

First Steps in Experimental Phenomenology

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1. Background

The paper uses some of the ideas developed by early phenomenologists in order to sketch fragments of a new architecture for artificial minds. In Europe, the fifty years from 1870 to 1930 saw an enormous amount of new scientific and philosophical ideas, some of which are collectively referred to as ‘Central-European philosophy and science’. The main figures to whom the label is attached are Franz Brentano and his pupils, notably Edmund Husserl, Alexius Meinong, Kazimierz Twardowski, Carl Stumpf, Christian von Ehrenfels and Anton Marty.¹ None of them any longer plays a major role in contemporary mainstream science and philosophy.² Moreover, when their ideas are occasionally cited, the references are often generic and based on highly questionable if not wrong interpretations.³ The only partial exception to this depressing picture is the case of Husserl, who is substantially better known than any of the other thinkers mentioned. However, even in the case of Husserl, the scientific relevance of his contributions is obstructed by a converging set of factors. In fact, the idea that phenomenology was a thoroughly scientific-oriented philosophy has been buried under (1) widely held misunderstandings about its development and its basic theses;⁴ (2) Husserl’s writing style and in particular his adoption of an overly complex terminology, which most contemporary scholars do not consider worth taking the time to decipher; and (3) the success enjoyed by the a-scientific philosophy of Martin Heidegger, possibly Husserl’s best known pupil. Heidegger’s fame throws a sinister light on the scientific suitability of Husserl’s phenomenology. It is worth noting that the sad fate encountered by phenomenology has been at least partly shared by straightforward scientific theories, the clearest case being the psychology of Gestalt.⁵

My task here is to show that at least some of the ideas developed by Central-European thinkers can still be fruitfully exploited for the scientific advancement of our understanding of the world and our experience of it. The main thesis defended by this paper is that the phenomonic level of analysis of the psyche is autonomous – i.e. non-reducible. The thesis will be defended by developing four main ideas: (1) the theory of levels of reality, (2) the distinction between act and object of presentation, (3) the structure of internal time, and (4) the distinction between egological and non egological acts. With some simplification, one can say that behind each of those ideas stands a

¹ Albertazzi, Libardi and Poli 1996, Poli 1997, Poli 1998, Albertazzi, Jacquette and Poli 2001. Albertazzi 2005.

² However, see Albertazzi 2001c and 2004.

³ Chisholm’s possibly being the main source of confusion.

⁴ One of the most widely held fallacies – especially among analytic philosophers – concerns the Husserl-Frege connections. On this see Hill and Rosado Haddock 2000.

⁵ Two aspects are worth mentioning. Firstly, the extraordinary fact that a number of experimental results have been forgotten, among them those concerning the structure of the specious present. Secondly, there is today scant awareness of the dialectic internal to the school. Most contemporary psychologists are little if at all aware of the differences between the Berlin (Köhler, Koffka, Wertheimer) and Graz (Meinong, Benussi, Ameseder) versions of Gestaltism. Furthermore, a proper reconstruction of the abundant output of the period should consider a number of other partially different but nevertheless close schools, notably the *Ganzheitspsychologie* of Sander, Volkelt and Krüger, the *Denkpsychologie* of Külpe and Bühler, and the *produktive Denken* of Selz. Only tiny fragments of this huge body of thought are available to English reading scholars.

major figure: Nicolai Hartmann for the theory of levels of reality, Franz Brentano for the distinction between acts and objects of presentation, Edmund Husserl for the structure of internal time, and Edith Stein for the distinction between egological and non egological acts.⁶ I shall present all the above theses from the point of view of the experiments conducted by Meinong and his pupils, notably Benussi, first at Graz and then at Padua.⁷ I may therefore claim that I am here adopting the point of view of what has been called *experimental phenomenology*, by which is meant the experimental study of phenomonic or first-person experiences.

The expression ‘experimental phenomenology’ was first coined by Thinès and has been used by various psychologists and philosophers, notably Kanizsa and Albertazzi.⁸ Here I shall use it in a more inclusive sense to encompass all the above-mentioned ideas and categorial frameworks. Furthermore, I shall twist its meaning from an epistemologically-oriented sense to an ontologically-oriented one.

2. Levels of reality

The ontological theory of levels runs counter to a number of deeply entrenched assumptions of mainstream science and philosophy. It is therefore advisable to start by enumerating its main claims. Three aspects are relevant. Let us consider them in the form of dichotomies, as follows:

- Levels of reality vs. levels of interpretation;
- Descriptive vs. genetic;
- Categorial vs. individual.

For each dichotomy, the first option is the reference one. Although confusion between *levels of reality* and *levels of interpretation*⁹ is not infrequent, trading one for the other is to blur or confound ontological dimensions with epistemological ones. In short, only some of the many possible levels of interpretation can be properly taken as levels of reality, namely those that are grounded on ontological categories. Further details will be given below.¹⁰

As far as levels of interpretation are concerned, choice of the granularity of the scene under description – the *windowing of attention*¹¹ – depends only on the observer and his/her purpose. On the other hand, levels of reality are grounded on the object, on its intrinsic nature.¹² Although it is not the purpose of this paper to argue in favor of this apparently old-fashioned vision, two brief remarks are appropriate. Firstly, at issue is one of the guiding ideas of the phenomenological attitude, namely the assumption that what appears – the phenomenon – is always the appearance of some underlying reality. Put otherwise: phenomena exhibit in their own way aspects, sides, and components of what they are phenomena of. Which means that it is through phenomena that we

⁶ Hartmann 1935, 1952. Hartmann was not a pupil of Brentano and pertains more to the phenomenological movement at large than to the School of Brentano. See Spiegelberg 1984, Ch. VI. On Hartmann see Werkmeister 1990.

⁷ See Albertazzi 2001a for a well documented reconstruction of Benussi’s work and results.

⁸ Thinès 1977.

⁹ Often termed *levels of description*. In order to avoid overlaps with the concept of *description* occurring in the second dichotomy, the expression *levels of interpretation* will be interpreted as referring to the epistemological interpretation of levels, as opposed to their ontological interpretation.

¹⁰ For an outline of my views on the relationship between epistemology and ontology see Poli 2001c; for a general presentation of my views on levels see Poli 1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2006, Gnoli and Poli 2005, Herre and Poli in preparation.

¹¹ Talmy 1996.

¹² Dimensions of reality grounded on the interaction between subject and object or between subjects require a more sophisticated framework. The chapters on the psychological and the social strata provide the requisite details.

access the nature of reality.¹³ Secondly, the concept of *essence* or *nature* of something is again one of the basic features of the phenomenological attitude. As a first and only partial approximation, the nature of an object is given by the object's structure as manifest in the web of internal and external causes that render the object's behavior explicit. I shall return to the problem of causation and the web of causes towards the end of this section.

Atoms, molecules, organisms distinguish levels of reality because of the causal links that govern their behavior, both horizontally (atom-atom, molecule-molecule, organism-organism) and vertically (atom-molecule-organism). This is the first assertion of the theory of levels. Although the further development of the theory will require a number of qualifications of this initial assertion, the idea of a series of entities organized on different levels of complexity will prove correct. The difference between levels of reality and levels of interpretation requires one to acknowledge that the *items* composing levels of reality are endowed with their own form of *agency*.¹⁴ From the point of view of the theory of levels of reality the two requirements of agency and presence of a causal web are equivalent. The former operates from above, the latter from below. A fully-developed theory of levels requires both a properly generalized concept of causation able to comprise not only material causes but also psychological and social ones, and a correspondingly generalized idea of *agency* able to explain not only psychological and social dynamics but material ones as well.

With a grain of salt, the difference between levels of reality and levels of interpretation entails the thesis that the former constrains the items of the universe as to which types of causation and agency are admissible. A level of reality can therefore be taken as a level of interpretation endowed with an appropriate web of causes or an appropriate type of agency.

Developing the theory of causation (or the theory of agency, for that matter) requires adoption of a new framework. This is where the opposition between description and genesis enters the scene. The distinction between a descriptive framework and a genetic one goes back to Brentano, who presented it as the difference between descriptive and genetic psychology. The idea is that before we study the causes that structure and connect the phenomena under observation, we should know what they are. In other words, the first step in any scientific endeavour involves the accurate *description* of the relevant data. If we are sufficiently able, we may succeed in connecting data within an appropriate web of causal dependences. This web is termed *genetic* in the sense that it explains how some items derive from other items. In this sense, *genetic* means therefore *dynamic*. It may well be – and more often than not this is precisely the case – that only a fraction of the relevant phenomena are explicable in this manner. Various sciences have been developed in order efficaciously to segment the whole of reality into classes of more or less uniformly connected phenomena: the guiding idea being that phenomena occurring within each class should be more causally homogeneous than phenomena pertaining to other classes, so that the task of explaining their behavior should be more easily accomplished.

This *dividi et impera* (divide and rule) strategy has been immensely successful, at least for some regions of reality. Other regions have proved more refractory, for a number of serious reasons. A first one is that different regions may require different types of causation, some of which are still unknown or only partially known.¹⁵ A second reason is that, for some regions of reality, the analytic strategy of breaking items down into pieces does not work properly. A third and connected reason is that a synthetic methodology is lacking.

The complexity of reality requires the analytic strategy of segmentation into *categorially* homogeneous regions. This first move is not a matter of dispute. However, some regions contain only items that can be further segmented analytically into pieces. These items are entirely governed

¹³ Two further specifications deserve to be added. First, besides real being, ideal being too should be taken into account. Second, 'object' is taken as the most general term for bearers of properties. So understood, the category of object comprises things, processes, stuffs, states of affairs and any other particular required by analysis of real and ideal items.

¹⁴ Providing that *agency* is properly neutralized.

¹⁵ This shows that we still await a properly generalized theory of causation.

by their parts (from below, so to speak). Other regions contain items which display different patterns: they depend on both their parts and the whole that results from them. Our understanding of these more complex items is still inadequate. Unfortunately, this is not the end of the story. Something more is required: sooner or later the products arising from the segmentation into categorially homogeneous regions should be synthesised. For we all live in *one* world, not in two or twenty-five worlds.¹⁶ This second synthetic move has proved much more troublesome than the original analytic one.

An ontology of the world cannot rely on analytic decomposition into different scientific frameworks. Sooner or later they will have to be reunified. Reductionism is the despairing response of those who believe that a synthetic picture will never be achieved.¹⁷

There is no denying that we still lack many answers. However, the theory of levels of reality is a necessary step toward the elaboration of a fully developed synthetic strategy.

Most details of the links connecting together the various levels of reality are still unknown. This should not come as a surprise. The various sciences have mainly worked on causal links *internal* to their regional phenomena; more often than not, the nature of inter-regional links is still unknown. The lack of a theory of levels of reality has been the major obstruction to the development of the requisite theories. For this reason, the first and most urgent task is to construct the *descriptive* framework of the theory of levels. Proposals on the architecture of levels and their basic connections will improve our understanding of the world and of its many types of dependence.¹⁸ We shall see later that the theory of levels helps to answer a number of new scientific questions.

The last opposition concerns the difference between the individual and the categorial. Let us assume that the differences between levels of reality and levels of interpretation on the one hand, and between descriptive and genetic frameworks on the other, have been accepted. Suppose then that a descriptive version of the theory of levels has been accepted.

The remaining problem is therefore how to describe levels. Apparently, the choice is between descriptions based on individuals and descriptions based on categories. Yet it is obvious that descriptions based on individuals do not work. The easiest way to show this is as follows. Assume that the distinction among the physical, the biological and the social levels is accepted.¹⁹ The decision must now be taken as to whether each level contains its own group of individuals. If it does, we must hypothesize three different groups of individuals, one for each level. However, it may well be that the physical individuum, the biological individuum and the social individuum are the only one individuum existing in the real world. A good exemplification of such a situation is provided by any one of us, and it is an exemplification that may be made as sophisticated as one wishes simply by distinguishing theory-based (or model based) individuals from real, transcendent, individuals. Be this as it may be, what interests us here is the world. It is always the same individuum that is subjected to physical, biological and social scrutiny. If we decide that each level of reality is made up of its own group of individuals, a number of demanding and possibly unsolvable problems immediately arise. My claim is that there is no principled reason for proceeding in this way. Even if the strategy may occasionally prove helpful, in the long run it systematically reifies categorial distinctions. The opposite strategy is based on categories, not on individuals. According to a categorially-based strategy, levels of reality are defined by their categories.

Some brief specifications will be helpful.

¹⁶ Smith 1996.

¹⁷ The belief is usually buried under the apparently neutral move of taking synthesis as the inverse of analysis, the idea being that $ASx = SAx$. See Rosen 1985.

¹⁸ The theory of levels may provide guidance for the teaching of sciences and their interrelationships.

¹⁹ The psychological level raises special problems, which we will shortly address. We will also see that there are reasons for adopting a distinction among levels different from the commonsense one given in the main text. However, the difference is irrelevant to the point under discussion.

- *Apparently, the choice between (transcendent) individuals and categories does not rule out theory-based individuals.* A moment's reflection suffices to show that the latter are fictions, because the strategy based on theory-based individuals is isomorphic to the category-based strategy.
- *Nobody denies that the same phenomenon (or group of phenomena) can be categorized in many different ways.* Correct. However, it should not be forgotten that we are engaged in ontology here: Only ontological categories are relevant to our task.
- *Even so, there may be different ontologies.* Well, perhaps: I am inclined to deny such a possibility. Furthermore, none of the great ontologists was an ontological relativist.
- *Suppose that we are willing to accept the via difficilior (more difficult road) of a unique ontology. Even so, the ontology can be presented in different ways based on different groups of categories, isomorphic but not identical.* I accept this claim. However, it is ontologically immaterial because it concerns the formal architecture of the theory more than its ontological content. As far as our interest here is concerned, we may select any of those categorial groups and deem its categories canonical.²⁰

To sum up the discussion thus far, our main conclusion is that we should adopt a categorial viewpoint. In short, a level of reality is represented by a group of (ontological) categories.

The next step is to distinguish the *universal* categories that pertain to the whole of reality, from *level* categories, which pertain to one or more levels but not to all of them.

As far as the former are concerned, the Aristotelian list of categories is still helpful. Whatever the items under analysis, they may present qualitative and quantitative determinations, temporal and spatial locations, relations to other *items*, and they may exert influence on other items and undergo influence by other items. Obviously, each of these categories requires developments that go well beyond Aristotle; yet his main intuitions as far as determinations are concerned are still worth considering.

Substance and determination are thus the first two universal categories. Analysis of substance requires the development of a number of new theories. One of them is the theory of particulars, i.e. the systematic analysis of categories like thing, process, stuff, and state of affairs. A second theory required is that of wholes and their parts. These basic references evince that 'substance' is the heading used for a complex net of topics. Determinations, too, are of a demanding complexity, mainly organized around the difference between extensive and intensive determinations.²¹

The theory of levels of reality articulates the dichotomy between substance and determination. This distinction requires subsequent specifications: certain families of determinations may inhere in specific families of substances. On the other hand, families of substances admit only corresponding families of determinations. Having a given length is a determination that can only inhere in a material substance;²² the determination of an irrepressible joy can only inhere in a psychological substance; the determination of fulfilment of some legal requirement through revocation can only inhere in a social substance.²³ The theory of the levels of reality provides the categorial framework for the systematic articulation all these differences.

The distinction traverses three basic realms or regions (or strata, as I will call them) of reality. Even if the boundaries between them are located in different places, the distinction among the three realms of material, mental and social phenomena is largely accepted by thinkers and scientists. A

²⁰ Different choices may be more or less suitable from a modeling perspective.

²¹ A determination can be extensive or intensive in either time and space. Nothing prevents determinations from being, say, extensive in space and intensive in time, or viceversa. See Poli 2001b, cap. 6.

²² *Material* as used in this sentence should be taken as the opposite, not of formal, but of psychological and social, according to a distinction that I will shortly provide.

²³ Examples show that the relation of inherence is rather complex and may be tuned by various structures. Aristotle glimpsed the problem through his theory of the *propria*.

major source of discussion is whether inanimate and animate beings should be placed in two different realms (which means that there are in fact four, not three, realms) or within the same realm. The latter option defends the thesis that a phase transition or something similar connects inanimate and animate items.

From a categorial point of view, the problem of how many strata there are can be easily solved. Leaving apart universal categories, two main categorial situations can be distinguished: (a) Types (items) A and B are categorially different because the canonical description of one of them requires categories that are not needed by the canonical description of the other; (b) Types (items) A and B are categorially different because their canonical description requires two entirely different groups of categories. Following Hartmann, I term the two relations as respectively relations of over-forming (*Überformung*) and building-above (*Überbauung*).²⁴

Strata or realms of reality are connected by building-above relations. That is to say, the main reason for distinguishing as clearly as possible the different strata of reality is that any of them is characterized by the birth of a *new* categorial *series*. The group of categories that are needed to analyze the phenomena of the psychological stratum is essentially different from the group of categories needed to analyze the social one, which in its turn requires a group of categories different from the one needed to analyze the material stratum of reality.

The two following situations exemplify the difference between over-forming and building-above. Consider first the relationships between, say, chemistry and physics. Let us assume that we possess a categorially adequate analysis of physics.²⁵ In brief: $\varphi = \{C_{\varphi 1}, \dots, C_{\varphi m}\}$. Let us further suppose that we possess a categorially adequate analysis of chemistry, say $\chi = \{C_{\chi 1}, \dots, C_{\chi n}\}$. The following question can now be asked: what type of relation connects physical and chemical reality? The answer is straightforward: Chemistry is based on physics, but says something more. Chemical phenomena go beyond (purely) physical phenomena: that is, chemistry is a creative extension of physics. Seeking to categorize chemical phenomena by resorting to physical categories alone does not produce false results; rather, it is useless because it dissolves what is characteristic of chemical phenomena. Categorially speaking, the situation can be summarized by saying that the set of chemical categories extends the set of physical categories. Passing from the physical to the chemical level is to add *new* categories.²⁶ This is the situation that I have called *over-forming*.

Let us now discuss a different case, for instance the connections between physics and psychology. As in the previous example, we assume that adequate categorizations are available, in the form of, say, $\varphi = \{C_{\varphi 1}, \dots, C_{\varphi m}\}$ and $\psi = \{C_{\psi 1}, \dots, C_{\psi n}\}$. However, it is immediately evident that the new situation is substantially different from the previous one. We cannot claim – as we did in the previous case – that the categories of psychology *extend* the categories of physics and that the group of psychological categories is obtained by adding new categories to the categories of physics. What we must instead claim is that psychological categories are orthogonal to physical categories. However, something more is needed, namely the claim that psychic phenomena require physical bearers.²⁷ Psychological phenomena are difficult to categorize because they are *categorially independent* and *existentially dependent* on their bearers. Relations between levels characterized by both categorial independence and existential dependence will be termed *building-above* relations.

²⁴ Cf. Hartmann 1935. The simplified version set out in Hartmann 1952 is worth reading as well. For an introduction to Hartmann see Werkmeister 1990 and the essays collected in the special issue of *Axiomathes* 2001, 12, 3-4. Even if my views differ substantially from Hartmann's, his theory is an obligatory starting point for anybody interested in the problem of levels of reality.

²⁵ It should go without saying that such categorial analysis must be produced by physicists, not by philosophers..

²⁶ This is only the simplest feature. A less cursory description would require discussion of a number of other features, notably the possibility that not all the lower level categories should be lifted to the higher order level and that in the two contexts the same category may play a different role because it interacts with different groups of level categories.

²⁷ It would be better to say *biological*. However, we will shortly see that from a categorial viewpoint the connection holds between the psychological and the material strata of reality, biology being included in the latter.

Some terminological conventions will help the further development of the theory of levels. In what follows, levels connected by building-above relations will be called *strata*, while levels connected by over-forming relations will be called *layers*. I shall use the expressions ‘sub-layer’ and ‘sub-stratum’ when analysis requires them. The term *level* will be used as generic between strata and layers.

The question now arises as to how the material, psychological and social strata are connected together. The most obvious answer is that they have a linear structure like the one illustrated by the left side of Figure 1. On this view, the social stratum is founded on the psychological stratum, which in its turn is founded on the material one. Likewise, the material stratum is the bearer of the psychological stratum, which in its turn is the bearer of the social one. However, I shall defend a different option, illustrated by the right side of Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Material phenomena act as bearers of *both* psychological *and* social phenomena. In their turn, psychological and social phenomena determine each other reciprocally. Psychological and social systems are formed through co-evolution, meaning that the one is the environmental prerequisite for the other.²⁸ Both have a double existential dependence: firstly they both depend on their material bearer; secondly, each depends on the twin stratum: psyches require societies and societies require psyches.

The next step is to articulate the internal organization of each stratum. The material stratum has a basically linear structure (figure 2; for a more detailed analysis see Poli 2001b).

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Shown on the left in Figure 2 are the three main layers of the material stratum. To show that the articulation can be further developed, the biological layer is ‘exploded’ into its main sub-layers (right).

Each of the three strata of reality has its specific structure. The case of the material stratum is the best known and the least problematic. Suffice it to consider the series atom-molecule-cell-organism (which can be extended at each of its two extremes to include sub-atomic particles and ecological communities, and also internally, as needed). In this case we have a clear example of a series that proceeds by levels of granularity. The basic distinction of the realm (stratum) into physical, chemical and biological components can be considerably refined (e.g., by distinguishing biology into genetics, cytology, physiology, ethology, ecology – a slightly more articulated picture is provided by Poli, 2001a,b). Compared to the material realm, the psychological and social ones are characterized by an interruption in the material categorial series and by the onset of new ones (relative to the psychological and social items). More complex types of over-forming are instantiated by them. Later on I shall consider some of the intricacies of the psychological stratum.

Before passing to the next topics, it is worth mentioning that the theory of levels of reality is the natural setting for elaboration of an articulated theory of the forms of causal dependence. In fact, it smoothly grounds the hypothesis that any ontologically different level has its own form of causality (or family of forms of causality). Material, psychological and social forms of causality can therefore be distinguished (and compared) in principled manner.

Besides the usual kinds of basic causality between phenomena of the same nature, the theory of levels enables us to single out upward forms of causality (from the lower level to the upper one). But this is not all. A theory of levels also enables us to address the problem of *downward* forms of causality (from the upper to the lower level). The point was first made by Donald Campbell some

²⁸ Luhmann 1984. I have defended the latter scheme in a number of papers, notably in Poli 2001b.

years ago (see e.g. his 1974 and 1990); Andersen et al. (2000) collects a series of studies on the theme.

The connection between the theory of levels and causality entails recognition that every level of reality may trigger its own causal chain. This may even be taken as a definition of level of reality: a level of reality is distinguished by its specific form of causality. As a consequence, we thus have a criterion with which to distinguish among levels of reality and levels of description.

This acknowledgement also enables us to develop a theory able to accommodate different senses of causality (distinguishing at least among material, mental and social causality). However, if the downward option is also available, the direct or elementary forms of causality should have corresponding non-elementary forms. I tend to adopt the expression *theory of unfoldings* as a convenient label for the many different types of causation linking items within and among themselves, and among their corresponding levels.

The theory of levels of reality comes equipped with a further framework, which I baptize the theory of chronotopoids. The expression refers to a generalized form of the relational theory of time and space. During the 20th century a number of philosophers, biologists, psychologists and sociologists tried to defend the idea that there are biological, psychological, and social forms of time and space. More often than not, those discourses were metaphorical and allusive, methodologically unclear and uncertain about the exact nature of their claims. As for the previous case of the theory of unfoldings, most discourses on varieties of times and spaces failed for lack of a theory of levels of reality. A source of confusion must immediately be cleared up. Chrono-topoids do not question the utility, relevance and necessity of the usual understanding of temporal and spatial reference-frames. Calendars, maps, landmarks and traffic lights are just as much accepted, welcomed and respected as everything else. They are not under discussion. The problem I am trying to address is substantially different from the discussion of clocks and maps.

Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish the two cases is to oppose as clearly as possible absolute and relational theories of time and space. Topoids and chronoids, as said, are relational. They consider their items “as seen from the inside”, something like the intrinsic geometry of a surface. On the other hand, customary time and space see their items “from the outside”. This is why they can be taken as containers. Material, psychological and social topoids and chronoids may behave differently from absolute time and space. This is not to deny that they are “in” absolute space and time as well, but they should *not* be taken as *reducible* to instances of absolute time and space only. Customary time and space can be understood as external semantics of the ontologically-based chronoids and topoids, whereas the latter are to be taken as (part of) the internal semantics of items.

3. First Intermezzo: Levels as a Guiding Idea

The above introduction to the theory of levels of reality paves the way for a categorially sharper analysis of psychological phenomena. The framework of levels immediately offers a number of guiding theses. Let me sketch at least some of them explicitly:

1. Psychological phenomena have a double type of causal dependence, on appropriate material bearers (mainly in the form of biological bearers) and on social bearers. The latter, too, are supported by psychological bearers, so that the causal dependence between psychological and social phenomena runs both ways. In such cases I shall speak of a mutual or bilateral type of dependence.
2. On the other hand, psychological phenomena are categorially independent of both material and social phenomena.
3. Furthermore, psychological phenomena are endowed with their specific type of causes and with their specific types of times and spaces. This general thesis must be supported by appropriate evidence grounded on specific, detailed analyses of relevant phenomena.

4. There is no reason for assuming that the internal organization of the psychological stratum is in any respect similar to the internal organization of either the material or the social stratum. No internal uniformity among strata is required, assumed or hypothesized.
5. The enormous amount of psychological knowledge accumulated during the past decades has substantially deepened our understanding of many psychological phenomena and their internal links. However, the understanding of the connections between material and psychological phenomena is still rather cursory and fragmentary. Given that the framework of the theory of levels is lacking, there is a constant temptation to absorb (reduce) psychological phenomena into biological ones. A quick survey of the literature shows how astonishingly often mind and brain are identified with each other in all relevant respects.

4. Psychological acts and their correlates

I shall now consider the nature and structure of psychological phenomena. The first requirement when addressing the problem of the structure of the psychological stratum is to realize that the psyche is twofold in nature: as far as mental activities are concerned, it is a process; on the other hand, mental processes are structured so that they have correlated contents. The traditional way to present the thesis of the processual nature of the psyche is to claim that psychological phenomena are temporal phenomena. I shall consider the thesis of the processual nature of the psyche in its version developed by Brentano:

Main ontological thesis on psychological phenomena (Brentano's thesis): Psychological phenomena have two sides, one independent, the other dependent. The independent side is a process, termed 'act'; the dependent side is an object, termed 'correlate' of the act. (Figure 3.)

Correlates are sometimes termed 'internal accusatives'. The easiest way to show the connection between act and correlate is by examples, as follows: for every seeing there is something that is seen, for every thinking there is something that is thought, for every feeling there is something that is felt, etc. Correlates depend on their acts as their ontological bearers. But something more is involved, because the dependence connection between correlate and act is of a more intimate nature than the usual bearer-borne relation. In fact, borne correlates are dependent on their bearer acts not only existentially but *materially* as well. *Material* here should be taken in the Husserlian sense, where it is opposed to *formal*.

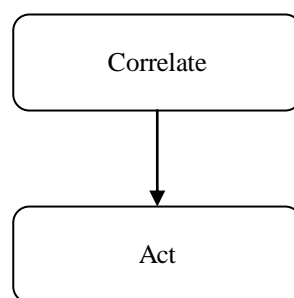


Figure 3. The base architecture of the psyche

We shall distinguish two main families of acts, which Stein baptized "egological" and "non-egological". The latter family is further subdivided into "perceptive presentations" and "mental presentations".²⁹

²⁹ The two last terms are not Stein's.

Presentations form what is usually called stream of consciousness, specious present or moment now. They concern the basic temporal structure of our conscious life. Mental presentations in particular concern what is nowadays usually ascribed to propositional knowledge. However, we shall see that the difference between non-propositional and propositional knowledge does not fit well with the difference between perceptive and mental presentations. Egological acts concern the so-called emotional components of the psyche. I shall return to them in section 8.

Three major problems characterize the theory of psychological acts, namely the problems of (1) the structure of the act, (2) the interaction among different acts, and (3) the production of an act on the basis of previous acts. A number of correlated but different problems concern the act's correlates. The latter can be simple or complex (or higher-order), and complex correlates are grounded on simple (or less complex) correlates. Furthermore, correlates are partially dependent on their acts, in the sense that *modifications* of the acts result in *corresponding modifications* of the correlates. Distinguishing the aspects of the correlate that depend on the corresponding act from those that are independent of it is not always straightforward. The next sections will address some of these problems.

5. Presentations

As said, acts of presentations constitute the specious present, the basic temporal flow of intentionality. The present is the multiplicity of what is actually given to the mind. However, the present is not only simultaneous perception; it is also *unification* of the given multiplicity. In short, the present “is that feature of the psychic change which is apprehended as unity and which is the object of a single mental act of apprehension”.³⁰

According to Husserl, intentional phenomena are complex realities requiring a number of different structures to do with (1) the act's internal structure (a component sometimes called ‘latitudinal’ intentionality) and (2) the ordering of the acts, i.e. the past-present-future rhythm of the succession of acts (‘longitudinal’ intentionality). The former heading comprises (a) the phases of the intentional act, (b) the forms of self-organization of the act's correlate (contrast, fusion, grouping, figure/background, pairing) and the time required by such self-organizations, (c) the modalization of the act (through attention or alertness, or their lack, and through emotional attitudes), (d) the modalization of the act's correlate (its profiling or salienting). The latter heading comprises the many complications arising from series of acts, ranging from the sinking of past acts into memory to anticipation of the future in the form of projects. In this paper I shall consider only *some* of the intricacies that characterize a single act of presentation.

The first questions to be asked are: How long does the specious present last? And, how can we determine its length? One possible way is to present two objects in succession and to measure the duration of the interval necessary for their perceptions not to interfere with each other. The idea is that if the two presentations are below the threshold, their objects mingle into the correlate of a single act of perception. Research has found that the minimum duration required for perception to take place without interference is ca. 700 μ s.³¹

If two different visual presentations follow one another at a quicker pace, the resulting perception is composed by elements originating from both of the original presentations. Suppose that two groups of six different objects each are presented one after the other. What is seen is a group of six objects comprising some of objects from the first sextet and some of those from the second sextet. This shows that a single act of apprehension requires a specific amount of time, and that the complexity of its correlate is constrained.

³⁰ Albertazzi 2001a, pp. 110-111.

³¹ Albertazzi 2001a, pp. 111.

One of the major points of disagreement between the mainstream theory of Gestalt (the Berlin faction) and the minority version developed by Meinong, Ameseder and Benussi (the Graz faction) is whether acts of presentations come ‘at a stroke’ or are structured in successive phases.³² The Berliners defended the idea that perceptions do not come in phases. On the other hand, the Grazers both conceptually and experimentally substantiated the opposite thesis that perception is organized in phases. The latter thesis does not imply that the different phases are perceptively separated. Perceptors are not aware of them; they apprehend only the final result of an act of presentation.

Benussi managed to find phenomena that can be better explained by accepting the thesis of the phases of the presentation. perhaps the most interesting is the case of temporal inversions. Consider the following sequence of sounds: Lah (100ms) – white noise (35ms) – Soh (100ms). What happens is that a positive temporal succession occurs so that what is heard is either the succession Lah – Soh – white noise, or white noise – Lah – Soh. That is to say that a perceptive reordering occurred.³³

The thesis of the phases of presentation is flanked by a twin thesis according to which the formation of percepts takes some time. In a sense, this is undeniable. However, the difference is between those who defend the thesis that the formation of the percept occurs at a purely neurophysiological level and those who defend the different thesis that the formation of the percept occurs within the act of presentation. The difference is substantial. The former thesis claims that all the percept-producing operations are neurophysiological while the latter thesis claims that they are phenomenic. If the phases of the act are phenomenic, some ways to make them apparent should be imaginable. Benussi thought that hypnosis could be used to slow down the usual speed of presentation in order to describe its various phases better.

Benussi distinguished three phases. (a) Critical phase, (b) The phase of consecutive impression, and (c) The mnestic phase. The three phases are now described for the case of acoustic perceptions.³⁴

The critical phase is characterized by *perceptive presentness*, in a sequential order, of its elements. The phase of consecutive impression requires immediate memory. Three transformations govern this second phase: (1) the elements constituting the critical phase are unified into a *whole*; (2) the original elements are no longer perceptively present but are experienced as *still present* in the form of a *simultaneous mental contemporaneity*; and (3) the elements experienced as mentally simultaneous are different from the original elements in that they now have the character of an *order of succession*. In short, the phase of consecutive impression is based on a mental whole, whose parts have the content of being organized in some given order. The third and final phase, the mnestic phase, is such that the simultaneous mental whole obtained in the second phase splits into constitutive parts according to some pattern. To be noted is that the elements so obtained are usually *different* from the one constituting the critical phase.³⁵ Temporal inversions provide confirmation of the claim.

The three phases may perhaps be synoptically summarized as *hearing some sounds, sounds heard, melody*.

Albertazzi notes that “the theory of the three phases is important for two reasons: (1) it raises the problem of the decomposing, or slowing down, of real psychic processes in order to see their internal articulation, and (2) it establishes a difference between perceptive presence and mental presence.”³⁶ Having already briefly considered (1), I now pass to (2), the problem of the difference between perceptive and mental presence.

Properly speaking, three different types of *presence* have been distinguished:

1. *Modal* presence

³² On the School of Meinong see the essays collected in Albertazzi, Jacqueline and Poli 2001.

³³ Albertazzi 1994, p.161.

³⁴ Visual perceptions require a slightly different wording. See Albertazzi 2003.

³⁵ Albertazzi 2001a, p. 115.

³⁶ Albertazzi 2001a, p. 116.

2. *Amodal* presence

3. *Mental* presence of representations

Both modal and amodal presence are forms of *perceptive* presence. The data of consciousness endowed with perceptive presence constitute the concept of *empirical reality*. Those with mental presence constitute representations or representative states.

The main structural difference between mental and perceptive items is that the former are associative, whereas the latter are assimilative. Associativity means here that new features may always be added to the relevant items. It may also be said that mental items are analytic. On the other hand, assimilative items are integral wholes. Assimilation is fusion, integration, synthesis. This means that they arrive at some fixed point, in the sense of a best configuration that does not admit further improvements.

Assimilative objects can be *enriched* with perceptive elements without the corresponding adequate external conditions.³⁷ An important case is the segmentation of the perceptive field into figure and ground, where the ground behind the figure is (amodally) completed. The figure has a rear which is not visible but phenomenally present. Objects experienced as three-dimensional objects present an interior, which is encountered and not solely thought.

To return to the difference between modal and amodal presence, Kanizsa specifies the latter as follows: “By ‘amodal presence’ is meant that type of perceptive presence (not only imagined but ‘encountered’ as Metzger puts it) which does not occur in any sensory modality.”³⁸ The triangle that bears his name is a well-known case of amodal perception (Fig. 4)

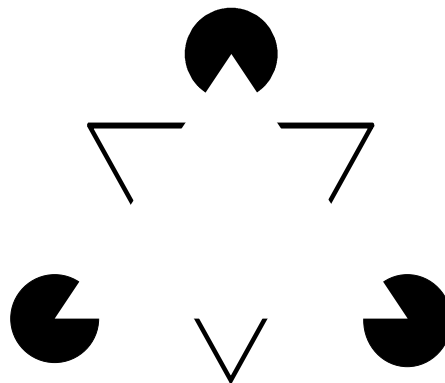


Fig. 4. Kanizsa's triangle

Benussi distinguishes assimilative processes from associative processes as follows:³⁹

1. Associative processes develop according to an additive pattern; assimilative processes alter the perceptive element from which they start (and therefore become one with it). I see an English word and I associate the corresponding Italian word with it: associative process. I 'see' a word spelt incorrectly and I read it in its correct form: assimilative process.
2. The additive pattern of associative processes is unlimited; assimilative processes tend towards a limit.⁴⁰

³⁷ Musatti 1964, p. 37.

³⁸ Kanizsa 1980, p. 90.

³⁹ Benussi 1925, pp. 30 and 32.

⁴⁰ Musatti 1964, p. 38.

3. Assimilative elements are perceptively experienced in the object in which they are presented; associative elements are presented in representative or mnemonic situations.
4. Assimilative processes are activated before, and independently of, mnemonic factors.⁴¹

Amodal presence is a case of phenomenal presence added to a modal base which, although not given in any sensory modality, is perceived (experienced) as if it were effectively given, and not just mentally represented.⁴² On the basis of phenomena of this type, Kanizsa claims that visual phenomena are “a domain of ‘emergent’ reality not reducible to other domains of reality and therefore to be studied using the methods of experimental phenomenology adequate to handle its specificity.”⁴³

Furthermore: “The organization is not contained in the stimulation ... the brain goes beyond the information given in the primary process ... in the primary process, as well as in the secondary one, we have phenomena of totalization, of completion, of integration, of gap-filling; we can, that is to say, observe the ‘presentification of the absent’”.⁴⁴

Summing up and integrating what we have seen so far with experimental data, the following are some of the basic features of presentations:

1. Presentations last from 200 μ s to 3000 μ s ca. On average, they last approximately 700 μ s.
2. The duration of presentations depends on a variety of factors, ranging from the subject’s mood feelings (they are shorter when the subject is excited and longer when s/he is relaxed) to the cognitive state of the subject (attention shortens presentation), to the content of what is presented, etc.
3. Presentations come with an inner organization, on various dimensions. Of these the most important are (a) the distinction between focus and periphery, (b) the presence of internal laws of organization, and (c) the elaboration of their content in subsequent stages. Point (a) entails that there are upper limits to the complexity of the correlate in the focus. Point (b) yields possibly most surprising results, namely the laws of temporal and spatial inversion (Benussi 1913). Point (c) states that presentations themselves have a temporal structure (Albertazzi 2003). This last point is highly significant in that it marks the difference between the Berlin and Graz schools of Gestalt psychology.
4. Presentations come in a (temporal) series, often called stream of consciousness.

6. Second Intermezzo: Forms of Reality Construction

This section is the only one in the paper that deals with correlates of the acts. The only point that I shall consider is the apparently surprising fact that acts are occasionally driven by their correlates. I have already presented Benussi’s distinction between perceptive and mental acts, i.e. between assimilative and additive acts. Assimilation and addition can be taken as two of the basic procedures giving that the experience of external and internal reality.

In the 1920s, Musatti – Benussi’s most outstanding pupil – singled out four forms of construction of both external and internal reality.

The forms of external reality construction are the following.

FIRST FORM OF EXTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. Given two simultaneous discordant phenomenal givens, relative to two distinct sensory fields, we assume that one corresponds to

⁴¹ Musatti 1964, p. 39.

⁴² Albertazzi 2001b, p. 327

⁴³ Kanizsa 1991, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Kanizsa 1980, p. 89.

reality and that the other is apparent (example of the stick half immersed in water). The discordance between the two phenomena is removed if one is used to give account of the other. We can describe this situation as the assumption, between discordant perceptive givens, of one datum as real and the other as apparent.

SECOND FORM OF EXTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. This proceeds by assuming reality to be the imaginary phenomenal datum of a practically impossible, but rationally thinkable, experience, for example the molecular structure of organisms. Atomic structure is real for science although none of our immediate impressions correspond to it. But we can imagine ourselves as able enormously to expand our perceptive capacities until we are putatively able to 'go and see'. By using the concept of 'extended perceptive apparatus', we can unite these first two forms of reality construction.

These are practically impossible but rationally thinkable cases.

THIRD FORM OF EXTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. This proceeds by assuming as real the imaginary phenomenal datum of an experience which is not only practically impossible but also rationally absurd, and only thinkable if we ignore the condition that defines the problem. Think of the world as it was before the appearance of the human species. By definition we cannot describe it. Moreover, this is an assumption that enables explanation of otherwise incomprehensible phenomena (geology, etc.).

FOURTH FORM OF EXTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. This is a reality determined outside the terms of our phenomenal experience. A better formulation would be that reality is indirectly determined only in relation to those given phenomena that it serves to organize. All cases of physical energy, the physical or chemical properties or conditions of bodies are cases of this form of reality construction.⁴⁵

The following are the corresponding forms for inner reality. It should be noted that these forms of construction are more on the side of acts.

FIRST FORM OF INTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. In situations of close concentration we realize the real complexity of phenomena which on other occasions we may have perceived in less complex terms. It is in regard to the latter, therefore, that we speak of the illusory or apparent poverty of data.

SECOND FORM OF INTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. Consider the onset phases of a process introspectively experienced as immediate. It appears immediate to us although we know that it is constituted by a sequence of phases. What appears to us as a single and immediate perceptive event is in fact only the final event in that process. We explain the appearance by assuming that the phases are too brief to be grasped.

THIRD FORM OF INTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. The unconscious is an example of the third form of inner reality construction. The reality of unconscious processes is constructed by means of a fiction which ignores the condition that they cannot be raised to the level of consciousness.

FOURTH FORM OF INTERNAL REALITY CONSTRUCTION. Examples are: capacities, dispositional attitudes (intelligence, memory, discernment). Properly speaking, memory, intelligence, and so on, are not psychic facts; that is, they are not introspectively graspable states or processes.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Musatti 1964, 16-19.

⁴⁶ Musatti 1964, pp. 99-102. For a broader analysis see Poli 1999.

In short, the four forms of reality construction understand reality as:

- Effectively given experience.
- Practically impossible but rationally thinkable experience.
- Practically impossible and rationally absurd experience.
- A reality determined independently of phenomenal experience.

The chief interest of Musatti's analysis of the mechanisms used to construct empirical reality resides in its ability to show that it is possible to proceed from actually given experiences to those which though practically impossible are nevertheless rationally thinkable, to those that are rationally absurd, and finally to those that lie entirely beyond our capacity for phenomenal experience.

7. Mental acts

Besides perceptive presence, the other type of presence is mental presence. I shall refer to the corresponding acts indifferently as mental acts, cognitive acts or non-egological acts. These acts concern imagery, phantasy, reasoning and (reactualized) memory.

I shall not consider them here in any detail. The dialectic between 'seeing' and 'thinking' is extremely complex and will be dealt with on other occasions.⁴⁷ Here I shall instead address the case of egological or emotional acts.

8. Emotional acts

Emotional or egological acts are structured in levels of depths, ranging from acts conveying more superficial information to those conveying more intimate information.⁴⁸ Three different layers can be distinguished.

The most external (superficial) layer concerns information about how we sense our body. *Feeling cold, warm, just ok* are some of the most typical cases. Let us call them *sensorial feelings*.

The next layer comprises information about our moods. *Feeling bored, excited, relaxed, angry, and exhausted* make up only a tiny section of the rich and highly articulated field of moods. Feelings pertaining to this second group are typically twofold: they have a more bodily-oriented side and a more psychologically-oriented one. By default, they merge, but they may diverge and their manifestation may follow different routes according to a variety of conditioning factors, from social to individual. Let us call this second group of feelings *mood feelings*.

The third and deepest-lying layer is our personal style, the way in which we react to what happens to us. Suppose that something hurts you. You may *resist* the pain, *tolerate* it, *combat* it, *accept* it, or even *enjoy* it. Let us denote this third group of feelings with the term *character*.⁴⁹

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

9. The general architecture

⁴⁷ For a relevant analysis see Albertazzi 2003.

⁴⁸ Poli 2006.

⁴⁹ De Monticelli 2000.

From what we have seen so far, presentations are determined by at least three different types of acts: perceptive, mental and emotional. Details of their interaction still await description. A major unsolved problem is their place within the overall architecture of the specious present. A number of different hypotheses can be advanced (fig. 6)

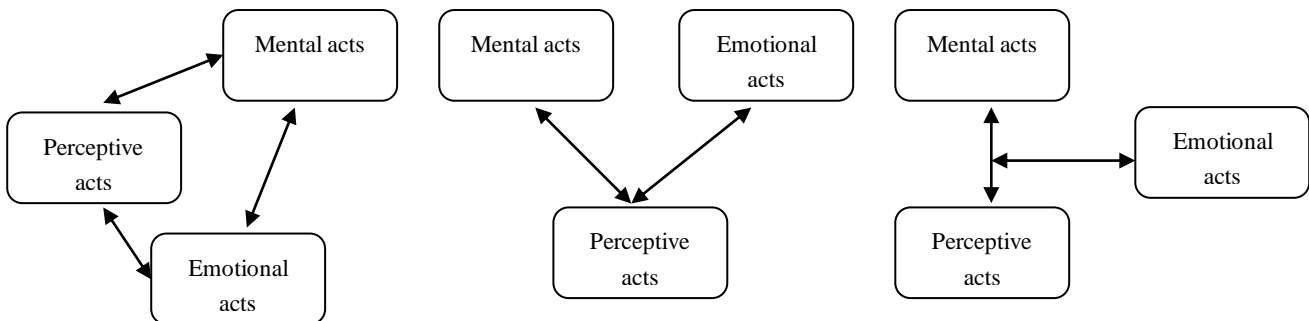


Figure 6. Three architectures of the specious present

The architecture on the left of Fig. 6 says that perceptive, mental and emotional acts interact with each other. The architecture in the centre says that perceptive acts are the basis upon which both mental and emotional acts (which may or may not influence each other) rest. The architecture on the right says that the organization of the specious present is multileveled and has two different types of dependence. A first dependence holds between mental and perceptive acts. A second dependence holds between emotional acts and the couple constituted by both perceptive and mental acts.

All the arrows are double headed: which means that all the dependences are bilateral (i.e., they come in the form of *interactions*). Formally, I take this picture as essentially correct. However, it conceals the fact that the *force* of the two directions may be different. For example, it may well be that the influence exerted by perceptive acts is greater than the influence exerted by mental acts on perceptive acts. Indeed, it is assumed that interactions are always asymmetrical, in the sense that one of the two directions prevails over the other.

With this proviso, which of the three architectures is likely to better approximate the real architecture of the specious present? And, secondly, should the arrows connecting them be interpreted as cases of over-forming or as cases of building-above?

As to the first question, I am not aware of any experimental result able to provide a definitive answer. I cannot therefore offer solid arguments in defence of one of the architectures against all the others. My personal guess is that the third architecture (the one on the right) may be closer to the truth. Embedded in the structure of the third architecture is the idea that emotional acts may facilitate or hamper the *interactions* between perceptions and cognitions. This is an aspect lacking from the other two architectures.

The second question is as demanding as the first one. Neither of the first two architectures provides definitive answers as to whether the dependences among their components are of the over-forming or building-above types. Both options are possible. However, this is likely untrue for the third architecture. Apparently, the arrow between perceptive and mental presentations is of an over-forming type, whereas the arrow between egological and non-egological acts is of a building-above type. As to the *direction* of the building-above relation connecting the egological and non-egological sub-strata, the most likely hypothesis is that non-egological acts build-above egological acts.⁵⁰ The reason for choosing the said direction is that the egological sub-stratum can apparently

⁵⁰ This amounts saying that egological and non egological acts should be understood as sub-strata of the psychological stratum. According to the definition of complexity provided in Poli 2006, the psychological stratum has at least a Type^[1,1] form of complexity and therefore is more complex than the material stratum.

exist without the non-egological one, but not the other way round. Assuming that this interpretation is correct, it follows that the egological field *existentially* depends on the non-egological field as its bearer. Put otherwise: a purely emotional psyche without perceptions and cognitions is imaginable, but not the reverse.⁵¹

10. The double transcendence of our internal life

The psychological stratum emerges from the material stratum as a type of reality characterized by a new series of categories. This means that the psychological stratum requires the material one as its existential bearer. In the meantime, we have found that there is more than one building-above relation connecting the material to the psychological stratum. In order to keep things as simple as possible, let us explicitly distinguish between the *family* of building-above relations concerning presentation and the *family* of building-above relations concerning (sensorial and mood) feelings. There is nothing to rule out the existence of a third *family* of building-above relations connected to unconscious acts. Figure 7 shows the case.

FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

Presentations refer to some transcendent reality. The exact meaning of ‘transcendent’ is far from being clear. In one sense, whichever meaning is given to the term ‘transcendent’, it should include the thesis that the connection between ‘external’ reality and its ‘internal’ presentation is far from being simple or direct (e.g., as a one-to-one connection between suitably chosen elements). Perception, and visual perception in particular, offers an enormous range of illuminating exemplifications. Among them consider the well known phenomenon whereby we see ‘things’ that are not there and do not see ‘things’ that are there.⁵²

As far as non-egological acts are concerned, the relation of transcendence between the act’s referent and its correlate is an instance of the building-above type of relation between the material and the psychological strata. Egological acts have the same structure as far as sensorial feelings are concerned: they are based on the same type of transcendent connection that we have just seen in the case of presentations. The situation of mood feelings and character is more complex. The component we have called character has a transcendent connection with ‘something’ that can be taken as its source. Unfortunately, the deep-lying nature of this ‘something’ is obscure and very difficult to pin down. Experience shows that something of the kind exists, but no evidence about its intrinsic nature and collocation is descriptively available. The most likely hypothesis is that the transcendent source of character is somehow buried in the unconscious layer of the psychological stratum. One of the merits of this hypothesis is its ability to explain why the ‘unconscious’ is unconscious: because it is transcendent with respect to our awareness. However, this is only a very preliminary step and much work remains to be done.

For the time being, let us assume that things stand as described above. If so, the conclusion we are forced to draw is that both the most external or superficial types and the most internal or deep types of egological acts are transcendent. The intermediate type of mood feelings is connected with both the external and internal types of sensory feelings and character. Not by chance this intermediate layer has a mixed nature supported by two different forms of energy. Besides the *biological* energy sustaining our body and its functioning, a *psychological* type of energy exists as

⁵¹ The distinction between the two cases resembles the difference between prokaryotes and eukaryotes. The main difference between them is that the genome of the latter is embedded within the cell’s nucleus. The evolution of complex organisms depends precisely on this particular constraint. Similarly, the evolution of complex minds depends on constraining psychological activity within the structure of the specious present.

⁵² The Kanizsa triangle given in Fig. 4 is a perfect exemplification of the former claim, any case of masking fits the latter case well.

well. The former depends on interaction with the environment (e.g., for food), the latter on interaction with other persons. Here lies one of the deepest-lying links between the psychological and the social strata of reality.

Something more should be added, before closing this section. According to Metzger, the phenomena composing the specious present are the border zone where phenomena occur whose physical and psychic properties are closely connected, in the sense of “physical states with psychic consequences and psychic states with physical consequences”.⁵³ The framework provided by the theory of levels helps give a slightly more precise formulation to the thesis that the specious present is a border zone within the *material* and the *psychological* strata. More precisely, between the biological and the psychological. In even more correct fashion, the thesis is that the specious present is a border zone between physiological and psychological acts, either in the form of egological or non-egological acts.

Representational attitudes determine mental forms of presence. These are causally inefficient. However, mental presence may be able to activate perceptive presence, and this is causally efficient, in the sense of possibly activating a new causal series. Representations can therefore become “realizers or transformers of reality ... and ... causal multipliers of reality”.⁵⁴

Benussi studied these phenomena by means of *real psychic analysis*, by which he meant the decomposition, isolation, immobilization and increase of psychic states obtained by means of hypnosis. By this means Benussi was able to uncouple emotional functions from intellectual ones. He succeeded in inducing pure emotional states (terror, pleasure, happiness, etc) and pure intellectual or pseudo-intellectual states (evidence, assent, denial, etc), *independently* of each other.

Hypnotic suggestion was used as a means to transform the mental presence of an object (through comprehension of a sign or of a word) into its corresponding perceptive presence. In so doing, Benussi investigated the dependence between emotional states and behavioral patterns. He discovered that a specific respiratory pattern corresponds to each type of emotion. Experiencing an emotion is likely to activate the corresponding respiratory pattern. Adopting a given respiratory pattern facilitates the activation of the corresponding emotion.

Scientifically speaking, hypnosis has fallen into disrepute, for good reasons. I am not asking for its rehabilitation. However, there is no need to throw the baby out with the bath water. Benussi is known for having been a thoroughly scrupulous experimentalist. A lack of more developed tools forced him to adopt hypnosis as the only available procedure. Nobody has ever questioned the rigour of his methodology and the seriousness of his data. The studies he conducted in the 1920s should therefore be reproduced and verified or refuted and, if verified, integrated with the other results acquired in the meantime.⁵⁵ If proved, something like the dawn of a new vision may be in sight.

11. Conclusion

This highly tentative paper has mixed experimental data on the structure of the specious present with categorial analyses conducted within the framework of the theory of levels of reality and some bold speculation on the general structure of the psyche. Many aspects have been touched upon only briefly (e.g., the structure of the act’s correlates⁵⁶), or not considered at all. Only the most apparent

⁵³ Metzger 1966, p. 70.

⁵⁴ Albertazzi 2001a, p. 119.

⁵⁵ Benussi 1927.

⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning that the School of Graz that flourished around Meinong developed two interrelated categorial and experimental frameworks called the theory of production and the theory of objects. The former analysed psychic acts, the latter objects, interpreted as acts’s correlates. In this paper I have sketched only a tiny fragment of the theory of production and said almost nothing of the theory of objects. For a first reconstruction of the School of Meinong see Albertazzi, Jacquette and Poli 2001.

surface of a series of enormously complex problems has been scratched. Further studies will have to complete this sketch with the many results obtained by cognitive science, verifying whether the framework suggested is able to accept and incorporate them. Time will tell. At any rate, the paper's main thesis should be clear enough, namely the idea that the guiding structure of the psyche is provided by the specious present, its organization and its parameterization.

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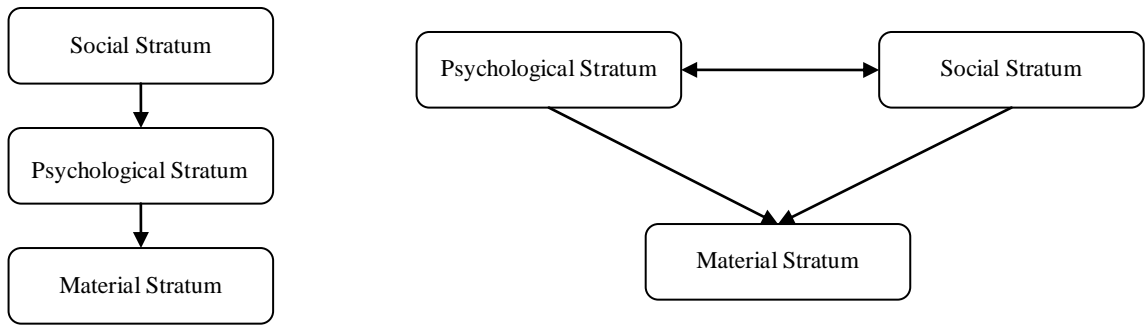


Figure 1. Left: Linearly organized strata. Right: Strata with bilateral dependence

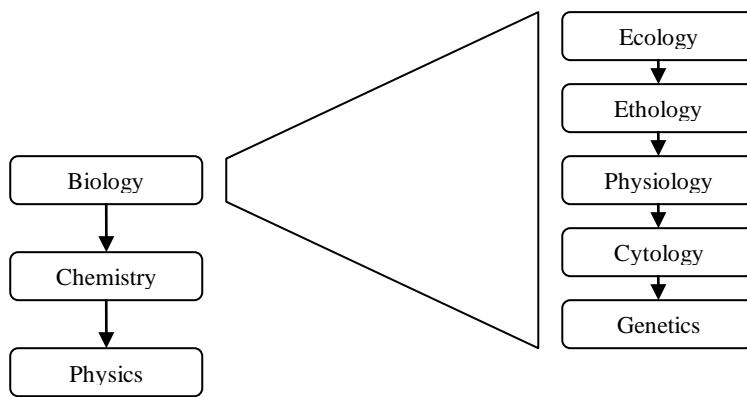


Figure 2. Material layers and sub-layers

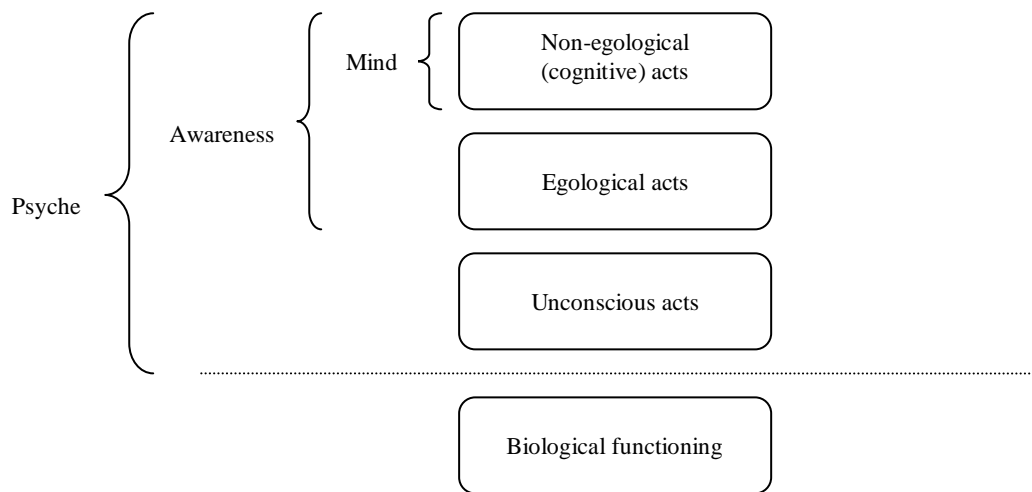


Figure 4. Main levels of the psychological stratum and the underlining biological layer

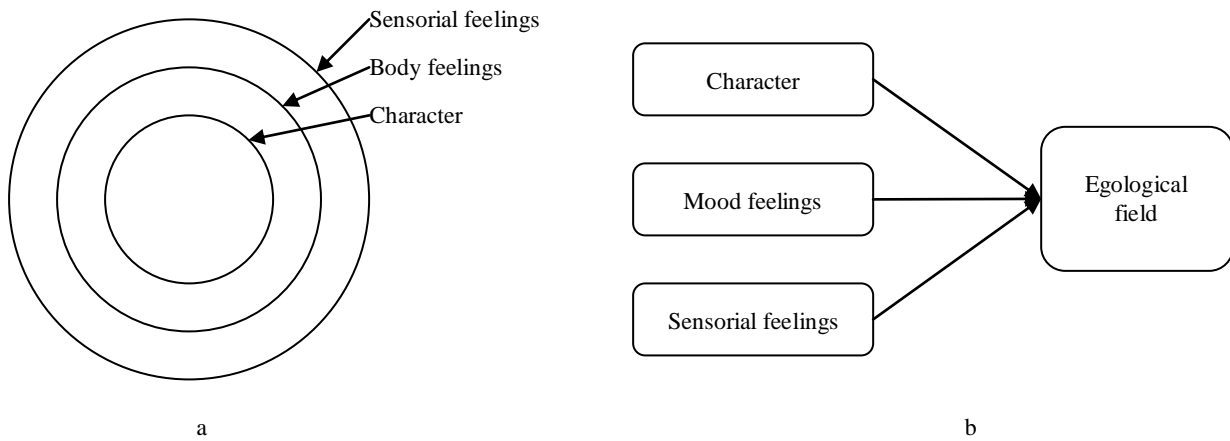


Fig 5. Egological acts: (a) the 'depth' or 'onion-like' organization of their sub-layers; (b) Egological sub-layers are 'part-of' the egological field

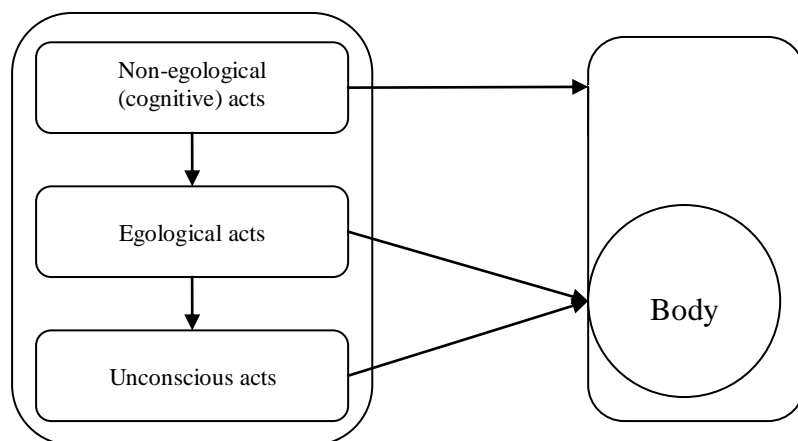


Fig. 7. Building-above relations between the material and the psychological strata