

The Substance of Brentano's Ontology

Barry Smith*

from *Topoi*, 6/1 (1987), 39–49.

1. Substances and Accidents

The literature on Brentano of recent times has manifested an unmistakably deflationary tendency, often presenting Brentano as little more than a forerunner of analytic philosophy, and rarely taking account of more than those few passages in which Brentano talks about something called 'intentionality'.¹ The present paper is an attempt to redress this balance. It seeks to demonstrate that, for all his analytic acumen, Brentano is to be classified not with the dry logic-and-language-choppers of modern times, but rather with the great metaphysical visionaries of the past, from Leibniz and Descartes to Spinoza and Lord Kelvin. Only in these terms, it may be argued, is it possible to explain the tremendous influence exerted by Brentano on so many of his pupils and disciples.

The paper is a study of Brentano's ontology, and more specifically of his theory of substance and accident, particularly as put forward toward the end of his life in the materials collected together as the *Kategorienlehre*.

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.² 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.³ For Leibniz, on the other hand, a substance is just a monad, i.e. it is simple (has no parts), ingenerable and incorruptible, and it is always mental.

All of these accounts, and all their many variants, are rejected by Brentano as incompatible with the original Aristotelian theory of substance. Indeed, 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.⁴

More precisely, 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. 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 – and examples of this sort are both less familiar to modern philosophers still finding their ontological feet, and also less attractive. 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. 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:

1. 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. Moreover, both of my acts of

simple perception are then distinct from my act of *seeing that* Mary is blushing (as also from the still more complex act of seeing Mary *as* blushing).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, and indeed the available ramifications are increased by the fact that my own mental acts and states are themselves (dynamic and static) accidents which are founded on me myself as bearer.

2. 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.⁶

3. All accidents, both static and dynamic, require a bearer (or perhaps in some cases a multiplicity of bearers): a smile smiles only in a human face.

It is this last requirement which will take up most of our attentions in what follows.

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, we shall say, 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 now 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 it 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, *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 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:

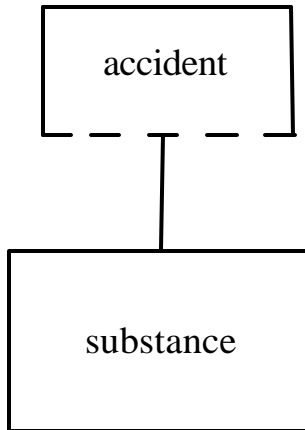
- (D5) a is mutually inseparable from b =: a is inseparable from b and b is inseparable from a.

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. Thus for example in the *Deskriptive Psychologie*, a collection of Brentano’s lectures from 1887-1891, 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. The Aristotelian Conception of One-Sided 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’ (1016 b 31ff.), what he means is that the latter can exist only with the support of the former.⁸ 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.⁹

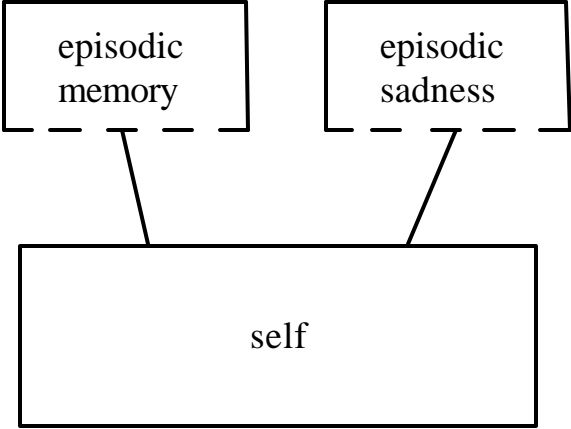
It is as if we can snap off the accident and still leave the substance behind, something we might represent, by means of a diagram, somewhat as follows:



(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. The line connecting the two frames signifies that the relation of being *in* or *on* or *of* between accident and substance holds between the entities depicted.

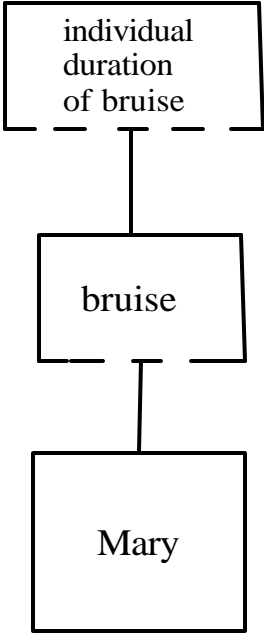
Of course a given substance can have more than one accident, as when, for example, I have a memory and a feeling of sadness at one and the same time. This we might represent as follows:



(A2)

and similarly for larger numbers of accidents inhering in a single bearer.
We can imagine also accidents of accidents, for example:

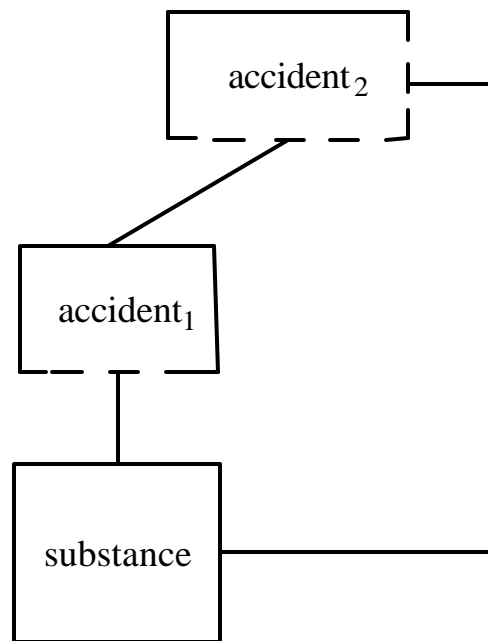
(A3)



However, whilst 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:

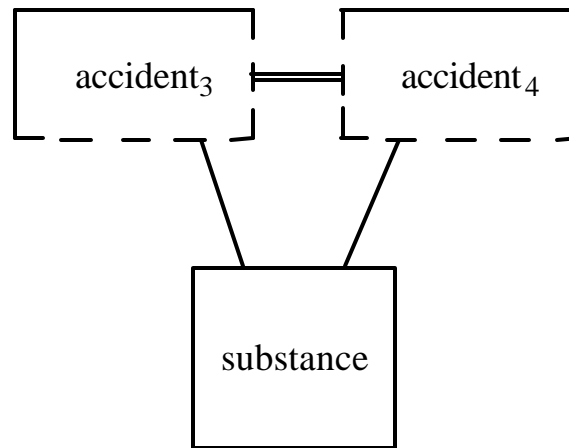
(P1) an accident of an accident is always also an accident of the substance.¹⁰

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



(A4)

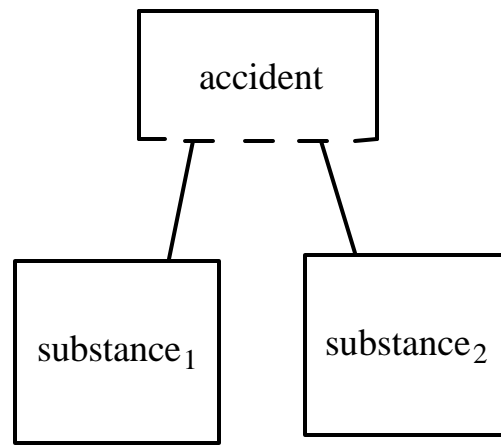
(A5)



i.e. cases where an accident of a substance is itself inseparable, either one-sidedly (A4) or mutually (A5), from another accident of the same substance. (Here a double line connecting two broken frames signifies a relation of mutual inseparability.)

Accident₁, for example, 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.

We can imagine, finally, *relational* accidents, that is to say accidents with a multiplicity of bearers. These 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, or a kiss, a conversation or a promise. Again, accidents of this sort – accidents with a multiplicity of bearers – 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.

4. Acts and their Subjects

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, preferring, willing, etc., manifest a complex array of different sorts of relations with each other, and Brentano’s descriptive psychology has the goal of providing a system of combinatoric laws which would describe how such phenomena may interrelate, how complex mental processes may

be built up from lower-order components (1982, p.Xf.). 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 my act of seeing and my simultaneous act of hearing are separable from each other. But the thinking of a concept and the making of a judgment to the effect that the concept is realised, or the seeing of something and the noticing of this same thing, stand in the relation of one-sided separability only. I can see without noticing, but I cannot notice something seen without continuing to see that thing.

Brentano's use of the notion of one-sided separability here is independent of any concern with the problem of substance. However, he does recognise 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 *supraponierte Akte*, 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 may be said to appear in these early discussions to this extent, 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 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 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 somehow illegitimate). This is what he means when he says 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 is included within the accident as a proper part. That is, Brentano 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 a *modal extension* of its substance.

5. The Brentanian Conception of One-Sided Separability

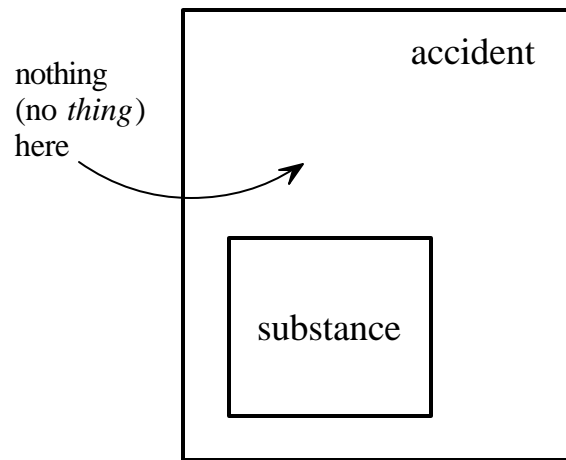
Brentano did not simply pluck this idea from out of the air. There are traces of the idea already in Aristotle,¹¹ and Brentano himself came to it through a series of detailed and gradually maturing reflections on the relation between the elements of consciousness and the mind, self, ego, soul (Brentano 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 is perhaps 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 is its accident.

This gives Brentano a 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 means of accounting for the unity of consciousness, for the fact that experience does not resolve into a multiplicity of scattered bits. The mental acts of a single subject overlap, sharing in common (modulo the passage of time) a certain constant kernel which we call the self.¹²

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 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,

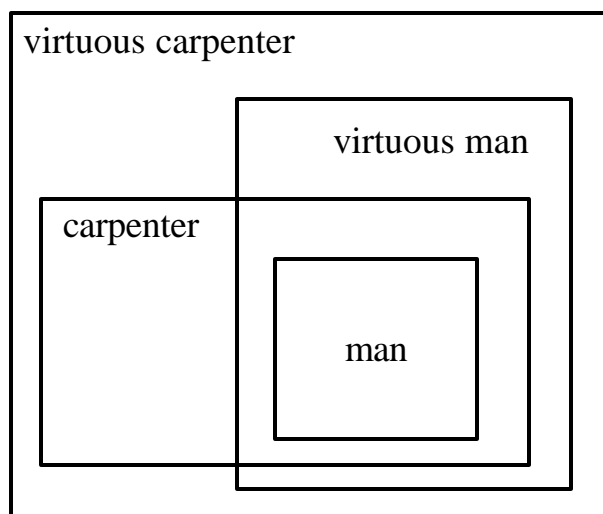
which is a straightforward implication of the axioms of standard theories of extensive part and whole, is here rejected.¹³

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 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.¹⁴ Expressing this point in somewhat pictorial terms we can say that there are only solid boxes in the Brentanian framework.

The substance is, now, *separable* from its Brentanian accidents in the sense that

it can survive even should it cease to be modally 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:

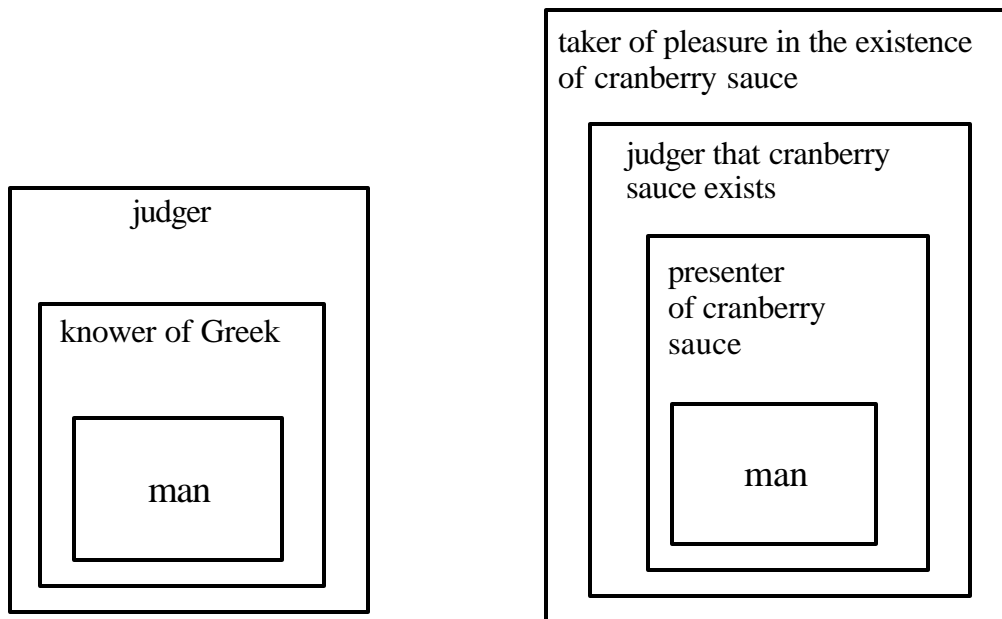


(B2)

ψ

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. Indeed, 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:¹⁵

(B4)



One picture is worth a thousand words. The diagrams here are however 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 *experimentation*.¹⁶ Thus it is possible – especially in the negative case – to go some way towards establishing whether Brentano would have admitted structures of a given sort, by ascertaining whether or not these structures admit of representation within the diagrammatic framework dictated by the idea which underlies his theory.

6. The A- and B-Readings of One-Sided Separability

The difference between the two readings of one-sided separability can perhaps 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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 the times at which a exists.¹⁹

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 modal 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) can now 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 wholes including their substances – but *nothing else* – as parts.

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 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*, 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. of an entity which is conceived as somehow including its body as proper part, without, however, there being any *extra* entity that is conceived as making up the difference.

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).

7. Aristotle vs. Brentano (Potentialism and 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 to form a single object. All the characteristic theses of the Brentanian ontology can then be re-expressed without remainder 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.²⁰ This is because he embraced, in respect of both parts and sums of objects, what we shall call the *thesis of 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.²¹ There are however several moments of being-in-the-prominent-sense, the absence of each one of which yields its own special inferior being.²² 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*.²³ That which exists potentially is such that it can exist actually, but only if certain pre-conditions are fulfilled.

The thesis of potentialism states that

- (P4) (a) a part of something actually real is not itself actually real for as long as it is a part, and
(b) a whole whose parts are actually real is not itself actually real for as long as it is a whole.²⁴

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 whilst the accident inheres in it, contravening the most fundamental presupposition of Aristotle's doctrine of substance. 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 (104, E83).²⁵

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, 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 (or Aristotle as Brentano conceives him) 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 'S₁' for the soldier before the battle, 'S₂' for the genidentical soldier after the battle, then according to Aristotle's theory we have

(a) $S_1 = S_2$.

Suppose, now, 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) $S'_1 = S'_2$.

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

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

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

(d) $S_2 = S'_2$,

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 is such an object (and all that is needed for this possibility to be realised is for soldier S to lose his arm).²⁶

Brentano, on the other hand, is able to thwart the contradiction whilst at the same time affirming a strong 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 S₁ ceased to exist with the loss of the arm. Indeed 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*.²⁷

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 commonsense. Thus we are tempted to suppose of, say, a homogeneous thing extended in space (an ocean, or a cloud, for example²⁸), 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' (106f., E84f.). From this we can perhaps 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 multiplicities of things are things in their own right. All parts of things are things, indeed, because anything we might be tempted to describe as a part of a thing which is not itself a thing is for that very reason not acceptable to Brentano as a part.²⁹

8. Places and Times

Brentanian accidents, as we have seen, may themselves serve as the bearers of further accidents, maybe modally extended in different ways and in principle without limit. This process must, however, have a determinate starting point; there must be certain substances: 'It is inconceivable that anything should contain a subsisting part without containing a first or primary subsisting part [*ein erstes Subsistierendes*]' (150, E114). This is because Brentano excluded as absurd the idea of an actual infinity.³⁰

But what then are the ultimate substances of Brentano's ontology?³¹ One group of ultimate substances we have met already: they are the mental substances or souls

which become modally augmented to form those half-way familiar things we call hearers, thinkers, haters. It is natural, now, to suppose that the remaining ultimate substances in the Brentanian ontology are just material or concrete things, and Brentano's philosophy has indeed 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. Brentano himself however finds the doctrine that material things are ultimate substances to be unacceptable. 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 in some *specific* place (being in Salzburg, being in the Lyceum) – is 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 may – as we normally conceive things – 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.³²

Kastil expresses Brentano's view 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.³³ Movement within this continuum is not, as we normally suppose, a matter of the perservation 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) would, on Brentano's account, signify the loss of its substance, 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 – which brings us back, by a somewhat devious route, to Descartes and Lord Kelvin.

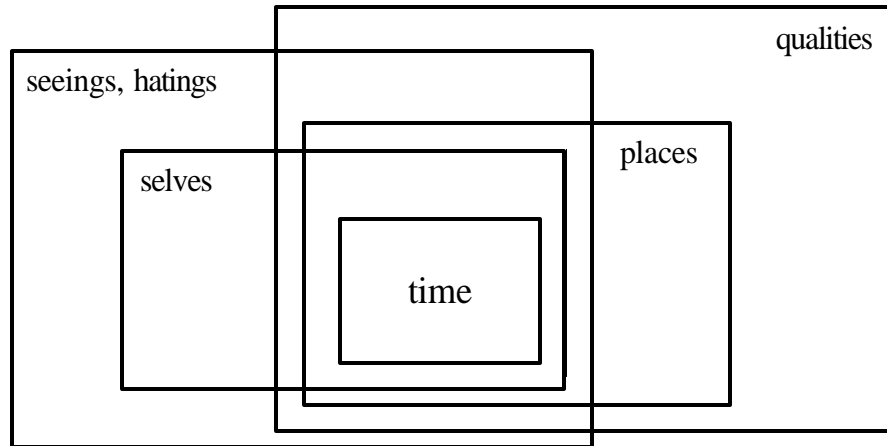
At the very end of his life Brentano considers the following hypothetical view of the physical world:

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. (298, E209)

With this, Brentano cuts himself free, irreconcilably, from the Aristotelian philosophy in which he has his 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, as in space, 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, and 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 is kept on the road.³⁴

What, now, can be said about the relation between time and space, under the Brentanian dispensation? Newton, we might say, sees time and space as mutually separable. Einstein sees time and space as mutually dependent. Brentano on the other hand 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 indeed selves, are simply accidents of time, generating something like the following simple and elegant view of the universe of contingently existing things:



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.

Notes

* I should like to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung for the award of a grant for research in Louvain and Erlangen where this paper was written. I am grateful also to Marjorie Grene, to Karl Schuhmann and to Peter Simons for helpful comments.

¹ A notable and heroic exception to this general trend is provided by Roderick Chisholm, who is almost single-handedly responsible for the fact that a wider

spectrum of Brentanian ideas is at last beginning to make itself felt in certain circles. My indebtedness to him – and particularly to his classic paper of 1978, which first awakened my interest in Brentano's ontology – is, I hope obvious, though it goes without saying that he should not be held responsible for what follows.

² 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'.

³ *De corpore*, 8,1.

⁴ Brentano's reading of Aristotle seems 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 possibly 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.

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

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

⁶ See Smith and Mulligan 1984 for further discussion of this point.

⁷ 1982, p.15f. As we shall see, 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 continue, an aspect of Brentano's philosophy that is too complex to be dealt with here.

⁸ I am here translating Aristotle's talk of 'substrate of predication' into the ontological mode; I do not however believe that I am thereby doing an injustice to his views.

⁹ This is clearly a simplification for certain types of accidents, as is recognised already in the passage from Porphyry quoted above.

¹⁰ On the dubiousness of this principle see Reinach 1911.

¹¹ See, perhaps, *Metaphysics* E (1026 b 16) where Aristotle mentions the problem raised by Sophists as to whether Coriscus and musical Coriscus are the same. Or *Metaphysics* Λ 1024 b 30: ‘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 a 2.) The idea appears in Leibniz also, 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. 47 ff.).

¹² On Brentano’s peculiar view of temporal passage – which is here left out of account – see section 8 below.

¹³ It is easy to imagine part-whole structures in which (P2) does not hold. Consider, for example, a world in which all objects are either open or closed intervals on the real line. Consider, then, some given open interval. This is a proper part of some closed interval, but there is, in such a world, no object which can be added to the one to yield the other.

¹⁴ And here we must note that, for a number of reasons, Brentano almost always discusses examples of the latter (psychological) sort when considering the relation of substance and accident.

¹⁵ We should 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.

¹⁶ See also Smith and Mulligan 1982, 1984.

¹⁷ This definition is central to the formal ontology developed by Husserl in the 3rd Logical Investigation: see the papers collected in Smith, ed. 1982.

¹⁸ See Appendix B to Chisholm 1976.

¹⁹ Again, Brentano's theory of temporal passage is here left out of account.

²⁰ In spite of the passages mentioned in n. XXXX above.

²¹ See e.g. 1026 b 15ff.

²² See Ingarden 1964/65, vol.I, for more details of this terminology of 'moments of being'.

²³ This is to present Aristotle in somewhat Meinongian terms which would need to be eliminated in a more careful exposition: for there is no greater actualist than Aristotle, in all of the more usual senses of this term. Moreover potentialism, for Aristotle, ought properly to be understood not in ontological terms at all, but rather in terms of the opposition between act and potency: the principle of potentialism is in fact for him a corollary of his principle of the priority of the act.

As a third mode of inferior being one might envisage the mode of being of secondary substances resulting from the cancellation of the moment of individuation.

²⁴ 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 a 3. 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.'

²⁵ References in this form are to the German and English editions of Brentano's *Kategorienlehre*, respectively. The translation by Chisholm and Guterman is not by any means a literal one. It rightly divides Brentano's long German sentences into English-sized bits, and it tampers with the text in other ways, in part because

Brentano's philosophy yields sentences which, in a literal translation, would be unacceptable (for example: 'a red is a space-filler' or 'a here is transformed into a there').

The translation seems occasionally to attempt a misplaced kindness on Brentano's behalf, however, making of him a more sober and less colourful philosopher than might be gathered from the original German. This applies, for example, where Brentano is expressing his contempt for Kant. When Brentano writes that Kant 'laboured under the delusion that...' [*in dem Wahn lebte*], the translation has: Kant 'thought...' (113, E89). When Brentano writes that the Kantian sort of metaphysics is to be 'damned from the start' [*von vornherein zu verdammen*], the translation talks of our being justified in 'rejecting' it (185, E137). In order to facilitate comparison, however, I have used the Chisholm- Guterman translation as the basis for the translations in the text.

²⁶ Things are, as usual, not quite so clear in Aristotle: see *Cat.*, 8 a 19 ff. A similar example has recently been used by van Inwagen (1981) to argue, in effect, that the soldier's arm, while undetached, does not exist.

²⁷ See Chisholm 1976, ch. III. Again, our discussion abstracts from the Brentanian theory of temporal passage.

²⁸ Assuming, for the moment, that these are homogeneous.

²⁹ Brentano's view of the part-whole relation hangs together also with his account of the boundaries of things. All conceivable (drawable) boundaries exist actually, for Brentano, independently of whether what these boundaries bound has existed or will exist in separation or as set off in any way from its environment.

³⁰ His arguments for this are summarised in Rogge 1935, p.106 f.

³¹ Note that a full treatment would require us to distinguish between two notions of first or ultimate substance within the framework of Brentano's ontology. On the one hand an ultimate substance is an entity which itself subsists in no further substance as part. On the other hand it is an entity which is ultimate in the sense that it contains no parts at all. To provide an account of ultimate substances in this second and stricter sense we should however need to go into the details of Brentano's theory

of the continuum.

³² See e.g. 247, E177. Contrast also Marty 1916 and the relevant portions of Smith (forthcoming).

³³ This continuum is finite; it therefore possesses a certain definite, though perhaps changing, contingent boundary, a fact that is exploited by Brentano as the basis of the following throwaway argument for the existence of God:

Space is substance; however it is not immediately necessary, but rather contingent substance. Because not all possible places could together be actual – infinite space is absurd – there is needed an explanatory cause for the fact that only a definite part of possible space is actualised. (376n45, En368)

³⁴ See e.g. 247 f, E178; Rogge 1935 (109 ff., 192 f.), 1939; Seiterich, 1936, esp. part 3.

References

Brentano, F. 1924/25 *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, 2nd ed., edited by O. Kraus, Leipzig: Meiner. Eng. trans. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. L. L. McAlister, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.

Brentano, F. 1933 *Kategorienlehre*, Leipzig: Meiner, Eng. trans., *The Theory of Categories*, by R. M. Chisholm and N. Guterman, The Hague/Boston/Lancaster: Nijhoff, 1981.

Brentano, F. 1982 *Deskriptive Psychologie*, ed. by R. M. Chisholm and W. Baumgartner, Hamburg: Meiner.

Chisholm, R. M. 1976 *Person and Object*, London: George Allen and Unwin.

Chisholm, R. M. 1978 “Brentano’s Theory of Substance and Accident”, in R.M.Chisholm and R. Haller, eds., 197-210, and in Chisholm, *Brentano and Meinong Studies*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982, 3-16.

Chisholm, R. M. and Haller, R. eds. 1978 *Die Philosophie Franz Brentanos* (*Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 5), Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Couturat, L. 1903 *Opuscles et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, Paris: P.U.F.

Fürth, R. *et al.* 1939 *Naturwissenschaft und Metaphysik. Abhandlungen zum Gedächtnis des 100. Geburtstages von Franz Brentano*, Brünn and Leipzig: Rohrer.

Husserl, E. 1900/01 *Logische Untersuchungen*, 1st ed., Halle:Niemeyer, 2nd ed., 1913/21 and as *Husserliana* XVIII, XIX/1, XIX/2 (pagination A for 1st ed., B for 2nd ed). Eng. trans. by J.N. Findlay, *Logical Investigations*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.

Ingarden, R. 1964/65 *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*, in 2 vols., the 2nd in 2 parts, Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Inwagen, P. van 1981 "The Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 62, 123-37.

Kastil, A. 1951 *Die Philosophie Franz Brentanos. Eine Einführung in seine Lehre*, Bern: Francke.

Marty, A. 1916 *Raum und Zeit*, Halle: Niemeyer.

Mulligan, K., ed. (forthcoming) *Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics. The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*,

Mulligan, K. and Smith, B. 1985 "Franz Brentano and the Ontology of Mind", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 45.

Mulligan, K., Simons, P.M., and Smith, B. 1984 "Truth-Makers", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 44, 287-321.

Parkinson, G. 1966 *Leibniz Logical Papers*, Oxford: Clarendon.

Porphyry 1938 *Introduction to the Predicaments of Aristotle. A Translation of the Eisagoge*, by C. G. Wallis, Annapolis: The St. John's Press.

Reinach, A. 1911 "Die obersten Regeln der Vernunftschlüsse bei Kant", *Kantstudien*, 16, 214-33, repr. in Reinach, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1921, 36-75 (new edition forthcoming, Munich: Philosophia).

Rogge, E. 1935 *Das Kausalproblem bei Franz Brentano. Eine systematische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Rogge, E. 1939 "Traum, Wirklichkeit, Gott. Eine Studie über das Realitätsproblem bei Franz Brentano und im *Discours de la Méthode*", in Fürth, *et al.*, 159-98.

Seiterich, E. 1936 *Die Gottesbeweise bei Franz Brentano* (Freiburger Theologische Studien, 42), Freiburg i. Br.: Herder.

Smith, B. (forthcoming) "Brentano and Marty: An Inquiry into Being and Truth", in Mulligan, ed.

Smith, B., ed. 1982 *Parts and Moments. Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology*, Munich: Philosophia.

Smith, B. and Mulligan, K. 1982 "Pieces of a Theory", in Smith, ed., 1982, 15-109.

Smith, B. and Mulligan, K. 1984 "Framework for Formal Ontology", *Topoi*, 2, 73-85.