

Philosophy from an Empirical Standpoint

Essays on Carl Stumpf

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**THE AUTONOMY OF THE SENSIBLE AND
THE DESUBJECTIFICATION OF THE *A PRIORI* BY STUMPF**

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Abstract. This paper focuses on Stumpf's book on the psychological origin of the representation of space *Über den psychologischen Ursprung der Raumvorstellung*. Husserl read this book while he was preparing a *Raumbuch* about the genesis of the representation(s) of space. Furthermore, attention is paid to Stumpf's critical interpretation of Kant's "metaphysical exposition" of space in the *Transcendental Aesthetics*. Finally, I discuss Stumpf's attempt at explaining the genesis of space as *aistheton koinon* deriving from the *aistheta idia* (different types of sensations). Stumpf's neo-Aristotelian stance will appear as anticipating Husserl's transcendental constitution of space.

What are the incentives for taking an interest in the philosophy of Carl Stumpf? Does he not provide more than enough reason to have his thought relegated to an outmoded period of philosophy, and to catalogue his work within the museum of academic curiosities from the turn of the 20th century? Moreover, does he not deliberately dissociate his work on the origin of the representation of space from every sort of philosophical or metaphysical question, asserting in his introductory remarks that his study "will not be of much forthright use to either the geometer or the metaphysician" (Stumpf, 1873, v)? Does he not defend a scientific conception of metaphysics, which he holds to depend on the results of the various sciences – declaring in his *Selbstdarstellung* that "metaphysics can only be usefully elaborated by starting from below [*von unten*], in continuity with the sciences, from whose results it must arrive at still further generalisations" (Stumpf 1924, 50)?

Moreover, did he not think that the method of philosophy should be dictated by the epistemological paradigm provided by the natural sciences, and as a general rule advocate transposing the methods of

the latter within philosophy? In this regard, he declares, in reference to Brentano, “One of the central theses in his habilitation thesis, according to which the method of philosophy is none other than that of the natural sciences, was and remains for me a guiding principle.” Stumpf thus interprets the Brentanian thesis in a radically different manner than Heidegger, for whom Brentano anticipates the need for phenomenology to return to the knowledge of the things themselves in their proper domain. (Heidegger, 1979, 24) Ultimately, by being opposed to the speculative style of philosophical *theoria*, Stumpf ended up devoting the greater part of his academic career to carrying out a number of psychological and physiological experiments within the laboratory, notably in the domain of acoustics, on the basis of which he elaborated his theory of consonance and fusion. Does this not mean his thought may be of a certain interest to musicologists, acousticians, and psychologists, but offers much less to philosophers?¹

We would do well to wonder whether his sole claim to fame is limited to having incited, with his *Raumbuch*, Husserl’s interest in the problem of space. As is well known, this resulted in the Husserlian project of editing a new *Raumbuch* (see Husserl, 1983a; Brisart, 2007) and then, in 1907, of developing a constitutive phenomenology of space (Husserl, 1973) and elucidating the fundamental principles of phenomenology (Husserl, 1950a). Is Stumpf merely to be credited, thanks to his theory of the *psychologische Theile* (psychological parts) or *Theilinhalt* (partial contents), with having permitted Husserl to elaborate a theory of *Fundierung* (foundation) and of the foundations of formal ontology (Husserl, 1984, 263-291) (as well as the contemporary research in mereology that lays claim to them), as well as the essential connection between sensorial contents and (temporal and spatial) forms (Husserl, 1973, 65-71; see Popescu, 2003, 122-124)? On the other hand, could he indeed be considered the true founder of mereology (Popescu, 2003, 132), as well as of *Gestaltpsychologie*? In short, as an intellectual and philosophical figure, does any intrinsic interest in Stumpf simply come down to his links with the cluster of intellectual luminaries who came to typify cultural and philosophical life in Germany at the turn of the 20th century – in the first place

¹ On this point, it is worthwhile consulting the autobiographical account given by Stumpf himself: Stumpf 1924, 13-27 and 53-57.

Brentano, as well as Marty, Mach, Hering, W. James, Cantor, Husserl, Wundt, Helmholtz, Mommsen, and Dilthey, among others?²

The central goal in this article is to show that, despite suffering from a lack of recognition, on the contrary Stumpf opened up *crucially important lines of philosophical thought*. He certainly was not explicitly committed to undertaking such pioneering work, and only later would others come to elaborate the significance of his findings in a more systematic fashion. Nonetheless, it is fair to say such areas of thought would perhaps not have been discovered without his pioneering work. Stumpf's thought is, in this respect, an example of a landmark *philosophical exploration* of certain themes emerging, so to speak, *from below the surface* of an ostensible field of inquiry. Once these themes are taken up and framed anew, their conceptual implications acquire capital importance. Here, then, we shall not treat Stumpf as an antiquated museum piece, but instead as a figure whose work prefigures key lines of thought in the subsequent development of German philosophy.

1 Stumpf's fundamental intuitions

Our approach here will not consist in explaining, step by step, the development of Stumpf's respective positions, for instance by drawing attention to their mooring in one or other domain of thought. Rather, the aim is to highlight the essential philosophical tendencies submerged within his work. In other words, in deviating from standard methods of genetic exegesis, we seek to show how these tendencies in Stumpf came to exert a strong influence in the history of philosophy and in the subsequent development of phenomenology.

1) The first fundamental theme consists in an *appeal to an intuitionist method*, that is to say, a return to what is actually given – in opposition to what he calls the “constructivist method” that in his view is closely tied to the “speculative dogmatism” characterizing the Kantian doctrine (Stumpf, 1924, 30).

Counter to any kind of speculative constructivism – that is, against any manufacture of conceptual artifices or methodological fabrications in the fashion of post-Kantian philosophers – Stumpf makes a case for building up philosophy *von unten* (from below). It is a question, in other words, of grounding philosophy in experiential data or in exper-

² Concerning these encounters, see again Stumpf 1924, 4-27.

iments. In such a return to what is given, one can discern the teleological anticipation of the “principles of principles” formulated by Husserl in § 24 of the *Ideen I*; namely, the need to return to the originally given intuition as legitimating source of all possible knowledge. (Husserl, 1976, 51) Furthermore, it appears to anticipate the Heideggerian call to be attentive from the beginning to what is given *zunächst und zumeist* (first and foremost), by not imposing any distorting theoretical project upon that which is presented in experience. (Heidegger, 1979, 131, 203 ff.; Heidegger, 1927, 63 ff.) The question then is how best to understand, within the framework of Stumpf’s thought, the exact nature and scope of that which is “really given” or truly intuitive, in contrast to that which is artificially constructed.³

2) Stumpf’s writings make frequent appeal to the basic principle of the *autonomy of the sphere of the sensible* or (in Husserlian terminology) *of the hyletic domain* – that is, its independence vis-à-vis noetic activities, which Stumpf classifies as *psychische Funktionen* (psychic functions).

In taking up the Brentanian project of a classification of psychic phenomena,⁴ Stumpf in fact proposes a systematic distinction between two fundamental classes of experiences: on the one hand, *phenomena* (*Erscheinungen*), contents of sensations obtained by the senses (*Inhalte der Sinnesempfindungen*); on the other, the *psychic functions* (*psychische Funktionen*), which encompass all acts, states, and experiences, and which denote the acts of attending to phenomena or of analysing the properties or intrinsic relationships particular to them.⁵ A cardinal methodological motive surfaces in this concern to sort various experiences; the possibility of *considering the sensuous or sensible domain of experience in a distinct and autonomous manner, as being infra-noetic or pre-predicative*, anterior to any psychic activity capable of modifying sense data or of producing new objects on their

³ Stumpf nevertheless provides some precise clarifications in Stumpf, 1906, 31-32.

⁴ Brentano, 1911. On the fundamental importance, for Stumpf, of the works and teachings of Brentano, cf. the explicit avowals in Stumpf 1924, 4 and above all 27: “I would say at the start that my conceptions, understood as broadly as possible, rely on ideas initially inspired by Brentano”. However, over and above these remarks, the influence of Brentano can be discerned throughout Stumpf’s work.

⁵ Stumpf, 1906, 4-5. The same goes for Stumpf 1924, 40: “The idea that relationships between sensations can be directly perceived in them and with them is a view I have defended and continue to defend”.

basis – in short, anterior to any psychic activity capable of constituting the hyletic sphere as an autonomous theoretical object.

An important counterpart to this position lies in a further claim by Stumpf, namely, that there are laws and specific structures that govern this autonomous sphere, prior to any intervention by acts of thought – no matter how basic they might indeed be. This view importantly anticipates one of Husserl's basic positions according to which a rigorous form of nomological conformity not only holds sway over the domain of thought, but is also already born out in the domain of sensuous affectivity or of pre-predicative experience.⁶ Elsewhere, Stumpf designates this science of sensuous phenomena as *phenomenology*⁷ – meaning with this term, not the investigation of an *a priori* correlation between the structured multiplicity of conscious experiences and the unity of meaning of objects of experience, but rather the two disciplines that Husserl respectively called *eidetics of the perceptual world* (ensemble of worldly ontologies, Husserl, 1974, 278 and 297) and *hyletic phenomenology*.⁸ In other words, phenomenology for Stumpf encompasses both the science of the structural forms belonging to the objects of pure sensuous perception and the science of the forms rooted in the contents that are included in the sensuous fields of experience.

3) Furthermore, Stumpf lays out a concept of sensibility that is neither purely empirical nor atomistic in character.

The domain of the sensible cannot in fact be restricted to the sole province of sensations, and that which is sensed or perceived is likewise irreducible to a multiplicity of punctiform sensations or impressions. By consequence, Stumpf's concept of the sensible not only encompasses the pure *hyle*, but the *morphé* as well – keeping in mind that this is to be taken not in the Husserlian sense of the intentional

⁶ This is the object of the entire first section of Husserl, 1973, 8 sq. and of ch. I of Husserl, 1954, 73 ff.

⁷ Stumpf 1924, 39-40: "The search for sensible phenomena as such, which attracts so much attention today, is not driven by psychology, but rather by phenomenology, which is a preparatory science practiced as much by physicians and physiologists as by psychologists."

⁸ Husserl, 1976, 196 (transl. 207): "Phenomenological considerations and analyses which specifically concern stuff can be termed hyletic-phenomenological [*hyletisch-phänomenologisch*]."

aims that contribute to the constitution of objects, but rather as the structural forms immanent to sensorial materials:⁹

This new form of psychology rightly includes among the latter [*scil.* the *Inhalte der Sinnesempfindungen*] the spatial *extension* [*räumliche Ausdehnung*] and the distribution of visual and tactile impressions [*Verteilung der Gesichts- und Berührungseindrücke*], for whatever is quantitative in sense contents is given in the same way as what is qualitative. (Stumpf, 1906, 4)

In other words, the contents of sensation are not limited to being a scattered multiplicity of singular impressional data – as a result of which they would be endowed with neither temporal nor spatial extension – but form a perceptual whole or a field incorporating both global structural forms (temporal succession, spatial extension, perhaps even causal connection) and the temporal and spatial relationships (*Verhältnisse*) circumscribed by the former. Consequently, a *holistic principle* governs the perceptual sphere; that is, there is a primacy of the whole vis-à-vis the parts, properties, and relationships that can be delineated within it after the fact. This is precisely where Stumpf anticipates a core anti-atomistic principle of *Gestaltpsychologie*: wholes are not formed through a synthesis or composition on the basis of parts that lack any intrinsic ties between them – that is, through a noetic activity exercised upon a multiplicity of punctiform sensible impressions. In themselves, they do not constitute *tota synthetica*; rather, they are *tota analytica*¹⁰ that pre-exist any parts (understood here in a broad sense that includes properties and relations) one can distinguish within them.

4) Correlatively, Stumpf defends an *anti-associationist and anti-Kantian principle*, which goes hand in hand with a methodological approach founded upon the concept of psychological parts (*psychologische Theile*) or partial contents (*Theilinhalt*).

⁹ We have borrowed the term *Strukturformen* from §103 of Husserl, 1974, 278, where it is claimed that real ontology deploys the Idea of a possible world “according to the structural forms that essentially belong to a world” – thereby indicating temporality, spatiality, causality, etc., that is, precisely the structures that Stumpf considers as given in the phenomena themselves.

¹⁰ With this phrase, we refer to Kant’s terminology for the form of the whole belonging to time and space as pure intuitions: Kant 1926, 293 and 540-541 (*Refl.* 3789 and 4424-4425). See Fichant 1997, 31.

This approach consists in distinguishing amongst the forms of necessary co-belonging (*notwendige Zusammengehörigkeit*) that bind together the parts of a whole given in a representation. On its basis, Stumpf sheds light on the criterion required to uncover an essential (eidetic) connection between various represented contents: the *impossibility of such contents being represented separately* by imagination. In this way, Stumpf embarks upon an implicit but fundamental re-evaluation of the role of imagination in philosophical knowledge, which prefigures the Husserlian thesis according to which phantasy constitutes an essential element of all eidetic sciences.¹¹

With this move, Stumpf also sets up a twofold re-elaboration of the traditional metaphysical criterion for substantiality. In his classic text dealing with the category of substance as such, the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes distinguishes between an *ontological* and an *epistemological* criterion for substantiality. Ontologically speaking, substantiality refers to the possibility of existing independently of any other thing (or, when appropriately defined with respect to finite entities, the possibility of existing solely in virtue of being dependent upon God). However, the criterion for recognizing substantiality resides in the ability to conceive the thing in question separately from anything else (in contrast to modes, which cannot be thought of separately). Separate conceivability thus becomes the key factor in determining the ontological status of substance.¹²

With respect to this classical conception of substantiality and any possible knowledge of it, Stumpf argues for a double shift in the meaning of substance.

On the one hand, separability is no longer stressed as a criterion of substantiality. Rather, emphasis is laid upon the *inseparability* of represented contents. Stumpf's main interest does not reside in the ontological status of substance (in opposition to the ontological deficiency of modes), and instead runs toward a methodological delineation of connective relationships between contents. Framed in neo-Kantian terms, the focal point of Stumpf's thematic interest lies not so much in

¹¹ Husserl, 1976, 148: "daß die "Fiktion" das Lebenselement der Phänomenologie, wie aller eidetischen Wissenschaft, ausmacht".

¹² Descartes, 1647, 47: "Lorsque nous concevons la substance, nous concevons seulement une chose qui existe en telle façon qu'elle n'a besoin que de soi-même pour exister (...); "il faut seulement, pour entendre que ce sont des substances, que nous apercevions qu'elles peuvent exister sans l'aide d'aucune chose créée".

the nature of *substance* per se, but in the *function* a substance fulfils, which is to say, the *relation between a substance and its modes*:

I believed (and still believe) that the relation between colour and extension was to be seen as a striking example or as an *analogon* of the relationship that metaphysics holds to exist between the properties of a substance. (Stumpf 1924, 8)

On the other hand, Stumpf transfers the epistemological criteria of separability and inseparability from the realm of pure thought (where they were situated in classical thought) to that of *imagination* and *sensuous representation*. The necessary relationships shown in this way in fact belong to the domain of sensuous representation, that is, to the hyletic or (as Stumpf called it) “phenomenological” level (Stumpf 1924, 39-40). This shift entails a re-evaluation of sensibility, which is henceforth held to be the key in disclosing essential connections or *a priori* relationships amongst represented contents.

5) Finally, a fundamental consequence of these analyses consists in the *de-subjectification of the a priori*. This conception of the *a priori* is radically opposed to Kant’s, for whom the *a priori* denotes the formal component in all knowledge, that is, its subjective form. In fact, in Stumpf’s view, the classification of knowledge as either *a priori* or *a posteriori* is no longer a question of its *origin*, but rather comes down to the *necessary validity of a relationship*:

It is not only contents of mathematical representations that stem from *a priori* knowledge; those forms of knowledge, as well as other forms that contribute to the enlargement of our understanding, have their source in *all* the contents of representation (Stumpf 1924, 33).

In Kant’s philosophy, the *a priori* character of a certain kind of knowledge tended to be identified with its *mathematical* character, its *internal provenance* (in opposition to the external origin of sensuous impressions) and its *status as subjective form* (in opposition to the material of knowledge). In Stumpf’s approach, the question whether a kind of knowledge is *a priori* or *a posteriori* no longer has anything to do with where it comes from. That is, it has nothing to do with whether such knowledge originates within the subject and its pure structures (*i.e.* a formal, internal provenance of knowledge) as opposed to the material of sensations (a material, external origin of

knowledge). The *a priori* status of knowledge is to the contrary evinced in the *consciousness of the impossibility of separating the contents of representation*, which for their part can have a sensuous nature and an external origin. This is, for example, the impossibility of separating a sound from its duration or from its intensity, or a colour from its extension across a surface.

Accordingly, what this perspective opens up is nothing less than the possibility of *reformulating the traditional doctrine of the categories*. This is because one can delineate the fundamental concepts expressed in the universal structures of the being as being – while at the same time ceasing to take either the forms of judgment or the forms of objectifying acts of thought as the guiding threads of analysis. Instead, since Stumpf’s approach turns on the question of “the origin of the fundamental concepts (the categories)”,

we must always investigate the *original phenomena* [*ursprüngliche Erscheinungen*] that constitute the foundation of their perception,

given that

in certain forms of intuition, we directly perceive the internal interpenetration of the parts of a whole [*Ganzes*]. (Stumpf 1924, 31, emphasis added)

In this way, Stumpf *re-anchors the ontology* and the *ensemble of a priori structures in sensibility*, that is, *in the intrinsic structure of perceived or experienced sensuous contents*. In a paradoxical manner, this move does not lead to a subjectification of the concept of the *a priori*, but rather to its de-subjectification!

This is because, on the one hand, sensibility here does not refer to a subjective faculty possessing certain inherent properties, with which every human or finite subject is endowed. Rather, the concept of sensibility at stake here is that of the properties and the relationships of hyletic contents such as they can be intuited from the moment such contents are given. On the other hand, if the sensible contents can only be given to a being endowed with sensibility (and, more precisely, endowed with a form of sensibility furnished with certain *de facto* sensorial fields: visual, tactile, etc.), then the necessary connection between contents holds true for *any and all subjects* – namely, for every sub-

ject in general, on condition that each is endowed with a sort of sensibility that permits it to perceive contents of that type.

As a result, ontological structures and laws enjoy *universal or absolutely unconditional validity* in a fashion radically different from the anthropological scope of the Kantian *a priori*. Whereas for Kant the *a priori* forms of sensibility only have validity “for us humans” (*für uns Menschen*)¹³ or, in any case, for “all finite thinking beings”,¹⁴ the categories and forms of the whole that belong to sensuous phenomena – that is, the forms of connection between the sensuous material and the structural forms that belong to them – possess a validity that is necessarily imposed upon *anyone* that might be presented with such phenomena.

2 Application of Stumpf’s principles to the problem of the origin of space

Let us now attempt to clarify the way in which these principles are already at work in the analysis of the origin of representation of space, as presented in Stumpf’s *Raumvorstellung* text from 1873.

In the first place, it is important to keep in mind the larger scope of Stumpf’s undertaking. What should one understand as “the origin of the representation of space” (*Ursprung der Raumvorstellung*)? To what end should one speak of the *representation* of space, rather than simply speaking of space itself? Is it a matter of opposing to actual space, understood as objective and external to the mind, the purely subjective and internal representation that we have in us (in a more traditional language, the *idea* of space)? And what is meant by the term *origin*? Does the notion that this origin is psychological in character entail that it has an empirical origin or a temporal genesis, or that it is in fact a production of a *Raumvorstellung* on the basis of sensations and through synthetic acts of thought?

Stumpf’s introduction provides a helpful set of preliminary answers to these questions.

1) In the first place, what sort of meaning is attached to the term ‘space’?

¹³ Kant, 1998 (KrV), B 41-42, B 59, B 62, B 51, B 68.

¹⁴ Kant, 1998, B 72.

Above all, it is neither possible nor necessary here to provide a definition of space more precise than the one with which each person comes to be acquainted in everyday life [*wie er Jedem aus dem täglichen Leben bekannt ist*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 2)

Here, space is minimally defined as the common basis shared by distance (*Entfernung*), place or position (*Lage*), size (*Grösse*) and direction (*Richtung*); furthermore, it is understood as that to which the determinations of juxtaposition (*nebeneinander*) are related, such as right and left, here and there, great and small; lastly, it is that in which external bodies and the body proper are situated, as well as being something manifested in touch and sight (Stumpf, 1873, 2). By consequence, Stumpf does not refer to space such as it is defined by physicalistic or geometric *thought*, that is, as relative to a metric, to ideal shapes and their possible transformations (translations, rotations, similitudes, projections, etc.). Instead, Stumpf exclusively focuses upon *pre-scientific or perceptual space*, where spatial determinations are *vague*, and not exact, in character. This is because distance, direction, position, and size are treated here as correlates of a simple, everyday subjective evaluation, divested of any pretence to objective validity or exactitude. The line of questioning pursued by Stumpf is not based upon the *epistemological* problem of mathematical and physics-oriented knowledge of space, in the hope of arriving at a deeper description of the types of spaces and their structure, but is rather oriented toward remaining true to the common notion of space, which furnishes an adequate basis for the vague spatial determinations of everyday experience.

This sort of analysis already evinces *the primacy of intuition in Stumpf's methodological approach*; namely, the requirement to remain faithful to the indeterminate space of everyday experience, and not to replace it with any sort of conceptual artifice that would lead to a mere theoretical construction.¹⁵ Moreover, given that there are representations and structures that are inherent to vague experience and that are prior to any project of arriving at exact knowledge, they must be seen to form a thematic domain in their own right. Stumpf's goal will be to clarify the laws of formation of such structures and representations belonging to that particular domain.

¹⁵ This is precisely the basis on which Stumpf criticises Herbart and Bain.

2) What sort of meaning, within this perspective, should be attributed to the expression *Vorstellung*?

Stumpf employs an analogous sort of framework here. Just as he eschews scientific definitions of space, Stumpf also nullifies conceptual distinctions employed in traditional philosophical discussions of space. He dispenses with the Kantian distinction between intuition and concept, and with Helmholtz's opposition between sensation of space (*Raumempfindung*) and representation or perception of space (*Raumvorstellung oder -wahrnehmung*). In their stead, he proposes a threefold distinction between classes of representation: actual (*wirklich*) versus phantasy and memorial representations (*Phantasie- und Gedächtnis-*), concrete versus abstract representations (*concrete vs abstracte*), and simple versus composite representations (*einfache versus zusammengesetzte*: Stumpf, 1873, 2-3). Without going into the detailed analysis of these oppositions, it should be noted that Stumpf endorses (without explicating its grounds) the primacy of actual representation or perception over any form of presentification: "The most original [datum] [*das Ursprünglichste*] is sensation or actual representation." (Stumpf, 1873, 3).

This move entails, from the outset, that Stumpf's project of psychological analysis has nothing to do with taking representations of space to be derived from actual sensuous representations by the mediation of either retentions, memories, associative operations within imagination, or synthetic acts of thought. His analysis is instead always carried out at the level of *actual* (strictly perceptual) representations, taken individually, in order to isolate their proper content, without ever reconstructing some or other hypothetical model of the genetic derivation of space on the basis of psychic processes that are not given in experience. Here, Stumpf's focus on intuition demands that the scope of analysis be limited to the content proper to the perceptual experience of space, without inscribing within it the genetic relationship between the different intentional modes directed at space. Significantly, in so doing, one is able to dispense with the bevy of empirical models purporting to explain the formation of the idea of space.

3) The concept of that which is *ursprünglichst* refers to the concept of *Ursprung* – an essential notion in this context. What is meant by the latter? What method is to be applied to the pre-scientific or everyday representation of space, if this can be attributed neither to an empirical, *i.e.* an associationist formation, nor to a synthetic construction?

The answer to this question, while not being explicitly articulated, is at least hinted at in the last pair of antithetical properties of representations, namely their simple *versus* composite character. Stumpf writes that the search for the origin of the representation of space embodies the very “essence of psychological analysis” (*Wesen der psychologischen Analyse*). (Stumpf, 1873, 1) What does this mean, and what ought to be understood as *analysis* within the domain of psychology?

By inquiry into the psychological origin of a representation, we mean investigation of the representations on the basis of which such a representation has been formed [*sich gebildet hat*], as well as the manner in which it is formed on the basis of the former [*Art und Weise, wie sie sich daraus gebildet*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 4)

This simple reference to the “mode of formation” of a new representation on the basis of pre-existing representations remains unclear as long as its specific nature is not clarified, since there is room for different conceptions of it. One could employ here, in the first place, an *associationist conception*, according to which a representation (for instance, a visual one) calls up another one; one might invoke a *neo-Kantian* conception here, according to which one representation would be produced through a synthetic connection to earlier representations; another option is a *kinaesthetic* conception, according to which the representation would be a mix of sensuous impressions and muscular sensations; lastly, there is *Stumpf’s conception*, which holds that the elucidation of the mode of formation does not involve anything like a process of genesis, but instead has to do with the decomposition or resolution (*Auflösung*) of a composite representation into more simple representations.

Stumpf thus argues for a shift away from the genetic paradigm to which the expression “mode of formation” seems to refer in the first place; the psychological analysis does not evince anything like a process of formation, but takes chemical analysis as its methodological paradigm, under the form of a decomposition of composite materials into their constitutive elements¹⁶. This shift evinces the Brentanian

¹⁶ Stumpf 1873, 5: “We can call the mode of inquiry described here, in analogy with chemical analysis [*in Analogie zur chemischen Analyse*], psychological analysis. For the latter as well, the aim is to break down composite materials, which we typically

principle that Stumpf ceaselessly espouses, namely, where philosophical method is seen as wholly congruous with the methodology of the natural sciences – and which he understands in the sense of a necessary contribution, within philosophy, of methodological paradigms proper to the natural sciences.¹⁷ Consequently, two methodological routes are open to the psychologist, in analogy with the natural sciences: internal observation (*rein innerliches Beobachten*) and experimentation (*Experimentieren*). (Stumpf, 1873, 5) What does this mean?

4) This method of analytic resolution into respective elements derives its justification from the fact that the representation of space is a “highly composite representation” (*sehr zusammengesetzte Vorstellung*) (Stumpf, 1873, 6) – a composition that is itself grounded in the status of *aistheton koinon* that Aristotle attributes to space in *De anima*.¹⁸ The latter is in fact not at all perceived by a sense faculty that would be specifically assigned to space (in which case it would be an *aistheton idion*), but is rather

(...) co-perceived [*mit wahrgenommen*] by the distinct senses (...) [S]pace has to be a content that is perceived collectively by means of different senses [*durch mehrere Sinne gemeinsam wahrgenommen*], and that, secondly, is perceived by a sense conjointly with another content [*von Einem Sinn zugleich mit einem anderen Inhalt wahrgenommen*] (for example, chromatic quality). (Stumpf, 1873, 6)

On this basis, one can then classify the different types of theories regarding this co-perception of space – that is, the manner in which it is conjointly perceived with a content proper to one of the five senses – and in function of the nature of possible relationships of composition of representations. A first set of alternatives is that either space is not a particular content, but only something that is composed in a certain way on the basis of sensorial contents or *aistheta idia* (Herbart), or that it is indeed a particular content (*besondere Vorstellung*). This case

employ, into their elements [*zusammengesetzte Stoffe auf ihre Elemente zurückzuführen*].”

¹⁷ Stumpf 1924, 4. Heidegger understands this Brentanian principle in a radically different way: not as importing the explicative paradigm of the sciences into philosophy, but conversely, as the need for philosophy to be guided by the nature of the domain of objects to be studied, as all sciences do, that is, as the anticipation of the phenomenological imperative to return to the things themselves. (See Heidegger, 1979, 24)

¹⁸ *De an.*, III, 418 a 12 ff., 425 a 13 ff. and 428 b 18 ff.

raises a second set of alternatives: either space is a quality proper to one of the senses, namely that of muscular sensation (A. Bain), or it does not belong to any of the senses, in which case it has the status of *aistheton koinon*. In this case, there arises a third set of possibilities: either there is no genesis of space on the basis of sensuous contents, with space being a form opposed to any sensuous material (Kant, Lotze), or indeed Stumpf's theory holds true:

[the representation of space] forms, conjointly with the sensible quality, which is represented in a spatial manner [*räumlich vorgestellt wird*], one sole content, indivisible according to its unique nature [*einzigsten seiner Natur nach untrennbaren Inhalt*], and which [space and quality] are only parts thereof [*nur Theile sind*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 7)

Nevertheless, the meaning of this *unitary* character of the spatial-sensuous representation remains an open question, as does, correlatively, that of the *mereological* relationship that presides over the hyletic sphere.

3 The intuitionist principle and perceptual holism

Before delving into Stumpf's own contribution to these questions, we should first become acquainted with the critical perspective that complements it. In so doing, we shall be able to understand better the intuitionist principle that characterises his method, as well as the anti-atomistic principle underlying his doctrine of perception.

In actuality, a keen *respect for the data of intuition* drives Stumpf's criticisms of Herbart's and Bain's positions. Against those authors, Stumpf argues for the fundamental requirement not to substitute, in place of the *Raumvorstellung* that is actually given to us in perception, any sort of conceptual construction or extrinsic explication that would lead back to the "psychological pre-conditions" (*psychische Vorbedingungen*) of its acquisition.

In the second place, Stumpf's critique is supported by an *anti-atomistic thesis* founded on the refutation or deconstruction of the supposition according to which "only non-spatial qualities are originally sensed" [*nur unräumliche Qualitäten*] (Stumpf, 1873, 32). Stated in positive terms, this thesis is identical with the principle of *perceptual holism*, which is to say, with the primacy of perception of the

whole over that of parts, or of the entire field over that of particular objects found within it:

we first perceive the entire visual field [*wir nehmen zuerst das ganze Gesichtsfeld wahr*] and it is only subsequently that we distinguish parts in it [*und unterscheiden dann daran Theile*], then, in them, still other parts, etc.. (Stumpf, 1873, 59)

The idea of sensuous content is adapted in conformity with the holistic principle; in place of the concept of element or atom of sensation (that is, of singular *sense datum*), Stumpf proposes the global concept of a field (*Feld*) of sensations, namely, of a totality of simultaneous sensuous contents, between which certain relationships can be distinguished, albeit only after the fact. The field is not a *totum syntheticum* resulting from the synthetic composition of isolated sensations, but a primitive, perceptually-given *totum analyticum*, where such sensations can be isolated through decomposition. The genesis of this field does not take place thanks to a composition of elementary parts, but rather through the decomposition of an initial whole.

1) In considering the alternatives to Stumpf's approach to the representation of space, it is worthwhile to consider Herbart's theory of serial forms (*Theorie der Reihenformen*), as presented in *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*. Herbart's principle of explanation is genetic in character; since the representation of space does not constitute a particular content, the goal of his analysis is to retrace the manner in which, on the basis of qualitative sensuous data coming from the different senses (in the first place, visually and tactilely) and in conformity with psychological laws to be determined, a number of diverse spatial representations are formed. The qualities belonging to a particular sense faculty can indeed be linked to each other in different manners, and one of them in particular (the most articulated one) is most closely affiliated with spatial representation; when we perceive a surface through touch or sight, we move our eyes or our fingers across it. Now, through such movement, we acquire a series of successive representations, where the strongest is the one that is currently sensed and actually perceived, while past impressions decrease in intensity. Moreover, by reversing the course of our eye and finger movements, we have the reverse series of past representations, which is to say, the same series of sense data in reverse order (Stumpf, 1873, 30-31). If, at that moment, we quickly retrace this series of sensuous impressions,

we acquire the representation of their spatial simultaneity, by dissociating the representation of simultaneity from the succession of representations:

This successive series of qualities [*Aufeinanderfolge von Qualitäten*], which occurs so rapidly that it can produce the impression of what is simultaneous [*Eindruck des Gleichzeitigen*] – this is space. (Stumpf, 1873, p. 31)

2) A second example of extrinsic genetic explication is furnished by the theory of Alexander Bain in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind* from 1920. This theory is namely an attempt to show how representations of space derive from the “association of certain simple originary elements” [*Association gewisser einfacher ursprünglicher Elemente*] (Stumpf, 1873, 36), according to certain unspecified laws of association. It is not a question of deriving space from solitary visual and tactile representations, as with Herbart, “but of conjoining a new sense to them and by insisting in particular on it” [*mit Hinzunahme und vorwiegender Betonung eines neuen Sinnes*] (Stumpf, 1873, 37) – namely muscular sense (*Muskelsinn*). The genesis of the presentation of space takes place thanks to the association of traditional sense data with muscular sensations endowed with duration, intensity, and speed. If, for example, one slides one’s hand across a tabletop, one has a sensation of movement (*Bewegungsempfindung*) linked to tactile sensations in constant flux, which together form a series. If we reverse the movement, we then have the same series of tactile sensations, but in reverse order. If we make the same movement more rapidly, this in no way alters the serial order of tactile sensations:

All this taken together produces this sensation of permanence, ordered stability, and co-existence that we habitually attribute to space; and space is nothing other than the complex of sensations [*Empfindungskomplex*] described in this way. (Stumpf, 1873, 44)

With respect to the assumptions made by these two theories, Stumpf formulates a twofold critique, thanks to which we can pick out two of Stumpf’s own crucial positions regarding these phenomena.

a) His critique is in the first place directed at *the reductionist supposition of these genetic doctrines*. They do not seek to conform with

the intuitive – non-artificial – representation of space that we actually have in everyday and pre-scientific experience, but substitute for it a complex and artificial theoretical construction. Herbart reduces the space of experience with which we are intimately familiar to a complex of sensations endowed with decreasing intensities, amalgamations (*Verschmelzungen*), and reproductions. (Stumpf, 1873, 31-34) As for Bain, he reduces the representation of space to the association of a continuous sensation of movement and a series of visual and tactile sensations ordered in a fixed series. (Stumpf, 1873, 54)

The everyday representation of space – the one we all have, which does not presuppose any deeper knowledge of our world, and which serves as the basis for vague notions of position, movement, and direction – is not reducible to any such schemas or associative complexes of sensations. Whatever function the latter may indeed have as psychic pre-conditions for the acquisition of the representation of space, they must for all that be understood as distinct from such an acquisition:

The concept of series [*Folge*] has to be taken seriously, so that it is not claimed that ‘this or that is space,’ but that ‘this or that is the psychic pre-condition [*psychische Vorbedingung*] for the representation of space.’ In short, we have to consider these elements as a psychic excitation stimulus [*psychischer Reiz*], which is something Herbart refuses to do. (Stumpf, 1873, 34)

Stumpf advances a similar sort of critique concerning Bain’s theory, which states that:

(...) these sensations of movement, etc., would not only be *occasions* [*Anlässe*] for forming representations of space, but would be the representations of space themselves, and that the entire meaning of the latter [*ihre ganze Bedeutung*] would be included in those sensations of movement, etc.. (Stumpf, 1873, 53)

Here again, the problem is that while such sensations of movement may, properly speaking, only constitute the occasion or the condition of the acquisition of the *Raumvorstellung*, they do not truly belong to the content of its meaning.

In Stumpf, this critique goes together with a *quasi-phenomenological or intuitionist requirement*, according to which one must remain faithful to the representation of space such as it is given

in everyday perceptual experience, without allowing it to get entangled with conceptual artifices or methodological fabrications. In Husserlian terms, this means, on the one hand, things must be approached in terms of the meaning they have for the consciousness through which there is experience of them, without ever overstepping the bounds of their given meaning in order to construct some other hypothetical meaning for them; on the other, it means the things themselves must be described without ever conflating them either with the noetic acts directed at them or with the psychic conditions of those acts.

b) Secondly, Stumpf's critique targets the *atomistic presupposition* inherent to these theories, according to which sensations in their most basic form have neither space nor extension. Such a supposition necessitates a genetic explanation of the passage from such non-extensive sensations to the representation of extension. One thus find in Herbart

the claim that one only originally experiences non-spatial sensations [*ursprünglich nur unräumliche Qualitäten empfunden werden*]; the development of space on the basis of the former [*Entwicklung des Raumes aus derselben*]; finally, the mathematical conception of this development and the concepts and laws that are proposed on its grounds. (Stumpf, 1873, p. 32)

The grounds for this thesis lie in the idea of the 'inextensivity' of the soul, of its simplicity, and of its purely intensive character (in respect to the Leibnizian view):¹⁹ in being simple, having no distinct parts, and being purely intensive, the soul is not extensive and cannot directly perceive something extended;²⁰ its representations of extension are *wholly mediate* in character, formed by composition of elementary unextended content.²¹

¹⁹ Stumpf, 1873, 116: "[t]he soul is a simple punctiform entity [*die Seele ist ein einfaches (punctuelles) Wesen*]; how could it immediately grasp something extended [*Ausgedehntes unmittelbar erfassen*]?"

²⁰ Stumpf, 1873, p. 117: "Representing is something completely intensive [*etwas gänzlich Intensives*]; it thus cannot originally contain something extensive [*ursprünglich nichts Extensives enthalten*]".

²¹ Stumpf, 1873, p. 119: "Objective extension [...] cannot initially emerge in the soul or be represented by it; however, [...] as content of representation, it has to be reconstructed by the soul on the basis of intensive sensations [*aus intensiven Empfindungen*]

In the refutation of Bain's theory, one can discern Stumpf's central arguments against the punctiform or inextensive character of visual sensations. According to this theory, one is initially limited to perceiving mathematical points that have to be linked up with each other – only in a second moment – by eye movements. In response, Stumpf argues, on the one hand, that mathematical points are in essence unable to be represented, which means it is absurd to consider them as the primitive data of representation. On the other hand, and more importantly, the supposition that these points are not just mathematical but also function as *minima visibilia* clashes with the fact that in perception there is a primacy of the whole over the parts, and of the visual field over the elementary forms of extension that comprise it. The visual field is not progressively composed by a synthesis of elementary *minima visibilia*, but is rather immediately given as a whole (*Ganzes*) whose elements can only be distinguished by a process of analysis:

We do not first perceive such *minima* in order then to compose something out of them. Rather, we first perceive the entire visual field [*nehmen zuerst das ganze Gesichtsfeld wahr*], and only afterwards do we distinguish parts in it [*unterscheiden dann daran Theile*], etc. (Stumpf, 1873, 58-59).

Here, Stumpf's understanding of perception falls under the guiding *principle of perceptual holism* closely linked to Gestalt psychology, applied to diverse global configurations that are, as Stumpf underlines time and again, original and non-composite in character. Accordingly, we can immediately distinguish a small circle from a small square without progressively having to form a perception of them;²² we perceive a line as a whole, without first having to draw it from thought, as Kant claims.²³ From the first moment, we perceive the whole sky as a whole, and not as a multitude of discrete surfaces from which the whole sky has had to be composed (Stumpf, 1873, 82).

wieder aufgebaut werden]”.

²² Stumpf, 1873, 60 : “They are spatially dissimilar [*sie sind räumlich ungleich*]”.

²³ Stumpf, 1873, 61 – in opposition to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Transzendente Deduktion, § 24, B 154: “We cannot think a line without drawing it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without describing it”. (Kant, 1998, 258)

We should thus bear in mind the cardinal consequence of these analyses; space cannot simply be made out to be the product of a synthesis of disjointed, inextensive sensations. The origin of the representation of space does not denote an empirical genesis of space on the basis of inextensive sensations and acts of reflection. To the contrary, the *original* status of the phenomenon of space has to be acknowledged; the term “original” (*ursprünglich*) means, quite precisely, that the spatial form is co-presented or co-perceived originally or from the beginning with certain sensuous contents, meaning that relationships of spatial exteriority are given in actual phenomena, and are not added on through a psychic activity that brings them into relation with each other.

In other words, spatial relationships are not something that has to be added on by relational thought to sensuous contents that in themselves are bereft of intrinsic relations. To the contrary, these spatial relationships already co-belong to these contents. Stumpf thus anticipates the distinction made by Husserl between two forms of synthesis; the one, produced by thought, results in a positing of relations external to the material of knowledge (for example, that of the ensemble as collection of pure *somethings*). The other consists in relations inherent to contents themselves (for example, the relationships of temporal succession, of co-existence and of spatial position, etc.: Husserl, 1970, 38).

4 Theory of psychological parts or of partial contents

Apart from the aforementioned critiques, the core of Stumpf’s 1874 text is devoted to his so-called theory of psychological parts or partial contents – meaning, in particular, the *eidetic connection between matter and form*. To this end, Stumpf elaborates a theory of the relations between the diverse components of a global content.

Let us recall Stumpf’s guiding principle, as subsequently formulated in his 1906 text cited above:

The new form of psychology rightly includes among the latter [the sensuous contents belonging to the five senses] the spatial extension [*räumliche Ausdehnung*] and the distribution of visual and tactile impressions [*Verteilung der Gesichts- und Berührungseindrücke*], for whatever is quantitative in the sense contents is given in the same way as what is qualitative. Between the phenomena, there are certain relationships [*Verhältnisse*]. They are always given in and with two phe-

nomena, it is not we who put them there; they are perceived in, or even at the phenomena. (Stumpf, 1906, 3)

The concept of phenomenon or sensuous content, that is, of that which is actually given, is not just limited to sensations, but also includes all the forms of connections between them, in that they are inherent to the sensuous contents themselves. It is thus necessary to distinguish these relationships from syntheses that result from higher psychic functions, for which Stumpf reserves the name “formations” (*Gebilde*). The relationships are “immanent” to sensuous contents and “independent of any intellectual functions”. (Stumpf, 1906, 23) In “not [being] created by mental functions [*durch die Funktionen nicht geschaffen*], but only observed [*konstatiert*] by them,” they behave “just like absolute contents” (Stumpf, 1906, 22) and “belong to the material of thought” [*zum Material des Denkens gehören*]. (Stumpf, 1906, 22) By contrast, formations are the correlates of higher mental functions, for example, of acts of collecting or grouping (*Zusammenfassungen*) contents that are not linked together by “any material affiliation [*keine sachliche Zusammenhörigkeit*], or by any common relation that establishes a connection between parts [*keine verbindenden gemeinschaftlichen Beziehungen der Teile*]”. (Stumpf, 1906, 29) For this reason, an ensemble (*Inbegriff*) cannot be confused with grouped material, nor with the function of grouping; it is only the correlate of the latter. The concept of an immediate datum (*das unmittelbar Gegebene*) thus comprises two kinds of relationships: material (*sachlich*) relationships that are immanent to contents and that are simply extracted from phenomena, and relations as formations produced by a higher act of grouping (or of relating). The first sort are phenomenal and necessary, whereas the second result from a synthetic act and are contingent in that regard; since the latter sort of connection is established by thought, it can equally be dissolved by thought and thus is contingent. With regard to space and relationships of spatial co-existence, the problem is thus exclusively one of determining the class of contents and relationships to which they belong. Is it a matter of an intra-phenomenal content and immanent relationships, or a question of a higher-order formation and of relations resulting from one or other sort of grouping?

1) Stumpf’s criticism of Bain’s associationist theory enables one to see how space and relationships of spatial co-existence have to be distinguished from any sort of higher-order *Gebilde*.

Bain explains the genesis of space as occurring by way of an association of sense data with muscular relations – whereby such an association in fact denotes a form of psychic function that produces new relations. However, on the one hand, it is possible to completely dissociate series of sensations, kinetic feelings, and the representation of space from each other, since each can be experienced in distinct fashion, isolated from the others; for example, one can sing a series of notes without the representation of space, or have a spatial representation unaccompanied by any muscular sensation. (Stumpf, 1873, 54-56) The connection between series of sensations and space, just as between muscular sensations and space, is thus not immanent and necessary to phenomena, but is only a contingent aspect of them. On the other hand, Bain assumes that there is an original separation between sensuous contents, which then can only be linked together as a result of association; in his view, there are only *aistheta idia*, but no *aistheta koinon*. However, the concept of association is inapplicable here; while association consists in recalling an absent content by way of a present content, the relationship between colour and extension is a relation between two present contents! (Stumpf, 1873, 48-49)

2) If space is not something produced either by association or by synthetic grouping, this is because it is distinguished by a form and an ensemble of original relationships that are immediately given or internal to phenomena. However, what sort of status should be ascribed to it? Is it an *a priori* form of subjectivity that comes to be imposed upon all sensuous material and distributes it spatially?

Here, Stumpf advances a decisive critique of the Kantian theory of the subjective forms (*subjective Formen*) – that is, regarding Kant's conception of subjectivity and the formality of the *a priori*. Kant characterises the *a priori* nature of space as subjective and formal because he fails to pinpoint the essential connection between sensuous material and form. Instead, he starts by separating them off from each other. In fact, Kant does indeed understand matter as “being formed from the beginning” (*sofort schon geformt*) by time and space, such that the idea of a sensuous quality deprived of any spatial-temporal form (*eine Qualität, die nicht geformt wäre*) remains inconceivable. (Stumpf, 1873, 12-13) Moreover, in his initial definition of matter and form, Kant correctly claims that any ordering rests upon an “absolute positive content that is at its foundation” – such that space is identified

with an absolute formal content that grounds all forms of ordering and all spatial relations.²⁴

However, this absolute space is in Kant's account equated with a sort of absolute formal content that remains irreducible and opposed to sensations; it is that in which they come to be ordered. As a result, the formal principle of space is taken to be opposed to all sensuous qualities and as being imposed upon the latter in an extrinsic manner.²⁵ Form is understood to be "superimposed by us" (*durch uns hinzugebracht*, Stumpf, 1873, 14) on a material intrinsically devoid of form, thereby setting the stage for the presupposition driving associationist theories. This is none other than the idea of a sensuous material originally devoid of any extensive dimension, from which arises the need to explain its acquisition of extensive properties.

Now, if we turn the question around for a moment, "how is such an opposition conceivable?" Moreover, "what is the basis for the polarity" (Stumpf, 1873, 14) between matter and form, if they can never be given separately? What sort of argument, model, or thought experiment would lead one to distinguish something that, in the phenomena themselves, is never given in isolation? In this regard, Stumpf focuses his attention on the second argument in Kant's metaphysical exposition of space, by which Kant separates the spatial form from all sensuous material. Writing that "*die Qualitäten können wir hinwegdenken, den Raum nicht*," Kant's argument is that it is possible to represent space without qualities, but not to represent qualities without space. (Stumpf, 1873, 19) However, such an argument hardly accords with actual experience:

²⁴ Stumpf, 1873, 15: "There is not order or relation without a positive content, which is found at its foundation [*keine Ordnung oder Relation ohne einen positiven, absoluten Inhalt, der ihr zugrunde liegt*], and enables something to be able to be ordered in such a precise manner. If not, why and how could we distinguish one form of order from another?" This claim is reaffirmed in the text from 1906: "The spatial and temporal distributions of sensuous phenomena are in no wise to be defined as mere relationships [*bloße Verhältnisse*]. The difference between right and left, now and before is for our consciousness an absolute distinction. However, in these differences in place and in absolute time, relationships are grounded" Stumpf, 1906, note p. 4).

²⁵ Stumpf cites the key passage from the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic: "Da das, worinnen sich die Empfindungen allein ordnen und in gewisse Form gestellt werden können, *nicht selbst wiederum Empfindung sein kann* [...]" (A 20/B 34 (emphasis added); Stumpf, 1873, 14)

the fact itself is an illusion. [...] One absolutely cannot represent space without any quality – e.g. through sight without any colour, by touch without any feeling of contact – nor, in a more general manner, separated from any sense whatsoever [*abgetrennt von allen Sinnen*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 19)

If one considers the thought experiment invoked by Kant, in which thought is divested of all colour, what would remain would not be the pure form of space, but only *obscurity*, that is, a black expanse (“*alle übrigen Farben weggedacht, bleibt Schwarz (eine schwarze Fläche)*”). (Stumpf, 1873, 23) Such imaginary experiences thus evince the phenomenon of the *reciprocal inseparability of space and sensuous qualities*. And this inseparability of matter and form does not exhibit a purely subjective or psychical character, but rather appears to be *objective or ontological* in nature. This is because it is not a matter of mere subjective inability to represent each separately. It rather comes down to a consciousness of the objective impossibility for such contents to be separated:

[C]ontents of which, according to their nature, the one cannot be thought without the other, can no longer be thought of as objectively existing without each other [*auch nicht als objectiv ohne einander gedacht werden*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 22)

In short, this inability to be represented otherwise is not attributable to a *subjective impossibility inherent to consciousness* insofar as it is separated from contents. Instead, it points to a *consciousness of an objective impossibility* – that is, the realisation, intuitive corroboration, or evidence of a necessary connection between contents. It is a “datum in consciousness of apodictic evidence”.²⁶ Stumpf’s description consequently entails the *de-subjectification* of the *a priori*; when things appear to us spatially, this is not because space is, for us and in us, an *a priori* form of sensibility ready to be imposed upon all sensuous material. Rather, they appear in space because extension holds an infrangible and apodictic connection with visual and tactile qualities – no matter the type of subject that perceives such qualities! In this way, the *a priori* nature of space no longer relies on being grounded in the status of a subjective form.

²⁶ Here, we have purposely paraphrased Husserl’s famous arguments in § 7 of the third *Logische Untersuchung* (Husserl, 1984, 242-243)

3) Stumpf expresses this relationship of inseparability of extension and qualities with the help of a mereological conceptual framework, that is, a certain conception of the relation between psychic parts or partial contents within a unitary whole. Within this framework, he can thus elaborate a general theory of relationships of representation conjoined in function of co-belonging (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) and lineage (*Verwandtschaft*) of contents of representation. (Stumpf, 1873, 106 sq) The perspective of *Zusammengehörigkeit* allows him to distinguish between two classes of contents: independent or autonomous contents (*selbständige Inhalte*), and partial contents (*Theilinhalte*). Here, independence is defined by the possibility of a separate representation, whereas the partial character of a content depends to the contrary on the impossibility of such a representation:

we are confronted with independent contents with regard to which, according to their nature, we can also represent individual elements of a complex of representations; however, we are equally confronted with partial contents where this is not the case. (Stumpf, 1873, 109)

Accordingly, space and qualities are partial contents of one same whole. They cannot in fact be represented separately, but “are, in virtue of a necessity stemming from their very nature, apprehended in and together with each other” (*naturnothwendig in und miteinander erfaßt*), just as the quality and the intensity of a sound are. (Stumpf, 1873, 273) If one reduces to nil the surface across which a colour is spread, it disappears as a quality, which proves that it is co-affected (*mit afficirt*) by the change in extension (Stumpf, 1873, 113), and that each cannot be simply seen as mere terms within a sum (*bloß Glieder einer Summe*).²⁷ According to this view, a certain status can be attributed to space; it becomes a form or absolute content that is perceived just as immediately as qualities are, and is perceived conjointly with them, given that it forms alongside them a unified and indivisible whole. Space is a *koinon aistheton*,²⁸ which together with the *idia aistheta* (the qualities) form an unbreakable whole:

²⁷ Stumpf, 1873, 114. Likewise, see p. 273: “Daß bei jeder Änderung der Ausdehnung die Farbe mitafficirt wird.”

²⁸ Stumpf, 1873, 6 (where Stumpf makes reference to Aristotle and Locke) and 301: “With Aristotle, we must consider space as a true *aistheton koinon*”.

space is perceived just as originally and directly as the qualities [*ebenso ursprünglich und direct wahrgenommen wird, wie die Qualität*]; and this is because they form one sole, indivisible content [*einen untrennbaren Inhalt bilden*]. (Stumpf, 1873, 115)

(...) the “attributes” such as quality, intensity, extension, etc., do not form a sum, but a whole whose parts are in fact only abstractions made after the fact. (Stumpf 1924, 31)

4) The foregoing then sets the stage for understanding the paradoxical status attached to the notion of *Ursprung* in this account of the origin of the representation of space. Since for Stumpf space is from the beginning (originally!) co-perceived in all sensuous representation, his account of its origin is able to forgo any model of space based on its temporal genesis or its active production. The term ‘origin’ here thus has little to do with either an original genesis or primitive acquisition that would be conditioned by certain types of punctiform impressions (visual, tactile, muscular) or by acts of thought (association, acceleration of ordered suit of sensations). Instead, the question of origin in this context simply concerns the disclosure of the eidetic relationship that grounds the necessary co-presence of space in all sensuous representation. This is why no recourse can be taken here – as would Condillac – to the methodological artifice of a primitive formation, of a first-time hypothesis out of which spatial representation would be fashioned.

The question of origin for Stumpf refers to its *mode of necessary presence* in every perception of a spatial type.²⁹ In Stumpf’s classification of representations, this means the representation of space is *actual* (*wirklich*), that is, truly acquired and perceptual in character (and not just a product of imagination or memory), and that its representation is *concrete*, that is, intuitive (and not just produced by thought; Stumpf, 1873, 3). If we may risk phrasing the matter paradoxically, ‘origin’ denotes a *structural genesis*: namely, the elucidation of the autonomous structuring of sensuous contents according to immanent forms (time, space). This is why nativistic theories constituted a decisive im-

²⁹ Stumpf, 1873, 127: “It has thus equally become clear that, when it is a question of the representation of space such as we have considered it here, it could not simply be a matter of its incipient formation [*erstmalige Bildung*], but of its genesis in each case in which we have such a representation [*ihre Entstehung in jedem Falle, wo wir sie haben*]”.

provement over empiricist positions,³⁰ but only on the express condition that nativism be sufficiently distinguished from assumptions about the innateness of space and time; while the innatist view holds certain representations to be innate, that is, constitutive of the human mind (or of finite subjectivity), nativism claims that formal contents like space are co-given with certain sensuous impressions, to the point of constituting a “native *a priori*”.³¹ This status as native *a priori* does not mean that the forms of representation inhere within a type of (human or finite) sensing subject instead of God, but instead entails the inherence of a formal content in certain impressional contents. It is therefore not a *noetic* necessity *in* the subject, and is thus free from any supposition as to the nature of the perceiving subject.

5 De-subjectification of the analysis of partial contents: the method of independent variation

1) A remaining difficulty concerns a Berkeleyian sort of problem. By what right, asked Berkeley, can abstract ideas be distinguished from each other, if the latter cannot *de facto* be perceived discretely and distinctly (Berkeley, 1996, 9-11)? Stumpf confronts the same issue; what enables thought to break an intuitive whole down into separate partial contents, if the latter can only be co-perceived within that whole? Framing the problem in terms of space: if space and colour constitute the inseparable contents of an “indivisible whole” (*untrennbarer Inhalt*; Stumpf, 1873, 7, and 115) or a “unitary whole” (*einheitlicher Inhalt*; Stumpf, 1873, 129 and 135), then how do we come to distinguish between them and to identify them as distinct parts? Is this differentiation a legitimate act of thought, or a falsification of the immediate intuitive data? Precisely within that field of experience where contents are not able to be represented in a separate state [*getrennt*] (Stumpf, 1873, 109-110), is it possible and appropriate to separate them? In a word, “how do we come to distinguish the two [*scil.* quality and place], and what is the meaning of such a distinction?”³² Is the

³⁰ Stumpf 1924, 44: “This conception, according to which a colour is hardly possible without extension, just as extension is impossible without some or other quality, and according to which, for this reason, the first visual sensations have to appear spatially (nativism), almost completely prevailed over empiricism which, at the time of Lotze, was predominant among psychologists”.

³¹ See Husserl 1950, 114: “Ein Reich des ‘eingeborenen’ Apriori”.

³² Stumpf, 1873, 129: “How do we come to distinguish both, and what is the meaning

mereological framework a legitimate one here, or must we renounce using concepts of the whole and the part in this context? Doesn't this problem establish the necessity (recognised *in fine* by Stumpf) of abandoning the mereological concept of "psychological parts"?³³ What is the nature of psychological parts, if their distinguishing feature does not lie in how they are different parts of a concrete and intuitive representation? Through which sort of analytical method of thought do we manage to resolve a unitary intuitive whole into individual elements, in accordance with the chemical paradigm of the decomposition of material into its elementary constituents?

The *method of independent* (non-concurrent) variation is the key to Stumpf's response here; psychological parts are not

anything other than the possibility, for a content that is in itself unitary [*in sich einheitlicher Inhalt*], to change in diverse manners [*verschiedenartiger Veränderungen*].³⁴

Let us try to map out his line of reasoning here. If we limit consideration to the case of simultaneously perceived qualities, the guiding principle seems to dictate that "one can only distinguish that which one has perceived separately".³⁵ For example, in an orchestral arrangement, one can only analyse the overall sound and distinguish single sounds if they have already been heard in a separate state. Are we then entitled to transpose this principle of differentiation of the field of simultaneous qualities to the case of partial contents (Stumpf, 1873, 134-135)? The case of the whole formed by space and sensuous qualities presents in this respect an altogether different difficulty. Namely, space is *never* able to be perceived separately, such that it is impossible to refer back to the antecedence of an isolated perception!

of this distinction? [*wie kommen wir dazu, beide zu unterscheiden, und welches ist der Sinn dieser Unterscheidung?*]"

³³ Stumpf 1924, 40: "Husserl worked out the conceptual aspect of these considerations [on the psychological parts]. I returned to the question in my essay on the attributes of visual sensations, and *I abandoned the expression 'psychological parts,' which I found inadequate*". (emphasis added)

³⁴ Stumpf, 1873, 274. See also 135: "Die verschiedenen Änderungsweisen des einheitlichen Inhalts A".

³⁵ Stumpf, 1873, 132: "Unterschieden wird nur, was getrennt wahrgenommen worden ist".

The case of partial contents thus requires that, instead of insisting upon the possibility of separating the contents themselves, we turn attention to how different modes of change within those contents can be delineated. For instance, it is possible to vary just one parameter of a sound (its intensity) while leaving the rest unchanged (pitch, timbre), in such a way as to highlight its intensity as a capacity of independent change. (Stumpf, 1873, 135-136) Likewise, one can observe the size of a surface, the intensity of a colour, the space of a coloured swath, etc., by making each vary in a separate manner. Although actual (perceptual) representations enjoy a certain primacy vis-à-vis imaginary ones, *phantasy* can become a *vital element* of analytical knowledge, counterbalancing the holistic character of intuition. Each modality of separable or independent variation allows one to detach from the intuitive whole a concept of partial content.

2) Does Stumpf thus anticipate the Husserlian method of *eidetic variation*, by which one arrives at the intuition of material essences (Husserl, 1954, 410-420)?

While it might be going too far to say Stumpf's is a method irreconcilable with eidetic variation, we should at least note that it is a *method employed for purposes that run completely counter to Husserl's aims*. For example, in Husserl, the eidetic variation of colour serves to show the eidetic connection between colour and extension, and thereby to evince the eidetic invariance of extension. For Stumpf, on the other hand, the same variation makes plain how colour can be the *Theilinhalt* of an intuitive complex – while bringing extension into relief would, for its part, be effected by an independent variation of size and position.

Variation in each case is thus put at the service of entirely antithetical ends. In Husserl, the goal is the demonstration of the synthetic laws of essence by which contents are bound together; in Stumpf, it is the demonstration of the degrees of analytic freedom available within the intuition of wholes. That is, *for the first, it is an instrument for uncovering the synthetic a priori; for the second, it serves to disclose analytic constituents of the representation*.

3) One final issue is inspired by Gestalt psychology. If we only perceive unitary wholes that include both extension and qualities, does the analytical perusal of extension constitute an artificial procedure

that abstractly distorts, after the fact, the intuitive data of our perception?³⁶

Without overly complicating matters, any suitable response here must nonetheless reflect a sufficient degree of nuance:

The result is thus the following: the plurality under question in the unity [*fragliche Mehrheit in der Einheit*] rests upon an act of putting oneself in the position of something [*Hineindenken*]. [...] However, it is not *arbitrary* [*nicht willkürlich*], but necessary [*nothwendig*]. This is because any similarity and any distinctness are imposed upon us by the content itself [*vom Inhalt selbst aufgedrungen*]. To use the Scholastic term, we establish a *distinctio cum fundamento in re*. (Stumpf, 1873, 139)

On the one hand, in order to break down the unitary whole into its components, one adopts a method analogous to the one used by Herbart in metaphysics, namely, *arbitrary variation of points of view*.³⁷ Its aim is to separate space from qualities shown together with it, by successively adopting distinct points of view, in order to produce an independent variation (namely, by first varying the relationships of size and position, and then the qualities). Thus, these extrinsic points of view of the variation are truly transposed into (*hineingedacht*) contents of representation by thought or imagination.

On the other hand, however, variation does not come down to an arbitrary subjective will, but remains *cum fundamento in re*, as imposed by the nature of contents themselves – such that in variation there is no trace of a methodological artifice bringing along with it a set of conceptual artifices. The differentiation of space from colour is in fact only the *analogon* of a natural process of thought, namely, the *spontaneous realisation of the attributes of a thing* on the basis of what we experience of it in such and such circumstances. For example, even if we do not currently perceive something, we still spontaneously attribute a colour to it because we know that that thing has the capacity to awaken in us certain visual impressions; we thus transpose into the thing, under the form of a permanent property, something that

³⁶ This also appears to be suggested by the formulation cited above from the *Selbstdarstellung*. (Stumpf 1924, 31)

³⁷ Literally, *Methode der zufälligen Ansichten*: “method of arbitrary points of view”. (Stumpf, 1873, 140)

is only a potential way for it to act upon our senses in conjunction with certain circumstances.³⁸

The formation of general concepts has to do with the same tendency; they denote something that is not detachable from the capacity to perceive lone representations.³⁹ The same holds true, finally, for how partial contents are shown. A kind of *hypostasis* is certainly involved here (given that we have no separate intuition of them), but only one that is *grounded* in an actual capacity to invoke independent variation of one sole component of the representation. An operative possibility is thus converted into a property of the representation. It is no doubt for this reason that Stumpf took so long to renounce the mereological conceptual framework. Strictly speaking, extension is not a real part of the unitary whole that is the coloured surface, for it only shows itself through variation. What we refer to as a separate formal entity is thus only the correlate of an operative possibility, and has no ontological permanence of its own.

6 Conclusion

If Stumpf's thought has an unsung import within the history of philosophy, specifically from a teleological perspective, this is for several key reasons.

1) He offers an interpretation of the Brentanian methodological requirement that leans toward an *intuitionist imperative*, or toward a return to the intuitive data of perception, without any theoretical construction built upon conceptual artifices.

2) He stresses the *autonomy of the sensuous sphere*, which is considered as governed by specific laws available to descriptive elucidation, as well as the demonstration of the *holistic principle* that holds sway within that sphere.

3) Stumpf undertakes the *de-subjectification of the a priori*, that is, he defends a thesis according to which the *a priori* laws of the sensuous sphere are the necessary connections between noematic contents

³⁸ Stumpf, 1873, 136-137: "There we find a particular trait of our usual manner of thinking; when a thing only does or undergoes something under certain circumstances, this is ultimately only a capacity or a possibility in relation to that thing. However, we seem to transpose this possibility or capacity onto the thing itself [*verlegen wir in das Ding*] as if it were a property that is actually and constantly inherent within it".

³⁹ Stumpf, 1873, 136-137.

of representation, and not forms of necessity grounded in the structure of finite subjectivity.

4) He also argues for the *de-subjectification of the analytic dimensions of the phenomenon*, running parallel to that of the *a priori*: just as any form of ordering is based on an absolute positive content, any mode of variation allowing a whole to be analysed according to its parts is likewise a possibility grounded in the structure of the represented contents.

5) These crucial positions within Stumpf's doctrine together entail a need to reform *ontology (specifically, the ontology of the doctrine of the categories)*. Stumpf did indeed envision the principle behind this reform without necessarily having realised it; given that the categories denote the modes of connection between psychological parts of a unitary intuitive whole and lend themselves to identification through independent variation of dimensions of the sensible, the categories are wholly anchored in the perceptual sphere. One can discern there the emergence of a recurrent theme in the germinal stages of phenomenology, namely, the *re-evaluation of sensibility* – understood not as a faculty, but as a general heading for the elucidation of the structures and laws of sensuous contents – and the *sensuous mooring* for every analysis of the higher functions of thought.

All these are powerful lines of thought that in our view bring to the fore the subterranean, but nonetheless central role played by Stumpf in the further elaboration of phenomenology and Gestalt psychology.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Translated by Basil Vassilicos.

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