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Editor

The Meaning of Something

Rethinking the Logic and the Unity
of the Ontology

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Chapter 1

Brentano on Presenting *Something* as an Intentional Object



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Abstract This paper is about the question: what is it for a mental state to mean (or present) something *as* an intentional object? This issue is addressed from a broad perspective, against the background of Brentano's philosophical program in *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*, and the controversy between the proponents of a non-canonical interpretation of Brentano's theory of intentionality, and the so-called orthodox interpretation advocated namely by R. Chisholm. My investigation is divided into six parts. In the first section, I explain the meaning and function of the notion of phenomenon in light of Brentano's philosophical program, and I briefly elucidate the notion of physical phenomenon which, in Brentano's *Psychology*, constitutes the primary object of consciousness. In the next two sections, I look at two aspects of Brentano's criticism of the identity thesis that he attributes to British empiricism, namely the psychological aspect, which concerns the identification of the two classes of phenomena, and the metaphysical aspect relating to the relationship between physical phenomena and the reality of an extramental world. Once this double distinction will be established, I will turn to the relation of intentional objects to presentations and put forward the hypothesis that intentional objects are conceptually dependent upon presentations and that this dependence rests, in turn, upon the content of the mental phenomena. The next step concerns Brentano's theory of primary and secondary objects, and one of the main non-orthodox arguments against the canonical interpretation, namely that the latter conflates primary and secondary objects. In this context, I examine a second hypothesis: that the secondary object, or intentional correlate of an act, is an intentional *content*, which is distinct both from the intentional object and from the reality to which it relates, and I maintain that the intentional content has the function of mediating the mental acts' relation to their objects. Finally, I shall examine some objections against the hypothesis of intentional content in Brentano's *Psychology*, and I will conclude with a brief commentary on the bearing of this investigation with

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regard to the interpretation of the genesis of Brentano's theory of intentionality, before and after the "reistic" turn of his philosophy.

Brentano's use of "*something*" (*aliquid, etwas, quelque chose*) takes on its full meaning in the context of his investigations regarding the nature of mental phenomena. This is confirmed in this excerpt from a 1908 manuscript on ontology:

The entire theory of the proper meaning and the diverse improper meanings of "something" or of "thing" or of "what-is" is clarified only through the study of the psychological activities and of the expression that our thinking finds in language. All our psychological activities have objects and have as objects what a something in proper sense is. (Brentano, 2020, §63).

In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*,¹ Brentano characterizes mental phenomena as "reference to something as an object" (1995a, p. 74)² or as a relation towards *something* (*pros ti* in Aristotle, and its scholastic translation *ad aliquid*) (see Taieb, 2018). Every mental phenomenon is about something as its object, and it belongs to its very structure that, in the experience of pleasure, one takes pleasure in something, and in enjoyment, one rejoices at something. This property of being about something is what has been called, since Brentano, the *intentionality* of a conscious state. However, in the famous excerpt from *Psychology* — which is referred to for his general definition of mental phenomena in terms of intentionality — Brentano preferably uses the terms "intentional inexistence" and "immanent objectivity", by which he also characterizes the *objects* of mental phenomena:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity (1995a, p. 68).

The most general feature of mental phenomena in this quotation is what is generally understood by intentionality, namely, the relation towards a content or direction towards *something*, in the sense that a mental state is always about *something* other than itself. For example, every judgment is about something judged and every desire is about something desired, as opposed to a stone, for example, which can certainly act causally on *something* else, but it cannot be said to be *about* anything. We then say of a state, such as fear, that it is intentional because it belongs to its very structure that one cannot be in this state without apprehending *something* as presenting a threat and as arousing a feeling of fear. In contrast, the notions "immanent objectivity" and "intentional inexistence" are also employed (1995a, p. 68–69) in order to characterize mental phenomena by means of their objects. Thus, Brentano speaks of "intentional (or mental) inexistence of an *object*," (1995b

¹Hereinafter referred to as *Psychology*. My thanks to Guillaume Fr chet and Hanid Taieb for their helpful comments on an earlier drafts of this paper.

²Compare with the wording of the first sentence of the 1911 appendix to *Psychology* in which Brentano summarizes the results achieved in this work: "What is characteristic of every mental activity is, as I believe I have shown, the reference to something as an object. In this respect, every mental activity seems to be something relational" (1995a, p. 211).

p. 68) of immanent objectivity in the sense of “mental inhabitation” (*psychische Einwohnung*) (Brentano, 2008, p. 106) or as “mental phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves,” or simply as a state which “includes something as object within itself” (1995a, p. 68).

Two of the many problems facing the interpretation of this excerpt from Brentano’s *Psychology* are relevant to our study: the first concerns the relationship between two distinct properties that Brentano seems to attribute to mental phenomena, namely, their aboutness and the fact they contain something within themselves as objects. The second difficulty is linked to the use of the notion of intentional inexistence in connection to the status of the objects of an act. These two questions have generated a great deal of interest ever since *Psychology* was published in 1874, and they have been put back on the agenda in the 1960s by R. Chisholm, who argues that part of these problems stem from the amalgamation of two theses within Brentano’s quote on intentionality: a psychological thesis, which pertains to the act’s reference to objects, and an ontological thesis, associated with the intentional inexistence of the mental phenomena’s objects. According to the ontological thesis, intentional inexistence has the meaning of a particular mode of being within the mind, i.e., a mind dependent intentional existence of its object (Chisholm, 1972, p. 705). This is comparable to fictional creatures such as Madame Bovary or Pegasus, who, according to Chisholm’s reading of Brentano, possess a mode of being that is different from actuality.³ The link between both theses is that “intentional entities were posited in the attempt to account for intentional reference” (Chisholm, 1972, p. 705). Thinking about *something*, according to Chisholm’s reading of Brentano, amounts to entertaining a mind-dependent entity with a peculiar mode of being.

Chisholm’s interpretation follows a long tradition, dating back at least to Anton Marty (and his students), and which is therefore called the canonical or orthodox interpretation. This position has been challenged recently by philosophers who question the validity of Chisholm’s ontological thesis, and who maintain that Brentano has always criticized the very idea of attributing a particular ontological status to intentional objects (Kent, 1984, p. 33; Sauer, 2006, p. 1, 4; Antonelli, 2009, p. 483). Chisholm’s opponents argue that by making the intentional object a mind-dependent entity, Chisholm would have confused, in Brentano’s theory of primary and secondary objects, intentional objects with secondary objects, or with what Brentano later called, “the intentional correlates of an act”. On the other hand, opponents of the orthodox interpretation maintain that the terms “immanent objectivity” and “intentional inexistence of objects” in no way refer to an ontological category.

³Chisholm’s thesis is clearly stated in the following excerpt: “According to the doctrine of intentional inexistence, the object of the thought about a unicorn *is* a unicorn, but a unicorn with a mode of being (intentional inexistence, immanent objectivity, or existence in the understanding) that is short of actuality but more than nothingness and that, according to most versions of the doctrine, lasts for just the length of time that the unicorn is thought about” (Chisholm, 1972, p. 705).

This debate on Chisholm's theses raises several questions, including that concerning the nature of something *as an intentional object of a mental phenomenon*, and more generally, his psychological thesis pertaining to the aboutness of an act.⁴ For it is one thing to challenge Chisholm's ontological thesis, yet quite another to account for the nature of *something* as an intentional object of an act. For even if one concedes that Chisholm's ontological thesis is misleading, the fact remains that the alternative advocated by the non-orthodox approach, with regard to *something*, and to intentional objects as objects *tout court*, is not viable. This alternative is only applicable with regard to excerpts from Brentano's *Psychology*, wherein the concepts of intentional inexistence and in-existent object are clearly used in order to characterize intentional objects, and thus seem to corroborate Chisholm's interpretations.

That being said, the issue of the ontological status of in-existent objects in Brentano's *Psychology* once again raises the following questions: what it is for a mental state to refer to *something*, and what is the nature of intentional objects in particular (Kent, 1984, p. 46–47) — a topic which I propose to investigate by focusing mainly on the “pre-reistic” period in Brentano's work, i.e., on the period between 1874 and the “reistic” turn which took place circa 1904 in Brentano's thought. I propose to approach this question from a broader perspective, against the background of Brentano's philosophical program and his discussion with British empiricists in the first chapter of the second Book of *Psychology*, in which he examines a series of criteria for the delineation of the two classes of phenomena.⁵ The importance granted to this discussion is justified, on the one hand, by the importance of positivism and British empiricism for Brentano's philosophical program (Cf. Fisette, 2022) and, on the other hand, because it offers a perspective favorable to the evaluation of the ins and outs of the debate opposing the canonical to the heterodox interpretation of Brentano's theory of intentionality, a debate which will serve as the leading thread of this study.

My investigation is divided into six parts. In the first section, I explain the meaning and function of the notion of phenomenon in light of Brentano's philosophical program, and I briefly elucidate the notion of physical phenomenon which, in Brentano's *Psychology*, constitutes the primary object of consciousness. In the next two sections, I look at two aspects of Brentano's criticism of the identity thesis that he attributes to British empiricism, namely the psychological aspect, which concerns the identification of the two classes of phenomena, and the metaphysical

⁴Quite a few good studies on that debate have been published recently, namely by Fr chet te (2013, 2015), Fisette & Fr chet te (eds.) 2013; Cesalli & Taieb (2012); see also Taieb's recent book on the topic of intentionality (Taieb, 2018).

⁵This discussion was resumed a few years later in his lectures *Zeitbewegende philosophische Fragen* which he held in Vienna one year before he left Austria and in which he extensively discusses several versions of phenomenalism. *Zeitbewegende philosophische Fragen, (1893–1894)*, Houghton Library: Harvard, LS 20, p. 29366–29,475, hereinafter referred to as *Lectures on positivism*.

aspect relating to the relationship between physical phenomena and the reality of an extramental world.

Once this double distinction will be established, I will turn to the relation of intentional objects to presentations and put forward the hypothesis that intentional objects are conceptually dependent upon presentations and that this dependence rests, in turn, upon the content of the mental phenomena. The next step concerns Brentano's theory of primary and secondary objects, and one of the main non-orthodox arguments against the canonical interpretation, namely that the latter conflates primary and secondary objects. In this context, I examine a second hypothesis: that the secondary object, or intentional correlate of an act, is an intentional *content*, which is distinct both from the intentional object and from the reality to which it relates, and I maintain that the intentional content has the function of mediating the mental acts' relation to their objects. Finally, I shall examine some objections against the hypothesis of intentional content in Brentano's *Psychology*, and I will conclude with a brief commentary on the bearing of this investigation with regard to the interpretation of the genesis of Brentano's theory of intentionality, before and after the "reistic" turn of his philosophy.

1.1 Brentano on Physical Phenomena

The notion of "*something*" in Brentano's *Psychology* is closely linked to that of a phenomenon which he conceives of both as the object of psychology, understood as the science of *mental phenomena*, and as that of natural sciences understood as the sciences of *physical phenomena* (1995a, p. 8). The notion of mental phenomena refers to the classes of mental states or acts, while physical phenomena stand for their objects. Physical phenomena are considered the primary objects of sensory perception, as opposed to mental phenomena, such as envy and shame, desire and will, which are objects of *inner perception*. In the first chapter of the second book of *Psychology*, Brentano examines a series of criteria for the classification of the two classes of phenomena, including intentionality, and he seeks to show that the properties belonging to one of these two classes are heterogeneous and irreducible to those of the other class of phenomena, and *vice versa*.

The importance granted to the concept of phenomenon for Brentano is primarily motivated by the philosophical program that he develops in *Psychology*. Brentano indeed defines his philosophy as a science based on experience, i.e., on observation and induction, and he underlines the close relationship that this program of a psychology-as-science has with the empirical sciences of the time. (Brentano, 1929, p. 95–96; cf. Fisette, 2020 and 2021). As his classification of the sciences shows, psychology occupies a position in the scale of the sciences next to physiology, and it entertains a one-sided relation of dependence with the latter, as with all the other sciences which precede it in this scale, from biology to chemistry and physics.

This dependence is due to the fact that, on the one hand, mental phenomena are given to us *only* in relation to organisms and in their dependence on certain

physiological processes, and, on the other hand, because sensations constitute an important source of mental phenomena belonging to the most elementary class of mental phenomena, namely, presentations which have physical phenomena as their primary objects (1995a, p. 36; 1929, p. 93–94). This is why physiology provides a significant contribution to psychology in one of its main tasks, which consists in “the investigation of the ultimate mental elements out of which more complex phenomena arise” (1995a, p. 34).

The use of the concept “phenomenon” by Brentano and positivism is closely related to the theory of the relativity of knowledge, which has been advocated by philosophers such as A. Comte, W. Hamilton, and J. Stuart Mill. Brentano conceives of it both as a limitation of our knowledge of transcendent realities and as the relational character of knowledge. This explains why even a science like physiology of the brain cannot inform us about the realities to which mental phenomena are linked: “It would tell us only about certain physical phenomena which are caused by the same unknown *x*” (1995a, p. 45). The theory of the relativity of knowledge brings to light another important distinction between the dimension to which intentional objects belong and that of transcendent reality.

This distinction, in turn, helps to further clarify the status of physical phenomena,⁶ both as objects of natural sciences and as primary objects of consciousness. As to their status of objects of natural sciences, Brentano assumes that physical phenomena, as such, originate in our sensory organs, which undergo the action of a three-dimensional world. He further presupposes that the “concomitant mental conditions” involved in the external perception of these phenomena, i.e., the fact that physical phenomena are conceptually dependent upon the subject’s activity. Finally, Brentano assumes that physical phenomena “manifest themselves in a pure state and as occurring in relation to a constant sensory capacity” (1995a, p. 75–76).

But the extensive use of the notion of phenomenon in *Psychology* does not make Brentano a defender of phenomenalism, as is commonly understood by Mach or most empiricists, for Brentano postulates a reality that transcends the world of phenomena. However, the primary objects of consciousness, like the objects of natural sciences, are not transcendent realities, but indeed, are physical phenomena. That is why some have qualified Brentano’s view as methodological phenomenalism, in order to distinguish this position from metaphysical phenomenalism, according to which there is nothing beyond physical phenomena, and which they attribute to Mach and to St. Mill, for example (Simons, 2009, p. XVII). Although this label is not entirely reliable, what matters here is that this conception of the objects of science as phenomena goes hand in hand with what Brentano calls “hypothetical realism,” i.e., “the assumption of an external world [which] is initially hypothetical” (1968, p. 156; see 1995b, p. 163).

⁶Brentano distinguishes between physical phenomenon and sensation by arguing that, unlike the physical phenomena of external perception, which have their origin in the physical stimulation of our sense organs, the domain of sensations includes all the images that appear in one’s imagination, which are not, strictly speaking, physical phenomena because they are not objects of external perception and only come into play as “contents of mental phenomena” (Brentano, 2008, p. 117).

(2006) and Antonelli (2009, 2012) argue, following Kent, that the terms “intentional inexistence” and “immanent objectivity” in Brentano’s *Psychology* “are used as ontologically neutral ways of saying that something is an object of a mental act” (Kent, 1984, p. 33), and this, as well in the case of objects of thought such as fictional creatures like Pegasus, and for concrete individual objects, such as a sound. That is why they believe that the real problem that arises when confronted with the definition of intentionality, in terms of intentional inexistence, is not so much the ontological status of the state’s objects, as their status of intentional objects.

And indeed, the notion of intentional inexistence in no way pertains to “any distinction between existent and non-existent objects of thought,” and therefore does not aim at solving the enigma of objects of thought, like Jupiter or Pegasus. For neither the objects of thought, nor the intentional objects in general, exist for Brentano. This is confirmed by Brentano’s definition of intentionality as reference to something as an object in which the preposition “as” indicates that the “*something*” is intended as the (intentional) object of an act and as the term for an intentional relation. However, even if I agree with the proponents of heterodoxy against Chisholm with regard to the interpretation of intentional inexistence as a mind-dependent intentional *entity* endowed with a particular mode of being within the mind, the question of the nature of “*something*” as an intentional object remains open. For it is one thing to maintain that intentional objects are ontologically neutral, yet it is quite another to maintain, as they do, that intentional objects are objects *tout court* (*schechtweg*) (Antonelli, 2009, p. 483; 2012, p. 236, 239), objects “in Wirklichkeit,” (Sauer, 2006, p. 7) or more specifically objects *per se* denoting concrete individual things “such as a chair, a unicorn, or a person ”(Kent, 1984, p. 47).

For the objects of external perception are physical phenomena which relate to a transcendent reality — “*ausserhalb des Geistes und in Wirklichkeit*,” — but it turns out that this reality, as I said, cannot, for reasons of principle, appear, since what appears to consciousness is not something truthful. Therefore, there are reasons to question the very idea of *something* like objects *per se* in Brentano’s *Psychology*, namely because of the unbridgeable gap that exists, epistemologically, between transcendent reality and intentional objects. Another option that I shall investigate below is that the “*something*” aimed at owes its status of intentional object to the fact that it is *conceptually* mind dependent on an act’s intentional content.

1.2 The Identity Thesis and Mental Monism

In a letter to Anton Marty, dated March 17, 1905, on which the heterodox arguments against the ontological thesis are partly based, Brentano claims that he never maintained that the immanent object of an act *can be identified with* the “presented object”, i.e., for example, the colour in an act of seeing with the seen colour (1962, p. 97–89). This quotation refers to a similar error that Brentano repeatedly denounces in his work, notably in his discussion with Bain (1995a, p. 70 f.), and

with several other empiricists in the first chapter of the second book of *Psychology*.⁷ He raises the same objection against Mach's theory of elements in his *Lectures on positivism* (LS 20, p. 29433, 29,439–29,440; cf. 1998, p. 67), and against J. St. Mill's doctrine of the permanent possibility of sensation (LS 20, p. 29419 f.). Brentano's criticism of Mach is quite relevant regarding the identity thesis because, on the one hand, he establishes a close correlation between this identification and his commitment to metaphysical phenomenalism, and on the other hand, Brentano even considers the possibility of preserving, with important modifications however, the core of his doctrine of elements by substituting for the identity relation that of correlativity (*Correlativität*) (LS 20, p. 29,444–29,445).

The aim of the next two sections is to examine Brentano's arguments against the identity thesis, taking into account the following two aspects: the psychological aspect, which concerns the identification of the class of physical to mental phenomena, i.e. what he calls mental monism; and the second aspect, which lies in the metaphysical bearing that positivists confer to the identity thesis, i.e., there is nothing real outside one's own sensations, which amounts to excluding reality from everything that is not mental (LS 20, p. 29424, p. 29427). I shall first examine the identity thesis in relation to Brentano's criticism of Hamilton in *Psychology*, and in the next section, I will examine his criticism of metaphysical phenomenalism in connection with his discussion of Bain's *Mental Science* in *Psychology*.

The basic assumption which Brentano discusses in connection with empiricism in *Psychology* corresponds to what he calls in *Lectures on positivism*, "mental monism," and it is formulated as follows:

This hypothesis (*Annahme*) 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 (1995a, p. 94).⁸

⁷I say a similar mistake because, in the case of Brentano's criticism of Bain and Hamilton, which I will examine in this section and the next, the mistake rests on the identification of the two classes of phenomena, i.e., from what is felt to the act of feeling which accompanies it, while the heterodox argument rests on the amalgamation of the intentional object and the content of the act which they conceive of as its correlate as we shall see below. However, insofar as they identify the physical phenomenon with the concomitant feeling and consider sense feeling as a mental phenomenon, this identification amounts to conceiving of the perception of pain as an inner perception which is therefore, from Brentano's point of view, evident and indubitable (1995a, p. 65). In other words, this amounts to saying that they identify the primary object of external perception, what is felt, with the secondary object of internal perception, i.e., the feeling's content. That is why Brentano's proposal to replace the identity relation with that of correlation is plausible as we shall see below.

⁸„Nur eine Annahme scheint, wenn es kein unbewusstes Bewusstsein geben soll, der Folgerung einer unendlichen Verwicklung entgegen zu können; diejenige nämlich, welche Hören und Gehörtes für ein und dasselbe Phänomen erklärt, indem sie das Hören auf sich selbst als sein Objekt gerichtet denkt. Ton und Hören wären dann entweder nur zwei Namen für ein und dasselbe Phänomen, oder der Unterschied ihrer Bedeutung bestände etwa darin, dass man mit dem Namen Ton die äußere Ursache bezeichnete, die man früher gemeiniglich dem Phänomen im Hörenden ähnlich dachte, und von der man darum sagte, dass sie im Hören erscheine, während sie in Wahrheit unserer Vorstellung sich entzieht“ (Brentano, 2008, p. 140–141).

Brentano attributes this position to Hamilton and Stuart Mill, as well as to A. Bain, whom he specifically criticizes for identifying “the act and the object of touch sensations and indicates that the same relation of identity between the act and its object applies to all the other types of sense-impressions” (1995a, p. 94).⁹ This is the well-known concept of sense-feeling (*Gefühlsempfindung*) along with Brentano’s *Empfinden/Empfundene* distinction, i.e., the distinction between the act of feeling and what is felt (Brentano, 2008, p. 141). According to Brentano, Bain identifies, in the sensation of pain, the pain felt with the act of feeling the pain that accompanies it (1995a, b, p. 94). That is why Brentano criticizes him for confusing, if not reducing, in the case of pain, the physical phenomenon, i.e., the apparent state of part of one’s body in which the pain is localized, with the mental phenomenon, i.e., the concomitant feeling (*Gefühl*) of pain which attaches to the corresponding sensation (*Empfindung*). Brentano maintains that there is an irreducible duality in the sensation of pain, for example, and that the state of pain, like any other mental state, is intentional and necessarily involves something felt as its intentional object. Brentano considers Hamilton’s view on affectivity as a particular case of a position prevalent at the time among empiricists like Bain. The following passage from Hamilton’s *Lectures on Metaphysics* summarizes their position on that issue and Hamilton’s reasons for not considering the sensations of pleasure and pain as (intentional) objects of consciousness:

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.” (Hamilton, 1859, p. 431).

Hamilton claims that an affective state (a feeling) like pain is subjectively subjective insofar as it has no content different from itself, and because the state of feeling and what is felt are one and the same thing. In other words, one can experience pain and be conscious of being in pain without objectifying its content because, in the experience of pain, there is neither an object nor a content distinct from the state of pain, nor any form of self-objectification or reflection on this feeling. The feeling (*Gefühl*) of physical pain that one experiences following an injury, for example, is a sense feeling which, just like the experience one has of any secondary qualities such as tactile sensations or color, for example, is a mode of consciousness which, in Brentano’s own vocabulary, does not belong to the class of intentional states and does not involve, consequently, something felt distinct from the feeling of pain.

One of the stakes in Brentano’s discussion on that issue resides in the principle of *Vorstellungsgrundlage*, which constitutes one of the main features that Brentano

⁹ „Im vorigen Kapitel besprachen wir eine Stelle von A. Bain, worin dieser Philosoph die Gefühlsempfindung im Sinne des Empfindens und des Empfundenen völlig identifiziert und für alle übrigen Gattungen von Sinneseindrücken dasselbe Verhältnis der Identität zwischen Act und Objekt des Aktes andeutet“ (Brentano, 2008, p. 141).

attributes to mental phenomena in *Psychology*. According to this principle, all mental phenomena are characterized “as presentations or as phenomena which are based upon presentation” (1995a, p. 74, 65). This principle is primarily intended to account for the one-sided dependency relation that higher-order states such as judgments and emotions have with the lower-order class of presentations upon which they are based. But this principle further stipulates that all mental phenomena, and therefore all and every conscious state, including the most elementary such as sense feelings, presuppose a presentation that grounds them namely because the most elementary mental phenomenon constitutes the threshold of consciousness and conscious experience as a whole.

And indeed, consciousness and intentionality are coextensive in the intentionalist theory of mind advocated by Brentano in *Psychology* (Crane, 2017). Every conscious state is by definition an intentional state, and vice versa: no pleasure without presentation and no presentation without something pleasing. Thus, one of the important issues that divide Brentano and empiricists pertains as to whether the experience of pain, for example, belongs to the class of intentional states, or whether it is a *sui generis* state, a mere sense-feeling associated with a non-intentional mode of consciousness, as claimed by philosophers such as Husserl and Stumpf, who dissociated themselves from Brentano on that issue (cf. Fisette, 2013, 2022). Brentano claims, on the contrary, that a sense feeling is an intentional state and, as such, it relates to something felt. Hence, the two aspects of Brentano’s criticism of Hamilton are as follows: the subjective aspect which bears on the intentionality of the mental state, and the objective aspect which concerns the physical phenomenon understood as the immanent object of an intentional state.

Let us now return to the case of pain and the distinction between the feeling of pain, which consists in its relation to an immanent object, and what is felt as pain, i.e., the physical phenomenon, which consists in the fact that the phenomenon appears as spatially localized, and in the case of pain, localized in a part of one’s body (1995a, p. 65; LS 20, p. 29441, 29,437). In the case of an injury to the body, a cut to the foot, for example, we say that we have pain in the foot or that we experience pain in that part of our body. According to Brentano, the experience of pain presupposes “a presentation of a definite spatial location which one usually characterizes in relation to some visible and touchable part of our body” (1995a, p. 63). What is externally perceived through this presentation of pain is a particular sensory property of the physical phenomenon, analogous to that which accompanies visual or auditory perception, wherein sound and color are localized in the auditory or visual field. However, the apparent state of a body part referred to as pain is not, strictly speaking, the intentional object of the feeling that accompanies the pain. For pain or the act of feeling pain is not said to be in any way about a body part, and thus that part of the body cannot be considered the object of pain.

But one experiences something painful that one *localizes* in a certain body part and we say about pain that a particular injury causes within a part of our body — assuming that this injury is the cause of pain — and that it is localized in the foot, for example, which therefore signifies that it is because of the injury in the foot that one feels something painful in one’s body part. This feature stands out clearly in the case

of phantom limbs, i.e., the case of someone who can feel pain in a part of her body even when this body part does not exist. In this case, the error is not in what one feels, since it is assumed that one can feel the same thing with or without the limb in which it is localized. Rather, it resides in the localization of pain in that part of the body, in this case in the foot, which is believed to be the cause of what one feels. Hence, the idea that the physical phenomena are signs whose function is to indicate, in the case of pain, “some visible and touchable part of our body” (1995a, p. 63). There seems to be an inference occurring in-between the feeling of pain, and that its localization in the body part is believed to be the source of pain. However, what one immediately experiences as something painful is, for Brentano, the physical phenomenon known as the immanent object of perception.

Brentano therefore, dissociates himself from what he calls mental monism, i.e., the identification of the class of physical phenomena with that of mental phenomena, but he claims, in his *Lectures on positivism*, that the core of Mill’s and Mach’s version of positivism can be preserved by replacing the identity relation with that of correlativity (*Correlativität*).¹⁰ In fact, Brentano argues that the class of relations called correlation is more appropriate for what J. St. Mill was looking for with his doctrine of permanent possibilities of sensation, as well as Mach, with his doctrine of elements, in that it makes it possible to avoid several problems associated with this form of monism namely idealism as we shall see below.

1.3 The Identity Thesis and Metaphysical Phenomenalism

I will now turn to the second aspect of Brentano’s criticism of the identity thesis, namely metaphysical phenomenalism, which goes hand in hand with mental monism. Brentano maintains that philosophers are wrong to infer from the thesis of the relativity of knowledge a form of phenomenalism and, as I mentioned above,

¹⁰“The relation is that between subject and object. And this certainly has to do with what others like Mach (and Lotze, for example) explained by saying that it is clear from the outset that there can be no color without an act of seeing (*Sehen*). But they finally say nothing about space, magnitude, *Gestalt* and movement. However, let us consider that we also have a presentation of these items as we have a presentation of colors and sounds (. . .) through sensation; then it seems that, to be consistent, one must also maintain, in the same way, that magnitudes, gestalt, movement, in short, all that is spatial, would never be able to exist (*bestehen*) if not as correlates of sensations and to entertain a subject-object relation with the latter. The opposite would be absurd. And we will have something essentially similar to what Mach wanted [with his doctrine of elements]” (LS 20, p. 29,444–29,445). The notion of correlation is used in this quotation in a broad sense, in order to characterize the relationship between the physical phenomenon and the vision of colour. Brentano argues that one presents space — which is a characteristic feature of color — by means of sensation. Under these conditions, everything that appears to us as extended can only exist in an intentional relation from the perceiving subject to its object, and in this case color, and as a correlate of sensation in the sense that since space is a property of colour, any representation of colour necessarily refers to something that appears to us as extended.

he instead advocates a form of hypothetical realism based on the postulate of an extramental reality of the outside world. But it is in a similar form of realism that Bain sees a contradiction, and which Brentano seeks to defend against this objection, in his discussions with the author of *Mental Science*. This discussion takes place in the context of Brentano's argumentation for the asymmetry between the actual and evident existence of mental phenomena, and the merely phenomenal and intentional existence of physical phenomena (1995a, p. 70). The discussion focuses in particular on whether or not it is contradictory, as Bain claims, to attribute to physical phenomena a different ontological status from that of a "mental existence" and, on the other hand, whether one is right to claim that "physical phenomena could not correspond to any reality" (1995a, p. 71).¹¹

The following excerpt from *Mental Science* summarizes the doctrine criticized by Bain:

The prevailing doctrine is that a tree is something in itself apart from all perception; that, by its luminous emanations, it impresses our mind and is then perceived; the perception being an effect, and the unperceived tree the cause. But the tree is known only through perception; what it may do anterior to, or independent of, perception, we cannot tell; we can think of it as perceived, but not as unperceived. There is a manifest contradiction in the supposition; we are required at the same moment to perceive the thing and not to perceive it. We know the touch of iron, but we cannot know the touch apart from the touch (Bain, 1868, p. 198).

According to Bain, since one can only think of something on the basis of percept, it is contradictory that one could conceive of something as a tree, which would not be perceived, i.e., as an object in itself which transcends subjective perception (Brentano, 2008, p. 110). Brentano agrees with Bain that there is not something like a thing in-itself, but he maintains that if Bain sees only a contradiction in positing a reality outside phenomena and percepts, it is once again because he conflates, in the case of tactile sensation, what is felt in contact with iron, the physical phenomenon, with the act of feeling. For in light of this distinction, it is legitimate to

¹¹ Notice, however, that Bain's position on that issue is here again a particular case of a more general position that Brentano attributes to several philosophers, including Hamilton, who claims that the lack of absolute knowledge, which stems from the thesis of the relativity of knowledge, has as a metaphysical consequence the relativity of the reality of an external world to the subject of knowledge (Hamilton, 1859, p. 96–97). Basically, the term phenomenon is associated in Hamilton with that of "relative," which is opposed to absolute, in the sense that nothing exists absolutely, i.e., "in and for itself, and without relation to us and our faculties" (1859, p. 97). In his *Lectures on positivism*, Brentano attributes a similar position to A. Comte, St. Mill and Mach. For example, he claims that Mach's phenomenalism and his proof of the absurdity of a spatial external world are grounded on the identity of the mental and the physical in sensation. Here again, Brentano's refutation of Mach's phenomenalism is based on his criticism of Mach's identity thesis. He addresses the same reproach to Mill's doctrine of the permanent possibility of sensation, and he maintains that St. Mill can be considered a positivist just like Mach insofar as he rules out everything that is not psychical, i.e., that "the object of experience is only his own mental phenomena. And so, he believes that he may not assume anything real other than his own psychical phenomena. (. . .) Indeed, only our own mental phenomena deserve the name of facts of experience (LS 20, p. 29411). Brentano maintains that metaphysical phenomenalism inevitably leads to a form of idealism, which can be summarized by Berkeley's classical formula: *esse est percipii*.

maintain, on the one hand, that the physical phenomenon, what is felt, does not exist outside the act of feeling, but on the other hand, it is wrong to say that there is nothing real beyond what is felt. This is what stands out from Bain's reasoning applied to physical phenomena, and which can be formulated as follows: a tree can only be thought of as it is perceived or as a percept; one can therefore only think of something insofar as it is perceived here and now; therefore, it does not exist, and it is contradictory to maintain that something like unperceived trees can exist outside of the perceiving subject.

In his commentary on Bain, Brentano argues that not every thought is a perception, and that even if it were the case, it would follow that one could only think of trees already perceived in the past. But this does not imply, *pace* Bain, that one can only conceive of something as object in so far as it is "perceived by us," i.e., as percepts or contents of one's perception (1995a, p. 71). Brentano maintains that it is only on the basis of this identification of the two classes of phenomena, perceiving and what is perceived, as they figure in the two premises of Bain's argument, that one can infer from epistemic to metaphysical relativity of what seems to transcend phenomena. True, from what we saw previously concerning the relativity of knowledge, Brentano agrees with Bain as to the limitations of our knowledge of a transcendent reality to which physical phenomena, as signs, are related through something like a signifier-signified relation. Brentano also admits that physical phenomena, as intentional objects of external perception, merely have a phenomenal existence, as shown by the conclusion of this discussion with Bain: "we will make no mistake if in general we deny to physical phenomena any existence other than intentional existence" (1995a, p. 72).

However, Brentano disagrees with Bain's metaphysical stance in that he believes that there is no contradiction in admitting, on the basis of the distinction between two classes of phenomena, that there is something extramental in which physical phenomena *qua* signs signify ("*außerhalb des Geistes und in Wirklichkeit*") (1995a, p. 72). Indeed, Brentano maintains that although we have no direct access to the reality of what causes phenomena, and although our knowledge of them is consequently substantially limited, there is a reality beyond phenomena which is independent of the knowledge we have of them. Instead of this form of metaphysical phenomenalism, according to which the reality of the extramental world is constituted of mere appearances, and in particular, of permanent possibilities of sensation, Stuart Mill maintains that there is nothing beyond appearances. As mentioned earlier, Brentano advocates hypothetical realism, which admits to the existence and reality of a world transcendent to consciousness, even if the philosopher considers that we only have indirect access to it by the effect that it exerts on us (1995a, p. 75). Now, Brentano's main argument against Bain's objection is that there would be a contradiction in this case only if one admitted, from the outset, that the predicate "to be presented" were part of the object of presentation as one of its moments. Only if the state of being presented were contained in the colour as one of its moments, as a certain quality and intensity is contained in it, would a colour which is not presented imply a contradiction, since a whole without one of its parts is indeed a contradiction. But this is obviously not the case. (1995a, p. 71).

There would therefore be a contradiction only if the predicate “to be perceived”, i.e., the tree or the colour as perceived, were a moment of the object as such, as the whole would thus be deprived from one of its parts. We saw that Brentano admitted that a physical phenomenon only appears when it is presented, but he does not admit that the something to which it refers, cannot exist without being presented. Hence, Brentano’s main argument against Bain is essentially that “being presented” is not a part (or a moment) of the physical phenomenon, i.e., of what is presented. This argument stems from Brentano’s overall argumentation throughout the first chapter of the second book of *Psychology*, according to which mental phenomena do not participate in any way in the properties of physical phenomena, and vice versa. There is therefore no contradiction in admitting the reality of something like the unknown x , and simultaneously the non-reality of x as a *phenomenon* and as an *object* of presentation.

1.4 Conceptual Dependence of Mental States’ Intentional Objects

The examination of this discussion with the empiricists has shown that Brentano is not committed to mental monism and, along with it, dismisses metaphysical phenomenalism altogether. In his discussion with Bain, Brentano argues that although “being presented” is not a moment of the physical phenomenon, and that the object of presentation may exist without being *presented*, a colour, for example, consequently “appears to us only when we have a presentation of it” (1995a, p. 71). But as Brentano’s main argument against Bain suggests, the fact that a physical phenomenon like a colour being presented does not make it an essential property of physical phenomena, for it is only if “to be seen” were an attribute of colour that there would be a contradiction with the thesis that something like colour can exist without being presented. How then to reconcile Brentano’s two following statements?

- A. Physical phenomena only appear when they are presented.
- B. “Being presented” is not a part or moment of physical phenomena.

The hypothesis I would like to examine in this section is that the first sentence states a *conceptual* mind-dependence, whilst the second statement is about the *ontological* dependence that Brentano rules out in his criticism of Bain. The issue that I will now address pertains to the conceptual mind-dependence of intentional objects.

Brentano claims, as we saw, that “to be presented” means the same as “to appear,” (*erscheinen*) (1995a, p. 62) and that what appears is quite simply the immanent object of presentation. For example, in the presentation of an object like a sound, Brentano considers that “a sound is never contrasted with hearing as an external object which is perceptible by means of hearing,” (1995a, p. 95) and that the object of hearing is not something real. Hearing does refer to something heard, that is, perceived as existing outside of the perceiving agent, but as the general definition of

the intentionality of mental phenomena as “reference to something as an object” requires, one must distinguish between the something aimed at through external perception — understood as the cause of the physical phenomenon in question — and this “something” as the intentional object of the presentation. To use once again the case of pain that is localized in a body part, we saw that Brentano distinguishes what is *felt* in pain from something that *causes* pain. This “something” is at the origin of a stimulation, which is perceived as the object of one’s presentation. The preposition “as” in the definition of intentionality indicates that the stimulation triggered by something is taken or apprehended in a certain way and under an aspect or a perspective, which takes into account the attitude and position of the (perceiving) subject in relation to the intended object: “In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on” (1995a, p. 68).

The idea of perspective is first expressed in Brentano through the use of the notion of “mode of consciousness,” upon which his classification of mental phenomena is based. Brentano in fact distinguishes the form from the matter of an act, the form corresponding to the “mode” of consciousness, which differs from one class of act to another, while the matter corresponds to the referent for which stands the subject of a sentence. Every consciousness is reference to something, but there are different modes (*Weisen*) of consciousness, depending on whether one refers to something via a presentation, a judgment, or an emotion-volition (1995a, p. 163–165, 190–192, 114). The sensation of pain can also be considered a mode, by which one apprehends this sensation under the mode of hurting. In the case of judgments and emotions, these modes of consciousness are manifested by the attitude that an agent adopts towards its object, namely, affirmation and negation in the case of judgment, and love and hate in the case of emotion.

After his “reistic” turn, Brentano takes into account new modes of consciousness, such as those associated with *modus rectus* and *modus obliquus*, and in his later works, he also takes into account modes of consciousness related to the class of presentations, notably the temporal differences in the presentation of particular objects (1995a, p. 217 f.). Brentano further argues that the reference to objects can vary not only depending on attitudes, but also depending on the object as such, which can be an object of consciousness in several ways. Indeed, the object can be presented more or less distinctly or determinate.¹²

¹²Brentano explains in his 1908 research manuscript on ontology that “the same thing can be an *object* in several ways, and several thinking activities can be directed towards the same *object*. The latter <occurs> whenever someone thinks of something and desires it, for instance; the former, however, when a thing that is presented by us can be presented now more determinately, now less determinately and, if less so, then less determinately now in one way, now in another way. I can present a certain red point with determinate localization and color. Being red and here belongs to it; if the first of these or the second were missing, it would not be this red point; but it can happen that, by thinking the concept of a red point in general, or the concept of something here in general, I think of that which is the red point, hence the red point indeterminately” (Brentano, 2020, § 31).

The “as” in Brentano’s definition of intentionality denotes the modes of consciousness and modes of presentation of the object, which are involved in the object *qua* intentional object. They are partly responsible for the conceptual dependence of intentional objects upon the bearer of the intentional states (Kent, 1984, p. 45). This conceptual dependence stands out clearly in cases of misperception that Brentano sometimes resorts to in *Psychology* in order to show that external perception is blind, since it only provides one with a relative and dubious knowledge of its objects.

For, as we saw, what appears to consciousness in external perception are not faithful copies of extramental reality, in the sense that physical phenomena do not correspond to the reality for which they stand. Brentano mentions cases such as Locke’s experience of two hands immersed in a water basin with the simultaneous feeling of hot and cold, or that of the illusion created by the Müller-Lyer’s Fig. (1995a, p. 6; 1907). The case of the phantom limb that I discussed earlier also shows that the feeling of pain is in itself indifferent to the existence or non-existence of the limb in which the pain is located. These cases seem to reveal a form of referential opacity in the relation of perception to something perceived. The cases of visual misperception associated with the figure of Müller-Lyer indeed show that what appears to external perception as a figure composed of two parallel lines, which are supposed to be equal, yet are not always in agreement with the percept and what one believes to perceive, i.e., a figure composed of two unequal lines.

This case, like many other cases of visual illusion, seems to testify to the presence of an intermediary, which mediates the relation of the perceiving subject to what is perceived, and firstly to a belief in the existence of the percept in all visual perception, which consequently determines what one perceives, and which, in hearing a sound, explains Brentano, “depending on whether or not one believes that it has a corresponding cause outside of us, we believe that a sound does or does not exist in the external world as well” (1995a, p. 95).¹³

But beyond the belief or non-belief in the existence of extramental objects, these cases bear witness to the presence of associative laws (1995a, p. 9), inferences and concepts in external perception, and demonstrate that this is accomplished in an *intensional* or *opaque* context (in contradistinction to transparent or extensional contexts). Cases of misperception seem to testify to the presence of an intentional content, by means of which the act determines its referent. Besides the existence or the non-existence of the object of perception, these cases show, moreover, that to one and the same object can correspond different perceptual contents which contradict one another, but which equally fit with the sensory data provided by stimulations. It is this conceptual element that seems responsible for the way in which something is perceived, and in cases of misperception, for the change that takes place in the perceiving subject, once one realizes that the initial perception was wrong. There is then a conceptual shift when the initial perception is replaced by a new perception

¹³Let us recall that for Brentano, the presentational mode by itself does not yet constitute a proper perception, i.e., a *Wahrnehmung* (literally: what is taken as true), for it presupposes a belief or a judgment. Hence Brentano’s thesis that perception is a judgment.

based on a slightly modified sensory configuration, and which fits more adequately with the whole sensory complex that triggers the physical phenomenon.

Brentano frequently uses the container-content metaphor to describe the characteristic features of a mental phenomenon, for example in expressions such as “intentional inexistence” and “immanent object,” the Aristotelian-Scholastic notion of mental inhabitation (*psychische Einwohnung*), or in several sentences in which mental phenomena are said to “contain an object intentionally within themselves” or to “include something as object within itself” (1995a, p. 68). Elsewhere in *Psychology*, Brentano explicitly claims that the immanent object of an act is nothing other than its content, and that in hearing, for example, “something else besides hearing itself is present within it as presented and constitutes its content” (1995a, p. 95). We shall see that the use of the notion of object in relation to an act’s content creates a confusion, insofar as an object as such cannot be internally perceived the same way that the content of an act does. In other words, no physical phenomenon can, for matter of principle, be internally perceived.

Cases of misperception are similar to cases of objectless presentations, such as in the presentation of fictional characters like Pegasus or Madame Bovary, and they can also be used as arguments for the content-object distinction. In this regard, Chisholm has been criticized for taking as a model of intentional reference cases of objectless presentations, and for addressing the problem of intentionality in Brentano’s *Psychology* in a misleading way, i.e., in terms of how to account for a mental act’s being related to a non-existent object, like a unicorn (Kent, 1984, p. 27; Sauer, 2006, p. 8). The “Heterodoxes” rightly argue that this model does not apply in cases of presentation of concrete or actual objects because “there is no apparent reason to suppose that there is an intentionally in-existent horse of simulacrum of horse in addition” (Kent, 1984, p. 28). True, in cases of misperception, there is indeed a belief which does not occur in cases of objectless presentations, such as a round square or Pegasus. However, once we put into brackets the question of the existence or non-existence of their respective objects, as well as the belief that is superimposed on external perception, these two acts seem to have the same structure and to function in the same way, insofar as we are dealing with two intentional states.

The question now pertains to the very nature of this intentional content.

1.5 The Theory of Primary and Secondary Objects and the Relationship Between Intentional Object and Presentation

Let us now consider an argument similar to the one Brentano makes against Bain in *Psychology*. It is based on the identification of the primary object of external perception with the secondary object of internal perception. This is Brentano’s main argument in the well-known 1905 letter to Marty, as well as in an excerpt from *Psychology* in which he discusses his theory of primary and secondary objects

in connection with the objection of infinite regress. Brentano argues that if the concept of sound were a relative concept, then it would be the primary object of consciousness:

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 (1995a, p. 101).

The heterodoxes base most of their argumentation against Chisholm on this quotation and the letter to Marty, and they conceive of the term “relative” in the latter quotation, in the sense of correlative or as the secondary object of an act. Chisholm would therefore have confused, in his interpretation of the intentional object of an act in terms of a mind-dependent entity (Chisholm, 1972, p. 705) with “the intentional correlate,” which he considered an “*ens rationis*, an unreal thought entity” (Antonelli, 2009, p. 477–478). They further argue that this amalgamation would have the consequence, as Brentano confirms in this passage, of making the secondary object a primary object of consciousness (Sauer, 2006, p. 1, 4). Identifying a secondary to a primary object would have the further consequence that “we could not think of anything except certain relations to ourselves and our thoughts,” (1995a, p. 101) an objection that Brentano also raises against Bain as we saw earlier.

The theory of primary and secondary objects holds that every mental phenomenon is both about something as its primary object, and aware of itself as its secondary object. For example, in the case of hearing a sound, we say that hearing is about a sound, its primary object, while hearing is aware of itself as its secondary object, in the sense that the agent who hears a sound is at the same time aware of hearing it, or aware of himself as being in this state. As Brentano explains in *Psychology*:

Every mental act is conscious; it includes within it a consciousness of itself. Therefore, every mental act, no matter how simple, has a double object, a primary and a secondary object. The simplest act, for example the act of hearing, has as its primary object the sound, and for its secondary object, itself, the mental phenomenon in which the sound is heard (1995a, p. 119).¹⁴

The very notion of a secondary object is confusing because what one becomes aware of in the secondary consciousness of the presented sound, i.e., the fact for the presentation of the sound to be its own object (or the presentation of the presentation of the sound), can hardly be an object in the same way that the sound is the primary object of hearing, since it is internally perceived. And indeed, Brentano says of the secondary consciousness that it is an indirect consciousness: “The act of hearing appears to be directed toward sound in the most proper sense of the term, and because of this it seems to apprehend itself incidentally and as something additional” (1995a, p. 98). The terms “incidentally” (*nebenbei*) and “additional” (*Zugabe*) seem to indicate that the secondary consciousness which accompanies the presentation of

¹⁴Brentano attaches great importance to the thesis that every mental state is conscious, a thesis he opposes in *Psychology* to the hypothesis of unconscious mental states (1995a, p. 78). Every mental phenomenon is conscious or, as Brentano also says, this class of phenomena is always accompanied by a concomitant consciousness.

a sound, unlike the primary consciousness, which takes the physical phenomenon as its object, is a consciousness subordinated to the primary consciousness. It is thus indirect, insofar as it does not take as its target the presentation of the primary object as such, but rather, the whole mental state which includes both the presented object, the sound heard, which is conceived of here as its content, and itself as secondary consciousness accompanying the presentation of the primary object:

... for the consciousness which accompanies the presentation of the sound is a consciousness not so much of this presentation as of the whole mental act in which the sound is presented, and in which the consciousness itself exists concomitantly. Apart from the fact that it presents the physical phenomenon of sound, the mental act of hearing becomes at the same time its own object and content, taken as a whole (1995a, p. 100).

Brentano's argument is that if secondary consciousness were consciousness of the presentation of the primary object as such, it would entertain an intentional relation with the latter and presuppose, in turn, a third consciousness that makes it conscious, and so *ad infinitum*, which is absurd (1995a, p. 215). Brentano claims instead that in the *same* act of hearing where the sound is presented, the subject *simultaneously* becomes aware of this act of hearing, "insofar as it has the sound as content within it, and insofar as it has itself as content at the same time" (1995a, p. 98). The notion of content in this quotation, as in many others, has the advantage of clearing up the confusion surrounding the notion of the secondary object, and of accounting more adequately for what one becomes aware of in internal perception.

The concept of intentional correlate, which Brentano uses in his lectures on descriptive psychology, partly overlaps with that of the secondary object, in that it designates, in the case of an act of hearing, the sound heard. Basically, the term correlation refers to the bilateral relation of dependence between pairs, such as cause and effect, sensing and sensed, presenting and presented, etc. Two concepts are therefore correlative when they are dependent on one another in this relation. Thus, there is no cause without effect, and no sound heard without the hearing of a sound, and vice versa (LS 20, p. 29441, 29,444, 29,445; M 32, p. 30285–30,286). In his lectures on descriptive psychology, Brentano draws on the mereological theory that he developed during the late Vienna period and conceives of intentional correlates as the mentally modified counterpart of the intentional object, more precisely, as distinct or separable parts only at the conceptual level. The intentional object is thus contained in a modified sense in the correlate of the act (the sound heard) (Brentano, 1995b, p. 28 f.). And it is therefore only by "*demodification*" that one accesses the initial sound as the intentional object of hearing. One must therefore distinguish the modified object, the sound heard as content of the act, from the "*demodified* sound" as its primary object which Brentano defines, in the late Vienna period, exactly as in *Psychology*, i.e., as an immanent object and physical phenomena (1995b, p. 63, 65) which appears as spatially localized (*räumlich localisiert erscheinen*) (LS 20, p. 29482). Moreover, as in *Psychology*, physical phenomena are considered immanent objects which, like the intentional correlates of an act, do not

actually exist.¹⁵ The intentional structure of an act in the late Vienna period seems therefore to correspond to what has been established in *Psychology*, with this important difference, however, that Brentano from now on takes into account the bearer of mental states, i.e., the so-called “mentally active subject,” (Fisette, 2015) and subordinates the act’s intentionality to a subject-object relation.¹⁶

Hence, the peculiarity which, above all, is generally characteristic of consciousness, is that it shows always and everywhere, i.e., in each of its separable parts, a certain kind of relation, relating a subject to an object. This relation is also referred to as ‘intentional relation’. To every consciousness belongs essentially a relation. (Brentano, 1995b, p. 23).

Brentano maintains that what is specific to this class of relation lies in the fact that intentional relations include a pair of correlates, of which “the one alone is real, [whereas] the other is not something real (*nichts Reales*)” (1995b, p. 22). We shall see that this definition of intentionality, in terms of relation, raises new difficulties since any standard relation implies the existence of both of its terms. Thus, in the appendix of 1911, Brentano seems to abandon the idea that all mental activity involves a genuine relation to an object and speaks instead of the reference to an object as “quasi-relational” (1995a, p. 212). Hence, the dual mistake that the “Heterodoxes” impute to Chisholm in his interpretation of intentionality, firstly, to consider cases of objectless presentations as paradigmatic of intentional reference, and, secondly, what Chisholm proposes in order to fulfill the conditions of a genuine relation in Brentano’s *Psychology* — i.e., that “intentional entities were posited in the attempt to account for intentional reference” (Chisholm, 1972, p. 705). To use Chisholm’s well-known formula, the intentionality of consciousness would not consist, in *Psychology*, in an extraordinary relation to ordinary objects, but rather, of an *ordinary* relation to a class of extraordinary objects.

Even if one admits with the “Heterodoxe” that Chisholm confused intentional object and intentional correlate and disregarding the ontological question which serves as their guideline, several questions arise, including the following two: firstly, what is the nature of the reference to the object, and secondly, what is the function of the intentional correlate in the relation to the primary object. Regarding this last

¹⁵Brentano explains in his *Lectures on positivism* that „Grünsehen ist nicht = grün, sondern geht auf das Grün als sein immanentes Objekt. Das eine besteht sicher in Wirklichkeit; von dem anderen gilt es jetzt als ausgemacht, daß nicht“(LS 20, p. 29438).

¹⁶Another major change that Brentano’s psychology underwent in his lectures on descriptive psychology concerns his conception of the subject as a substance, a conception that Brentano had explicitly dismissed in 1874 in his discussion of the Aristotelian definition of psychology as a science of the soul to which he opposes his own definition as a science of mental phenomena (1995a, p. 2 f.). In contrast, in the *Lectures* on descriptive psychology, the subject is conceived of as a substance. On the changes in Brentano’s definition of psychology as a “science of the soul,” (see 1995b, p. 155); regarding his definition of the mental as a substance, Brentano writes: “Everything psychical which we apperceive is composed. It is an accident which includes the substance of the soul, or a plurality of accidents of the same substance, each of which contains this substance. Each phenomenon of the soul has several correlates, a primary object and a secondary one, the latter being the phenomenon itself, given as an object”. (Brentano 1995b, p. 167–168)

question, the “Heterodoxes” claim that the correlate has no function in the reference to objects, that it is a mere epiphenomenon (*Begleiterscheinung*) (Antonelli, 2012, p. 235). Brentano maintains that the presentation of a sound and the presentation of the presentation of a sound are one and the same mental act (1995a, p. 98), and hence, “parts of one single phenomenon in which they are contained, as one single and unified thing” (1995a, p. 74).¹⁷ Another option would be to conceive of the correlates as intentional contents and intentionality as an extraordinary relation, characterized by the mediating function of contents, to something as an object. Although this option presents its share of difficulties, as we shall see in the next section, it also has the advantage of plausibly accounting for the conceptual dependence of the intentional object to the act.¹⁸

1.6 Objections Against the Idea of Mediating Content

I will now look at certain objections formulated against the use of the notion of content and its presumed function in Brentano’s theory of intentionality during the “pre-reistic” period. In the following excerpt taken from his recent response to Cesalli-Taieb (2012), Antonelli raises objections against the attribution to Brentano’s philosophy of mind of something like an intentional content, endowed with the function of mediator in the relation of mental states to their intentional objects.

This correlate, however, did not have a particular function or role in the context of Brentano’s theory of intentionality. It was a mere *Begleiterscheinung* which was created and which ended with the unfolding of the act. The correlate was not the object, nor was it that, through which the act reaches its transcendent object (i.e., that which some Brentano scholars refer to as the ‘content’ of the mental act). The function of a ‘cognitive device’ or vehicle of transcendence belongs in all respects to the act, which is never empty or indeterminate, but is always formally qualified

¹⁷ „... Teilphänomene eines einheitlichen Phänomens, in dem sie enthalten sind, und für ein einziges einheitliches Ding“ (Brentano, 2008, p. 114).

¹⁸ I am not the first to revisit Brentano’s thesis along these lines. G. Fréchette (2013) also used the notion of content in order to elucidate the notion of intentional correlate in Brentano. He conceives of the correlation in terms of the dependence of the presentation on its content and suggests using the distinction between the content of an act and its content in order to account for the more exotic distinction between *correlatum* and *relatum*. Thus, the non-real correlate becomes quite simply the “content” of a mental state while the immanent object becomes the “intentional object” of the act: “For every act of presentation *p*, there is a content *cp* such that not only *p* and *cp* are interdependent, but also that being aware of *p* also means to be aware of *cp*, and the other way round as well. Presenting a horse or a unicorn does not make an ontological difference in that respect, since the correlation holds between the act and its correlate: the presented-horse or the presented-unicorn (Fréchette, 2013, p. 100). However, Fréchette only considers cases of objectless presentation and does not seem to have considered the possibility of assigning intentional contents the function of mediator between an act and its object. See also A. Chrudzinski (2013).

(as Aristotle would have said) or objectively determined (as Brentano said, using medieval terminology) by its (transcendent) object (whether existent or non-existent). The object is in fact, as Brentano emphasized in his *Descriptive Psychology*, contained in a modified way, not only in the correlate but also in the act: ‘red’ is contained in a modified way in both the correlates, in the ‘seen-red’ as well as in ‘red-seeing’. The correlate is not a *Vermittler*, a mediator, it belongs to secondary consciousness, which always flows *en parego* or *nebenbei*. If it really were a *Vermittler*, if the act reached its transcendent object (target object) through the correlate, this would mean that our access to things would always be reflexively mediated. However, this would imply a complete reversal of the natural relationship between primary and secondary consciousness; it would also mean that the former is made possible by the latter, which, for Brentano, would clearly be absurd. (Antonelli, 2012, p. 236).

The first objection rests, as we saw, on the idea that the objective correlate is a mere epiphenomenon that is added to the intentional relation, without exercising any particular function in the relation of the act to its object. This argument is problematic in light of Brentano’s theory of the unity of consciousness, according to which the presentation of the primary object and the presentation of the secondary object are metaphysical parts and “divisives” (1995a, p. 121) of one and the same unitary content, in the same way as shape and size for a circle, or velocity and direction for movement (Brentano, 1954, p. 191). The unity formed by the presentation of the primary and secondary object can be formulated as follows:

P_p = Presentation of the primary object
 P_s = Presentation of the secondary object
 W = The whole unifying P_p and P_s

For any mental state M of a subject S , W is conscious iff there is a P_p and a P_s , so that i) P_p is a part of W , (ii) P_s is a part of W and (iii) W is a whole of which P_p and P_s are parts (see Kriegel, 2003; Textor, 2006). According to this reading of Brentano’s theory, the consciousness of the secondary object is merely an abstractum insofar as it is part of one and the same unitary phenomenon on which it is ontologically dependent (1995a, p. 98). Since all these elements are involved in the relation to the primary object, the intentional correlate of an act therefore cannot be a mere epiphenomenon.

I understand the second objection in the sense that the aboutness of an act (the so-called “vehicle of transcendence”) is a function of, and is determined by, its object. This objection presupposes that the concrete object of sensory perception is a “transcendent object,” an object *per se*, entirely independent of the intentional relation. However, we have shown that this cannot be the case. Moreover, as cases of misperception show, an object cannot by itself determine the percept because to one and the same object can correspond different perceptions which equally fit with the sensory complex, but which contradict one another. The vehicle of transcendence in the internalist theory of mind, advocated by Brentano in *Psychology*, is the content by which an act determines what object is aimed at, and in what sense it does.

Transcendence is in immanence, as one of Brentano's famous followers repeatedly pointed out.

The third objection seems to be based on a particular understanding of the term "*nebenbei*" in an excerpt from Brentano's *Psychology* that I quoted above, wherein he discusses the relation that consciousness bears to itself as a secondary object.¹⁹ The phrasing of this passage may be a source of confusion given that the terms "*nebenbei*" (incidentally) and "*Zugabe*" (additional) may suggest that the secondary consciousness of the presentation of the intentional object is something extrinsic to the act of hearing and a mere additive like sugar to coffee. This further suggests that secondary consciousness and the presentation of the presentation of the primary object would therefore be imposed from without in the sense that it would make the target state conscious. But this interpretation is not consistent with one of Brentano's main thesis in *Psychology* according to which all mental states are intrinsically conscious (*Psychology* p. 119, p. 78 f.), and as I said earlier, it does not withstand the infinite regress objection. Consequently, secondary consciousness as self-consciousness cannot be extrinsic and additional in this sense.

The fourth objection is simply that the idea of a mediator would have as a consequence that one's access to objects would be reflective. Indeed, Brentano opposes the idea that one's access to the target object presupposes any reflection on the content of the act because, on the one hand, this reflection would presuppose a separation between the presentation of the primary object and the presentation of the presentation of the object, and on the other hand, the latter would in turn presuppose a third act which would make it conscious, and so on *ad infinitum*. Brentano claims that it is one and the same act which *simultaneously* becomes aware of both the primary and its secondary object understood as its correlate. There is therefore no reflection if one means by this that a reflection on the content of the act would be a prerequisite for the presentation of the primary object.

However, if one agrees that the secondary object, as well as the secondary consciousness of the presentation of the primary object, are parts of the whole act, and that they are both involved in the relation to the primary object, then the most natural option to account for their joint participation in this unit is to view it as an intentional content, as most of Brentano's students did, including Stumpf, Meinong, Twardowski, and Husserl by endowing the content with the function of mediator between the act and its objects. It is rather unlikely that this option could have escaped Brentano's attention.

¹⁹This is confirmed in Brentano's *Psychology* wherein he identifies his position with that of Aristotle in *Metaphysics*: "Thus in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*, he says, 'Knowledge, sensation, opinion and reflection seem always to relate to something else, but only incidentally to themselves.' Here it is apparent that his conception agrees entirely with our own and he undoubtedly had this conception in mind when he wrote the above quoted passage in which he rejected the infinite complication of mental activity as an unjustified inference" (*Psychology*, p. 102).

1.7 Concluding Remarks

I started off this study on Brentano's thesis with the question: what is it for a mental state to mean (or to present) *something as* an intentional object? This issue has been addressed from a broad perspective, against the background of Brentano's philosophical program in *Psychology*, and the discussions regarding this program with the English empiricists who, along with Aristotle, represent Brentano's main interlocutors in his *Hauptwerk*. This perspective, focused on his program of a psychology as science, has brought to light some presuppositions related to the use of the notion of phenomenon in *Psychology* and several issues related to Brentano's discussions on the nature of mental states and their objects. I have shown that the use of the notion of physical phenomenon was motivated by a form of phenomenism which, in order to be compatible with the version of hypothetical realism advocated by Brentano in *Psychology*, imposes significant limitations on the knowledge of the realities in the transcendent world.

Hence, the cardinal distinction in the general definition of intentionality as reference to *something* as an object between the "*something*" referred to, and the primary object of consciousness, which is conceived of as a physical phenomenon. This distinction indeed represents one of the major issues in Brentano's criticism of metaphysical phenomenism in his discussion with Bain, and later with the positivists in his *Lectures on positivism*. We saw that this form of phenomenism certainly presupposes what Brentano calls mental monism which is also at the heart of Brentano's argumentation against it in the first chapter of the second book of *Psychology* on the distinction between the two classes of phenomena.

That being said, the common thread of this study was the recent controversy between the proponents of a non-canonical interpretation of Brentano's theory of intentionality, and the so-called orthodox interpretation advocated by R. Chisholm, which is based on the ontological thesis, according to which intentional objects are mind-dependent entities endowed with a particular mode of being within the mind. The argument of the advocates of heterodoxy against Chisholm is based in part on the Aristotelian background of Brentano, the absence of the so-called ontological thesis in Aristotle, on textual arguments drawn from *Psychology*, and on the 1905 letter to Marty. We saw that two of the excerpts in *Psychology*, upon which the "Heterodoxes" partly base their argumentation against Chisholm, occur precisely in the context of Brentano's discussion with the English philosophers regarding two aspects of the identity thesis. And there is indeed a parallel between Brentano's discussions with British empiricists and many positivists, and the controversy regarding Chisholm's interpretation, and I argued that Brentano did clearly foresee the consequences of an orthodox interpretation of Brentano's thesis.

However, a further argument of the opponents of orthodoxy is based on the consequences of the identification of the two classes of phenomena, meaning that the concurrent interpretation would amount to identifying primary with secondary objects of consciousness. I have admitted that this argument supports the proponents of the non-canonical interpretation against Chisholm's ontological thesis. I have also

agreed with the “Heterodoxes” that intentionality in *Psychology* cannot be an ordinary relation with extraordinary objects, but neither is it simply an extraordinary relation with ordinary objects. This is where I disagree with the latter, insofar as the intentional relation in no way has objects *per se* or objects *tout court* as one of its terms. For even if one admits with the “Heterodoxes” that intentional objects are not endowed with any particular mode of being, and that even if the terms “intentional inexistence” and “immanent objectivity” are not to be understood along Chisholm’s ontological thesis, the question remains open as to Brentano’s use of intentional inexistence of an *object*. One of the options I have considered in relation to physical phenomena as primary objects is that even if this notion does not denote any ontological category as such, Brentano nevertheless uses it negatively in order to delineate the status of intentional objects from that of the transcendent reality, meaning that intentional objects merely have a phenomenal or intentional existence (1995a, p. 70).

There is a sense to saying that intentional objects are not merely ontologically neutral, but they are, as intentional objects, non-real, non-transcendent, etc., which does not mean exactly the same as ontologically neutral since these predicates are used negatively, namely, in order to demarcate the domain of the phenomenal from that of transcendent reality. Furthermore, I argued that intentional objects are not objects *per se*, independent from its relation to mental states, but they are conceptually dependent upon the intentional relation that a mental state entertains with something as its intentional object. I have further argued that this conceptual dependence rests in turn on the content of an act, i.e., intentional correlate or secondary object, which has a mediating function in the act’s relation to its object.

The issue I will now address is whether or not this conception of intentionality survives the changes brought about by the “reistic” turn. To do so, I will add brief comments on the scope of this research on the other controversy opposing the orthodox and the non-orthodox interpretations of the genesis of Brentano’s theory of intentionality, before and after the “reistic” turn. The arguments against the idea of a mediating content in Brentano that we examined in the last section, just like those of many “Heterodoxes” in their criticism of Chisholm, ultimately rest on a dual assumption in the interpretation of Brentano’s views on intentionality. The first concerns the nature of the intentional object as an object *per se*, whilst the second states that the intentional correlate is, if not extrinsic to the intentional relation, at least merely epiphenomenal. This dual assumption has a direct bearing on the interpretation of the genesis of Brentano’s theory of intentionality.

Indeed, the “Heterodoxes” defend a continuist reading of this genesis, maintaining that despite the changes that Brentano’s philosophical program underwent after the “reistic” turn, none of these changes ultimately affect the core of the structure of an intentional act as a special kind of relation to “intentional objects” (Sauer, 2006, p. 24–25). They argue that what changes after the “reistic” turn is, on the one hand, the abandonment of the idea that mental phenomena have intentional correlates (understood as inexistent entities), and on the other hand, the taking into account of the *in recto* and *in obliquo* modes in the intentional reference to objects (together with several other modes as we saw earlier). Continuity’s advocates therefore presuppose that since the correlate of an act is merely incidental

in the intentional relation, the abandonment of intentional correlates does not affect the theory of intentionality in its very relational structure.

On the other hand, the orthodox point of view adopts a discontinuist reading of this genesis because its supporters believe that the “reistic” turn goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the ontological thesis, i.e., the postulate of mind dependent entities together with a relational theory in favor of an adverbial theory of intentionality (cf. Chrudzinski & Smith, 2004). The discontinuists’ argument for abandoning the relational theory of intentionality lies in the idea that since a binary relation implies the existence of both of its terms as is presumably the case before the “reistic” turn, and that intentional reference in the late Brentano violates this rule insofar as it only requires the existence of the foundation of the relation, i.e., of the thinking substance and not of the object thought, then intentional reference after the “reistic” turn is merely relative-like. This then explains the discontinuist reading of the “Orthodoxes”. However, their opponents argue that the changes that occur after the “reistic” turn are not so much the idea that intentional reference is a type of relation to an intentional object, as the abandonment of the thesis that mental phenomena have correlates (endowed with a particular ontological status). This amounts to saying that Brentano’s framework of the intentional structure of a mental phenomenon remains unchanged throughout the evolution of Brentano’s treatment of intentionality.

That being said, it is questionable whether Chisholm’s ontological thesis is a reliable guide for studying the genesis of Brentano’s theory of intentionality throughout his work. Because the “reistic” turn in Brentano’s philosophy involves major modifications not only to its metaphysics (see Chrudzinski & Smith, 2004), but more generally to the philosophical program which Brentano adopted in *Psychology*, and the question arises as to how Brentano’s conception of the intentional structure of an act could have withstood these drastic changes. Among the changes that directly affect Brentano’s philosophy of mind, I have mentioned the definition of psychology as a science of mental phenomena vs. as science of the soul, his new conception of the soul as a substance, and the subordination of the intentional relation to the subject-object relation. Moreover, these changes seem to bring about the abandonment of methodological phenomenalism and, with it, the distinction between something transcendent and physical phenomena as the primary object of consciousness. For the “something” on which I have insisted in this study, is conceived of, after the “reistic” turn, as a concrete particular thing as Brentano confirms in several places, namely, in the 1911 appendix to *Psychology*, where the philosopher says that he is no longer of the opinion that “mental relation can have something other than a thing as its object” (1995a, p. XXIII). Brentano now claims that “all mental references refer to things,” (1995a, p. 227) and while he no longer admits that primary objects of consciousness are physical sensations or phenomena, he rather considers, from 1905 on, that the something towards which intentional consciousness is directed is a thing:

All our psychical activities relate to things, have things in some manner as their objects. Thus, our judgments and our cognitions also <relate to things>. But they have them variously as objects; now by believing in them, now by denying them, now by believing or denying them as present, now by accepting or rejecting them as somehow past or future (Brentano, 2020, §26).

This quote is taken from a manuscript dated 1908, in which Brentano insists, as I said, on the modes of reference to things as objects, and in particular, on the modes *in recto* and *in obliquo*. It is from this perspective that Brentano, in the 1911 appendix to *Psychology*, reformulates his theory of primary and secondary objects, taking into account the changes in the modes of intentional reference:

... for the secondary object of mental activity, one does not have to think of any particular one of these references, as for example the reference to the primary object (...). The secondary object is not a reference but a mental activity, or, more strictly speaking, the mentally active subject, in which the secondary reference is included along with the primary one (1995a, p. 215).

The taking into account of the mentally active subject brings about a significant change in the way of stating the problem of intentionality, insofar as the mental phenomenon is considered as a state of the subject, i.e., a state the subject is in, and that the subject is aware of himself as being in that (intentional) state, which refers to something as a thing. For example, when the subject has a presentation of something before the mind, one presents himself as being in that state *in recto*, and, at the same time, one presents obliquely the something referred to in this presentation. What is specific to this mode of intentional relation is that it only requires the existence of the foundation of the relation, the mentally active subject, and not the presented object. The presentation only has a real relative because the intentional object for the late Brentano is, ontologically speaking, a mere linguistic fiction, an *ens linguae*.

But if one disregards the ontological status of the elements that enter into the composition of the intentional structure of an act, the question arises as to whether the *in recto* and *in obliquo* modes of reference, which the late Brentano takes into account, affects, in any ways, the relational structure of an act. The answer seems to be negative, according to the continuists at least, who see in this new mode of intentionality as only a new formulation of an older theory (understood as relation to an intentional object). I partly agree with the continuists on this point, provided that one admits, as some continuists do, (see Fréchette, 2013) that Brentano continues to advocate an internalist theory of intentionality in which intentional contents (as correlate) are the subject's own contents, and that, in the late Brentano, they have the same mediating function that they had in *Psychology*, even if the terms of the intentional relation, including the "*something*," underwent significant changes.

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