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Chapter 12
Brentano and J. Stuart Mill on Phenomenalism and Mental Monism

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Abstract This study is about Brentano's criticism of a version of phenomenalism that he calls "mental monism" and which he attributes to positivist philosophers such as Ernst Mach and John Stuart Mill. I am interested in Brentano's criticism of Mill's version of mental monism based on the idea of "permanent possibilities of sensation." Brentano claims that this form of monism is characterized by the identification of the class of physical phenomena with that of mental phenomena, and it commits itself to a form of *idealism*. Brentano argues instead for a form of indirect or hypothetical realism based on intentional correlations.

Keywords Brentano · Stuart Mill · Mach · Positivism · Phenomenalism · Permanent possibilities of sensation

This study is about Brentano's relationship with positivism. This topic has been investigated in connection with Comte's and Mach's versions of positivism, and it has been argued that the young Brentano was significantly influenced by several aspects of Comte's positive philosophy without ever committing himself to its anti-metaphysical assumptions.[1] But several other aspects of Brentano's relationship with positivism have not been thoroughly investigated; namely, Brentano's

[1] See Münch, D. (1989), „Brentano and Comte", in: *Grazer Philosophische Studien,* vol. 35, *philosophiques de Strasbourg*, vol. 35, pp. 85–128; Fisette, D. (2019), "Brentano's lectures on positivism (1893–1894) and his relationship with Ernst Mach", in: F. Stadler (Ed.), The Centenary of Ernst Mach, Berlin: Springer, collection Ernst Mach Circle, p. 39–50.

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relationship with the British philosopher John Stuart Mill.[2] The young Brentano was influenced by several aspects of Mill's thought and we shall see that the philosophical program that Brentano developed in Würzburg is in many respects similar to that of Mill. Several years later, in his lectures on positivism and monism that he held in Vienna in 1893–1894,[3] Brentano is more critical of Mill's version of positivism and the so-called permanent possibilities of sensation. The form of phenomenalism that Brentano criticizes in these lectures rests on what he calls "mental monism," which he characterises as the identification of the class of physical phenomena with that of mental phenomena. Brentano argues that this form of monism commits itself to *idealism,* which can be summarized by Berkeley's classical expression: *esse est percipii*. I claim that Brentano argues instead for a form of indirect or hypothetical realism, and that his own alternative to mental monism consists in replacing the identity relation with that of intentional correlation.

12.1 The Background of Brentano's Relationship with Mill and Positivism

Brentano's interest in positivism goes back to his first meeting with Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg during his studies in Berlin in 1858–1859.[4] Trendelenburg exercised a great deal of influence over his intellectual development, not only with respect to his knowledge of Aristotle, but also to his apprenticeship in philosophy. This is what he will confirm, in 1914, on the occasion of his appointment as a member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences:

> With Trendelenburg, I shared the conviction throughout my life that philosophy lends itself to true scientific treatment, but that it cannot get along with such treatment unless it wants to be revived regardless of what was transmitted by the great thinkers of the past. I followed his example by devoting several years of my life to the study of Aristotle's writings, which he had taught me to consider, above all else, as an untapped treasure. The same belief that there is no real prospect of success in philosophy, unless proceeding in the same way as in other scientific fields, has less encouraged me to want to embrace much than to concentrate all my strength in some relatively simple tasks.[5]

[2] There are, however, helpful studies on Brentano's relationship to Stuart Mill: see Haller, R. (1988), „Franz Brentano, ein Philosoph des Empirismus", in: *Brentano Studien*, vol. 1, pp. 19–30; Baumgartner, W. (1989), „Brentanos und Mills Methode der beschreibenden Analyse", in: *Brentano Studien*, Bd. 2, pp. 63–78.

[3] Brentano, F. (1893–1894), *Vorlesungen: Zeitbewegende philosophische Fragen*, Houghton Library: Harvard, LS 20, pp. 29366–29475; hereinafter referred to as *Lectures on positivism*.

[4] In his book *Seiendes, Bewußtsein, Intentionalität im Frühwerk von Franz Brentano* (Freiburg, Alber, 2001, p. 144), M. Antonelli rightly pointed out that most German positivists at the time, notably Ernst Laas, who supervised Benno Kerry's dissertation on the problem of causality in Stuart Mill, were students of Trendelenburg.

[5] Brentano, quoted in M. Antonelli, *Seiendes, Bewußtsein, Intentionalität im Frühwerk von Franz Brentano*, *op. cit*., p. 38.

This conviction led Brentano to take an interest in positivism, and it is also at the heart of the research program which he developed in Würzburg.

In 1869, he published an article entitled "Auguste Comte and positive philosophy," in which he praises the merits of the French philosopher whom he describes as "one of the most remarkable thinkers of [the 19th century]".[6] Brentano's interest in Comte and positivism is not limited to this article. He also held a public lecture on Comte in 1869,[7] and it is known that Brentano's paper was only the first of a series of seven articles that he planned to write on Comte's philosophy, a project which he never carried out. Nevertheless, many issues discussed by Brentano in this article on Comte were already at the heart of his philosophical preoccupations when he assumed his position at Würzburg in 1866; namely, his philosophy of history, his urging of the employment of the inductive method of the natural sciences in philosophy, and his critique of speculative philosophy. Besides these themes common to Brentano and Comte, several other factors should also be considered in this context. Notable among these are the classification of sciences that took on increasing importance for Brentano during this early period, and the question of religion – more specifically, the question of the compatibility of philosophy practised in the spirit of the natural sciences with one form or another of theism.[8]

One of the decisive factors explaining why Brentano took an interest in Comte's philosophy is without a doubt the importance he granted to British empiricism, and especially to John Stuart Mill's philosophy. It was through Mill's work on Comte's positivism that Brentano came to know about the work of the French philosopher, and his reading of Comte had been deeply influenced by Mill's interpretation of Comte's philosophy in that work.[9] But there is reason to think that Mill's position with regard to Comte's positivism in that work is also, for Brentano, a non-negligible motivation for his interest in Mill's philosophy. We know from Stumpf that Brentano's interest in Mill's philosophy can be traced back to his first lectures on metaphysics, delivered at Würzburg from 1867 (until 1872), in which he dealt abundantly with Mill's *System of Logic*.[10] Stumpf also confirms that Brentano's interest

[6] Brentano, F., „Auguste Comte und die positive Philosophie", in: Kraus, O. (Ed.) (1968), *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie und ihr augenblicklicher Stand,* Hamburg: Meiner, pp. 99–100.

[7] Concerning Brentano's 1869 public lectures on Comte and positivism, see Stumpf, C., "Reminiscences of Franz Brentano", in: McAlister, L. (Ed.) (1976), *The Philosophy of Franz Brentano*, London: Duckworth, p. 20.

[8] See Brentano, F. (1873), „Der Atheismus und die Wissenschaft", in: *Historischpolitische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland*, vol. 72, pp. 852–872 & pp. 917–929.

[9] Mill, J. St. (1865), *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, in: Mill, J. St., *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Robson J. M. (Ed.) (1969), Toronto: University of Toronto Press, vol. X, pp. 261–368.

[10] Beside Stuart Mill's work on Comte, Brentano deals extensively with Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* in several lectures, namely in his 1869 lectures on *deduktive und induktive Logik*, and in Brentano's *Psychology* (Brentano, *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint*, trans. A. C. Rancurello et al., London: Routledge, 1973; hereinafter referred to as *Psychology*) where he repeatedly refers to Stuart Mill's contribution to the classification of acts, the laws of association, and introspection. Brentano further discusses Mill's logic in a talk delivered in Vienna in 1890 under the title "Modern errors concerning the knowledge of the laws of inference" (in D. Fisette & G. Frechette (Eds.),

in Comte's philosophy goes hand in hand with the increasing importance of British philosophy in Brentano's research and teaching during the Würzburg period.[11] Indeed, Marty and Stumpf have pointed out significant changes in Brentano's philosophy toward the end of the 1860s, including changes in the definition of psychology in its relation to metaphysics. Brentano temporarily dissociates himself from the Aristotelian conception of psychology as a science of the soul, and distinguishes more clearly the field of psychology from that of metaphysics. We can even speak of a turning point in Brentano's thought, which began during this period, and which is reflected in his rapprochement with the research program developed by philosophers like John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte, for example, and based on a philosophy from an empirical point of view. This stands out clearly from the comparison of Brentano's work on Aristotle's *De Anima* in 1867, which contains virtually no reference to contemporary psychology, as Brentano's first lectures on psychology were delivered at Würzburg between 1871 and 1873. It is on these lectures that Brentano's *Hauptwerk* is based, and in which we can observe a rapprochement with the British philosophers.[12]

One of the important sources of information regarding Brentano's effort to bring himself closer to the British empiricists is his correspondence with Mill from 1872 until the latter's death in 1873.[13] This exchange took place during Brentano's *Glaubenskrise*, beginning in 1869 with his reflections on Church dogma, and culminating in his abandonment of priesthood in 1873 and his resignation from his position as *ordinarius* at Würzburg a few weeks later – a position that he had finally obtained in May 1872, despite Hoffmann's opposition, thanks to the intervention of Lotze. It is in this state of mind that Brentano prepared to travel to England, and he would arrive in London during the summer of 1872 to meet some British philosophers.[14]

In the first letter to Mill, Brentano relates the regrettable state of philosophy in Germany, as well as his intention to reform it by drawing on the reform of the natural sciences. He describes himself as elated by the realization that his own ideas are close to those of Mill in many respects regarding the method and certain of his

Themes from Brentano, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 513–524) in which he opposes the neo-Kantian conception of the rules of inference to that of Stuart Mill.

[11] This is also confirmed by A. Marty in his short biography of Brentano where he notes Brentano's increasing interest, during the Würzburg period, in philosophers such as Locke, Hume, Bentham, Stuart Mill und Jevons (Marty, A. (1916), "Franz Brentano. Eine biographische Skizze", in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I, 1, Halle: Niemeyer, pp. 97–103.

[12] Stumpf, C., „Reminiscences of Franz Brentano", *op. cit.* p. 37.

[13] Mill, J. St., *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill, 1849–1873*, Mineka Francis E. and Lindley Dwight N. (Eds.), Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, vol. XVII, part IV.

[14] It is known that Brentano had planned to teach a course on the theme "inductive and deductive logic with an application to the natural sciences and to the sciences of mind" in the summer semester of 1873, but this course was never given because, in the meanwhile, Brentano resigned from his position at Würzburg. See. Werle, J. (1989), *Franz Brentano und die Zukunft der Philosophie*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 97–98.

doctrines.[15] Brentano tells him about his plans to travel to England, and this correspondence deals largely with the planning of a meeting between the two philosophers. However, we know that this meeting never took place, first because Mill was no longer in London during Brentano's stay, and second, because a later meeting, intended to take place at Avignon, was unfortunately prevented by Mill's passing.[16] This does not mean that the British philosopher was uninterested by the young Brentano's work, as the correspondence itself demonstrates the contrary. A review of George Grote's work on Aristotle,[17] in which Mill comments of one of Brentano's two works on Aristotle[18] which he had sent to Mill in 1872, also indicates the latter's interest in Brentano. The passage concerns Brentano's habilitation thesis and shows Mill's high esteem for him:

> Franz Brentano's work *The Psychology of Aristotle*, *In Particular His Doctrine of the Active Intellect*, which M. Grote does not seem to have considered as he wrote his essay because Brentano's work was recently published in 1867; without taking position on the question of determining whether Brentano has supported all his theses in that work, the author of the present article cannot help but noting that this work is one of the most meticulously executed pieces of philosophical research and exegesis that he has ever encountered.[19]

Mill's glowing remarks on Brentano gives us an idea of the philosophical scope that such a meeting between both philosophers might have had.[20]

12.2 Mill's Permanent Possibilities of Sensation

The major influence of Comte and British empiricism on Brentano's thought has recently given rise to interpretations of his philosophy as a version of phenomenalism. We owe the first interpretation to P. Simons in his introduction to the English translation of Brentano's *Psychology* (p. XVI), in which he attributes to Brentano what he called "methodological phenomenalism." Simons's interpretation has been taken over recently by Tim Crane who claims that this form of phenomenalism is

[15] Worth mentioning in this regard is Brentano's ethics which has been strongly influenced by Mill's and Bentham's utilitarianism. See Chisholm, R. (1986), *Brentano and Intrinsic Value*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[16] Brentano nevertheless meets with other philosophers during his stay in England, notably with H. Spencer, with whom he exchanged a few letters that were published in the journal *Nachrichten*, vol. 6, 1995, pp. 7–16.

[17] Grote, G., *Aristotle*, A. Bain/G. C. Robertson (Eds.) (1972), London: John Murray; Mill, J. St. (1875), 'Grote's Aristotle', *Dissertation and Discussions*, London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, vol. IV, pp. 189–230.

[18] J. S. Mill, 'Grote's Aristotle', *op. cit*., pp. 211 & 222.

[19] Mill, J. St., 'Grote's Aristotle', *op. cit*., p. 222.

[20] This correspondence also contains a very interesting philosophical discussion on the theory of judgment, and notably on Brentano's thesis of the reduction of categorical judgments to existential judgments, which I cannot discuss in this study. Brentano reproduces the relevant excerpts of this discussion with Mill in a long footnote to his *Psychology* (p. 169–171).

compatible with the thesis that the reality of the external world transcends appearances and phenomena.[21] According to the second interpretation, Brentano committed himself in his *Psychology* to metaphysical phenomenalism, according to which there is nothing beyond phenomena, the reality of the external world being constituted by mere appearances. We shall see that the methodological link with phenomenalism is justified, although the expression "methodological phenomenalism" is rather misleading. The term "phenomenology" is perhaps more appropriate given Brentano's extended use of the term phenomenon, and it is well known that many psychologists, including his pupil Stumpf, have used it in this way.[22] On the other hand, despite his sympathy for philosophers such as Comte, Mill, and Ernst Mach, for example, who advocate a rather radical form of metaphysical phenomenalism, we shall see that there are reasons to believe that Brentano himself never adhered to this form of positivism.

Brentano's reservations with respect to phenomenalism are first formulated in his *Psychology* and later in his lectures on positivism entitled "Contemporary philosophical questions" which he held in Vienna one year before he left Austria and in which he extensively discusses several versions of phenomenalism (p. 29417–29426). Despite the cursory character of Brentano's notes, which predominately consist of quotes and paraphrases from the main texts of these philosophers on that topic, these manuscripts are valuable with regard to Brentano's position on phenomenalism. He carefully examines four versions of positivism and compares Comte's version to Kirchhoff's on the one hand, and Mill's version to that of Ernst Mach, on the other hand. He claims that Mill's and Mach's versions constitute progress over that of Comte's and Kirchhoff's to the extent that they both take into account the contemporary development of natural sciences and they grant more importance to the field of mental phenomena than the other two versions. The first part of these lectures is devoted to a comparative study of Comte's and Kirchhoff's versions of positivism which he at this point clearly repudiates. He then asks whether one should rule out any form of positivism or consider any other forms, even if one has to provide them with a critical complement. Brentano opts for the second option, and proposes to

[21] According to T. Crane (*Aspects of Psychologism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), what distinguishes Brentano from phenomenalism proper is that Brentano "believes that there is something beyond the phenomena, although we can never know it. Nonetheless, this knowledge can never come through science; so as far as science is concerned, phenomenalism might as well be true. Peter Simons has usefully called Brentano's approach methodological phenomenalism and I will adopt this label," p. 33.

[22] See Fisette, D. (2015), "The Reception and Actuality of Carl Stumpf", in: D. Fisette/R. Martinelli (Eds) (2015), *Philosophy from an empirical standpoint*: *Essays on Carl Stumpf*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 1–53.

examine in turn Mill's doctrine of permanent possibilities of sensation in chapter 11 of his critical work on Hamilton[23] and Ernst Mach's doctrine of elements.[24]

Brentano already discussed Stuart Mill's theory in the first chapter of the second book of his *Psychology* in the context of a revision of his definition of natural sciences. Brentano considers certain restrictions to his definition of the natural sciences as sciences of physical phenomena because the phenomena of imagination, for example, which are ultimately physical phenomena, are not objects of study of the natural sciences. It is in this context that he proposes this definition of the natural sciences as the

> sciences which seek to explain the succession of physical phenomena connected with normal and pure sensations (that is, sensations which are not influenced by special mental conditions and processes) on the basis of the assumption of a world which resembles one which has a three-dimensional extension in space and flows in one direction in time, and which influences our sense organs.[25]

Brentano claims that this form of explanation further presupposes that one ascribes to the world "forces capable of producing sensations and of exerting a reciprocal influence upon one another, and determining for these forces the laws of co-existence and succession.[26] In a footnote to this passage, he associates this notion of force with what Mill calls "permanent possibilities of sensation," even if he claims that the notion of physical phenomenon ultimately refers to "the external causes of sensation" that are manifest in sensations.[27]

> This explanation does not coincide entirely with Kant's premises, but it approaches as far as possible his explanation. In a certain sense it comes nearer to J. S. Mill's views in his book against Hamilton (Chap. 11), without, however, agreeing with it in all the essential aspects. What Mill calls "the permanent possibilities of sensation," is closely related to what we have called forces.[28]

What Brentano says immediately after this passage regarding the task of natural sciences and their object (forces) does not seem to be entirely in agreement with his understanding of Mill's doctrine in his 1893–1894 lectures. For he says explicitly in this passage that these forces belong to a spatial world, a true effective world, which is exactly what Mill disputes with his doctrine of the permanent possibility of

[23] Mill, J. St. (1865), *An examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy, and of the principal philosophical questions discussed in his writings*, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865; He introduced the concept of permanent possibilities of sensation in chapter 11 entitled "The psychological theory of the belief in an external world".

[24] Mach,E. (1991), *Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen*, 6e ed., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; see Brentano, *Über Ernst Machs 'Erkenntnis und Irrtum'*, R. Chisholm/J. C. Marek (Eds.) (1988), Amsterdam: Rodopi.

[25] *Psychology*, p. 74.

[26] *Psychology*, p. 74.

[27] *Psychology*, pp. 75–76.

[28] *Psychology*, p. 76 n.

sensations, as we shall see later.[29] Be that as it may, Brentano concludes this brief commentary on the definition of the natural sciences by saying that this definition is justified to the extent that it was conceded from the outset that

> the external causes of sensations correspond to the physical phenomena which occur in them, either in all respects, which was the original point of view, or at least in respect to three-dimensional extension, which is the opinion of certain people at the present time. It is clear that the otherwise improper expression 'external perception' stems from this conception.[30]

Twenty years after the publication of his *Psychology*, Brentano is much more critical of Mill's philosophical positions. In his lectures on positivism, Brentano understands Mill's book on Hamilton as an attempt to explain our *belief* in an external world in terms of beliefs in permanent possibilities of sensation. The following quote summarizes Mill's working hypothesis in this chapter of his book on Hamilton:

> The conception I form of the world existing at any moment, comprises, along with the sensations I am feeling, a countless variety of possibilities of sensation; namely, the whole of those which past observation tells me that I could, under any supposable circumstances, experience at this moment, together with an indefinite and illimitable multitude of others which though I do not know that I could, yet it is possible that I might, experience in circumstances not known to me. These various possibilities are the important thing to me in the world. My present sensations are generally of little importance, and are moreover fugitive: the possibilities, on the contrary, are permanent, which is the character that mainly distinguishes our idea of Substance or Matter from our notion of sensation.[31]

Mill claims to account for the common sense belief in the existence of a real world, of a substance, by reducing it to such permanent possibilities of sensations.[32] He further maintains that our world view contains, in addition to sensations – which are fleeting and momentary and which are moments dependent on us – a multiplicity of possibilities of sensations which come to us partly from past experiences or observations, and which indicate that, under certain conditions, one can experience them repeatedly. In addition to such possibilities, there are possibilities about which we do not know and that we can only imagine or anticipate, for example, and which constitute further possibilities. Mill claims in this passage that the main difference between the actual sensations and these possibilities is that the latter are *permanent*, and that it is precisely the permanence of these possibilities that distinguishes the substance from mere phenomena and sensations.

[29] However, in his *Lectures on positivism*, Brentano argued that Mill, in the second edition of his work on Hamilton, recognized the existence of matter and distanced himself from the version of phenomenalism that he advocated in the first edition.

[30] *Psychology*, p. 76.

[31] Mill, J. St. (1865), *An examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy, and of the principal philosophical questions discussed in his writings*, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, pp. 237–238.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 246.

Experience further teaches us that the succession of these sensations is linked to a fixed order[33] from which we form the relations of cause and effect. This order of succession is not between real sensations in experience, but between groups of possibilities of sensations (of wholes), which seem to us more real than our own sensations.[34] As a special case of a permanent possibility of sensation, Mill uses the example of the city of Calcutta.

> I believe that Calcutta exists, though I do not perceive it, and that it would still exist if every percipient inhabitant were suddenly to leave the place, or be struck dead. But when I analyse the belief, all I find in it is, that were these events to take place, the Permanent Possibility of Sensation which I call Calcutta would still remain; that if I were suddenly transported to the banks of the Hoogly, I should still have the sensations which, if now present, would lead me to affirm that Calcutta exists here and now. We may infer, therefore, that both philosophers and the world at large, when they think of matter, conceive it really as a Permanent Possibility of Sensation.[35]

These possibilities of sensation form the permanent background of one or more of these sensations which appear to us to be real at a given moment. According to Brentano, the possibilities behave in relation to the real sensations as a cause in relation to its effects or as matter in relation to form.[36]

Brentano concludes this analysis by saying that Mill is a pure positivist in the sense that he excludes everything that is not psychical phenomena, which is to say that "the object of experience is only his own mental phenomena. And so he believes that he may not assume anything real than his own psychical phenomena. (…) Indeed, only our own mental phenomena deserve the name of facts of experience".[37]

This is Brentano's characterization of Mill's mental monism: physical phenomena understood as the primary objects of experience are reducible to one's own mental phenomena, and to percepts in the case of sensory perception. For if phenomena are somehow related to experience, then they are necessarily related to mental states (sensory perception): *Esse est percipii*.[38] We shall see that Brentano's main criticism of Mach and Mill is based on the fact that they do not account satisfactorily for the duality in the percept or in one's state of mind, such as an emotion between the feeling and what is felt, or between perceiving and what is perceived. According to Brentano, to this duality correspond two classes of phenomena, which are bearers of heterogeneous and irreducible properties.

[33] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29419.

[34] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29421.

[35] Mill, J. St. *Ibid.*

[36] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29422.

[37] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29411.

[38] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29423.

12.3 The Case of Pain in *Psychology*

Let us now examine Brentano's diagnosis of the form of phenomenalism advocated by Mill and Mach, which is based on the amalgam of the class of physical phenomena with that of mental phenomena. In his *Psychology*, Brentano discusses a similar hypothesis in relation to his theory of primary and secondary objects, which he attributed to Hamilton, A. Bain and Mill; it also consists in identifying primary objects, i.e. physical phenomena, with secondary objects, i.e. mental phenomena. Brentano's discussion of this hypothesis takes place in the first chapter of the second book of *Psychology*, in which he discusses several criteria for the delineation of the class of mental phenomena from that of physical phenomena. It is in this context that he introduces the notion of intentional inexistence both as the main criterion for this classification and as the main property of mental phenomena. The discussion with the English empiricists pertains more specifically to the value of the division in the class of phenomena between the subclass of physical phenomena and that of psychical phenomena. Brentano argues against phenomenalism on the basis of the principles underlying his classification in his *Psychology*.

Brentano uses Hamilton's view on affectivity as an example of the position advocated by Mill and the other positivists on that issue. In the following excerpt, Hamilton refuses to consider sensations (feelings) of pleasure and pain as mental (or intentional) phenomena.

> In the phaenomena of Feeling, – the phaenomena of Pleasure and Pain, – on the contrary, consciousness does not place the mental modification or state before itself; it does not contemplate it apart, – as separate from itself, – but is, as it were, fused into one. The peculiarity of Feeling, therefore, is that there is nothing but what is subjectively subjective.[39]

Hamilton's position in this passage rests on the idea that one can be conscious of being in a state of pain without representing it (without objectifying it), which is to say that the state of pain can be conscious without being about anything, i.e. without being intentional, as Stumpf and Husserl also claim. The notion of content can also be used to formulate the same opposition. According to the author of *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, an affective state (a feeling) such as pain is subjectively subjective because it has no content different from itself, and the state of feeling and what is felt are one and the same thing.

Brentano disagrees fully with Hamilton's analysis, and proposes an analysis of pain which is compatible with the basic tenets of intentionalism. He admits that macroscopic objects necessarily appear to us as phenomena because the mode of donation of an object depends on the way it is determined intentionally, and in this sense what is given to consciousness necessarily depends on an act of presentation. Thus, the mode of consciousness by which one relates to a physical phenomenon belongs to the class of intentional acts which he calls presentations. That is one of the principles of Brentano's *Psychology* that is at the heart of the dispute with the

[39] Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, *op. cit.* p. 431).

positivists. It is the principle (*Vorstellungsgrundlage*) according to which every mental state is either a presentation or is based on a presentation.[40] This amounts to saying that this feeling of displeasure is always "presupposed by a presentation":[41] no pleasure or pain without a presentation and therefore without an intentional act. Unlike Hamilton, Brentano claims that every state possesses a content which is different from itself and which carries properties different from those of mental phenomena, and this content constitutes its primary and immanent object.[42]

Moreover, in response to an argument of A. Bain, Brentano argues that despite the fact that the mode of givenness of physical phenomena, such as colour, for example, is dependent upon and relative to the presentation we have of it, that does not mean that a colour cannot *exist* without being presented. Otherwise, being presented would be a property of colours.[43] Brentano only says that "to present," "to be presented" means the same thing as "to appear".[44] Yet one of the properties that Brentano attributes to the subclass of physical phenomena is space. In the case of the experience of pain, the object presented is the part of the body where pain is localized. This is consistent with one of the main features of physical phenomena – i.e., that they are always externally perceived as localized.[45]

Brentano further maintains that all phenomena such as colours convey a similar form of duality, and he emphasizes this distinction in the cases of a cut, a burn, and a tickle which awaken in us a feeling of pain:

> But then in cases where a feeling of pain or pleasure is aroused in us by a cut, a burn or a tickle, we must distinguish in the same way between a physical phenomenon, which appears as the object of external perception, and the mental phenomenon of feeling, which accompanies its appearance, even though in this case the superficial observer is rather inclined to confuse them.[46]

He claims, in fact, that the sensation of pain as any sensation involves the *Empfinden-Empfundene* duality, and that we must distinguish, even at this most elementary level, the act of experiencing pain, which is a mental phenomenon, from that toward which this act is directed, i.e., the physical phenomenon.[47]

As we can see, one of the fundamental presuppositions in Brentano's diagnosis based on the identification of physical and mental phenomena is that pain and sensory feelings in general are, for the positivists, mental phenomena and intentional states. Yet this is precisely what Hamilton denies in the excerpt quoted above. To do

[40] *Psychology*, p. 65.

[41] *Psychology*, p. 62.

[42] *Psychology*, pp. 95–96.

[43] *Psychology*, p. 91.

[44] *Psychology*, p. 62.

[45] *Psychology*, pp. 65–66.

[46] *Psychology*, p. 63.

[47] One of the arguments used by Brentano against this identification is linguistic and it is based on the equivocity of the German notion of *Gefühl* which designates both the feeling (*Empfinden*) and what is felt (*empfundene*) (*Psychology*, p. 65). Brentano also mentions an argument based on the experience of the phantom limb (*ibid.*).

justice to their own position, we can introduce a new distinction within the class of affective states between sense feelings, which are sensations just like colours and sounds, and emotions, which are intentional states like beliefs and desires. The essential difference is that emotions but not sense feelings are intentional states. This distinction is at the heart of the debate between Brentano and his students Husserl and Stumpf. In a sense, the debate that divides Brentano and Mill pertains to the question whether the experience of pain belongs to the class of intentional states or whether it is a mere sense feeling as sensationalist philosophers such as W. James claim.[48] Husserl and Stumpf claim that they are two *sui generis* states, while Brentano seems to advocate a form of intentionalism according to which intentionality is the unique trait of the mental, and the threshold of conscious experience is representational and therefore necessarily intentional. This is again confirmed by this excerpt from Brentano's lectures on positivism in which he summarizes his position on the relationship between the two classes of phenomena:

> The sensory feeling (das *Empfinden*) always has the general characteristic feature of a mental phenomenon, which is characterized as an intentional relation to an immanent object. It can be found similarly in memorising, desiring, enjoying, recognizing, negating, etc. However, what is felt [in a sensory feeling] has the general character of a physical phenomenon, which consists in the fact that the phenomenon is localized.[49]

12.4 Phenomenalism vs. Indirect Realism

In his book on Comte, Stuart Mill suggests that the adjective "positive" in the expression "positive philosophy," "would be less ambiguously expressed in the objective aspect by Phaenomenal, in the subjective by Experiential".[50] Mill's remark brings to the fore two characteristic features of positive philosophy, which Brentano insists upon in his article, to wit: first, that it is a philosophy aiming to found itself on experience, i.e., on observation and induction, and second, that it ultimately only concerns itself with phenomena, and more specifically, with the succession and similarity between phenomena, which it subordinates to natural and invariant laws. Furthermore, it implies the rejection of research into ultimate causes by which Comte characterizes the mode of explanation of phenomena by theistic philosophy and metaphysical philosophy in his theory of the three states. In this respect, the notion of phenomenon as used by Comte and the positivists is especially important to Brentano with regard to its central role in his *Psychology*, in which it designates at once the object of psychology (mental phenomena) and that of the natural sciences (physical phenomena). Brentano relates the use of phenomena in his philosophy to the relativity of knowledge, by which he means both a limitation of our

[48] See Fisette, D., "Mixed Feelings", in: D. Fisette/G. Fréchette (Eds.) *Themes from Brentano, op. cit*. pp. 281–306.

[49] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29441.

[50] Mill, J. St., *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, *op. cit.* pp. 10–11.

knowledge of transcendent things and of the relational character of our knowledge. A passage from Mill's work on Comte summarizes this point perfectly:

> We have no knowledge of anything but Phaenomena; and our knowledge of phaenomena is relative, not absolute. We know not the essence, nor the real mode of production, of any fact, but only its relations to other facts in the way of succession or of similitude. These relations are constant; that is, always the same in the same circumstances. The constant resemblances which link phaenomena together, and the constant sequences which unite them as antecedent and consequent, are termed their laws. The laws of phaenomena are all we know respecting them. Their essential nature, and their ultimate causes, either efficient or final, are unknown and inscrutable to us.[51]

According to Brentano, the thesis of the relativity of knowledge does not entail any form of scepticism or any metaphysical presuppositions. On the other hand, a philosopher like Hamilton argues that the lack of absolute knowledge and thesis of relativity of knowledge testify for metaphysical relativism, i.e. the relativity of the existence and reality of the external world to the subject of knowledge:

> But the meaning of these terms will be best illustrated by now stating and explaining the great axiom, that all human knowledge, consequently that all human philosophy, is only of the relative or phenomenal. In this proposition, the term *relative* is opposed to the term *absolute*; and, therefore, in saying that we know only the relative, I virtually assert that we know nothing absolute, – nothing existing absolutely; that is, in and for itself, and without relation to us and our faculties. (…) But as the phenomena appear only in conjunction, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to think them conjoined in and by something (…) But this something, absolutely and in itself, – *i.e.* considered apart from its phenomena, – is to us as zero. It is only in its qualities, only in its effects, in its relative or phenomenal existence, that it is cognizable or conceivable.[52]

Hamilton's characterisation of the relativity thesis in this passage is metaphysical since it emphasizes the relativity of the existence of the objects of the outside world and not merely an epistemic limitation as does Brentano. And contrary to what some commentators of Brentano have recently argued, the adoption of the relativity thesis does not necessarily involve metaphysical phenomenalism. Brentano conceived of it as an epistemological limitation related to the extended use of phenomena in philosophy and science. According to Brentano, the phenomena studied by sciences, such as sound or heat, do not have any real existence outside observation, but are mere phenomena and "signs of something real, which, through its causal activity, produces presentations of them".[53] That is why Brentano maintains that we cannot claim that the objects of the external perception really are how they seem to us, in contradistinction to mental phenomena, the reality of which is guaranteed by the evidence of internal perception: "We have no experience of that which truly exists, in and of itself, and that which we do experience is not true. The truth of physical phenomena is, as they say, only a relative truth".[54] For physical phenomena

[51] *Ibid.,* p. 6.

[52] Hamilton, W., Lectures on *Metaphysics*, *op. cit*., pp. 96–97.

[53] *Psychology*, p. 14.

[54] *Psychology*, pp. 19–20.

give us no representation of the reality to which these phenomena refer, and what appears in these phenomena does not truly exist. Brentano further claims that even if we had a complete knowledge of the physiology of the brain, for example, this could not provide us with more information concerning the true nature of these realities; that would only tell us something about certain physical phenomena which are caused "by the same unknown X".[55] What Brentano ultimately disputes in this case is the mode of explanation of phenomena referring to occult properties or obscure causes, i.e., to what Comte in his three laws theory calls the theological and metaphysical modes of explanation based on fictitious entities or persons. Brentano claims instead that our knowledge is limited to relations between phenomena, more specifically relations of succession and resemblance that link phenomena with one another and, as we said above, the main task of science consists in formulating laws that govern these relations. For instance, when we seek to explain why one body attracts another one, we are not looking for an occult entity belonging to the ultimate nature of attraction, but rather we relate phenomena using a law, in this case the law of gravitation.[56]

Despite Brentano's commitment to the thesis of the relativity of knowledge and several other aspects of positivism, he does not endorse the mental monism and metaphysical phenomenalism that he closely associates with the identity thesis. This clearly stands out in the conclusion to his lectures on positivism: "It therefore seems that the proof of the absurdity of the presupposition of an external space world on the basis of the identity of the mental and the physical in sensation be a complete failure".[57] As most of his students, Brentano advocates instead a form of critical or indirect realism which is compatible with the thesis of the relativity of knowledge insofar as one understands this form of realism as a form of hypothetical realism, as Brentano frequently does in several manuscripts published in *Vom Dasein Gottes*. For example, in these manuscripts he says that the presupposition of a real world is a hypothesis: i.e., to quote Brentano, "a hypothesis which makes comprehensible with infinitely more probability than any other our physical phenomena and their order."[58]

12.5 Final Remarks on Intentional Correlation

I shall conclude this study with a few remarks on Brentano's option to metaphysical phenomenalism based on the identity relation between the two classes of phenomena. In his lectures on positivism, Brentano raises the question as to whether, if one admits the irreducible character of these two classes of phenomena, the core of

[55] *Psychology*, p. 45.

[56] *Psychology*, pp. 116–117.

[57] *Lectures on positivism*, p. 29443.

[58] Brentano (1968), *Vom Dasein Gottes*, Hamburg: Meiner, p. 156.

Mill's and Mach's version of positivism could not be preserved. Brentano answers in the affirmative, on the provision that one replaces the identity relation between the two classes of phenomena by that of correlativity (*Correlativität*), which he developed in his lectures on descriptive psychology held in Vienna in the late 1880s.[59] In his lectures on positivism, Brentano claims that this idea of correlation, broadly understood, is something similar but more appropriate to what John Stuart Mill was looking for with his doctrine of permanent possibilities of sensation, and Mach with his doctrine of elements.

> If there is no identity, in the sensation, between psychical and physical phenomena, another relation might be conceivable which would render it inseparable. I mean that of correlativity (*Correlativität*). So are cause and effect, bigger and smaller, bride and groom, etc., not identical but correlates and as correlates, inseparable. But also seeing green and green seem to be correlates.[60]

As first approximation, the term correlation refers to the bilateral relation of dependence between pairs like *cause* and *effect*, *larger* and *smaller*, etc. But Brentano's proposal mainly pertains to this class of correlates which he calls intentional correlates (*intentionales Korrelat*) and which are involved in the relation between these two classes of phenomena. Examples of intentional correlates include the pairs *sensing* and *sensed*, *presenting* and *presented*, *denying* and *denied*, *loving* and *loved*, etc. Brentano maintains that what is specific to the class of intentional relations lies in the fact that it includes a pair of correlates, of which "only one is real, while the other is not." In his lectures on descriptive psychology, Brentano claims that the intentional correlate (*intentionales Korrelat*) of any intentional state is not something real.

This notion of intentional correlate is actually at the heart of a recent controversy surrounding the so-called orthodox interpretation of Brentano's theory of intentionality advocated by most of Brentano's students, and more recently by R. Chisholm. There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between this controversy and the debate on phenomenalism to the extent that the former bears on the orthodox interpretation of Brentano's intentionality thesis as an ontological thesis on the status of the immanent objects of mental phenomena. For what is at stake in both debates is the status of primary objects or physical phenomena and the amalgam of primary and secondary objects, i.e. the act's object and its correlate.

Let us first take a look at the debate over intentionality. In a nutshell, according to the advocates of the so-called continuist reading of Brentano, the traditional interpretation of Brentano's theory of intentionality in his *Psychology* conflates the primary object with the intentional correlate of mental act (i.e. the secondary object). One of the arguments that proponents of the unorthodox interpretation forward is based on a passage from Brentano's *Psychology* in which he maintains that the sound is not a relative concept (i.e., a correlate).

[59] Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, R. Chisholm/W. Baumgartner (Eds.) (1982), Hamburg: Meiner.

[60] *Lectures on positivism*, pp. 29443–29444.

> The concept of sound is not a relative concept. If it were, the act of hearing would not be the secondary object of the mental act, but instead it would be the primary object along with the sound. And the same would be true in every other case, which is evidently contrary to Aristotle's own view. Likewise, we could not think of anything except certain relations to ourselves and our thoughts, and this is undoubtedly false.[61]

Here, the physical phenomenon of sound is considered the primary object of external perception, whereas the secondary object is the object of internal perception (or of self-consciousness) and it includes, in addition to the primary object, the presentation of the sound and the internal perception of the latter. The discontinuists argue that the sound heard is not an intentional object but rather its intentional correlate.

Brentano's argument in this passage can be formalized as follow:[62]

1. The sound is the primary object of the act of hearing a sound.
   If the sound was a relative concept, then we would have:
2. The sound (as an object of the act of hearing) is the same as the heard sound.
   It would then follow that:
3. The heard sound is the primary object of the act of hearing a sound.
   It would further follow that the actual correlate would be, according to the canonical interpretation:
4. The act of hearing a sound would be the primary object of the act of hearing a sound.

Brentano concludes that the concept of sound is not a relative concept and that the second premise must be false because it confuses the primary (ordinary and non-dependent) and the secondary (intentional and dependent on its relation to the act) object.

According to the proponents of the non-orthodox interpretation, Brentano distinguishes, therefore, between the object of an act (the sound "tout court") and its correlate (the intentional object, the sound heard). From this perspective, Chisholm and the adherents to the orthodoxy are wrong to say that the object of an act is a mysterious entity endowed with a kind of "diminished existence." However, if the non-orthodox interpretation is right in insisting on the distinction between intentional objects and correlates, the question arises as to what the status of the objects of external perception – i.e., of the physical phenomena, which they sometimes call the objects "tout court" – is. For Brentano's theory of primary and secondary objects pertains primarily to consciousness and it aims at accounting for the fact that in hearing a sound, for example, one is not only conscious of the sound, but she is at once conscious of being in the state of hearing it as its secondary object. What, then, is the bearing of Brentano's theory on the issue of the distinction between correlate and intentional object? Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an object "tout court" for Brentano, but only phenomena triggered by distal or proximal stimuli, and as we saw above, "forces capable of producing sensations." And without this distinction, it is very difficult to figure out how to conceive of the distinction

[61] *Psychology*, p. 101.

[62] See Sauer, W. (2006), „Die Einheit der Intentionalitätskonzeption bei Brentano", in: *Grazer philosophische Studien*, vol. 73, pp. 1–26; Fréchette, G., „Brentano's Thesis (revisited)", in: *Themes from Brentano*, *op. cit*., pp. 91–119.

between, on the one hand, primary objects of external perception and transcendent objects, and on the other hand, intentional correlates and intentional objects. This raises several interesting questions about the status of primary objects in Brentano that I cannot address here.

Be that as it may, Brentano's criticism of Mach's and Mill's versions of phenomenalism seems to support the non-orthodox interpretation of Brentano's intentionality thesis insofar as both the discontinuist interpretation and these versions of phenomenalism commit the same mistake. This seems to be confirmed by a passage in Brentano's *Psychology* in which he discusses a hypothesis based on the identification of primary and secondary objects that he attributes to A. Bain and J. Stuart Mill: "This hypothesis assumes that the act of hearing and its object are one and the same phenomenon, insofar as the former is thought to be directed upon itself as its own object".[63]

In any case, once one accepts the validity of the distinction between correlate and intentional object and emphasizes the relational character of intentionality in Brentano, the rapprochement which has been made at the outset with methodological phenomenalism gains plausibility. For it shows that if one excludes the metaphysical dimension underlying these versions of phenomenalism, not much difference remains with Brentano. For example, we saw that Brentano is committed to several aspects of positivism, namely, the importance he grants to phenomena, relations, the relativity thesis, and to the mode of explanation based on observation and induction. This mode of explanation consists, on the one hand, in seeking relations of succession and similarity that link phenomena to one another, and on the other hand, in searching for general laws that govern these relations. This explains how Brentano was able to integrate several elements of the positivist program into his own without ever committing himself to its metaphysical assumptions.

[63] *Psychology*, p. 94.