

A HISTORICAL SURVEY AND CONCEPTUAL ACCOUNT OF
STATES OF AFFAIRS

by

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Roberts, Matthew Erskine (Ph.D., Philosophy)
A Historical Survey and Conceptual Account of States of Affairs
Thesis directed by Professor Michael Tooley

States of affairs are entities like *snow's being white*. This dissertation encompasses two projects. First, I provide a historical survey of the concept of *state of affairs* as it has been used in the history of ontology. Second, I provide a novel conceptual account of states of affairs.

In chapter one I survey early theories of states of affairs, which include those of Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817-1881), Carl Stumpf (1848-1936), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Alexius Meinong (1853-1920), Anton Marty (1847-1914), and Adolf Reinach (1883-1917). I conclude that Rudolph Lotze was the first theorist of states of affairs.

In chapter two I examine Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889-1951) theory. I conclude with Max Black that Wittgenstein did not countenance possible states of affairs.

In chapter three I examine prominent contemporary accounts of states of affairs including those of Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999), John Pollock, Reinhardt Grossman, Alvin Plantinga, Ramon Lemos, and David Armstrong.

In chapter four I consider methodological preliminaries and five desiderata for any successful theory of states of affairs. I consider differences between sentence nominalizations and the possible worlds approach to states of affairs; both considerations lead to the preliminary conclusion that propositions are distinct from states of affairs.

In chapter five I construct propositions out of abstract designators, concepts, and operators (DCO's). Propositions are maximally fine-grained potential objects of belief and are logical forms of DCO's. Propositions are irreducible, *ante rem* universals.

In chapter six, I produce a new theory of states of affairs. They are maximally fine-grained objects of intentional mental states like entertaining. They are second-order logical forms of DCO's like propositions. I offer identity conditions for propositions and states of affairs and show how they can be isomorphic. This logical isomorphism serves to give truth conditions for propositions. I consider this theory in light of actualism and then apply it to a correspondence theory of truth. I briefly consider tensed propositions and events in light of this sketch of correspondence. I then show that my desiderata have been satisfied. I conclude by providing comparison and contrast between this new theory and its contemporary competitors.

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The term ‘states of affairs’ is a relatively recent term in the history of ontology. While there are a plethora of variegated theories in this history, a common thread through all of them is that states of affairs are referred to by gerundive phrases like ‘snow’s being white’ or sometimes ‘that’-clauses like ‘that snow is white’. Beyond this agreement, however, the differences in theories are significant.

While many contemporary theorists have either explicitly developed a theory of states of affairs or have used them for other theoretical projects, especially possible worlds theories, no one has ever produced a historical survey of states of affairs. The first goal of this dissertation, then, is to produce that survey.

‘State of affairs’ is a term of art. Different theorists use the term quite differently. So, there is no settled use of the term in contemporary metaphysics. Nonetheless, one evident divide between theories of states of affairs is the abstract-concrete division. The majority of theories, both historical and contemporary, take states of affairs to be some sort of abstract object which is at least partially, if not completely, non-physical. Sometimes these abstract states of affairs are identified with propositions, which have a much longer history. Propositions have traditionally served as the mental content of beliefs (and sometimes other intentional attitudes) and the meanings of statements and sentences.

In the minority of theories is a concrete view that takes states of affairs to be slices or atoms of the physical world. These atoms are understood to be composed of

particulars exemplifying properties and/or standing in relations. These concrete states of affairs are often termed ‘facts’. Concrete theories of states of affairs are in the minority of theories primarily because ‘facts’ is the more common term for these concrete entities in the contemporary literature. I will use ‘fact’ as a synonymous term for concrete states of affairs.

In order to remain as neutral as possible on the nature of states of affairs, I will simply take them to be those entities that are denoted by nominalized gerundives (gerund phrases which are also noun phrases) and, sometimes, ‘that’-clauses, though I will prefer the former given that this is the more common usage. However, on occasion, it will be necessary to more precisely define ‘states of affairs’ in the context of explaining a particular theory. While surveying these theories, I will remain neutral on questions concerning the identity of states of affairs and propositions, whether states of affairs are abstract or concrete, whether they contain concrete physical particulars and other important issues addressed in these various theories.

States of affairs are also identified with events and facts in some theories. But, for the purposes of narrowing our scope, I have limited our inquiry to theories that use the English term ‘state of affairs’ or to theories which translate terms like the German ‘*Sachverhalt*’ as the English ‘state of affairs’. While this is done to limit our scope, it is certainly understood that doing so will leave out other theories that use different terms like ‘event’, ‘fact’, ‘situation’, ‘condition’, ‘proposition’, and perhaps other terms that may in fact refer either to the abstract or concrete states of affairs of those theories we will examine. This narrowing of scope, however, is not arbitrary, given the several

theories that explicitly use the term ‘state of affairs’ we see throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries.

The first project of this dissertation, then, is to survey the history of theories of states of affairs. This project encompasses chapters one through three. In chapter one, I examine late nineteenth and early twentieth theories of states of affairs. In chapter two, I examine Ludwig Wittgenstein’s theory of states of affairs as presented in the *Tractatus*. In chapter three, I examine contemporary theories from the late 1960’s to the present.

The second project of this dissertation is to produce a new theory which demonstrates familiarity with its predecessors, but attempts to improve on all of them. The theory I develop will join the majority of theories as an abstract-object theory, but it brings a clearer, more precise theory to the contemporary scene than its competitors. In chapter four I lay out preliminaries for a theory and consider whether states of affairs are distinct from propositions and conclude that they are. In chapter five, I examine the nature of propositions since they are intimately related, though not identical to states of affairs. In chapter six, I present a new theory of states of affairs whose central thesis is that states of affairs are second-order logical forms of designators, concepts, and operators. I also sketch a theory of how my theory of propositions and states of affairs maps onto a correspondence theory of truth. I then briefly compare and contrast my theory with the most prominent theories detailed in our historical survey.

The following chart provides a summary of the theories we will survey.

Summary Chart

| | <i>Abstract</i> | <i>Concrete</i> | <i>Possible</i> | <i>Mental/Semantic Content</i> | <i>Mind Dependent</i> | <i>Mind Independent</i> | <i>Negative</i> | <i>Necessary</i> | <i>Modal Properties</i> | <i>=to Possible Worlds</i> | <i>Distinct from Propositions</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Aristotle | No | Yes | ? | No | No | Yes | ? | No | ? | No | Yes |
| Rudolph Lotze | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | No | Yes | ? | ? | ? | No | ? |
| Carl Stumpf | Yes | No | ? | Yes | Yes | No | ? | ? | ? | No | ? |
| Edmund Husserl | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | ? | ? | ? | No | Yes |
| Alexius Meinong | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | ? | Yes | ? | No | No |
| Anton Marty | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | ? | No | ? | No | ? |
| Adolph Reinach | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Ludwig Wittgenstein | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | ? | No | Yes |
| Roderick Chisholm | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| John Pollock | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | Yes | Yes |
| Reinhardt Grossman | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | ? | ? | ? | ? | Yes |
| Alvin Plantinga | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | ? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Ramon Lemos | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | Yes |
| David Armstrong | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Matthew Roberts | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Explanation of Column Headings:¹

Abstract: States of affairs include some non-physical element.

¹If the theorist in question held a view at any time in his career, I have marked the relevant category in the affirmative even if his theory changed over time. The theorists are listed in the chronological order of their first published theory of states of affairs. In some cases the theorist does not explicitly say what his position is, but it is clear enough from the rest of what he says that we can specify an answer for the given column. A “?” indicates that there is not enough evidence to specify a position for the given column. In some cases it will appear that the theorist held contradictory views as in those who held that states of affairs are both abstract and concrete. It is left to the reader to determine if such cases are contradictions or if there is a favorable reading of the theorist that shows that there is only an apparent contradiction in his theory. Some of categorizations are controversial, especially in the case of Wittgenstein. I have indicated positions that are in harmony with my arguments for preferring one interpretation above another as detailed in the text.

Concrete: States of affairs are either partially or completely constituted by physical particulars.

Possible: The theory takes at least some states of affairs to be possible, non-actual or non-obtaining entities.

Mental/Semantic Content: States of affairs serve as the mental and/or semantic content of intentional states like belief or entertaining, or indicative sentences and/or statements and/or utterances.

Mind Dependent: States of affairs are dependent on some mental act, state, or the existence of a mind for their existence.

Mind Independent: States of affairs exist independently of any mental acts or minds.

Negative: Negative states of affairs like *snow's not being blue* exist.

Necessary: States of affairs exist necessarily (they are not contingently existing entities).

Modal Properties: States of affairs bear modal properties like being necessary or being contingent.

= **to Possible Worlds:** (Maximal) States of affairs are identical to possible worlds.

Distinct from Propositions: States of affairs are not identical to propositions.

*Chapter 1: Late 19th and Early 20th Century
Theories of States of Affairs*

Pre 19th-century Theories of States of Affairs

The history of states of affairs prior to the late 19th century is scant. Apart from Aristotle, there is little mention or theorizing about states of affairs prior to the late 19th century. Nevertheless, there are a few hints of the concept of state of affairs in philosophy prior to the 19th century. We begin with Aristotle.

Aristotle

Aristotle had some notion of states of affairs, though his comments were rather sketchy and undeveloped. Historical philosopher Peter Simons argues that Aristotle held to the existence of states of affairs taking them to be facts citing evidence from Aristotle's *Categories*. However, Simons says Aristotle did not believe in possible facts.² Noted historian of philosophy Gabriël Nuchelmans has detailed the comprehensive history of propositions from ancient through contemporary philosophy. Nuchelmans argues that Aristotle's views on states of affairs are ambiguous.³ Nuchelmans agrees with Simons that Aristotle held to the existence of facts, for facts (*pragma*) are the correspondents to propositions (*logos*). However, Aristotle also held that there did exist correspondents to false propositions. Nuchelmans reasons that this ontological commitment entails that Aristotle must have

² Simons, P. (1988). Aristotle's Concept of State of Affairs. *Antike Rechts-und Sozialphilosophie*. O. a. M. F. Gigon. Frankfurt, Verlag Peter Lang. 6: 97-112.

³ See Gabriël Nuchelmans (1973). *Theories of the Proposition: Ancient and Medieval Conceptions of the Bearers of Truth and Falsity*. Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing Company.

also countenanced possible facts as these correspondents of false propositions, though Aristotle does not explicitly commit to such possible facts. Says Nuchelmans,

We have to conclude again, I think, that Aristotle expresses himself in such a way that no definite answers to our question can be given. Concentrating on some aspects one can read him in one way, concentrating on other aspects one can read him in another way.⁴

Barry Smith, historian of late 19th century philosophy, points to the 19th century as the most prominent period to that point in time in the concept's development, but still notes that there is mention of the concept from Aristotle through the medieval philosophers. Says Smith,

Traces of the *Sachverhalt* concept are discoverable by hindsight already in Aristotle, above all in those passages where Aristotle speaks of the *pragma* as that on which the truth of the *logos* depends. Aquinas, too, takes the 'disposition of things' as the cause of the truth of a judgment, and similar views are present in the later middle ages, for example in the doctrine of the *complexe significabile*—of that which can be signified only as a complex—defended by Wodeham, Crathorn and Gregory of Rimini.⁵

Were we tracing the history of the concept of facts, a pre-19th century investigation would produce evidence that there was theorizing about them from Aristotle on. But we are particularly interested in the concept of states of affairs, which can be used to speak of both facts and possible facts.

19th and Early 20th Century Theories of States of Affairs

The concept of states of affairs arose in Austrian philosophy in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The German term for state of affairs is '*Sachverhalt*,' the

⁴ Gabriel Nuchelmans, *Theory of the Proposition*, vol. 1, 34-36.

⁵ Smith, B. (1989). "Logic and the Sachverhalt." *Monist* 7(2): 53. See this also for an etymology of *Sachverhalte*. See Nuchelmans for an in-depth discussion of the doctrine of the *complexe significabile* in *Theory of the Proposition*, vol. 1, 34-36.

plural being '*Sachverhalte*.' While philosophers have debated the proper English translation of this German term, it is most often translated 'state of affairs.'

At the turn of the century, ontology was undergoing a revolution, argues

Reinhardt Grossman:

Several new *categories* were added to the traditional Platonic-Aristotelian inventory consisting of individual things and their properties. Added were *relations, sets, and states of affairs*. Of course, this revolution did not take place overnight. It developed slowly with many tentative and some aborted steps. This is quite obvious for the category...of *state of affairs*.⁶

Elsewhere Grossman notes,

The emergence of states of affairs as a separate category of entities—on a par with individuals (substances) and properties (modifications of substances)—marks the most decisive break of modern philosophy with the Aristotelian heritage.⁷

Historian Kevin Mulligan notes that the concept of state of affairs was a significant development in analytic philosophy at this time:

The category of *Sachverhalte* or states of affairs stands at the centre of a number of important discussions in exact twentieth century philosophy. It makes its most striking appearance in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* but dominates the thought of Russell and Moore and reappears in many of the most important discussions of meaning, truth and the analysis of propositions from Russell and Moore onwards. The category of states of affairs is arguably a distinctively modern philosophical discovery.⁸

Theorists took virtually every attitude toward states of affairs in this unsettled period in the history of ontology. Some, like Brentano, rejected them outright.

Others like Husserl saw in them a valuable distinction from propositions, admitting

⁶ Grossman, R. (1995). "Thoughts, Objectives, and States of Affairs." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 50: 163.

⁷ Grossman, R. (1973). *Ontological Reduction*. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 11.

⁸ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 206.

both into their ontology.⁹ Philosophers such as Bolzano accepted propositions but not states of affairs. Anton Marty, among others, accepted states of affairs, but not propositions.¹⁰ Why did the concept of states of affairs arise in late 19th century philosophy? Edgar Morscher comments,

As far as I can see, in most or all cases the dominant aim in introducing propositions and/or states of affairs [in 19th-century Austrian philosophy] is to guarantee the independence from time, space, change, mind and language, of truth and falsity and of logical properties and relations like (in)validity, logical consequence, (in)compatibility and so on. In order to guarantee the objectivity of those attributes, the Austrian philosophers mentioned above [Bernard Bolzano, Anton Marty, Edmund Husserl, Alexius Meinong, Franz Brentano] thought that we need special truth-bearers and/or special truth-makers, because the “normal” truth-bearers (like sentences and thoughts) and the “normal” truth-makers (the objects the sentences and thoughts are about) are or at least could be temporal and spatial, changeable and (in the case of truth-bearers like thoughts and sentences) also mind- or language-dependent... some Austrian philosophers wanted to guarantee the objectivity of truth-values and logical attributes via the objectivity of the truth-bearers, others via the objectivity of the truth-makers. Because of the convergence of aim this difference in the means was ignored by many Austrian philosophers, which led to confusions and misunderstanding among them. ...the views of Austrian philosophers on propositions and states of affairs were similar at a superficial level but more fundamentally in opposition.¹¹

In their “Truth-Makers” Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith also shed light on the impetus for the concept of states of affairs:

During the realist revival in the early years of this century, philosophers of various persuasions were concerned to investigate the ontology of truth. That is, whether or not they viewed truth as a correspondence, they were interested in the extent to which one needed to assume the existence of entities serving some role in accounting for the truth of sentences. Certain of these entities, such as the *Sätze an sich* of Bolzano, the *Gedanken* of Frege, or the propositions of Russell and Moore, were conceived as the bearers of the

⁹ Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Holder-Pichler-Tempsky: 75.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Morscher, “Propositions and States of affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein”, 80-82.

properties of truth and falsehood. Some thinkers however, such as Russell, Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, and Husserl in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, argued that instead of, or in addition to, truth-bearers, one must assume the existence of certain entities in virtue of which sentences and/or propositions are true. Various names were used for these entities, notably 'fact', '*Sachverhalt*', and 'state of affairs.'¹²

Barry Smith points to a dichotomy first expressed by Husserl in the emergence of states of affairs as an ontological category. In considering Carl Stumpf's introduction of the term '*Sachverhalt*' to German ontology, Smith points to

a fundamental dichotomy, both terminological and ontological, a dichotomy which was clearly seen for the first time by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* and which was hinted at by Frege in his terminology of 'realms,' a dichotomy which is important because it has led to certain important confusions on the part of those philosophers such as, we suggest, Meinong, Russell, and Chisholm who have failed to appreciate its full significance. This dichotomy may be expressed as follows:

Entities are divided into (at least) two categories, which we might call the category of meaning-entities and the category of object-entities, respectively.

| Meaning Entities | Object Entities |
|--|------------------------|
| Senses | Individual Objects |
| Propositions (<i>Sätz an sich</i>) | |
| Thoughts | Higher-order objects |
| Judgment-contents | Properties |
| Concepts (conceptual contents) | Relations |
| Theories (and other higher-order meaning-structures) | States of Affairs |
| <i>Vorstellungen</i> , ideas, images | Events |
| Husserlian <i>noemata</i> | Processes |
| ... | ... |
| "= realm of senses" | "= realm of objects" |

Perhaps we can characterize the opposition involved here by saying that meaning-entities are actualized in and from the content of our conscious acts, especially conscious language-using acts, and that they thereby form the medium of significant access to object-entities. The latter, on the other hand,

¹² Mulligan, K. P. S., Barry Smith (1984). "Truth-Makers." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XLIV(3): 287.

radically exclude the possibility of actualization by consciousness; object-entities can hold only the ‘target’ position for an act.¹³

Besides the impetus for the concept of states of affairs there has been some debate over the origin of the concept in Austrian philosophy. Nikolay Milkov argues that the term ‘*Sachverhalt*’ as a referent for a state of affairs was first introduced by Rudolph Lotze in his *Logic* (1874).¹⁴ Milkov argues that Lotze’s use of the concept laid the foundations for Carl Stumpf’s, Husserl’s, and Wittgenstein’s use of it and notes that

...Stumpf, Husserl and other phenomenologists made an additional requirement of it: it came to denote the specific ontology of judgements as opposed to facts. However...this modification was not essential to the authentic meaning of the concept of state of affairs as introduced by Lotze. What is more, the phenomenologist notion of state of affairs has a meaning reducible to that of Lotze’s notion.

Milkov also argues that historian Barry Smith has frequently changed his view on the origin of the concept.¹⁵ Milkov details several views that Smith has held. To summarize, according to Milkov, Smith has attributed the origin of the concept to Carl Stumpf, Julius Bergmann, and Rudolf Lotze. For example, in his 1978 “An Essay in Formal Ontology,” Smith says,

The term *Sachverhalt* was introduced into philosophy by Carl Stumpf (who was, with Husserl, Meinong, Twardowski and Marty, a pupil of Brentano) in the mimeographed logic lectures which Stumpf gave in Halle in 1888. Its first important appearance in philosophical print was in 1900 in volume I of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, a work dedicated to Stumpf, with whom Husserl had worked in Halle. Husserl does not, however, flag the innovatory nature of this term, something which is explained partly by the nature of the German language as a kind of linguistic construction kit, partly by the vagaries of Husserl’s prose, and finally by the fact that, 12 years after Stumpf’s first use, the term was already beginning to acquire the naturalness

¹³ Smith, B. (1978). "An Essay in Formal Ontology." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 6: 50-51.

¹⁴ Milkov, N. (2002). "Lotze's Concept of State of Affairs and Its Critics." *Prima Philosophia* 15(4): 438.

¹⁵ Milkov, N. (2002). "Lotze's Concept of State of Affairs and Its Critics." *Prima Philosophia* 15(4): 437-450.

and the familiarity which, given the ontological propriety of the underlying notion—it has since shown that it deserves. Stumpf himself first went into print with the term after he had left Halle and gone (through Munich) to Berlin, in a monograph for the Berlin Academy which appeared in 1907, just about the time when Wittgenstein was settling himself in the *Berlin Technische Hochschule*.

Given Wittgenstein's prominent place in the history of the concept, Smith considers the possibility that Wittgenstein invented the concept independently of these earlier Austrian philosophers. Argues Smith,

... This suggestion must, I think, be rejected, and for reasons which may have some more general light to throw on the genesis of philosophical terminology, whether within a single language or by an absorption from a second language of the type which seems to have occurred with regard to the English term 'state of affairs.' It is difficult for philosophers working today to appreciate the extent to which their use of both *Sachverhalt* and *state of affairs* is a relatively modern innovation.¹⁶

As far as the first appearance of the English phrase 'state of affairs,' Smith points to Ogden and Ramsey's translation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

Smith also traces the etymology of 'state of affairs' and *Sachverhalt*:

Etymologically speaking...both '*Sachverhalt*' and 'state of affairs' derive ...from juridical uses of the term '*status*' in the sense of *status rerum* (state or constitution of things), as contrasted with the *status hominem* or state of a man (as slave, free, etc.). Thus the O.E.D. speaks of a 'state of things' or 'state of affairs' as "the way in which events or circumstances stand disposed (at a particular time or within a particular sphere)."

The term '*status rerum*' is rooted especially in that branch of rhetorical theory which relates to the conduct of a trial. Here *status* is defined as the question which grows out of a given legal conflict. Thus for example Quintilian writes: "What I call *status* is called by other constitution, by others question, and by others that which one can infer from the question." [*Institutio oratoris*, 3, 6, 2.] '*Status*' in this connection signifies also in an extended sense "the way things stand, the condition or peculiarity of a thing in regard to its circumstances, position, order" [*Lexicon totius latinitatis*, IV, 478f.] An important role seems to have been played here by Goclenius, who draws a

¹⁶ Smith, B. (1978). "An Essay in Formal Ontology." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 6: 40-41.

clear opposition between ‘*status*’ and ‘*propositio*’ from the point of view of the status of law. That *status* is, he says, “the fulcrum about which turn both the representations of the prosecution and those of the defence” [*Lexicon philosophicum* (1613), 1081]. The court’s job is to determine which of these conflicting representations is true; in other words, it has to determine *how things stand*—*wie die Sachen sich zueinander verhalten*—in regard to the matters raised therein.¹⁷

Reinhardt Grossman credits the recent discovery of states of affairs to Bolzano whose ontology rested on his notion of a *sentence as such* (*Satz an sich*). Grossman comments,

While “logicians” like Bolzano and Frege were grappling with the problem of arriving at the notion of a state of affairs which would serve their purposes, additional philosophical impetus for the acceptance of the new category came from an entirely different and rather surprising “psychological” direction. I have in mind the students of Brentano. (In addition to Meinong, I should mention Marty, Twardowski, Husserl and Stumpf)... While Bolzano and Frege were primarily interested in the nature of objective truths, these philosophers started out with an interest in the nature of mental acts and, in particular, in the nature of judgment.¹⁸

The debate over the first use of *Sachverhalt* is not easily settled as can be seen from the contradictory arguments over its origins. Bolzano’s *Sentences as such* as Grossman takes them seem closer to most theorists’ propositions and thus would not be a strong candidate for the origin of the concept as it is most used today. Milkov’s criticism of Barry Smith’s multiple stances on this question combined with the fact that Lotze precedes all of Smith’s positions on the origin, lends credence to Milkov’s argument that Lotze was the first ontologist to use the concept during this period of philosophy. While certainty on this question is elusive, the most warranted position

¹⁷ Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. *The School of Franz Brentano*. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 52: 324-325.

does appear to be Milkov's: Rudolf Lotze was the first to use the term '*Sachverhalt*' to speak of the metaphysical concept of a state of affairs.

With the questions of the impetus and origin of the concept explored, we can now turn to an examination of the most prominent theorists of states of affairs in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These include Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817-1881), Carl Stumpf (1848-1936), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Alexius Meinong (1853-1920), and Anton Marty (1847-1914), and Adolf Reinach (1883-1917).

I have selected this order based on the chronological order in which their theories first appear in print. In this section, my primary task will be that of exposition. I will generally refrain from critiquing each theory as this will be more efficiently accomplished in advancing my own theory. We begin with Lotze.

Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817-1881)

Nikolay Milkov argues that Rudolph Lotze first introduced the term '*Sachverhalt*' to refer to the sense of the objective content of judgments which, for Lotze, was the minimal structured ontological unit.¹⁹ States of affairs for Lotze were concatenations of objects, a pattern exemplified in both mind and matter in the sense that, for Lotze, there is only one pattern, be it in mind or matter, for this concatenation of objects.²⁰ It appears then that Lotze held to an identity theory of truth where the content of a true judgment is identical to some fact in the world, that is to say, there is no distinction

¹⁸ Grossman, R. (1995). "Thoughts, Objectives, and States of Affairs." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 50: 166-167.

¹⁹ Milkov, N. (2002). "Lotze's Concept of State of Affairs and Its Critics." *Prima Philosophia* 15(4): 437-450.

²⁰ Milkov, N. (2002). "Lotze's Concept of State of Affairs and Its Critics." *Prima Philosophia* 15(4): 437. This view forced Lotze into an identity theory of truth, a theory to be explored under the heading of truth in this dissertation.

between a truth and a truthmaker. On this view, physical particulars are capable of serving as mental content. Since truthmakers and truth are identical on this view, their ontology is also identical. But what are we to do with the apparent fact that distinct judgments can be made about the same fact? For example, the fact of a *rose's being red* can produce varying judgments like (1) *This rose is red*, (2) *Redness inheres in this rose*, or (3) *This rose forms the substrate of this redness*. Milkov explains,

These judgements...haven't specific ontologies different from the ontology of the fact about which they are made. The reason for this is that in the judgments, on the one hand, and in factual material on the other hand, one and the same set of individuals (objects) are concatenated with one another but in different arrangements (relations, *Verhältnisse*). What is most important is that the possibility that the individuals of the factual material have to make up different ensembles (complexes, states of affairs) lies in the individuals themselves. This means that the different ontologies of the judgements are implicitly contained in the factual material on which the judgements are based. (In our case, the fact that this rose is red contains in itself the ontology of the judgement (1), (2), and (3). So, in a sense, the latter can be reduced to the ontology of the fact.) Indeed, this material—the fact—can be called a quasi-complex state of affairs, which is nothing but a conjunction of all the possible atomic states of affairs (the ontology of judgements) that can be built on its basis.

Barry Smith argues that Lotze along with Gustav Bergmann were trying to escape the German idealism of their day which made the objects of experience and knowledge purely mental. Their desire was to free logic from its bondage to the mental in offering their ontologies of states of affairs.²¹ From Smith's work, it seems that Lotze's theory of states of affairs changed over his career. Smith notes that in the second edition of his *Logic* (1880),

Lotze introduces his treatment of judgment by distinguishing, in addition to purely immanent relations between presentations, also ‘material relations’ (*sachliche Verhältnisse*) between what he calls the ‘contents’ of presentations. It is only “because one already presupposes such a material relation as obtaining,” Lotze writes, “that one can picture it in a sentence (*In einem Satze abbilden*).” [Lotze 1880, 57f].

Both Lotze and Bergmann are here feeling their way towards a view of the objective standard or target of judgment as transcendent to the mind of the judging subject. In Lotze himself this culminates in a Platonistic view of the objects of judgment along lines more familiar from the work of Bolzano and Frege. (The latter, we might say, makes a Platonic object out of the conceptual complex of the idealists.) But Lotzean ideas on the objects of judgment were developed not only by Frege. Lotze’s lectures were attended also by the two Brentanists Carl Stumpf and Anton Marty, both of whom will have a role to play in the story that follows.²²

From Smith’s remarks, it seems that Lotze abandoned the identity theory of truth later in his career, given his “Platonistic view of the objects of judgment.” Nevertheless, it is clear that he was seeking mind-independence for the objects of judgment throughout his work.

Carl Stumpf (1848-1936)

According to Kevin Mulligan, “The expression ‘*Sachverhalt*’ was introduced as a technical term into philosophy by Stumpf as early as 1888 as a terminological improvement on Brentano’s ‘*Urteilsinhalt*’ (the content of a judgment) which Brentano had already distinguished from the ‘matter’ of the judgment (i.e. its sense).²³ In his “Logic and the *Sachverhalte*,” Smith argues that Stumpf’s

²¹ Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. *The School of Franz Brentano*. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **52**: 323-341.

²²Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. *The School of Franz Brentano*. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **52**: 326-327.

²³ Mulligan, K. (1985). "Wie die sachen sich zueinander verhalten" inside and outside the 'Tractatus'." *Teoria. Logica e filosofia del linguaggio* 5: 145.

introduction of the term ‘*Sachverhalt*’ “...sparked, at least terminologically, the various *Sachverhalt*-ontologies put forward by the followers of Brentano around the turn of the century.”²⁴ Regardless of whether Stumpf or Lotze was the first to use *Sachverhalt* in this manner, we do see that ‘*Urteilsinhalt*’ and ‘*Sachverhalt*’ were closely related terms in this period of Austrian philosophy given Anton Marty’s 1909 use of the former to designate states of affairs (see below). Smith agrees with Mulligan that Stumpf gave ‘*Sachverhalt*’ the same sense as Brentano’s ‘*Urteilisinhalt*’ but also related ‘*Sachverhalt*’ to Bolzano’s *Satz an sich*, a term which is often translated ‘proposition’ by Bolzano scholars. Says Smith,

It therefore seems that the term stands in close relation to the ‘conceptual content’ of Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* and then also to the ‘sentential sense’ (‘thought’) of Frege’s semantical writings. But it does not seem now to be possible to set *Sachverhalte* or states of affairs alongside propositions or thoughts, to consign them, that is to say, to what Frege called the ‘realm of sense’ as opposed the realm of ordinary referents (including the real world and its objects, properties and relations). For the surely by now well-justified use of this term, not only in Wittgenstein, Husserl, Reinach and Ingarden, but also in standard analytic philosophical discussions of facts, is such as to treat existing states of affairs as dovetailed, with objects, properties, relations, events and processes, being that on the object side of things which, directly or indirectly, make assertive sentences true or false.²⁵

Considering more recent theories of states of affairs like those of Plantinga, Pollock, and Chisholm, the understanding of states of affairs as belonging to the realm of ordinary referents seems overstated today, though not necessarily at the time of

²⁴ Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. *The School of Franz Brentano*. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **52**: 327. Smith cites Stumpf’s notes to his logic lectures given in Halle, a copy of which can be found in the Husserl Archive in Louvain. See also Stumpf’s “*Erscheinungen und psychische Funktionen*,” *Abhandlungen der Berliner Akademie*, 1907, and his contribution to *Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, 1924.

Smith's remarks before these contemporary theories gained prominence. Smith provides further description of Stumpf's states of affairs:

As Stumpf himself later recorded, the term '*Sachverhalt*' was introduced by him in 1888 to stand for a 'specific content of a judgment,' "which is to be distinguished from the content of a presentation (the matter) and is expressed linguistically in a 'that-clause' or in substantivised infinitives." [Stumpf 1907a, 29f.] ... Together with concepts and sets or aggregates, the *Sachverhalt* is assigned by Stumpf to the category of what he calls 'formations' (*Gebilde*). These are to be distinguished first of all from what Stumpf calls 'functions,' i.e., from our mental acts themselves. But they are to be distinguished also from 'appearances,' i.e. from sense data as classically conceived, and Stumpf is in fact here still operating within the broadly empiricist framework within which it is sense data which serve as the typical examples of objects of presentation. The latter, as Stumpf conceives them, are given to us as independent of the activities of mind. As organized or collected, however—for example as they occur in the context of an aggregate or set—they are taken up into consciousness in such a way that they are given to us as existing only as immanent to the relevant (in this case aggregating) act. A Stumpfian state of affairs, similarly, can exist only as the 'immanent content' of an actually occurring judgment. Hence it cannot 'be given directly and thus be real of itself alone, independently of any function'. *Sachverhalte*, like other Stumpfian formations, "are factual only as contents of functions." [Stumpf 1907a, 30.] They "are not to be found anywhere separated off... in some 'supersensible realm' as entities existing in and of themselves. They do not exist as dead preparations or petrifications, but only in the context of the living being of the mind. [Stumpf 1907b, 34]²⁶

So, unlike Lotze's later thought, Stumpf seems to take a mind-dependent (conceptualist) understanding of states of affairs, not a Platonistic view.

L.A.V. Brettler reinforces Smith's interpretation of Stumpf:

As early as 1888, Carl Stumpf—like Meinong and Husserl, a former student of Brentano—acknowledged a role in the theory of judgments for s-o-a-s

²⁵ Smith, B. (1978). "An Essay in Formal Ontology." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 6: 49.

²⁶ Smith, B. (1989). "Logic and the Sachverhalt." *Monist* 7(2): 57-58; Carl Stumpf's 1907a article is "Erscheinungen und psychische Funktionen," *Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-history. Kl., 4 (1907) pp. 29f; Stumpf's 1907b is "Zur Einteilung der Wissenschaften," *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-history. Kl., 5 (1907) p.34.

[states of affairs] as the contents to which our acts of judgment refer. These s-o-a-s were to serve a logical function intermediary between the phenomenon judged and the act of judging. Stumpf regarded them as logically dependent on acts of judging though they were to be distinguished from the act of judging as such.²⁷

Brettler continues,

S-o-a-s are logical entities dependent on psychic functions, yet objective in Stumpf's sense and real insofar as they are the content of an actual judgment. The structural laws of s-o-a-s are said to govern the sequence and conclusion of acts of judgment. ... The rules governing premises and conclusions are thus not causal laws of psychological processes, but structural laws of s-o-a-s to which a logical necessity pertains.²⁸

The extent of scholarship is not as great on Stumpf or Lotze as those that followed.

These early theories of states of affairs were not comprehensive. However, Edmund Husserl and Alexius Meinong produced more comprehensive theories near the turn of the century. We begin with Husserl.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

Edmund Husserl produced the most extensive theory of states of affairs to this point in time in his *Logical Investigations (Logische Untersuchungen)* (1900) as well as his *Formale und Transzendente Logik* (1929). On Edgar Morscher's interpretation of Husserl, states of affairs are truth-makers of true propositions. However, Husserl also sometimes says of them that they are true or false, thus making states of affairs truth-bearers as well. Adolf Reinach, a pupil of Husserl's

²⁷ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy*. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University, 26.

²⁸ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy*. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University, 28.

would later criticize this conflation.²⁹ Barry Smith is more optimistic in regard to Husserl's ability to successfully distinguish between propositions and states of affairs. Says Smith,

Clarity in respect of the distinction between *Sachverhalt* and proposition, as also between both of these and the immanent contents of judgment was first attained by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* of 1900/01. Here *Sachverhalt* and proposition are squeezed apart, and a conception of *Sachverhalte* as objectual truth-makers explicitly defended.

Husserl argued for a view of *Sachverhalte* as objectual judgment-correlates analogous to objects as the transcendent targets of presentations. Moreover, he saw that *Sachverhalte* can serve as correlates not only of acts of judging but also of special kinds of nominal acts (for example when we say that p 'is welcome,' 'is probable,' 'has as consequence that...,' etc.).³⁰

Kevin Mulligan takes Husserl's theory of states of affairs to be the "...first recognizably modern account of states of affairs," set out in his *Logical Investigations*.³¹ Mulligan has done the most extensive work on Husserl's theory of states of affairs. Says Mulligan

Husserl's account of states of affairs is sketchy. With respect to a large number of important questions it is not always clear what Husserl's answer is, e.g., whether attributes are or are not ideal objects, whether a true negative sentence corresponds to an obtaining negative state of affairs and what this would be. The fact that sentential sense and states of affairs are not always clearly distinguished introduces a crucial ambiguity into three interesting claims about states of affairs: they stand in the ground-consequent relation (I § 3); they are the bearers of modality (Prolegomena § 6); they are negative or positive (Prolegomena § 27). But then Husserl never intended to address

²⁹ Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Holder-Pichler-Tempsky: 78.

³⁰ Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. The School of Franz Brentano. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 52: 332-333.

³¹

himself systematically to the topic of states of affairs in the *Investigations*, which are, after all, a series of interconnected investigations into a number of related problems. He introduces the notion of states of affairs as and when he needs it. It is apparent now what large gaps there are in what he says. But had he not indicated the lines along which a family of different accounts of states of affairs might be developed by modifying the accounts of all his predecessor philosophers, we might still be hesitating between a very restricted number of alternatives. Between on the one hand, realist accounts of truth such as that which allows of no correspondence and in which true sentences name the True or model-theoretic simulacra of correspondence incapable of explaining how processes in the world that we see and measure make sentences true and, on the other hand, some version of anti-realism, e.g. the conceptualist view that a true sentence is true because an object falls under a general concept.³²

Mulligan contrasts Husserl's theory, with contemporary theories of his day. Says Mulligan,

Husserl profoundly modifies the accounts of *Sachverhalte* current among other students of Brentano and paves the way for the first systematic account of states of affairs in the modern sense, that given by his pupil A. Reinach in 1911 in his paper "Zur Theorie des Negativen Urteils," an account further elaborated by another pupil of Husserl's, R. Ingarden in the first two volumes of *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt* (1964/65). It is true that Husserl's 1900/01 account is very sketchy and indeed when compared to subsequent accounts given by Meinong of what he calls *Objektive* in *Über Annahmen* (1902, 1910) and Marty in his *Untersuchungen* (1908). But these accounts are dominated by a non-propositional theory of judgement due to Brentano, a theory Marty develops and from which Meinong emancipates himself only partially. Husserl's account differs also from that given by Frege in "Über Sinn und Bedeutung." For unlike Frege, Husserl does not conceive of ordinary asserted sentences or propositions (Frege's term is "Behauptungssatz") as names, nor a fortiori as names of the True or the False.³³

On Mulligan's interpretation of Husserl, states of affairs serve as the objects of our assertions, suppositions, questions, desires, but also what we see. He continues,

³² Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 230-231.

³³ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 207.

Throughout the *Investigations* Husserl is concerned to establish the distinction between (uses of) names and (uses of) sentences. It is in the course of developing this distinction that he claims that names are related to things and sentences to states of affairs. In particular, what is asserted in an assertion is a state of affairs.³⁴

Says Mulligan,

Unlike Frege...Husserl does not conceive of meaningful sentences as any sort of name. Even a nominalization of a sentence yields, on his account, a name of a state of affairs and not a name of a truth-value.³⁵

Husserl's theory of states of affairs gradually develops throughout his *Logical*

Investigations:

Husserl nowhere discusses systematically in the *Investigations* the distinction between positive and negative states of affairs, on the one hand, and obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs, on the other hand. This is doubtless due to the fact that the terminology that was to become canonic, and which Husserl is the first to employ, according to which states of affairs obtain (*bestehen*, *haben bestand*) or do not obtain, propositions (sentences, assertions, judgements) are true or false, individual things and complexes thereof exist or do not exist, species obtain or do not obtain establishes itself only gradually in the course of the *Investigations*. Indeed Husserl initially often misuses his own terminology. Reinach grants Husserl achieved complete consistency at VI § 39 ff. but not before...As the terminology already indicates both states of affairs and species are ideal entities, they obtain or do not obtain. A further more important point about states of affairs follows from Husserl's claim that propositional form mirrors what he calls the form of states of affairs; just as propositions can contain names of anything whatsoever, so too "there is no categorical form that cannot become a component of the form of a state of affairs" (VI § 63). In other words, ideal or higher-order objects that are not states of affairs, such as collectiva and disjunctiva (VI § 51), as well as everything else can occur "in" states of affairs...³⁶

Finally, we note Mulligan's commentary on the relationship between Husserl's states of affairs and his ontological commitments:

³⁴ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 209.

³⁵ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 216.

³⁶ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 224-225.

We might describe Husserl's ontological commitments as follows: the world is the totality of objects—temporal and ideal—and states of affairs; every basic state of affairs contains at least one ideal object (attribute) and one other object and nothing belonging to any other material category. For something to hang together with (*zusammehängen*) something else, for objects to stand in relations to one another (*sich zueinander verhalten*) is for them to belong to a state of affairs.³⁷

From Mulligan's reading of Husserl, it would seem that Husserl's states of affairs are both facts and propositions where the former is taken to be a truthmaker or a true proposition and the latter is taken to be the content of a person's belief.

David Woodruff Smith has written on the distinction Husserl makes between situations (*Sachlage*) and states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*). Says Smith,

Husserl's distinction between situations and states of affairs is sketchy and suggestive at best, with only a couple of examples...

What do we know about these two types of entities: situations and states of affairs? Husserl offered just four principles about them:

- 1) States of affairs are "categorical" structures, built up from individuals, properties or species, and relations (categories) plus instantiation (a syncategorematic form). For instance, the state of affairs that Brentano was a teacher of Husserl is a complex entity built up from the individuals Brentano and Husserl, the relations of being a teacher of, and the form of instantiation.
- 2) Situations are "pre-categorical" entities, without the structure of relations binding individuals together into states of affairs by virtue of instantiation. ("*Sachlage*" literally means how things lie, while "*Sachverhalte*" literally means how things are related, thus forming a state of affairs.)
- 3) States of affairs are "founded" upon situations, in that a given state of affairs could not exist unless a certain situation existed.
- 4) Different states of affairs may be founded upon the same situation. For instance, the state of affairs that $2 < 3$ is distinct from the state of affairs that $3 > 2$, but both are founded upon the same situation.

³⁷ Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 230.

Husserl also held three cognate principles about intentional relations between experiences and states of affairs or situations: [1] “Predicative” experiences, viz., judgments, intend states of affairs—which are categorial, or predicative, entities.

[2] “Prepredicative” experiences, viz. perceptions or intuitions, intend either individuals or, I take it, situations—which are precategoryal, or prepredicative, entities.

[3] “Active” judgments about objects founded upon “receptive” perceptions or intuitions of those objects.

So the distinction between predicative and prepredicative experiences parallels the distinction between categorial and precategoryal entities, viz. states of affairs and situations. And this is because the latter are respectively the objects of the former.

Unfortunately, the principles Husserl put forth do not tell us what situations are.³⁸

Smith proceeds to speculate on what Husserl’s situations might be. He concludes that the best option is that

...a situation might be viewed as a certain sort of part-whole complex, or affair (*Sache*), from which parts are extracted and put together into states of affairs. Somewhat as a pile of children’s blocks lies on the floor (a *Sachlage*) and blocks are drawn from it and put together to build a little house, so a situation is a complex of things (*Sachen*)—individuals, properties or species, relations, and instantiations—which can be put together to form various states of affairs. Then the resulting states of affairs are founded upon the situation, as they could not exist without it, yet the situation is precategoryal, in itself not yet structured into these states of affairs. This...view of situation may well be Husserl’s, given his interest in part-whole structure and given related views of complexes and facts among Brentano’s students.³⁹

So, Smith’s understanding of Husserl’s states of affairs and situations portray each as more concrete than abstract, though there may be an abstract element to them.

³⁸ Smith, D. W. (1991). On Situations and States of Affairs. *Phenomenology and the Formal Sciences*. T. Seebohm, Dagfinn Follesdal, and Jitendra Mohanty. Dordrecht, Kluwer: 52-53.

³⁹ Smith, D. W. (1991). On Situations and States of Affairs. *Phenomenology and the Formal Sciences*. T. Seebohm, Dagfinn Follesdal, and Jitendra Mohanty. Dordrecht, Kluwer: 54.

Granted, this collection of scholarship leaves many unanswered questions and Husserl seems unclear and even contradictory in places.. However, we do have the beginnings of a theory of states of affairs in Husserl that would influence theories that were to come.

Alexius Meinong (1853-1920)

Alexius Meinong developed a theory of what he called objectives in his *Über Annahmen* (1902, 1910).⁴⁰ Commentators on Meinongian objectives have identified them with propositions as well as states of affairs. J.N. Findlay has provided the most comprehensive commentary on Meinongian objectives. Findlay takes Meinong's objectives to be both facts and possible facts. Objectives can be expressed in 'that'-clauses, some of which are the case and some of which are not, e.g., *that China is a republic*, or *that there is an integer between 3 and 4*, are objectives that are not the case. Notes Findlay, "Meinong tries to prove that they are a unique and irreducible sort of entity, indispensable to our knowledge of reality and to reality itself."⁴¹

According to Findlay a primary function of Meinong's objectives is to serve as the mental content for false beliefs and assumptions. However, Findlay rejects the notion that Meinong's objectives are propositions, for the proposition *that snow is white* is clearly distinct from the being-white-of-snow. Says Findlay,

⁴⁰ See Mulligan, K. (1989). "Husserl on States of Affairs in the Logical Investigations." *Epistemologia* 12(31): 207.

⁴¹ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 59.

it is clear that the objective ‘Snow is white’ neither says anything, nor means anything, nor corresponds to anything, nor predicates anything of anything. It is not a mental activity which can do something; it simply is something, namely, the being-white-of-snow.⁴²

Findlay distinguishes two types of Meinongian object:

We may use the word ‘object’ to translate Meinong’s *Gegenstand*; an object is anything to which a mental process may be directed. For Meinong’s word *Objekt*, which applies only to objects in the narrower sense, i.e. to those which are not objectives, we shall...use the word ‘objectum’. Objects therefore divide into the two classes of objectives and objecta.⁴³

According to Findlay, Meinongian objectives depend for their existence on objecta that they are about. For example, snow is the objectum that the objective *that snow is white* is about. Both objecta (like snow) and objectives (like *that snow is white*) can serve as material for another objective.

Objectives can even be about objects that do not have being:

...‘there is no perpetuum mobile’ is an objective which is a fact, whereas the objectum which it concerns, the perpetuum mobile, has no being. Again an objective may concern an objectum which has being and yet fail to be a fact; thus ‘Rome is in France’ is about something which exists, yet it is not the case. As far as being goes, the sphere of objectives seems to be wider than the sphere of objecta, because there are all sorts of interesting facts about objecta which do not exist.⁴⁴

Objectives are incapable of existing on Findlay’s interpretation of Meinong, or more precisely, objectives possess a different sort of being than ordinary physical objects.

For this type of being Meinong employs the word ‘sub-sistence’ (*Bestand*)...Objectives are not the only subsistents: a relation such as diversity subsists between two entities, and the number of a group of existences subsists, but cannot exist as they do. In the case of objectives, if

⁴² Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 70.

⁴³ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 67.

⁴⁴ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 72.

they subsist they are known as facts (*Tatsachen*), or are said to be factual (*tatsächlich*). If they do not subsist, they are unfactual (*untatsächlich*).⁴⁵

Findlay further explains the distinction between Meinong's two types of being:

We saw in our study of objectives that Meinong drew a fundamental distinction between two varieties of being, existence and subsistence. Such things as classes, configurations, similarities, and facts subsist, whereas tables, chairs, and mental states exist. In what this difference lies it is impossible to say, but it impresses itself immediately on the minds of laymen and philosophers alike, and is as irreducible as the difference between yellow and blue.

Objectives also bear modal properties like necessity, possibility, factuality, truth, and probability. But factuality, argues Findlay,

...occupies the central place in Meinong's list of modal properties, ousting the property generally called truth. Truth is not, properly speaking, a separate modal property of an objective; nor has it the fundamental importance which philosophers have generally attributed to it. As we have seen, an objective is true if it is factual, and if it functions as the pseudo-existent object of some apprehending experience; it is only an important property because an objective which is a fact can be given to us without its factuality being given, i.e. we often light on facts without knowing that they are facts. ... [Factuality] is a property which an objective can possess in its own right at all times, whereas truth can only belong to it if it is apprehended by some one.⁴⁶

Objectives are eternal and timeless. Says Findlay,

... It looks, therefore, as if certain objectives go through a period of unfactuality which has no beginning though it has an end; this is succeeded by a period which has both a beginning and an end, in which they enjoy factuality; then a second period of unfactuality commences to which there is no end.⁴⁷

For the most part, Findlay rejects Bertrand Russell's well-known interpretation of Meinong's objectives as propositions. Argues Findlay,

⁴⁵ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 74.

⁴⁶ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 187.

⁴⁷ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 77.

...Meinong's objectives and the Russell-Moore propositions of 1904 have one thing in common, they are the objects to which judgments are directed; in other respects they are totally different.⁴⁸

Findlay explains that Russell's propositions have being whether they are true or false, but this is not the case for Meinong's objectives. The only objectives that subsist are those that are facts. Given Russell's position (in 1904) that propositions are distinct from facts, since objectives are in some cases identical to facts, they cannot be identical to Russell's propositions, says Findlay. Meinogian objectives, explains Findlay, serve as both facts (truth-makers) and mental content (truth-bearers). Says Findlay,

Meinong's theory of truth is therefore a theory of identity or coincidence. The same objective which is factual is also pseudo-existent, that is, reveals itself in a certain judgement or assumption, and the conjunction of factuality and pseudo-existence makes the objective true. There is no entity which is true by virtue of a correspondence with fact; the fact itself is true in so far as it is the object of a judgement. It is possible for Meinong to call a fact true because for him the word 'fact' is not a mere name, but involves a description. Facts are not an ultimate sort of entity, but are those objectives to which an ultimate characteristic, factuality, belongs. Hence an objective which has factuality, or which is, in common parlance, a fact, may very well also be true...

Hence Meinong's theory of truth and falsehood is simply one of identity; the pseudo-existent objective of an experience is true if it is also factual, false if it is unfactual. Truth and falsehood, in spite of their august associations, are therefore properties of objectives which play a very unimportant and derivative part in the theory of objects; they are completely overshadowed in importance by the fundamental distinction between factuality and unfactuality. Since Meinong attributes to his objectives so many properties that no one would dream of attributing to propositions, and since the proposition-theory of truth is so totally different from Meinong's theory, it can only lead to confusion if we identify objectives with propositions.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 83-84.

⁴⁹ Findlay, J. N. (1933). *Meinong's Theory of Objects*. London, Oxford University Press, 88-89.

Findlay suggests that objectives could be called states of affairs or circumstances, since these are not as unusual as the term ‘objective.’ ‘States of affairs,’ of course, corresponds to ‘*Sachverhalt*,’

which Meinong considers as a possible alternative to his word *Objektiv*, and which had been used in this sense by Stumpf. But he objects to this word because it would be strange to say of an unfactual objective that it was a *Sachverhalt*. That the diagonals of a square are unequal or that whales are not mammals, would hardly be called *Sachverhalte* though they are objectives. I am not clear that a similar restriction applies to the English phrase ‘state of affairs’. We can easily say that the visit of a pope to England would be a strange state of affairs, though we do not for an instant suppose that such a visit is likely to take place.⁵⁰

Ultimately Findlay prefers the term ‘circumstance’ as the best translation of Meinong’s *objektiv*.

More recent commentary on Meinong’s objectives also exists. Peter Simons notes that Meinong’s work on assumptions required that he produce an ontology of the objects of assumptions and judgments,

which objects he called *objectives*, preferring not to use Stumpf’s term *Sachverhalt* (state of affairs), which he thought was laded in favour of the true. Objectives combine some of the behaviour of propositions and other characteristics of states of affairs. Like propositions, they are there for all judgements and assumptions, including false ones, but like states of affairs their existential status is different for truth than for falsity: the objective of a true judgement or assumption, while not spatiotemporally real, still *subsists* or obtains (*besteht*), while the objective of a false judgement or assumption does not even have this kind of being.

...Objectives about an object do not have that entity as part, for an objective can at best subsist, whereas many objects can also be spatiotemporally actual or real. If *Graz is in Austria* had Graz as a part, then it would be a subsistent with a real part, and if *Sherlock Holmes is not real* had Sherlock Holmes as a

⁵⁰ Findlay, J. N. (1933). Meinong's Theory of Objects. London, Oxford University Press, 90.

part, it would have an object as part which does not exist at all. Both cases are absurd, thinks Meinong, so what an objective is about is not part of it.⁵¹

Barry Smith points out, “Truth, possibility and also probability are, according to Meinong, attributes not of objects but of objectives, and...it is objectives which provide the subject matter for the science of logic as Meinong conceives it.”⁵²

From Findlay’s, Simon’s and Smith’s remarks we do see characteristics of propositions (objects of belief) and states of affairs (objects exemplifying properties) in Meinong’s objectives. Edgar Morscher reinforces this dual nature of Meinongian objectives:

According to my criterion, Meinong’s objectives (*Objektiv*) occupy an ambiguous position between propositions and states of affairs: they always involve objects (*Gegenstände*) in the Meinongian sense, but many of these Meinongian objects are not straightforward “normal” objects (*objecta*, *Objekte*); most of them are a kind of hybrid, sharing some characteristics of normal objects and some of concepts. The relation of involvement is indeed not the usual part-whole relationship (a mistaken interpretation due to Russell), since the objects which an objective involves need not subsist even when the objective itself subsists. However the constituents of an objective are certainly not concepts in the traditional sense, and Meinong appears to understand involvement by *analogy* with part-whole.

Meinong characterizes his objectives as [-real], [-causal], [-spatial], [-temporal], [-generable], [-changeable], [-mind-dependent] and [-language-dependent]. They are multipurpose, even all-purpose objects for Meinong: they play the roles of sentence-sense and sentence-object, thought-content and thought-object, and finally truth-bearer and also truth-maker. The ambiguous function of Meinong’s objectives as at once truth-bearers and truth-makers is displayed on the one hand by his claim that they can be true or false and on the other by his definition of truth, according to which a judgement is true iff the corresponding objective subsists (*besteht*), which is the only possible mode of being of an objective. Meinong therefore identifies a subsisting objective with a factual objective or fact, and he also calls such a fact a ‘true

⁵¹ Simons, P. (1999). Bolzano, Brentano and Meinong: Three Austrian Realists. *German Philosophy Since Kant*. A. O’Hear. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 122-123.

⁵² Smith, B. (1996). Logic and the *Sachverhalt*. *The School of Franz Brentano*. L. M. L. Albertazzi, Roberto Poli. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 52: 336.

objective.’ Being factual and being true differ only in that ‘true’ involves reference to a judgement whereas ‘factual’ does not.⁵³

L.A.V. Brettler adds additional explanation to Meinong’s distinction of being. She explains,

Meinong distinguished two modes of being: existence and subsistence (*bestehen*). Existence was the mode of being of being (particular, actual, things—*Soseienden*) such as “this piece of paper.” Subsistence was the mode of being of essences or of the characteristics of beings. The referents of judgments and assumptions were said to be not actual beings but subsistent or non-subsistent “objectives” (*Objectiv*). Objectives were ideal objects and therefore (like numbers) were without “having” being in the narrower sense, i.e., existing. From Rudolf Ameseder, Meinong adopted the following way of expressing the distinct nature of objectives: They had being (in the wide sense) and were being, while objects merely had being. This turn of phrase has not been of much help, however, in clarifying the nature of objectives. The assertion of the independence of being and being-so-and-so (*Sein* and *Sosein*), however, did allow Meinong to assert the subsistence of objectives such as the “non-being of the round square,” the “round square” being a non-existing object, and the non-subsistence of objectives such as the “blackness of this particular piece of (white) paper.” The subsistence of an objective is independent from the existence of its object. Both types of objectives are of significance for the analysis of negative judgments and their references; they were the means by which Meinong could explain how non-existent objects could serve as objects for judgments about their non-existence.

One motive for distinguishing between the object as existing and the essence or nature of the object as subsisting was to provide some kind of ontological status of the objective correlates of all our thoughts. “Being directed to something” (*auf etwas Gerichtetsein*) was said to be the characteristic of the psychological. The referents of the representations and of judgments and assumptions were objects and objectives, respectively, Meinong—a realist but not a reist—was not willing to follow in the steps of Brentano. Nor was his position what we will call the “agnostic” ontological position of Stumpf who regarded universals, values, concepts, and s-o-a-s, all “formations” (*Gebilde*)

⁵³ Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Holder-Pichler-Tempsky: 78-79. The ‘-’ sign indicates that the attribute that follows is not possessed.

as logically dependent on psychic functions and, in a curious circular argument, “real” insofar as they were the content of a “true” judgment.⁵⁴

It was Roderick Chisholm’s study of Meinong’s objectives that inspired his own theories of states of affairs in the early 1970’s and beyond in his “Homeless Objects.”⁵⁵ Chisholm sees in Meinong’s objectives a necessary function of mental content for propositional attitudes. In addition to expressing objectives in ‘that’-clauses, Chisholm also argues that they can be equally expressed using nominalized gerundives, e.g., ‘snow’s being white.’⁵⁶ States of affairs may also be expressed using other grammatical phrases:

And, as Meinong makes abundantly clear, there are many other devices in our languages for singling out such objects. “That A exists’, ‘A exists’, and ‘The existence of A’ all mean the same object; they differ with respect to the attitudes that the speaker uses them to express.” (*Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*) But the “that”-clause would seem to be the most natural device for referring to objectives.⁵⁷

On Chisholm’s understanding of Meinong, objectives not only serve as mental content, but also as bearers of value, i.e., logical, aesthetic value. Necessity and contingency are primarily properties of Meinong’s objectives, says Chisholm.

Contrary to Findlay, Chisholm takes objectives to be identical not only to Russell-Moore propositions, but also to Frege’s thoughts (*Gedanke*) and Bolzano’s *Satz-an-*

⁵⁴ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy*. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University, 29-31.

⁵⁵ Chisholm, R. (1973). Homeless Objects. Brentano and Meinong Studies. Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press. 27: 207-223.

⁵⁶ I am here using the terms ‘express’ and ‘refer’ interchangeably.

⁵⁷ “Homeless Objects,” in Chisholm, R. (1982). Brentano and Meinong Studies. Atlantic Highlands, N. J., Humanities Press; this article originally appeared in Chisholm, R. (1973). Revue Internationale de Philosophie 27: 207-223; 44.

sich. The most natural English term for objectives, according to Chisholm, is ‘state of affairs,’

if we construe states of affairs in such a way that some of them (e.g., there being horses) may be said to occur or obtain and others of them (e.g., there being unicorns) may not be said to occur or obtain.⁵⁸

Chisholm admits that Meinong’s language doesn’t allow him to use this obtain/not-obtain terminology:

As we have seen, according to Meinong’s doctrine, an object may have a *Sosein* without having a *Sein*. From the fact that there are truths about a certain object, it doesn’t follow that the object exists or has any other kind of being, for there are truths about objects which are such that there are no such objects. And so Meinong does not say, as I have said, that there are states of affairs some of which obtain and some of which do not obtain. If he used the word “obtain” as I do, he would say that states of affairs, or objectives, are such that some of them obtain and some of them do not obtain. But, according to his doctrine, the only objectives which are such that there are such objectives are the ones that in my terminology, may be said to obtain. And he uses “is” where I have used “obtains”: objectives are of two sorts, those which, like the being of horses, are such that there are those objects, and those which, like the being of unicorns, are such that there are not those objectives.

Thus Meinong would say that, since there are horses, there is also the being of horses, as well as the being of the being of horses, the nonbeing of the nonbeing of horses, and the being of the nonbeing of the nonbeing of horses. And he would say that, since there are no unicorns, there is the nonbeing of unicorns, as well as the being of the nonbeing of unicorns, and the nonbeing of the being of unicorns.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “Homeless Objects,” in Chisholm, R. (1982). Brentano and Meinong Studies. Atlantic Highlands, N. J., Humanities Press, 46.

⁵⁹ “Homeless Objects,” in Chisholm, R. (1982). Brentano and Meinong Studies. Atlantic Highlands, N. J., Humanities Press, 46-47.

Chisholm notes that Brentano found this multiplication of entities manifestly absurd. Chisholm remarks,

Brentano's objections suggest a dilemma: "If you say that objectives are abstracta, then you must have a view about the kinds of things that exemplify or instantiate them. How many things, if any, exemplify that objective which is there being no round squares? If you say that objectives are concreta, or individual things, then you must have a view about where they are. Is *there being no round squares* an objective which is to be found everywhere or nowhere? If it's nowhere how can you say it's a concretum?" The best strategy for Meinong, I would think, would be to go between the horns. The universe, he might well say, is by no means restricted to objects that are either abstracta or concreta. Perhaps that golden mountain I had been thinking of is a concretum. But it would be characteristic of Meinong to ask: "what if someone thinks of a golden mountain that is not a concretum?" and the incomplete objects, which we will discuss below, would also seem to be such that they are neither abstract nor concrete.

Both Russell and Brentano assume that all those truths that are taken by Meinong to be truths about objectives can be paraphrased in such a way that they can be shown not to involve such objects. Many such truths, of course, can be so paraphrased. But what of that expressed by "There is something Jones is trying to bring about which, Smith believes, will never obtain?" If we consider just what it is that such a true sentence tells us, and if we take care not to read more or less into its meaning than is actually there, we will find, if I am not mistaken, that neither Brentano nor Russell nor any other philosopher has shown us how to interpret it without reference to those objects that Meinong called "objectives".⁶⁰

We have condensed the most significant commentary on Meinongian objectives and have seen that while Meinong's theory was the most developed to this point in time, it leaves room for confusion about the nature of existence, truth, propositions, and states of affairs. On some less charitable readings, Meinong's theory may strike us as incoherent given his different types of being. Yet, Meinong's objectives point to an ontological category of states of affairs that would continue to be developed

throughout the 20th century. It is not unfair to say that Meinong is the primary reference point for all theories of states of affairs that followed given its in-depth development.

Anton Marty (1847-1914)

Anton Marty's states of affairs are what he calls judgment-contents (*Urteilsinhalte*). These judgment-contents include particulars such as *A* (not merely the concept of *A*) in the judgment-content of *A's being red*.⁶¹ States of affairs are sentence-senses, thought-contents, and truth-makers, but not truth-bearers. For Marty, a judgment is true iff the judgment-content exists "i.e., iff the judgement corresponds to its content."⁶² Edgar Morscher comments,

...in other words, I think that the natural way to take the concept of a judgement-content is to regard it as that which objectively grounds the correctness of our acts of judging, or more exactly, that without which our judgemental behavior could not be correct nor adequate.

...Judgement-contents, therefore, are what is thought or judged in a judgement; it is the judgement-content—and not the object the judgement is about to which the judgement must conform in order to be true.⁶³

Barry Smith adds,

⁶⁰ "Homeless Objects," in Chisholm, R. (1982). *Brentano and Meinong Studies*. Atlantic Highlands, N. J., Humanities Press, 48-49.

⁶¹ Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky: 78. Morscher relies on Marty's *Untersuchungen zur allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie*, Vol. I (Halle a.d. S. 1909, reprint: Hildesheim—New York 1976). See Morscher's Judgement-Contents. *Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **3**: 184-185 for a complete bibliography of Marty.

⁶² Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky: 78.

⁶³ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. *Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **3**: 193.

The judgment, therefore, must bend itself to the whim of the judgment-content, which itself exists autonomously, depending only on those realia which form the subject-matter of the judgment.⁶⁴

While a true judgment must conform to its judgment-content,

...judgement-contents do not play the role of truth-bearers... When Marty occasionally speaks nevertheless of the truth and falsity of judgement-contents, he means by that nothing but their being or non-being...⁶⁵

So, Marty's theory of truth does not appear to be an identity theory like Lotze's since

Marty's judgment-contents, while containing concrete particulars (or at least depending on them for their existence), are not facts as we have defined them.

However, Morscher understands Marty's judgment-contents as facts—either possible

or actual. Marty's judgment-contents are facts, argues Morscher, in that no true

judgments exist without their corresponding judgment-content existing. In the case of

false judgment, Marty denies that a judgment-content exists.⁶⁶

In the case of a false judgement the content is in fact lacking; a false judgement 'has' a content only in the sense of a relative determination (*relative Bestimmung*), i.e., hypothetically, and not in the sense of a real relation whose relata must be real themselves. Only for true or correct judgemental acts is there really an adequate content to which these conform; only when a judgement is true or correct, does a real correlation or adequation with its content hold. Otherwise, such a content does not really exist, and consequently a false judgement does not stand in a real relation to its content.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Smith, B. (1994). *Austrian Philosophy*. LaSalle, Illinois, Open Court, 107.

⁶⁵ ⁶⁵ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. *Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **3**: 189.

⁶⁶ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. *Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **3**: 187-188.

⁶⁷ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. *Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. **3**: 188.

States of affairs function in some ways as propositions for Marty since they serve as the meanings of declarative and indicative sentences. As in the case of false judgments, there is no judgment-content that serves as the meaning of a false sentence; there is only a judgment content in the same relative determination sense as there is in the case of false judgments.

Morscher further describes Marty's theory of judgment-contents, noting that

Marty's states of affairs are [-real], [-spatial], [-temporal], [-mind-dependent], and [-language-dependent] but in contrast to Bolzano's propositions they are [+generable] having a certain way of coming into being, not on their own, but together with other things; this makes them also in a certain way [+temporal], being in time, [+changeable] and [+causal].⁶⁸

By "[real]," Morscher means that Marty's states of affairs are possible entities.

Morscher explains,

...they do not even belong to the realm of real things. Only real things can be causes and effects in the proper sense of the words according to Marty; they alone can stand in causal relations, and can therefore come into being and pass away, whereas this is not true of non-real things...Judgement-contents therefore do not belong to the field of the causal relation in the strong sense of the word, and they therefore cannot come into being or pass away. There is, however, a weaker form of coming into being and passing away for non-real things, not on their own, but together with real things. A collective, e.g., is non-real, but it originates and disappears together with its real members, and the same also holds for relations and judgement-contents.

...A judgement-content comes into being and passes away together with the object it is about. If, e.g., *A* begins, then the being of *A* or the judgement-content [*A* is] originates, and with *A*'s ending and passing away the being of *A* or the judgement-content [*A* is] also ceases to be.

...All beings—including the non-real things and therefore also the judgement-contents—are temporal. There are no timeless judgement-contents. There

⁶⁸Morscher, E. (1986). Propositions and States of Affairs in Austrian Philosophy before Wittgenstein. From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy. J. C. Nyiri. Vienna, Verla Holder-Pichler-Tempsky: 78. Here again, the '-' symbolizes *not* and the '+' symbolizes that the attribute that follows is had by Marty's states of affairs.

are, however, ‘sempiternal’ judgement-contents as, e.g., the impossibility of a triangular square, which always obtain. Other judgement-contents are only temporary, i.e., they are natural a certain time but are not at another time.⁶⁹

Morscher describes five types of judgment-contents that Marty believed existed: being, e.g., [*A* is], non-being, e.g., [*A* is not], being-this, e.g., [*A* is *B*], being-impossible and being-necessary.⁷⁰ Barry Smith comments that Marty’s theory of states of affairs is quite similar to the theory of *Objektives* detailed in Meinong’s *On Assumptions*. Says Smith, “Both judgment-contents and objectives are in a certain sense entities intermediate between judgments on the one hand and objects on the other.”⁷¹

To conclude, we see that Anton Marty laid out a fairly detailed theory of state of affairs, though his judgment-contents seem to include elements of states of affairs, propositions, and facts depending of course on how these are defined.

Adolf Reinach (1883-1917)

Clarity increases with nearly each successive theory of states of affairs. Adolf Reinach’s theory was the clearest, most precise to date before Wittgenstein’s, which we will consider in the next chapter. Barry Smith says,

From the point of view of present-day philosophy, and in particular of philosophical logic, [Reinach] recommends himself particularly because of

⁶⁹ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 3: 190-191.

⁷⁰ Morscher, E. (1990). Judgement-Contents. Mind, Meaning, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 3: 186.

⁷¹ Smith, B. (1994). *Austrian Philosophy*. LaSalle, Illinois, Open Court, 106.

the carefulness of his terminology and the clarity of his style, which is crystalline when set in comparison with that of other phenomenologists including...Husserl....⁷²

This, in spite of the fact that Reinach was a disciple and colleague of Husserl.

L.A.V. Brettler comments on Reinach's theory's place in the history states of affairs theories:

Reinach by no means originated the term "s-o-a-s" nor, as is clear from his own careful notes regarding its use by Stumpf and Husserl and the use of the terms "objective" by Meinong, did he make any claim to have done so. In Reinach's writings, however, s-o-a-s undergo a careful analysis, vastly enriching the concept. In the process of this analysis Reinach took a position in opposition to that of Meinong and, in certain respects, to that of Husserl. Underlying his treatment of s-o-a-s, in connecting with the various problems dealt with in his articles, was the conviction that s-o-a-s—not the objectivities that are elements of s-o-a-s, nor judgments and knowledge which have intentional reference to s-o-a-s—are *a priori* in the primary sense. It was his belief that the "fundamental significance of s-o-a-s for the most important philosophic problems would set itself forth ever more strongly."⁷³

Barry Smith provides a nice analysis of the historical context that led to Reinach's theory in his "Introduction to Adolph Reinach on the Theory of Negative Judgment:"

The concept of *Sachverhalt* or state of affairs plays a central role in Reinach's philosophy to a degree equaled, perhaps, only in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In the 18th and 19th centuries, logical orthodoxy in both Germany and England had rested on a conception of the judgment as a compound of concepts or presentations. Judgments thus conceived have no direct ontological correlates of their own: they are true or false in virtue of the existence or non-existence of a corresponding combination amongst the ontological correlates of their constituent concepts. Against this background, the recognition of the heterogeneity of the judgment as compared to (atomic or molecular) concepts

⁷² Smith, B. (1978). "An Essay in Formal Ontology." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 6: 39-40.

⁷³ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy*. *Philosophy*. Montreal, McGill University, 40.

or presentation—and in particular the isolation of the moment of assertive force by Brentano and Frege—was a considerable step forward. Yet the judgment-correlates, a category of entities in the world which would make judgments or sentences true or false, was taken neither by Frege nor by Brentano. The delineation of this category was first carried through effectively by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*, receiving its most refined form...by Reinach...The distinction between propositions or meaning-correlates of judgements, and states of affairs or object-correlates of judgments, has since been taken for granted not only by continental philosophers influenced by Husserl, but also in much analytic philosophical work on logical semantics and on the ontology of facts.

Within Austrian philosophy however, particularly in the work of Bolzano, and of philosophers in the Brentano school such as Meinong and Marty, this distinction was not made. Bolzano's *Satz an sich* and Meinong's *Objektiv* exhibit traits characteristic of both meaning-entities and object-entities, and it is difficult to see how these two sets of traits can be reconciled. *Objektives*, for example, are compared to ideal meanings in possessing an eternal or timeless existence, yet they are also viewed as being capable of containing real material objects as constituents. The same ontological brinkmanship is manifest in the work of Moore and Russell on the proposition, and it can be discerned also in the work of Chisholm (another philosopher heavily influenced by both Meinong and Brentano), particularly in his conception of a generalized category of states of affairs which would include as sub-categories both events and propositions.

For Husserl, as for Reinach, the meaning-object dichotomy is firstly a distinction between the sense and quality of an act on the one hand, and the object intended in the act on the other: thus every act of judgment, for example, exhibits both a meaning and (at least if the judgment is true) an associated state of affairs. But it is secondly a distinction between the two separate disciplines of formal logic and formal ontology. A further dichotomy arises when we consider states of affairs from the point of view of existential ontology and ask after the mode of existence of statal entities. Is the existence of states of affairs dependent upon that of more or less distantly associated mental or linguistic acts? Or do they enjoy an autonomous existence, independently of mind or language? In Husserlian terms, is the state of affairs *this rose is red* a moment residing exclusively in the ontological orbit of the rose, or is it rather a moment of a larger whole constituted by, *inter alia*, a corresponding act of judgment. A variant of the first position is defended by Reinach...The second position has been defended by, for example, Meinong and Strawson (compare the latter's claim that 'If you prise the statements off the world you prise the facts off it too').

The most extreme affirmative position concerning the autonomy of statal entities is one which asserts that there is such an entity corresponding to every

possible judgment, to every possible well-formed sentence, whether true or false. This position is characteristic of ontological rationalism or Platonism as evinced, in different ways, by Bolzano, Frege, Meinong and Chisholm. A view of this kind is defensible, I believe, only where it relates to entities belonging to the sphere of meaning (to Frege's realm of sense') or, as in Meinong's case, to some hybrid sphere of quasi-meanings. Where states of affairs are conceived as object-entities, tied down to the real world of Frege's 'ordinary referents,' then it becomes impossible to develop intuitions which could support such all-embracing Platonism: what mind-independent external referent, what constituent part or contour of the world, could correspond, for example, to a false sentence, to a counterfactual conditional, or to a judgment concerning the indefinite future?

Clearly some restriction is needed upon sentences to which autonomous *Sachverhalte* may be expected to be correlated. The most obvious restriction consists in denying objectual correlates to judgments that are false. An alternative, however, is to distinguish amongst the totality of autonomously existing states of affairs, subsistent states of affairs corresponding to true judgments, and non-subsistent states of affairs corresponding to those that are false. This is the position adopted by Meinong, by Reinach, and by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*.

Philosophers who adopt this latter approach may be inclined also to conceive of statal entities as possessing an eternal existence, as custodians of (eternal) truth and falsity in a world of transient objects. Wittgenstein, as is well known, adopted the opposite view, regarding objects as what is unalterable and subsistent, their configuration in states of affairs was what is changing and unstable (*Tractatus* 2.027), a position which echoes the ontological atomism of Herbart.⁷⁴

Reinach was reluctant to give a rigorous definition of states of affairs, though had he done so, this definition would have surpassed his predecessors in precision and clarity. Reinach took states of affairs to be the mental contents of propositional attitudes, specifically, "that which is believed and affirmed, which stand in the

⁷⁴ Smith, B. (1982). Introduction to Adolf Reinach on the Theory of Negative Judgment. *Parts and Moments: Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology*. B. Smith. München, Philosophia Verlag: 293-295.

relation of contradictory positivity and negativity.”⁷⁵ Reinach shied away from providing a strict definition of states of affairs because they were primitive objectual formations. Says Reinach, “...for such most primitive objectual formations as states of affairs, things and processes, whether definitions are possible at all, and whether, if they were possible, we could achieve anything with their aid (341/86).”⁷⁶

Wolfgang Kühne comments on the manner in which Reinach referred to states of affairs:

[Reinach] does not use that-clauses as names of states of affairs but an infinitive construction. If somebody refers to the object *a* and ascribes to it the property of *being P* then the state of affairs represented by the act of judgement is called by Reinach “*the being P of a (das b-sein [sic] des A)*.” Since ‘is true’ doesn’t follow this phrase grammatically, Reinach is being consistent to distinguish states of affairs and propositions. One disadvantage of the Reinachian way of referring to states of affairs becomes manifest when one considers many-place predications... Here one is forced to build the names of the corresponding state of affairs after the model of the simpler one-place cases, and the result is rather clumsy: “the being smaller than Simimas of Socrates”...⁷⁷

Reinach held an abstract view of states of affairs like Husserl and Meinong.

States of affairs for Reinach existed independently of any particular human judgment

⁷⁵ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. Speech Act and Sachverhalt. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201. The parenthetical reference is to Smith’s 1982 English translation and the 1921 German version of Reinach’s *Zur Theorie des negativen Urteils*” respectively; for Smith’s English translation, see Smith, B., Ed. (1982). Parts and Moments: Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology. Analytica: Investigations in Logic, Ontology, and the Philosophy of Language. München, Philosophia Verlag, 289-314.

⁷⁶ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. Speech Act and Sachverhalt. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201.

⁷⁷ Kühne, W. (1987). The Intentionality of Thinking: The Difference Between States of Affairs and Propositional Matter. Speech Act and Sachverhalt. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 184-185.

or cognition. Moreover, states of affairs constitute a special realm distinct from the realm of objects and they are eternal and immutable.⁷⁸ Barry Smith extrapolates,

Reinach's theory would therefore allow us to conceive *Sachverhalte* as the locus of existence of the past and of the future, that is, as truth-makers for our present judgements about objects which have ceased to exist or have yet to come into existence.⁷⁹

Smith does note, however, that there are hints in Reinach's 1911 "*Zur Theorie des negativen Urteils*" ("On the Theory of Negative Judgment") that he takes a more ontologically modest approach to *Sachverhalte*, allowing at least some to exist within the material world.⁸⁰

For Reinach there is a foundation relation that holds between a factual material (*dingliche einheitskomplex*) and a state of affairs. The same fact can serve as a foundation for several different states of affairs. Thus, the distinct states of affairs associated with the judgments *this rose is red*, *redness inheres in this rose*, and *this rose forms the substrate of this redness*, and *this rose is not blue* is the same fact, though each state of affairs comprehends (*aufgefasst*) the fact in different ways.⁸¹ The foundation relation that holds between a fact and various states of affairs is not one of ontological dependence, says Smith, since Reinach's states of affairs are Platonistic and thus necessarily existing objects. Smith argues that because of this

⁷⁸ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201.

⁷⁹ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201, footnote 30. Smith notes that this eternal quality of Reinach's states of affairs is in contrast to Marty's theory of *Urteilsinhalte*.

⁸⁰ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201.

⁸¹ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 201-202.

Platonistic commitment, Reinach was unable to give a satisfactory account of the foundation relation.⁸² Smith comments,

Why, then, was he attracted by the Platonistic idea? First of all, because he had formulated his conception of logic as a theory of states of affairs in order to solve—in a Husserlian spirit—the problem of psychologism. He therefore held that, in order to guarantee the necessity of logical laws, it was necessary to grant to *Sachverhalte* a special, extraterrestrial status of just the sort which was granted to propositions by Bolzano and by Frege. The applicability of logic to human cognitive performances would then be guaranteed by showing how mental acts and states may relate, in different ways, to *Sachverhalte* thus conceived. Reinach adopted a Platonistic position also however because he held—with Meinong and Marty—that in order to uphold the correspondence theory of truth in its full generality it is necessary to suppose that to each variety of judgement there is correlated an appropriate variety of truth-making states of affairs. This applies, in particular, to negative judgements, which would be correlated with ‘negative states of affairs’. And now, whilst it may be possible to conceive a positive state of affairs like *this rose is red* as some sort of real complex, no such view is possible for negative states of affairs like *this rose is not yellow* or *unicorns do not exist*, for the latter cannot be counted as denizens of the real world alongside things, processes and events.⁸³

Reinach took states of affairs to be built out of elements put together according to definite laws of constitution. These elements are counterparts of objects in the actual world, but not physical objects.⁸⁴ Smith notes several similarities between Reinach’s theory of states of affairs and Wittgenstein’s theory which is laid out in his *Tractatus*:

There are of course a number of features of Reinach’s theory of the *Sachverhalt* which awaken echoes of the theory put forward by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. Both Wittgenstein and Reinach see the name-object relation as the point of contact between a judger and the world. Both place the notion of state of affairs at the centre of their philosophies, and both conceive the

⁸² Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 202.

⁸³ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 202.

⁸⁴ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 202.

state of affairs not as an abstract proposition or judgement-content but rather as the *ontological correlate* of an act of judgement, as that in the world in virtue of which a used sentence is true or false. Reinach and Wittgenstein share also the recognition that there are, above the level of states of affairs, two further levels—a linguistic level, and a psychological level of thoughts or acts of judgement. Of course, Wittgenstein goes considerably further than Reinach in exploiting the theory of *Sachverhalte* as a means of throwing light on the *logical* structures of associated sentences. But I suggest that this is only at the cost of ontological simplification, or idealization, at all three levels, simplification of a sort which is absent from Reinach's treatment.⁸⁵

Reinach was particularly concerned with the nature and status of negative states of affairs. Says Smith,

The most serious controversy in the formal ontology of states of affairs...has concerned the relative status of positive and negative states of affairs. For Wittgenstein, as, for example for Pfänder (*Logik*, Section I), all states of affairs are positive: Reinach however was insistent that there are both positive and negative states of affairs and that, whilst these have distinct epistemological properties, they are, in regard to their mode of being, indistinguishable. Reinach's views on negative states of affairs were criticized by Ingarden in his *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*. Ingarden argued that if states of affairs are to be conceived as object-entities, dovetailed with the individual objects, events, properties and relations in the real world, then it is clearly justifiable to say of a state of affairs such as this rose is red that it exists autonomously, since here all of the constituents of the state, i.e., the rose and its individual accident of redness, themselves exist autonomously. Consider however the negative state of affairs this rose is not blue. Here whilst the rose itself exists autonomously, the property involved is only thought or intended; it is carried into the situation from outside by our act of judgment. Therefore, argues Ingarden, the mode of existence of such a state of affairs must be distinct from that of the positive, autonomous state of affairs.

Hence we have distinguished, at this level of generality, three alternative positions regarding the autonomy of states of affairs: Ingarden's position, according to which only states of affairs corresponding to positive, true sentences exist autonomously; Wittgenstein's position, according to which both subsistent and non-subsistent *Sachverhalte* exist, but all are positive; and Reinach's position which allows both positive and negative, subsistent and non-subsistent *Sachverhalte*.

⁸⁵ Smith, B. (1987). On the Cognition of States of Affairs. *Speech Act and Sachverhalt*. K. Mulligan. Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff: 203-204.

In the present essay [“On the Theory of Negative Judgment”] Reinach considers in detail only those properties of *Sachverhalte* that are of relevance to the theory of judgment, and specifically to the theory of the negative judgment. The clarity of Reinach’s own exposition makes superfluous the duplication of his arguments here. It is however worth pointing out that, in contrast to most modern philosophical logicians, he is concerned not merely with logical (deductive) and semantic properties and relations amongst judgments (or propositions) considered in abstraction from their contexts of use, but also with the judgment as a mental act, bound up with other mental acts of recognizing, thinking, arguing and inferring.

His account rests on a distinction between two types of mental formation: spontaneous, temporally punctual and typically linguistically articulated acts, on the one hand, and non-spontaneous, enduring conditions or states typically only loosely associated with a language, on the other. To the first category belong (episodic) acts of assertion, denial, questioning, etc., acts of perceptual or cognitive apprehension and of evaluation of objects or states of affairs, acts of intending an object (e.g. of meaning so-and-so by the use of a given proper name), acts of promising, commanding, forgiving, requesting, etc. To the second category belong states of conviction or belief, of having something (some object of state of affairs) before or on one’s mind, of enjoying some sensation, of feeling obliged or committed to someone, etc. Reinach’s principal charge against previous accounts of the judgment was that the distinction between judgment as assertion and judgment as conviction had been ignored, or, more generally, that the relation between the two spheres had been thoroughly misunderstood, whether in accounts of the dependence of judgment as assertion upon an underlying conviction or belief, or of the dependence of, say, an act of promising upon an underlying intention or volition...

A note on influences: In considering the influence of “On the Theory of the Negative Judgment” it would almost certainly be wrong to assume any awareness of Reinach’s work on the part of the author of the *Tractatus*, despite the similarities between the respective *Sachverhalt*-ontologies of Wittgenstein on the one hand, and of Reinach and the other Munich phenomenologists on the other. These similarities are almost certainly to be attributed to a shared influence upon both Reinach and Wittgenstein of the work of Meinong, and perhaps also of Stumpf and Husserl. Where Reinach did exert a substantial influence was upon the members of the Munich-Göttengen circle of phenomenologists themselves, and in particular upon Ingarden, whose 1925 analysis of the category problem owes much to the Reinachian approach to states of affairs. Reinach exerted an importance [sic] influence also upon Otto Selz, a Würzburg psychologist who applied Husserlian and Reinachian ideas in his work on the psychology of thinking.

Consideration of these and other influences will however have to be postponed for another place.⁸⁶

Reinach was critical of Meinong's theory of objectives because of Meinong's failure to distinguish between propositions and states of affairs and subsequent confusion between the predicates *true* and *obtains*. L.A.V. Brettler notes,

Reinach's principal criticism of Meinong's concept of the *Objectiv* was that is contained in a yet undistinguished form both the concepts of proposition (*Satz*) and s-o-a (*Sachverhalt*). Meinong's use of the terms "true" and "false" in reference to objectives was understandable to Reinach only as a result of this confusion of propositions and s-o-a-s. Meinong's reference to the proposition as an *Objektiv* formulated in words was in Reinach's view insufficient. In spite of these points and the many others on which Reinach differed with Meinong's position, the work of the latter was of major significance for Reinach's treatment of s-o-a-s. It was indeed in opposition to Meinong (and to Brentano and Husserl in part) that Reinach's theories of s-o-a-s, propositions, and judgments seem to have taken form.⁸⁷

Brettler provides a good amount of detail of Reinach's theory of states of affairs:

Thus we perceive objects, feel them, take pleasure in them, but to know is not to know an object but rather a *s-o-a-s*. S-o-a-s may be either necessary or contingent. In a necessary s-o-a the predicate is grounded in the essence(s) of the subject-object(s). Reinach calls this relationship of grounding and being grounded an "essential connection" (*Wesenszusammenhang*). In contingent s-o-a-s there are no necessary essential connections. The necessity and generality pertaining to a necessary s-o-a-s both derive from the "essential connection," as does its *a priority*. Essential connections are therefore the subject of knowledge which is regarded as being a final, irrespective of time and change, as its subjects are free of change.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Smith, B. (1982). Introduction to Adolf Reinach on the Theory of Negative Judgment. Parts and Moments: Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology. B. Smith. München, Philosophia Verlag: 295-297.

⁸⁷ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University.

⁸⁸ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University, 39.

Individual objects, whether physical (and thus material, extended, colored, etc.) or psychic, are said to “exist”. They have a certain duration in time and therefore a beginning and an end in time. “Tree in general,” like the number “2,” has none of these characteristics. Yet Reinach maintains that they are not “nothing,” because we can make valid positive and negative statements about such objectives (*Gegenstandlichkeiten*). “Ideal objectivities” is the term Reinach chooses to use to refer to these “entities” in order to distinguish them clearly from real particular objects. Ideal objectivities are then divided into two groups: those to which there corresponds an unbounded set of individual objects (examples: “tree in general” and “all particular trees”) and those to which no such set corresponds. The latter (such as “2”, “4”, and propositions) are said to be themselves individual. Thus while all real objects are individual, ideal objectivities may be individual or “general.”

Reinach counters his earlier statement, that ideal objectivities are not “nothing”, by raising the question, left unanswered in this context, of whether and in what sense one can speak of ideal objectivities as having “an existence outside consciousness.” This question is later raised again and in part resolved by claiming a mode of being for ideal entities which is not *existence* in the sense of real being, but “ideal existence.” However, Reinach always maintained that knowing, by essence does not involve the creation or production of a being, but rather its *discovery*. This implies at the very least some strong form of independence from consciousness for ideal objects and objectivities. ...S-o-a-s, Reinach maintains, are completely different in nature from objects whether real or ideal, (for example: things, tones, experiences, or numbers, propositions, and concepts, respectively). Among the main characteristics which result from this difference in nature are that s-o-a-s, unlike real or ideal objects, can stand in relations of cause and effect and of ground and result, be negated, and take on modalities.

Real objects are said to exist and ideal objects to exist ideally. S-o-a-s subsist (*bestehen*). The concept of s-o-a-s in no way includes its subsistence as an essential moment, just as the *existence* of an object is distinguished from the object. Thus certain s-o-a-s, such as, the “being-gold of a mountain” and the “being-round of a square” do not or cannot subsist. The fundamental difference between s-o-a-s and objects is that when a s-o-a does not subsist the contrary s-o-a necessarily subsists and *vice-versa*, while for non-existing objects there is no corresponding objective existent. Reinach does not claim to have produced a conclusive definition of s-o-a-s and, in fact questions whether it is possible to do so for “such final objective structures” as s-o-a-s and things. This point of view is in accord with his view that essences can be grasped only as they are given together with their essential connections, only in the medium, so to speak, of essential laws.

Reinach thus does not claim a real existence for s-o-a-s, but he does assert that the denial of the objective subsistence of s-o-a-s in general is the contrary-to-

sense position of absolute skepticism in the theory of knowledge. The laws of s-o-a-s are said by Reinach to be in fact the foundation of most of the traditional logical laws governing propositions and judgments. Here Reinach can be said to be trying to win “believers” in the validity of the law of contradiction over to support of the analogous law of s-o-a-s. We must supplement Reinach’s position by asserting that many s-o-a-s actually require a many-valued logic. This is clearly the case for those s-o-a-s which take on modalities in the range between necessary and impossible, and for s-o-a-s of values. This view is in fundamental agreement with Reinach’s point that the laws of logic must be grounded in the nature of the subject matter, the objective s-o-a-s to which propositions refer...

“We know,” Reinach asserts, “that the negative s-o-a-s, just like positive s-o-a-s, subsist whether or not they are represented, known, believed, meant or asserted by anyone.” (GS, p. 93) ... States of affairs can take on negation, unlike objects...

Reinach asserts that the judgment “it is warm” cannot refer to the “situation” which we call warmth, for a “situation” is clearly not a s-o-a-s. Moreover, he has maintained that by essence a judgment refers to a s-o-a. Situations cannot take on modalities, be negated, etc.

Reinach was a realist... There are the real individual objects whose status as real entities is completely independent from their being the intentional correlates of conscious acts. These objects exist and have a beginning and an end in time. Events, situations, and causal relations, all real, are all founded on the existence and alteration of these real objects. To this point we have been entirely in the empirical realm...

Almost all of the distinctions which Reinach made with regard to the various types of judgments and propositions, the nature of the evidence for them, the logic required by them, and the processes by which they are formulated and constituted as judgments and potential assertions, respectively, are said to be grounded in the nature of the objective s-o-a-s to which they refer. Strictly speaking, this entails regarding all epistemological and logical terms as being primarily ontological.⁸⁹

So, we see that Reinach’s theory of states of affairs was the most thorough and developed to this point in the history of ontology. While there are still questions left open in his theory, it certainly seems to be an improvement on its predecessors with

⁸⁹ Brettler, L. A. V. (1973). *The Phenomenology of Adolf Reinach: Chapters in the Theory of Knowledge and Legal Philosophy*. Philosophy. Montreal, McGill University, 51-116.

respect to detail and, I would say, philosophically as well. Of all of the theories of this period, Reinach's will resemble my own more than any other.

Chapter 2: Ludwig Wittgenstein's Theory of States of Affairs

While all contemporary theories of states of affairs can look back to Meinong's theory as a stepping-off point, it is Wittgenstein's theory laid out in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (hereafter *Tractatus*) (1922) that most contemporary metaphysicians think of when they think of 20th-century theories of states of affairs. Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is the best known user of the term *Sachverhalt*, though he also used the terms '*Sachlage*' and '*Tatsache*.' Considerable debate exists over the proper translation and understanding of each. To remain consistent with Wittgenstein's predecessors we will continue to translate '*Sachverhalt*' as 'state of affairs' though it will be necessary to mention alternative translations in Wittgenstein's case given the influence of his theory on contemporary theories of not only states of affairs, but also propositions and facts. Given the significant scholarship that exists on the *Tractatus*, my goal in this chapter is to examine the most prominent scholarship in order to gain the clearest understanding of the fundamentals of Wittgenstein's theory of states of affairs. So, a critical examination of Wittgenstein's *Sachverhalt* and *Tatsache*, and to a lesser extent *Sachlage*, is necessary. Particular attention will be given to the question of what way, if any, Wittgenstein's states of affairs can be taken as possible states of affairs or possible facts.

Considerable criticism has been levied against Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Gottlob Frege is said have been unable to get past the first page without concluding that the work was obfuscatory. Wittgenstein's teacher, Bertrand Russell also had similar foundational questions of the *Tractatus*. Scholar Ray Monk comments,

‘You see’, Frege wrote [to Wittgenstein], ‘from the very beginning I find myself entangled in doubt as to what you want to say, and so make no proper headway.’ He was unsure what Wittgenstein meant by the terms *Tatsache*, *Sachverhalt* and *Sachlage*, and would need, he said, examples to clarify the terminology. Are there *Sachverhalte* that do not exist? Is every collection of objects a *Sachverhalt*? Frege’s letter must have been a bitter disappointment to Wittgenstein. There is nothing in it to indicate that Frege got past the first page; his questions all relate to the first ten or so propositions in the book, and are all concerned with terminology rather than substance... To his letter Russell appended a list of questions and doubts about the book. Like Frege, he wanted to know what the difference was between *Tatsache* and *Sachverhalt*.¹

Wittgenstein scholar Roman Suszko agrees with Frege’s and Russell’s initial reaction: “The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* of Ludwig Wittgenstein is a very unclear and ambiguous metaphysical work.”² Confusion over the proper understanding of *Sachverhalt*, *Tatsachen*, and *Sachlage* is compounded when these are translated into English since they have been translated differently. Notes Monk,

Ogden translates *Sachverhalt* as ‘atomic fact’, and *Sachlage* as ‘state of affairs’; Pears and McGuinness have ‘state of affairs’ for *Sachverhalt* and ‘situation’ for *Sachlage*. Ogden’s translation has the merit, at least, of making it clear—as Wittgenstein had to explain to both Frege and Russell—that *Sachverhalte* are what correspond to (true) atomic propositions, and are therefore the constituent parts of *Tatsachen* (facts).³

So, with Monk, we will stick to the German terms without trying to translate them into English.

¹ Monk, R. (1991). "Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius." *International Studies in Philosophy* 2(6)163-164.

² Suszko, R. (1968). "Ontology in the *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein." *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 9(1): 7.

Tatsache

Let us briefly consider *Tatsache* before moving to *Sachverhalte*. Andrew Newman notes that

Facts are the first ontological category introduced [in the *Tractatus*]. The world is said to consist of facts, where a fact (*Tatsache*) is the objective correlate of a true sentence.⁴

In his commentary on the *Tractatus* Max Black comments on the proper understanding of *Tatsache*:

Definition of 'fact': "1.1. fact (*Tatsache*): always be to contrasted with 'thing' (*Ding*) or 'object' (*Gegenstand*). A further pair of important contrasts is with 'atomic fact' (*Sachverhalt*), for which see notes on 2, and with 'state of affairs' (*Sachlage*), for which see notes on 2.0121a.

Initially, at least, W. uses 'fact' in much the same way as that word is used in ordinary life—roughly speaking, to mean whatever is expressed by a true statement. Thus 'facts' may be either positive or negative (2.06b), and either elementary (= 'atomic') or complex (cf. 4.2211).

The natural reading of *Tatsache* as 'molecular fact' (or, 'complex fact') seems to have been contrary to W.'s original intentions: '*Tatsache* is what corresponds to the logical product of elementary propositions when this product is true' (*Letters*, 129 (3)). W. adds the tantalizing remark: 'The reason why I introduce *Tatsache* before introducing *Sachverhalt* would want a long explanation' (ibid.). (One may guess that the word is first conceived, superficially as it were, as a totality of *Tatsachen*. That these can obtain only if there are atomic facts or *Sachverhalte* is then discovered by reflection. We are unable to produce a single example of an atomic fact.)

If *Tatsachen* are to be understood as in the quotation from W. above, we might think of *Tatsache* as a collective noun for referring to sets of atomic facts.

...the non-verbal counterpart of a contingently true statement (a fact) cannot be designated, either by a name or by a description in Russell's sense.

³ Monk, R. (1991). "Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius." *International Studies in Philosophy* 2(6)164.

⁴ Newman, A. (2002). *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 54

...Again, it will not do to construe 'that'-clauses or full sentences as descriptions of facts, in Russell's sense of descriptions (cf. notes on 4.023 where the point is argued at length). Certainly a whole sentence cannot be a description, which, qua incomplete symbol, must always occur within a wider setting. But could we not understand 'That men breathe is a fact' as analogous with 'The king of France exists,' taking 'is a fact' to play a role similar to that of 'exists?' I think not. For in the second case we are saying that some man exists; and by parity of thought we ought to mean in the first case that some fact exists. (And so in general: the existence of what is ostensibly identified by a definite description must be distinct from that thing itself.) But it is an important feature of the intended use of 'fact' that it must be absurd to say of a fact that it exists; talk of a non-existent fact is a contradiction, as talk of a non-existent man is not. If we had an expression existing-man we would have a genuine analogue to 'fact'. But of course, 'existing man' does not make sense, except by way of allusion to some true existential statement (unless it means the same as 'living man'); no good case can be made for an analogous use of 'existing fact.'

Now if facts cannot be designated, if they can be only stated or asserted, general statements about facts (construed as pointing to objective counterparts, and not 'expendable' in the way I suggested as conforming to ordinary-language uses) become extremely problematical. Wittgenstein has deliberately departed from the ordinary uses of 'fact' without providing instructions for the new uses. The notion of a fact as a unique 'configuration' or 'concatenation' of objects, that is not itself a complex object (something, one might be tempted to say, whose essence it is to obtain), will have strong appeal for anybody who, like Wittgenstein, accepts a conflation of a correspondence theory of truth with a bearer theory of meaning and Russell's theory of descriptions.⁵

Black's commentary is arguably the most comprehensive and persuasive of all scholarship on the *Tractatus*. Having consider Wittgenstein's use of '*Tatsache*', let us now consider his use of '*Sachverhalte*'.

⁵ Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 31-35.

Sachverhalte

While considerable controversy exists over the proper understanding of Wittgenstein's *Sachverhalte*, Peter Simons, Kevin Mulligan, and Barry Smith provide a nice summary:

The theory of *Sachverhalte* may be summarized briefly as follows: the simple objects which, in Wittgenstein's eyes, make up the substances of the world, are configured together in various ways. An elementary sentence is true iff the simple objects designated by its constituent simple names are configured together in a *Sachverhalt* whose constituents correspond one-to-one with the constituents of the sentence, the configuration of the objects being mirrored in the structure of the sentence.⁶

Two predominant interpretations exist among *Tractarian* scholarship. These are that of Erik Stenius in his *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought* (1964) and Max Black's *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (1964).⁷ Let's begin with Stenius. On *Sachverhalt*, Stenius writes that

Etymologically the German word *Sachverhalt* is a *Sich-Verhalten* of *Sachen* or *wie sich die Sachen verhalten*, i.e. something which could be rendered as a 'relatedness of things' or 'or matters' or as 'how matters stand.' There is no counterpart in English of the word *Sachverhalt*; among others the following translations have been suggested: 'situation,' 'circumstance,' 'state of affairs;' but the use of each of these expressions differs from the German use of the word *Sachverhalt*. The third of them is employed in the English version of the *Tractatus* as a rendering of the German word *Sachlage*, which refers to a concept of the same category as the concepts *Sachverhalt* and *Tatsache*, and differs from both of them.⁸

⁶ Mulligan, K. P. S., Barry Smith (1984). "Truth-Makers." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XLIV(3): 309.

⁷ Stenius, E. (1964). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press and Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

⁸ Stenius, E. (1964). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 29-30.

Stenius does think there is a distinction to be made between a *Sachverhalt* and a *Tatsache* (which he translates ‘fact’), though both can be translated, he thinks, as ‘how matters stand.’ Stenius argues that a *Tatsache*, a fact, serves as the descriptive content of true sentences. For example, in the sentence ‘The earth is larger than the moon’ the descriptive content is that which is asserted, which is expressed in the ‘that’-clause ‘that the earth is larger than the moon.’ This ‘that’-clause presumably refers to (is correlated with) a fact which also serves as the descriptive content of the aforementioned sentence. Stenius argues that German usage permits us to say that the descriptive content of such true sentences can be called a *Sachverhalt* independently of whether that descriptive content is a fact (*Tatsache*). In the case of false sentences like ‘The earth is smaller than the moon’ there is still a descriptive content—*that the earth is smaller than the moon*, and this is a *Sachverhalt*, but it is not an existing *Sachverhalt*, i.e., a *bestehender Sachverhalt*, which is identical to a *Tatsache*. Such a descriptive content is, rather, a *nich bestehender Sachverhalt*, i.e., a non-existing *Sachverhalt*, and is therefore not a *Tatsache*. Says Stenius, “...a *Sachverhalt* is something that could possibly be the case, a *Tatsache* something that is really the case.”⁹ Stenius elaborates on the nature of possible *Sachverhalte*:

The most important views connected with the concept of ‘thought’ as a picture are stated in sentences 2.203, 3.001, 3.02, and 3.03...

These statements are related to the following question: What is meant by an unreal state of affairs being ‘possible?’ In reality things stand as they stand. We cannot combine the elements of reality into a possible state of affairs without making it real. In what sense, then, can we speak of a possible unreal state of affairs?

⁹ Stenius, E. (1964). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 31.

... ‘the mode of existence’ of a merely possible state of affairs is that we can form a picture—or to be more exact—an adequate picture that presents it...

...we are capable of combining the elements of the picture field in any way consistent with their internal structure. And since the key of interpretation is adequate every actually ‘possible’ combination of the picture elements manifests and forms a criterion of the potential ‘possibility’ of the corresponding combination of the elements of the prototype: ‘the picture contains the possibility of the state of affairs that it presents’, i.e. it defines it.

What has been stated here about pictures in the form of printed diagrams also applies, according to the *Tractatus*, to mental pictures. To think is to form mental pictures; therefore “an elementary state of affairs is thinkable” means: we can form a (mental) picture of it’ (3.001); therefore ‘the thought contains the possibility of the state of affairs which it thinks, and ‘what is thinkable is also possible’ (3.02). It follows that what is not possible is not thinkable (3.03)—a picture depicting an impossible state of affairs adequately is a contradiction in adiecto.¹⁰

Stenius argues that German usage permits the distinction between facts (*Tatsache*) and states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), but that it also accords with Wittgenstein’s words in statement 2 of the *Tractatus*. Argues Stenius,

Here we are told that what is the case, *die Tatsache*, is *das Bestehen von Sachverhalten*, i.e. that *Sachverhalte* ‘exist.’ This must imply that *Sachverhalte* as such are thought of as either ‘existing’ or ‘non-existing’, and that, in the first case only, they belong to what is the case and form *die Tatsache*. In fact Wittgenstein’s use of the words *Sachverhalt* and *Tatsache* is throughout in accordance with this distinction being made between their meanings—perhaps with the exception of 2.034 and 4.2211.

Stenius concludes,

The above distinction between *Tatsache* and *Sachverhalt* could be transferred into English in, for instance, this way: We translate the word *Tatsache* as ‘fact,’ *bestehend* as ‘existing’ or ‘real’, *Sachverhalt* as, say, ‘circumstance’, and adopt the following rule: ‘A circumstance is something that may exist (be real) or not exist (not be real). An existing (real) circumstance is a fact.’ Statement 2 could

¹⁰ Stenius, E. (1964). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 114-116.

then be rendered as follows: ‘What is the case, the fact, is that circumstances exist.’¹¹

Stenius admits that this interpretation of Wittgenstein is not problem-free. In considering *Sachlage* vis-à-vis *Sachverhalt* and *Tatsache*, Stenius points out that *Sachlage* can be non-existing entities just like *Sachverhalte*. However, Stenius rejects the suggestion that *Sachlage* and *Sachverhalt* are synonymous terms for Wittgenstein. A *Sachlage*, says Stenius, is the descriptive content of a non-atomic sentence whereas a *Sachverhalt* is the descriptive content of an atomic sentence. Here I take Stenius to mean by ‘atomic sentence’ a subject-predicate sentence. In conjunctive, disjunctive, and other non-atomic sentences, the descriptive content is a *Sachlage*, not a *Sachverhalt*. German usage, says Stenius, takes *Sachverhalte* as simple and *Sachlage* as complex. Thus, Stenius thinks a better translation of *Sachverhalt* would include the preceding ‘atomic’ before ‘circumstance’ or even better, ‘atomic state of affairs.’ Stenius proceeds to argue that in fact every *Sachverhalt* is a *Sachlage*, though non-atomic *Sachlage* are not *Sachverhalte*. Thus, a proper translation of *Sachlage* is ‘state of affairs.’

So, *Sachverhalte* are atomic states of affairs according to Stenius’ interpretation of Wittgenstein. *Sachverhalte* meet the following conditions: (1) they can be existent (real) or non-existent where the former is called an atomic fact, (2) they are independent of one another: the existence or non-existence of one atomic state of affairs is independent of any other atomic states of affairs, (3) this independence holds generally for atomic states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), but not non-atomic states of affairs

¹¹ Stenius, E. (1964). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 31.

(*Sachlage*) such that the latter are not independent of one another, and (4) a *Sachverhalt* is described in language by an elementary sentence. Let us now consider the other predominant interpretation of Wittgenstein, that of Max Black.

Max Black provides a detailed examination of the proper understanding of *Tatsache*, *Sachverhalt*, and *Sachlage* in his *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (1964).¹² He considers evidence for two theories of the *Sachverhalt*; these theories he calls the F-theory and the P-theory where the former takes *Sachverhalte* to be facts consisting of contingently existing objects held together in a complex and the latter takes *Sachverhalte* to be possible facts or states of affairs that do not necessarily exist (or obtain). Black comments on the appropriate translations of *Sachverhalt* (which he translates 'atomic fact' as does Ogden in his translation) and *möglicher Sachverhalt* (which he translates 'possible atomic fact').¹³ Says Black, "Literally this word simply means "situation." Etymologically it suggests "hold of thing"—i.e. a way things stand in relation to one another."¹⁴ Says Black,

Although 'atomic fact' for *Sachverhalt* had Wittgenstein's approval and was so used in Russell's introduction, it has been held to suggest misleadingly that an atomic fact is a species of fact. However, the suggestion of logical simplicity conveyed by the adjective exactly corresponds to Wittgenstein's intentions: he talks about a *Sachverhalt* whenever he wishes to refer to the objective counterpart of an unanalysable contingent truth (see, for instance, 4.2211). Pears and McGuinness's consistent use of 'state of affairs,' without the adjective, blurs this important point.

Unfortunately, Wittgenstein is not consistent in his use of *Sachverhalt*. Most of the time, as in 2, he uses the word in the sense of (atomic) fact, i.e., for an actual, contingent combination of objects (as in 2.01, 2.011, 2.012, 2.0121b, 2.0141, 2.0272-2.032). Occasionally, however, especially where he speaks of

¹² Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

¹³ Wittgenstein, L. (1922). C.K. Ogden (trans.) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

¹⁴ Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 39.

the non-existence (*Nichtbestehen*) of *Sachverhalte* (2.06, 2.062, 2.11, 4.1, 4.25, 4.27, 4.3) this reading will hardly do (see the further discussion below).

In Ogden's translation, the word *Sachverhalt* is always rendered as 'atomic fact'. Words of closely related meanings are *Tatsache* (translated by Pears and McGuinness as 'fact', e.g. at 1.1) and *Sachlage* (translated by them as 'situation' at 2.0122; Ogden has 'fact' at 2.11, 'state of affairs' at 2.0121, 2.014, 2.202, and elsewhere). 'Fact' is an acceptable translation of *Tatsache*; there is however, a serious question as to whether 'atomic fact' will serve for *Sachverhalt* and a closely connected question about the proper way to understand *Sachlage*.¹⁵

Black considers significant evidence for both the F-theory and P-theory treatments of *Sachverhalte*. Arguments for the F-theory include the following:

(1) Wittgenstein himself allowed 'atomic fact' to stand in the revised impression (1933) as well as in the original English edition, both of which he had opportunity to correct. It is implausible to suppose he did not understand the difference between making *Sachverhalt* stand for a fact and making it stand for a possibility, or that his knowledge of English was unequal to the task of making the appropriate corrections. (Cf. similar comments by Anscombe, Introduction, p. 30 f.n.)

(2) Wittgenstein speaks of a *Tatsache* as being composed of (*besteht aus*) *Sachverhalte* (4.2211). Since a *Tatsache* is a (complex) fact, this speaks in favour of regarding a *Sachverhalt* as a fact.

(3) Several times Wittgenstein speaks of a *möglicher Sachverhalt* (possible *Sachverhalt*), e.g., at 2.0124 (cf. also 2.0123 and 2.0121 (5)). Now if a *Sachverhalt* is a possibility, the phrase *möglicher Sachverhalt* (= 'possible possibility'), italicized at 2.0124, becomes an absurdity.

(4) A 'configuration' (*Konfiguration*) of objects constitutes (*bildet*) the *Sachverhalt* (2.0272). Now the configuration is not determined by the substance of the world (2.0231) and is therefore (according to 2.024) not independent of what is the case: the configuration is mutable (2.0271). Throughout the text, the 'configuration' of objects is taken to be what is contingent about the world. If a *Sachverhalt* is a configuration of objects it cannot be a timeless unity of objects, independent of contingent fact. Whenever the objects are in a configuration, there will be a fact, not the possibility of a fact. Compare also 2.03 on objects hanging together in a *Sachverhalt*.

¹⁵ Black, M. (1964). A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 39-40.

(5) If Wittgenstein held that objects combined in complexes, which may or may not exist, he might have been expected to say so, and to use some word other than *Konfiguration* or *Struktur* (2.032) for the manner in which objects are so combined.

(6) If *Sachverhalte* were mere possibilities, how could Wittgenstein say that what is essential to an object is that it can occur in a *Sachverhalt* (2.012, 2.0121b, 2.0123a, 2.0141)? On the P-theory, Wittgenstein would surely be committed to saying that an object must occur in all the *Sachverhalte* of which it is a constituent.

(7) According to Wittgenstein, a name must have an object for which it stands (3.203) while nothing need answer to a meaningful description (3.24 (2)); it is therefore important that he speaks of a *Sachverhalt* as being described by a proposition (4.023c). For, according to the P-theory, something must answer to a 'that'-clause namely, the corresponding *Sachverhalt*. It would therefore be correct to treat such a clause as a compound name of the possibility of which it stands. But Wittgenstein says that names are simple (3.202) and argues against the idea that the proposition is a complex name (3.143c). In the Notes on Logic, he chides Russell for still believing in complexes that are not facts: 'Frege said "propositions are names;" Russell said "propositions correspond to complexes." Both are false; and especially false is the statement "propositions are names of complexes" (93 (3)).

(8) The 'picture theory' of the proposition recognizes co-ordinations between names and objects (3.2) and identity of logical form between the sentence-fact and the fact represented (2.151, 2.18). Wittgenstein does not say that the whole sentence-fact stands for some complex entity—indeed this way of looking at the sentence is alien to his standpoint.

The above considerations support the conclusion that Wittgenstein held that objects are not linked by necessary *connexions*, but only contingently come together in various mutable combinations.¹⁶

In support of the P-theory, Black offers the following evidence:

(9) Wittgenstein often speaks of the *Bestehen* (= 'holding') or *Nichtbestehen* (= 'not holding') of *Sachverhalte*, e.g. at 2, 2.04, 2.05, 2.06, 2.062, etc. Now it is hard to think of a fact as not holding or, in Ogden's translations, not existing.

(10) Similar difficulties arise, though perhaps not so forcefully, in *connexion* with the phrase *möglicher Sachverhalt* (for which see point (3) above). One is inclined to say that a merely 'possible' fact is not yet a fact.

¹⁶ Black, M. (1964). A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 42-43.

(11) The uses of *Sachlage* closely parallel those of *Sachverhalt*. Sometimes they are used almost as synonyms: cf. 2.012 with 2.012ia, the beginning of 2.0122a with its ending, 4.031 with 4.0311, 4.021a with 4.023c. The logical grammar of *Sachlage* is close to that of *Sachverhalt*: we have *möglicher Sachverhalt* (2.0122, 2.202, 2.203, 3.11a, etc.), *Sachlagen* are configurations of objects (3.21), they can hold or exist (*bestehen*) 5.135, etc.). Hence, if *Sachlage* is properly translated as ‘possible state of affairs,’ something that may or may not obtain, a parallel translation would seem to be required for *Sachverhalt*.

(12) A proposition (*Satz*) presents (*vorstellt* or *darstellt*) a *Sachlage* (2.11, 2.203, 3.02, 4.021, 4.031, 4.032a, 4.04a, etc.). A *Sachverhalt* is likewise presented (3.0321, 4.0311, 4.122d—notice that in the first of these passages we are dealing with a false picture). What a picture of a proposition presents (*darstellt*) is its sense (2.221 and *passim*). It would seem, therefore, that a *Sachlage*, qua sense, should be a possibility, not an actuality (cf. 4.061a: ‘... a proposition has a sense that is independent of the facts...’); and similarly for a *Sachverhalt*. When we read at 4.03b that a proposition communicates a *Sachlage*, immediately after being told that a new sense is what is communicated, the interpretation of a *Sachlage* (and hence also of a *Sachverhalt*) as a possibility becomes almost irresistible.¹⁷

After weighing this evidence, Black favors the F-theory over the P-theory and offers the following remarks that mitigate the force of points (9)-(12):

With regard to (9): there is certainly some awkwardness in talking about facts not existing or not obtaining. But to say, for example, ‘The fact that the moon is larger than the earth does not obtain,’ however clumsy it may sound, may be no more reprehensible than saying ‘The present Queen of France does not exist.’ The latter sentence does not mean the absurdity, ‘There is a person who is the present Queen of France but does not exist’ but rather ‘There is no such person as the present Queen of France.’ Similarly, the first sentence can be read as meaning ‘There is not such a fact as that the moon is larger than the earth.’ We could dodge the awkwardness by substituting ‘state-of-affairs’ for ‘fact’. But if so, we must not be tempted to suppose that a ‘state-of-affairs’ in the intended sense is some complex entity, also describable as a ‘possible fact’ and distinguishable from an ‘actual fact.’ A ‘state of affairs,’ so conceived, is no more a possible something than a person (say ‘the Queen of France’) is a possible something. In using a description of a person, we are of course implying that it is (logically) possible for the person in question to exist, but ‘possible person’ has no good use. Similarly, in speaking of a certain ‘fact’ or ‘state-of-affairs’ (as a synonym for ‘fact’) we are implying that it is possible for

¹⁷ Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 43-44.

there to be such a fact. The mistake to be avoided is that of peopling Wittgenstein's universe with three types of things (say: 'objects,' 'facts' and also 'situations' or 'circumstances'). There are (timelessly) objects—and (contingently) facts or states of affairs. Reference to a 'possible state of affairs' should be regarded, according to context, either as a pleonasm or else as shorthand for reference to logical form. Similar considerations apply to point (10) above.

The moral of considerations advanced at point (11) above is that *Sachlage* should sometimes be treated as an approximate synonym for *Tatsache* (compare 2.11 with 2). On the view I am advocating, all three words, *Sachverhalt*, *Sachlage*, and *Tatsache* are usually to be taken as standing for simple or complex states of affairs (not possibilities).

The plausible error behind point (12) depends upon supposing that if A is a picture of B, B must exist in some sense. But to say, correctly, that A is a picture of a centaur wearing a bowler hat is not to imply that there exists a centaur wearing a bowler hat of which A is a picture. Nor is it to imply, absurdly, that A is really a picture of a 'possible' centaur. Similarly, we can say, on Wittgenstein's view, that a proposition depicts (or presents) a fact, without in the least committing ourselves to the view that the fact in question must exist. If the proposition does depict a fact, it would be otiose to say that it also depicts something more, namely a possibility. As for Wittgenstein's implicit identification of a proposition's sense with the *Sachverhalt* or *Sachlage* depicted, this may be compared with this identification of the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of a name with its bearer (3.203). Both views are inadequate, as will appear later. But there is no ground here for thinking that Wittgenstein intended a proposition's sense to be a complex entity composed of objects in some non-contingent combination. If I am not mistaken, this interpretation is quite contrary to his intentions.¹⁸

Black's case for the F-theory interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Sachverhalte* seems more persuasive than Stenius' P-theory as Stenius' seems based more on conjecture than textual evidence. While we cannot be certain that Wittgenstein advocated the F-theory, Black's compilation of evidence certainly favors this interpretation.

¹⁸ Black, M. (1964). *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 44-45.

Andrew Newman in his *The Correspondence Theory of Truth* agrees that Black's interpretation, which he says is the majority interpretation, prevails over Stenius'. Says Newman,

It looks as though the issue is settled in Black's favour by Wittgenstein's letter to Russell of 19th August 1919: "*Sachverhalt* is, what corresponds to an *Elementarsatz* [elementary proposition] if it is true. *Tatsache* is what corresponds to the logical product of elementary propositions when this product is true."...

But... why is a state of affairs spoken of differently than a fact, and in what sense do elementary sentences describe states of affairs?

...I think that it is best simply to take a *Sachverhalt* to be an atomic fact. Fact locutions can be taken in two ways, either as describing a certain unit existing in the world or as merely a way of describing how things are or how things could be without a commitment to ontological units. But it is essential to the *Tractatus* to understand facts and states of affairs as real units, not as a way things could be."

...the *Tractatus* [holds] a clear compositional view of facts: states of affairs are real units, their components are real, and there is a limited number of both...

This is why I think it is best to adopt the interpretation that a *Sachverhalt* is an atomic fact.¹⁹

Herbert Hochberg provides an interesting alternative interpretation of Wittgenstein that seems to agree with Black's interpretation, but also preserves a notion of possibility captured by Stenius' P-theory interpretation. Argues Hochberg,

Speaking as we have makes it appear that Wittgenstein holds to two kinds of facts. Thus one might take him to maintain that atomic facts are of two types. But to speak of actual and possible facts in such a way precludes one from holding that an actual fact is also a possible fact. Yet Wittgenstein characteristically speaks of the possibilities in such a way that it is clear that all of the facts that an object can be a constituent of are possibilities, irrespective of

¹⁹ Newman, A. (2002). *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 55-57. Wittgenstein's letter to Russell of 19 August 1919 is found in *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, p. 72.

whether such facts exist or not. Moreover, there is another question that arises. What determines the possibilities with respect to an object? Wittgenstein's solution simultaneously avoids literally introducing possible facts as entities, while having the benefits of their introduction, and also provides an answer to the questions just raised. Possibilities are introduced as essential characteristics of objects. We have already seen that Wittgenstein's objects are natured. Possible facts are packed, as it were, into the nature of the object. Among such possibilities are those that correlate to actual facts as well. 2.0123 If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in *Sachverhalten*. (Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.) A new possibility cannot be discovered later. 2.014 Objects contain the possibility of all situations. This doctrine enables him to recognize only one kind of fact (the actual, existent atomic fact) while grounding the tie between a sentence and what it is about in something—a possibility as part of the nature of the object. Taking objects to have natures thus helps unite several themes of the *Tractatus*. We have already seen how the question of an object's being the kind of thing that it is gets resolved by having objects be natured. Such natures also resolve the problem of how sentences indicate possibilities. In both cases one deals with logical or internal matters. Similarly, the ontological ground of tautologies will also be located in the natures of things.²⁰

What remains unanswered on Hochberg's interpretation is the question of how to understand statements about non-existent objects like Pegasus in 'Pegasus is an acute flyer.' There would seem to be no constituent object of an existing atomic fact that would contain within itself a nature having anything to do with Pegasus. That is to say, Hochberg's interpretation seems to only allow for counterfactual statements about existing objects but not statements about non-existing objects.

Henry Le Roy Finch has also provided definitions of the concepts of *Sachverhalt*, *Tatsache*, and *Sachlage* in his *Wittgenstein—the Early Philosophy: An Exposition of the Tractatus*. Finch takes Wittgenstein's *Sachlage* to be situations which are an

...arrangement of *things*, or of items which are complex and hence can be further described and stand in external relations to each other. Since things

²⁰ Hochberg, H. (1971). Facts, Possibilities, and Essences in the *Tractatus*. *Essays on Wittgenstein*. E. D. Klemke. Urbana, University of Illinois Press: 525-531.

must be possible constituents of states of affairs [*Sachverhalte*], (2.011) but do not “hang together” in states of affairs until they are taken as “objects of a thought,” (3.2) every situation is at the same time a possible states of affairs.

Finch defines *Sachverhalte* (translated ‘states of affairs’) as

...structures of *objects*, or arrangements in which the relations between the objects are internal, since every state of affairs is one of all possible states of affairs, or one structure is one of all possible structures of its objects. (2.03, 2.033) Since if any objects are given, we are given *all* objects (5.524A) and since if all objects are given, all possible states of affairs are also given, (2.0124) we are always dealing with finite combinatorial manifolds when we are dealing with states of affairs.²¹

Thus Finch seems to take *Sachverhalte* as a sort of mind-dependent complex in the sense that the constituents of a *Sachverhalt* are combined by the mind. However, the constituents themselves are not mind-dependent, but already exist in *Sachlage*. Given the significant evidence provided by Black, however, Finch’s conception of *Sachlage* and *Sachverhalt* do not seem plausible as a correct understanding of these terms.

Peter Simons provides a slightly different interpretation of *Sachverhalte* in his “The Old Problem of Complex and Fact.” Simons’ interpretation is similar to Black’s F-theory, but distinguishes between complexes and facts. According to Simons, Wittgenstein’s *Sachverhalte* are not facts but complexes. The difference between a fact and complex, says Simons, is that a fact is the existence or non-existence of a complex and a complex is just a concatenation of objects and relations or objects and properties, e.g., *a* standing in *R* to *b*. He says,

...the *Sachverhalte* of the *Tractatus* are best seen not as atomic *facts*, but as atomic *complexes*.

²¹ Finch, H. L. R. (1971). *Wittgenstein--The Early Philosophy: An Exposition of the "Tractatus"*. New York, Humanities Press, 53.

...Against the standard interpretation, stemming from Russell and the first translation, Müller and Dietrich argue, in my view correctly, that no *Sachverhalte* are facts. The evidence comes from the *Tractatus* itself. Firstly, facts divide into positive and negative, but there are no true or false facts (NB 97, *cfr.* 2.06). *Sachverhalte* do not divide into positive and negative: all are positive—Wittgenstein retorts to Russell, “Of course no elementary propositions are negative” (NB 131, LRKM 73). The existence (*das Bestehen*) of *Sachverhalten* is a positive fact, their non-existence (*Nichtbestehen*) a negative fact (2.06) The elucidation of facts as *das Bestehen und Nichtbestehen von Sachverhalten* is wider than that given at 2, where only *das Bestehen* is mentioned. Wittgenstein obviously had a tendency to accentuate the positive, as his letter to Russell shows. In all these remarks, Wittgenstein uses the gerund, ‘*das Bestehen*,’ only at 2.04 and 2.05 does he use the participle ‘*bestehende*.’ If facts were simply sums of *bestehenden Sachverhalten*, then a single *bestehender Sachverhalt* would have to be the existing or obtaining of itself, and there would be no telling what to do with negative facts...Finally, Wittgenstein uses the word ‘depict’ (*abbilden*) almost always for the relation between propositions and facts, or reality (*Wirklichkeit*) (2.17, 2.18), whereas he uses ‘represent’ [*darstellen* (2.11, 3.0321, 4.1, 4122) or *vorstellen* (4.0311)] for *Sachverhalte* and *Sachlagen*. The usage is not wholly uniform, but that a difference is intended can be seen from 2.201: A picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of the existence and non-existence of *Sachverhalte*.

Despite the inconsistencies, the evidence is strongly in favour of not identifying *bestehende Sachverhalte* as facts. Wittgenstein’s position is more subtle than his letter to Russell and Russell’s introduction would have us believe. Nevertheless the term ‘atomic fact’ could, without disturbance, be introduced into the *Tractatus*. One possible convention is the following: if an elementary proposition is true, then its corresponding *Sachverhalt* exists. Call its existence a *positive atomic fact*. If the elementary proposition is false, call the non-existence of its corresponding *Sachverhalt* a *negative atomic fact*. Then there will be a one-one correspondence between *Sachverhalten* and atomic facts, and a one-one correspondence between *bestehenden Sachverhalten* and positive atomic facts.

Why does Wittgenstein need *Sachverhalte*? Because every sentence with sense represents something, but not every proposition is true. Only the true ones correspond to facts. What an elementary proposition represents cannot be a positive atomic fact, as I have used this term, for then all elementary propositions would be true. So Wittgenstein needs what in Meinongian terms we can call a watered-down fact...which a proposition can represent irrespective of its truth-value. In the *Tractatus* this role is played by the *Sachlage* or situation (2.11, 2.202), and in the special positive atomic case Wittgenstein uses the special term ‘*Sachverhalt*’. In correspondence with Ogden Wittgenstein took exception to the former’s translation of ‘*Sachlage*’ as

‘states of affairs,’ and suggested instead ‘*status rerum*’ (Letters to C.K. Ogden, Blackwell, 1973), which however adequately fits both Ogden’s translation and the ordinary German ‘*Sachverhalt*,’ which is a strong point in favor of the Pears-McGuinness translation of the latter as ‘states of affairs.’ In the essay “Complex and Fact” Wittgenstein recommends cutting the Gordian knot by abandoning the restriction of ‘fact’ to what correspond to true propositions. Since the word ‘*Sachverhalt*’ carries this connotation far less than ‘fact’ or ‘*Tatsache*’—and for this reason recommended itself to phenomenologists—it is a pity that Wittgenstein did not recall the word later: as well as being unfair to the *Tractatus*’ treatment of *Sachverhalt*, as Kenny shows, he is being unfair to the connotations which perhaps led him to use the word in the first place.

It is worth remarking that ‘*Sachverhalt*’ is used differently in the *Tractatus* from the way it is used in the *Notebooks* [1916]: in the latter the restriction to atomic cases is absent. Thus Anscombe’s translation of it as ‘situation’ happily fits the Pears-McGuinness of ‘*Sachlage*’ in the *Tractatus*. So between the early surviving *Notebooks* and the *prototractatus* the term ‘*Sachverhalt*’ was restricted to atomic cases, and its former place taken by ‘*Sachlage*’ (cf. NB 8(4) and 4.031, for instance). But not all previous occurrences escape conversion: some *Tractatus* entries are simply transcriptions of their corresponding *Notebooks* entries. A case in point is 3.001 (cfr. Point 4 above). This may help to explain why it is sometimes hard to distinguish *Sachlage* from *Sachverhalt* in the *Tractatus*.

We know that Wittgenstein thought the *Tractatus* embodied a confusion between complex and fact. We also know, from his criticism of Russell, that this confusion cannot have consisted simply in identifying them or failing to distinguish them. The picture is more complicated. Wittgenstein expelled complexes from his official ontology. He felt compelled to introduce *Sachlagen* and *Sachverhalte* because there are not enough facts for every proposition. But these *Zwischendinge* served in large part to fill the vacuum created by the removal of complexes. The confusion between complex and fact consists in the different demands put primarily on *Sachverhalte*; they are squeezed between complexes and facts.

...The *Tractatus* is an inconsistent book, and no consistent reconstruction will be a perfect fit. But a consistent treatment of *Sachverhalte* as atomic complexes gives us, I think, a better fit than a consistent treatment of them as atomic facts. So let me first outline the picture, and then support it with internal and external evidence.

We assume that there are complexes, and that they are fully determinate. They consist ultimately of simple objects in immediate combination, but complexes may also combine to form larger complexes. A complex which has no proper

sub-complexes, and therefore consists solely of simple objects in concatenation, may be called an ‘atomic complex’: “atomic” not in lacking parts, but in lacking complex parts. Everything that Wittgenstein says in the 2’s about the possibility of the occurrence of simples in *Sachverhalten* we may say about the possibility of their occurrence in atomic complexes...

...Each elementary proposition will be true if its corresponding atomic complex exists, and false if it does not exist, so elementary propositions and their negations are fully determinate. Every possible complex corresponds to a possible situation (*Sachlage*), but not conversely, since a possible *Sachlage* is presented by any contingent truth-function of elementary propositions. Most *Sachlagen*, like most contingent propositions, leave a *Spielraum*, which allow a number of different possibilities: which possibilities are included and which are excluded is clearly shown by the fully clarified version of any contingent proposition. We describe the world fully by giving all the atomic facts, or equivalently, by saying which atomic complexes exist—this determines also which do not exist. And so on.

The similarities between this picture and the *Tractatus* hardly need comment. If we look again, we see the relations between objects and *Sachverhalten* in that work are just those of constituent to complex: objects occur in *Sachverhalten* (2.012-2.0123), they are constituents of them (2.011) as objects are of complexes (3.24); by their configuration they form *Sachverhalte* (2.0272), and so on. That is why I have left ‘*Sachverhalt*’ untranslated: its normal German meaning, like that of ‘state of affairs,’ suggests not an object *simpliciter* but the way in which things stand to one another.²²

In his “*Wie Die Sachen Sich zueinander Verhalten*’ Inside and Outside the *Tractatus*,” Kevin Mulligan follows Simon’s interpretation but seems to modify it a bit. Says Mulligan,

Following Simon’s lead we may summarise the view which is at issue...by means of the equivalence principle: (EP) $aRb \equiv (aRb)$ exists where parentheses indicate the formation from a sentence of a singular term designating a complex.

(EP) is not, of course a faithful rendering of Wittgenstein’s position in the *Tractatus*, which embraces a distinction between complex and *Sachverhalt*, between what exists and what obtains, though only the latter is taken seriously.

²² Simons, P. (1985). "The Old Problem of Complex and Fact." *Teoria. Logica e filosofia del linguaggio* 5(21): 219-224.

We can, however, extend (ERP) in a manner which comes close to the *Tractatus* by introducing formulae like ‘/aRb/’ to stand in for expressions such as ‘that *a* is similar to *b*’, ‘that fencer *a* is lunging at fencer *b*,’ or ‘that *a*’s thrust is followed by *b*’s parry, and then formulate the principle: (EEP) aRb \equiv /aRb/ obtains \equiv (aRb) exists. But how close is this an approximation to Wittgenstein’s views? Note first of all, that ‘*Sachverhalt*’ means different things in the two texts at issue, and that the contrast between what exists and what obtains is developed fully only in the *Tractatus*. The *Notebooks* are explicitly only committed to the step from true proposition (‘aRb’) to true assertion of existence (‘(aRb) exists’). The *Tractatus*, on the other hand, has only the step from true elementary proposition to the obtaining of the *Sachverhalt*. The principle (EEP) itself is, in fact, faithful neither to the *Notebooks* nor to the *Tractatus*; it expresses an amalgam of doctrines from both.²³

We conclude with one last prominent interpretation of Wittgenstein’s *Sachverhalte*.

Reinhardt Grossman considers the issue of non-existent or non-actual states of affairs in his “Wittgenstein and the Problem of Non-existent States of Affairs.” Says Grossman,

As usual, when one tries to interpret Wittgenstein, a great number of terminological unclarities stand in the way. The puzzle starts on the very first page, and it is not surprising that a clear thinker like Frege cannot get beyond this first page of the *Tractatus*. Therefore, we have no choice: we must agree from the beginning on a definite interpretation of some of Wittgenstein’s crucial terms. There is no problem with the proper translation and understanding of Wittgenstein’s term ‘*Tatsache*’: It straightforwardly becomes our ‘fact.’ But the expression ‘*Sachlage*’ (or ‘*Sachverhalt*’) is not so easy. We are tempted to translate it as ‘state of affairs,’ with the understanding that some states of affairs obtain, and are therefore facts, while others do not obtain. This is of course, how we have talked up to the present. But Wittgenstein seems to use ‘*Sachlage*’ at times for ‘atomic fact’ and at other times more akin to our ‘state of affairs,’ so that it then makes sense to say of a *Sachverhalt* that it holds (obtains) or does not hold (does not obtain). . . . I shall adopt the second interpretation. The problem that concerns us, then, is this: What, according to Wittgenstein, is the ontological status of mere states of affairs or circumstances, that is, of states of affairs which do not obtain and therefore are not facts?

A search for an answer in the *Tractatus* to this most important question, however, proves to be rather disappointing. No clear view about the ontological

²³ Mulligan, K. (1985). “‘Wie die sachen sich zueinander verhalten’ inside and outside the ‘*Tractatus*’.” *Teoria. Logica e filosofia del linguaggio* 5: 149-150.

status of mere states of affairs emerges. The problem is not discussed. Some states of affairs obtain, others do not. The former are facts, the latter are not facts. So far, so good. But do mere states of affairs, although they do not obtain (do not exist?) have any ontological status? Do they subsist like Bolzano's *sentences as such* and Fregean *thoughts*?

Or do they have no ontological rank whatsoever like some of Meinong's objectives? As far as I can make out, Wittgenstein does not address this question. Of course, since Wittgenstein talks about states of affairs that do not obtain, one may take this to mean that they do have some kind of ontological status. ... But it is clear that one may talk about mere states of affairs without attributing any ontological status to them.²⁴

So, Grossman takes a P-theory interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Sachverhalte*, but bemoans the lack of any comment on the ontological status of non-obtaining states of affairs.

We have now completed our survey of the most prominent Wittgenstein scholarship concerning his theory of states of affairs. As can be seen from the considerable controversy, it is easy to feel bewildered about how to understand Wittgenstein's three terms, especially *Sachverhalt* and *Sachlage*. Of all the scholarship, Max Black's stands out as the most systematic and thorough. Black's case for an F-theory interpretation is the strongest, but the fact that he admits there is some evidence for a P-theory interpretation combined with scholars like Stenius' and Grossman's P-theory interpretation forces us to conclude that Wittgenstein simply failed to provide a clear theory of states of affairs in the *Tractatus* (as well the *Notebooks*). When numerous interpretations of a theory are possible, even plausible,

²⁴ Grossman, R. (1998). "Wittgenstein and the Problem of Non-existent States of Affairs." *Acta Analytica* 21: 144-146.

we are left to conclude that the theory under consideration cannot provide any sound basis for a consistent, detailed understanding of states of affairs. Such confusion cries out for a clearer theory than Wittgenstein gives us. In the next chapter we will see that clarity markedly increases with contemporary theories of states of affairs.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Theories of States of Affairs

Contemporary theories of states of affairs did not appear until the late 1960's with the work of John Pollock and Roderick Chisholm. Chisholm's work began through his study of Meinong's objectives, thus Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* did not entirely generate the flurry of activity we see from the late '60's onward. Both well-known and lesser known metaphysicians produced theories of states of affairs in varying degrees of detail. We will consider the following theorists in the chronological order in which their published work appeared: Roderick Chisholm, John Pollock, Reinhardt Grossman, Alvin Plantinga, Ramon Lemos, and David Armstrong.¹ Some of these theories seem to have emerged independently of others, while some seem to

¹ Other notable contributors include Kit Fine (who doesn't provide a theory so much as a road map of various options one might take with facts), Jon Barwise and John Perry with their situation semantics (these are geared toward formal semantics where ontological questions regarding the status of situations are set aside; for example, they say "We are only claiming to find this view of the world embedded in natural language, not to discover how the world really is, even if we do happen to think the world is the way we describe it."— Perry, J. B. a. J. (1983). Situations and Attitudes. Cambridge, MIT Press, 60.); Edward Zalta in his Zalta, E. (1983). Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics. Dordrecht, D. Reidel and Zalta, E. (1989). Singular Propositions, Abstract Constituents, and Propositional Attitudes. Themes from Kaplan. J. J. P. H. W. Almog. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 455-478; Thomas Wetzel's in Wetzel, T. (2003). States of Affairs, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. **2004**; and C.A. Baylis' Baylis, C. A. (1948). "Facts, Propositions, Exemplification and Truth." Mind **57**(228): 459-479. Baylis takes facts to exemplify states of affairs/propositions (they are identical) in the same sense that objects exemplify properties; he deems this a version of the correspondence theory of truth, which he calls an "exemplification" theory of truth. False propositions, like uninstantiated properties, have no instances—there are no facts that exemplify them. I have not included an exposition of Baylis' theory here given its brevity; I have selected major contributors for this contemporary survey; all of those examined here have presented their theories in multiple publications. Objections to the theories we will discuss, for example Jaegwon Kim's rebuttals to Chisholm in Kim, J. (1989). "States of Affairs, Events, and Propositions." Grazer philosophische Studien **7/8**: 147-162 and Quentin Smith's criticisms of Plantinga's views in Smith, Q. (1993). Language and Time. Oxford, Oxford University Press will be considered in the next chapter when I develop a new theory.

significantly influence others. While Meinong appears to be the primary influence on Chisholm, Plantinga, and Grossman, Wittgenstein's influence on David Armstrong is evident. Yet Armstrong's theory seems to have developed independently of the early contemporary theories. In Chisholm's case, his theory of states of affairs evolved over time to the point that he eventually denied their existence toward the end of his theorizing. Nevertheless, his early work was influential on others and is thus worth tracing. Some of the theorists did not directly set out to produce a theory of states of affairs, but instead used states of affairs for other purposes. For example, Plantinga relies heavily on states of affairs in his attempt to understand the nature of necessity.² Since some of the following theories speak of states of affairs, but are much broader than this subject alone, I have focused on the more significant and interesting aspects of each theory in order to narrow our scope. We begin with Roderick Chisholm.

*Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999) (1966)*³

Roderick Chisholm first mentions states of affairs in the first edition of his *Theory of Knowledge*.⁴ There he speaks of beliefs being true or false with respect to states of affairs existing or not existing. A truth, he says, is a state of affairs that exists. A fact, he says, has two senses: 1) a state of affairs that exists and, 2) a state of affairs that is known to exist. Chisholm says little else about states of affairs in this early work. In his 1969 "Language, Logic, and States of Affairs," Chisholm lays out the beginnings of

² Plantinga, Alvin. *The Nature of Necessity* Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy, ed. Jonathan Cohen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.

³ I have included the date of each theorist's first published reference to states of affairs.

⁴ Chisholm, R. (1966). *Theory of Knowledge*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 103-104.

his early views on states of affairs. He identifies states of affairs with propositions; ‘states of affairs’ and ‘propositions’ are two names for the same abstract object. He says, “They are said to be *propositional* entities in that they have a form or structure analogous to that of sentences.”⁵ States of affairs can be conjunctive or disjunctive or negated, for example. They are abstract in that some are actualized or exemplified and some are not. Chisholm uses nominalized gerundives like *there being horses* and *there being unicorns* to refer to states of affairs. Gerunds are noun derivations of verbs which usually end in ‘ing’ in English. They are *nominalized* gerundives since the gerund phrase is a noun clause of which ‘obtains,’ ‘fails to obtain,’ ‘is actual,’ etc. may be meaningfully predicated. Chisholm notes that the terms ‘actualized’ and ‘exists’ are interchangeable with respect to states of affairs. One may also say that some propositions are true and others are false to make this same distinction. In defending the existence of states of affairs, Chisholm appeals to several phenomena. First, he considers the relata of a causal relation. For example, *a’s being F causes b’s being G*. Second, states of affairs serve as the relata of the before and after relations as in “Aristotle refuted that view long before Smith had thought of it.”⁶ Third, states of affairs, both exemplified and unexemplified, can serve as the content of propositional attitudes. Fourth, states of affairs serve as value bearers as in *there being a just distribution of pleasure*, even if such states of affairs are unexemplified. Finally, states

⁵ Chisholm, R. (1969). Language, Logic, and States of Affairs. *Language and Philosophy: A Symposium*. S. Hook. New York, New York University Press: 242.

⁶ Chisholm, R. (1969). Language, Logic, and States of Affairs. *Language and Philosophy: A Symposium*. S. Hook. New York, New York University Press: 243.

of affairs are needed to explain the concepts of truth and falsity. He offers one possible explication:

A sentence is true, in a certain use, provided the belief it would express if it were interpreted in that use is a belief that is true; and a man may be said to have a belief that is true, i.e., he may be said to believe something correctly, provided, first he believes with respect to a certain state of affairs that that state of affairs is exemplified, and provided, secondly, that that state of affairs *is* exemplified. And finally, the metaphysician may argue, we cannot give an adequate account of the truths of logic without reference to such entities as states of affairs.⁷

Chisholm's views on states of affairs were refined with subsequent articles and books. In his 1975 "The Intrinsic Value of Disjunctive States of Affairs," Chisholm speaks of states of affairs obtaining in possible worlds, though his focus is on how states of affairs bear value.⁸

In his 1979 "Events and Propositions," Chisholm distinguishes between propositions, events and states of affairs. More precisely, events and propositions are species of states of affairs. So, this is a departure from his earliest work where states of affairs and propositions are identical. A proposition can be defined as any state of affairs which is necessarily such that either it or its negation always occurs. An event is "any contingent state of affairs which is not a proposition and which implies change (i.e., which implies that there is some state of affairs *p* such that *p* occurs and not-*p* occurs)."⁹ Chisholm also defines the truth of a proposition here as

p is a *true proposition* if and only if *p* is a proposition and *p* occurs or obtains, and *p* is a *false proposition* if and only if *p* is a proposition and *p* does not occur or obtain. If we say that a *fact* is any state of affairs

⁷ Chisholm, R. (1969). Language, Logic, and States of Affairs. Language and Philosophy: A Symposium. S. Hook. New York, New York University Press: 243.

⁸ Chisholm, R. (1975). "The Intrinsic Value in Disjunctive States of Affairs." Nous 9(3): 295-308.

⁹ Chisholm, R. (1970). "Events and Propositions." Nous 4(1): 20.

that occurs or obtains, then the relation that a true proposition bears to the fact which is said to “correspond to it” is simply identity. This “theory of truth” might be called the classical theory, for it seems to be what was intended by Bolzano, Meinong, and Husserl, if not also by Frege, Moore, and Russell.¹⁰

In his 1976 *Person and Object*, Chisholm provides a much more developed theory.¹¹ He adds to his theory of states of affairs the notion that states of affairs are necessarily existing entities. He also uses an additional term to express his exemplified/actualized-unexemplified/unactualized distinction. States of affairs, he says, may ‘occur,’ or ‘obtain,’ as before, but they may also ‘take place,’ or fail to do so. Chisholm takes what I will call (following Plantinga) an anti-existentialist view of states of affairs.¹² By anti-existentialist, we mean a view of states of affairs which holds that they “are in no way dependent for their being upon the being of concrete, individual things. Even if there were no concrete, individual things, there would be indefinitely many states of affairs.”¹³ Chisholm still maintains the genus-species picture of states of affairs, propositions and events and thus denies there are concrete events, i.e. events that are “included among the concrete things and individuals of the world.”¹⁴ Chisholm uses the following example to argue for states of affairs being intentional objects that may fail to obtain:

‘What Jones fears most is precisely what Smith is trying to bring about.’
The sentence seems to tell us that there is a certain thing toward which Smith had one intentional attitude and toward which Jones had quite a

¹⁰ Chisholm, R. (1970). "Events and Propositions." *Nous* 4(1): 20.

¹¹ Chisholm, R. (1976). *Person and Object*. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court.

¹² Plantinga, A. (1983). "On Existentialism." *Philosophical Studies* 44: 1-20.

¹³ Chisholm, R. (1976). *Person and Object*. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 114.

¹⁴ Chisholm, R. (1976). *Person and Object*. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 116.

different intentional attitude. Their common object, for example, could be Brown being elected mayor. They could have this common object even if Brown were not elected mayor. In that case, Jones' fears would have been unfounded and Smith's efforts unsuccessful. Brown being elected mayor, then, can be their common object even though it never occurs. The most natural view to take, therefore, with respect to this first type of fact, is to say that the common intentional object of Jones and Smith is a state of affairs—one that may or may not occur.¹⁵

Chisholm bases this argument on the following methodology:

From the fact that a true sentence seems to commit us to the existence of a certain object, it does not follow that there is in fact such an object. What we should say is rather this: If (i) there is a sentence which seems to commit us to the existence of a certain object, (ii) we know the sentence to be true, and (iii) we can find no way of explicating or paraphrasing the sentence which will make clear to us that the truth of the sentence is compatible with the nonexistence of such an object, then it is more reasonable to suppose that there is such an object than it is not to suppose that there is such an object. Given an adequate view of the nature of philosophy, it does not seem to me to be reasonable to deny this conditional...¹⁶

In the case of a commitment to the existence of states of affairs, Chisholm can find no paraphrase and is therefore committed to their existence.

Chisholm proceeds to formally define states of affairs:

P is a state of affairs \equiv_{Df} It is possible that there is someone who accepts p .¹⁷

'Accepts' here could be replaced with 'considered' or 'entertained' says Chisholm.

Chisholm leaves both 'accepts' and 'occurs' as undefined. Chisholm also provides identity conditions for states of affairs:

p entails $q \equiv_{\text{Df}}$ p is necessarily such that (a) if it obtains then q obtains and (b) whoever accepts it accepts q .

¹⁵ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 116

¹⁶ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 116.

¹⁷ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 117.

...if a state of affairs p is identical with a state of affairs q , then p entails q and q entails p .¹⁸

Chisholm takes states of affairs here to be eternal entities; it is a Platonistic view.

States of affairs are related to properties and relations in the following way:

For every property or relation G , there is a state of affairs p and there is a state of affairs q which are necessarily such that: p obtains if and only if G is exemplified and q obtains if and only if G is not exemplified.¹⁹

Chisholm expresses one possible objection to his reduction of propositions to states of affairs:

Let us take note briefly of one possible objection to this reduction of propositions to states of affairs. We may put it as follows: (i) Your theory implies that, if a man believes that a storm is occurring, then that state of affairs which is the occurrence of a storm is the object of his belief. But (ii) the sentence "He believes that a storm is occurring" is natural and clearly grammatical, whereas "He believes the occurrence of a storm" is unnatural and not clearly grammatical. Hence (iii) if a man believes that a storm is occurring something other than the occurrence of a storm is the object of his belief.

The premises of the argument are certainly true. If we wish to say of a man that he believes that a storm is occurring, we do not say 'He believes the occurrence of a storm'. But we may say 'He believes in or suspects, or is counting on, or is mindful of, the occurrence of a storm'. And where we may say of a man that he fears, regrets, hopes or knows that a storm is occurring, we may also say, equally well, that he fears, regrets, hopes for, or is cognizant of the occurrence of a storm. Such points of usage may throw light upon various intentional attitudes. But surely they give us no reason to suppose that 'the occurrence of a storm' and 'that a storm is occurring' refer to different things. The argument is simply a non sequitur.

Chisholm also provides a definition of the concretization of any state of affairs:

¹⁸ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 118.

¹⁹ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 119.

e is concretized by A at $t =_{\text{Df}} e$ occurs; for every property P , if e entails P , and if P is had only by contingent things, then some member of A has P at t ; and there is no proper subset S of A which is such that, for every such P , some member of S has P .²⁰

Following this definition of concretization, Chisholm defines an occurrence of a state of affairs at a particular time and place:

e occurs at time $t =_{\text{Df}}$ There is a set A such that e is concretized by A at time t .

e occurs at place $P =_{\text{Df}}$ There is a set A and a time t such that e is concretized by A at t , and all the members of A are at place P at t .

In his 1979 “The Structure of States of Affairs,” Chisholm provides a slightly different definition of states of affairs:

p is a state of affairs $=_{\text{Df}}$ p is possibly such that there is someone who accepts it; and there is something which obtains and which is necessarily such that whoever conceives it conceives p .²¹

Chisholm also provides logical relations that hold between states of affairs:

p logically implies $q =_{\text{Df}}$ p is necessarily such that if it obtains, then q obtains.

p involves $q =_{\text{Df}}$ p is necessarily such that, whoever conceives it, conceives q .

p entails $q =_{\text{Df}}$ p logically implies q , and p is necessarily such that whoever accepts it accepts q .

Says Chisholm,

We may characterize three further relations by making use of the qualification ‘properly’. Thus p properly entails q , provided only p entails q and q does not entail p : analogously for logical implication and involvement.²²

²⁰ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 125.

²¹ Chisholm, R. (1979). The Structure of States of Affairs. Essays on Davidson: Actions and Events. B. V. a. M. Hintikka. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 109.

²² Chisholm, R. (1979). The Structure of States of Affairs. Essays on Davidson: Actions and Events. B. V. a. M. Hintikka. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 110-111.

Chisholm continues,

... p contradicts $q =_{\text{Df}} p$ is necessarily such that it obtains if and only if q does not obtain.

p explicitly denies $q =_{\text{Df}} p$ contradicts q , and p properly involves just what q involves. This concept of explicit denial provides us with a mark of what we may call a negative state of affairs: a negative state of affairs is one that explicitly denies something.

...Each state of affairs and its negation are so related that one is negative and the other is not negative. We may now define negation this way:

... p is a negation of $q =_{\text{Df}}$ Either p explicitly denies q , or q explicitly denies p .²³

Chisholm defines a world:

W is a world $=_{\text{Df}}$ W is a state of affairs; for every state of affairs p either W logically implies p or W logically implies a state of affairs that contradicts p ; and there is no state of affairs q such that W logically implies both q and a state of affairs that contradicts q .²⁴

In his 1979 “Objects and Persons: Revision and Replies” Chisholm modifies his theory of states of affairs. He says,

In *Person and Object*, I had defined ‘ p is a state of affairs’ by saying “It is possible that there is someone who accepts p .” The point of the definition, as Kim observes, was to emphasize the fact that states of affairs are by their nature such that they are possible objects of certain intentional attitudes. Kim is right in saying that the utility of such a definition will depend upon the extent to which we understand these attitudes, and he is not convinced that I have been sufficiently clear with respect to the concept of acceptance. I would suggest, moreover, that the earlier definition suffers from another defect: although I make use of the undefined concept of obtaining, the definition of states of affairs does not relate the concept of a state of affairs to that of obtaining. And so I would now modify the account of states of affairs in two respects: I

²³ Chisholm, R. (1979). The Structure of States of Affairs. *Essays on Davidson: Actions and Events*. B. V. a. M. Hintikka. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 111-112.

²⁴ Chisholm, R. (1979). The Structure of States of Affairs. *Essays on Davidson: Actions and Events*. B. V. a. M. Hintikka. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 112.

would make use of two intentional concepts, instead of just one, and I would connect the concept of a state of affairs with that of obtaining.

The two intentional concepts, then, are (i) that of acceptance and (ii) that of entertainment. I have discussed acceptance above. One may entertain – or consider — a state of affairs without accepting that state of affairs and without accepting its negation. The logic of entertainment differs in significant ways from that of acceptance. Consider, for example, the disjunctive proposition, there are horses or there are cows. One can accept the proposition without accepting either disjunct, but one cannot entertain the proposition without also entertaining each of the disjuncts. ...

D13.1 p is a state of affairs \equiv_{Df} There is a q which is such that it obtains and necessarily whoever entertains it entertains p . This definition, I believe, successfully captures the desired concept.

In view of what I have said above about the meaning of sentences containing demonstrative expressions, I now have a somewhat more restricted concept of states of affairs than I had in *Person and Object*. Thus I have reservations about Kim's formulation of what he describes as "the most fundamental fact about states of affairs" as I conceive them—namely, that 'states of affairs are designated by gerundial nominalization of indicative sentences.' I would accept the statement if it means only that states of affairs are designated by some such nominalizations, but not if it means that every such nominalization designates a state of affairs.²⁵

Chisholm continues to develop his theory in his 1981 *The First Person*:

'But you can't mean to say that all possible worlds are actual worlds. There is—and can be—only one actual world!' The word 'actual' is here ambiguous. If 'x is actual' is taken to mean the same as 'x exists', then all possible worlds are actual. But when it is said that only one world is actual, then 'is actual' is taken to mean the same as 'obtains'. There is—and can be—only one world that obtains.²⁶

²⁵ Chisholm, R. (1979). "Objects and Persons: Revisions and Replies." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 7/8: 342.

²⁶ Chisholm, R. (1981). *The First Person: An Essay on Reference and Intentionality*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 129.

Chisholm's theory takes a different turn in his 1989 *On Metaphysics* where he says that states of affairs can be reduced to properties.²⁷ Says Chisholm,

Is it possible, then, that states of affairs, so conceived, constitute a subspecies of property? We might be tempted to say that the state of affairs *that-p* is to be identified with the property of *being-such-that-p*. But *is* there such a property as “being such that p”? What we should say is, rather, this:

D9 That-p is a state of affairs = Df There is a property which is necessarily such that it is exemplified if and only if p

...

Since states of affairs are thus reducible to properties, the expression “the state of affairs that-p *obtains*” is reducible to a statement about *exemplification*:

D10 The state of affairs that-p obtains = Df Something has a property which is necessarily such that it is exemplified only if p.

What of *propositions*? If we use “proposition” to refer to a type of abstract object and not to a type of contingent thing (such as those “singular propositions” that are thought to contain contingent things as their constituents), then there would seem to be no ground for distinguishing propositions from states of affairs—unless we say that propositions are those states of affairs which are necessarily such that either they are always exemplified or they are never exemplified. And the concept of the *truth* of a proposition would be explicated by reference to exemplification in the way in which *obtaining* is explicated above.

And so our analyses of the intentional structures of properties may also be interpreted as analyses of the intentional structures of *states of affairs* or abstract *propositions*. The schematic letters in the definitions of property *conjunction* (D5), property *disjunction* (D6), and property *negation* (D7) may be replaced by terms for states of affairs.²⁸

Chisholm continues this theme of reductionism in one of his final works, *A Realistic Theory of Categories* (1996). Here Chisholm reduces propositions referred to by ‘that’-clauses to properties:

²⁷ Chisholm, R. (1989). *On Metaphysics*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

²⁸ Chisholm, R. (1989). *On Metaphysics*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 148-149.

D1 The proposition that p is true =Df There is something that has the attribute of being such that p.²⁹

Chisholm proceeds to identify facts with true propositions and possible worlds with a certain type of proposition:

...a proposition such that for every proposition e, either w logically implies e or w logically implies the negation of e; and there is no proposition h such that w implies both h and the negation of h.³⁰

Chisholm proceeds to deny that there are singular propositions and that his theory avoids the problems that singular propositions produce, particularly the problem of believing propositions about non-existent objects as in believing the proposition *that Pegasus is a horse*.

In this work, Chisholm has done away entirely with speaking of states of affairs. He has a new category, states, which are not defined intentionally (in fact, Chisholm leaves them undefined), but are characterized as entities that are composed of contingent substances and properties. States are closest to facts in our terminology.

Chisholm produces 3 general principles for states:

A1 For every x, x is F if and only if there is the state x-being-F.

A2 For every x, the state x-being-F is necessarily such that it is a state of x.

A3 For every property P, if there is the state x-having-P, then that state is necessarily such that it is a state of having the property P.³¹

²⁹ Chisholm, R. (1996). A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 23.

³⁰ Chisholm, R. (1996). A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 25.

³¹ Chisholm, R. (1996). A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 74.

Chisholm proceeds to discuss higher-order states and what states are events. Again he provides several definitions:

D10 x is a *first-order state* = Df x is a state of a substance.

D11 x is a *second-order state* = Df x is a state of a first-order state.

D12 x being F is an *event* = Df (1) x -being- F is either a first-order state or a second-order state; and (2) x is not necessarily such that it is F .³²

Dean Zimmerman, a student of Chisholm's toward the end of Chisholm's career describes, how Chisholm eventually came to reject his view of states of affairs in the early 1980's. Explains Zimmerman,

The phenomenon of first person reference subjected the ontology of states of affairs to considerable strain. If propositional attitudes are relations between thinkers and states of affairs, what states of affairs are implicated in those attitudes expressed using the first person pronoun? ... Since states of affairs are necessary things, their constituents, too, must be necessary existents. The only way, then, for a state of affairs to be about some contingent thing is for it to contain an "individual concept" of that thing: a property only one thing could have, and one that is had by that thing. Chisholm introduced haecceities, but later became uncomfortable with them. ...

The phenomenological inadequacy of the haecceity theory led Chisholm to rethink problems of self-reference, looking for an haecceity-free theory that would allow for the distinctions we actually make among self-directed beliefs. What resulted was the "direct attribution" theory of belief: the objects of the so-called propositional attitudes are really properties, and the things that are true and false (in at least one primary sense) are direct attributions of properties to oneself. ... Forced to regard the objects of belief, hope, wonderment, etc. as properties in at least those cases ascribable by means of an indirect reflexive ("she, herself," "he, himself"), Chisholm (and Lewis) advocate treating all believing, etc. as a matter of the self-ascription of properties. When a person believes that she, herself, is mortal, she self-ascribes the property of mortality. When she believes, with respect to her father, that he is

³² Chisholm, R. (1996). A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 77.

mortal, what is happening is this: she self-ascribes a property that implies that there is some relation holding between her and only one other person, and that person is mortal; and her father in fact stands in that relation to her. When she believes that someone (or other) is mortal, she self-ascribes a simpler property: being such that someone is mortal.

... At first, the new account of the propositional attitudes sent relatively minor ripples through Chisholm's system, as he examined the extent to which the change called for modifications of his view in epistemology (1982: ch. 1), action theory, axiology, and ethics, and of his resolution of the paradox of analysis (1986). In these areas, there was little change in fundamental doctrine. But a fairly radical rethinking of his theory of events and causation was called for. The self-ascription account of thinking solves problems with the older, propositional account by rejecting the received opinion that truth and falsity are, at bottom, properties of propositions. In order to give a unified theory of truth and falsehood, Chisholm adopts what he calls a "doxastic theory of truth," not unlike Russell's "multiple relation theory of judgment" (Russell 1910): it is beliefs or judgments that are true and false in the "primary sense"; the truth and falsity of other things is to be explicated in terms of the sense in which beliefs are true and false (1993, 1986:23). This strips the old states of affairs of two of their most important functions: as the things that are, at bottom, true and false; and as the objects of propositional attitudes. Furthermore, now that haecceities have been rejected, no necessarily existent state of affairs can, in any obvious way, imply the existence of contingent particulars; so states of affairs are inadequate vehicles of truth and falsehood in all but the most abstract or general cases. States of affairs become a third wheel within the theory of the true and false, and are eventually jettisoned.

But states of affairs had played a dual role, as both objects of propositional attitudes and, when true, worldly facts and events. Formerly, the bearers of truth and falsehood were propositions, which were a category of states of affairs; and states of affairs (when they obtained) were not to be distinguished from facts. When the bearers of truth and falsehood are doxastic—acts of judgment—no simple identification of the bearers of truth with facts or events is possible. Many facts and events have nothing to do with judgments or thinkers. Something must be introduced to play the roles of fact and event in the new ontology: those things in virtue of which acts of judgment are true or false, and the sorts of things that are causes and effects. And so Chisholm introduces a new category, that of states: contingently existing structures that are made out of things and properties, and that exist only if the things have the relevant properties (1990["Events

Without Times: An Essay on Ontology”], 1996 [*A Realistic Theory of Categories*]).³³

Bruce Aune also confirms that Chisholm rejected his earlier notion of states of affairs:

...but Chisholm does not discriminate between these linguistic structures in assigning semantic values. As it happens, he made a point of emphasizing that not all gerundial nominalization of indicative sentences designate states of affairs. [Objects and Persons: Revision and Replies,” Grazer Philosophische Studien 7/8, p. 343] The ones that do not are the ones that contain demonstratives, indexicals, and proper names.

When Chisholm abandoned the view that sentences containing names and demonstratives express propositions or states of affairs, he claimed that such sentences express attributions of properties to objects: Chisholm “Reply to Bruce Aune” (358) “I have to agree with most of what he says in criticism of my view about states of affairs. In the book, *Person and Object* (1976), I had considered states of affairs as being abstract objects, believing that in this way I could restrict the category of contingent things to individuals, thus avoiding commitment to so-called “concrete events.” But subsequently, in *On Metaphysics* (1989), I abandoned the concept of states of affairs as abstract objects. And so my position since that time has been the same as Aune’s.³⁴

We see a significant progression in Chisholm’s theory, from a robust, developed account of states of affairs to the ultimate rejection of them due to the problem of first-person reference. Chisholm’s theory of states of affairs, before he abandoned it, is one of the most developed contemporary theories. Any contemporary theory, especially one that seeks to tie intentional (or propositional) attitudes to states of affairs cannot do so without a thorough familiarity with Chisholm’s theory. One of the questions that remains for any theory that resembles Chisholm’s is whether the problem of self-

³³ Zimmerman, D. (2001). Roderick Chisholm, Part II: Metaphysics. *A Companion to Analytic Philosophy*. A. P. a. D. S. Martinich. Malden, Massachusetts, Blackwell: 293-294.

³⁴ Aune, B. (1994). Chisholm on States of Affairs and Reference. *The Philosophy of Roderick M. Chisholm*. L. E. Hahn. Chicago, Open Court. 25: 345.

reference will force one to jettison states of affairs as Chisholm thought that it did. In the case of our next theorist, John Pollock, the problem of self-reference has not led to a similar rejection of states of affairs.

John Pollock (1966)

John Pollock has produced a comprehensive theory of states of affairs, propositions, possible worlds, and modality. Though he began theorizing as early as 1966, his two works *Language and Thought* (1982) and *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics* (1984) provide the most developed versions of his theories. Pollock was the first contemporary philosopher to note the grammatical identification of states of affairs as nominalized gerundive phrases. Like Chisholm, Pollock identifies states of affairs with nominalized gerundives like *John's being a bachelor*. Pollock says, "A state of affairs is just something's being the case."³⁵ States Pollock,

The concept of a state of affairs brings together under one heading a number of different kinds of things between which we ordinarily distinguish, such as events (*the Giant's winning the pennant*), situations (*the division's being trapped at Dien Bien Phu*), conditions (*X's being a locally compact Hausdorff topological group*), causes (*the five ball's striking the eight ball*), occurrences, accidents, happenings, incidents, circumstances, consequences, etc. Given an English indicative sentence P, there is a gerund clause P_g which stands to P as "John's being a bachelor" stands to "John is a bachelor". A state of affairs is that *kind* of thing to which we can refer by using these gerund clauses...

It is advantageous to introduce the following locution: Given a gerund clause P_g that refers to some state of affairs, let us define 'p_g obtains' to mean simply P. Thus, "John's being a bachelor, obtains", means, "John is a bachelor".³⁶

³⁵ Pollock, J. (1967). "The Logic of Logical Necessity." *Logique et Analyse* 10(39-40): 309.

³⁶ Pollock, J. (1967). "The Logic of Logical Necessity." *Logique et Analyse* 10(39-40): 309-310.

Pollock remains neutral on the question of the ontological status of state of affairs. He says,

When I say that there is a state of affairs having a certain property, I am using “there is” in the same sense as the mathematician who says “There is a prime number between 15 and 20”. The people who deny the existence of states of affairs frequently deny, in the same sense, the existence of numbers. But in doing so they do not mean to deny that there is a prime number between 15 and 20. Thus I am inclined to think that my talking about the existence of states of affairs is really philosophically neutral. I am only talking about interrelations between states of affairs, and not any deeper questions about the “ontological status” of states of affairs.

I think that much the same thing can be said to forestall possible objections to my saying that there are conjunctive states of affairs, negative states of affairs, general states of affairs, etc. This is really no more than a convention on my part concerning how I will use the term “state of affairs.”³⁷

Pollock takes states of affairs to have an algebraic structure. States of affairs are sometimes said to be the same state of affairs. Says Pollock,

Thus, in general, given two states of affairs, X and Y, we can read “X = Y” as either, “X is the same thing as Y?”, or, “For X to obtain is the same thing as for Y to obtain.”³⁸

The algebraic structure of states of affairs also includes a relation of constitution that holds between certain states of affairs. States Pollock, “For example, we may say that John’s being unmarried is part of John’s being a bachelor, or Smith’s having had a wife is part of Smith’s being a widower.”³⁹

In his *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*, Pollock further develops his views on states of affairs. He says that states of affairs can exist without obtaining:

³⁷ Pollock, J. (1967). “The Logic of Logical Necessity.” *Logique et Analyse* 10(39-40): 311.

³⁸ Pollock, J. (1967). “The Logic of Logical Necessity.” *Logique et Analyse* 10(39-40): 312,

³⁹ Pollock, J. (1967). “The Logic of Logical Necessity.” *Logique et Analyse* 10(39-40): 312.

“For example, there is such a state of affairs as *my not* existing even though I do exist.”⁴⁰ States of affairs resemble propositions in that they are a sort of truth bearer; he states

In many way, states of affairs resemble propositions. In particular, they are truth bearers of a sort. States of affairs are not literally true or false, but obtaining and not obtaining are truth-like properties.⁴¹

However, states of affairs differ from propositions in that the former are directly referential whereas propositions are not. Says Pollock,

For example, if Mary is the girl in the red hat, then (on at least one construal of the definite description) *the girl in the red hat's looking lost* is the same state of affairs as *Mary's looking lost*. States of affairs may involve objects directly rather than under a description.⁴²

Propositions, says Pollock, are maximally fine-grained objects of belief that are not directly referential. By ‘directly referential’, Pollock means a proposition that includes as part of it the referent of a designator included in the proposition. In his *Language and Thought*, Pollock rejects this directly-referential view of names.⁴³ So, propositions are not directly referential whereas states of affairs are. Pollock continues,

They are “about” objects but not in terms of some mode of representation. States of affairs, in some sense, contain objects as direct constituents. Whether we distinguish between directly referential propositions and states of affairs seems to me mainly a matter of convenience. It is generally (though not universally) acknowledged that distinct propositions can be logically equivalent. The question arises whether this is also true of states of affairs; i.e., can two distinct states of affairs be necessarily such that one obtains iff the other does? I do not see any basis in intuition for deciding this matter, so I am going to follow the simpler course and suppose that logically equivalent states of

⁴⁰ Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 52.

⁴¹ Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 52-53.

⁴² Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 53

⁴³ Pollock, J. (1982). *Language and Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 40-105.

affairs are identical. In other words, I shall assume: If S and S^* are states of affairs, $S = S^*$ iff and S and S^* are necessarily such that one obtains iff the other does. This is a safe assumption even if there is another sense of ‘state of affairs’ in which equivalent states of affairs need not be identical, because we can always regard states of affairs in the present sense as being equivalence classes of the more finely individuated kind of states of affairs.⁴⁴

So, Pollack’s states of affairs are coarse-grained whereas his propositions are not. Pollack explains why propositions are not coarse-grained:

When I think about Herbert, I must think about him *in some particular way*, i.e., under some particular mode of representation. We can either take that mode of representation to contribute to the identity of the proposition believed, or we can ignore the mode of representation and say that we believe the same proposition just as long as we believe the same thing of the same object (regardless of how we are thinking of that object). Propositions of the latter sort have been called *directly referential propositions*; we might call those of the first sort *indirectly referential propositions*.

It seems that there is a finest possible criterion for deciding whether two people (or one person in two possible situations) believe the same thing. This requires them to be thinking of objects in the same way, to be holding the beliefs at the same time, and some cases (e.g., in first-person belief) to be the same person; there may also be additional requirements. Objects of belief or disbelief individuated by this criterion are maximally fine-grained. I propose to reserve the term *proposition* for these maximally fine-grained objects of belief or disbelief. This is the way the term will be used throughout this book.⁴⁵

Pollock provides definitions of negation, disjunction and conditionals for states of affairs and notes that “Obviously, it follows from these definitions that states of affairs satisfy the axioms for the propositional calculus, or what comes to the same thing,

⁴⁴ Pollock, J. (1984). The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 53-54.

⁴⁵ Pollock, J. (1984). The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 9.

states of affairs form a Boolean algebra under the operations $\&$, \sim , and \vee .”⁴⁶ We will further explore Pollock’s related theory of propositions in the development of our theory in chapter five.

Reinhardt Grossman (1973)

Reinhardt Grossman’s first theorizing on states of affairs appeared in his 1973 *Ontological Reduction*. Grossman, like Chisholm, was influenced by Meinong. Like Chisholm’s early theory, Grossman’s states of affairs are entities that can obtain or fail to obtain. Non-obtaining states of affairs exist just as much as obtaining states of affairs. So Grossman rejects a Meinongian view that countenances different levels of being. He says,

Entities divide into things and states of affairs. Correspondingly, I shall say that things *exist* or do not *exist*, while states of affairs *obtain* or do not *obtain*. But I do not wish to imply by this terminological distinction that there are two different modes of being. I do not know of any sufficiently convincing argument to the effect that things must have a different ontological status from states of affairs.⁴⁷

Later, he says: “Either a thing exists or it does not exist; there is no third possibility. There are no levels of being.”⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Grossman calls non-obtaining states of affairs ‘non-existing states of affairs in places,’ so he seems to equivocate on ‘existing.’ He says,

At any rate, in the primary sense of ‘merely possible’, only states of affairs are merely possible. Hence the questions of whether or not merely possible entities can have ontological status and can have properties reduce, from an ontological point of view, to the questions

⁴⁶ Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 53-54.

⁴⁷ Grossman, R. (1973). *Ontological Reduction*. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 39-40.

⁴⁸ Grossman, R. (1973). *Ontological Reduction*. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 90.

whether or not merely possible states of affairs have any kind of ontological status and whether or not they can have properties. As to the first question, I believe that merely possible states of affairs, just like merely possible things, have no ontological status whatsoever. A state of affairs either obtains or does not obtain. There is no other possibility. States of affairs which do not obtain do not have a watered-down form of being.

But I think that nonexistent states of affairs, unlike nonexistent things, have properties and stand in relations to other entities. The properties they have are not “ordinary ones.” They are categorial properties. Every state of affairs, whether it obtains or not, is an entity—a something—and is a state of affairs. States of affairs which do not obtain exemplify, in my opinion, the two categorial properties of being an entity and of being a state of affairs.⁴⁹

Grossman’s ‘ontological status’ is unclear. He wants to deny that there is more than one type of being and his possible states of affairs do have some sort of being since they have certain properties. Yet, ‘ontological status’ cannot mean obtaining since the obtaining/non-obtaining distinction is made in addition to the claim that possible states of affairs have no ontological status. So, this claim that states of affairs have no ontological status remains unclear.

Grossman denies that states of affairs are identical to propositions. He says,

...as I use these two expressions, existent propositions—if there were such entities—would be correlated to false sentences as well as true ones, while only true sentences can be said to represent states of affairs which obtain. In other words, if there were propositions, there would exist a proposition for every sentence, regardless of whether the sentences were true or false. States of affairs, though, obtain only for true sentences. Now, this is merely one difference between propositions and the states of affairs of my ontology, but it is an important one, and it may help to explain why I insisted above that the theory of states of affairs is not about propositions.⁵⁰

States of affairs also serve as a relatum of mental acts. Says Grossman,

⁴⁹ Grossman, R. (1973). Ontological Reduction. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 91.

Every mental act stands in the intentional relation to a state of affairs, irrespective of whether the state of affairs obtains or not. Every act, as I mentioned in the introduction, is in this sense propositional. Properly speaking, it is not Hamlet who stands in the intentional relation to a certain thought when someone, as we ordinarily say, thinks of Hamlet, but rather some state of affairs involving Hamlet; for example, the state of affairs that Hamlet is indecisive.⁵¹

Grossman provides identity conditions for both obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs.

Two states of affairs are the same if and only if they contain (a) the same constituents, (b) in the same order, and (c) with the same number of occurrences...

Take, for example, the two states of affairs *P or Q* and *Q or P*. They have the same constituents, yet they are merely equivalent, not identical.⁵²

States of affairs can be classified by their constituents, says Grossman. There are quantified and non-quantified states of affairs; the former can be further specified by the type of quantification they contain and the order in which the quantifiers occur. In addition to classifying states of affairs according to whether they contain quantifiers, states of affairs can be divided into atomic and molecular where the former do not contain quantifiers, negation or connectives. Molecular states of affairs are nonquantified but contain negation and/or at least one connective. States of affairs can also be classified according to the type of constituents they contain which are other than quantifiers and connectives, though his examples here are unclear.⁵³

⁵⁰ Grossman, R. (1973). Ontological Reduction. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 43-44.

⁵¹ Grossman, R. (1973). Ontological Reduction. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 91.

⁵² Grossman, R. (1973). Ontological Reduction. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 40.

⁵³ Grossman, R. (1973). Ontological Reduction. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 189.

In his *The Categorical Structure of the World* (1983) Grossman discusses the problem of mental content for false belief:

Meinong's objectives are similar to our states of affairs. It is our view that a true belief intends a fact, while a false belief intends what merely appears to be a fact. A true belief, in other words, intends an existing state of affairs, while a false belief intends what merely appears to be an existing state of affairs. This view is essentially Meinong's. He speaks of objectives where we speak of states of affairs. And he also disagrees with us on the ontological status of facts: He believes that they subsist, while we hold that they exist. But these are relatively minor differences.

...But Meinong's view differs from ours in one fundamental respect. A false judgment, he maintains, intends something which has no being; it neither exists nor subsists. But, and here is where we differ, this something is nevertheless an objective; it belongs to the category of objective. Meinong believes, walking here, too, in the footsteps of Twardowski, that in general objects which have no being at all may nevertheless have properties and stand in relations.... There is therefore, precisely speaking, no such property as that of being a state of affairs. What there is, is the property and category of being a fact. Properly speaking, there are no states of affairs, there are only facts. Meinong's view, one might say, stands halfway between Bolzano's and mine. According to Bolzano, false propositions subsist just as much as true ones. According to Meinong, they have no being at all, but they still have some properties. According to my view, finally, they neither have being nor do they have the property of being a state of affairs.

But we cannot avoid using some such term as 'state of affairs' and 'intention of a mental act'. There are many occasions when we have to speak about whatever a belief intends, irrespective of whether the belief is true or false. Therefore, there are many occasions when we have to talk about whatever a mental act intends, irrespective of whether the belief is true or false. ... I use the words 'object' and 'state of affairs' for this purpose. An object is anything that may be before a mind, irrespective of whether or not it exists, and irrespective of its category. A state of affairs is anything that may be before a mind, irrespective of whether or not it exists, which either is a fact or would be a fact if it existed. To make an important point once more: There is no such category or property as that of being an object or of being a state of affairs. These are just words which we use as convenient abbreviations. An object in general, for example, can be described only in terms of the

intentional relation which it has to mind, since it may have no other property whatsoever.⁵⁴

Here Grossman appears to have changed his view from his earlier *Ontological Reduction* in that states of affairs do not have any being whereas before they did exist even if they did not obtain. Overall, Grossman's theory is similar to Chisholm's though it is less clear in places and less systematized than Chisholm's. Like Chisholm and Meinong, Grossman's starting place is with intentionality. With Chisholm, there was clarity on the ontological status of non-obtaining states of affairs, but as we see with Grossman, there is not this level of clarity.

Alvin Plantinga (1974)

Like John Pollock in his development of a theory of language, Alvin Plantinga did not explicitly set out to produce a theory of states of affairs. Nevertheless, he relies on them heavily in his attempt to understand necessity, particularly in his seminal *The Nature of Necessity*. Plantinga is a realist about possible worlds in that he takes them to exist, though he distinguishes the predicates 'exists' and 'actual' (or 'obtains') such that all possible worlds exist, but only one is actual. Possible worlds are maximal states of affairs—states of affairs that include or preclude every state of affairs. Thus, the obtains/exists distinction that holds at the level of possible worlds, also holds at the level of individual states of affairs. Says Plantinga,

⁵⁴Grossman, R. (1983). *The Categorical Structure of the World*. Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 335-337.

Actuality, for states of affairs, is like truth for propositions; just as some propositions are true and others false, so some states of affairs are actual and others unactual. Those that are unactual, however, like false propositions, nevertheless *exist*; actuality must not be confused with existence.⁵⁵

Here, like the early Chisholm, Plantinga evinces his Platonism about states of affairs (and hence possible worlds), propositions and properties. All of these are necessarily existing beings according to Plantinga. Some states of affairs are possible, some are impossible as in *9's being a prime number*, but all exist. Impossible states of affairs could not possibly obtain. Since the actual world, α , is one possible world, it too is an abstract, necessarily existing object, though it does not necessarily obtain. Of the actual world, Plantinga says it

...is an abstract object. It has no center of mass; it is neither a concrete object nor a mereological sum of concrete parts; indeed α , like *Ford's being ingenious*, has no spatial parts at all.⁵⁶

Plantinga distinguishes states of affairs from propositions. Propositions are true (false) in a world.⁵⁷ Plantinga is not dogmatic on the question of whether his states of affairs are really just identical to his propositions:

It is clear that a proposition like (1) *Socrates is snubnosed* is intimately related to a state of affairs like (2) *Socrates' being snubnosed*. Roderick Chisholm, indeed, thinks the relation so intimate as to constitute identity. As he sees it, there are not two kinds of entities—propositions and states of affairs—but only one; propositions just are states of affairs. Perhaps he is right. Without entering that question, we may note that in any event there is an obvious respect in which (1) corresponds to (2); it is impossible, in that broadly logical sense, that (1) be true and (2) fail to obtain. We might extend the use of 'entails' and say that (1) entails (2).

⁵⁵ Plantinga, A. (1985). Alvin Plantinga: Self-Profile. *Alvin Plantinga*. J. T. a. P. v. Inwagen. Dordrecht, D. Reidel: 88.

⁵⁶ Plantinga, A. (1976). "Actualism and Possible Worlds." *Theoria* 42: 258.

⁵⁷ Plantinga, A. (1974). *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 89.

But it is equally impossible that (2) obtain and (1) be false; (2) also entails (1). And obviously for any possible world W and proposition p , W entails p or entails the denial of p .⁵⁸

Nevertheless, Plantinga does maintain a distinction between states of affairs and propositions arguing that the ‘true’ predicate and the ‘obtains’ predicates are distinct:

...are there really *two* sorts of things, propositions and states of affairs, or only one? I am inclined to the former view on the ground that propositions have a property—truth or falsehood—not had by states of affairs.⁵⁹

Contra David Lewis, Plantinga denies that possible worlds contain concrete objects.

Rather, they contain haecceities of individuals, i.e., individual essences like *being Socrates*. So, to say an individual exists in a world is to say that some maximal state of affairs (a possible world) contains the haecceity of that individual such that, were that world to obtain, *being Socrates* would be exemplified and, therefore, Socrates would exist. For example, one possible world may include the state of affairs of *Socrates being hooknosed* such that we can say that Socrates exists in that world. But here, ‘Socrates’ expresses the haecceity of Socrates, which is included in that world (a maximal state of affairs).

Like propositions, states of affairs serve as mental content in Plantinga’s theory of modality. Authors of fiction, says Plantinga, have a particular talent for calling our mind to certain states of affairs:

⁵⁸Plantinga, A. (1974). *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 45-46.

⁵⁹ Plantinga, A. (1976). "Actualism and Possible Worlds." *Theoria* 42: 139-160; reprinted in Loux, M. E., Ed. (1979). *The Possible and the Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 258.

He brings it to mind for us, helps us focus our attention upon it, enables us to entertain, explore, and contemplate it, a procedure we find amusing and titillating or edifying and instructive as the case may be.⁶⁰

Plantinga also speaks of objects existing in states of affairs and defines this counterfactually:

...an object *x* exists in a state of affairs *S* if and only if necessarily, if *S* had been actual, *x* would have existed. Socrates, therefore, exists both in *Socrates' being wise* and in *Socrates' being foolish*.⁶¹

While objects can exist in states of affairs, Plantinga defends a view he calls “anti-existentialism,” the view that singular propositions, states of affairs, and haecceities are all ontologically dependent upon the individuals they involve, e.g., the proposition *that Socrates is snubnosed*, according to existentialism, is dependent upon Socrates for its existence. Plantinga argues,

Surely it's possible that Socrates should not have existed; unlike God and the number seven, Socrates is not a necessary being. So the proposition *possibly Socrates does not exist* is true, and the proposition *Socrates does not exist* is possible, that is, possibly true. But that proposition could not have been true without existing. Furthermore, if it *had* been true, Socrates would not have existed. If it had been true, therefore, it would have existed but Socrates would not have existed. It is therefore possible that the proposition *Socrates does not exist* exist when Socrates does not—contrary to the claims of existentialism, according to which that proposition has Socrates as a constituent and hence is ontologically dependent upon him.⁶²

Plantinga's work on necessity and states of affairs has brought multiple ontological debates to the service, some of which we will address in producing our own theory of

⁶⁰ Plantinga, A. (1974). *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 160.

⁶¹ Plantinga, A. (1985). Alvin Plantinga: Self-Profile. *Alvin Plantinga*. J. T. a. P. v. Inwagen. Dordrecht, D. Reidel: 89.

⁶² Plantinga, A. (1983). "On Existentialism." *Philosophical Studies* 44: 9.

states of affairs. Plantinga's contribution to theories of states of affairs is significant in that his theory is clearly laid out. An important question for our theory will be whether Plantinga's haecceities work to preserve his anti-existentialist account. As we saw above, Chisholm gave up his theory of states of affairs on account of difficulties with haecceities and self-reference.⁶³

Ramon Lemos (1927-2006) (1986)

Ramon Lemos developed an extensive theory of states of affairs in the mid-1980's, first in his "Propositions, State of Affairs, and Facts" and subsequently in his *Metaphysical Investigations*.⁶⁴ Like Chisholm, Plantinga, Pollock, and Grossman, Lemos refers to states of affairs using nominalized gerundives. Like Plantinga, Lemos distinguishes between states of affairs and propositions with the *true-false/obtain-fail-to-obtain* predicate distinctions. Says Lemos,

The obtaining of a given state of affairs, like the state of affairs that obtains, is neither true nor false, whereas the proposition that a given state of affairs obtains is true or false.⁶⁵

Like Chisholm, Lemos defines a state of affairs intentionally, but also, unlike Chisholm, semantically:

...the concept of a state of affairs is the concept of something the obtaining or nonobtaining of which can be the content of a belief, judgment, or statement...⁶⁶

⁶³ Instead of speaking in terms of haecceities, I will prefer John Pollack's "propositional designators".

⁶⁴ See his Lemos, R. (1986). "Propositions, States of Affairs, and Facts." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24(4): 517-530 and Lemos, R. (1988). *Metaphysical Investigations*. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses.

⁶⁵ Lemos, R. (1988). *Metaphysical Investigations*. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses, 116.

⁶⁶ Lemos, R. (1988). *Metaphysical Investigations*. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses, 115.

While states of affairs can be entertained as intended objects of thought, they cannot by themselves be believed, judged, or stated and thus are distinct from propositions which *can* be believed, judged, or stated. So, the state of affairs is not the content of a belief, judgment, or statement, but when combined with the predicates *obtains/does not obtain*, a proposition is formed, which can then serve as the content of a belief, judgment, or statement. I cannot, says Lemos, believe *snow's being white*, but I can believe that *snow's being white obtains* since the latter is a proposition.⁶⁷ Lemos further explicates the relation that holds between states of affairs and propositions:

...propositions presuppose the obtaining and nonobtaining of states of affairs, in the sense that no proposition could be true or false in the absence of the obtaining and the nonobtaining of states of affairs. It is because various states of affairs do or do not obtain that various propositions are true or false.⁶⁸

Lemos does not say whether this 'because' expresses a logical or causal relation, though the most obvious choice would seem to be the former. Lemos explains that a state of affairs (and its obtaining or nonobtaining) is the nominative content of a belief, judgment, or statement and a proposition is the predicative content of beliefs, judgments, or statements. He says,

The predicative content presupposes but is not presupposed by the nominative content. This is the case because, as we indicated above, one can think of a given state of affairs and its obtaining without believing, judging, or stating that it does in fact obtain, whereas one cannot believe, judge, or state that it obtains without first having thought of it. In this sense the nominative content of a belief, judgment, or statement is more fundamental than the predicative content. It is also more fundamental in the sense that it is only by virtue of a difference in

⁶⁷ I have left 'that' unitalicized here to reflect Lemos' expression of a proposition, though it is more often included in the expression of a proposition.

⁶⁸ Lemos, R. (1988). Metaphysical Investigations. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses, 116.

their nominative component that two propositions of the same quality and quantity can differ.

What is meant by saying that a state of affairs and its obtaining or not obtaining is the nominative content and a proposition the predicative content of a belief, judgment, or statement can also be explained as follows. When one simply thinks of some state of affairs or of its obtaining or not obtaining without also thinking either that it does or that it does not obtain, one simply intends it as the object of one's thought and does not predicate of it either that it does or that it does not obtain. The linguistic expression of such a thought would be something such as "the Eiffel Tower's being in London" or "The obtaining (or nonobtaining) of the state of affairs consisting of the Eiffel Tower's being in London."⁶⁹

Lemos also recognizes both possible and impossible states of affairs, the latter being those that cannot obtain. Lemos goes on to develop an elaborate framework for understanding the various objects, both existing and non-existing that a state of affairs might involve.⁷⁰

Lemos has had less impact in the development of states of affairs theories due primarily to his choice not to interact with any of the contemporary theories that preceded him. Nevertheless, his contribution to the history of states of affairs theories is worth noting because of his unique attempt to make explicit the relation that holds between states of affairs and propositions. While ultimately I believe this attempt fails, it is a creative attempt nonetheless.

⁶⁹ Lemos, R. (1988). Metaphysical Investigations. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses, 117-118.

⁷⁰ Lemos, R. (1988). Metaphysical Investigations. Rutherford, NJ, Associated University Presses, 157-178.

David Armstrong (1997)

The most recent contribution to states of affairs theories has come in David Armstrong's *A World of States of Affairs*.⁷¹ Armstrong approaches states of affairs not from an intentional perspective but from a fact-perspective; in fact Armstrong takes 'fact' and 'state of affairs' to be synonymous terms. Working in the tradition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Armstrong lays out his basic thesis at the beginning of *A World of States of Affairs*:

The hypothesis of this work is that the world, all that there is, is a world of states of affairs. Others, Wittgenstein in particular, have said that the world is a world of facts and not a world of things. These theses are substantially the same, though differently expressed.

The general structure of states of affairs will be argued to be this. A state of affairs exists if and only if a particular (at a later point to be dubbed a thin particular) has a property or, instead, a relation holds between two or more particulars. Each state of affairs, and each constituent of each state of affairs, meaning by their constituents the particulars, properties, relations and, in the case of higher-order states of affairs, lower-order states of affairs, is a contingent existent.⁷²

So, first-order states of affairs are made up of physical particulars exemplifying properties and standing in relations. They are non-mereological collections since the constituents of a state of affairs are not sufficient to determine that state of affairs' identity. For example *a's loving b* and *b's loving a* include the same constituents, but are not the same states of affairs.⁷³ Says Armstrong,

States of affairs, then, have a non-mereological mode of composition. But, of course, if states of affairs are taken as units, as atoms one might say, and one does not dive within these states of affairs, then they are

⁷¹ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁷² Armstrong, D. M. (1997). *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁷³ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 120.

susceptible of themselves being put together in a way that obeys the mereological rules...Atomic states of affairs may be *conjoined* to form molecular states of affairs ...and these conjunctions obey the mereological rules.⁷⁴

Second (and higher)-order states of affairs are states of affairs that contain first-order states of affairs as constituents. But, since states of affairs are not mereological compositions, molecular states of affairs would seem distinct from second-order states of affairs since molecular states of affairs supervene on first-order states of affairs and supervenience is no addition of being to the subvenient. Thus second-order states of affairs do not supervene on first-order states of affairs.

As a naturalist, Armstrong holds that the spacetime system is identical with a certain set or aggregate of states of affairs that is the totality of states of affairs.⁷⁵

Armstrong's naturalistic commitments also lead him to reject possible states of affairs.

Says Armstrong,

A doctrine of merely possible states of affairs, however, is incompatible with Naturalism, in our sense of the term, the view that the world is a spacetime system and nothing more.⁷⁶

For Armstrong, having causal power is a necessary and sufficient condition for something to exist and since merely possible state of affairs cannot cause anything to occur, they cannot exist. Nevertheless, Armstrong does not want to deny that there are truths about which states of affairs, though they do not obtain, possibly obtain. More generally, Armstrong does not want to deny that there are modal truths. Armstrong is committed to a truthmaker view of truth in which truths must have truthmakers. Thus,

⁷⁴ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 122.

⁷⁵ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 5.

⁷⁶ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 148.

the question becomes, what are the truthmakers for modal truths (which include truths about merely possible states of affairs)? Armstrong argues the following:

The following compromise proposal is here advanced. All states of affairs are contingent. Their constituents, both particulars and universals, are likewise contingent existents. Since the world is a world of states of affairs, there are no other truthmakers for any truths except these contingent states of affairs and their contingently existing constituents. Modal truths, therefore, while not contingent truths, have nothing but these contingent beings as truthmakers.

Suppose, for instance, that it is true that it is possible that a has the relation R to b and also true that it is possible b has R to a , where a , R , and b all exist and R is a dyadic universal and an external non-symmetrical relation. The truthmaker for both these different modal truths will be the same mereological sum: $a + R + b$. Notice that for modal truths, as for other truths, there is no assumption that the truth-truthmaker relation, the correspondence relation, is always one-one. And notice also that the *class* $\{a, R, b\}$ is not required as truthmaker (though of course it exists), but the mere mereological sum.

Consider again the necessary, if unexciting, truth that if P and Q are two universals, then P is different from Q . The truthmaker for this truth is nothing but $P + Q$. It seems to be a necessary truth that a particular of a kilogram in mass contains a proper part that is a pound in mass. The truth-maker for this is again the two universals, assuming that is what they are, *being a kilogram* and *being a pound*.

The truthmaker or truthmakers for a particular modal truth will make the truth true in virtue of nothing more than relations of *identity* (strict identity) and *difference* holding between the constituents of the truthmaker (Identity will be especially conspicuous in the case of necessary truths, difference in the case of truths of possibility.) Identity and difference may be merely partial (see 2.32), a matter that has not received sufficient attention in the past. These relations are, furthermore, internal relations. And whatever be the case with other internal relations, it is surely plausible that identity and difference constitute no ontological addition, no addition of being. If so, the ultimate truthmakers for modal truths are nothing more than the *terms* of these relations, terms which are all of them contingent beings.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 150.

The truthmakers must contain instantiated universals since Armstrong denies the existence of uninstantiated universals. Armstrong does countenance necessary states of affairs:

It would seem that we require necessary states of affairs, much like laws of nature but not contingent. These states of affairs would seem to be higher-order states of affairs involving connections between simple universals, that is, connections between simple states-of-affairs types.⁷⁸

This is not to confuse Armstrong's claims that all states of affairs are contingently existing entities; states of affairs can be necessary, though they contingently exist. States of affairs are themselves also particulars, a position that Armstrong calls "the victory of particularity."⁷⁹ States of affairs, specifically first-order states of affairs, lack the repeatability characteristic of universals and are, therefore, particulars. Armstrong rejects disjunctive states of affairs and negative states of affairs, but does grant states of affairs of totality, states of affairs whose content is "that such and such entities are *all* the entities of some selected sort."⁸⁰ It is these totality states of affairs that are the truthmakers for negative and disjunctive truths.

Given Armstrong's naturalist constraints, his theory is much different than the other contemporary theories we have examined. Were it not for his choice of 'states of affairs' instead of 'fact' we would not consider his theory among those we have selected. But this terminological distinction is informative in that it shows the vast diversity of theories that have fallen under the term 'states of affairs'. Moreover,

⁷⁸ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 156.

⁷⁹ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 126.

⁸⁰ Armstrong, D. M. (1997). A World of States of Affairs. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 134.

Armstrong's theory gives us one live option on the question of whether states of affairs are identical to facts; according to Armstrong, they are.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen a variety of contemporary theories of states of affairs. We see both Meinong's and Wittgenstein's influence on these contemporary theories. We see more developed and precise theories in this contemporary collection of theories than we see in late 19th-century and early 20th-century theories. Each theory has value in informing us about the nature of states of affairs or shedding light on important questions about their nature. However, none of these theories entirely succeeds in capturing their nature. It will be our task in the next three chapters to produce a theory that gleans the most valuable elements of each of these theories while making suggestions for improvement in places where it is necessary.

*Chapter 4: A New Theory of States of Affairs:
Preliminaries*

Instead of critiquing each theory that we outlined in chapters one through three, it will be more efficient to produce a new theory in which the differences and advantages over those that have gone before will be clearly seen. A few notes on methodology are in order as our starting place significantly affects our conclusions. Also along the lines of preliminaries, we want to consider certain desiderata any successful theory of states of affairs will satisfy. Chief of our questions will be whether states of affairs are distinct from propositions on the assumption that both exist. An answer to this question is pursued here in chapter four. However, fully answering this question requires that we explore the nature of propositions especially if states of affairs turn out to be identical to or very similar to them; this inquiry will occupy chapter five.

Having explored the nature of propositions, we turn to the nature of states of affairs and their relationship to propositions in chapter six. Are states of affairs identical to facts or are they distinct? As we saw with Armstrong's theory, his states of affairs serve as truthmakers for truths. Thus, a third important question arises: what relationship do states of affairs bear to truth? We tackle this question as well in chapter six. We begin in this chapter with preliminaries for our theory of states of affairs.

Methodology

The majority of theories of states of affairs throughout their history begin with the phenomena of propositional (or intentional) attitudes and the semantic content of

statements, particularly statements involving intentional attitudes like belief.¹ When we examined the late 19th and early 20th-century theories of states of affairs, we saw that these were almost uniformly interested in explaining the content of intentional attitudes as well as semantic content for statements. One began with the phenomenology of certain intentional attitudes like belief or with indicative sentences and saw that there was *prima facie* evidence for the existence of some entity to explain common phenomena in these arenas. If I believe that snow is white, a natural explanation is to postulate some entity *p* to which I stand in a believing relation. Likewise, if Jones says ‘Snow is white’ and I say ‘What Jones said is true’, it is natural to postulate some semantic entity to which ‘What Jones said’ refers. Our intuitions are no different today than they were for these late early theorists.

To focus on statements for a moment, we point out that languages possess a grammatical structure; this seems to be a practically (if not a logically) necessary condition for any language since we cannot realistically conceive of a language without such structure. If we take this structure at face value, we see how crucial it is for successful communication. For example, a complete sentence is necessary for communicating any alethic claim; the claim cannot be evaluated as true or false unless there is a complete sentence that communicates the claim. As we examine language more closely, we see that complete sentences of that language routinely seem to commit us to the existence of various abstract objects. For example,

(1) ‘What Smith fears, Jones hopes to bring about.’

¹ I prefer the term ‘intentional attitudes’ to ‘propositional attitudes’ since it remains an open question as to whether there can be attitudes that take entities other than propositions (perhaps states of affairs) as their mental content.

seems to commit us to a state of affairs that is not actual at the time of the utterance of the sentence, (or to a proposition that is not true).² Now, this commitment is only *prima facie* since it is possible in many cases to paraphrase a sentence thereby eliminating ontological commitment to the object referred to by the initial sentence. As Roderick Chisholm argues,

From the fact that a true sentence *seems* to commit us to the existence of a certain object, it does not follow that there *is* in fact such an object. What we should say is rather this: If (i) there is a sentence which seems to commit us to the existence of a certain object, (ii) we know the sentence to be true, and (iii) we can find no way of explicating or paraphrasing the sentence which will make clear to us that the truth of the sentence is compatible with the nonexistence of such an object, then it is more reasonable to suppose that there is such an object than it is not to suppose that there is such an object. Given an adequate view of the nature of philosophy, it does not seem to me to be reasonable to deny this conditional.³

What we see throughout the majority of the theories we've examined is that no paraphrase appears available for statements like (1). As we have seen throughout our survey of states of affairs theories, states of affairs are most often referred to using nominalized gerundive phrases. For example, we might say, 'Jones has long thought of the Chicago Cubs being world champions' where 'the Chicago Cubs being world champions' purports to refer to a state of affairs that has not obtained since 1908 at the time of this writing.

This extraction of a phrase from this sentence comports with Noam Chomsky's philosophy of language in which he recognizes the surface structure of language, a structure that breaks sentences into various parts including phrases. Chomsky himself

² I am leaving open the question of whether states of affairs are distinct from propositions at this point, though as will become evident, I believe they are.

³ Chisholm, R. (1976). Person and Object. La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 117.

does not take credit for this concept, but attributes it to the Port-Royal *Grammar* of

1660.⁴ Says Chomsky,

It seems that one of the innovations of the Port-Royal *Grammar* of 1660—the work that initiated the tradition of philosophical grammar—was its recognition of the importance of the notion of the phrase as a grammatical unit. Earlier grammar had been largely a grammar of word classes and inflections. In the Cartesian theory of Port-Royal, a phrase corresponds to a complex idea and a sentence is subdivided into consecutive phrases, which are further subdivided into phrases, and so on, until the level of the word is reached. In this way we derived what might be called the “surface structure” of the sentence in question...

Chomsky continues,

But it is interesting that although the Port-Royal *Grammar* is apparently the first to rely in a fairly systematic way on analysis into surface structure, it also recognized the inadequacy of such analysis. According to the Port-Royal theory, surface structure corresponds only to sound—to the corporeal aspect of language; but when the signal is produced, with its surface structure, there takes place a corresponding mental analysis into what we may call the deep structure, a formal structure that related directly not to the sound but to the meaning...

...In the example just given, “Invisible God created the visible world,” the deep structure consists of a system of three propositions, “that God is invisible,” “that he created the world,” “that the world is visible.” The propositions that interrelate to form the deep structure are not, of course, asserted when the sentence is used to make a statement; if I say that a wise man is honest, I am not asserting that men are wise or honest, even though in the Port-Royal theory the propositions “a man is wise” and “a man is honest” enter into the deep structure. Rather, these propositions enter into the complex ideas that are present to the mind, though rarely articulated in the signal, when the sentence is uttered.”⁵

The recognition of the surface grammar of a sentence, combined with the *prima facie* ontological commitments of various phrases extracted from true sentences, gives us an initially strong reason to think that states of affairs exist. If no paraphrase is available,

⁴ Arnauld, A. a. C. L. (1975 (originally 1660)). General and Rational Grammar: The Port-Royal Grammar. The Hague, Mouton.

⁵ Chomsky, N. (1972). Language and Mind. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1617.

there becomes no good reason to be resistant or even agnostic toward their existence. And, if the surface structure of our sentences produces in us a mental analysis that in turn produces a deep structure of the meaning of sentences, we have additional evidence for postulating semantic entities to explain this deep structure.

Ultimately, any entity we postulate to explain these mental and semantic phenomena must contribute to our best comprehensive theory of the world. As George Bealer argues,

Commonplace syntactic constructions in natural language seem to generate ontological commitments to a dazzling array of metaphysical categories—But just because a syntactic construction in some natural language appears to invoke a new category of entity, are we theoreticians epistemically justified in holding that there *are* such entities? This would hardly seem sufficient. To be epistemically justified, the ontology to which we theoreticians are committed must pass strict standards: the entities must be of the sort required by our best comprehensive theory of the world.⁶

My approach to theorizing about states of affairs, then, is driven by a sense that the phenomenology of intentional attitudes combined with certain semantic phenomena cannot be ignored; we must take them seriously. On the other hand, ontological

⁶ Bealer, G. (1989). Fine-Grained Type-Free Intensionality. *Properties, Types and Meaning*. G. Chierchia, Barbara H. Partee, and Raymond Turner. Dordrecht, Kluwer. 1: 178-223. Bealer proceeds in this article to argue that our best comprehensive theory of the world requires a commitment to fine-grained type-free intensional entities. He gives an epistemic argument that extensionalists like Quine must rely on principles of epistemic appraisal or acceptability in order to justify their own scientific and philosophical theories as well as criticize their opponents. For example, Quine relies on the notion of the “simplest theory” being the most epistemically acceptable. But terms like ‘simplest’ and ‘acceptable’ do not belong to the primitive vocabulary of Quinean existentialism. Bealer concludes, “Extensionalists are forced by their own basic principles to avail themselves of some apparatus for representing definitional relationships. But any such apparatus—metalinguistic or non-metalinguistic—turns out to be unacceptable according to these very same principles. Thus, extensionalism in its strict form is a self-defeating philosophy and, hence, is unacceptable. Further, since any apparatus adequate for representing definitional relationships presupposes a logical theory that is ontologically committed to fine-grained intensional entities, extensionalists have no choice but to revise their basic principles...in order to make room for this inevitable intensional ontology,” 222; Bealer concludes, “The reason PRPs [Properties, Relations, and Propositions] are needed in a theory of reference and truth is that there are special syntactic constructions—‘that’-clauses, gerundive phrases, infinitive phrases, and the like—that behave as singular terms, and to give the truth-conditions for sentences containing these singular terms, which are called *intensional abstracts*, we seem forced to assign references to them. When we do so, PRPs are the simplest and most natural choice because (except in certain problem cases) their identity conditions mirror beautifully the intensional substitutivity conditions on expressions occurring within intensional abstracts,” 179.

parsimony should always be strived for; we don't want to multiply types of entities beyond necessity. We must navigate through the Scylla and Charybdis of ontological parsimony and an unwarranted elimination of entities that are explanatorily necessary for the mental and semantic phenomena we encounter.

Desiderata for a Theory

Before offering a new theory of states of affairs it will be helpful to ask what an acceptable theory of states of affairs should accomplish; what are the desiderata for a theory of states of affairs? If states of affairs turn out to be part of our most comprehensive theory of the world, given that most theorists think that access to them begins with reflection on intentional attitudes and the semantics of intentional attitude statements, an acceptable theory ought to account for certain phenomena of the relevant intentional attitudes and intentional attitude statements. For example, if states of affairs exist, then they ought to shed light on the phenomena associated with intentional attitudes like entertaining when we are entertaining *snow's being white* or for the semantics of statements like 'Jones was thinking about snow's being blue and how that might affect the mood of skiers.'

Secondly, an acceptable theory of states of affairs ought to explain why states of affairs are either identical or distinct from propositions. Is there really a difference between the entities referred to by the phrases 'that snow is white' and 'snow's being white' or not and, if there is, how significant is this difference? An acceptable theory will tell us.

Third, an acceptable theory ought to shed light on the relation that states of affairs and/or propositions bear on the questions of truth and specifically the correspondence theory of truth, should this theory of truth be the best available. A related question is: are propositions/states of affairs identical to truthmakers/facts or are they distinct?

A fourth question involves whether or not so-called singular propositions/states of affairs contain concrete particulars. For example does the proposition *that Socrates is snubnosed* include the person Socrates as part of its makeup? So, a fourth desideratum for an acceptable theory of states of affairs is that it account for propositions/states of affairs that involve concrete particulars.⁷

Fifth, an acceptable theory of states of affairs should answer the question of whether it has any light to shed on the nature of modality, the properties of *necessity* and *possibility* that certain statements/propositions/states of affairs and property/relation-exemplifications seem to possess.

Do States of Affairs Exist and Are They Distinct from Propositions?

Propositional Realism

We begin with the evidence for thinking states of affairs exist. We have seen throughout the literature that nominalized gerundives are the most common linguistic expression used to denote states of affairs as in ‘Jones pondered Smith’s being late to

⁷ ‘Involve’ is used neutrally here leaving open the question of whether it is to be understood as ‘contain’ or in some non-constitutive, non-physical manner.

the show' where 'Smith's being late to the show' denotes the content of Jones' pondering. As we have seen in our historical survey, some also take 'that'-clause nominalizations of indicative sentences to denote such mental content (especially in the case where propositions are thought to be identical to states of affairs).⁸ English is replete with both types of noun-phrases. The question arises as to whether these noun phrases denote anything. More commonly, 'that'-clauses are focused on with concern to this question, as the literature on propositions is much more extensive than that on states of affairs and the former are generally referred to using 'that'-clauses. There are, of course, many arguments that have been given for the existence of propositions. It will be helpful to review the main ones given the possibility that states of affairs are identical to them.

The most common reasons given for propositional realism are (1) propositions serve as the semantic content of (especially) indicative sentences and statements; (2) propositions are bearers of truth values; (3) propositions stand in logical relations that in turn preserve the validity of arguments; (4) propositions are *de dicto* bearers of modal properties; and (5) propositions serve as the mental content of various mental states like belief. Let's consider each of these briefly.

More common than any reason for holding to propositional realism is the argument that indicative sentences, being basic units of language, must have a semantic content.⁹

⁸ 'Indicative' and 'declarative' are terms that are used interchangeably in the literature. However, Susan Haack prefers the former: "Sentences with their main verb in the indicative mood are declarative, but 'declarative' is meant to be rather broader than 'indicative', to include, for example, conditionals whose main verb is in the subjunctive;" Haack, S. (1978). *Philosophy of Logics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 76. Haack's reasoning seems sufficient to prefer 'indicative' over 'declarative'.

⁹ We need not be limited to indicative/declarative sentences, but these are the most common sorts considered. I will set aside questions concerning indexical sentences that express different propositions while being identical sentences. John Pollock's treatment of indexical in his *Language and Thought* is a promising approach; see

Similarly, it is argued that given the empirical fact that sentences of one language are translatable into sentences of another language, there must be a *common* semantic content to both.¹⁰ Propositions are proffered as these common contents. As George Pitcher notes,

If one person says “It is raining,” another “*Il pleut*,” and a third “*Es regnet*,” a correct answer to the question “What did he say?” would in each case be “He said that it is raining”—for each would have said *the same thing*. And it is this element which all three utterances have in common—this same thing that is said in all three cases—that is the real bearer of truth, not the different sentences which the speakers happen to utter.¹¹

For those who do not accept this argument, it is sometimes argued that semantic contents could not have a truth value, and hence, propositions qua semantic contents could not have a truth value. Thus, while one might countenance propositions, she rejects that they are the semantic contents of indicative sentences.¹² James Thomson provides a good example of this objection:

...propositions are identified, by their proponents as well as by their detractors, with meanings; more precisely, with the meanings of complete declarative sentences. Despite the great authority of those who have made or consented to such an identification, it is surely quite wrong. If propositions are asserted, denied, proved, and so on, then they are not meanings; for meanings are not asserted, denied, or proved. Did Goldbach conjecture, or Euler try to prove, a meaning?¹³

Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, especially 117-124. I prefer the term ‘semantic content’ to ‘meaning’ since there is a distinction between sense and meaning according to Pollock; see *Language and Thought*, 99 ff. For a helpful discussion on alternatives to propositional realism, e.g., Quine’s and Prior’s theories, see Loux, M. (1998). Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction. New York, Routledge, 142-154.

¹⁰ See Alonzo Church, “Propositions and Sentences,” in *The Problem of Universals: a Symposium*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 3-11.

¹¹ George Pitcher, “Introduction” in *Truth*, ed. George Pitcher, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964), 5.

¹² See R. Cartwright “Propositions” in *Truth*, 81-103 and Michael Loux *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 142.

¹³ Thomson, J. F. (1969). “Truth-Bearers and the Trouble About Propositions.” The Journal of Philosophy 66(21): 739.

But this rejection of propositions as semantic contents trades on the assumption that only individual words and not complete sentences are the conveyors of semantic content. Perhaps we rarely talk about the content of sentences in our common parlance because we learn language by starting with words and then moving to complete sentences. But of course learning—coming to understand—a language is about learning the content of the terms of the language and *how those terms are properly combined into sentences*. Thus, I see no reason to limit semantic content to words alone and not sentences.

We have already seen the second common reason given for propositional realism in Pitcher's quotation above: propositions are bearers of truth-value. If propositions are semantic contents of indicative sentences and we ascribe the property *true* to a sentence, we also ascribe this same property to the proposition it expresses. We see a natural progression from propositions considered as semantic contents to propositions considered as bearers of truth-value.

Similarly, we see a natural progression from propositions considered as bearers of truth-value to propositions considered as the relata of the entailment relation. To take the case of a valid argument as an example, we must assume that truth-valued entities exist if we are to categorize a valid argument as such. Valid arguments are by definition those arguments that have premises which, if true, logically entail their conclusion. That is, the conclusion must be true if the premises are true. For such an entailment relation to hold then, its relata must bear truth-values, by definition. Certainly there may be other forms of entailment that don't clearly have truth-valued

entities as their relata. For example, it has been suggested that the supervenience relation is an entailment relation. Nevertheless, if we grant that there are valid arguments, we have a clear example of the relation of entailment that holds between truth-valued entities.¹⁴ Propositions are the traditional, and seemingly best, candidate for such entities.

A fourth reason for being a propositional realist is the need to explain the intuitively obvious necessary and contingent aspects of our thought and language content. Clearly, the content of certain beliefs and sentences seems true in a unique way. For example, the semantic content of ‘Seven is a prime number’ seems *necessarily* true. But the semantic content of ‘There are nine planets in our solar system’ seems *contingently* true. Given that the manner in which these two sentences and their semantic contents are true is intuitively different, it is thought that there must be some entity that bears these modal values of necessity and contingency. Propositions, again, are the most plausible candidate, especially if they are already thought to bear truth-values, since in some cases modality seems to be a *mode* of the truth-value of the content of our language and thought. This is *de dicto* necessity as opposed to *de re* necessity. The former concerns the manner in which thoughts and statements are true; the latter concerns how individuals possess properties and stand in relations.¹⁵

Finally, propositional realism is held by many for the reason that intentional mental states are, by definition, about something, and are therefore representational.

¹⁴ See also Jon Barwise and John Perry “Situations and Attitudes,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 78:11 (November, 1981), 668-691 on the view that situations (non-truth-value-bearing entities) can also stand in entailment relations. Other logical relations like that of compatibility and incompatibility are also thought to hold between bearers of truth value; see Michael Loux, *Metaphysics*, 139.

Representational entities are most naturally understood as mental content. For example, my belief that the earth is, on average, 93,000,000 miles from the sun is *about* the sun, so it is intentional. Moreover, my belief *represents* the sun and the earth's distance from it. This representational character of my belief is a mental content with a truth-value. What better candidate than a proposition to designate this mental content? On this understanding, propositions could also serve as the mental content of a whole host of other intentional attitudes, e.g., hope, desire, wishing, etc. We note this reason for propositional realism last since it is more controversial and less agreed upon than those that precede it. As Jaegwon Kim notes, there is a wide disagreement about the nature of objects of belief.¹⁶ Nevertheless, most philosophers of mind recognize that there is a problem of content for such intentional states.¹⁷ Propositions are commonly offered as a plausible solution to this problem.

The primary hesitation towards propositions seems to be naturalist leanings, since propositions have traditionally been held to be abstract, non-physical objects which are certainly not at home in a naturalist view of the world. Of course, we might respond, "So much the worse for naturalism." But this response isn't necessary given that some naturalists like David Armstrong admit propositions into their ontology. In Armstrong's case, this is a recent development as he eschewed propositions altogether

¹⁵ While it is an interesting question as to what, if any, relationship might hold between *de dicto* and *de re* necessity, we will not consider that question here. I take 'individual', 'particular', and 'object' to be synonymous terms.

¹⁶ Jaegwon Kim, "States of Affairs, Events, and Propositions," *Grazer philosophische Studien* 7/8 (1989), 148. "Objects" of belief is ambiguous between objects beliefs are about and the content of beliefs. I will speak of the content of a belief where Kim here speaks of the object of a belief.

¹⁷ For example, see David Braddon-Mitchell and Frank Jackson, *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 176-179.

in the past.¹⁸ In his more recent work, though, Armstrong seeks a “this-worldly”

account of propositions, but admits that they are abstractions:

Propositions, on this view, are abstractions, but not in any other-worldly sense of ‘abstraction’, from beliefs, statements and so on. They are the *content* of the belief, what makes the belief the particular belief that it is; or else the *meaning* of the statement, what makes the statement the particular statement that it is. That the content or meaning is an abstraction becomes clear when we notice that contents and meanings are types rather than tokens. Beliefs in different minds may have the very same content, numerically different statements may have the very same meaning.¹⁹

Of course the question remains as to whether abstractions like propositions can fit into the naturalistic world of Armstrong, i.e., whether there exists a this-worldly account of propositions. I have my doubts, but that is not the central issue here. The point is that even for a naturalist like Armstrong, propositions are the most plausible candidate for explaining the content of beliefs.

Are States of Affairs Distinct from Propositions: Nominalizations

We have now reviewed the primary reasons for thinking propositions exist and, taken as a collective set of data, these reasons are compelling. The next question that naturally arises is whether nominalized gerundives, which are more often than not said to refer to states of affairs, denote entities that are numerically identical or distinct from propositions, which are commonly referred using nominalized ‘that’-clauses. We say they are “nominalized” because we can produce both noun phrases by turning an indicative sentence into a noun-phrase. For example ‘Snow is white’ is nominalized to

¹⁸ Armstrong, D. M. (2004). *Truth and Truthmakers*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 12-17.

¹⁹ Armstrong, D. M. (2004). *Truth and Truthmakers*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 13.

produce either ‘that snow is white’ or ‘snow’s being white’. Of course, if ‘state of affairs’ is just another expression for ‘proposition’, then since the evidence for propositional realism is strong, so is it for states of affairs realism, and therefore, states of affairs do exist, though they are simply identical to propositions.

The deeper question before us then becomes whether nominalized ‘that’-clauses and nominalized gerundives of the same indicative sentence refer to distinct entities, i.e., propositions and states of affairs respectively. For reasons of parsimony, we are inclined to assert their identity if we can. Why postulate two entities when you can do the same work with one? Let us consider arguments for and against the assertion that these nominalizations refer to the same entity.

One might be inclined to think that these two ways to nominalize an indicative sentence are simply accidents of the English language; it turns out there is more than one way to nominalize an indicative sentence in English than the more familiar nominalization of a ‘that’-clause. One can also produce a gerundive nominalization, but nothing ontological turns of this accident of language. Moreover, there is at least one other way to nominalize an indicative sentence: we can create an infinitive phrase from an indicative sentence. Thus, ‘Snow is white’ becomes ‘for snow to be white’. This is a noun phrase since it can serve in the subject position of an indicative sentence as in ‘For snow to be white would be one of many ways to create a world.’ Perhaps there are still other ways to nominalize an indicative sentence, though none readily come to mind.

In response to the observation that there is more than one way to nominalize a sentence, one also observes that the product of each nominalization is *different* in

interesting ways. Each nominalization adds words that are not present in the indicative sentence. In the ‘that’-clause nominalization, one simply adds ‘that’ to the beginning of the indicative sentence to produce the ‘that’-clause nominalization. But, in the case of the nominalized gerundive, the form of the verb ‘is’ is changed to a participle ‘being’. A participle is an adjective derived from a verb. As Webster’s defines it, a participle is

an adjective or complement to certain auxiliaries that is regularly derived from the verb in many languages and refers to participation in the action or state of the verb; a verbal form used as an adjective. It does not specify person or number in English, but may have a subject or object, show tense, etc., as *burning, in a burning candle, or devoted in his devoted friend.*²⁰

‘Being’ is the present participle of ‘be’, ‘is’ is the third-person singular indicative of ‘be’. So, when ‘Snow is white’ is nominalized to produce a gerundive nominalization, the verb is transformed into a participle from the indicative mood. The verb form also changes in the infinitive nominalization from ‘is’ in ‘Snow is white’ to ‘to be’ in ‘For snow to be white’, and, of course, the word ‘for’ is added to produce the nominalized infinitive.

One might respond here that this is an interesting study in the grammar of indicative sentence nominalization, but, as before, nothing ontological turns on these different nominalization forms.

However, the stakes are raised when we consider what predicates can be meaningfully conjoined to these various nominalizations. As we have seen, especially with contemporary accounts, there is a tendency to distinguish between the predicates

²⁰ (1999). Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, Random House. 2006.

‘is true (false)’ and ‘obtains (fails to obtain)’/ ‘occurs (fails to occur)’.²¹ Those theorists who distinguish between states of affairs and propositions commonly argue that it is a state of affairs that obtains (fails to obtain) and a proposition that is true or false. Thus, the English predicates of ‘is true’/‘is false’ and ‘obtains’/‘fails to obtain’ express different concepts and, ultimately correspond to different properties of states of affairs and propositions alike. The logical consequence of such positions as Plantinga’s, et. al., is that ‘That snow is white is true’ is a coherent sentence whereas ‘Snow’s being white is true’ is not. Moreover, ‘That snow is white obtains’ is not coherent, nor is ‘Snow’s being white is true’. Presumably, these incoherent pseudo-sentences are incoherent because the predicates that express the concepts that correspond with the properties of *is true (false)* and *obtains (fails to obtain)* are only true of certain entities, either propositions (in the case of the properties *true (false)*) or states of affairs (in the case of the properties *obtains (fails to obtain)*).²²

But there are other predicates not bandied about in the literature that we might consider here. In particular, the predicate ‘is the case’ is an interesting predicate in this context in that it does seem coherent to say both ‘That snow is white is the case’ and ‘Snow’s being white is the case’.²³ Here, we come to a decision point, for we have a choice between two options it seems to me. First, we can say that the predicate ‘is the case’ is a perfect example of the accidental nature of English (and other languages for that matter) that has, through its evolution, produced various constructions, some of

²¹ ‘Occurs (fails to occur)’ seems substitutable *salve veritate* with ‘obtains (fails to obtain)’ so that we can for purposes of simplicity, speak of the ‘obtain (fails to obtain)’ alone.

²² For simplicity’s sake, we can set aside here the question of whether there are negative properties like *fails to obtain*.

which are syntactically acceptable and others of which are not. On this view ‘is true’, ‘obtains’, ‘occurs’, ‘is the case’ and probably others all express the exact same concept which corresponds to the exact same property: *truth*, and *mutatis mutandis* for ‘false’, ‘fails to obtain’, etc. On the other hand, one might argue that ‘is the case’ simply expresses a more coarse-grained concept than ‘is true (false)’ or ‘obtains (fails to obtain)’ such that ‘is the case’ can be meaningfully predicated of these two sorts of noun phrases whereas the former two are more fine-grained concepts and can therefore only be meaningfully predicated of propositions and states of affairs respectively.

How are we to decide between these two options? Ultimately, I think the question concerns the nature of concepts and how linguistic items (words, sentences) express those concepts. To say that *is the case* is a more coarse-grained concept is simply to say that it is more general and covers more potential subjects of which it might be meaningfully predicated than the concepts of *is true (false)* and *obtains (fails to obtain)*. Just as the concept *is a fruit* is more coarse-grained than *is an apple*, so is the concept *is the case* more coarse-grained than *is true* or *obtains*, etc.

It is a safe assumption to say that the expression of concepts by these various linguistic predicates is ultimately an expression of the mental content of various intentional attitudes. Thus

(1) ‘That snow is white is true.’

expresses a thought we might have as does

(2) ‘Snow’s being white obtains.’

²³ I am indebted to Jay Wood for this example.

We must therefore ask ourselves, is there a phenomenological difference in the concepts expressed in (1) and (2)? And, of course, our answers may differ depending on the nature of our reflections.

Nevertheless, there does seem to me an objective point to make about the difference between these two sentences. As we noted above regarding ‘that’-clause nominalizations, the form of the verb does not change, but in the gerundive nominalization it does change from ‘is’ to ‘being’ combined with the genitive (possessive) form of the noun (‘Snow’s’). This change in the verb form seems to reflect a slightly different concept. ‘Is’ is static—it seems to freeze in time that which is being referred to (snow), but ‘being’ is active and on-going—it characterizes snow as actively exemplifying *whiteness* in an on-going fashion.

A similar distinction is argued for by Jonathan Bennett in his treatment of facts and events. The question before him is whether states of affairs (which for Bennett are concrete and thus facts) and events are distinct, and, as we have done, he turns to their linguistic expressions to see if any light can be shed on the question. Bennett distinguishes between states of affairs and events based on the grammatical distinction between perfect and imperfect sentence nominals.²⁴ So, like us, Bennett is peering inside nominalized phrases to examine the form of the verb. Perfect verbs convey a completed action, one that had a beginning and an end. Imperfect verbs convey an ongoing or open-ended action. Thus, Bennett notes that perfect nominals are more noun-like, e.g., ‘the death of Cesar’, ‘the sinking of the Titanic’, ‘the theft that Mary

²⁴ See Bennett, J. (1988). Events and Their Names. Indianapolis, Hackett. Bennett’s states of affairs are similar to Armstrong’s.

committed', 'Quisling's betrayal of Norway', and 'Mary's theft of the bicycle'.²⁵

On the other hand, imperfect nominals have a verb "alive and kicking" inside of them as in 'Caesar's dying', 'the Titanic's sinking', 'Mary's committing the theft', 'Quisling's betraying of Norway' and 'Mary's stealing the bicycle'.²⁶

So, from Bennett's research it appears that English reflects a distinction between states of affairs and events based on the imperfect/perfect distinction of verbs in sentence nominals. While Bennett's question is not one we want to tackle at this point, his methodology leads him to plausibly distinguish between states of affairs and events. Thus, using the same methodology in considering the verbs of the 'that'-clause nominalization and the gerundive nominalization, we are led to a similar conclusion: the predicates of 'is true (is false)' and 'obtains (fails to obtain)' do indeed express distinct concepts which correspond with distinct properties because the sentence nominalizations they are predicated of possess different verb forms that express different manners of predication. Therefore *is the case is* a more coarse-grained concept than *is true/false* and *obtains/fails to obtain*. Therefore, 'is the case' is meaningfully predicated of both 'that'-clause and gerundive nominalizations of indicative sentences while the predicates 'is true(false)' and 'obtains(fails to obtain)' are only meaningfully applied to 'that'-clause nominalizations and gerundive nominalizations respectively.

²⁵ See Wetzel, T. (2003). States of Affairs, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2004, 23 for a good explanation.

²⁶In Zeno Vendler's words. See Wetzel, T. (2003). States of Affairs, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2004, 23.

But what about our infinitive nominalization, ‘For snow to be white’? Here again we see that unlike the ‘that’-clause nominalization, but like the gerundive nominalization, the verb form has been altered, in this case to an infinitive, and the word ‘for’ has been added to produce the nominalization. Can ‘is true (is false)’, ‘obtains (fails to obtain)’, or ‘is the case (is not the case)’ be coherently predicated of our infinitive nominalization? The first two predicates do not seem coherently predicable, but ‘is the case’ may be coherent, though it is no doubt an awkward construction: ‘For snow to be white is the case.’ Even here, it is not clear to me that this is a coherent construction; we seem to have a borderline case. If arguably none of these predicates seem coherently predicable of this infinitive noun phrase, why? It seems to be due to nature of the infinitive verb: it is a way to express a hypothetical situation that does not afford itself of being described as something actual. Moreover, the infinitive form of the verb makes the tense of the verb less precise. In the indicative ‘Snow is white’ we have a third-person *present* form of the verb, but in the infinitive nominalization, the tense can be taken as present or future. Even if ‘is the case’ can be coherently predicated of this infinitive nominalization, the awkwardness of the construction is reason enough to see why discussion of such nominalizations is absent in the literature.

We have had to probe some fine points of grammar to reach the conclusion that states of affairs exist and are distinct from propositions. Ultimately these linguistic differences represent conceptual differences at the phenomenological level of our intentional attitudes. Along these lines and as additional evidence for the distinction between states of affairs and propositions, we might consider different intentional

attitudes and their contents. In the case of belief, propositions are thought to serve nicely as their mental content. We say, 'I believe that snow is white' and the 'that'-clause naturally designates the content of our belief. However, consider another intentional attitude, entertaining. There are different sorts of entertaining. We might entertain the truth or falsity of a proposition as in 'He entertained that snow is blue is true.' But we might also say 'He entertained snow's being blue' where our subject takes no alethic position toward the content of his intentional attitude. Now one might say here that our subject could just as easily entertain a proposition, designated by a 'that'-clause, while refraining from ascribing any truth-value to it. So, Jones could entertain *that snow is blue* though not ascribe *truth* or *falsity* to it. Even if we admit this, however, it still seems that in the case of Jones's entertaining *snow's being blue*, it is not the sort of thing that he *could* ascribe *truth* or *falsity* to whereas he could do so with the content *that snow is blue*. Now, this argument is not decisive because, again, the foundational issue here is whether these different predicates of these nominalizations express distinct concepts. And this is a question that seems solvable only by introspection of the phenomenology of one's intentional attitudes.

The epistemic status of the question of distinct predicates here does not discredit our conclusions on the question, however, for there is a Cartesian argument, persuasive I believe, that such introspective data is more sure, not less than empirical observation and interpersonal agreement.²⁷ Nevertheless, coming to agreement about the question of whether nominalized 'that'-clauses, gerundive nominalizations, and infinitive

²⁷ For such an argument see Bealer, George. "The Incoherence of Empiricism I." *Aristotelian Society* 66 (1992): 99-138.

nominalizations of the same indicative sentence refer to different entities will continue to prove difficult on its own. Thus, if there is an additional argument to the effect that propositions are distinct from states of affairs, this conclusion would stand on more solid ground. Therefore, let us consider states of affairs from a possible worlds approach.

Are States of Affairs Distinct from Propositions: Possible Worlds

A different approach to the question of the distinction between propositions and states of affairs is to consider possible worlds. As we see with Plantinga, chiefly, but also with (the earlier) Roderick Chisholm, states of affairs can be used to build possible worlds which are in turn thought to be a valuable heuristic for understanding modality. For these philosophers, possible worlds are more than just a heuristic, though; they are existent, though unactual, entities that are part of the furniture of reality. Irregardless of whether possible worlds or possible worlds semantics shed any light on modality or not, why have these thinkers decided to use states of affairs as opposed to propositions to build their possible worlds? I propose that that they have done so because the nominalized gerundives that designate states of affairs more closely express the notion that states of affairs and in turn possible worlds (which, as the reader will recall are maximal states of affairs for these theorists), are *ways* the world could be. While it is not in doubt that modal predicates like ‘possibly’ and ‘necessarily’ are meaningfully predicated of ‘that’-clause nominalizations, given the indicative verbs that lie within them, they fail to capture the element of possibility that the imperfect and participial verbs of the nominalized gerundives capture. So, ‘that snow is blue’ is meaningfully

said to be possible, but ‘snow’s being blue’ has possibility built into the verb in a way that the indicative and perfect verbs do not. Once again, we might ask if this is an accident of English or whether it’s pointing to a real conceptual distinction between these two grammatical forms? With this additional evidence, the conclusion that this is a real conceptual difference seems stronger.

But what should we say of nominalized infinitives? Do these nominalizations refer to an entity distinct from both propositions and states of affairs? If we are to be consistent with the way we have proceeded thus far, it would seem that nominalized infinitives refer to some entity distinct from propositions and states of affairs. The deeper metaphysical question here, however, is how significant the difference between all three of these entities is. As I will develop below, there is little reason to think that the difference goes beyond that of logical form. Are different logical forms ontologically significantly different? One might think that, metaphysically speaking, any difference between entities is ontologically significant since they are not identical. But this seems like an overly broad understanding of ontological significance in this context. So, let us mean by ‘ontological significance’ here a difference that involves a difference in ontological category. Without saying what ontological categories there are, assuming that there are fundamental Aristotelian categories, for any objects x and y to be significantly different is for x and y to be members of different categories. Since I will argue that states of affairs and propositions are certain logical forms of designators, concepts and operators, on this definition of significance, states of affairs and propositions are not ontologically significantly different—they belong to the category of logical form. And this would also apply to the entities designated (call them

‘infinitons’) by nominalized infinitives, another logical form of designators, concepts, and operators.

However, even though it turns out that propositions, states of affairs, and infinitons all fall into the same ontological category of logical form, it is still worth exploring their nature and the relations that hold between them. For sake of simplicity, I will limit our inquiry to propositions and states of affairs with the understanding that the theory can be developed along similar lines for infinitons.

To conclude this section of our inquiry, it would seem that if there is a conceptual difference expressed by ‘that’-clauses and nominalized gerundives of the same indicative sentence which is apparent to several theorists, this apparent difference cannot be ignored. If states of affairs and propositions are logical forms then it will be apparent why there is a distinction between the two: different logical forms of the same designators, concepts, and operators are at work. Such a difference in logical form, however, is subtle enough to explain why many theorists are inclined to collapse them into one entity.

If the difference between propositions and states of affairs is one of logical form, we are led to many questions about the nature of these logical forms: what sort of entities are they; what relations do they bear to each other; what relation do they bear to the world to which they sometimes correspond? It is to these questions that we turn to in the next two chapters.

Chapter 5: Propositions

The Nature of Propositions

As we saw in our survey of reasons given for the existence of propositions they provide significant explanatory power for a host of intentional and semantic phenomena. To develop a comprehensive theory of propositions is a monumental task in the philosophy of language, mind, metaphysics, and philosophical logic. Thus, we cannot undertake such a comprehensive theory here. What we desire is the outlines of a theory that will shed light on the most important ontological elements of propositions and the relations they stand in to states of affairs. John Pollock has developed an extensive theory of language which includes developed treatment of propositions and states of affairs in both his *Language and Thought* and *Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Pollock's theory is comprehensive and persuasive on many points. Of chief interest to us is Pollock's theory of objects of beliefs since this is most pertinent for developing a related ontology of states of affairs.

One of the reasons we saw for the doctrine of propositional realism is that propositions help to explain the common content of people's beliefs. Jones and Smith both believe that snow is white. One natural explanation is to say that both Jones and Smith stand in the belief relation to the same proposition: *that snow is white*. But of course Jones and Smith can think of snow differently. Jones may have been born on a tropical island having never seen snow, though it has been described to him. Smith, on the other, may have grown up in Alaska and thus conceives of snow via the many sensory memories of the outdoors he has. So, there are different ways that Jones and

Smith may represent snow to their minds, and yet we say they share the same belief that snow is white. Because of this obvious possibility, Pollock defines propositions to be maximally fine-grained objects of belief. Propositions are maximally fine-grained in the sense that they involve the unique ways that individuals conceive of whatever their beliefs are about. And thus, on this definition, Jones and Smith do not believe the same proposition since they conceive of snow differently. However, their beliefs are logically equivalent: necessarily, if one is true the other must be true. To say that Jones and Smith believe the same thing is to say that some more coarse-grained object of belief is shared by Jones and Smith. But since Pollock reserves propositions for maximally fine-grained objects of belief, a more coarse-grained object of belief is not a proposition on Pollock's definition. Says Pollock,

This restriction on the use of the term 'proposition' is intended primarily to avoid senseless disputes about, e.g., whether there are "really" such things as directly referential propositions. The answer to the latter question is, "It depends upon what you mean by 'proposition'".¹

Central to Pollock's reasoning for defining propositions as maximally fine-grained objects of belief is that he thinks coarse-grained objects of belief can be ultimately analyzed in terms of the former such that the latter are dispensable. Says Pollock,

Coarse-grained objects of belief can always be described in terms of maximally fine-grained objects of belief. This is because a coarse-grained object of belief φ can be described by describing the circumstance under which one can be said to believe it, i.e., by describing the range of belief states which are states of believing φ . Every belief state can be regarded as having a maximally fine-grained object of belief, so an equivalent description of φ proceeds by describing the maximally fine-grained objects of belief by believing which one can believe φ . If we wished, we might simply identify the coarse-grained

¹ Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 12.

object of belief with the corresponding set of maximally fine-grained objects of belief...we might identify the directly referential proposition that x is F with the set of all maximally fine-grained objects of belief wherein x is thought of in different ways and believed to be F .²

Pollock expands on this definition of propositions in his *Foundations of*

Philosophical Semantics:

We believe coarse-grained objects of belief *by* believing fine-grained objects of belief. For example, I believe the directly referential propositions that Herbert has a mustache by thinking of Herbert in some particular way and believing a fine-grained object of belief that encodes that mode of representation...the directly referential proposition that Herbert has a mustache would be identified with the set of all propositions ascribing having a mustache to Herbert under different modes of representation.³

Following, Pollock we can understand propositions as maximally fine-grained objects of belief. However, we need not restrict propositions to objects of belief. As we saw in chapter four, propositions serve several functions besides being objects of belief. Moreover, as we will see below, some propositions seem incapable of serving as mental content of minds like ours.

Propositional Designators

It is natural to individuate propositions in terms of their structure and their constituents. A directly referential theory of propositions in the tradition of Russell's later multiple-relation theory of belief and David Kaplan's "directly referential" propositions, take propositions to be constituted by concrete physical objects. As Pollock notes,

² Pollock, J. (1982). *Language and Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 11.

These are propositions which are about an object “directly,” without involving a particular way of thinking of an object. The object itself would somehow be a constituent of these propositions. As we have seen, directly referential propositions are unproblematic as coarse-grained objects of belief, although they cannot be fine-grained objects of belief and hence are not propositions in our sense of the term ‘proposition’. Different ways of thinking of the same object yield different (fine-grained) propositions.⁴

Thus, the proposition *that Jones is tall*, on the directly referential view of propositions, contains Jones as a constituent. We can also reject this view on the grounds that it entails that one cannot falsely believe propositions about non-existent objects as in the case that Jones believes *that Pegasus is a winged horse*, a false proposition since ‘Pegasus’ refers to no object. Suppose Jones was raised in a Pegasus-worshipping cult such that he sincerely believes that Pegasus is a winged horse worthy of worship. On the assumption that there are no non-existent objects—that possibilism is false—it would be impossible for Jones to believe such a proposition since Pegasus, being a non-existent object, cannot be a constituent of this proposition. If presentism is true, this rejection of directly referential propositions would also apply to past or future-existing objects. Since on presentism these objects do not exist, they cannot be constituents of propositions. Thus, some other constituent must serve the role of the subject of propositions, often expressed linguistically using a proper name.

³ Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 9-10.

⁴ Pollock, J. (1982). *Language and Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 50. It is not clear to me that coarse-grained objects of belief can contain physical objects as their constituents either. This will become evident when we consider the ontological status of propositions and states of affairs below as well as their representational character. Additionally, it seems problematic to construe an object of belief, even though it is coarse-grained, as a *set* of propositions. While I will not develop a theory of coarse-grained objects of belief here, I believe they should be understood in a manner similar to the theory I develop for maximally-fine grained objects of belief. Thus, I do not think there is any sort of propositions that are directly referential.

Pollack theorizes that “propositional designators” can serve this role. When we believe something about an object, says Pollock, we think of that object in a certain way. The way in which we think of the object serves to designate the object. The various ways we conceive of objects are propositional designators.⁵ Propositional designators are similar to Fregean modes of presentation, though there are several types of the former and only one type of the latter. The most familiar type of propositional designator is a definite description. A definite description is a collection of concepts as in *the inventor of bifocals*, which as a constituent of the proposition *that the inventor of bifocals was multitalented*, designates Benjamin Franklin.

When we believe propositions about ourselves, we don’t use definite descriptions; these propositional designators Pollock calls “personal designators.” There are also *de re* designators, which designate objects in non-descriptive ways. These are actually the most common sort of propositional designator, says Pollock, particularly in those cases in which we have beliefs about objects or persons with which/whom we are quite familiar. Pollock illustrates,

Recall again the case of Robinson and Thompson who are really one and the same person leading a double life. You could know “each person” well and think of each nondescriptively without knowing that they were one and the same person. If you occurrently believed that Robinson was tall and you occurrently believed that Thompson was tall, you were certainly having two different thoughts. Your two states of occurrent believing were phenomenologically distinguishable, so you were believing two different propositions, despite the fact that you were believing the same thing about the same object and you were not thinking about the object under a description in either case. This indicates that even though your thoughts about Robinson and Thompson were not mediated by descriptions, they involved some kind of mental representation. If your belief that Robinson is tall was different from

⁵ Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 19.

your belief that Thompson is tall, then you must have been thinking about Robinson and Thompson in different ways, and hence the man himself was not a literal constituent of your thought.⁶

A third sort of propositional designator that Pollack mentions is a logical designator, which designates a proposition by its content. So, when I think of a proposition in terms of its content (*that snow is white*), I am using a logical designator to do so. Though Pollack does not specify, it would seem that such designators are, like definite descriptions, combinations of concepts.⁷ Finally, there are temporal designators since we think of the present time nondescriptively.

Definite descriptions can combine with all of these various designators to create more complex propositional designators. For example, 'the mother of me' is an expression that expresses a complex designator in that it is a definite description combined with a personal designator. There may be other designators that Pollock omits. The more important point here is that designators of various varieties serve as one sort of constituent in Pollock's propositions.⁸ They are abstract representations of objects and *function* to designate objects even if those objects don't exist as in the proposition *that Pegasus is a winged horse*. In such cases propositional designators do not actually designate an individual, though they would were the individual to exist.

With Pollock, we can say that propositional designators serve nicely as constituents of propositions that help to explain the referring nature of proper names and singular

⁶ Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 63-64.

⁷ Or, since propositions are combinations (logical forms to be precise) of designators, concepts, and operators as Pollock argues (and I follow him), perhaps propositions themselves could serve to designate themselves.

⁸ Pollock develops a theory of proper names and indexicals which relies upon these notions of propositional designators in various ways. See Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

terms in sentences.⁹ Concrete objects need not be constituents of propositions for propositions to be about objects; their designators serve this function. Given the representational nature of propositions it is hard to see how making non-representational concrete objects constituents of propositions would help towards explaining how people can believe that one individual is actually two, as in Pollock's example above. This propositional designator view also avoids the problem of proper names having no sense if their referent does not exist. Proper names in sentences can express senses—propositional designators—though these proper names and their corresponding designators fail to refer. The sentence that contains the proper name expresses a proposition of which the propositional designator is a constituent.

Pollack's theory of propositions is made more complex than most since he distinguishes statements from propositions. He says,

...we can say that the conveyance of information consists of the speaker having a certain proposition in mind and his audience coming to have related propositions in mind. Let us call these *the sent-proposition* and *the received-propositions* respectively. The sent-proposition is the proposition the speaker must believe if his stating is "in earnest", i.e., if he "believes what he says". The received-proposition is the proposition in terms of which a member of the audience understands the speaker. The simplest case is that in which the sent-proposition and the received-proposition are the same proposition, but that is not necessary for the conveyance of information. For example, the speaker may be attempting to convey to his audience that a certain object has a certain property. As long as his audience knows what object he is referring to and understands what property he is attributing to it, his purpose will have been achieved. It is not necessary to his purpose that the audience comes to think of the object in the same way as the speaker. If the audience thinks of the object in a different way than the speaker, then the received-proposition is not the same as the sent-proposition despite the conveyance of information having been successful. Thus we can say that the function of stating is to get the audience to

⁹ Here I take 'singular term' to refer to any expression that refers or purports to refer to an individual. Thus, singular terms are not limited to proper names, but also include any multiple-word expression that refers or purports to refer to an individual. For example, 'Caesar's death' is a singular term in the sentence 'Caesar's death was a relief to many.'

receive a proposition related in some specified way to the sent-proposition, but perhaps not identical with the sent-proposition.¹⁰

So, for Pollock, propositions do not generally serve as the sense of statements, but are restricted to the domain of maximally fine-grained objects of belief. Pollock doesn't identify propositions with the *meanings* of sentences either. This is due primarily to the phenomenon of indexicality which is present for most sentences, says Pollock. The meaning of sentences is instead a function from the circumstances in which sentences are uttered to the statement the speaker of the sentence intends to make. The details of this distinction need not concern us here, though.¹¹ These distinctions are simply pointed out to show that on this maximally fine-grained understanding of propositions, the view that they serve as the meanings or sense of statements is not used to support a realist view of them. The distinction between the meaning and sense of statements and propositions is also valuable for any propositional realist like myself, because it shows the complexity any realistic theory of propositions will involve.

Concepts

We see that one sort of constituent of propositions is a propositional designator.

Pollock includes other constituents as well. Concepts are the most common propositional constituent. Says Pollock,

Concepts are what can be believed or disbelieved of objects. Objects “fall under” or *exemplify* concepts. Just as for objects of belief, on different occasions we employ finer- or coarser-grained criteria for believing the same thing of an object. I will take concepts to be

¹⁰ Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 20-21.

¹¹ For the details, see Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 6-9.

individuated by the finest-grained criteria for deciding whether we believe the same thing of an object. That is required for concepts to be constituents of propositions.¹²

In *Language and Thought* Pollock also notes that relational concepts are what can be believed or disbelieved of n-tuples of objects. The concept of *being gray*, then, is exemplified by my computer if I believe my computer is gray and the concept of *is between* is exemplified by my computer, bookshelf, and printer if I believe my computer is between my bookshelf and printer.¹³ The extension of a concept is the set of all objects exemplifying it.

I will assume here, beyond what Pollock says, that there is a distinction between concepts and properties such that there is a distinction between an object exemplifying a concept (which happens because I believe a concept of an object) versus an object exemplifying a property (or standing in a relation) which happens independently of whether I believe anything about the object or not.¹⁴ Also, I understand the extension of a concept to be the set of all *actual* objects that exemplify the property to which the concept believed about the object corresponds.¹⁵ So, if I believe the propositions *that my computer is gray*, the extension of the concept *is gray* is my computer insofar as the concept *is gray* is a constituent of this proposition.

¹² Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 10.

¹³ Pollock, J. (1982). *Language and Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2.

¹⁴ Pollock does treat properties in Pollock, J. (1984). *The Foundations of Philosophical Semantics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 71-83, but not with respect to the distinction between concepts and properties.

¹⁵ I assume that possibilism, the view that there are non-actual objects, is false. There are non-actual states of affairs, but states of affairs are not objects in the relevant sense. And, as we will see in chapter 6, non-actual states of affairs exist, though they are non-actual. This is the distinction Plantinga makes between a state of affairs' existing and its obtaining/failing to obtain. All states of affairs exist, but only some obtain.

The correspondence between concept and property is sufficiently understood by examples: the concept of *being trilateral* corresponds with the property of *being a triangle*, a shape; the concept of *being red* corresponds with the property of *being red*, which is some configuration of matter on the surface of some object that reflects certain wave-lengths of light and that gives rise to certain phenomenological experiences in various conscious subjects.¹⁶ Concepts can be more finely grained than the property and relation exemplifications they correspond to, as we see in our first example. However, sometimes they possess the same level of granularity as the property or relation exemplifications they correspond to, as in our second example.

Concepts are by definition representational. Are concepts non-phenomenal? Or can phenomenal red (the sensory quality involved in experiencing a red sensation) represent the property red? There does seem to be a distinct abstraction in the mind of the concept of *being red* that is non-phenomenal, though it still serves to represent the property exemplification in the physical world. Certainly if any sensations are representational, not all are, at least in the sense of concepts that Pollock defines above. This is because there is a concept we believe of the objects associated with our sensory experiences which is additional to the sensory experiences caused by those objects. As we learn a language, we learn to apply concepts to the objects that cause our sensory experiences. We have a sensory experience of red long before we deploy the concept that enables us to pick out red things. Concepts, then, seem non-phenomenal since sensations are not generally representational in the relevant way. Certainly, one can

¹⁶ This is a rough and ready definition of a property. More nuanced definitions are certainly available, though unnecessary here.

possess the concept of *being red* without having experienced a red experience, as in the case of a blind person. Yet, doesn't a sighted person at least some of the time conjure up a sensation of red from memory to serve as the conceptual representation of the property of *being red*? Not necessarily. What we can more precisely say is that we use sensory experiences like a visual sensation or the sound of a word to represent concepts to our minds, where the concept itself is distinct from these representations of it. Thus, if I believe that my computer is gray, I may use mental sound images of words or visual images of grayness to represent the conceptual content of the concept *is gray* to my mind. But the concept is distinct from these sensory representations. Thus, concepts are non-phenomenal.

As we see in our example of the distinction between the concept *being trilateral* and the property of *being a triangle*, properties are not better candidates than concepts for propositional constituents because properties do not always possess the fine-grainedness that concepts do. For example, *being blue* is logically equivalent to *being not green*, but if we say that negative properties exist, we have more properties than it seems necessary to postulate in explaining the physical world of objects exemplifying properties and standing in relations. Yet, we do have beliefs about objects, that they are not green. So, *not green* is a concept present to the mind, though not clearly a property.

Moreover, as Bertrand Russell shows us, some "properties" are not instantiable as in the "property" of *being impredicable*. But there is a conceptual content in beliefs whose mental content are propositions like *that the predicate of being impredicable is impredicable*. Kenneth Olson explains,

A property is called “impredicable” if it does not exemplify itself. For example, the property of being white would be impredicable, since properties are not colored, while that of being a property would not, since it is itself a property. A contradiction is obtained in the obvious way by asking whether the property of being impredicable exemplifies itself. This strongly suggests that there is no such property as that of being impredicable. *A fortiori*, then, it is not by “grasping” this property that we understand the expression “is impredicable.” Yet understand it we do, since otherwise we should be unable to follow the argument.¹⁷

Or consider the complex predicate of ‘being a round square’. While it does seem to express a complex concept, it would seem to be an impossibly instantiated property.

So, *being a round square* is a concept, but not a property since we can express it linguistically and associate some mental content with this expression.

Finally, as Michael Jubien argues, properties are not clearly representational. But being representational is a necessary condition for any theory of propositions such that including properties as constituents of propositions would not be compatible with their representational nature.¹⁸ For these reasons, then, it is best to assign concepts as constituents to propositions and not properties, though this is not to say that propositions cannot exemplify properties like *being true*, *being Smith’s favorite proposition*, *being necessary*, etc.

For reasons similar to taking propositional designators as abstract and not concrete-physical objects, we can take concepts in the same way since there are clearly many beliefs that we have that involve non-exemplified concepts as in the concept *being a chiliagon* or the concept *being such that I travel faster than the speed of light*.

¹⁷ Olson, K. R. (1987). *An Essay on Facts*. Stanford, Center for the Study of Language and Information, 5. This antimony was one of Bertrand Russell’s antimonies, though less well known than the set-theoretical paradoxes.

¹⁸ Jubien, M. (2001). "Propositions and the Objects of Thought." *Philosophical Studies* 104: 47-62.

Logical Operators

A third sort of propositional constituent that Pollock recognizes are logical operators (or just “operators”). Operators include the connectives (conjunction, disjunction, conditional, bi-conditional), negation, modalities (necessity and possibility), truth, falsity, and the quantifiers (universal and existential). This is not necessarily an exhaustive list. The logical operators also seem to be most plausibly taken to be abstract since they are representational. The operators are representational entities since they represent relations and properties that hold between/are instantiated by propositions. Taken in this representational sense, logical operators are concept-like in that they represent various logical relations and properties; they are, however, unique in that they are exemplified by propositions themselves.¹⁹ So, following Pollock, we will distinguish logical operators from concepts as a certain sort of constituent of propositions. Given these three types of constituents of Pollock’s propositions, we have the result that propositions are best understood as abstract structures of propositional designators, concepts, and logical operators, hereafter “DCO’s”.

DCO’s are representational entities. All three represent, or at least possibly represent some aspect of reality. Propositional designators represent individuals (if they exist) or have the capacity for representing individuals who do not exist, but could. That is not to say that possible individuals have any being at all; Meinongianism seems wrong. But, it is to say that the ontological status of a propositional designator is not altered if it fails to refer to any individual in reality. Concepts represent property and

¹⁹ And, as we will see in chapter six, other forms like states of affairs also stand in such relations and exemplify such properties as the operators represent.

relation instantiations, though these instantiations may not be actual as well. And logical operators represent connections between and properties of propositions, some of which may not hold. Thus, DCO's do not seem dependent on successfully representing anything for them to remain constituents of the objects of our beliefs.

One might ask here *how* it is that DCO's represent anything? No clear answers are forthcoming. It is the task of analytic metaphysics to provide explanations and analyses of various metaphysical phenomena. Nevertheless, all metaphysicians are faced at certain points in their theorizing with certain primitive facts. In our case, it seems a primitive fact that DCO's are representational in nature. They serve well to explain the phenomena of our intentional mental states which are by definition representational. We must leave it as a brute fact that some of our mental states are representational and that DCO's further specify, though do not explain this representational character.

Propositions and Logical Form

We hinted above that the only difference between propositions and states of affairs is that of logical form, that propositions and states of affairs are different logical forms. Now we see more clearly that propositions are logical forms of DCO's. By 'logical form', I mean a particular structure of DCO's, a particular manner by which they are joined together.

But why not say that propositions are ordered sets of DCO's? The chief reason to avoid this view is that the ordering of such sets would itself need an explanation. This ordering is naturally taken to be an n-adic relation, but if we include this relation among the sets' constituents, we have an infinite regress since we would need an additional

ordering relation to order the first ordering relation with the other constituents that we began with. Thus, by postulating the idea of logical form, we avoid such a regress by arguing that logical forms are not analyzed in terms of their constituents alone, but are instead taken to be non-mereological structures of DCO's. Propositions are non-mereological in the sense that they are not simply the sum of their parts. The logical form we call 'proposition' is an ordered whole of DCO's, something over and above its constituents, but not devoid of analysis.

Michael Jubien argues against taking propositions as ordered sets, in the same vein as we have.²⁰ But he also rejects any notion that propositions could have constituents because of the same Benacerraf dilemmas that beset set-theoretical conceptions of numbers.²¹ And Jubien is right to reject any set-theoretical notion of propositions. However, Jubien also rejects George Bealer's understanding of propositions ascribing to Bealer the view that propositions are primitive *sui generis* entities.²² Bealer certainly uses the term '*sui generis*', but I don't believe it's fair to describe his theory as "primitive." Bealer provides an algebraic model structure of his propositions attributing a detailed structure to them.²³ Thus Bealer's and my propositions have an analyzable structure, though they are irreducible to their constituents. In saying propositions are *sui generis*, then, Bealer is simply saying that propositions are not reducible to their constituents—and this seems right. Jubien rejects Bealer's

²⁰ Jubien, M. (2001). "Propositions and the Objects of Thought." *Philosophical Studies* **104**: 47-62.

²¹ See Benacerraf, P. (1965). "What Numbers Could not Be." *The Philosophical Review* **74**(1): 47-73.

²² See Bealer, G. (1979). "Theories of Properties, Relations, and Propositions." *Journal of Philosophy* **76**(11): 634-648; Bealer, G. (1982). *Quality and Concept*. Oxford, Oxford University Press and Bealer, G. (1998). "Propositions." *Mind* **107**(425): 1-32.

²³ Bealer, G. (1982). *Quality and Concept*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

propositions, and ultimately propositions altogether, because he cannot see how these propositions, though primitive, can be representational. But, in arguing that propositions contain representational DCO's this worry is eliminated.

The Ontological Status of Propositions

What is the ontological status of propositions? Thus far we have argued that propositions are constituted by abstract DCO's. There is a long tradition of taking propositions Platonically (also called an *ante rem* view) which take propositions to be necessarily existing mind-independent abstract objects. There are others who prefer conceptualism, the view that propositions are mind-dependent entities. On this view minds give rise to the existence of propositions such that the absence of minds would mean the absence of propositions. Thirdly, the directly referential (also termed existentialist) view of propositions takes them to be completely or at least partially constituted by and therefore ontologically dependent on physical objects. A related fourth view is an *in re* view, which holds that propositions are ontologically dependent upon the objects they are about, though those objects are not necessarily constituents of those propositions. On this view, if objects pass out of existence, then so do all propositions that are about those objects.²⁴

Having already ruled out the third option, is there any reason to prefer an *ante rem* view over a conceptualist or *in re* view? George Bealer offers an argument from

²⁴ I am ignoring other views of propositions, e.g., that they are functions from possible worlds to truth values in those possible worlds.

intensional logic for the position of *ante rem* realism in his “Universals.”²⁵ Bealer’s argument is complex but his basic idea is to show that neither nominalism, conceptualism, or *in re* realism are capable of accounting for transmodal phenomena. Transmodal phenomena involve certain predicates of ‘that’-clauses like ‘is necessary’, ‘is probable’, ‘is possible’, ‘is true’, ‘is known’, etc.

Additionally, Bealer argues that the referential truth conditions (roughly, the idea that for a sentence to be true, the singular terms of that sentence must successfully refer) for intensional sentences (like ‘Jones believes that Smith is a conceptualist’) cannot be accommodated by either linguistic token or linguistic type nominalism, conceptualism, or *in re* realism, without deeply unsatisfactory results for the proponents of these views. For example linguistic token nominalism is left with the result that linguistic tokens necessarily exist—hardly palatable for such a view; similar results occur for conceptualists and *in re* realists.

If Bealer’s argument works, we have a stronger argument for *ante rem* realism than those that are typically given. For example, philosophers like Chisholm have argued that propositions must necessarily exist since they are timeless entities. But whether propositions are timeless entities seems largely dependent on whether one incorporates times into her theory of propositions or not, and it is not therefore evident that this is a good reason to be a Platonist about propositions.

It has also been argued that truths do not plausibly cease to exist upon a person’s thinking about them (contra conceptualism). For example, if all of the intentional

²⁵ Bealer, G. (1993). "Universals." *The Journal of Philosophy* 90(1): 5-32.

agents in the universe were annihilated, but the earth remained, it seems that the truth of *that snow is white* would remain independently of any agent's believing so. This argument, however, has been charged with trading on the ambiguity between truths (true propositions), which exist in a mental realm, and facts or truthmakers. The latter are said to be slices of reality often constituted by physical objects as in the fact (not the proposition) that snow is white. Philosophers like Michael Jubien are perfectly content to hold that truths defined as facts exist independently of the mind because they are not mental entities in the first place.

Perhaps a more convincing argument for taking propositions anti-existentially and anti-conceptually (mind-independently) is to consider propositions that are inconceivable, yet known to be true. Consider propositions about extremely large numbers that are larger than could be brought before the mind in a moment of thought or so large that one's finite lifetime was insufficient to conceive of the proposition. These propositions would still seem true or false, though in the cases in which the numbers involved in the proposition are larger than the number of all of the particles in the universe, not clearly dependent on anything physical. They could be known to be true because of computations done by a machine capable of handling such large-number arithmetic. Such propositions would thus seem mind-independent and physical-world independent. Moreover, it seems arbitrary to say that they are finite in age and not eternal, for the numbers involved in such propositions need not describe any finite set of physical objects. So, these propositions would seem to exist independently of the beginning of the physical universe, before there were *any* physical objects. To conclude, then, if Bealer's argument and this last argument are together cogent, an *ante*

rem view of propositions that takes them to necessarily exist seems the most plausible of the four options we have considered.

Conclusion

We have developed an understanding of propositions that largely follows John Pollock's theory though supplements it in places. Pollock, in fact, is non-committal about the ontological status of propositions; they seem to be little more than a heuristic for him to describe belief and statement content. For example, he says

...one might begin to wonder whether there really are all these different objects of belief of varying graininess. For present purposes the best response to such skepticism is that we need not take propositions very seriously in the philosophy of language. At a crude level, the narrative function of language is to convey thoughts. Talk of propositions is just a convenient way to describe the contents of our thoughts. To say that there is a proposition of a certain sort is to say that it is possible for one to have a belief of a corresponding sort. At the expense of additional complexity, we could dispense with talk of propositions in the current investigation and talk instead of types of belief states individuated in terms of sameness of content. Different criteria of sameness of content generate different types of belief states and correspondingly different objects of belief.²⁶

Since I have taken a realist stance on propositions, we see that our theory goes beyond Pollock's in its ontological commitment. With this understanding of propositions in place, we can now turn to an exploration of how states of affairs resemble, differ, and relate to propositions as well as how both relate to the nature of truth.

²⁶ Pollock, J. (1982). Language and Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 11.

Chapter 6: Propositions, States of Affairs and Truth

The Nature of States of Affairs

States of Affairs and Mental Content

In the last chapter, we explored the nature of propositions. Now we consider states of affairs. In our linguistic analysis of nominalized gerundives we concluded that there is good reason to think that their referents, states of affairs, are distinct from propositions, but that they are not significantly different in ontological category from propositions. We approached our inquiry from the perspective of nominalized ‘that’-clauses and gerundives. In our examination of propositions we saw that ‘that’-clauses often function as singular terms as in ‘Jones believes that Smith is intelligent’; ‘that Smith is intelligent’ is the direct object of the sentence. Nominalized gerundives can also serve as singular terms in sentences such as ‘Plantinga entertained Chisholm’s being wrong about the identification of states of affairs with propositions’ where ‘Chisholm’s being wrong about the identification of states of affairs with propositions’ is a singular term and the direct object of the sentence. If the ‘that’-clause singular term appears to refer to the content of belief, the nominalized gerundive also seems to refer to the content of entertaining. Thus, just as propositions are maximally fine-grained mental contents, so are states of affairs. However, propositions are contents that can be true or false, states of affairs cannot. This is why it is coherent to predicate ‘true (false)’ of ‘that’-clauses, but not of nominalized gerundives. As we saw in chapter four, nominalized gerundives are meaningfully said to ‘obtain (fail to obtain)’. Thus, it

is coherent to say that the object of Plantinga's entertaining obtained. We might include here similar intentional attitudes like thinking about, conceiving, exploring, considering and perhaps others, all of which take states of affairs as their contents, but do not ascribe *truth* or *falsity* to these contents. This diversity of intentional states to which states of affairs are assigned as mental contents can also be attributed to propositions, since other intentional attitudes besides belief would seem to take propositions as their mental content. For example, hoping, wishing, and supposing are intentional states that take propositions as their content.

States of Affairs and Logical Form

If the 'true (false)' and 'obtains (fails to obtain)' predicates express different concepts, but states of affairs and propositions are not ontologically significantly different, we are led to the conclusion that states of affairs are structured wholes—logical forms—of DCO's just as propositions are. Are the state of affairs *snow's being white* and the proposition *that snow is white* the *same* logical form, then? No. These are two unique logical forms.

However, the notion of logical form is also used when peering within a proposition or state of affairs. For example, we speak of subject-predicate, universal and existential quantifications, conditionals and bi-conditionals, disjunctions and conjunctions, and others—all as logical forms. Thus it will be helpful to distinguish between two orders of logical form. First-order logical forms generally characterize the manner in which propositions or states of affairs are related to each other by operator relations or

modified by operator properties; second-order logical forms are those of *proposition* and *states of affairs*, particular amalgamations of DCO's.¹

While first-order logical forms generally describe the way operators link or modify propositions and states of affairs, the exception is the subject-predicate logical form which does not involve an operator relation or property. Operator relations and operator properties must be distinguished from operators. The latter are the conceptual representations of the former and serve as constituents of propositions and states of affairs. The former are relations and properties, non-representational entities, that relate or modify propositions and states of affairs. Quantifiers and modalities are operator properties and the connectives are operator relations. Two propositions $P_{\text{proposition}}$ and $Q_{\text{proposition}}$ can be related by the operator relation of a conditional, but the complex proposition $P_{\text{proposition}} \rightarrow Q_{\text{proposition}}$ consists only in DCO's.² Here the ' \rightarrow ' expresses the operator of a conditional which corresponds to the relation of a conditional that holds between $P_{\text{proposition}}$ and $Q_{\text{proposition}}$ if this complex proposition is true. The conditional relation that holds between $P_{\text{proposition}}$ and $Q_{\text{proposition}}$ is *represented* by the conditional operator as a constituent in the complex proposition. So, one can have a complex proposition before his mind that includes the operator which represents a conditional that links two atomic propositions where the operator is taken as a special sort of representation whose extension is the conditional *relation* that holds between two atomic propositions. Atomic propositions (and states of affairs) are propositions (states

¹ Infintons would be another second-order logical form of DCO's. There may be others, but we are limiting our inquiry to propositions and states of affairs for simplicity's sake.

² When symbolizing I will use the subscripts '*proposition*' and '*soa*' to distinguish between propositions and states of affairs respectively.

of affairs) that contain no operators and whose logical form is subject-predicate.³

We can understand subject-predicate form as involving the exemplification of a concept by a subject(s), though this exemplification is not restricted to monadic exemplification. Thus, *that the ball is round* is a monadic subject-predicate proposition, whereas *that John is married to Mary* is a dyadic subject-predicate proposition which actually involves two subjects. When we specify the first-order logical form of a proposition or state of affairs, we are specifying the manner in which the operators within a proposition or state of affairs represent connections between propositions and/or states of affairs which are designated by designators. Otherwise the first-order logical form is atomic.

Returning to linguistic considerations for a moment, we can see that just as one can nominalize an indicative sentence to produce a gerundive phrase, one can also nominalize conditional, conjunctive, and indicative sentences with various first-order logical forms. So, for example, the conditional ‘If the universe begins to exist, then it has a finite age’ can be nominalized to produce ‘if the universe’s beginning to exist, then it’s having a finite age’. And this nominalization denotes a state of affairs with the first-order logical form of a conditional. It is easy to see how the other first-order logical form sentences can be nominalized to produce nominalized gerundive denotations of states of affairs that reflect the same first-order logical form as the nominalized sentence.⁴

³ Perhaps there are other atomic logical forms; I am unsure on this point.

⁴ One difficulty in saying there are conditional and other non-atomic first-order logical forms of states of affairs is that the stating of a conditional generally implies the *truth* of two propositions related by a conditional. Thus, we generally take $P_{proposition} \rightarrow Q_{proposition}$ as if *P is true*, then *Q is true*. Since we took *truth* and *falsity* to be operator

It is worth noting that while states of affairs are second-order logical forms, states of affairs themselves come in higher orders as well. If S_{soa} is a state of affairs, S_{soa} 's *obtaining* is a second-order state of affairs and $(S_{\text{soa}}$'s *obtaining*) $_{\text{soa}}$'s *obtaining* is a third-order state of affairs *ad infinitum*.⁵ Additionally, states of affairs can possess propositions as complex constituents as in $P_{\text{proposition}}$'s *obtaining* and propositions can likewise possess states of affairs as complex constituents as in the proposition *that* S_{soa} *obtains*.⁶

Identity Conditions for Propositions and States of Affairs

With this understanding of states of affairs, we can now specify identity conditions for both propositions and states of affairs. For propositions we can say that necessarily two propositions are identical if and only if they share the same first and second-order logical form of designators, concepts and operators. Formally,

properties in chapter 5, it would be more accurate to state conditionals (and the other connectives) as $[\text{True}]P_{\text{proposition}} \rightarrow [\text{True}]Q_{\text{proposition}}$. However, in the case of conditional states of affairs like our example, there is an ambiguity in that if the conditional implicitly includes the operator property *obtains*, then it would seem that we have *propositions* related by a conditional since S_{soa} *obtains* and Q_{soa} *obtains* are propositions, not states of affairs. On the other hand, if the operator property is *obtaining*, we would preserve the second-order logical form of a state of affairs since S_{soa} 's *obtaining* is a state of affairs (albeit a second-order state of affairs, which we discuss in the next paragraph). The relevant conditional state of affairs would be $[\text{Obtaining}]P_{\text{soa}} \rightarrow [\text{Obtaining}]Q_{\text{soa}}$. The question also arises as to whether conditionals and other connectives could combine states of affairs and propositions as in $[\text{Obtaining}]P_{\text{soa}} \rightarrow [\text{True}]Q_{\text{proposition}}$. I'm inclined to say no since the antecedent of the conditional is a second-order state of affairs, which may or may not obtain while the consequent is a proposition.

⁵ I will use the subscripts 'proposition' and 'state of affairs' to denote a proposition or state of affairs respectively. In our discussion of facts below we'll see that ' S_{soa} 's *obtaining*' can denote both a second-order state of affairs and a fact such that '*obtaining*' in the denotation of the state of affairs expresses a concept, but that '*obtaining*' denotes a property in the denotation of the fact.

⁶ The question arises as to whether there are n-order propositions. If there are they would take the form $[\text{True}][P_{\text{proposition}}$ is true] in the case of 2nd-order propositions and so on *ad infinitum*. I see no reason to deny such n-order propositions if there are n-order states of affairs.

$$\square [\forall P_{\text{proposition}} \forall Q_{\text{proposition}} \forall L \forall d_{1\dots n} \forall c_{1\dots n} \forall o_{1\dots n} ((P_{\text{proposition}} = Q_{\text{proposition}}) \leftrightarrow (P_{\text{proposition}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)] \leftrightarrow Q_{\text{proposition}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)])]$$

where $P_{\text{proposition}}$ and $Q_{\text{proposition}}$ are propositions, L is a first-order logical form, d is a designator, c is a concept, and o is a logical operator, and the entire expression, e.g., ' $P_{\text{proposition}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)]$ ' represents the second-order logical form of *proposition*. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis* for states of affairs:

$$\square [\forall P_{\text{soa}} \forall Q_{\text{soa}} \forall L \forall d_{1\dots n} \forall c_{1\dots n} \forall o_{1\dots n} ((P_{\text{soa}} = Q_{\text{soa}}) \leftrightarrow (P_{\text{soa}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)] \leftrightarrow Q_{\text{soa}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)])]$$

where P_{soa} and Q_{soa} are states of affairs. Notice that while L represents the first-order logical form for the DCO's that follow it, it does not specify which logical form--it could be universal generalization, conditional, bi-conditional, subject-predicate, etc. These definitions are designed to be general and therefore to apply to all first-order logical forms of DCO's.

Isomorphism Between Propositions and States of Affairs

One can easily see that there is an isomorphism that holds between propositions and states of affairs that possess the same first-order logical form and contain all and only the same DCO's. Thus *that snow is white* is isomorphic with *snow's being white*. This isomorphism is one of logical equivalence such that necessarily, if a proposition and a state of affairs are isomorphic, the proposition is true if and only an isomorphic state of affairs obtains. Formally, we can say

$$\square [\forall P_{\text{proposition}} \forall Q_{\text{soa}} \forall L \forall d_{1\dots n} \forall c_{1\dots n} \forall o_{1\dots n} (P_{\text{proposition}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)] \approx S_{\text{soa}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)]) \leftrightarrow$$

$(\text{True}(P_{\text{proposition}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)]) \leftrightarrow \text{Obtains}(Q_{\text{soa}} L[(d_1, d_2 \dots d_n)(c_1, c_2 \dots c_n)(o_1, o_2 \dots o_n)]])$

Given that isomorphic propositions and states of affairs are logically equivalent, there is no causal truth-making relation that holds between them. A state of affairs' obtaining does not make a proposition true since states of affairs are proposition-like entities.

However, while states of affairs do not *make* propositions true, states of affairs do give us a way to talk about truthmakers—let us call them facts—in an abstract sense. States of affairs are not identical to facts on this view. Nor are obtaining states of affairs identical to facts.⁷ Nevertheless, states of affairs that do not obtain enable intentional agents to conceive of facts that are non-existent. For example, Smith may conceive of the complex of individual and property of *snow's being blue*, a fact (were it to exist), by means of the state of affairs of *snow's being blue* as his mental content. In such cases, states of affairs (or propositions) can act as designators that designate facts. And, of course, designators are one constituent of intentional states like that of Smith in this example.

One might retort here that Smith could just as easily deploy the proposition *that snow is blue* to conceive of the fact of snow's being blue. But here again we see the reason that metaphysicians are more inclined to speak of facts and possible facts using nominalized gerundives instead of 'that'-clauses: the former express possibility by using the participial form of the verb whereas the latter uses the indicative form of the verb. Facts are referred to using 'that'-clauses as well as nominalized gerundives, but *possible* facts seem more aptly expressed using nominalized gerundives. Hence, there

⁷ This is a bit misleading here since '*S's obtaining*' can refer to a second-order states of affairs or a fact. This will become clearer in our discussion of facts below.

is a useful semantic distinction between nominalized ‘that’-clauses and nominalized gerundives.⁸

The logical isomorphism between states of affairs and propositions can also be applied to the notion of truth conditions. A correspondence theory of truth that is based on the idea that true propositions correspond with facts (slices of reality), often includes within it the notion of truth conditions. It is said that if one provides the truth conditions for a true proposition, he has said what it is for a given proposition to be true. ‘Condition’ is a term that is sometimes used synonymously with ‘state of affairs’ and thus we can in the same vein say that by giving the isomorphic state of affairs for a given proposition, we are also giving that proposition’s truth condition: Necessarily, for all propositions P and states of affairs Q , P is isomorphic to state of affairs Q iff Q is the truth condition for P . Q is a “referential” truth condition in the following sense: Necessarily, for all states of affairs Q , Q obtains iff Q ’s designator(s) refer, where ‘refer’ is taken to be a success term.

Actualism

If states of affairs capture an element of possibility, a modal notion, it is easy to see why philosophers like Pollock, Chisholm, and Plantinga are inclined to build possible worlds out of them. A natural consequence of doing so is to hold to what Robert Adams, and Thomas Wetzel following him call “soft actualism.” Says Wetzel,

⁸ Nevertheless, there is no problem in saying that Smith could use a proposition as a designator in an intentional state to designate a fact. But, there is also no reason to deny that either states of affairs or propositions can serve as complex designators of facts. We will discuss this in greater detail in our discussion of truth below.

A philosopher is a *soft actualist* if she holds that there are both obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs but the non-obtaining states of affairs are made up entirely out of entities that actually exist.⁹

This is opposed to hard actualism, which holds that obtaining states of affairs, often called ‘facts’, are the only states of affairs there are. On our theory, soft actualism naturally follows from the view that there are designators that do not refer and concepts that are not exemplified. These often serve as mental content, but the designators do not denote anything and the concepts have no extension. Soft actualism is here applied to states of affairs, but it is just as easy to see that the view can hold for propositions too in the sense that there are propositions that are false and which have as constituents designators that do not denote and concepts which are not exemplified. However, because states of affairs more closely capture the element of modality in their participial expression, the view is more likely to be applied to states of affairs than to propositions. It should be noted however that even though the participial expression of nominalized gerundives conveys a certain sense of possibility not conveyed by the indicative verbs of nominalized ‘that’-clauses, modal operators are still necessary to specify whether a state of affairs is possible, impossible, or necessary. In other words, the participial verb of nominalized gerundives does not replace the need for modal predicates.

⁹ Wetzel, T. (2003). States of Affairs, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2004, 6.

Truth

Non-truthmaker, abstract accounts of states of affairs like ours have been charged with a failure to provide any explanation of truth. Specifically, the question directed toward our theory is: *what* about reality do true propositions and obtaining states of affairs correspond with? If states of affairs do not make propositions true, what, if anything, does? As Quentin Smith argues,

What is missing from the philosophy of Chisholm, Wolterstorff, Plantinga, and others is the notion of a truth-maker of a proposition, that is, the notion that I (but not they) express by “state of affairs.” They would not deny that there is something that makes a proposition true, but they have no theory of such items; and in this respect, their philosophy is impoverished.¹⁰

Perhaps it is unfair for Smith to charge Plantinga and the like with a failure to have a theory of truthmakers as such theories are significant undertakings. Nevertheless, he is right to argue that Plantinga in particular has left us without even a minimal sketch of how such a theory might go. Thus, our task here is to provide such a sketch realizing that a flow-blown theory of truthmakers or, as I prefer, ‘facts’, is not feasible here.

The domain of theories about truth is broad and therefore assumptions must be made to narrow the scope of our sketch. I have offered a realist view of propositions and states of affairs arguing that they are abstract contents of intentional attitudes which are neither mind, nor physical-object dependent entities. In the case of propositions, with Pollock we have understood them as maximally fine-grained contents of belief (and other intentional attitudes). Thus, if a belief is true, it is true in virtue of its

¹⁰ Smith, Q. (1993). Language and Time. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 158.

content's, a proposition's, truth. Likewise for states of affairs, if one entertains something actual, she entertains a state of affairs that obtains. If we focus on propositions for the sake of simplicity, we see that the most natural view of truth for our theory is that of correspondence. Roughly, a proposition is true just in case it corresponds with some aspect of reality. This conception of truth goes beyond that of a semantic definition like Alfred Tarski's in which it is thought that providing truth conditions for a proposition is sufficient for explaining that proposition's truth.

Bernard Linsky explains,

But what is it that providing truth conditions accomplishes? Some think that it provides an adequate "definition" of truth, one that should satisfy any desire for an "explanation" of truth. It is precisely the feeling that this is not all that needs to be said that leads to the introduction of facts as truth makers. The notion of facts is introduced precisely to provide an explanation where others just provide truth conditions. Facts are deemed necessary in order to show what it is for an object to have a property. Object *a* has property *F* when the fact of *a*'s *having F* exists, or obtains. The real *truthmaker* for a proposition then is a fact which includes objects and properties as constituents...¹¹

The great question before us then becomes just what the correspondence relation between true propositions, obtaining states of affairs, and facts amounts to.

Equivalently, what are the truthmakers/actualitymakers for true propositions and obtaining states of affairs?

¹¹ Linsky, B. (1994). "Truth Makers for Modal Propositions." *The Monist* 77(2): 194.

Richard Kirkham in his *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* distinguishes between two sorts of correspondence theory: correspondence as correlation and correspondence as congruence.¹² Says Kirkham,

The first of these, put very simply, says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, then the truth bearer is true; otherwise it is false. What the correspondence-as-correlation theory does *not* claim is that the truth bearer mirrors, pictures, or is in any sense structurally isomorphic with the state of affairs to which it is correlated. A truth bearer *as a whole* is correlated to a state of affairs *as a whole*. On the other hand, correspondence as congruence *does* claim that there is a structural isomorphism between truth bearers and the fact to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. Indeed, it is precisely because of this isomorphism, say the defenders of correspondence as congruence, that the fact and the truth bearer can be said to correspond with each other.¹³

Kirkham's distinction is helpful in that both sorts of correspondence theory seem plausible for different cases. Correspondence-as-correlation seems plausible for complex propositions that contain operators.¹⁴ Correspondence-as-congruence theories are helpful for explaining how atomic facts make atomic propositions and states of affairs true and actual respectively. If all propositions correspond with facts only in the weaker correspondence-as-correlation sense, then this sort of correspondence becomes overly mysterious in that it tells us nothing about how the correspondence relation works. Alternatively, it seems implausible for non-atomic propositions to correspond

¹² For recently developed correspondence theories of truth see Newman, A. (2002). *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Fumerton, R. (2002). *Realism and the Correspondence Theory of Truth*. Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield and O'Connor, D. J. (1975). *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*. London, Hutchinson and Co. Publishers.

¹³ Kirkham, R. L. (1992). *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 118-119.

¹⁴ For sake of simplicity, I will often speak of propositions vis-à-vis correspondence with facts, with the understanding that states of affairs also correspond with facts in the same sense as their isomorphic propositions.

congruently with facts in the case of the general quantifiers, negative propositions, and the connectives. Says Kirkham,

...some who would accept the existence of atomic facts would still object to the correspondence theory of truth on the grounds that while there are many true beliefs (statements, or whatever) that are disjunctive, conditional, or negative, there is no such things as a disjunctive, conditional, or negative fact.¹⁵

For example, if a disjunctive proposition corresponds congruently with a fact, that fact is also disjunctive, but it is hard to know what a disjunctive fact would be given that its corresponding proposition is true just in case *one* of its disjuncts is true. Such a disjunctive fact would seem to require the existence of negative facts, which, as we have seen in the case of distinguishing between properties and concepts, populates the world with unnecessarily many facts. Moreover, since I reject possibilism, there are no possible objects, including possible facts, that could correspond to a disjunct that was false. Similar problems arise for negative propositions since we are avoiding the postulation of negative facts.

Kirkham, however, sees no problem here:

First, it is not at all clear why there cannot be facts of these sorts. Perhaps on some technical, philosophical sense of ‘fact’ there are none, but then so much the worse for the technical sense of ‘fact’. Surely it is not incorrect English (contra Acton 1935, 189) for an ordinary person to say, ‘It is a fact that either the train gets here on time or I shall be late’ or ‘It is a fact that if the price of corn does not rise, then I shall go broke’ or “it is a fact that I’m not going to make it.’ ...Second, even if there are no facts of these sorts, this would be of relevance only to correspondence-as-congruence theories. On a correspondence-as-correlation theory, the fact referred to by a true disjunctive statement need not itself be a “disjunctive entity,” whatever that could be.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kirkham, R. L. (1992). Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction. Cambridge, MIT Press, 139.

¹⁶ Kirkham, R. L. (1992). Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction. Cambridge, MIT Press, 139.

But Kirkham's objection to a rejection of disjunctive facts trades on the equivocal use of 'fact'. Here Kirkham is using 'fact' to refer to a true proposition, not a truthmaker of a true proposition. And natural language reflects this usage. So, while we are stipulating a technical use of 'fact', this is no minor stipulation. Whether 'fact' is used to designate true propositions or truthmakers of true propositions is a *significant* ontological difference.

The proper understanding of correspondence for us, then, will be Kirkham's correspondence-as-congruence in the case of atomic propositions. These correspond with atomic facts while complex propositions—those that contain operators—will correspond-as-correlation to atomic facts. Those complex (non-atomic) propositions correspond-as-correlation to atomic facts in virtue of their atomic propositions and states of affairs components corresponding-as-congruence to atomic facts. I will not provide a formalization of this here. I seek only to provide a sketch of how such a correspondence theory would work on our understanding of propositions and states of affairs.

Facts

Let us focus for a moment on facts. Atomic facts are the most basic divisions of reality.¹⁷ Atomic facts are built out of individuals, properties and/or relations.

¹⁷ For developed theories of facts see Olson, K. R. (1987). *An Essay on Facts*. Stanford, Center for the Study of Language and Information and Bennett, J. (1988). *Events and Their Names*. Indianapolis, Hackett. I prefer 'realty' to world in order to include all that exists, both physical and non-physical.

Individuals (particulars, objects) exemplify properties and/or stand in n-adic relations. Individuals need not be limited to physical individuals. Numbers or even propositions and states of affairs are individuals since they exemplify properties and/or stand in relations. Anything that can exemplify a property or stand in a relation can be the constituent of a fact.

As we have seen, confusion in this area mounts because of the way that we refer to facts. Both ‘that’-clauses and nominalized gerundives are used to do so. This is one apparent reason that metaphysicians sometimes identify facts, propositions, and states of affairs. We commonly say ‘It’s a fact that snow is white’ or ‘The fact of snow’s being white hid the polar bear’s presence from us.’ But, the fact that we use the same noun phrases to refer to facts as we do to propositions and states of affairs does not entail that these are identical entities. Natural language routinely uses identical singular terms to refer to distinct individuals. Thus we can say that for cases in which a ‘that’-clause or nominalized gerundive within a sentence refers to a fact, and not a proposition or state of affairs, the proposition expressed by such a sentence contains a designator which designates the fact. In such cases, a state of affairs or proposition can be used as a designator within the proposition expressed by the sentence. Thus the proposition *that the fact that snow is white camouflages polar bears* contains a designator, *that snow is white*, which is an imbedded proposition that functions as a designator in the larger proposition expressed by the sentence ‘The fact that snow is white camouflages polar bears’.

Returning to atomic facts, if these are the basic atoms of reality, then true atomic propositions (and atomic states of affairs that obtain) will in some sense correspond-as-

congruence with these facts. First consider the constituents of propositions and states of affairs: DCO's. It is natural to say that for designators and concepts to correspond with some fact is at least partially to say that their extensions are non-empty. But of course, this is not sufficient, for the designator and concepts of one proposition may have non-empty extensions, but not because their extensions partake in the same fact. For example, the proposition *that John is tall* includes the designator *John* and the concept *is tall*. While John may exist, he may be short, but Sam may be tall so that the concept *is tall* is exemplified (but not by John). Thus it is not sufficient to say that if the DCO's of a proposition have non-empty extensions, the proposition corresponds with a fact. Thus, it is clear that the first-order logical form of a proposition must be part of the story to tell about correspondence of proposition with an atomic fact. Given that first-order propositions (and states of affairs) that contain operators are non-atomic, we are left with only atomic propositions and states of affairs that can correspond-as-congruence with atomic facts. The atomic proposition *that John is tall* corresponds with the atomic fact of John's being tall. This fact consists in the individual John exemplifying the property of *being tall*.

What about the second-order logical forms of *proposition* and *state of affairs*? Do these represent facts in the same way that their first-order subject-predicate (atomic) logical forms do? Not clearly. Instead, second-order logical forms specify the particular type of subject-predicate form of DCO's. In the case of propositions and states of affairs, the difference in predication is expressed by 'is' and 'being' in the proposition *that snow is white* and the state of affairs of *snow's being white*. But, given that a proposition or state of affairs' first-order logical form may be non-atomic, we

must say that it is the derivative subject-predicate form that is specified by the second-order logical form of *proposition* or *state of affairs*. The derivative subject-predicate form is the subject-predicate form(s) that non-atomic propositions and states of affairs can be reduced to. For example, in the case of a conditional proposition, one must look to the atomic propositions that are joined by the conditional operator relation (which is expressed by the conditional operator) to see what their subject-predicate form is. This specification of second-order logical form as a specification of the type of subject-predicate form of DCO's leads us to the conclusion that all propositions and states of affairs are either atomic (subject-predicate), or contain derivative atomic propositions or states of affairs.

States of affairs while distinct from propositions as second-order logical forms will still correspond with the same fact as their isomorphic propositions when both are atomic. Given the logical equivalence of the isomorphic second-order logical forms of *proposition* and *state of affairs*, they will always correspond to the same fact.

Operators

How do operators fit into this correspondence theory of truth? Because operators function as representations of relations between or properties of propositions and states of affairs, their extensions, assuming operators are in some sense representational, are satisfied by the propositions and states of affairs that stand in those relations and exemplify those properties. In the case of the connective operator relations (relations of conjunction, disjunction, conditional, and bi-conditional), these serve to combine propositions and states of affairs into molecular complexes of propositions and states of

affairs. These complexes are not themselves propositions and states of affairs since operator properties and relations are not constituents of propositions and states of affairs. Instead, when operator properties and relations combine/modify propositions and states of affairs, we have facts whose constituents are operator properties/relations, propositions, and states of affairs and their DCO's.

In the case of quantifier properties, these serve to modify propositions and states of affairs by allowing these second-order logical forms' designators to become variable, designating some individual or other in the case of existential generalizations, and designating all of a class of individuals in the case of universal generalizations. Modal operator properties modify the way in which propositions are true/false (and states of affairs obtain/fail to obtain) in the case of *de dicto* modality. In the case of *de re* modality, modal operator properties modify the way in which individuals exemplify their properties and stand in their relations. The negation operator property also modifies the *truth/falsity* properties of propositions and states of affairs. *Truth/falsity* and *obtain/fails to obtain* properties can also be taken to be operator properties. So, operators serve to represent the operator relations and properties that propositions and states of affairs exemplify.

While it seems fairly straightforward in the case of the connective operators that their correspondence ultimately depends upon the relations atomic facts bear to each other, quantification and negation operators are less clear. Various proposals for the quantifiers have been offered. For example, in the case of universal generalization, it has been proposed that a conjunction of atomic facts could serve as a sort of super-fact to which a true universal generalization proposition corresponds. But some, like David

Armstrong, have objected that such a conjunction would not be sufficient since this conjunction does not specify that *all* of the relevant atomic facts are included in the super-fact. Thus Armstrong proposes a totality fact, a fact that there are no additional facts to be included in the super-fact conjunction. I will not attempt to solve this difficulty here.

In the case of negation, for it to have a non-empty extension is for the proposition that exemplifies it (taking the negation operator as representational) to have an empty extension. The scope of a negation operator can vary from negating an entire proposition (state of affairs) to negating a predication within a proposition or state of affairs. This is the difference between the proposition expressed by the sentence ‘It is not the case that snow is blue’ and that expressed by the sentence ‘Snow is not blue’. Both propositions expressed include the negation operator in them. In the first case, we simply say that if the proposition negated has an empty extension, the negated proposition is true. In the second case the sentence is true just in case the extension of the concept *blue* is empty.

Tensed Propositions

I have generally avoided complicating this sketch by including questions of tensed propositions, i.e., propositions about the past and the future. In harmony with my actualist assumptions, I am inclined toward the view of presentism, the view that only

the present exists and neither the past nor the future exists.¹⁸ Such a view leaves us with the difficulty of saying what past or future-tensed propositions correspond to on a correspondence theory of truth. Certainly there are true propositions about the past and many are inclined to think there are true propositions about the future as well. Since we have said above that states of affairs are identical to the truth conditions for any proposition that state of affairs is isomorphic to, we can extend this idea to tensed propositions. Consider the proposition

(1) *that Alvin Plantinga wrote The Nature of Necessity.*

On one reading, the state of affairs of *Alvin Plantinga's having written The Nature of Necessity* is isomorphic to (1). Given that there is no past-existing person (Alvin Plantinga) on presentism, one way to provide not only a truth-condition (the isomorphic state of affairs), but also the truthmaker (fact) for this tensed proposition is to assign this latter role to the isomorphic state of affairs' exemplifying a tensed property. When an individual, including, a state of affairs, exemplifies a property, we have a fact. According to this line of thinking, then, the state of affairs of *Alvin Plantinga's having written The Nature of Necessity* is a state of affairs that presently exemplifies the property of *obtaining*, and this fact accounts for the truth of the isomorphic proposition.

¹⁸ For a defense of presentism see Smith, Q. (1993). Language and Time. Oxford, Oxford University Press and Crisp, T. (2002), Markosian, N. (2004), A Defense of Presentism. Oxford, Clarendon Press, and Thomas Crisp's In Defense of Presentism. Philosophy. South Bend, Notre Dame (Dissertation).

The most obvious objection here is that this solution is trivial and unhelpful since states of affairs on our theory are not significantly different than propositions. Why not simply say that (1) is true because (1) exemplifies the property of *being true*? In other words, an appeal to an abstract state of affairs helps no more than appealing to the proposition's truth, also a fact, to explain why it is true.

So, we need an explanation beyond simply pointing to the logically equivalent state of affairs' obtaining for the truth of any tensed proposition. One option is to argue that it is in virtue of the fact that the designator(s) of a tensed proposition did/will refer that a tensed proposition like (1) is true. So, taking *Alvin Plantinga* as, in this case, a *de re* designator, this designator has the past-tense property of having designated an individual. If this route is taken however, one is forced to countenance tensed properties which are unpalatable to many.

Alternatively, if tense is removed from the constituents of states of affairs, we can assign past-tensed properties to them as a whole. So, instead of making *Alvin Plantinga's having written The Nature of Necessity* the relevant state of affairs for truth-making of (1), we remove tense from the state of affairs by considering the state of affairs of *Alvin Plantinga's writing The Nature Necessity* and then predicate a tensed-concept which represents a tensed property, viz., *obtained*. On this alternative, the state of affairs of *Alvin Plantinga's writing The Nature of Necessity* having the property of *obtained* is a complex fact that makes the tensed proposition *that Alvin Plantinga wrote The Nature of Necessity* true. But, here again, one must countenance tensed properties for this option to work.

The same sort of solution can be applied to future-tensed propositions. On this view, future-tensed propositions are made true by non-tensed states of affairs possessing future-tensed properties. Since tensed-properties seem metaphysically mysterious to many, one can ameliorate this worry by taking a Plantingian view of possible worlds (maximal states of affairs), which holds that possible worlds include and preclude all of their states of affairs essentially or necessarily.¹⁹ Thus, the actual world (an abstract object we recall) includes all of its states of affairs essentially. One could then explain tensed properties in terms of the sequence of states of affairs that make up the actual world. Thus tensed-propositions are ultimately made true in virtue of the fact that isomorphic states of affairs will or have obtained according to the essential sequence of all states of affairs that are included in the essential makeup of the actual world. Such an alternative may avoid countenancing tensed properties by reducing them to this sequence of states of affairs. But of course, such a solution forces one to adopt an essentialist view of possible worlds, which may seem as metaphysically problematic as tensed properties such that we are no closer to understanding what makes tensed propositions true.

However, it does seem that if an *ante rem* view of propositions and states of affairs holds, it is not implausible to believe that maximal states of affairs (possible worlds) which exist necessarily also include all of their states of affairs necessarily. And, if there is a sequence to the states of affairs included in a possible world, this too would

¹⁹ For an argument to the conclusion the essential properties are distinct from necessary properties, see Fine, K. (1994). "Essence and Modality." Philosophical Perspectives 8: 1-16.

seem to be essential to any given possible world, including the actual world given its *ante rem* status.²⁰

Events

A theory of events is not needed to sketch a correspondence theory of truth that is compatible with the conceptual account of states of affairs I have developed. However, a few brief comments are in order. First, events do seem distinct, though not ontologically significantly distinct, from facts.²¹ Second, events can be roughly thought of as facts that are extended over time (assuming sense can be made of this on presentism).²² Thirdly, nominalized gerundives are also used to denote events as in ‘*Jones’ getting the plague*’. Thus, a parallel theory of abstract events to the theory of states of affairs that has been developed here would seem available. The main difference between states of affairs and abstract events is in the nature of the concepts expressed by the verbs of these nominalized gerundives. Event nominalized gerundives include action verbs whereas states of affairs nominalized gerundives contain simple linking verbs like ‘being’.²³

²⁰ Since we have said that states of affairs are not ontologically significantly different from propositions, it would not seem to matter whether one built possible worlds out of propositions or states of affairs on this solution.

²¹ See Bennett, J. (1988). Events and Their Names. Indianapolis, Hackett for an argument for the distinction between facts and events.

²² Events would have be understood here as groupings of facts or facts *considered* sequentially, though not actually existing in the past or the future since these do not exist on presentism.

²³ For a relevant discussion see Wolterstorff, N. (1979). "Can Ontology Do Without Events." Grazer philosophische Studien 7/8: 177-201.

Of course, I have only given a sketch here of a correspondence theory of truth that is compatible with our theory of propositions and states of affairs. Nonetheless, something like the direction I have pointed toward seems inevitable for the DCO account of states of affairs I have developed.

Have the Desiderata Been Satisfied?

In our preliminary remarks in chapter four, we listed several desiderata for any acceptable theory of states of affairs. First, an acceptable theory ought to account for various phenomena of relevant intentional attitudes and intentional attitude statements. We have met this desideratum by showing that states of affairs serve as the intentional content of attitudes like entertaining. Moreover, they serve as the referents of nominalized gerundives in intentional contexts as in the sentence ‘Jones contemplated snow’s being blue.’

Second, we said that any acceptable theory of states of affairs ought to provide an explanation for why propositions and states of affairs are distinct, if they are. We saw that the reason they are distinct, though not ontologically significantly different, is because they are distinct second-order logical forms of designators, concepts, and operators. Isomorphic states of affairs and propositions are logically equivalent but not identical.

Third, our theory sheds light on a correspondence theory of truth but showing how states of affairs serve as the truth conditions for propositions when they are isomorphic to each other. Furthermore, states of affairs and isomorphic propositions correspond-as-congruence with truth-making facts when those states of affairs and propositions are

atomic. When the extensions of the first-order logical forms of these propositions and states of affairs are non-empty in virtue of the existence of one fact, we have correspondence between the proposition, states of affairs, and fact.

Our fourth desideratum stated that any acceptable account of states of affairs provide an explanation of singular propositions/states of affairs. Our theory does this by following John Pollock's Fregean-esque notion of propositional designators. This move saves us from a problematic existentialist view of propositions and states of affairs and nicely accounts intentional states that contain false propositions and non-obtaining states of affairs.

Fifth, our theory reveals that states of affairs provide no significant insight on the nature of modality that is above and beyond what any theory of propositions might produce. States of affairs do not possess a key to unlocking mysteries about the nature of modality. *De dicto* modality, it seems, is a matter of operator properties of the *truth/falsity* of propositions and *obtains/fails to obtain* of states of affairs. *De re* modality is a matter of properties that modify the way in which objects exemplify their properties and stand in relations. While modal phenomena should certainly be accounted for in any full-blown theory of propositions or states of affairs, neither theory will explain the nature of modal properties.

The DCO Theory Compared and Contrasted to Contemporary Theories

To compare and contrast our theory to every theory surveyed would be a tedious and unnecessary undertaking. However, a broad-stroked comparison and contrast with

contemporary theories would be helpful for setting this theory amongst its contemporaries.

This conceptual account of states of affairs resembles Plantinga's more than any other contemporary theory in that it distinguishes between propositions and states of affairs, but takes both to be anti-existentialist entities. This theory moves considerably beyond Plantinga's, however, in attempting to specify the nature and structure of states of affairs where Plantinga only briefly defines them by using examples of nominalized gerundives before proceeding to build possible worlds out of them and exploring the nature of modal properties. We also sketch how our theory of states of affairs comports with a correspondence theory of truth, which goes beyond Plantinga's theory.

Our theory also relies heavily on John Pollack's theory of propositions, especially with respect to their structure. However, we depart significantly from Pollock in denying that logically equivalent states of affairs are identical. Recall that Pollock saw no reason to deny the identity of logically equivalent states of affairs. But, on our theory states of affairs are so similar to propositions that they too are maximally fine-grained, though not objects of belief. So, just as Pollock's maximally fine-grained objects of belief are not identical when logically equivalent, neither are states of affairs.

Our theory is nothing like Armstrong's, whose states of affairs are much more like our facts than our states of affairs. This would hold for Wittgenstein's theory as well, since Armstrong's theory of states of affairs follows in the tradition Wittgenstein's. This of course assumes that Wittgenstein's *Sachverhalte* are not possible facts, which we saw good reasons to accept in chapter two.

Chisholm's early theory of states of affairs resembles ours in that its approach is through intentional attitudes and nominalized gerundives. For the early Chisholm, states of affairs were defined as intentional content of the intentional attitude of acceptance. But of course Chisholm's genus-species relationship between states of affairs, propositions, and events is not one shared by ours. Moreover, Chisholm's ultimate rejection of states of affairs because of problems of self-reference are handled in my theory by adopting Pollock's personal designators as a certain sort of constituent of propositions and states of affairs.

These are the most prominent theories in the literature. Similarities and differences between the other theories of our survey should be fairly straightforward.

Conclusion

I have offered a new theory of states of affairs that adds new dimensions that have been otherwise neglected in historical and contemporary theories. We have examined the short history of states of affairs theories and have seen that clarity increased over the course of the 20th century.

In the theory here presented we see that states of affairs are ontologically similar to propositions, though they are distinct second-order logical forms of designators, concepts and operators. We have spelled out the relation of isomorphism that can hold between propositions and states of affairs. And we have sketched a correspondence theory of truth and truthmaking facts to compliment our theory of states of affairs and propositions. This conceptual account of states of affairs is set against the backdrop of a comprehensive history of states of affairs, but improves upon its predecessors by

providing more specificity and consistency. Our account appreciates three approaches seen in the history of states of affairs theories: the linguistic approach which focuses on nominalized gerundives and 'that'-clauses, the intentional attitude approach which focuses on mental content, and the truthmaker approach which seeks to explain truth as correspondence. With all of these approaches considered, we have produced a theory that demonstrates awareness of these metaphysical concerns, thereby producing a theory that is part of our best comprehensive theory of the world.

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