

Chapter Three

Franz Brentano II

On Substance and Accident

1. *Brentano's Metaphysics*

Much of the literature on Brentano has manifested a certain deflationary tendency, often presenting Brentano as little more than a forerunner of Husserl or of analytic philosophy, and rarely taking account of more than those few passages in which Brentano talks about his doctrine of intentionality. Here, in contrast, I shall seek to do full justice to the metaphysical aspects of Brentano's thinking. At the centre of our concern, as always with Brentano, will be the philosophy of Aristotle, and more specifically Aristotle's theory of substance and accident, which is given detailed treatment by Brentano in the materials collected together as the *Theory of Categories*.

The question as to the nature of substance has notoriously been answered in different ways at different times in the history of philosophy. Kant, for example, conceived substance (or the 'schema' of substance) as that which remains identical through change. Locke conceived it as a 'supposed I-know-not-what', which is inferred as lying behind the phenomena and as linking them together.¹ Hobbes conceived it as that which exists 'without the help of sense', i.e. independently of whether we conceive it or have an idea of it, maintaining that only that which is corporeal can meet this requirement.² For Leibniz, on the other hand, a substance is just a monad, i.e. it is simple (has no parts), it is ingenerable and incorruptible, and it is always mental.

1. In the *Essay* (II, 23, § 2) Locke refers to 'the supposed but unknown support of these qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante*, without something to support them'.

2. *De corpore*, 8,1.

All of these accounts, and all their many variants, are rejected by Brentano as incompatible with the original Aristotelian theory of substance. As Brentano conceives things, they avoid the very problems which Aristotle was struggling with in developing his theory. Brentano conceived his own theory of substance, in contrast, as a refined and perfected version of the Aristotelian theory, and although one can have some doubts as to the total faithfulness of Brentano's interpretations of Aristotle's texts, he did undoubtedly succeed in grappling with Aristotle's problems, sometimes in surprisingly fruitful ways.

The Aristotelian notion of substance can be understood, Brentano argues, only as correlative to that of *accident*. A substance is that which can gain or lose accidents – as a man may gain or lose a suntan, a headache, or a knowledge of Greek. Brentano's reading of Aristotle seems in this point to come closest to the Aristotle of Porphyry:

Accident is what becomes and passes away without destruction of the subject. It is divided into two: for some accidents are separable, and others are inseparable, e.g. sleeping is a separable accident, but blackness is an inseparable accident of the crow and the negro. Nevertheless we may possible conceive of a white crow or of a negro changing his color without the destruction of the subject. They also define it thus: accident is what may contingently inhere or not inhere in the same, or what is neither genus, difference, species, nor property but is always subsistent in a subject.³

We might say that for Brentano a substance has two jobs to perform: it is a (possible) *bearer of accidents*; and it serves to *individuate* one accident from another (for example one redness from a second, qualitatively exactly similar redness). Here we concentrate exclusively on the first of these two jobs. The second – which we might conceive as making up the difference between primary and secondary substance – brings problems of its own.

We are using the term 'accident' in the widest possible sense, to embrace all of Aristotle's categories of *quality*, *quantity*, *where*, *when*, *action*, *reaction*, *affection*, *position* and *state*. Some accidents are what we might call dynamic accidents – a running, a smiling, a sitting down, the clenching of a fist, the reddening of a cheek – and as such they are reasonably familiar to contemporary philosophers from work on the ontology of events on the part of

3. See Porphyry's *Introduction to the Predicaments of Aristotle* (p. 12 of the translation).

Davidson *et al.* Other accidents are conditions or states: a standing still, a being seated, a smile, the individual redness of Mary's cheek, the individual charge in this conductor, the individual warmth in this pebble – examples of a sort which are less familiar to modern philosophers. The reason for acknowledging the wider class of accidents – and I shall henceforth assume that the acceptance of dynamic accidents is unproblematic – lies first of all in the fact that no sharp line can be drawn between static accidents on the one hand and dynamic accidents on the other.⁴ What is static on one level of analysis may be dynamic on another, as when a state of rest or equilibrium in a structure consists in part in complex processes of interaction. Further, there are a number of properties which conditions or states share in common with events and processes:

(i) Both static and dynamic accidents may be *pieceable*, i.e. they may be extended in space and time in such a way that they are capable of being divided into constituent accidents, both in fact and in our imagination.

(ii) Both static and dynamic accidents may be perceivable: I can see both the reddening of and also the subsequent redness in Mary's face, and then the latter is something no less individual than the former.⁵ This implies further that both static and dynamic accidents may also serve as the objects of other higher-order acts and states such as memories and emotions.

(iii) All accidents, both static and dynamic, require a bearer (or a multiplicity of bearers), as a smile smiles only in a human face. My own mental acts and states are themselves (dynamic and static) accidents which are founded on me myself as bearer

It is requirement (iii) which will take up most of our attentions in what follows.

4. Brentano runs the two together in his theory of 'psychic phenomena', a concept which seems to embrace both static and dynamic examples. See Reinach 1989, pp. 95–108 (= 1911, Part I).

5. On the perceptibility of accidents see Mulligan, Simons and Smith 1984, § 4.

2. *Mutual and One-Sided Separability*

Consider a quantity of pebbles arranged in a line. Each pebble can be separated from the residue, in the sense that it can survive as it is even though the remaining pebbles are destroyed. The pebbles are then mutually separable from each other. Each is independent of the others in the sense that it has no need of them in order to exist. Suppose, however, that the pebbles are warmed by the sun, and consider the relation between a pebble and that static accident which is its specific warmth. A pebble is separable from its warmth in that the latter can cease to exist (when the pebble cools down) while the former goes on existing. A warmth, however, is not in this sense separable from its pebble. We might say that the warmth enjoys an inferior or derivative or qualified being: it can exist only with the support of the substance in which it inheres. There is no way in which the pebble can be destroyed and its warmth remain in existence.

The pebble is, we shall say (echoing the terminology of our previous chapter), *one-sidedly separable* from its warmth – where talk of one-sided separability between two objects is understood to imply also a one-sided inseparability in the opposite direction.

We can define the notions of mutual and one-sided separability between contingently existing objects as follows:

- (D1) a is separable from $b =: a$ is such that it can continue to exist even though b should cease to exist.
- (D2) a and b are mutually separable $=: a$ is separable from b and b is separable from a .
- (D3) a is inseparable from $b =: a$ is such that it can continue to exist only if b also continues to exist.
- (D4) a is one-sidedly separable from $b =: a$ is separable from b and b is inseparable from a .

Two or more objects may also be mutually inseparable, may exhibit what might be called a zero-sided separability:

- (D5) a is mutually inseparable from $b =: a$ is inseparable from b and b is inseparable from a .

This notion of mutual inseparability – also called mutual dependence or reciprocal interpenetration – played an important role in Brentano's early ontology, and it remained central to the ontologies developed therefrom by Stumpf and Husserl.⁶ Thus for example in the *Deskriptive Psychologie*, space and quality are seen as mutually inseparable: space just *is* what gets filled by quality, and a spatial extension only exists to the extent that there are space-filling qualities which this extension is the extension *of*.⁷

3. Aristotle on Separability

It is the notion of one-sided separability that is at the core of both Aristotle's and Brentano's ontologies of substance and accident. Thus when Aristotle conceives substances as 'beings in the prominent sense' and insists that accidents exist 'merely in an analogous sense', what he means is that the latter can exist only with the support of the former. Accidents are, precisely, *accidental*; they are not necessary for or essential to the further existence of their bearers. Substances, in contrast, can exist perfectly well without the help of the accidents which they may underlie.⁸

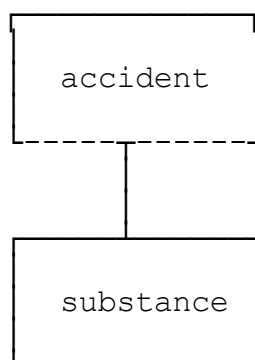
It is as if we can snap off the accident and still leave the substance behind, something we might represent by means of a diagram, somewhat as follows:

6. See Smith and Mulligan 1982.

7. 1982, pp. 15 f. This thesis – which has obvious Cartesian echoes – is still maintained in the first part of the *Kategorienlehre*. In the last drafts of this work, however, mutual dependence applies only to boundaries and continua, an aspect of Brentano's philosophy that is too complex to be dealt with here. See Brentano 1976 and Smith 1992.

8. This is clearly a simplification for certain types of accidents, as is recognized already in the passage from Porphyry quoted above.

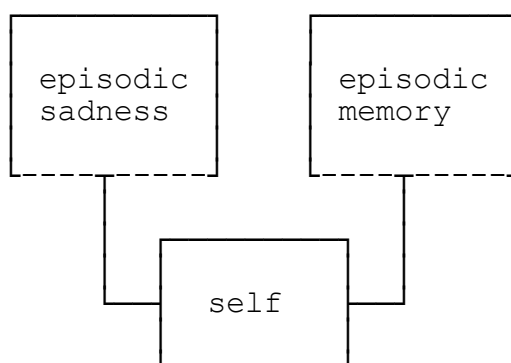
[A1]



We shall call this the A-conception of one-sided separability. The solid frame is intended to picture a separable entity, an entity that can exist in its own right. The broken frame pictures an inseparable entity, an entity that is dependent on something else in order to exist. The line connecting the two frames signifies that a relation of inherence, of being *in* or *on* or *of*, holds between the entities depicted.⁹

Of course a given substance can have more than one accident, as when, for example, I have a memory and a feeling of sadness at one and the same time. This we might represent as follows:

[A2]

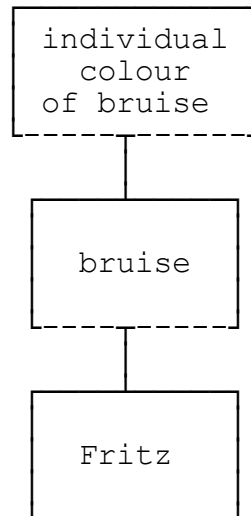


9. See Smith and Mulligan 1982.

(and similarly for larger numbers of accidents inhering in a single bearer).

We can imagine also accidents of accidents, for example:

[A3]

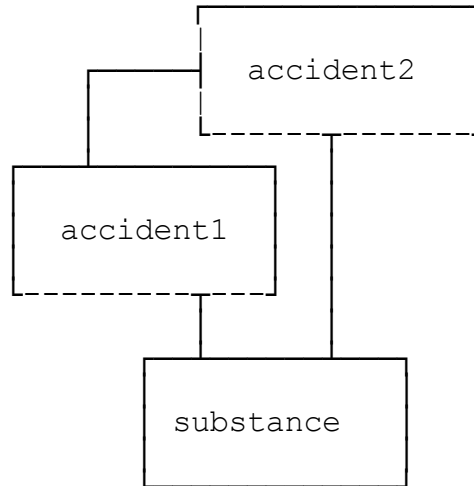


While such higher-order accidents seem to be perfectly admissible within the quasi-Aristotelian framework here presented, they are in fact ruled out by Aristotle's *theory*. This is because Aristotle held to the principle:

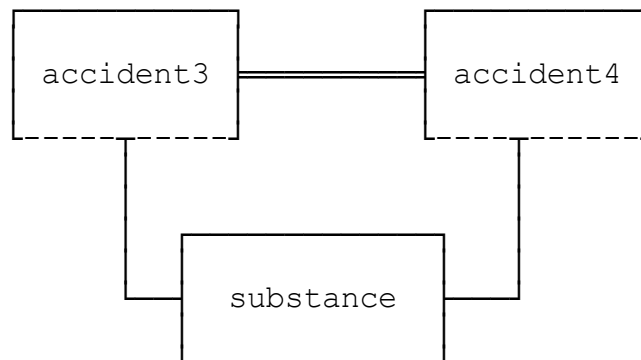
(P1) an accident of an accident is always also an accident of the substance.

He could therefore accept at most accidents of accidents of the following forms (with obvious extrapolations where larger numbers of accidents are involved):

[A4]



[A5]



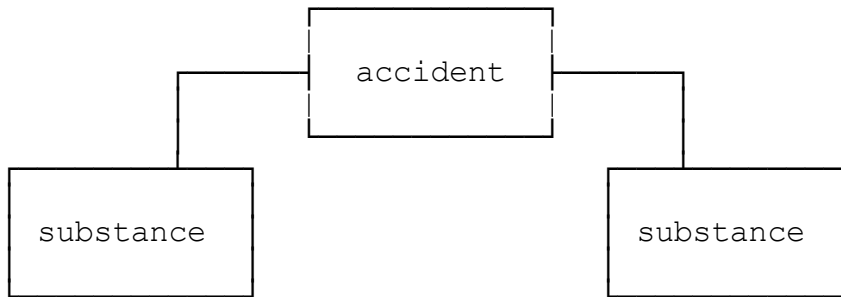
i.e. cases where an accident of a substance is itself inseparable, either one-sidedly or mutually, from another accident of the same substance. (Here a double line connecting two broken frames signifies a relation of mutual inseparability.)

Accident₁ might be Professor Geach's knowledge of Greek, accident₂ some judgment formulated by Professor Geach in that language. Accident₃ and

accident₄ might be the North and South poles of a magnet, or the colour and extension of a spatial fleck, respectively.

We can imagine, finally, *relational* accidents, that is to say accidents with a multiplicity of bearers, which may be represented as follows:

[A6]



again, with obvious extrapolations where larger numbers of bearers are involved, or where we are dealing with relational accidents of a higher order.

Examples of such relational accidents would be a hit, a kiss, a conversation or a promise. Again, accidents of this sort are not admitted within Aristotle's theory, though we can see that they, too, are quite at home within the framework here presented. Relational accidents are not acceptable to Brentano either. Brentano in fact comes close to affirming that all putative cases of relational accidents are capable of being divided, without remainder, into non-relational accidents of their respective bearers.¹⁰

4. *Brentano on Separability*

The relation of one-sided separability was first encountered by Brentano in his investigations of what he called the 'elements of consciousness'. Our mental acts of seeing, remembering, affirming, negating, etc., manifest a complex array of different sorts of relations with each other, and Brentano's descriptive

10. Cf. 1933, p. 57, Eng. p. 50.

psychology has the goal of providing a system of combinatoric laws which would describe how complex mental processes may be built up from lower-order components. Many of the elements of consciousness, Brentano writes,

can actually be cut loose or separated from one another in that the part that earlier existed with the second part in the same real unity continues in existence when that other part has ceased to exist (1982, p. 12).

Thus as we saw, my act of seeing and my simultaneous act of hearing are mutually separable from each other in just this sense. But the thinking of a concept and the making of a judgment to the effect that the concept is realized stand in the relation of one-sided separability only.

Brentano's use of the notion of one-sided separability here is independent of any concern with the problem of substance. He does however recognize that the elements of consciousness can be said to exist on different levels. That is to say, mental acts fall into the categories of fundamental or basic acts and what Brentano calls *supra-ponierte Akte* (superposed acts), the former being one-sidedly separable from the latter. Thus my wish to take a trip must be based on a presentation of a trip; my pleasure in the fact that cranberry sauce exists must be based on a judgment that cranberry sauce exists, and this in turn on an idea or presentation of cranberry sauce. My fear or hope that Mary will arrive must be based on a presumption that she will arrive, and this in turn on a presentation of her arrival. And now, the category of substance appears in these early discussions in that Brentano affirms that the relation between wish and presentation or between fear and presumption is like the relation all these acts bear to the *subject* who has them (1982, p. 84). Thus we have to do here with more or less complicated variants of the relation depicted in our discussion of the quasi-Aristotelian framework in diagram (A4) above. Brentano came gradually however to evolve a quite different, 'reistic' conception of the relations here involved. For where he had earlier held that mental acts have an inferior being in relation to their subjects, that they exist only in an analogous sense, he later came to believe that all entities exist in the same way, that 'existence' has only a strict and proper sense (that all uses of this term which depart therefrom, like all appeals to vague and spurious 'analogies', are illegitimate). This he formulates by saying that everything that exists is a *concretum*, a 'real thing'. Hence he has to find some way of coping with what Aristotle wants to say about the relation between accident and substance – and

with what he himself wants to say about mental acts and their subjects – without appealing to special, inferior, dependent entities. Brentano solves this problem by turning Aristotle’s theory (almost) on its head: it is not, for Brentano, that the accident is an inferior entity existing *in* or *on* its substance. Rather, the substance itself, he says, is included within the accident as a proper part. That is, Brentano in his *Theory of Categories* conceives the accident not as an extra entity existing ‘in an analogous sense’ *alongside* the substance. He conceives it rather as the substance itself *augmented* in a certain way. The accident is what he calls a *modal extension* of its substance.

Brentano did not simply pluck this idea from out of the air. There are traces of the idea already in Aristotle,¹¹ and Brentano himself came to it through a series of detailed and gradually maturing reflections on the relation between the elements of consciousness and the mind, self, ego, soul (Brentano uses all these expressions interchangeably) that thinks them. Thus he argues that there is a sense in which, when I have a mental act, then the *subject* of this act is present as a part of the act – an idea which becomes even clearer when we think not of mental acts but of physical actions such as shoelace-tyings or hurdle-vaultings. The act, according to Brentano, is not some extra entity attached to the self; it is the self momentarily augmenting itself, mentally, in a certain way; so that this self comes to serve as a part of that whole which is its accident.

This gives Brentano a new means of explaining how it is, when I am seeing and hearing, that it is the same I that is subject in both acts. That is, it gives him a new means of accounting for the unity of consciousness – for the fact that experience does not resolve itself into a multiplicity of separate bits. The mental acts of a single subject *overlap*, he now holds: both synchronically

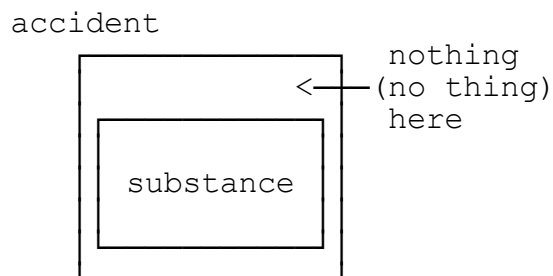
11. See *Met.* 1026^b16, where Aristotle mentions the problem raised by Sophists as to whether Coriscus and musical Coriscus are one and the same. Or *Met.* 1024^b30: ‘the thing itself and the thing itself modified in a certain way are somehow the same, e.g. Socrates and musical Socrates’. (Cf. also 1018^a2, 1030^b13). See also Suarez’s discussion of the ‘*accidens concretum*’ in his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXXIX, s.1, n. 10–12 and Cajetan, *In De Ente et Essentia d. Thomas Aquinatis*, “153ff. The idea appears further in Leibniz, though here there can be no question of an influence on Brentano: ‘We shall also accept every term here as complete, i.e. as a substantive, so that “big” is the same as “big entity”.’ ‘An entity is either in itself (*per se*) or accidental (*per accidens*); or, a term is either necessary or mutable. Thus, “man” is an entity in itself, but “learned man” or “king” are accidental entities. For that thing which is called “a man” cannot cease to be a man except by annihilation, but someone can begin or cease to be a king, or learned, though he himself remains the same.’ (See “General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and of Truths”, first publ. in Couturat 1903, trans. in Parkinson 1966, pp. 47ff.)

and diachronically they share in common a certain constant kernel which we may call the self:

Among the entities that have parts, there are some whose whole is not composed of a multiplicity of parts; it appears much rather as an enrichment of a part, though not as a result of the addition of a second part. One example of such an entity is a thinking soul. It ceases to think and yet remains the same soul. But when it starts to think again no second thing is added to that entity which is the soul. What we have here, then, is not like what we have when one stone is laid alongside another or when we double the size of a body ... The substance is a thing and the accidentally extended substance is again a thing, but a thing not wholly other in relation to the substance; hence we do not have that kind of addition of one and one that leads to a plurality. (Brentano 1933, pp. 53f., Eng. pp. 47f.)

Brentano continues to follow Aristotle in regarding the accident as existing only with the support of its substance, but now the one-sided separability of the substance in relation to the accident is conceived not as in [A1] but rather as follows:

[B1]



This we can call the B-conception of one-sided separability. The nesting of one box inside another is intended to represent the fact that the object depicted by the nested box is properly contained in, is a proper part of, the object depicted by the nesting box, after the manner of an Euler diagram. But the relation of containment involved here differs from that which we should encounter were the substance a mere piece (extensive part) of the containing accident. For despite the fact that the substance is a proper part of its accident, there is according to Brentano no further part which would make up the difference. Hence the remainder principle:

(P2) if a is a proper part of b then there is some c , discrete from a , which is also a part of b ,

which is a straightforward implication of the axioms of standard theories of extensive part and whole, is here rejected.¹²

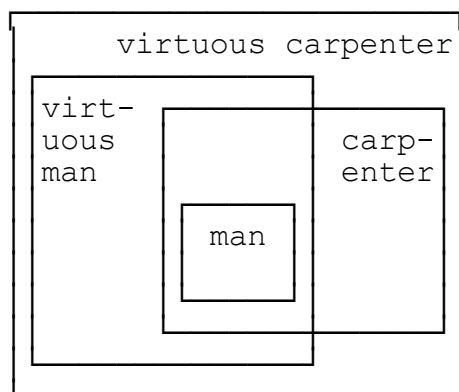
It is crucial to the Brentanian theory that there be no extra entity which would make up the difference between substance and accident. For this third entity would be precisely an ‘inferior existent’ of the sort he is now determined to get rid of. An accident is a thing, no less than its substance. There are no jumps and runs, but only jumpers and runners; no thoughts and feelings, but only thinkers and feelers. No qualities and quantities, but only qualified, quantified things.

The substance is *separable* from its Brentanian accidents in the sense that it can survive even should it cease to be accidentally extended in this or that way. An accident, in contrast, is inseparable from its substance, for there is, quite literally, nothing left over when the substance is destroyed.

As we have already seen in our discussion of the unity of consciousness above, Brentano’s idea can be easily extended to deal with cases where a number of accidents inhere simultaneously in a single substance. Thus in place of the Aristotelian [A2], Brentano might have:

12. Cf. Chisholm 1978, pp. 206f. On extensional mereology see Simons 1987, ch. 1. It is easy to imagine part-whole structures in which (P2) does not hold. Consider, for example, a world in which all objects are open intervals on the real line, and consider an open interval which is a proper part of some second open interval. There is, in such a world, no object which can be added to the one to yield the other.

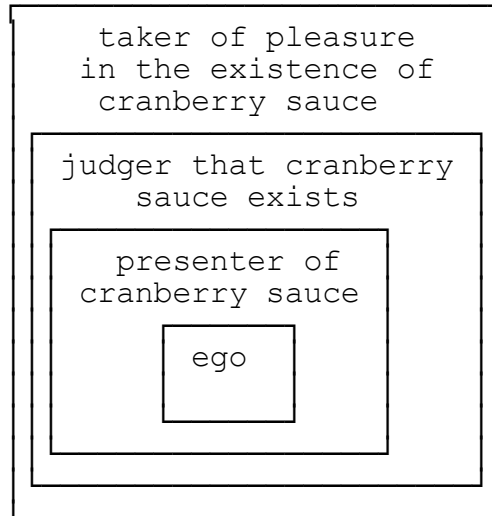
[B2]



The idea can be extended also to cope with accidents of accidents. Brentano, too, accepts the principle that an accident of an accident is an accident of the substance. Since the Brentanian accident is not an entity distinct from its substance, there is no way in which it can have accidents of its own, i.e. accidents which would inhere in it (along the lines of [A3] above), without also inhering in its substance. And indeed all the cases considered by Brentano are counterparts of [A4], though translated into the Brentanian framework:¹³

13. We would have trouble constructing a Brentanian counterpart to [A5], i.e. a relation of *mutual* inseparability between Brentanian accidents, though some cases of this sort are dealt with by Brentano in his theory of boundaries and continua. See, again, Brentano 1976 and my 1992.

[B3]



The diagrams here are intended to be more than mere abbreviatory devices. Not only do they capture in a peculiarly simple way the opposition between our two conceptions of one-sided separability; they also place quite determinate constraints on what can and cannot be allowed within the respective theories – and thereby allow a sort of *diagrammatic experimentation* in the manner of Peirce.¹⁴ Such experimentation, in conjunction with careful analysis of Brentano’s own writings, reveals that it is possible – especially in the negative case – to go some considerable way towards establishing whether Brentano would have admitted structures of given sorts by ascertaining whether or not these structures admit of representation within the diagrammatic framework dictated by the idea which underlies his theory.

The difference between the two readings of one-sided separability can be brought out by defining:

(DA) a is A-dependent on $b =: a$ is such that it can continue to exist only if b continues to exist and b is not a part of a .¹⁵

14. See Smith 1992, §§ 1ff. and the references there given.

15. This definition is central to the formal ontology developed by Husserl in the 3rd Logical Investigation: see the papers collected in Smith (ed.) 1982.

The parallel definition:

a is B-dependent on $b =: a$ is such that it can continue to exist only if b continues to exist and b is a part of a ,

is however unacceptable for our purposes. This is because Brentano accepts a principle – called by Chisholm the principle of mereological essentialism – according to which all parts are essential to their wholes.¹⁶ We might formulate this principle as follows:

(P3) if b is a part of a at some time at which a exists, then b is a part of a at all times at which a exists.

This implies that every whole is willy nilly inseparable from all its parts, since should the part cease to exist, then the whole, too, goes out of existence. Aristotle, as we shall see, maintains no such thesis.

The relation of separability between a substance and its accidental extension is much stronger than that relation between a part and its whole that is guaranteed by (P3). For if the substance is removed from that whole which is its modal extension, then not merely does the latter cease to exist but so, too, do all its parts. This suggests the definition:

(DB) a is B-dependent on $b =: a$ is such that it and all its parts can continue to exist only if b continues to exist and b is a part of a .

Either of the two notions defined in (DA) and in (DB) and represented in [A1] and [B1], respectively, can equally well be employed as a rendering of the one-sided separability of substances in relation to their accidents. Yet each yields a quite different conception of what an accident is. The A-notion yields a view of accidents as additional entities, even if they are entities which exist only ‘in an extended sense’. The B-reading yields a view of accidents as thingly wholes including their thingly substances – but *nothing else* – as parts.

16. See Appendix B to Chisholm 1976.

Once the opposition between A and B has been exposed, it is interesting to speculate on the extent to which a similar opposition might have played a role in the wider history of metaphysics. In regard to the relation between mind and body, for example, one can distinguish on the one hand conceptions which acknowledge the mind (soul, ego, self) as an *extra entity*, perhaps dependent in some sense on the body with which it is associated and one-sidedly inseparable therefrom. And on the other hand there are conceptions centred on the concept ‘*person*’, i.e. on the concept of an entity which is conceived (not always very clearly) as including its body as proper part, without, however, there being any *extra* entity that is conceived as making up the difference.¹⁷

The same sort of opposition is present also in the philosophy of perception, between those who see sense data as dependent in some sense on transcendent things-in-themselves (Locke, Kant), and those who affirm that in experiencing sense data we also experience things themselves, or rather that the phenomena we experience *are* the things themselves, perceived or apprehended in a certain way (Husserl, Daubert, J. J. Gibson).

The opposition can manifest itself also in the theory of truth-making, or in the ontology of that in virtue of which a given sentence or proposition is true.¹⁸ Thus when Aristotle acknowledges the accidental categories of *quantity*, *quality*, *relation*, *spatial* and *temporal location*, *situation*, *having*, *action* and *passion*,¹⁹ he does this in part because he holds that, for true sentences of a range of different sorts, corresponding entities are needed to serve as that in virtue of which these sentences are true. ‘By a *quality*’, as Aristotle puts it, ‘I mean that in virtue of which things are said to be somehow qualified.’ (*Cat.*, 8^b25) Thus for example the sentence ‘Socrates is pale’ is true in virtue of a certain individual qualitative accident of paleness (or in virtue of the inherence of such an accident in the substance who is Socrates).²⁰ ‘Socrates is saluting’,

17. An interestingly complementary view is developed by Nozick 1981, pp. 110ff. This sees the self as what Nozick calls a ‘Fregean property’ – an unsaturated entity that is not capable of existing in separation from whatever are its thoughts or perceptions at any given time.

18. See Mulligan, Simons and Smith 1984.

19. See Ch. 4 of the *Categories*.

20. Qualities, for Aristotle, include not only sensible qualities but also figure or shape, habits, and powers. See *Cat.*, 8^b25–11^a4.

similarly, might be seen as being made true by the inherence (occurrence) in Socrates of an individual salute (accident of action), and so on. From the Brentanian perspective, now, the truth-makers for the sentences mentioned are to be understood exclusively via distinctions between things, for example between *Socrates* and *pale Socrates*. We might think of the latter as a seasonally existing thing: pale Socrates and tanned Socrates taking turns to exist, though in such a way that Socrates himself, their common part, remains unaffected by this alternation. Similarly ‘Socrates is saluting’ is true if and only if there exists that thing which is saluting Socrates.

5. *Mereological Potentialism vs. Mereological Actualism*

There is a sense in which the Aristotelian framework sketched above is more powerful than the framework defended by Brentano. For working within the former we can simply identify Brentano’s augmented substances with those complex wholes which result when we consider substances and accidents of the straightforwardly Aristotelian sort as joined together mereologically to form a single object. All the characteristic theses of the Brentanian ontology can then be re-expressed in Aristotelian terms, and no similar translation is forthcoming in the opposite direction.

Aristotle himself, however, could not have accepted such an attempt to reconstruct the Brentanian position within his own theory. This is because he embraced, in respect of both parts and sums of objects, what we shall call the *thesis of mereological potentialism*.

We said that for Aristotle not all entities are beings in the same sense. Some entities have being only in an analogous sense: they exist, as it were, in an inferior manner. There are however several moments of being-in-the-prominent-sense, the absence of each one of which yields its own special inferior mode of being.²¹ The first such inferior mode of being we have already considered. It is the mode of *being in* of an accident in its substance, and may be said to reflect a cancellation of the moment of *independence*. A second such mode might be the mode of being merely potentially, reflecting a cancellation of the moment of *actuality*. That which exists potentially is such that it can exist

21. See Ingarden 1964/65, vol. I, ch. III, for more details of this terminology of ‘moments of being’.

actually, but only if certain pre-conditions are fulfilled. As a third mode of inferior being one might canvas the mode of being of secondary substances (species, universals), which results from the cancellation of the moment of individuation.

The thesis of mereological potentialism has two parts:

- (P4)(a) a part of something actually real is not itself actually real for as long as it is a part;
- (b) a whole whose parts are actually real is not itself actually real for as long as it is a whole.²²

This thesis rules out the adoption of something like the B-position as a special case of A, for it implies that the substance that would be contained in a Brentanian accidental whole could not continue to be actually real while the accident inheres in it, contravening the most fundamental presupposition of Aristotle's entire metaphysics. As Brentano explains the matter:

Aristotle believes that a thinking substance, when it ceases to think, remains the actual thing that it was. For this reason he cannot conceive the substance with the accident as a real thing, for then this substance would be a real thing both before it begins to think and after it has ceased to think, but not while it is thinking. When the substance thinks, however, it is in Aristotle's opinion not two real things, but *one* real thing, bound up with a bonus of something that exists in an extended sense (1933, p. 104, Eng. p. 83).

The force of (P4a) can be illustrated by considering the example of an earthworm. When we cut the earthworm into pieces, what had been a single actually real whole is transformed into a multiplicity of actually real (ex-)parts, each one of which can be identified as having previously been contained, *merely potentially*, within the original whole.

The force of (P4b), on the other hand, can be illustrated by considering that whole which contained as its parts the two cities of Buda and Pest, as they were, facing each other across the Danube, before 1873. With the formation,

22. The doctrine that two things can never be one thing and that no unitary thing can be a multiplicity of things is set forth by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Z; see esp. 1039^a3. See also Leibniz' letter to Arnauld of 30 April 1687: 'I believe that where there are only entities by aggregation, there will not be real entities.' 'There will never be found any means of making a true substance out of a number of entities by aggregation.'

out of these two parts, of that single entity we now know as Budapest, a merely potentially existing whole was transformed into something actual.

The primary role of the thesis of potentialism is as part of Aristotle's treatment of the problem of the perseverance of substances. Aristotle wants to insist that substances may endure as one and the same not merely when they gain or lose accidents, for example pleasure or hunger, but also when they gain or lose substantial parts. Imagine a soldier S , whose arm is destroyed in battle. If we avail ourselves of a somewhat misleading shorthand and write ' S_1 ' for the soldier before the battle and ' S_2 ' for the genidentical soldier after the battle, then according to Aristotle's theory we have

$$(a) \quad S_1 = S_2.$$

Suppose that the thesis of potentialism is false, and that that proper part of S which is the soldier minus his arm (say S') is, even before the battle takes place, a real or actual substance, as it were locked away inside the soldier as a whole. Then it seems reasonable to suppose that the soldier-minus-arm, too, remains one and the same actual being through the loss of the arm, i.e. that

$$(b) \quad S'_1 = S'_2.$$

But now, before the battle, soldier and soldier-minus-arm are two distinct substances (one a proper part of the other), i.e.

$$(c) \quad S_1 \neq S'_1.$$

After the battle, however, they are one and the same:

$$(d) \quad S_2 = S'_2,$$

which yields a contradiction. It is in part in order to thwart this contradiction that Aristotle embraces the thesis of potentialism. We can then no longer affirm (b) and (c), since, until the battle takes place, there is no soldier-minus-arm. It is merely *possible* that there be such an object (and all that is needed for this possibility to be realized is for soldier S to lose his arm).²³

23. Things are, as usual, not quite so clear in Aristotle: see *Cat.*, 8^a19ff. A similar example has been used by van Inwagen (1981) to argue, in effect, that the soldier's arm, while undetached, does not exist. Compare on these issues also Scaltsas 1990.

Brentano, on the other hand, is able to thwart the contradiction while at the same time affirming a strong mereological actualist position according to which all the parts of an actual thing exist as actual things. This he does by denying that a substance can survive the loss of substantial parts, which means that he cannot affirm (a), since for him the substance S_1 ceased to exist with the loss of the arm. Whenever a soldier loses any part, however small, it becomes a *different substance*. A substance, for Brentano, can survive only the loss of its accidents, not of its substantial parts. Thus for Brentano all substantial parts are essential, a fact which he acknowledges by insisting on the word '*Wesen*' ('essence') as a parallel translation with *Substanz* of Aristotle's *ousia*. From this it follows however that those ordinary things which are susceptible to change of parts – brooms, ships, houses, soldiers – are for Brentano not enduring things at all. They are *entia successiva*.²⁴

Aristotle's conception of the relation of whole and part is in this respect more commonsensical than Brentano's, for we do seem to accept that we can lose arms or kidneys or ears, as well as toothaches and bruises, and yet still remain the same (same person, same thing). On the other hand the thesis of actualism, too, has some support in common sense. Thus we may be tempted to suppose of a thing extended in space (a cloud, for example), that its spatial parts exist in the same sense and with the same degree of actuality as does the whole. That is, we do not suppose that their being parts is essential to them, that they would suddenly graduate from potentiality to actuality should the other parts of the thing cease to exist. We suppose, with Brentano, that they 'would as surely remain unchanged as the earlier part of a motion would remain unchanged if the motion, instead of continuing, should be broken off' (1933, pp. 106f., Eng. pp. 84f.). From this we can conclude, somewhat lamely, that actualism holds of some sorts of parts, potentialism of others.

The Brentanian picture of the relation between substance and accident can be made to work however only against the background of a universally actualist theory of whole-part relations, a theory which insists that all parts of things and all collectives or multiplicities of things are things in their own right. All parts of things are things, because anything we might be tempted to describe

24. See Chisholm 1976, ch. III.

as a part of a thing which is not itself a thing is for that very reason not acceptable to Brentano as a part.

6. *Places and Times*

Brentanian accidents, as we have seen, may themselves serve as the bearers of further accidents, may be accidentally extended in different ways, in principle without limit. This process must, however, have a determinate starting point; there must be ultimate substances: 'It is inconceivable that anything should contain a subsisting part without containing a first or primary subsisting part [*ein erstes Subsistierendes*]' (1933, p. 150, Eng. p. 114). This is because Brentano excluded as absurd the idea of an actual infinity.²⁵

But what then are the ultimate substances of Brentano's ontology? One group of ultimate substances we have met already: they are the mental substances or souls which become accidentally augmented to form those half-way familiar things we call hearers, thinkers, haters. It is natural to suppose that the remaining ultimate substances in the Brentanian ontology are just material or concrete things, and Brentano's philosophy has often been interpreted along these lines, particularly by those who would see him as having anticipated a reist or concretist doctrine of the sort propounded by Leśniewski or Kotarbiński (discussed in Chapter Seven below). Brentano himself however finds unacceptable the doctrine that material things are ultimate substances. For if a material thing is a substance, then a material thing at a place would have to be an accident. Yet the idea that being at a place – as contrasted with being at some *specific* place (being in Salzburg, being in the Lyceum) – might be a merely accidental property of a material thing is in Brentano's view absurd. Absurdity does not ensue, however, if we regard non-mental substances as being constituted by the very places which material things – as we normally conceive them – occupy. And then, since places themselves inhere in nothing further, nothing will stand in the way of our considering such places as the ultimate corporeal substances.

25. His arguments for this are summarized in Rogge 1935, pp. 106f.

Kastil expresses Brentano's view at the time of the *Theory of Categories* as follows:

The [corporeal] accident – as sensation shows us in the qualitative determinations of its primary object – is not something beside or outside place, but something that includes this as its subject. (1951, p. 182)

Some places are qualified by being red places, hard places, Chisholmy places. Other places are 'empty' in the sense that they are not the substantial bearers of any qualitative determinations.

The totality of places is itself a substance, a certain spatial continuum. Movement within this continuum is not, as we normally suppose, a matter of the perseverance of one thing through a continuum of places which it successively occupies. For any movement of a physical body (i.e. of a certain complex qualitative accident of a place, a 'sensible spatial magnitude') would, on Brentano's account, signify the loss of its substance (its place), and therefore also its ceasing to exist. Movement is rather to be understood as a matter of neighbouring parts of the unitary spatial substance experiencing in succession a chain of similar accidental determinations. A red dot 'moving' across the landscape is in fact a continuum of redness-accidents comprehending a succession of different places (though the apparent unacceptability of such claims may come to be seen in a different light if one takes account of the fact that Brentano treats the external world as in some sense a mere phenomenal 'surface'²⁶).

At the very end of his life, Brentano considers the following hypothetical view of the physical world:

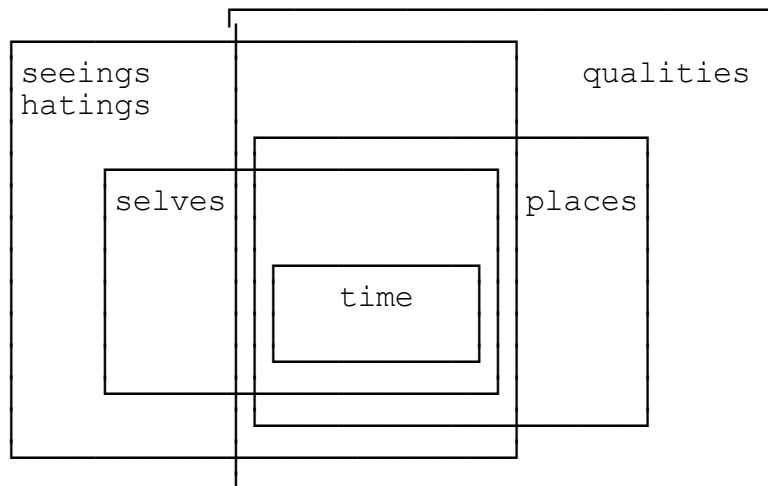
One might go so far as to conjecture that the totality of what is bodily would be to be conceived as a single stationary corporeal substance which, as Lord Kelvin's homogeneous fluid is supposed to contain here and there vortices, would be afflicted here and there with certain particular accidents. In this case the laws of mechanics, as well as those of physics, chemistry and physiology, would pertain to these accidents, to their changes and interactions. This stationary unitary substance would take the place of the aether. And in place of what had been formerly regarded as the substance of corporeal matter, there would be accidents which, attaching to the single substance, would spread themselves from one part of it to another. (1933, p. 298, Eng. p. 209)

26. See the Appendix to his 1933.

With this, Brentano cuts himself free, irreconcilably, from the Aristotelian ontology in which so much of his thinking had its roots. The single most important respect in which Brentano's view of accidents differs from that of Aristotle is however in regard to the treatment of time. For Brentano treats location in time, too, not as an accidental but as a substantial determination. There are no things which are not also temporal things. But further, there are no things which are not also things existing now, in the unique temporal moment which is the present. For Brentano there is only *one* temporal determination, which all things share in common. Thus it is as if, with each successive instant of time, an entire new complement of worldly furniture comes into being to replace the old. This occurs, however, in such a way that there obtains a pre- (or constantly re-)established harmony between the microcosmos of perception and thought and the macrocosmos of qualitatively extended things. Some of the most beautiful – and bizarre – pieces of Brentanian metaphysics are devoted to the subject of that *concursum dei* by which this continuous process of recreation (and continuous re-establishment of the link called 'intentionality') is kept on the road.²⁷

Newton, we might say, sees time and space as mutually separable. Einstein sees time and space as mutually dependent. Brentano, in contrast, sees space as one-sidedly dependent on (inseparable from) time. Time can exist without space, but not vice versa. The obvious implication is that space, and selves, are simply accidents of time, generating something like the following simple and elegant view of the universe of contingently existing things:

27. See e.g. 1933, pp. 247f, Eng. p. 178; Rogge 1935 (pp. 109ff., 192f.), 1939; Seiterich 1936, esp. part 3.



The present moment, on a view of this sort, would be the single contingently existing substance, and all other contingently existing entities would be accidents thereof. I myself would then stand to the present moment in just the same relation that my present act of thinking stands to me.

Brentano himself cannot accept a view of this sort. For a substance, as already mentioned, has not merely the job of providing the *foundation* for its accidents, it must also provide their *individuation*. This is a job which time (the present moment) cannot perform, for it is the same for everything that exists. To build this aspect into our theory would require a treatment of Brentano's complex and difficult theory of species and generality. That, however, is another chapter in Brentano's ontology.