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Judgment and Mere Presentation in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*

*Takeshi Akiba*¹

¹ Department of Literature, Keio University

Abstract

In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl considers the relationship between judgment and mere presentation. He claims, in opposition to Brentano, that judgment never contains mere presentation with the same content as its basis. After showing that to justify this claim is an important matter for Husserl, we will take up an argument which is purported to justify this claim, and which appeals to the incompatibility of two kinds of act-quality. We will examine a seemingly natural way to ground this incompatibility thesis, which in turn invokes the presence or absence of belief state, and we will show that this line of thought has some difficulty. After that, we will propose a candidate of alternative justification for the incompatibility thesis.

I. Introduction

It is well known that two philosophers who stand at the beginning of the tradition of phenomenology, namely Brentano and Husserl, frequently used the concept of 'non-independent part (unselbständig Teil)' or 'moment'. According to them, entities stand in the part-whole relations not merely accidentally; rather, entities can and do constitute various kinds of necessary part-whole structures. And the concept of non-independent part is an

indispensable tool to describe such a structure adequately.

While the concept of non-independent part might be regarded as ‘topic-neutral’ (or ‘formal’ in Husserl’s term), the realm into which Husserl and Brentano primarily investigated by using this concept is that of our consciousness. Our aim in this paper is to examine an issue concerning the part-whole relation in this realm. More specifically, we will take up a thesis which is defended by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* (“LU” in the following), and which he claims in opposition to Brentano.

Leaving the precise formulation to the next section, let us see roughly the content of the thesis in question. It has to do with the phenomenon of ‘judgment’, and with the question of how to understand the correct part-whole structure of this phenomenon. To put it more intuitive way, the question is, when we judge about something, what we really do. Husserl’s position on this matter will become clear when we contrast it with the following passage of Brentano, which we find in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*:¹

Therefore, we may regard the following determination of mental phenomena as indubitably correct: they [mental phenomena] are either presentations, or are based upon presentations as their bases.

Here by “presentation”, Brentano means the act of merely making something appear to consciousness, as distinguished from the act of judging (accepting and rejecting) and emotion (love and hate).² Accordingly, in the passage above Brentano is claiming that, in general, presentations are necessary components of all kinds of mental act. In this sense, Brentano’s position can be characterized as the one claiming the fundamental and universal character of presentation in the realm of consciousness.

In contrast to this, Husserl maintains, in the 5th *Investigation*, that as far as judgment is concerned, the alleged universality of presentation does not hold. According to him, judgment is never something which contains presentation as basis and which is formed by adding some extra component to presentation. When we judge something, it is not the case that we perform an act of presenting at the same time; rather, we are then doing only one thing, and this

¹ [Brentano 1973, 120]. See also p. 136.

² [Brentano 1973, 120], [Brentano 1959, 34].

one thing is completely different from mere presentation. This, roughly speaking, is the content of the thesis we will examine below.

The outline of this paper is as follows. After several preliminaries, we will reformulate Husserl's thesis to be considered (II), and argue that to justify this thesis is an important matter for Husserl for at least two reasons (III). After that, we will take up an argument which some scholars think supports the thesis, and we will show that the justification of the argument itself is not as straightforward as it first seems, although we basically agree to that argument (IV). Finally, we will point out some of the further issues (V).

II. Formulation of Husserl's Thesis

1. Preliminaries

Before formulating Husserl's thesis, let us begin with some preliminaries. As for terminology, there are two things to be noted. First, in LU, Husserl uses the term "act (Akt)" as an abbreviation of "intentional experience".³ (Thus, "act" corresponds to the Brentannian term "mental phenomenon".) In what follows, we also will use the term "act" in Husserl's sense. Second, when speaking of the part-whole relations between various acts, Husserl uses expressions which suggest dependence relation (i.e., "be founded upon" and the like) as interchangeable with expressions like "contain" or "involve".⁴ In what follows, we will use the latter mereological expressions for the sake of terminological unity.

As for the general structure of acts, Husserl maintains that there are two kinds of non-independent (dependent) part for every act, which are called 'matter (Materie)' and 'quality (Qualität)' respectively.⁵ According to him, a matter of an act (act-matter) is a moment that determines both which object he act is directed to and in which way it is directed. A quality of an act (actuality), on the other hand, is a moment that determines in which attitude the act intends the object, and this includes, among others, judgment, question,

XIX/1, 391-3].

[XIX/1, 441, 443, 445, 463, 471]. Brentano, too, seems to admit this paraphrase (Brentano 1982, 10-27)].

IX/1, 425-6].

wish, desire, will, fear, joy, and so on. To illustrate these two kinds of moment, let us see the sentences below:

- (1) Ibsen is the principal founder of the modern dramatic realism.
- (2) There are intelligent beings on Mars.
- (3) Are there intelligent beings on Mars?

On the one hand, the acts expressed by (1) and (2) are said to have the same quality (namely, judgment), although they have different matters. On the other hand, the acts expressed by (2) and (3) are said to have the same matter, though they have different qualities (judgment and question).

As the last preliminary point, which is also the most important, we have to mention the difference between ‘judgment’ and ‘mere presentation (bloss *Vorstellung*)’. Both of them are act-qualities in the sense above. Although how to understand the essence of the difference is a question in which we have to engage ourselves below, it suffices here to refer to Husserl’s characterization of them. According to him, a judgment is an act which can be expressed by declarative sentence, and which intends its object (state of affair) as existing.⁶ In this sense of existence intention, Husserl says that judgment is, like perception, “positional (*setzend*)” act, and marked off in being accompanied by the character of belief and conviction (*Überzeugung*). As for the mere presentation, Husserl gives an example: it is typically performed in “cases where an expression, e.g. a statement, is well understood without prompting us either to belief or disbelief”(XIX/1, 444). Because of this lack of existence intention and conviction, mere presentation is said to be like imagination, and called “non-positional (*nichtsetzend*)” act.

2. Husserl’s Thesis

Now let us turn to the main topic. We said above that Husserl objected to the Brentanian claim of universality of presentation. But this objection needs to be made more precise. What Husserl objects to is the claim which is obtained when we interpret Brentano’s expression “presentation” as meaning “m/

⁶ [XIX/1, 444, 461, 475].

presentation",⁷ and which can be formulated as the thesis just below:

(*) For each act, either it is a mere presentation, or it contains a mere presentation with the same content.

And as also indicated above, the kind of act which Husserl claims invalidates (*) is nothing other than judgment. More precisely, Husserl maintains that, in general, judgment never contains as its component a mere presentation which has the same propositional content (the same act-matter).⁸ And it is exactly this claim that is the theme of this paper. It can be formulated as follows:

(H) Any judgment J does not contain a mere presentation which has the same propositional content as J's.

The main thesis being formulated, let us see the relation between (*) and (H). As we will see in the next section, there are some reasons which motivate Husserl to reject (*). But it should be noted that, for Husserl, whether or not he can reject (*) depends on whether or not he can justify (H).⁹ To understand why this is so, it should be noticed that like Brentano, Husserl thinks that such acts like wishes, questions, and wills necessarily contain either judgments or mere presentations (XIX/1, 514). Because of this premise, if Husserl admits that also judgments contain mere presentations (i.e. that (H) does not hold), then he must admit the presence of mere presentation in all kinds of act (i.e. the truth of (*)). Thus, the only way for Husserl to reject (*) is to justify (H); or, to put another way, if he cannot do that, he must admit the

⁷ In chapters 3-6 of the 5th *Investigation*, Husserl distinguishes various meanings that the word "presentation (Vorstellung)" might have, and examines the theses which are obtained when the word "presentation" is interpreted in different ways. The main possibilities Husserl actually considers are the following four: (i) act-matter, (ii) mere presentation, (iii) nominal presentation, and (iv) objectifying act. The thesis (*) above is the one which is yielded when one adopts (ii). In this paper, we remain neutral on whether this (*) is really Brentano's view.

⁸ Though in LU, Husserl maintains the so-called species theory of meaning, we ignore that in this paper, and adopt a more intuitive way to express the relation between acts and propositions.

⁹ More precisely, the possibility of rejecting (*) depends on whether or not Husserl can give counterexample to it by means of *either* judgment *or* mere presentation. Since Husserl treats these cases parallelly, in this paper we ignore the case of perception.

room for (*) to hold.

III. Significance of the Thesis

In this section, we will argue that to justify (H) is an important matter for Husserl. As we saw just above, for Husserl, failing to justify (H) just amounts to admitting the room for (*) to hold true. So, we will argue for the importance of justifying (H) by seeing what happens if (*) in fact holds. (We note in advance, however, that the discussion in this section is meant as a rough sketch, and not as a strict argument.)

First, in the context of LU, a problem arises concerning the characterization of the class of act called “objectifying act”. This class needs to be characterized as the one which includes both judgment and mere presentation, and which has a natural unity, in the sense that its members are united by some common feature. The reason why the naturalness is required is that in LU, Husserl makes crucial uses of that class at least at two points: first, he raises a question of how the concept of “knowledge (Erkenntnis)” is to be elucidated and answers to it by saying that knowledge is a kind of synthesis of identification between *objectifying acts* (XIX/2, 539, 582-6); second, he raises a question of what kind of acts can be a bearer of meaning, and answers by saying that it is only *objectifying acts* (XIX/2, 544ff, 585, 734ff.). In both cases, in order for his answer to have some explanatory significance at all, the class of objectifying act must be characterized by some common feature in advance; otherwise, his answers might arouse a suspicion of being merely *ad hoc*.

However, if (*) holds true, the characterization Husserl gives in LU will not work. The features Husserl gives as characterizing the class of objectifying act are the following two: an objectifying act is an act which can occur without containing other acts; and, an objectifying act is an act which solely can provide act-matter (XIX/1, 515-6). But if (*) holds true, the only acts which are picked out by these features are mere presentations, and consequently, the class will not include judgment too, as required.

Secondly and in broader perspective, it can be pointed out that the thesis (*) is in conflict with a Husserlian view on the consciousness as a whole. The view in question is to the effect that the consciousness is to be described as a ‘teleologically ordered unified system’ (III/1, 336-7; XVII, 252). According

to Husserl, the consciousness is never an aggregate of 'contents' or 'flow of sensible impressions' which lack any internal relationship each other (III/1, 196). Rather, the consciousness is a system which consists of those various forms of experiences, each of which is centered on a privileged form of experience called "evidence (Evidenz)", and each of which has some teleological potency toward that privileged form of experience (XVII, 315-6).

In Husserl's philosophy, this view on the consciousness as a whole is partly supported by another view on how each act is to be analyzed. It is the view to the effect that it is precisely the evidence that is 'original' form of experience, and all other acts are to be analyzed as *its* 'modifications' in some sense (XVII, 315ff.). The relation between two views is clear: it is precisely because all acts are to be analyzed as modifications of evidence that consciousness can be described as a single united system; and it is precisely because of this that each act can be described as a member of a single system. In short, for Husserl the view of consciousness as a system is supported by the view on the order of analysis among various kinds of acts.

Again, however, if (*) holds, this order of analysis comes to have some difficulty. For, according to (*), all acts other than mere presentation are to be analyzed as consisting of an underlying mere presentation and some extra component in each case. But this would deprive even the evidence of the privileged status of primitive form of experience in terms of which all other acts are to be analyzed, and the evidence would become no different from other acts in that it is analyzed on the basis of more primitive form of experience (i.e. mere presentation). Thus, admitting the truth of (*) has a result of depriving Husserl of one ground for describing the consciousness as a system centered on the evidence.

IV. Incompatibility Argument

How, then, can Husserl's thesis (H) be justified? In this section, we will take up an argument which some scholars suggest justifies (H)¹⁰ and which seems

¹⁰ [Smith 1977, 489-90], [Mulligan & Smith 1989, 136].

to us the strongest and the most straightforward one for that purpose. Whereas we basically regard the argument as correct, we will show that the justification of its key thesis (formulated as (IC) in 1) is not as easy as it first seems. After showing that in 2, we will propose in 3, by reference to Reinach, an alternative justification of (IC).

1. Incompatibility Thesis and its Ground

The basic idea of the argument in question is to appeal to the ‘incompatibility’ of two act-qualities, namely judgment and mere presentation. That is, it appeals to the idea that, just as in the realm of material things, different colors cannot exist at the same space-time region, so in the realm of consciousness, ‘positional’ judgment quality and ‘non-positional’ mere presentation quality cannot exist in the same act. This idea can be formulated as follows:

(IC) Any subject who is performing an act of judgment J at time t is not performing, at time t , an act of mere presentation which has the same content as J’s.

Certainly, assuming Husserl’s basic framework, (H) follows from this thesis.¹¹ And as we said above, we also think this (IC) is true.

However, how can one justify (IC)? Here begins the problem. As suggested above, scholars who think that (IC) justifies (H) and regard (IC) as true seem

¹¹ In order to see the relation of implication more clearly, let us introduce a bit of symbolization. First, (H) can be formulated as this (ranges of variables are: “S” for subjects of act, “ t ” for times, “ x ” and “ y ” for acts) :

(H) $\forall S \forall t \forall x ((x \text{ is a judgment} \wedge S \text{ is performing } x \text{ at } t) \rightarrow \neg \exists y (y \text{ is a mere presentation} \wedge x \text{ contains } y \text{ at } t \wedge \text{the matter of } x = \text{the matter of } y))$

Next, (IC) can be expressed as:

(IC) $\forall S \forall t \forall x ((x \text{ is a judgment} \wedge S \text{ is performing } x \text{ at } t) \rightarrow \neg \exists y (y \text{ is a mere presentation} \wedge S \text{ is performing } y \text{ at } t \wedge \text{the matter of } x = \text{the matter of } y))$

Last, scholars seem to assume the following principle (“Part Inheritance”) :

(PI) $\forall S \forall t \forall x \forall y ((S \text{ is performing } x \text{ at } t \wedge x \text{ contains } y \text{ at } t) \rightarrow S \text{ is performing } y \text{ at } t)$

Then, it is clear that (H) is derived from (IC) and (PI). And since (PI) belongs to Husserl’s basic framework, we will not question it here.

to appeal to the opposition of 'positional/non-positional' character of respective acts. But, where a justification is required, the nature of alleged opposition must be made more explicit and precise. What feature of two kinds of act, then, is to prevent them from being performed by the same subject at the same time?

A very natural way to answer to this question seems to be this: to recall the characterization Husserl gives to two kinds of act, and to ground the opposition by appealing to the feature of 'belief' or 'conviction' (XIX/1, 444, 475, 501). Thus, it seems very natural to try to ground (IC) by the following two theses:

(J) Each subject who is performing an act of judgment J at time *t* believes, at *t*, the proposition which is J's content as true.

(P) Any subject who is performing an act of mere presentation P at time *t* does not believe, at *t*, the proposition which is P's content as true.¹²

Obviously, (IC) can be derived from the theses (J) and (P). (The point is that because judgment and mere presentation require a contradictory belief-state from a subject, they cannot be performed by her at the same time.) So, the correctness of justification of (H) in this way boils down to the truth of (J) and (P). But are both of them true? We shall next examine that point.

2. Problem of (P)

2.1. Introduction of a distinction

Of these two theses, (J) has nothing problematic. It is impossible that while someone judges Q, she does not believe Q as true at the same time.

How about the thesis (P)? At first sight, it also seems quite plausible. In our view, however, there seems to be some situations that make (P) look quite

¹² There will be no essential difference for our following discussion if one replaces for "does not believe..." in (P) the expression "does not believe, at *t*, the proposition which is P's content is true nor does she believe, at *t*, the proposition which is P's content is false".

doubtful. That is, it seems that there are situations in which a subject performs a mere presentation, while she *does* believe the content of it as true.

In order to make clear the point we have in mind, let us introduce in advance a distinction into the realm of intentional experience that Husserl indifferently calls “act”. It is a distinction that R. Reinach suggested in his “Theory of Negative Judgment” and B. Smith and others generalize in contemporary debate.¹³ According to them, there are at least two different groups in the realm of intentional experience. One includes experiences which *occur* or *happen* at a certain moment, and of which it does not make sense to ask how long it persisted or how strong it was. Examples of such experiences are: remembering a scene one saw in the past, suddenly noticing the presence of a dog under the chair, deciding to go to Paris, and the like. In what follows, we will call such an experience “mental *event*”, as Smith and others do. The second group, on the other hand, includes experiences which *endure* for certain period of time, and of which the length of persistence or the intensity can be asked with a good sense. Examples are: affection to families, fear to the examination, joyful feeling for the victory of national team, and so on. We will call them “mental *states*” in the following.

With this distinction in mind, let us return to (J) and (P). It should be noticed that, on the one hand, the two sorts of experience in question here, namely judgment and mere presentation, are both included in the group of mental event. (They occur, for example, at the moment at which a speech is completed; and while it makes good sense to ask whether one judged or not, it does not make sense to ask about the strength of the judgment.) Consider, on the other hand, an experience of belief, in term of which (J) and (P) characterize the opposition between judgment and mere presentation. It becomes immediately clear that this is a kind of mental state (belief can endure for certain period, and it makes perfectly good sense to ask how strong one’s belief is). But then, it also becomes clear that (J) and (P) are characterizing the opposition between two kinds of mental event (judgment/mere presentation) simply by the presence or non-presence of a mental state (belief). And this means that the strategy

¹³ [Reinach 1989, 95ff.], [Mulligan & Smith 1986]. In that paper, Smith and Mulligan also distinguish ‘mental process’ which includes perception, deliberation, observation, and the like.

(J) and (P) adopt is to identify a positional mental event (judgment) with the presence of a positional mental state (belief), while attributing the non-presence of that positional state to a non-positional event (mere presentation). We will see, however, that this simple identification might not necessarily work well.

2.2. Counterexample to (P)?

As we already said, it is the characterization of mere presentation by (P) that we regard as problematic. And we recall that the example Husserl gives for mere presentation is an act of merely understanding an expression like a statement, without taking any attitude of belief or disbelief. So, let us consider a situation which suits that example. (It should be noted, however, that our aim here is only to show that (P) is at least not clear enough to be able to justify other theses, and not to establish the falsity of (P) in a definite way.)

Consider the following situation. A high school student, Taro, took an examination on the world history one day. When the examination started, he decided to solve true-false problems first, and read on the paper the sentence: "In 58 B.C. Julius Caesar conducted his first military campaign against Gallic tribes". He deliberated for a few seconds, and remembered soon that this was the point he had repeatedly studied the previous night and also just before the examination. So, he could write confidently "true" on the paper.

In this situation, it is evident that Taro understood the sentence. But it took several seconds for Taro to make up his mind. So, when Taro understood the sentence, he did not take the attitude of belief or disbelief toward the proposition expressed by the sentence. Thus, an act of mere presentation was surely performed at the moment of Taro's understanding the sentence. However, in spite of this, it is in fact difficult to claim that at this moment, Taro did *not* believe the proposition as true, as (P) requires. Let us explain why. What is important here is that it is nothing other than the mental state of belief that is at issue, and that in order for a belief state to endure for a given period, it is not necessary that the subject is incessantly aware of the content of belief explicitly throughout that period. In the situation above, Taro repeatedly made sure of the truth of the proposition before the examination, and though after a few seconds of deliberation, he immediately recovered his conviction. So, it is quite plausible that Taro's belief state endured for a period which includes the time of examination, and consequently, his belief was there at the moment

of his understanding. Of course, the problem is a few seconds' deliberation. But since in general, a content of belief needs not be explicitly aware of throughout the period of belief's endurance, it seems that this kind of indecision must be countenanced. For, if such indecision should become a sufficient reason for rejection of attribution of belief, it would become the case that we in fact have no belief at any moment.

Thus, it is plausible that the situation above makes (P) quite doubtful. The main point here is that a positional state of belief does not necessarily (or, at least cannot so easily be said to) exclude a non-positional event of mere presentation, and as far as (P) requires this exclusion, (P) must become problematic.

3. An Alternative Justification of (IC)

If our conclusion is right, we cannot justify (IC) simply by invoking the presence or non-presence of belief state. Nevertheless, we still think the incompatibility between judgment and mere presentation can be justified. So, we try to provide another justification.

In order to find an alternative way, we think it good to consider the characterization of act of judging as 'spontaneously asserting', which Reinach gives (Reinach 1989, 99). As we will see below, there is good reason to think that this characterization can be gainfully used to ground the opposition between judgment and mere presentation. In other words, we think the following two theses can better justify (IC).

(J') Each subject who is performing an act of judgment J at time t *spontaneously asserts*, at t , the proposition which is J's content as true.

(P') Any subject who is performing an act of mere presentation P at time t *does not spontaneously assert*, at t , the proposition which is P's content as true.

Again, it is obvious that (IC) can be derived from (J') and (P'). And, in contrast to (J) and (P) above, we claim these two theses are both true. For reason of space, however, we will deal with only Taro's case which made (P) problematic,

and show that under a quite plausible principle, even that case does not make (P') problematic.

The principle we have in mind is that any spontaneously performed act is always performed in the mode of thematic consciousness. More precisely, it says that when someone performs an act spontaneously (learning the rules of chess, composing a menu of dinner, etc.), the intentional object of the act is aware of as one's main theme at that time and occupies her central attention. And what is important is that, according to this principle, when someone spontaneously asserts something, she has the content of that act thematically in mind, and in so doing is directed to it in affirmative manner.

Now let us return to Taro's case. We want to claim (P') can be shown to be true even in this situation. In order for (P') to be true, it suffices that the predicate "does not spontaneously assert" holds of Taro when he understood the sentence. But, assuming the principle above, it is evident that this predicate holds of him; for if he did spontaneously assert the proposition, then he must have asserted it while thematically having it in mind, and he would never have deliberated before the answer. Thus, under this principle, (P') can be shown as true in this situation.

V. Conclusion

Let us end up with pointing out some further issues. First, an immediate task arising from our discussion is to provide a more convincing justification of (IC). Although we think (J') and (P') are true, we have not yet shown it clearly enough, and it might be necessary to consider another justification. Anyway, to do that would require a deeper insight into the essence of judgment and mere presentation.

Second, we want to call attention to the task of more precise description of consciousness, to which the distinction between mental event and mental state invites and which this distinction makes possible. In our view, an especially relevant issue here is the theory of knowledge that Husserl proposes in the 6th *Investigation*. There, Husserl takes up an experience of knowing which is called "dynamic unity" (XIX/2, 566). Roughly speaking, this kind of experience is said to occur where an act of empty intention (e.g. understanding an expression) is performed first, and then a corresponding act of intuition is

performed and fulfills the earlier empty intention. However, if the acts of understanding or judging are mental events, as distinguished from mental states and processes, the problem of how this fulfillment is possible arises. For, in that case, the acts of understanding and judgment are not those acts which can endure from one moment to another, and it would be impossible for them to be fulfilled after the moment at which they are performed. Thus, when we take into consideration the distinction between mental event and states, the analysis of experience of knowing will turn out to be a more complicated matter than Husserl seems to think. And to fill this gap will be another task for us.

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