

THE SENSORY BASIS OF CONTENT IN WEBER*

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What is sensation?

Examples of sensory entities are phonemes /c/, /a/, /t/, in opposition to the word "cat." In the case of vision, borders and textures may be cited as sensations, this time in opposition to the picture of a cat.

An understanding of content

Content is a broad name for higher cognitive experiences. These would include the word "cat," in opposition to phonemes, and in opposition to the borders and textures that make up this picture. Veber¹ mostly speaks about experience, and he distinguishes several kinds of psychological experiences. So we shall speak about experiences as well. He also uses the term "content," differentiating it from the act of psychological experiences. But if we speak about the sensory basis of content according to current usage, this seems to correspond quite well to what Veber would call the sensory basis of experiences. In traditional terms of substance and accident, the content of experiences is their accident for Veber, whereas the act is their substance.

Problems with the sensory basis

One unclarity about Veber's work is that he mostly agrees with our characterization of sensation (edges, phonemes), whereas he also speaks

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¹ Franc Veber (1890-1975) was the first professional philosopher to write in Slovene. He is still the finest Slovene philosopher. The reason that he is scarcely known abroad is that most of his almost twenty books and hundreds of articles, published from early twenties to the late thirties, were written in Slovene. Veber was the favorite pupil of the philosopher Alexius Meinong, and was designated by him to be his successor at the Karl-Franzens University in Graz. He decided to come to Slovenia for nationalistic reasons, at the time of the foundation of the University in Ljubljana, and he operated his own school there in the twenties and thirties. The reason Veber is scarcely known in Slovenia is that his philosophical tradition has been completely destroyed there. Wolfgang Gombocz (Austria) and Seppo Sajama (Finland), for example, demonstrated the importance of Veber's work to me in the early eighties. Veber lived in Ljubljana from 1945 on, without publishing anything, but he presented two lectures in Graz in the fifties and produced several written works, including an as yet unpublished book entitled *Moja filozofska pot* (written 1970). In his Graz lecture, and in another manuscript, from late 1970 and also unpublished, *Občutki in filozofski pogled na svet*, he speaks about sensory entities. Nobody seems to have noticed this characteristic feature of his recurring theme. One may presume that it was somehow out of his desperation as to the fate of his philosophy in Slovenia that he signed one of his papers, which was dedicated to the problem of sensation, with the German variant of his name, Franz Weber.

about the sensory experiences of tables. This is rather hard to understand.

Sometimes it seems that the importance attributed to sensation is connected to the bridge which sensation builds between the physical and the mental. The foundation of one's experience of pain is physical, but there is a correlated psychological experience of pain.² So here we would seem to have a case of a smooth transition from the physical to the psychological. However, if one takes a dualist point of view, as Veber did, then there appears to be no bridge here. It is almost as though Veber had difficulties acknowledging the importance of sensory experiences, or that he did not consider such sensations to be actual experiences in their own right.

The concentration of our attention on sensory data—in the visual sense—might give an impression of looking at an abstract picture. But an abstract picture is not something that would be seen in nature. The reason is that organisms have their attention primarily directed at information about objects. For example, I do not usually pay attention to edges, borders, contours, or shades of a color, but instead see a tree, a cat, or a house. Thus, I am primarily interested in information regarding objects in my environment.³ In this sense one may say that the information concerning objects can be considered primary for an organism.

My typical experience includes the information about a cat, rather than the sensory information about its edges and shades of the color brown. But information about experiences requires something such as a judgement: "There is a cat!" Such a judgement extracts a full-blown representation, obviously, out of the previous sensory basis. A reason for Veber not to acknowledge the importance of sensory data would be the fact that a sensation is not yet an experience, at least not in the same way as an experience derived from an object.

This is why in some places Veber rejects the sensory basis of content, at least in sense of the psychophysical basis. But because of this, he is driven to embrace a view of experiences as being *a priori*,⁴ and not inductive or empirical in any other way. However, it is difficult to see how the basis of all experiences—presentations—could constitute empirical building blocks of all construction and be *a priori* as well. If something is *a priori*, it seems, it can not be empirically experiential at the same time.⁵

Confusions about sensation in Veber's works are not very surprising once one takes a broader view of the problem. Even nowadays, in cognitive science, the meaning of "sensation" is not very well defined. Still more, the boundary between sensation and perception is in many ways confusing.⁶

2 I thank professor Wilhelm Baumgartner, Würzburg University, for conversations concerning this point, at the Franz Brentano Forschungsinstitut, November 6, 1991.

3 My book *Jezik, misel in predmet* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1988) is dedicated exclusively to the defence of the thesis that language and thought depend on the relation between organisms and entertain objects.

4 Franc Veber, *Sistem filozofije. Prva knjiga: O bistvu predmeta* (Ljubljana: Kleinmayr & Bamberg, 1921), 118.

5 We shall see that Veber overcomes this difficulty by introducing special sensory objects.

6 See Matjaž Potrč, "Sensation and perception," unpublished ms.; Fred Dretske, "Seeing, believing and knowing," 129-148 in D.N. Osherson, S.M. Kosslyn & J.M. Hollerbach, eds., *An Invitation to Cognitive Science: Visual Cognition and Action* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990); Marko Polič, *Poglavja iz zaznavanja*. (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1989).

This confusion stems from the unclear determination of sensation in psychology.

The main question about sensation which continues to separate opinions in philosophy and psychology is whether a sensation is an experience, and whether it is psychological. The usual answer is that sensation is NOT psychological, thus, that it can not be seen as an experience in its own right.

My opinion⁷ is that, at least, there are MECHANISMS of sensory experiences which are of the same kind as mechanisms in higher cognitive tasks. For this reason, and also since they are on a different level from the higher sensations, the sensory mechanisms of discrimination and individuation allow for a naturalistic explanation of higher cognition, especially for the explanation of content.

For some of the historical background about the study of the sensation in psychophysics, which is particularly important for the development of the Meinongian theory of objects, I examined Meinong's booklet "Weber's Law."⁸ The differences in the discussion about just noticeable difference are seen there as objects in their proper right. Weber's opinion⁹ is that in we should search for roots of theory of objects in this place.

The thesis about the dependence of cognition on sensation

One thesis claims that all the higher cognitive experiences depend on sensation. Why things should be so may be seen from the complete picture of various experiences and their mutual relations. The thesis of sensation as the basis of experiences accords well with the principle of "closed foundation" and "open top" of the experiential structure. This thesis has been embraced by Meinong and is characteristic of Graz Austrian philosophy.¹⁰

The theory of production of presentations

According to the theory of production of presentations¹¹ there is a basis of content which is not derived from anything else. The cases of association and determination would be negative examples.¹² If I associate the idea of philosophy with the idea of a big book, this is derivative, and so does not participate in the production of presentations. And if 5 is determined as the result of my counting 1, 2, 3, 4, then this is not the case of production. Thus, it seems that the only sensory presentations are those which have not already been produced and accordingly are not derivative.

7 I defended this opinion in many places, particularly in *Categorization and Intentionality* (Bayreuth: Bayreuther Universität, 1989), and also in "Sensation and Perception".

8 See Potrč, "Philosophy of psychology in Slovenia and Yugoslavia," forthcoming.

9 Veber, *Sistem filozofije*.

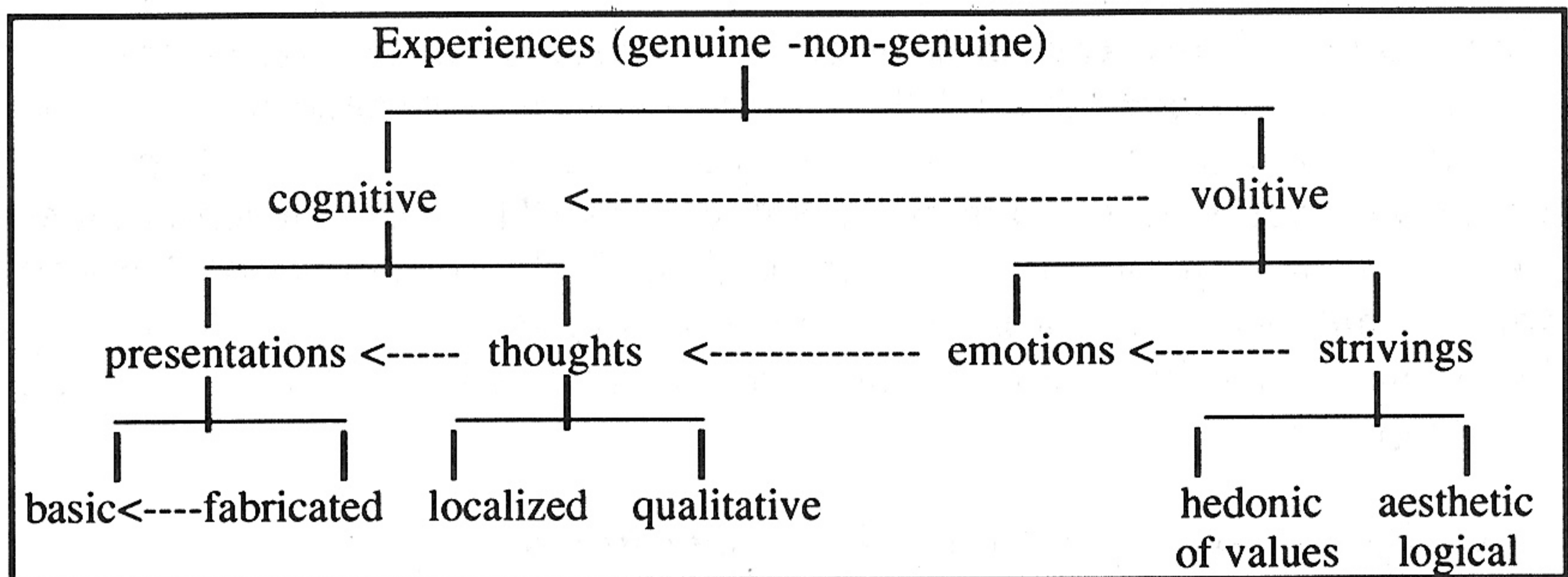
10 And even for Brentano, where the following striking succession may be found: presentations <--- judgements <--- emotions <--- behavior. I wish to thank Dieter Münch for discussion about this point, Franz Brentano Forschungsinstitut, November 7, 1991. See Dieter Münch, "Haben Computer psychische Phänomene?" *Brentano Studien* (Würzburg) 2: 165-178.

11 Termed *Vorstellungsproduktion* in the Graz School.

12 Franc Veber, "Problem predstavnosti produkcije," *Znanstveno društvo za humanistične vede* (Ljubljana) 4 (1928) 139-253.

Presentations

In Veber's system of experiences, presentations play the foundational role. Presentations are the necessary basic ingredients of all other experiences. My thought that the cat is brown has as its ingredients cat and being brown, the two presentations. Similarly, emotions are foundationally dependent on thoughts. And thoughts, again, are foundationally dependent on presentations. Let us look at the case of my striving to obtain a brown cat. This striving is dependent on my desire, hence on my emotion, according to which I like the brown cat. Thus, my striving has emotion as its basis. Further, the emotion has the thought involving the brown cat as its basis. Whereas I can perfectly well have a thought about the brown cat as my experience without having any emotion based on this thought, it would be impossible for me to possess an emotion (say, liking a brown cat) without entertaining a thought about the brown cat in its basis. And my possessing of a thought about the brown cat depends, as we have learned previously, on my experiences of presentations of cat and being brown. This is the hierarchical building of experiences, with presentations in its basis. It may be illustrated with a schema taken from Veber's book *Sistem filozofije*:



It may be seen from this picture that presentations are to be separated into two groups: the basic and the fabricated ones. The basic ones are the ones that interest us.

A problem about foundations

Basic presentations are, thus, at the foundation of the building of experiences. Yet with this statement there arises a problem. The problem seems to be that the presentation of a cat is already a complex datum.

The presentation of a cat may come in various perceptual modes. It may be based on my hearing someone pronouncing the word "cat." Or again it may be based on my visually recognizing a cat. Again, someone may postulate another hierarchy among modes of presentation. So my auditorily-based identification of the word "cat" may itself be based on, or coupled with, my visual memory presentation of the cat.

But there is something still more important. This is the fact, as already stated, that presentation cannot be a psychologically basic datum.

Sensory experience is basic for a particular presentation to be identified. Thus, the presentation of a cat is built out of edges and textures, and there is a visual presentation of a cat. Edges, borders, patches of color and textures are thus the primary data, in the very foundations of experiential building. So, no presentation of a cat would be possible without sensory material coming into this presentation of a cat. And, in the same manner, there would be no striving possible without the basis of sensory material, for the simple reason that striving needs a basis of desires, and desires need a basis of thoughts, and thoughts need a basis of presentations, and presentations need a basis of sensory information.

Presentation as a complex datum

It is not difficult to see that presentation is a complex datum. The visual presentation of a cat is built out of sensory elements such as edges and shades of color.

In order to obtain the presentation of a cat, an organism has to sort out the relevant information from the more basic sensory stimuli. That the experience of a presentation would be something primitive is not a fact, may be seen easily from the case of visual illusions. Let us take the famous rabbit/duck example. The same basis of sensory data allows me on one occasion to identify the information concerning a duck from it, and on another time the information concerning a rabbit. But this shows distinctively that presentation is already a complex datum. It is important, on the ground of our previous considerations, to see that it would be impossible for an organism to have a presentation without having the sensory basis upon which to sort it. Schematically, extending the considerations above, presentation depends on sensory material:

Sensory material <----- Presentation

Thus, in order for an organism to form a presentation, it is necessary that it possess a basis of sensory material first. But the opposite does not hold. It is thus possible for an organism to possess sensory material as already identified, without necessarily possessing any presentation based upon this material. This would happen in the case of an abstract picture: I would perceive a quantity of edges and textures, but no figure.

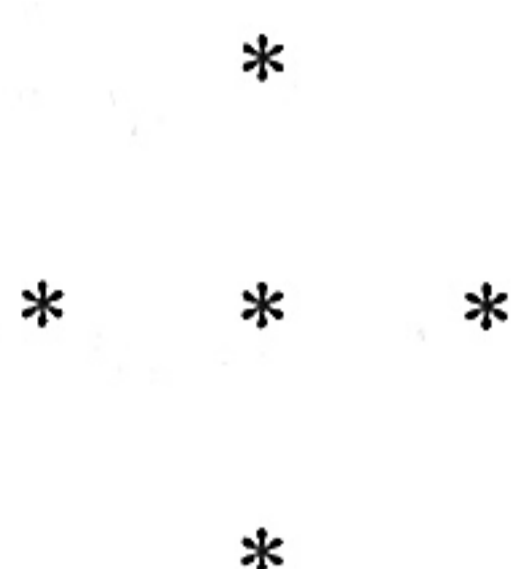
The production of presentations¹³

It is not right to speak about the production of ideas being extended over the complete range of experiences. In the Brentanian tradition there are two theses. The first is the thesis about the dependence of higher-order experiences upon lower-order experiences. According to this thesis, there exists dependence of emotional experiences on thoughts and the further dependence of thoughts on presentations, in the sense that there can not be any being such that it would possess emotions, but would not possess

¹³ I.e., *Vorstellungsproduktion*. I thank Mauro Antonelli for this explanation, Wuerzburg, November 8, 1991.

judgements and presentations.

The thesis about the production of presentations, however, stops with fully formed presentations, and does not extend further to judgements or emotions. It may be described with the help of an example concerning five points:¹⁴



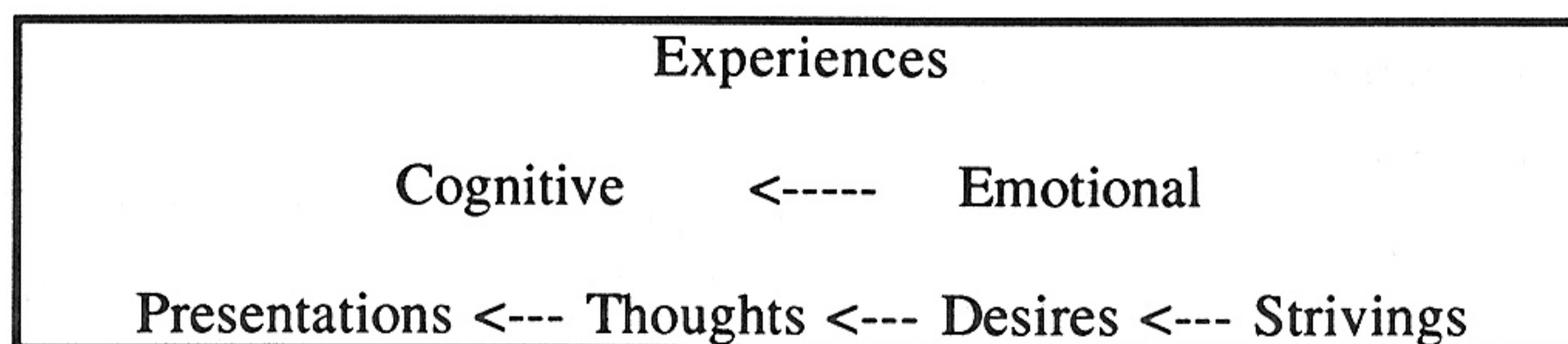
These points are sensory presentations. The points form a basis for the possible apprehension of several figures. There is, for example, a possible apprehension of a diamond, or of a cross, and of several other figures on the basis of these points. These would be Gestalt presentations. The transition from sensory presentations towards Gestalt presentations results in what we would usually call presentations. This presupposes an activity from the side of the apprehending subject—the activity, exactly, which results in the presentation. But although presentation is the result of this activity, it is itself a passive experience, as compared to judgement, for example, which supposes an active attitude on the part of the subject. The relation of sensory presentations and Gestalt presentations makes for the psychological relation of the production of ideas.

But there also exists a parallel foundational relation. According to this relation, our points are objects of the first level, whereas Gestalt presentations would be objects of a higher level. The whole may be presented schematically thus:

Psychological relations	Foundational relations
Sensory presentations	First-level objects
Gestalt presentations	Higher-level objects

The mutual dependence of experiences

Such dependence may best be seen if we consider a simplified version of the schema of experiences set out above:



Now, care must be exercised with respect to the arrows. The arrows signify the mutual dependence of experiences. There is a possible being that

¹⁴ The example is to be found in Veber, *Sistem filozofije*, and *Očrt psihologije* (Ljubljana: Zvezna tiskarna in knjigarna, 1924).

possesses cognitions only, but no emotions.¹⁵ Veber¹⁶ offers the following thought experiment about such a being: it would see the fire, but it would walk into it and destroy itself, because it would not be capable to entertain any emotions, those of fear for example. Although a being with cognitions but without emotions is deplorable, it is still possible. But there is no possible being with emotions and without cognitive experiences. In the same sense, the being that entertains a kind of striving should entertain desires, thoughts and presentations in the basis of this striving. This is the dependency that arrows are introduced to show.

The problem about sensation may be exhibited by an extension of the schema of experiences to the left:

Sensory Experiences <----- Presentations

Because presentations (upon which any other experiences depend) depend themselves on sensory experiences, all experiences seem to be grounded on sensory experiences. But this would then mean that sensory experiences are of the utmost importance for any experiences whatsoever, that sensory experiences are the foundation for all the rest of experience.

Veber did not make any such extension in his complete schema of experiences. But it is clear that this kind of foundation posed a problem of the first philosophical importance for him.

Objects and objects of sensory experiences

The epistemically-based dependence of experiences has as its correlate in the ontological dependence of objects corresponding to these experiences. In one argument Veber claims that sensory experiences (*Empfindungen*, *občutki*) have their own objects. This is a consideration with respect to why sensory experiences are a foundation for the theory of objects. In order to grasp this, we should see which objects really are the objects of the theory of objects (*Gegenstandstheorie*). Let us take the bottom row of experiences, and attach their objects under them:

Presentations <-- Thoughts <-- Desires <-- Strivings			
Objects	Objectives	Willings	Wantings

Objectives, for example, are the objects which are accessible through thoughts, but they have an independent existence. Objectives and all other objects are the proper¹⁷ working domain for the theory of objects. It may be presumed that there exists a similar dependence among the objects as they

¹⁵ Are there beings with presentations only? It seems that such kinds of beings are possible for Veber, and even for Brentano. Dieter Münch thinks that they are incorporated in classical computers and in Husserlian entities. I think that it is difficult to ascribe any behavior, and thus—maybe—any presentations to them. Sic!

¹⁶ Veber, *Očrt psihologije*.

¹⁷ *Heimatlose Gegenstände*, objects without a home—because such objects have not been placed in any other science yet. It is the theory of objects (*Gegenstandstheorie*) that incorporates them.

exist among experiences. Following this, objects to the right would depend on the objects to the left of our schema. Willings would for example depend on objectives, and they would further depend on objects.

Now, what about the objects of sensory experiences? First, what are these objects? And, second, does the whole structure of objects depend on sensory objects? Veber indeed thinks that there exist objects of sensory experiences. The first approximation to these objects would be that sensory experience of an edge would be correlated with the object of that edge. Veber also thinks that whole structure does indeed rest on sensory objects.

Proof that there is hierarchy of sensory experiences according to the proximity of the experience of reality

This should be a proof against the opinion that experiences can be genuine or non-genuine. Actually, Meinong held that any experience whatsoever may be genuine or non-genuine. If I observe the cat now, I entertain the genuine presentation of the cat. But if I later think about the cat, or hallucinate the cat, my experiences may be classified as non-genuine. This then applies to any kind of experience.

According to Veber, sensory experiences show that such a thesis may be countered. A closer observation of the nature of sensory experiences makes clear that they are ordered according to whether they are closer to the function of presentation or to the "attainment" function (see below). The following ordering of sensations may be established:¹⁸

sensations of	position touch temperature smell hearing sight
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There is a regularity to be observed in this hierarchy. If I touch the cat, there is a function of *attainment* in the foreground. Somehow I feel that reality is encountered by the sensation of touch. On the other hand, if I look at the cat, the sensation is now the one of presentation. In this case, reality is not touched but only represented. Still more to the point, in the case of the sensation of touch, where the *attainment* function is in the foreground, the function of presentation tends to disappear almost completely; whereas in the case of the sensation of sight, matters are just the opposite. There we

¹⁸ Veber says that anybody may try to order sensory experiences for themselves according to their proximity to the function of presentation or to the attainment function: "Damit wir das klar erkennen, sei folgende Reihe echter Sinnesempfindungen angeführt: Tastempfindung - Lageempfindung - Temperaturempfindung - Geruchsempfindung - Tonempfindung - Gesichtsempfindung," quoted from *Empfindungsgrundlagen der Gegenstandstheorie*, Manuskript B9, in Vebernachlass, Forschungsstelle für österreichische Philosophie, Graz (a lecture in Graz from the early fifties, published in *Conceptus*, (Graz) 53-54 (1987), 8).

have to do with an almost complete disappearance of the *attainment* function. The intermediate cases of sensations (temperature, smell) tend to show an equal distribution of attainment and presentation functions.

The above regularity or continuum of sensations may be illustrated with the similar ordering of characteristics which are to be found in the mutual relation of truth and probability for beliefs concerning contrary facts. If, in my belief, I accord $3/4$ likelihood that it is going to rain tomorrow, then I shall accord $1/4$ likelihood to the contrary fact, namely that it is not going to rain tomorrow. In the case of beliefs in contrary thoughts, we have the following situation:

	+1	+3/4	+1/2	+1/4	+0
Positive thought:	-----				
	-0	-1/4	-1/2	-3/4	-1
The same negative thought:	-----				

(where +1= maximal belief, +0= minimal belief, -1= maximal belief about not being of A, -0= minimal belief about not being of A.¹⁹)

Although the cases are not identical for the continuum of sensations and for belief (truth and probability) concerning contrary facts, the latter may illustrate the regularity Veber had in mind. What he tried to show is that contrary to the opinion that each experience may be invariably taken as being genuine or non-genuine, some experiences are closer to reality, because their attainment function is emphasized.²⁰

Actually, Veber thought that this fact may shed a new kind of light on the relation of substance and accident.

Two arguments about sensation and the theory of objects

There are two arguments put forward by Veber to show that sensation is important for the theory of objects. One of these arguments is epistemic, and the other one is ontological.

a. The **EPISTEMIC** argument is as follows:

Without the experience of presentation there is no theory of objects.

Without presentation of sensation there is no presentation.

∴ Without sensation there is no approach to a theory of objects.²¹

The epistemic argument is concerned with the basis of sensation as far as the knowledge about objects is concerned. It is important to know that

¹⁹ Veber, Franc. *Uvod v filozofijo*. Ljubljana: Tiskovna zadruga, 1921.

²⁰ *Trefffunktion*, but another expression is used by Veber as well, *Daseinsfunktion*, where the attainment of reality is accentuated.

²¹ Weber: "Ohne Erlebnispräsentation keine Gegenstandstheorie. Ohne Empfindungspräsentation keine Präsentation. Ohne Empfindungen kein Weg zur Gegenstandstheorie," *Empfindungsgrundlagen*, 5.

the approach to the theory of objects is psychological. But the psychological approach only says something about access to objects. It says nothing about the objects themselves.

It is useful to look at an example of a controversy in the research concerning concepts in order to see what is at stake here. Recently, psychologists seem to have discovered a large number of new truths concerning the old topic of concepts. In the Aristotelian tradition, research concerning concepts has been centered in relations among concepts: for example, whether the concept of "robin" is included in the concept of "bird," or whether the concept "table" and the concept "bird" have no space common to both. Underlying the Aristotelian tradition has been the assumption about the definitional nature of concepts: for each instance, for "bird," whether necessary and sufficient conditions may be given. This means that for each instance it should be always possible to establish with full determinacy whether it belongs to a concept or not. According to psychological findings there exist instances of concepts without any precise delineation, and the concepts themselves, following this, are called fuzzy concepts. Psychological findings have shown, among other things, that "robin" has been conceived as a typical "bird" by a specific population, much more typical a "bird" than a "penguin" would be. But this means that necessary and sufficient conditions do not hold anymore. If they did, then "robin" and "penguin" would be instances of "bird" in exactly the same right. But the existence of prototypical exemplars seems to show that the defintory view can not hold.

Or, as critics hasten to say, it would only seem to be like that.²² All that the psychologists have shown, critics claim, is the psychological accessibility of objects. The psychological accessibility is empirical, and it may vary throughout different populations. Penguins may be more typical birds for Patagonians than for the people of Central Europe. But these findings about the psychological accessibility of instances of concepts, these critics claim, do not say anything about the nature of concepts as such. Although the psychological accessibility—measured in milliseconds of reaction time—may vary throughout populations, the penguin and the robin remain instances of the concept bird with fully equal rights. Thus, facts about psychological access to the concepts do not have any impact on the ontological structure of concepts.

Now that we have seen, by this example, what the difference among the psychological and the ontological consists in, we may be better equipped for an understanding of what the arguments concerning the impact of sensation on the theory of objects actually means. First, we should bear in mind that the objects which the theory of objects is interested in are independent of empirical data. Whereas it is an empirical fact that a stone falls on the ground if I let it do so, it is a fact independent of empirical existence that

²² Georges Rey wrote a classic paper about this. As well, this is the opinion of Jerry Fodor. I have discussed this with Mr. Rey on various occasions, and with Mr. Fodor three years ago at Rutgers University.

bodies move because of the attraction of larger bodies.²³

The argument, it may be said, centers on psychological access to objects. First come the presentations. (Without experience of presentation there is no theory of objects.) According to the hierarchical dependency of experiences, presentations are the basis of all other experiences. The reason is that the possibility of a creature possessing strivings, for example, depends of the previous possibility of the same creature possessing desires, and therefore thoughts, and therefore presentations. So, the experience of presentations is the basis for possessing all the rest of experience.

Now the second premise says that there is something still more basic than presentations, namely the presentations of sensation. (Without presentation of sensation there is no presentation.) But if such is the case then presentations of sensation are the basis for all the rest of presentations and hence they are the basis for all the rest of experiences. This is the meaning of the affirmation that presentations of sensation provide the foundation for presentations.

It follows that sensation is basic for the theory of objects. (Without sensation there is no approach to a theory of objects.) But as the experience of presentation has been mentioned in the first premise, the affirmation has to be interpreted epistemically: it is concerned with what may be known. It need not be interpreted ontologically, with respect to what there is. The first premise says that experience of presentation is necessary for the theory of objects. This needs to be interpreted as meaning that there could have been no theory of objects if no one had had access to the objects. But a creature can have access to any objects, to objectives for example, only if it has access to presentations first. But according to the second premise, a precondition for a creature to possess access to presentations is its previously possessing access to presentations of sensation. Prior to possessing access to the picture of the cat, the creature should be able to have access to the borders and textures that enter into the processing of the picture. From this one may deduce that possessing sensory experiences is a precondition for having access to the theory of objects. The theory of objects is made by cognitive beings only. This is why the first argument has epistemic impact.

b. The **ONTOLOGICAL** argument

The second argument, on the contrary, is ontological. It also concerns the relation between sensation and the theory of objects, but it does not speak about epistemic access of some creature to objects. It speaks about the ontological preconditions for a theory of objects as far as they appear in the ontological hierarchy. The argument is as follows:

Without sensations there are no sensory objects.

²³ Weber, *Empfindungsgrundlagen*, 1.

Without sensory objects there is no working space for the theory of objects.

∴ Without sensations there is no theory of objects.²⁴

In this argument, there is no talk about access to objects. On the contrary, the discussion concerns the ontological basis of the theory of objects.

The first premise says that sensations are preconditions of sensory objects. Here, it is not important that someone experiences the sensations. It is important that if there exists a sensation, this sensation is the precondition of a sensory object. Let it be the case that there is sensation of a border that I experience. In this case, the ontological precondition is fulfilled for an object to appear, the sensory object. Now, this sensory object does not depend on experience. But it depends on sensation. What should such an object be? What can be its rationale? The justification for the existence of the sensory object is rooted in the very basis of intentionality. If there is a sensation of hearing, there is something which is not identical with hearing that the sensation points towards: the object, that which is heard, the sound. In the same sense, the sensation of border has as its objective correlate the object border. This object border is a sensory object. It belongs to the theory of objects in so far as its existence is independent of someone's access to it.

The second premise says that sensory objects ground the very possibility for the theory of objects to appear. In commenting on the previous argument, we spoke about sensation as grounding the accessibility of the theory of objects. But in the present argument we speak about the ontological dependence of theory of objects on sensory objects. If there is an objective—the object corresponding to my thought that a cat is brown—the object corresponding to the cat is one of its ontological preconditions. But in the very roots of the ontological preconditions of this objective there has to exist something like the sensory object of a border. Thus sensory objects are preconditions for any objects and therefore for the theory of objects.

From this, it is concluded that sensations ground the theory of objects. We are speaking about an ontological relation of grounding, and not about a relation of psychological access as with the previous argument. The ontological grounding role of sensations should be understood along the lines of ontological dependence among various kinds of objects.

Accident, substance and sensation

According to the Aristotelian tradition, a substance is the center of its accidents. A horse is a substance, which has the accidents as its part: it is brown, it is moving, it belongs to me.

²⁴ "Ohne Empfindungen keine Empfindungsgegenstände. Ohne Empfindungsgegenstände kein Arbeitsbereich der Gegenstandstheorie. ∴ Ohne Empfindungen keine Gegenstandstheorie." Weber, *Empfindungs-grundlagen*, 6.

In contrast with this tradition, Brentano introduced the terminology of part and whole. He claimed that the substance is a part of the accident, thus of the whole. Using our previous example, we would claim now that the accident, being brown, is a whole, which has the horse, its substance, as its part.

But this is not the whole of the story. The real substance, according to Brentano, is the subject. And we may say that experience of brownness of the horse is the accident. So, here, we would have a whole—the experience of the brown horse—which has the experiencing subject, thus the substance, as its part. Generalizing this result, one could claim that any possible experience is an accident, and thus a possibly occurring whole, which has the—experiencing—subject as its substance. This would mean that there is no possible experience without a subject, its substance, supporting it.

Veber adds yet another turn to the story about accident and substance. He starts with the analysis of mental experiences, where he distinguishes content and act as two main parts. Now, the content of my experience would be the brown horse, and the act of experience would be the presentation of the brown horse. Of course, in addition to the presentation, there may be other kinds of experiences, such as thoughts, desires or strivings (concerning the brown horse). These different kinds of experiences would form the differences as to the act of mental experience as a whole. My desiring a brown horse would thus involve a different act from my merely presenting the brown horse. The content, the brown horse, would remain the same.

But there is still another difference of act to be noted. We may distinguish between genuine and non-genuine presentations.²⁵ My genuine presentation of the brown horse would be there as I observe the brown horse directly. I also can engage in a fantasy concerning the brown horse, but in this case this would not be a genuine presentation. Being genuine and non-genuine seems clearly to be a difference of acts, because the acts are different whereas the content remains the same.

What if we now try to compare the distinction between content and act with the distinction between substance and accident? A first reaction would seem to be to identify content with substance and act with accident. The reason would be that a content—the brown horse—seems to introduce something quite close to a kind of substance, whereas an act²⁶ would seem to be nearer to an accident, because the mode of presentation (of content) seems to be something accidental to the seeming substantiality of content. Whether the brown horse is presented genuinely or non-genuinely, in fantasy only, seems to be secondary to what is presented; the mode of presentation of the brown horse seems to be secondary to the brown horse.

What has been already said seems to follow the Aristotelian tradition. And we earlier mentioned its difference from the Brentanian way of posing the question. According to the Brentanian way of putting things, the brown horse would be an accident (a whole), whereas the subject would be the substance. But we have no subject explicitly in our case under discussion,

²⁵ For example, as Meinong did.

²⁶ According to the Fregean reflex?

the presentation of the brown horse.

If we think for a while, we may observe that the act (mode of presentation of the content) contains an attitude of the subject (towards a particular content). The act of presenting a brown horse may be genuine or again non-genuine.

From this starting point we may be tempted to conclude that the act is the substance. The reason for this would be that the act of mental experience involves the subject of this experience, the way the subject reacts towards the content. An additional reason, from the side of the theory of objects, would be that content is independent of the experience of a subject, whereas the act obviously is not (although content figures in the experience.)

This is what Veber claims: the content of mental experiences is the accident, whereas the act is their substance. One reason that we pointed out in favor of this kind of interpretation, is that the subject of experiences is most closely tied to the act of experiences, whereas the content of experiences tends to keep a particular independence from the (psychological) subject of experiences.

But there is still another reason to claim that the content of mental experiences is the accident, whereas the act of mental experiences is the substance. The reason is not in the subject of experiences, but in the reality of what mental experiences *attain*. The simplest way to explain this would be with sensory experiences.²⁷

Although it is somehow controversial what sensory experiences really are,²⁸ one feature which they have is that we most directly come into contact with reality with their help.²⁹ If I have a presentation of the brown horse, I can only have this presentation because of at least some direct experience with the sensory material—patches of brown color, edges—which later on can be organized into the (visual) experience of a horse.

Now, here we have sensory experiences.³⁰ Take, e.g., my visual experience of a patch of brown color. Its content is brown color. This content may be seen, in itself, as independent of any of my possible experiences, as an object in the sense of the theory of objects. Thus it seems clearly to be the case that the content of brown color is an accident of any of my experiences. This is why the brown color, thus the content, may be called an accident.

But there remains the question whether my (possible) experience of the object brown color really comes into contact with the color brown. This is the question of the act of experience. It is with the act that the question whether the experience is experience about the brown color seems to be affected.

However, at this point there are two possible interpretations of

27 This is what Veber does, in *Občutki*.

28 Whether sensory experiences are psychological, or physiological, thus not experiences at all, is a matter of dispute, as we have mentioned.

29 This is again what Veber claims with his *Treffgedanke*, attainment thought—where attainment refers to the attainment of the external or transcendental reality with the help of an experience.

30 Let us presume that sensory experiences really are experiences, and not only the physiologically conditioned reactions to the external stimuli.

aboutness. Both interpretations seem to be tied to the act of experience, because it is the act of experience which makes this experience to be about something. Of course, the act alone can not make the experience to be an experience about something. For this, content is necessary. But content all by itself, because it is objective and independent of experience, can not be an experience either.

One interpretation of aboutness would point out the directedness of the act. Because an act is directed, the experience is about something. But this would leave open the possibility that this something may not be real or even that it may not exist. Thus, I can think about a square circle, but it is not the case that the square circle exists. Thus, according to this interpretation, the act would perfectly well allow for an individualistic kind of aboutness. It would not be necessary or even important that the act should point to something real.

Another kind of interpretation would stress the nature of the act, its genuineness or non-genuineness.

Now, at this point, sensory experience becomes very important. The reasoning in favor of the possibility of an individualistic, even solipsistic, interpretation of mental experiences partially depends on the fact that the contents of mental experiences are usually taken to be higher-order kinds of experiences (presentations, thoughts, desires, strivings). But in the case of these higher cognitive experiences it is always possible that the link with reality is broken. We may think about unicorns, or strive to draw a square circle. The possibility to break the link with reality in higher-order experiences comes from the fact, however, that they are already a construction, derivative upon the material which touches reality.

The only experiences that really can be said to touch or not to touch reality are sensory experiences. Only in experiences of flecks of brown color, edges or phonemes may we really speak about a direct link with reality. But these experiences of direct links to reality are clearly matters of acts and they are not a matter of the content of mental experiences. So the genuineness or non-genuineness of acts of sensory experiences are foundational for the link with reality.

This link to reality, which depends on the act may be called the attainment function of mental experiences.³¹ It goes without much discussion that most sensory experiences are attainment, and thus genuine experiences, according to their act. Otherwise, the survival of an organism would be endangered, for sensory information would be systematically misleading for it. Thus, the connection of sensory experiences to reality had better exist;³² whereas it is sometimes desirable and rewarding from the point of view of survival if various, even conflicting models are put upon reality in the case of higher cognitive experiences, and thus that such models are detached from a direct link with reality.

Whatever the case may be, if we revert to our main point of discussion,

³¹ *Zadevanje*, or *Treffen*, is the term introduced by Veber, here translated as "attainment."

³² The modularity thesis (Jerry Fodor, *Modularity of Mind* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1983)) claims exactly that in sensory modular experiences systematic error is not desirable or even possible.

acts of sensory experiences may be seen as substances because of their attainment function in the case of the acts' genuineness.

To see the point more clearly: Contents of mental experiences only provide presentations. And these presentations are not connected to the basic external reality as the source of all experiences, whereas acts of mental experiences, among other things,³³ point to a transcendent reality in the case of their genuineness. But the genuineness of mental acts is basic in sensory experiences only, because these are the experiences with most direct link to the reality, upon which other kinds of experiences continue to build. This is why the act of experiences is their substance.

One objection to such reasoning would be that the genuineness of attainment of experiences does not connect anything to these experiences or to their description.³⁴ The answer would be that this objection does not consider the sensory experiences as most basic for attainment experiences. In the case of higher cognitive experiences, such as thoughts, it is easy to remain without any contact with transcendent reality.

Another objection may be that the attainment function does not add anything to the description of the content of mental experiences. The answer to this one would be that the attainment function does not indeed have any link to the content, so that this is no flaw.

The following objectors' question would urge us to determine whether there is any positive contribution whatsoever of the attainment experiences to the description of these experiences. The answer would be that an act of mental experience really does not contribute substantially to the content. Only if we consider the act to be substance, can we see the point. The act as substance points to the fact that experience is the experience of a subject. And it is substantial for the subject to base its experiences on reality. At least this necessarily holds for most of sensory experiences, which are the basic building blocks of all the rest of our very rich mental life.

Let us look a little closer at the general structure of Veber's views concerning the status of sensation.

Sensation and dualism

Veber is a dualist. In short, he thinks that there exist two worlds: the psychological and the external. Between them somewhere is located the physical world of sensory experiences, which is non-existent—although the external world is known through the physical world only.

In his book *Uvod v filozofijo* Veber gives a characterization of his point of view,³⁵ which I here present in an analytical form:

33 They can as well distinguish presentations, thoughts, desires and strivings.

34 See Seppo Sajama, "Direct mental reference: Veber's concept of 'zadevanje'," *Acta Analytica* (Ljubljana) 5: 33-43.

35 "Vsa ta izvajanja me torej silijo, da se napram gori orisanemu trojnemu, monističnemu, svetovnemu naziranju (spinozizem, materijalizem, spiritualizem) izrečno postavim na *stališče svetovnega dualizma*, trdeč, da faktično, to je tudi v tzv. metafizičnem smislu eksistira dvoje bistveno različnih in nepremostljivih svetov, izmed katerih nam je eden - naša duševnost - najboljše poznan, drugi - faktično eksistentni zunanji svet - pa le v toliko, da ni duševnega, temveč prostornega značaja. Med tema dvema svetoma leži nam znani fizikalni svet z vsemi svojimi barvami, trdotami, glasovi, kislinami, toplotami itd., ki *kot tak* faktično ne eksistira, temveč je v svoji celokupnosti le

1. there exist two worlds: the mental world and the external world;
 - 1.1 the mental world is the world of the mentality (of a particular individual);
 - 1.11 one (a particular individual?) always has direct access to (one's own) mental world;
 - 1.2 the external world exists factually;
 - 1.21 the external world is indirectly accessible and spatial;
2. the physical world is situated in between the mental world and external world;
 - 2.1 this physical world is the physical world which we are able to know about;
 - 2.11 the physical world consists of colors, resistances (*trdote*), voices, acids (*kislina*), warmnesses (*toplota*);
 - 2.2 the physical world as such does not exist;
 - 2.21 The physical world, in its integrity, is nothing but a direct "object" of our integral mentality;
 - 2.211 The physical world serves us as an auxiliary object for grasping the factual external world;
 - 2.2111 For this reason (since the physical world serves as an auxiliary object for us to apprehend the factual external world) the factual external world should at least have the characteristic of spatiality.

The picture of the overall situation may be thus presented graphically:

Mental world ---> (Physical World) ---> External world

So, there are three worlds: the mental, the external and the physical world; but actually, there are only two worlds: the mental and the external, because the physical world does not exist (2.2). What does this mean?

It may mean that the external world is inaccessible to us, or it may mean that the only thing that is accessible to us from the external world are the things from the physical world. The things from the physical world are thus the things that are accessible to our senses.

The physical world, it must be noted, does not consist of objects such as chairs and cats. It consists of SENSORY EXPERIENCES such as sounds, firmnesses, colors. It must be noted further that sounds, colors, are the objects of sensory experiences.

From the distribution of worlds (mental, external, physical), it is clear that sounds and colors do not belong to the sphere of the mental or to the sphere of the external. They belong to the sphere of the physical. But we should be careful not to confuse the physical with the external (because this would be the ordinary sense of the physical), so we should better term the *psychophysical* or the *sensory* what is called the physical world by Veber.

neposredni "predmet" naše celokupne duševnosti, nam obenem služeč kot pomožni predmet za dojetanje faktičnega zunanjega sveta, ki mora ravno iz tega zadnjega razloga biti tudi vsaj prostornega značaja." *Uvod v filozofijo*, 107.

From this point of view, it must be noted again, that what is called physical by Veber, and thus psychophysical by us, is of the utmost importance for Veber, because the psychophysical allows for the transition from the mental to the external; it allows for mental access to the external.

A different kind of interpretation would accord even more importance to the psychophysical in Veber's construction: It is possible that Veber is trying to say that the external world (tables, chairs) is not accessible to our mental experiences at all. In this case, what would be accessible to our mental experiences would be the objects at the level of sensation, at the level of what we call the psychophysical (sounds, colors); these objects are independent of these experiences as such, since, according to Veber, they have an existence independent of mentality. But this would then mean that the psychophysical objects are the truly Veberian objects!

One objection could be raised against this interpretation: Veber says that sensation (he calls it the physical) is non-existent, that it does not exist. But in the rest of the book he argues that philosophy has its object which is independent of the objects of the rest of sciences.

At this point, one may conjecture that sensory (psychophysical) objects are the only objects which allow for access to the external world. If we take this affirmation strictly, it may mean that sensory objects really are the mental objects, because it is via mentality that the knowledge of external world is possible. In particular, this interpretation seems plausible because the external world, for Veber, is uncertain, contrary to the (internal) mental world, which has the primacy of direct access (of the individual, the one who experiences).

Elucidation of the nature of the external world is in order here. First, it seems that the external world exists independently of the mental. So it has independent existence, independent of anybody's knowledge. This would be in agreement with the view that objects of science and philosophy are independent of the (processes of) knowledge of these objects.

But the world of sensation (called the physical world by Veber) has again the role of auxiliary object, which serves for access to the external factual world. Thus, one may conclude from this that the external factual world is not accessible directly. And that which is accessible to the experience (to the mental) are sensory objects (Veberian physical objects). Sensory objects are auxiliary: this means that their final task would be to access the external world, which would be itself not directly graspable or accessible.

Does this mean now that the only objects (of the external world) that are accessible are sensory objects? This would mean that one has mental access to the color brown, to a moving object, to a miaowing sound, and through this, one would have access to the cat.

But even if one has access to the cat, it may be that the cat, here, figures as an auxiliary object! This would be in agreement with the Brentanian view that the cat is a whole, and as such is an accident, which has the experiencer (the subject, thus the substance) as its part. "I am

appeared to in a cat-like manner" would mean that the experience of the cat, as a whole (i.e., as an accident) has me, the experiencer (hence, the substance) as its part.

However, it does not seem to follow from what Veber tells us that the cat could figure as an auxiliary object—because according to Veber, only sensory experiences may figure as auxiliary objects.

Does this mean that each sensory experience as a whole—the flashing brown color, the miaowing sound—would have, as wholes, cat as its part, but that the cat would have, as another level of the whole, the experiencing subject as its part? Would the picture thus be like this:

the flashing brown color as a whole (accident)

having as its part



the cat (substance of the flashing brown color),

but also whole—an accident—

having as its part



Matjaž, the experiencing subject

(substance of the cat)

This would be the Brentanian ontological extension of the Veberian project. But it does not seem to be possible for Veber to claim that there really is "the cat," so the intermediate level would apparently have to be discarded by him, because the only objects he allows for are sensory objects.

Matjaž, so it seems, would be reduced to the mental world (experience). But this mental experience, according to the premises of intentionality, would need to have an object, independent of the mental experience itself. This experience would be directed to the auxiliary object (the flashing brown color).

And the (auxiliary) object "flashing brown color" would be directed at the external world ("the cat"?—actually, nobody would know if this would be the cat here). All that we are permitted to know is that there is something spatial about the external world, that this world is spatial (2.2111).

Hence, all we would know about the external world would be something like a kind of semi-Kantian schema, including spatiality. But this is in opposition with the overall Veberian criticism of Kantianism, which, according to him, gives to mentality the power to create the external world.³⁶ But the external world should be conceived as independent of experience, because according to the premises of intentionality, mentality and thus experience should have objects which exist independently of them.

A particular comment should be made with respect to 2.21. I understand this affirmation in the following way: From birth till death, an individual is bombarded with the stream of sensory (psychophysical) information. This

³⁶ See for example *Uvod v filozofijo*.

stream of information is enormous in its diversity, because it comprises all the sensory information an individual gathers in his or her entire life. It is also enormous in its quantity. But the thesis says that this stream is but one object. This object is put between parentheses, because it is a curious object.

It must be noted that the physical does not individuate things, such as cats, but only sensory information, such as the information concerning edges, colors, or phonemes. This is the additional reason why the "object" is quite curious, and thus put in parentheses.³⁷

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POVZETEK

OBČUTKI KOT TEMELJ VSEBIN DUŠEVNIH STANJ PRI VEBRU

Za slovenskega filozofa Franceta Vebera so občutki pomembni, saj tvorijo temelj za vsebine duševnih stanj, povezanih z vsakršnim možnim izkustvom. V svojem sistemu filozofije skuša Veber razložiti vse vrste izkustev (predstave, misli, želje, stremljenja), kot tudi njihove predmete, v smislu predmetnostne teorije, ki jo je odkril Vebrov učitelj Alexius Meinong. V svojem še ne objavljenem poznem opusu Veber poudarja občutke kot tisto vrsto izkustva, ki ji zlasti pripada vloga zadevanja realnosti. Ne le da spoznavno kaj zve o realnosti le s pomočjo izkustev, ki jih prinašajo občutki. Obstaja tudi predmetnostni temelj občutkov v Gegenstandstheorie. S stališča občutkov si ogledamo Vebrovo razumevanje razlike med substanco in akcidence. V skladu z Vebrovim dualizmom so občutki edino sredstvo, s pomočjo katerega lahko spoznamo realnost. Vendar pa občutki pravzaprav ne obstajajo.

³⁷ Other pertinent bibliography: Baumgartner, Wilhelm. "Objects analysed. Brentano's way towards the identity of objects," 20-30 in *The Object and Its Identity*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989) and "Psychologie - Ontologie - Metaphysik," *Neues Jahrbuch* (1991) 23-36; Chisholm, Roderick, "Brentano's Theory of Substance and Accident," in *Brentano and Meinong Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987); Gombocz, Wolfgang, "Franz Weber (1890-1975). Ein Vorwort zu zwei Veroeffentlichungen aus seinem Nachlass," *Conceptus* (Graz) 53-54 (1987) 67-74; Haller, Rudolf, "Franz Brentano, ein Philosoph des Empirismus," *Brentano Studien* 1 (1989)19-30; Meinong, Alexius, *Über die Bedeutung des Weber'schen Gesetzes: Beiträge zur Psychologie des Vergleichens und Messens* (Hamburg/Lepizig: Leopold Voss, 1896); Potrč Matjaž, *Brentanian Ontology Naturalized*, Unpublished ms.; Smith, Barry, "The primacy of place: An investigation in Brentanian ontology," *Topoi* 8 (Dordrecht, 1989) 43-51.