on)[Domain: generically dependent continuant]

a(g-depends on)[Range: independent continuant]

a(g-depends on)[Axiom: if *a* **g-depends on** *b* at some time *t*, then *a* **g-depends** on something at all times at which it exists. [073-001] ]

a(generically dependent continuant)[Definition: *a i*s a *generically dependent continuant* = Def. *a* is a *continuant* that **generically depends** on one or more other *entities*. [074-001] ]

as(generically dependent continuant)[Examples: the pdf file on your laptop, the pdf file that is a copy thereof on my laptop\; the sequence of this protein molecule; the sequence that is a copy thereof in that protein molecule. ]

As we saw, BFO’s *specifically dependent continuants* are subject to the axiom of non-migration – they cannot migrate from one bearer to another. *Generically dependent continuants*, in contrast, can in a sense migrate, namely through a process of exact copying which allows, for example, the very same information artifact to be saved to multiple storage devices.

We can think of *generically dependent continuants*, intuitively, as complex continuant patterns (complex qualities) of the sort created by authors or designers, or (in the case of DNA sequences) through the processes of evolution. Further examples of *generically dependent continuants* include: the chessboard pattern, the Coca Cola logo, the pattern of a traffic sign. Each such pattern exists only if it is concretized in some counterpart *specifically dependent continuant* – the pattern of black and white squares on this wooden chessboard here before me; the pattern of red and white swirls on the label of this Coca Cola bottle; the pattern of paint on this traffic signboard.

Such patterns can be highly complex. A certain pattern (of letters of the alphabet and associated punctuation and spacing) which is a work of literature is concretized in the patterns of ink marks in this and that particular *copy* of the work. When you create a novel then in addition to creating an **s-dependent** pattern of inkmarks on your manuscript, you create also a particular instance of the *generically dependent continuant* type *novel*. When you print further copies in book form, then you create multiple particular instances of the *independent continuant* type *book.*

## Relation of concretization

a(concretization)[Elucidation: *a* **concretizes** *b* **at** *t* means*:* *a* is a specifically *dependent continuant* & *b* is a *generically dependent continuant* & for some *material entity c, a* **s-depends** on *c* **at** *t* and *b* **g-depends** on *c* **at** *t*, and if *b* migrates from bearer *c* to another bearer *d* than a copy of *a* will be created in *d.* [075-001]]

The data in your database are patterns instantiated as **s-dependent** quality instances in your hard drive. The database itself is an aggregate of such patterns. When you create the database you create a particular instance of the *generically dependent continuant* type *database*. Each entry in the database is an instance of the *generically dependent continuant* type *datum*.

Data, databases, pdf files, novels, and other information artifacts are thus analogous to other created artifacts such as paintings or sculptures. They differ from the latter, however, in that, once they have been created, they can exist in many copies. These many copies exist because of a templating process. Only where such a templating process exists do we have the sorts of patterns which are *generically dependent* continuants.

*Generically dependent continuants* can be **concretized** in multiple ways; you may concretize a poem as a pattern of memory traces in your head. You may concretize a piece of software by installing it in your computer. You may concretize a recipe which you find in a cookbook by turning it into a plan which exists as a *realizable dependent continuant* in your head.

a(concretization)[Axiom: if *a* **g-depends** on *b* at some time *t*, then there is some *c*,which isa **concretization** of *a* and which **s-depends** on *b* **at** *t.* [076-001]]

**Works of Music and Experimental Protocols**

In the case of a work of music such as Beethoven’s *9th Symphony*, there is a certain abstract pattern, a *generically dependent continuant*, which we shall call #9. #9 is an **instance** of the type *symphony*, which is itself a subtype of the type *musical work*. #9 is **concretized** in certain *specifically dependent continuant* patterns of ink marks that we find in printed copies of the *score*, or (for example) in certain *specifically dependent continuant* patterns of grooves in vinyl disks. The score is an **instance** of the *generically dependent continuant* type *plan specification*, specifying how to create a corresponding *musical performance*. This *plan specification* is **concretized** in distributed fashion in the form of a network of subplans distributed across the minds of the conductor and the members of the orchestra, together forming a plan to create a musical performance of #9. This complex *realizable dependent continuant* is then **realized** when conductor and orchestra work together to create a certain pattern of air vibrations conforming to the score and audible to an audience through certain associated patterns of excitations of their auditory nerves. One consequence of the above is that we cannot in fact listen to Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, but rather only to performances thereof.

Analogously, when a research team decides to perform an experiment following a published protocol, the protocol itself is a *generically dependent continuant* **instance** of the type *plan specification*. The leader of the research team concretizes this protocol in her mind to create that specifically dependent realizable *continuant* which is her plan for carrying out this experiment. At the same time she creates a series of sub-protocols, which are plan specifications for each of her various team members. Each of the latter is then concretized in the mind of the appropriate team member as a plan for carrying out corresponding subactivities within the experiment. The experiment itself is the total *realization* of these plans, having outputs such as publications, databases, and so forth, as described in the [Ontology for Biomedical Investigations](http://obi-ontology.org/page/Main_Page) (OBI).

# 3. Occurrent

a(occurrent)[Elucidation: An *occurrent* is an entity that unfolds itself in time or it is the instantaneous boundary of such an entity (for example a beginning or an ending) or it is a temporal or spatiotemporal region which such an entity occupies*.* [077-001]]

The realm of occurrents is less pervasively marked by the presence of natural units than is the case in the realm of independent continuants. Thus there is here no counterpart of ‘object’. In BFO 1.0 ‘process’ served as such a counterpart. In version 2.0 ‘process’ is the occurrent counterpart of ‘material entity’. Those natural – as contrasted with engineered, which here means: deliberately executed – units which do exist in the realm of occurrents are typically either parasitic on the existence of natural units on the continuant side, or they are fiat in nature. Thus we can count *lives*; we can count football games; we can count chemical reactions performed in experiments or in chemical manufacturing. We cannot count the processes taking place, for instance, in an episode of insect mating behavior.

Even where natural units are identifiable, for example cycles in a cyclical process such as the beating of a heart or an organism’s sleep/wake cycle, the processes in question form a sequence with no discontinuities (temporal gaps) of the sort that we find for instance where billiard balls or zebrafish or planets are separated by clear spatial gaps. Lives of organisms are process units, but they too unfold in a continuous series from other, prior processes such as fertilization, and they unfold in turn in continuous series of post-life processes such as post-mortem decay. Clear examples of boundaries of processes are almost always of the fiat sort (midnight, a time of death as declared in an operating theater or on a death certificate, the initiation of a state of war).

Processes can be arbitrarily summed and divided. In particular, we can identify sub-processes – temporal parts – which are fiat segments occupying constituent temporal intervals of the temporal interval occupied by the process as a whole. Occurents are processes, or the boundaries of processes, or temporal or spatial temporal regions.

## Relation of temporal parthood

We introduced above the relation **occurrent\_part\_of**. We can now identify in its terms the sub-relation **temporal\_part\_of** which holds between two occurrents when the former is a phase or subprocess (a slice or segment) of the latter:

a(temporal\_part\_of)[Definition: *a* **temporal\_part\_of** *b* =Def.

*a* **occurrent\_part\_of** *b* &

& for some *temporal region r*, *a* **occupies** *r*

& for all occurrents *c*, *r*′ (if *c* **occupies** *r*′ & *r* **occurrent\_part\_of***r*

then (*c* **occurrent\_part\_of** *a* iff *c* **occurrent\_part\_of** *b*)). [078-001]]

Thus *a* is exactly the restriction of *b* to *r*. The process of a footballer’s heart beating once is an **occurrent part** but not a **temporal part** of a game of football.

as(temporal\_part\_of)[Examples: your heart beating from 4pm to 5pm today is a **temporal part** of the *process* of your heart beating\; the 4th year of your life is a **temporal part** of your life\. The first quarter of a game of football is a **temporal part**ofthe whole game. ]

a(temporal\_part\_of)[Definition: *a* **proper\_temporal\_part\_of** *b* =Def. *a* **temporal\_part\_of** *b* & not (*a* = *b*). [116-001]]

a(temporal\_part\_of)[Axiom: if *a* **proper\_temporal\_part\_of** *b*, then there is some *c* which is a**proper\_temporal\_part\_of** *b*and which shares no parts with *a.* [117-001]]

Temporal parts are often referred to as as stages or phases of an occurrent.

a(occurrent)[Axiom: *a* is an *occurrent* entity iff *a* is an entity that has **temporal parts**. [079-001]]

Since *temporal regions* are **temporal parts** (though not **temporal proper parts**) of themselves, this means, in particular, that *zero-dimensional temporal regions* (temporal instants) are also *occurrents*.

Subtypes of *occurrent* are:

process

process profile

process boundary

temporal region

zero-dimensional temporal region

one-dimensional temporal region

spatiotemporal region

**Projection relations**

a(projects\_onto)[Elucidation: To say that each spatiotemporal region *r* **projects\_onto** some temporal region *t* is to say that *t* serves as the temporal extension of *r.* [080-001]]

a(projects\_onto)[Elucidation: To say that spatiotemporal region *r* **projects\_onto** spatial region *s* **at** *t* is to say that *s* serves as the spatial extent of *r* **at** *t.* [081-001]]

Every spatiotemporal region projects onto some time region, and at every time instant within its extent onto some spatial region (all of this relative to some frame).

## Occupies relation

a(occupies)[Elucidation: a**occupies** r. This is a primitive relation between an *occurrent* and a *temporal* *or spatiotemporal region* which it exactly occupies. [082-001]]

The **occupies** relation is the counterpart, on the *occurrent* side, of the relation **located\_at.**

**Histories**

The *history* of a *material entity* is the totality of processes taking place in the spatiotemporal region **occupied** by the *entity*, including processes on the surface of the entity or within the cavities to which it serves as host. (See the OGMS definition of ‘[*extended organism*](http://berkeleybop.org/obo/OGMS:0000087)’ and also the treatment of embryontology in [13].) The history of a *material entity* will include, on the above account, the movements of neutrinos within the interior of the entity as they pass through.

Synonyms of *history* are:‘course’, ‘trajectory’. In the case of organisms histories are what we normally call ‘lives’ [15]. In the case of sentient organisms lives will include also the experiences of the organism.

A revision is being contemplated for a future version of BFO which would define the history of an entity as the sum of processes in which that entity is the major participant (or ‘agent’).

The relation between a material entity and its history should be one-to-one. Histories are thus very special kinds of processes, cince not only is it the case that, for any material entity *a*, there is exactly one process which is the history of *a*, but also is it the case that for every history there is exactly one material entity which it is the history of.

Histories are additive. Thus for any two material entities *a* and *b,* thehistory of the sum of *a* and *b* is the sum of their histories.

## 3.1. Process

a(process)[Definition: *p* is a *process* = Def. *a* is an *occurrent* that has **temporal proper parts** and for some time *t*, *a* **s-depends** on some material entity **at** *t*. [083-002]]

as(process)[Examples: the life of an organism\, a process of sleeping\, a process of cell-division, \ a beating of the heart\, a process of meiosis\, the course of a disease\, the flight of a bird\, your process of aging. ]

Just as there are relational qualities, so also there are relational processes, which **s-depend** on multiple material entities as their relata.

Examples of relational processes: John seeing Mary [1, 4], a moving body’s crashing into a wall, a game of snooker, the videotaping of an explosion.

### 3.1.1 Process boundary

a(process boundary)[Definition: *p* is a *process boundary* =Def. *p* is a **temporal part** of a*process* &  *p* has no**proper temporal parts.** [084-001]]

a(process boundary)[Axiom:Every process boundary **occupies** *zero-dimensional temporal region.* [085-001] ]

a(process boundary)[Example: the boundary between the 2nd and 3rd year of your life. ]

## Relation of participation

a(has\_participant)[Elucidation**: has\_participant is an** instance-level relation between a process, a continuant, and a time at which the continuant participates in some way in the occurrent. [086-002]]

a(has\_participant)[Domain**:** process]

a(has\_participant)[Range**:** *independent continuant*, *specifically dependent continuant*, *generically dependent continuant*]

a(has\_participant)[Axiom: if *a* **has\_participant** *b***at** *t* then *a* is an *occurrent*. [087-001] ]

a(has\_participant)[Axiom: if *a* **has\_participant** *b***at** *t* then *b* is a *continuant*. [088-001] ]

a(has\_participant)[Axiom: if *a* **has\_participant** *b***at** *t* then *b* exists **at** *t*. [089-001] ]

**Participation always involves some material entity**

a(has\_participant)[Axiom: if *a* **has\_participant** *b***at** *t* & *b* is a *specifically* *dependent continuant*, then

there is some *material entity c*, *b* **s-depends on** *c* **at** *t* & *a* **s-depends on** *c* **at** *t*. [090-002] ]

a(has\_participant)[Axiom: if *a* **has\_participant** *b***at** *t* & *b* is a *generically dependent continuant*, then

there is some *material entity c*, *b* **g-depends on** *c* **at** *t* & *a* **s-depends on** *c* **at** *t.* [091-002] ]

Thus both specifically and generically dependent entities participate in processes – for example when a file is copied from one hard drive to another – but only *via* the bearers of their specifically dependent concretizations. The underlying idea is that when something changes, then a material entity changes. All change supervenes in this sense on material change.

Spatial regions do not participate in processes.

On the participation of qualities in processes see the treatment of qualitative change, below.

### 3.1.2 Process profile

## The Ontological Square



## It will be important for our argument which follows that BFO generalizes Zemach’s idea of a continuant entity by allowing not only *things* (such as pencils and people) as continuants, but also entities that are *dependent* on things, such as qualities and dispositions. BFO thereby draws not merely on Aristotle’s distinction between universals and particulars, but also on his division of substances and accidents, which reappears in BFO as the opposition between independent and dependent continuants. Determinable and Determinate Quality Universals

Qualities, in BFO, are seen as entities in their own right (of the sort referred to elsewhere in the literature as tropes, or individual accidents). They are entities which are dependent on the independent continuant entities (such as planets, organisms, molecules) which are their bearers.

Qualities instantiate quality universals, which are divided into *determinable* (such as *temperature*, *length* and *mass*) and *determinate* (such as: 37.0°C *temperature*, 1.6 meter *length*, and 4 kg *mass*). (Anticipating our discussion of ‘process profile universals’ later in this paper, we might refer to determinate universals as quality profiles.) [84]

Determinable quality universals are *rigid*, in the sense that, if a determinable quality universal is exemplified by a particular bearer at any time during which this bearer exists, then it is exemplified at every such time. John’s temperature (a certain quality instance inhering in John from the beginning to the end of his existence instantiates the same determinable universal temperature from the beginning to the end of John’s existence. Determinate quality universals, on the other hand, are non-rigid: the same quality instance may instantiate different determinate universals at different times, as in Figure 3.



Figure 3: John's temperature and some of the determinable and determinate universals it instantiates at different times

We note in passing that the determinate temperature universals are independent of whatever system of units is used to describe them. The universals here referred to in terms of degrees Celsius would be instantiated even in a world in which the Celsius or any other system of units had never been established. We note also that for certain families of qualities we can draw a distinction between determinate qualities reflecting what we can think of as absolute and relative values, respectively. (The Kelvin scale is a scale of absolute temperature values in this sense.)

When clinicians speak for example of temperatures as falling within some ‘normal’ range, then they are referring to relative values of another sort. A single person has a normal temperature only relative to (the temperature qualities of) persons in one or other larger population (for example healthy persons at rest in an indoor environment, persons recovering from pneumonia, and so on).

# Processes in BFO

Our primary concern here is with BFO’s treatment of continuants, which include processes, process boundaries (for example beginnings and endings), and the temporal intervals and temporal instants which processes and process boundaries occupy. Because processes are extended in time, this means that, for each process, we can identify arbitrarily many sub-processes occupying sub-intervals of the temporal interval occupied by the process as a whole.

The assertion that one entity is an occurrent part of a second entity means simply that both are occurrents and that the first is a part of the second. The sum of processes taking place in your upper body during the course of your life is a proper continuant part of the sum of all processes taking place in your whole body during the same interval of time. There is however a narrower relation which holds between one occurrent and another when the former is exactly the restriction of the latter to a temporal region that is a proper part of the temporal region occupied by the latter. When one entity is a temporal part of a second entity, we can then write

*a* temporal\_part\_of*b* =Def.

*a* occurrent\_part\_of *b* &

& for some temporal region *r* (*a* occupies*r*

& for all occurrents *c* (if *c* occupies*r* then

(*c* occurrent**\_**part\_of *a* iff *c* occurrent\_part\_of *b*)))

The first quarter of a game of football is a temporal part of the whole game. The process of a footballer’s heart beating once is an occurrent part, but not a temporal part, of the whole game. The process of your heart beating from 4pm to 5pm today is a temporal part of the entire process of your heart beating. The 4th year of your life is a temporal part of your life, as is the process boundary which separates the 3rd and 4th years of your life.

## 4.1 The Problem of Process Measurement Data

When BFO is used to annotate the results of measurements of qualities, then in a typical case, for example the measurement of your height, the following elements can be distinguished:

1. the BFO:object that is you,
2. the BFO:quality that is your height,
3. the BFO:two-dimensional spatial region that is the distance from the top of your head to the base of your feet that is measured when we measure your height,

The result of this measurement is referred to by means of

1. the BFO:generically dependent continuant expression: ‘1.7 m tall’.

Each item on this list is unproblematically identifiable as instantiating a BFO category. (4) is an information artifact, for instance a record in some file on your laptop. The record is said to be ‘generically dependent’ upon its bearer, since it can be transferred to another laptop through a process of exact copying. The temperature of your laptop, in contrast, is specifically dependent on the laptop, since the temperature of a body (the temperature trope, this specific instance of the universal *temperature*), cannot migrate to another body.

When we attempt to develop a corresponding analysis in BFO terms of the data resulting from measurements of processes, however, then a problem arises. In the case of a body moving with constant speed, for example, we can here distinguish at least the following elements:

1. the BFO:object that is moving,
2. the BFO:process of moving,
3. the BFO:temporal region occupied by this process,
4. the BFO:spatiotemporal region occupied by this process (path of the motion),
5. the speed of the process,

where (5) is referred to by means of

1. the BFO:generically dependent continuant expression: ‘3.12 meters per second’.

Each of items (1)-(4) and (6) instantiates a readily identifiable BFO category. Item (5), on the other hand, presents a problem, since the obvious candidate category of *process quality*, a counterpart on the occurrent side of BFO:quality on the side of continuants, is not recognized by BFO. To see why not, consider the following scenario, which is designed to illustrate the contrasting logico-ontological orders governing the continuant and occurrent realms as BFO conceives them. [14]

## 4.2 Why Processes Do Not Change

Imagine, first, John, a BFO:object, who, on a certain day, either does or does not go on a one-month diet. In the former case John’s determinable weight quality will decrease; in the latter case this quality will remain constant. In either case John will remain at the end of the month *the same object* as he was on the day in question. Both John and his weight are first class entities, thus instantiating universals represented in corresponding BFO-conformant ontologies.

In the case of a process – for example John’s *life* – in contrast, no parallel scenario is imaginable. Of course we can imagine John’s lifeas varying under two different scenarios – *life with diet*; *life without diet*. But then, however small the variation from one imagined life to another, we are here imagining two different lives.

As Galton and Mizoguchi point out [53], persuasive arguments have been presented in the literature to the effect that processes cannot change, because processes *are* changes (they are changes in those continuant entities which are their participants). Certainly we have ways of speaking whose surface grammar suggests that processes can change. But when we say, for example, *let’s speed up this process*, then what we mean is: let’s ensure that some on-going process is one which will be quicker than the process that would have occurred had we not made some specific extra effort.

Because independent continuants may gain and lose parts over time, the instance-level parthood relation on the side of continuants is *indexed by time*. The instance-level parthood relation on the side of occurrents, in contrast, holds always in a non-indexed way. Certainly a process can have as successive temporal parts subprocesses which differ in manifold ways. But it is here the participants in the process that change – and these participants are in every case continuants.

Some continuant universals, such as *larva* or *fetus* are non-rigid, in the sense that If some organism *a* instantiates the universal *larva* at *t*, then it does not follow that *a* instantiates*larva* at all times at which *a* exists, since *larva* is a non-rigid universal. Universals on the side of occurrents, in contrast, are always rigid, so that if an occurrent instantiates a universal at some time, then it instantiates this universal at all times. [16] This is because, while continuants can change their type from one time to the next (as when an embryo becomes a fetus, which in turn becomes an infant, no similar sort of change can be identified on the side of occurrents.

## 4.3 First Approximation to a Solution of the Problem of Process Measurement Data

A process of running can be described as increasing speed continuously over a certain interval of time. Butagain, it is more precisely the moving body that is changing, and not the process in which that body participates. Now we can, of course, talk as if, given, say, a running with speed *v*, then there is some attribute of this process in addition to the running itself – namely the attribute that it is a process of increasing speed. And if BFO is to serve the needs of scientists in providing the basis for common vocabularies to be used in annotating measurement information, then it is of course essential that BFO provides some simple means for annotating attributions of this sort, just as it provides the means to annotate attributions of qualities on the side of continuants.

Our argument is that, for occurrents, such attributions are *just a way of speaking:* there is no extra first-class entity, *in addition to the running process itself*, which makes them true. But how, then, do we respond to the need on the part of the users of BFO to annotate data deriving from measurements which have processes as their targets?

Our response is, in first approximation, very simple: when we predicate, for instance, ‘has speed 3.12 m/s’, to a certain process of motion, then we are asserting not that that the process in question *has some special quality* (which the same process, in another scenario, might conceivably have lacked); rather, we are asserting that this process *is of a certain special type*. Thus an assertion to the effect that

1. motion *p* has speed *v*

is analogous, not to:

1. rabbit *r* has weight *w*,

but rather to:

1. rabbit *r* instance\_ofuniversal *rabbit.*

(1), in other words, should be interpreted as being of the form:

(4) motion *p* instance\_of universal: *motion with speed v.*

This treatment of attribution in terms of instantiation reflects standard policy throughout the BFO ontology – part of the BFO strategy to maintain its ontological simplicity. There are no qualities of occurrents, in BFO, just as there are no qualities of qualities, and also no qualities of spatial or temporal regions. Leaving aside the single case of qualities of independent continuants, attributions in BFO are quite generally treated in terms of the relation of instantiation, as in Table 2:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| spatial region *r* has volume *w* | *r* instance\_of universal *region with volume w* |
| height quality *q* has value 2 meters | *q* projects onto one-dimensional spatial region *r* and *r* instance of universal 1 meter long *one-dimensional spatial region* |
| temporal region *t* has duration *d* | *t* instance\_of universal *temporal region with duration d* |
| process *p* has duration *d* | process *p* occupies temporal region *t* and *t* instance\_of universal *temporal region with duration d* |
| temperature quality *q* has value 63° Celsius | *q* instance\_of universal 63° Celsius *temperature quality* |

Table 2: Examples of attributions in BFO

## 4.4 Processes as Dependent Entities



Processes themselves stand to the independent continuants which are their participants as qualities stand to the independent continuants which are their bearers. Our strategy is to use the instantiation relation between process instances and process universals as basis for an account of how process attributions relate to the underlying reality. To make an approach along these lines work, however, we will need to find a way to do justice to the fact that the processes with which experimenters have to deal are typically highly complex in nature. A running process, for example, might simultaneously make true assertions to the effect that it is not merely an instance of determinable universals such as:

*running process*

*constant speed running process*

*cardiovascular exercise process*

*air-displacement process*

*compression sock testing process*

but also of quantitatively determinate universals such as

*running process* of 30 minute duration

3.12 m/s *motion process*

9.2 calories per minute *energy burning process*

30.12 liters per kilometer *oxygen utilizing process*

and so on.

That processes involve change is then reflected in the fact that some of the universals on this list may hold non-rigidly; thus John’s process of running may be a 9.2 calories per minute energy burning process at one time and an 8.7 calories per minute energy burning process at another.

A treatment of process attributions along the given lines brings a problem for BFO, however, since it would seem to imply a conflict with the principle of pairwise disjointness principle enunciated above.

## 4.5 An Amended Proposal

How, then, are we to do justice to the need to annotate data in which speed and other process measurement data are ascribed to processes? To see the lines of a solution considerFigure 4, which illustrates the cardiac events occurring in the left ventricle in a single beating of a human heart. This figure tells us that each successive beating of the heart is such as to involve (at least) six different sorts of physiological processes, corresponding to measurements along the six distinct dimensions of *aortic pressure*, *atrial pressure*, *ventricular pressure*, *ventricular volume*, *electrical activity*, and *voltage*, respectively.(Here voltage is used as a proxy for the intensity of sound.) ([85].



Figure 4. A Wiggers diagram, showing the cardiac events occurring in the left ventricle http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardiac\_cycle.

The figure tells us further that, when measuring activity in a complex system such as a human organism, it is variations only along specific structural dimensionsof the corresponding whole process to which our measuring processes and the resultant measurement data relate. In the *running* case, these different measuring processes are directed to structural dimensions within the whole process pertaining to *speed of motion*, *energy consumed*, *oxygen utilized*, and so forth*.* In each case we focus on some one structural dimension and ignore, or strip away in a process of selective abstraction, all other dimensions within the whole process.

When measuring processes selective abstraction yields in the simplest possible case representations of sequences of qualities. Such sequences of qualities are one simple example of what, in what follows, we shall call *process profiles*. When we measure, for example, the *process of temperature increase* in patient John, then John himself is the bearer of the temperature qualities that we measure and record on John’s temperature chart. And when we measure John’s growth process by taking measurements of his height and weight at regular intervals, then there, too, it is John who is the bearer of the qualities that we measure and record. Process profiles of this simple sort can be represented by means of a graph in which measures of a certain quality are plotted against time.

## 4.6 Reciprocal Dependence among Qualities and Their Parts

When we measure continuants, too, there is a similar process of selective abstraction, all yields representations of *qualities* (of height, mass, and so on). In the realm of colour qualities we can distinguish three dimensions of variation, corresponding to three inseparable parts of hue, brightness and saturation which can be measured independently. An instance of colour‑hue cannot of its nature exist, except as bound up with some instance of brightness and saturation; instances of brightness and saturation, similarly, cannot exist except as bound up with some specific instance of colour hue [45]. This yields a dependence structure of the sort depicted in Figure 5. [3, 20]

Figure 5: Three-sided reciprocal dependence of the three instance-level parts (*a*, *b*, *c*) of a colour instance: *hue* (α), *brightness* (β) and *saturation* (γ).

The parts represented in this Figure can be, again, separated out by the observer through a process of selective attention – as when we measure the saturation of a colour sample and ignore its hue and brightness – but they cannot exist except in the context of some whole of the given sort.

## 4.7 Reciprocal Dependence among Processes and Their Parts

We can identify dependence relations among processes and their parts of a variety of different sorts. When a key is used to open a lock, for example, then the movement of key and lock form a reciprocally dependent process pair, and something similar holds when a pair of boxers are sparring in the ring, or a pair of dancers are moving together across the dance floor.

For many families of processes, for example of human metabolism or physiology, complex repertoires of process profile universals have been identified, and it is instances of such universals that are represented in many of the assertions clinicians make when reporting process measurements in the form of time-series graphs (medical charts) of, for example, temperature, respiration or pulse rate. (See the [Vital Sign Ontology](http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~ag33/vso.html).)

Every process is embedded within a series of larger process wholes, each nested within yet larger process wholes. Thus when a billiard ball is moving across a table then we can focus on the ball’s motion relative to the table, but we can also focus on the larger process is the motion of the body-table system relative to the motion of the earth; we can focus on the motion of the body-table-earth system relative to the movement of the sun; and so forth.

Human physiological processes, too, are embedded within a series of larger wholes in this way. When studying the kidney, for example, physiologists may investigate (for example): processes within the interior of the kidney, interactions between the kidney and other parts of the urogenital system, interactions between this system and other bodily systems, and so on.

The physiologist may study kinetic, hydraulic, electrical or chemical processes extending across smaller and larger wholes, for example when investigating pharmacokinetic interactions between the kidney and drug molecules within its compartments, or when investigating photodermatological interactions which occur when the epidermis is exposed to sunlight.

Physiologist may be interested in the processes in a single organism, but they may be interested also in this single organism as part of one or other larger whole which includes an entire population of organisms of a relevant similar type (all humans, all human babies of a given birthweight, all athletes, …). *Normal processes* are defined for this larger population (as *normal qualities* were defined above), and deviations from this norm are defined for the single organism relative thereto. nature when the organism is undergoing drug treatment, or processes of a photodermatological sort when the organism is exposed to sunlight.

# Process Profiles

A special subtype of such reciprocal dependence among process parts arises in cases such as are illustrated in Figure 4, where the process parts in question – which we shall identify in what follows as *process profiles –* are of the sort that serve as the target of a process of measurement.

A process profile as a part of a process that is of the sort that can be measured on the basis of some process of selective abstraction. The key to annotating many process measurement data in BFO terms is to identify the process profiles represented by the corresponding measurement charts created in the salient domains.

We can define a process profile as a part of a process that can serve as the target of a process of measurement (and thus of selective abstraction). We introduce the relation process\_profile­\_ofbetween one process and another surrounding process, as a special of occurrent parthood relation, which we elucidate as follows:

*a* process\_profile\_of*b* holds when

*a* is process profile

& *a* is a proper continuant\_part\_of *b*

& *a* and *b* occupythe same temporal region

When heat is applied to a volume of gas in a closed container then the pressure of the gas will rise; when we measure the rise in temperature or in pressure of the gas then in each case we rely on selective abstraction, which enables us to identify and measure two distinct process profile parts of a single whole process.

## 5.1 Quality Process Profiles

The simplest type of process profiles are what we shall call ‘quality process profiles’, which are the process profiles which serve as the foci of the sort of selective abstraction that is involved when measurements are made of changes in single qualities, as illustrated, for example, by process profiles of mass, temperature, light intensity, and so on.

## 5.2 Rate Process Profiles

On a somewhat higher level of complexity are what we shall call rate process profiles, which are the targets of selective abstraction focused not on determinate quality magnitudes plotted over time, but rather on certain ratios between these magnitudes and elapsed times. A speed process profile, for example, is represented by a graph plotting against time the ratio of distance covered per unit of time. Since rates may change, and since such changes, too, may have rates of change, we have to deal here with a hierarchy of process profile universals at successive levels, including:

|  |
| --- |
| speed profile  constant speed profile  2 mph constant speed profile  3 mph constant speed profile  increasing speed profile  acceleration profile  constant acceleration profile  32ft/s2 acceleration profile  33 ft/s2 acceleration profile  variable acceleration profile  increasing acceleration profile |

and so on.

Clearly, the types and subtypes listed here are analogous to the determinable and determinable types and subtypes of qualities recognized by BFO-conformant ontologies on the continuant side discussed already above. Here again the reader must bear in mind that in both sets of examples the determinate universals in question, while they need to be referred to using specific units of measure, are in fact unit-specification independent. In both sets of examples, too, we can distinguish the absolute (velocity) and the relative (speed process profile).

## 5.3 Beat Process Profiles

One important sub-family of rate process profiles is illustrated by the beat or frequency profiles of cyclical processes, illustrated by the 60 beats per minute beating process of John’s heart, or the 120 beats per minute drumming process of involved in one of John’s performances in a rock band, and so on.

Each such process includes what we shall call a beat process profile instance as inseparable part, a subtype of rate process profile in which the salient ratio is not distance covered but rather number of beat cycles per unit of time. Each beat process profile instance instantiates the determinable universal *beat process profile.* But it also instantiates multiple more specialized universals at lower levels of generality, selected from

rate process profile

beat process profile

regular beat process profile

3 bpm beat process profile

4 bpm beat process profile

irregular beat process profile

increasing beat process profile

and so on.

In the case of a regular beat process profile, a rate can be assigned in the simplest possible fashion by dividing the number of cycles by the length of the temporal region occupied by the beating process profile as a whole. Irregular process profiles of this sort, for example as identified in the clinic, or in the readings on an aircraft instrument panel, may be of specific interest because they are of diagnostic significance.

In the case of rate process profiles in general, measurement data are often expressed not in terms of the process profile instantiated across a temporal interval, but rather of what holds at some specific temporal instant. The latter is then defined in terms of the former in the following way:

(5) John is moving with speed *v* at time instant *t*

is to assert, roughly, that there is some temporal interval (*t*1, *t*2), including *t* in its interior, in which the speed *v* process profile is instantiated. More precisely (in order to take account of the fact the John may be moving with a continuously changing speed in the neighborhood of *t*), (5) must be formulated in something like the following terms:

(6) Given any ε, however small, we can find some interval (*t*1, *t*2), including *t* in its interior, during which the speed *w* at which John is moving is such that the difference between *w* and *v* is less than ε.

Note that the logical significance of the ‘at time instant *t*’ in (5) is distinct from what it is, for example, in

1. John has temperature 64° Celsius at time instant *t*

In the latter case, we are using ‘at *t*’ as part of an assertion concerning the instantation by an individual of a continuant universal; in the former case, we are using ‘at *t*’ to pick out a part of a process which instantiates an occurrent universal – where the instantiation relation itself is (as it were) timeless.

## 3.2 Spatiotemporal region

a(spatiotemporal region)[Elucidation: A *spatiotemporal region* is an *occurrent* entity that is **part** of spacetime. [095-001]]

‘Spacetime’ here refers to the maximal **instance** of the universal *spatiotemporal region.*

Spatiotemporal regions are such that they can be **occupied\_by** processes.

as(spatiotemporal region)[Examples: the *spatiotemporal region* **occupied** by a human life\, the *spatiotemporal region* **occupied** by the development of a cancer tumor\, the *spatiotemporal region* **occupied** by a *process* of cellular meiosis. ]

a(spatiotemporal region)[Axiom: All **parts** of spatiotemporal regions are spatiotemporal regions. [096-001] ]

a(spatiotemporal region)[Axiom: Each spatiotemporal region **projects\_onto** some temporal region. [098-001] ]

a(spatiotemporal region)[Axiom: Each spatiotemporal region **projects\_onto** somespatial region **at** t. [099-001] ]

The projection relation will need to be defined in each case in terms of the frame employed.

a(spatiotemporal region)[Axiom: Every *spatiotemporal region* *r* is such that *r* **occupies** *r.* [107-001]]

a(spatiotemporal region)[Axiom: Every *occurrent* **occupies** some **spatiotemporal region.** [108-001] ]

a(temporal region)[Theorem: Every *occurrent* **occupies** some *temporal region*. [109-001]]

Trivially, every *spatiotemporal* or *temporal region* **occupies** itself.

## 3.3 Temporal region

Given a temporal reference frame R, we can define ‘timeR’ as the maximal **instance** of the universal *temporal region*.

a(temporal region)[Elucidation: A *temporal region* is an *occurrent* entity that is **part** of time as defined relative to some reference frame. [100-001]]

a(temporal region)[Axiom: Every *temporal region* *r* is such that *r* **occupies** *r.* [[119-001] ]

a(temporal region)[Axiom: All parts of temporal regions are temporal regions. [101-001] ]

A temporal region is an *occurrent entity* upon which a process can be projected. Temporal regions are introduced in BFO to provide a basis for consistent representation of temporal data, for example as described in [68].

### 3.3.1 Zero-dimensional temporal region

a(zero-dimensional temporal region)[Elucidation: A *zero-dimensional temporal region* is a temporal region that is without extent. [102-001]]

as(zero-dimensional temporal region)[Examples: a temporal region that is occupied by a process boundary\; right now\; the moment at which a finger is detached in an industrial accident\; the moment at which a child is born\, the moment of death. ]

a(zero-dimensional temporal region)[Synonym: temporal instant. ]

### 3.3.2 One-dimensional temporal region

a(one-dimensional temporal region)[Elucidation: A *one-dimensional temporal region* is a temporal region that is extended. [103-001]]

a(one-dimensional temporal region)[Example: the temporal region during which a process occurs. ]

A temporal interval is a special kind of *temporal region*, namely one that is self-connected (is without gaps or breaks).

## The precedes relation

Preceded\_by, defined in RO, is not defined in the BFO2 Reference, except by citation to a paper. That paper does not provide axioms on the relation. The RO definition from[http://obofoundry.org/ro/](http://obofoundry.org/ro/" \t "_blank) is given below.

As there is an open issue regarding the OWL rendering this should be fixed in the reference.

The RO page definition is suboptimal as the quantification and type of t (instant, interval) isn't stated.

[http://krr.meraka.org.za/~aow2010/Trentelman-etal.pdf](http://krr.meraka.org.za/~aow2010/Trentelman-etal.pdf" \t "_blank) offers:

Using this theory we can define relations such as preceded by and immediately preceded by, whereby a process p� ispreceded by a process p   if and only if the last temporal instant of p is earlier than the first temporal instant of p�, and a process p� is immediately preceded by a process p if and only if there exists a temporal instant which is both the first instant of p� and the last instant of p.

This is better in that it is clear that time instants are used, and because it more clearly expresses the intent of the relation, but needs the relations 'first temporal instant' and 'last temporal instant' are needed (process->time instant) are needed.

Please see [http://code.google.com/p/bfo/issues/detail?id=15](http://code.google.com/p/bfo/issues/detail?id=15" \t "_blank) which discussed changing the domain/range of the relation to occurrent.

See discussion in [16].

C:\Users\phismith\Downloads\all.tif

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**BFO Relations**

Need to deal with all the RO relations

New primitive relations:

Projects\_onto

What else?

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