

Rosaria Egidi • Guido Bonino (Eds.)
Fostering the Ontological Turn
Gustav Bergmann (1906-1987)

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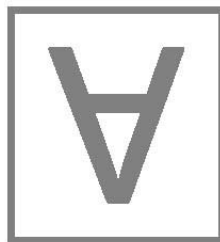
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“... THE MOST MEMORABLE DON QUIXOTE OF A GREAT CAUSE”
BERGMANN’S CRITIQUE OF MEINONG*

Abstract. At first, I explain *how Bergmann reads Meinong*. As regards his method, Bergmann’s stated aim is to examine Meinong’s thought through all the stages of its development; but he is very selective in choosing exactly what to consider, not just within each of Meinong’s texts, but equally among his texts – indeed he completely ignores Meinong’s mature works. Moreover, he often alters Meinong’s thought by translating it into his foil ontology. As regards the content, Bergmann interprets Meinong as a reist and a nominalist. I try to show that such a view is not correct. I then discuss this interpretation by focusing on *which Meinong Bergmann reads*, that is, which writings he refers to and at the same time which of Meinong’s theories he criticizes. I sketch the four phases of the development of Meinong’s thought distinguished by Bergmann: his first theory of relations, the theory of the objects of higher order, of objectives, and finally object theory. I present Bergmann’s critique and compare his distinction of different degrees of independence, which establish differences of status among categories of existents, with Meinong’s distinction between kinds of being. Finally, taking into account also Meinong’s mature work, I offer an *assessment* of Bergmann’s proposal to rethink object theory. Considering Meinong’s theory of incomplete objects, I show that Bergmann would have found in Meinong an ally not only in the battle against representationalism, as he maintains, but also in that against nominalism.

In an article on the ‘Meinong’ of Gustav Bergmann, Rosaria Egidi expressed a *desideratum* concerning the need for «reconstructing the arguments in Bergmann’s critique [of Meinong] in order to assess their soundness and their peculiarities compared to other interpretative perspectives»¹. Recently, in an article devoted to some aspects of Bergmann’s analysis of Meinongian ontology, Guido Bonino remarked that, apart from a few ex-

* Bergmann’s works are quoted from the *Collected Works* (2003-2004); Meinong’s works, except the first edition of *Über Annahmen* (1902), are quoted from the *Alexius Meinong Gesamtausgabe* (1968-1978). The following abbreviations will be used:

CW = G. Bergmann, *Collected Works*

R = G. Bergmann, *Realism*

GA = *Alexius Meinong Gesamtausgabe*.

Translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise; references to English translations appear in square brackets.

¹ Egidi, 2005, p. 55.

ceptions², «[i]n spite of its being often mentioned in Meinongian bibliographies, it does not seem that Bergmann's painstaking analysis of certain selected themes of Meinong's views produced a great impact on Meinongian studies»³. Here, I will only partially meet the *desideratum* of examining the arguments in Bergmann's critique of Meinong: firstly because, just as Egidi's and Bonino's articles are not exhaustive – the former revolving essentially on the issue of representationalism, the latter on Meinong's reism –, neither will be my contribution, whose aim is simply to add another piece to the puzzle; secondly because, although I will attempt to provide an assessment of Bergmann's reading of Meinong, I will not compare it with standard interpretations of Meinongian philosophy. I will proceed as follows: first (1) I am going to explain how Bergmann reads Meinong; subsequently, (2) I will point out which Meinong Bergmann reads, that is, which writings he refers to and at the same time which of Meinong's theories he criticizes; finally, (3) I will propose a brief assessment, by taking into account Meinong's mature work, which Bergmann completely ignored.

1. *How does Bergmann read Meinong?*

Besides writing about him more generally throughout the whole volume, Bergmann deals specifically with Meinong in the fourth part of *Realism*, where he systematizes his ontological conceptions (some developments and reassessments of which may be found in later essays and in his posthumous *New Foundations of Ontology*)⁴. He gives a strong interpretation of Meinongian ontology – I would almost say a violent one – both as regards its interpretative method and its content.

1.1. *What is Bergmann's interpretative method?*

The method is clearly explained by the author himself under three different headings: the development of Meinong's thought, his style and his terminology⁵. (a) To begin with, Bergmann remarks that Meinong's thought in ontology is not uniform, but scattered with «breaks and new starts»: bet-

² Cf. Barber, 1966; 1970; 1971; Grossmann, 1974.

³ Bonino, 2006, p. 240.

⁴ Cf. Bergmann, 1992; 2003: CW II, pp. 309-369; on which cf. Hochberg, 1994, pp. 9 ff.; 2001.

⁵ Cf. R, pp. 340-343.

ween his first and final ontology there were two intermediate stages, which means that we have four ontologies overall. *Therefore*, Meinong's thought needs to be considered through each step of its development. (b) As for Meinong's style, Bergmann defines it a «diffuse style»: Meinong purportedly could not state «in the right way and in the right context» the distinctions he points out.

He is forever prone to pursue phenomenological butterflies, sometimes under the goad of a central motive that has recently emerged, more often just for the pleasures of the chase. One wishes he had instead taken the time and the trouble to find out whether and how what he says at the moment jibes with what he has said earlier. (R, p. 342)

Moreover, unlike Brentano, Meinong employs ordinary language instead of an ideal one. *Therefore*, on one hand, Bergmann ends up neglecting entire portions of Meinong's work written in such a diffuse style; on the other hand, he lays out everything in an ordered form, imposing «a systematic notation». Finally, (c) according to Bergmann, «Meinong's terminology is obscure and eccentric» (R, p. 342); *therefore*, he adopts his own terminology – which, needless to say, he believes to be neither obscure nor eccentric. For all these reasons, (d) Bergmann feels entitled to express himself rather freely, by saying «some things which he [Meinong] does not say at all and some others, which he does say, very differently» (R, p. 343).

Actually, despite language differences, Bergmann is hardly more accessible reading than Meinong, due partly to the complexity of his way of arguing, filled with lengthy analyses and so focused on details that the wider picture can easily be lost, and partly to the fact that his language often diverges from the standard scholarly terminology⁶. Yet, I think it is important to stress a difference in style between our two authors, which mirrors a difference in their ways of thinking and which we can characterize as an opposition between a systematic approach and an aporetic one. In *Realism*, Bergmann gives an outline of an ontological system, dubbed as *foil*, and he tries to show in which respects it is preferable to alternative ontologies such as the *antifoil*, the *prototype*, and the things-ontologies of Brentano and Meinong. In general, both as he criticizes his opponents and as he advances his theses, Bergmann's statements are sharp and resolute. Meinong's style, on the other hand, is aporetic besides being «diffuse»: he often puts forward tentative theses, which are later to be fully worked out

⁶ Bonino – Torrenco, 2004, pp. 7-8 and Egidi, 2005, p. 56 see in Bergmann's writing, in his way of arguing and terminology one of the main reasons for the limited diffusion of his thought.

or entirely replaced; he often smoothes out expressions which might look clear-cut and uncompromising with phrases such as ‘so to speak’ (*sozusagen*), ‘if anything’ (*womöglich*), ‘in favourable circumstances’ (*unter Umständen*), ‘at the very best’ (*günstigenfalls*) and the like, or else he says that the present state of research does not allow us to be more precise on a certain subject. Meinong does not work out his ontology into an accomplished system: as Bergmann correctly pointed out, he builds up his ideas through progressive additions, refinements and reworkings. The systematic sketch appearing in the “Selbstdarstellung” (1921) is aimed at giving a general introduction to his philosophy rather than at organizing it as a system. Meinong himself presents his research as a philosophy «from below», proceeding from given facts, and not as a system⁷.

Why did I refer to Bergmann’s interpretation as violent? First of all, because he often alters Meinong’s thought by translating it into his own ontology, the *foil*. The term ‘foil’ refers both to the background – which is part of the language requirements of a comparative ontology – and to the contrast, the yardstick for evaluating an ontology: Meinong’s ontology is precisely examined and judged by the yardstick provided by the foil; Meinong’s language is translated into the language of the foil; the latter, in turn, arises from an ontology which is far from neutral – if any philosophy can be neutral. Secondly, the violence lies also in Bergmann’s selection of Meinongian works. We know that Bergmann intends to consider Meinong’s thought through all the stages of its development. Such an approach is correct, yet, as we will see, Bergmann does it by means of a selection not just *within* each of Meinong’s texts, but equally *among* his texts, whereby he completely ignores those written after the second edition of *Über Annahmen* (1910), corresponding to the mature stage of Meinong’s thought, that is, *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* (1915) and *Über emotionale Präsentation* (1917). The former is widely regarded as Meinong’s main work – not just because of its size – whereas the latter was regarded by the author himself as his most important writing⁸. As we said earlier, though, Bergmann’s interpretation is a strong one not just because of the way he reads Meinong, but equally as regards its content. Now, what is the image of Meinong that he presents us?

⁷ Cf. Meinong, 1921: GA VII, p. 42; cf. also p. 4. For a critical analysis of the interpretation that Meinong gives of his own philosophical research see Manotta, 2005.

⁸ Cf. Doris Meinong’s Preface to Meinong, 1923: GA III, p. 473.

1.2. *What image of Meinong does Bergmann present us?*

Meinong's goal was to work out the object theory as an *a priori* science, aimed at accounting for the totality of objects. Object theory is meant to be a science that deals with objects as such and with objects in their totality⁹, a science combining an abstract *a priori* perspective on objects, which is typical of mathematics, and an aspiration to the maximum possible extension and generalization, which has always been peculiar to metaphysics. Conversely, according to Bergmann, there really are no objects in Meinong's ontology – we thus have an object theory without objects, which is why he never uses the term 'Gegenstandstheorie'¹⁰; there are no complexes either, and consequently no facts. All this can seem odd, but it is exactly the conclusion that Bergmann draws after comparing Meinong's ontology with his own foil and translating Meinong's language into the foil language.

The fundamental categories of the foil are things, facts and subsistents. In the foil, all complexes are facts, while all simples are things. Things are divided into particulars and universals. Particulars are *bare* particulars, that is, they are devoid of any nature and differ from each other only numerically. Insofar as they are things, universals are simple, they account for properties and may be possessed by several objects. On the contrary, ordinary things are complexes, and thus they are facts. However, things are not the only constituents of facts, but the latter have at least one other necessary constituent which Bergmann calls "nexus" of exemplification. A fact is made up of things connected by a nexus; the latter belongs to the category of subsistents, and is therefore not homogeneous with the elements it connects, i.e., universals with each other and with particulars. A peculiar character of the nexus is that it requires no further entities in order to be connected with the things it connects; by this claim, Bergmann averts Bradley's infinite regress¹¹.

Bergmann holds as true what he calls the 'principle of exemplification', according to which there is no universal which is not exemplified by a particular, and there is no particular which does not exemplify at least a quality. For Colour as genus to exist, it must be exemplified by a given colour; for this colour to exist, it must be exemplified by a given particular¹².

⁹ Cf. Meinong, 1904: GA II, pp. 485, 486 [1960, pp. 78, 79].

¹⁰ Cf. R, p. 341, fn. 10, p. 344.

¹¹ Cf. R, pp. 4-14.

¹² Cf. R, p. 360. Cf. also R, p. 88: «*A universal need not be separable*. In the foil, the Principle of Exemplification makes particulars and universals equally inseparable from

Hence, «[f]acts are *independent* in a sense in which things are not» (R, p. 43): facts are – in Bergmann’s language – independent₂, whereas things (particulars and universals) are dependent₂. Yet, it is not necessary that a given particular exemplify that specific colour; in order to have a fact (e.g., a coloured particular) a nexus is needed. Therefore, things show a certain independence₁, while nexus are dependent₁.

As Bergmann himself states, *Realism* may be portrayed as a passionate battle against three philosophical positions: nominalism, reism and representationalism¹³. Against these views, he supports realism, which he conceives as twofold: realism₁, that is the doctrine that there are universals, is opposed to nominalism and reism; realism₂, which holds that some things are not mental, is opposed to representationalism and idealism¹⁴. It is against the background of this basic framework that Bergmann reads and criticizes Meinong.

According to Bergmann, in Meinong’s ontology there is nothing but things, either physical or mental. These are conceived in two ways. On one hand, they are *perfect particulars*, that is, qualified particulars, and not ordinary objects, which are complex. On the other hand, the entities of Meinong’s ontology are *collections of particulars*, which Bergmann calls ‘cryptoclusters’, and which Meinong would mistakenly see as objects¹⁵. This, in Bergmann’s opinion, makes him a reist, although not an extreme one such as Brentano. Reism is the conception viewing all beings as things, things as simple and nexus as non-existent. Meinong fell just short of breaking the bonds of reism, and that is, according to Bergmann, one of his glories¹⁶.

Representationalism holds that beings which minds come to know depend on minds themselves, and that there exists a middle term between mental entities and their intentions, that is, extra-mental beings. Thus, the connection between the First (the mental world) and the Second (the physical world) rests on a Third (the world of ideas). Even though representationalism affects the earliest of Meinong’s ontologies, Bergmann argues,

each other»; Bergmann, 1960: CW II, p. 69: «None of us is ever presented either with an individual that is not qualified or with a character (quality) that is not exemplified by an individual».

¹³ Cf. R, p. 340.

¹⁴ Cf. R, p. 22. Cf. also Bergmann, 1963: CW II, p. 77: «Idealism holds that all entities are mental; materialism, that they are all nonmental. Only realism₂ sides with common sense, asserts that (1) some entities are mental, some nonmental».

¹⁵ Cf. R, pp. 335-337.

¹⁶ Cf. R, p. 12; cf. also R, pp. 338, 354.

he eventually comes very close «to throwing off the shackles of representationalism»¹⁷. Bergmann can therefore regard Meinong as a valid ally in the battle he has launched against representationalism – which leads to idealism – and for a realistic₂ ontology. Meinong supposedly reaches conclusions that are strictly compatible with a realistic ontology (i.e., with the foil); at the same time, his arguments are not always correct and he eventually fails to construct a true ontological alternative to representationalism. This happens, as Bergmann has it, because Meinong’s anti-representationalism is affected by nominalism.

Bergmann considers nominalism as the doctrine claiming that there are no universals, only particulars¹⁸; properties themselves are particular and not universal – more precisely, perfect particulars, mutually connected through a homogeneous nexus. According to Bergmann, Meinong’s nominalism is extreme. Despite these shortcomings, he was however able to uphold an ontology that is «genuinely nonrepresentational and realistic₂ in structure», «free from the absurdities of idealism». Herein lies his glory; the way he fought for this cause makes him «the most memorable Don Quixote of a great cause» (R, pp. 339, 340).

I will not discuss representationalism; instead, I will say something on Meinong’s “reism” and especially about his “nominalism”. Let us now get into the details and attempt to answer the second question we asked in the beginning.

2. Which Meinong does Bergmann read?

Some help towards answering that question may come from Bergmann himself: he devoted the whole of chapter twenty in part four of *Realism* to reconstructing the development of Meinong’s ontological thought, where, as previously said, he identifies four different stages. Actually, some claims by Bergmann seem to contradict such a scheme: in part two, he distinguishes only two Meinongian ontologies, «the one with which he started and the one over which he died» – a claim that he repeats later on¹⁹. But in order to understand Meinong’s eventual ontology, a refinement is required, which just consists in considering «two intermediate stages, each marked by the emergence of a central motive» (R, p p. 341). By doing so,

¹⁷ R, p. 139; cf. also R, p. 340.

¹⁸ Cf. R, pp. 22, 49, 86, 142. Cf. also Bergmann, 1958: CW I, p. 325.

¹⁹ Cf. R, pp. 139, 340.

Bergmann carries out what he had previously stated about his interpretative method, yet at the same time he does something more: although his alleged purpose is not to write a “factual history”, but a “structural history”, that is, to give a rational reconstruction and not a genetic one, when he reads Meinong he tries to pay attention to the chronological succession of the texts.

2.1. *The first three ontologies*

The first ontology may be found in 1877 and 1882 *Hume-Studien*. At this stage, Meinong’s interests are mainly psychological in character, or else, as Bergmann has it, «he was then above all and to the virtual exclusion of everything else concerned with the assay of contents» (R, pp. 399-400), which are all mental. Meinong is still a representationalist. He does not distinguish – as he will later acknowledge himself²⁰ – between content and object, that is, in Bergmann’s language, between cores and their intentions. Even though he speaks about representational contents and representational objects, Meinong understands both as mental. Relations – which Bergmann calls ‘connections’²¹ – are likewise all mental. It is true that Meinong sorts them into ‘real’ and ‘ideal’, but these terms have not the same meaning as in his later writings, when they refer to two different kinds of being – Bergmann writes: «levels of existing» (R, p. 403) and this expression implies a precise interpretation. In the first ontology, there is only one kind of being, hence ‘real’ and ‘ideal’ refer to two different modes in which relations arise. Both ideal and real relations are mental, but while ideal relations (of resemblance, identity, compatibility, comparison, cause and effect) subsist among representational contents, and are produced²², real relations are founded on mental states (they subsist between the act of representing and the representational contents, or between the foundations and the relation built on these), and are perceived²³. Connections are the major innovation of the first ontology: according to Bergmann, the early

²⁰ Cf. Meinong, p. 1899: GA II, p. 381 [1978, p. 141].

²¹ Bergmann calls Meinong’s *Relation* ‘connection’ and reserves the word ‘relation’ for his own use (cf. R, p. 344). From here on, if there is no risk of confusion, ‘Relation’ is translated by ‘relation’, otherwise the German word is used; the same holds for ‘Komplex’ and ‘complex’; ‘connection’ appears in Bergmann’s quotations or arguments.

²² Cf. Meinong, 1882: GA II, pp. 42-43, 128, 142, 155.

²³ Meinong, 1882: GA II, pp. 137-142. Cf. also R, p. 410: «They [*scil.* all connections] are either ideal₁ or real₁, depending on whether or not the mind has produced them out of other contents».

Meinong «does *not dialectically consider physical objects*», but he «admits the proposition that there are physical objects» (R, p. 401); Meinong's connections are internal connections among nonmental particulars, which are imported into the mind and given the ontological status of mental particulars²⁴.

The second ontology wholly emerges in “Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung und deren Verhältnis zur inneren Wahrnehmung” (1899). The transition has been gradual. Bergmann skips over intermediate steps – his purpose being, as usual, structural rather than merely historical –, but he understands very well the major significance of the theory of relations in the development of Meinongian ontology. This theory, which Meinong had worked on repeatedly over the previous seventeen years, represents the underlying thread of his writings up to 1899. In Bergmann's opinion, the transition to the second ontology is prompted by two innovations. The first one is the distinction between content and object, that is, in his language, between core and intention. According to the new point of view, he says, «*[t]he former is mental; the latter, physical*»²⁵. Now, the mental character of contents is explicitly stated by Meinong, but the claim that «all intentions exist» does not fully make sense of the development of his thought – unless we interpret ‘exist’ in a way which is not the same as Meinong's. Following Twardowski²⁶, Meinong puts forward two arguments to support the distinction between content and object: the first concerns their existence, that is to say, the content exists even though the object does not – as in the case of an ideal relation, a mathematical object or a fictional object –; the second concerns their nature, as the object of an idea has some properties – Meinong gives the example of something blue, hot or heavy – which can by no means inhere in the content, as this cannot in turn be blue, hot or heavy²⁷. Bergmann only considers the second argument and ignores the first, in the context of which Meinong introduces a classification of non-existing objects. Yet Bergmann regards as the second innovation (giving rise to the second Meinongian ontology) precisely what he seems to be neglecting, i.e., the notion of ideal object (*idealer Gegenstand*), which he calls ‘ideal particular’²⁸, that is, an object of higher order

²⁴ Cf. R, p. 405.

²⁵ R, p. 409; cf. also R, p. 400.

²⁶ Cf. Twardowski, 1894, pp. 30-31 [1977, pp. 27-28].

²⁷ Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, pp. 382-84 [1978, pp. 141-142].

²⁸ Cf. R, p. 410. For the reasons why Bergmann translates ‘*Gegenstand*’ with ‘particular’, cf. R, p. 344.

involving the introduction of a second kind of being. According to Meinong, objects of higher order are characterized by an «intrinsic non-independence»²⁹, because they can only be thought of in reference to other objects, on which they are built. Objects of higher order include relations (like the difference between two objects) and complexions (like a melody)³⁰. They can be both ideal, like the relation of similarity between two things, and real, like the combination between a colour and an extension. The notion of ideal is linked to a specific kind of being, ‘subsistence’, which is neither physical nor psychical; while both the physical and the psychical are connected to the kind of being that Meinong calls ‘existence’, that is, to being temporally determined. Therefore, according to the new view, all relations of the first ontology (either ideal or real) are real, since they are all mental. More precisely, what can exist is real, what can subsist is ideal³¹. This means that Meinong identifies neither real objects with existent objects nor ideal objects with subsistent ones. Bergmann ignores the definition of ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ by means of the concept of possibility and writes: «A real particular has *Dasein* (*ist da*). An ideal particular has *Bestand* (*besteht*)» (R, p. 263). Instead, according to Meinong, an object is real if its nature allows it to exist, independently of whether it actually exists or not; in this sense, reality is not limited to actual existence in the present, but it includes also the past and the future³². Moreover, as Meinong explains in a later writing, what subsists is ideal, but not all that is ideal subsists: again, he calls those objects ‘ideal’ which by nature cannot exist but can only subsist; this does not exclude that there are ideal objects which actually do not even subsist³³.

With ideal particulars, Bergmann claims, Meinong preserves both reism – since the new entity is a particular – and the internal character of relations, for an ideal relation obtains necessarily as a result of the nature of its *inferiora*³⁴. Presumably, although he makes no explicit reference to it, Bergmann has in mind a page³⁵ where Meinong proposes the example of a comparison between two colours, *A* and *B*, and writes:

²⁹ Meinong, 1899: GA II, p. 386 [1978, p. 144].

³⁰ For lexical uniformity, I use the term ‘complex’ (*Komplex*) instead of ‘complexion’ (*Komplexion*).

³¹ Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, pp. 394, 395 [1978, p. 150].

³² Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, p. 457 [1978: 192-193].

³³ Cf. Meinong, 1910: GA IV, pp. 63-64, 74 [1983, pp. 51-52, 58].

³⁴ Cf. R, p. 410.

³⁵ Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, p. 398 [1978, p. 152].

The *A*- and the *B*-idea participate at any rate, in the whole process. This can only mean that both ideas enter into a certain real relation with each other. The operation aimed at producing the relation brings about, under sufficiently favourable conditions, a new idea, namely the idea of the difference, naturally not of the difference in general, but of the specific difference between *A* and *B*.

Here, Meinong is speaking of the difference as a particular. It must be remarked, however, that he refers to a real relation between ideas (*Vorstellungen*), and not to the ideal relation of difference subsisting between the objects *A* and *B*. An ideal relation diverges from a real one in one important respect: it follows *necessarily* from a given set of inferiora;

if *A* and *B* are different once then they will always be different, they must be, and we understand “must” in the sense of logical necessity which is established, on the one hand, by the characteristics [nature, *Beschaffenheit*] of *A* and *B* and, on the other hand, by the character [essence, *Wesen*] of difference.

Meinong does not yet differentiate the production of ideas (*Vorstellungsproduktion*) having other ideas as their inferiora from the foundation (*Fundierung*) of ideal relations, understood as the necessary relation between an ideal superior and its inferiora³⁶. It is because of this ambiguity that Bergmann can write:

Structurally, Meinong’s connections are internal connections of the Second; imported into the First, where they were given ontological status; then, without losing this status, re-exported into the Second. (R, p. 410)

The third innovation, leading to the third ontology, is the theory of objective (*Objektiv*), which is introduced in the first edition of *Über Annahmen* (1902)³⁷. The theoretical means to conceive the objective are offered by the essay on objects of higher order. Indeed, according to Meinong, an objective is an object of higher order, but it is of a different kind than a relation or a complex. An objective is the object of a judgement or of an assumption, not of an idea; it can be true or false, if it is true it subsists, and if it subsists it is a fact³⁸.

How does Bergmann translate Meinong’s theory in his own language? He takes the objective as an object of higher order and defines it as «an ideal particular compounded out of a nature which is a proposition and

³⁶ The distinction is made in *Über Annahmen* (1902, pp. 8-9), where Meinong writes that Rudolf Ameseder called his attention to such «inexactness» (p. 8 and fn. 4). Cf. Ameseder, 1901, pp. 6-9 and Meinong, 1910: GA IV, pp. 16, 251-252 [1983, pp. 18, 182]; on this topic cf. Raspa, 2005, pp. 112-114.

³⁷ Cf. R, pp. 413, 415, 416.

³⁸ Cf. Meinong, 1902, pp. 189; 1910: GA IV, p. 69 [1983, p. 55].

either *ex* or *nonex*»³⁹. Here ‘*ex*’ stands for existence and ‘*nonex*’ for non-being⁴⁰, both «do the jobs of Frege’s True and False» (R, p. 364); indeed «[a] proposition combines with *ex* or *nonex* depending on whether the sentence which stands for it is true or false» (R, p. 357). The objective satisfies the need to represent states of affairs and, by means of *nonex*, it accounts for problems like non-veridical perception or false belief. However, Bergmann thinks that Meinong lacks an adequate notion of fact, because he neither has the notion of nexus nor does he make a clear distinction between things and complexes. Here it should be recalled that, according to Bergmann, things are simple and only facts are complex.

In Bergmann’s opinion, Meinong’s is not a complex ontology (like his own), but a function ontology, which suffers from *two major inaccuracies* and *two fundamental inadequacies*. The first inadequacy is nominalism, the other is «Meinong’s failure to recognize the ontological status of functions»⁴¹. The two inaccuracies are the «nature inaccuracy» and the «function inaccuracy»⁴². The latter and the second inadequacy are strictly connected with Bergmann’s interpretation of Meinong’s *Relationen* and *Objektive*. First I shall deal with them, and then I will discuss nature inaccuracy and nominalism.

Bergmann starts his reasoning⁴³ with an example, which also shows how the ideal language works. Two tones, c_1 and e_1 , are connected into the fact that ‘ c_1 is higher than e_1 ’. This situation can be differently expressed in different ontologies. In Meinong’s ontology – he says – there are the two particulars c_1 and e_1 , a *Relation*, which he writes as $(c_1; e_1)$, and an *Objektiv*, written as $(c_1; (c_1; e_1); e_1)$; the latter respectively take the roles of the connection and of the fact; they are particulars too, which means that they are (i) independent, (ii) simple and, of course, (iii) not universal. Let us examine first Bergmann’s reading of Meinong’s *Relation* or connection (see above fn. 21). (iii) A connection $(c_1; e_1)$ is a particular if, and only if, given another connection $(c_2; e_2)$, whose inferiora c_2 and e_2 are grounding the same pitches as c_1 and e_1 , it is different than the latter. Since this is precisely the case in Meinong’s ontology, then connections are particulars. This result is important for the rest of Bergmann’s argument. (i) As for its

³⁹ R, p. 415; cf. also R, pp. 355-356 and 361: «To be an ideal particular and to be one of *higher order* is one and the same».

⁴⁰ Cf. R, pp. 354, 355.

⁴¹ R, p. 360 and fn. 54; cf. also R, p. 339.

⁴² Cf. R, pp. 336-337, 353, 371-372.

⁴³ Cf. R, pp. 344-348; on which cf. Bonino, 2006, pp. 254 ff.

independence, we know that a connection $(c_1; e_1)$ as an object of higher order is built upon other objects which are its indispensable basis. This means, according to Bergmann's reading, not only that unless the inferiora c_1 and e_1 were there, the superius $(c_1; e_1)$ would not be there (and conversely), but also that unless the inferiora are what they are, the superius would not be what it is (and conversely). It seems then not easy to show the independence of Meinong's *Relationen*, but a help comes from the previous argument: $(c_1; e_1)$ is a particular insofar as it has a nature, which neither nexus nor any other subsistents of the foil have; hence, $(c_1; e_1)$ is neither a nexus nor another subsistent, and it is also not dependent in the sense in which the latter are (i.e., dependent₁). The argument is not yet definitive, it has to be completed with (ii) the simplicity proof of the connection $(c_1; e_1)$. If $(c_1; e_1)$ were a fact, it would be complex, that is, it would consist of c_1 , e_1 and a further entity; but then a connection between the former and this entity is required, and so on in an infinite regress. If $(c_1; e_1)$ is not a nexus, Bradley's regress cannot be averted. Without nexus there is no fact, but at the very best a collection; and if a connection is neither a nexus nor a fact, it can only be a thing, that is a particular, which is as such simple, independent₁ and not universal. The whole argument clearly presupposes the foil's ontology.

With regard to objectives, as these are objects of higher order, Bergmann thinks that what has been previously said about *Relationen* holds for them as well. In fact, he says that an objective is connected with its inferiora as $(c_1; e_1)$ to c_1 and e_1 , and that as this is a particular, so is the objective too. Therefore, the objective $(c_1; (c_1; e_1); e_1)$ is built upon both the members of the *Relation* and the *Relation* that connects them, that is, upon c_1 , e_1 and $(c_1; e_1)$. Also in this case an infinite regress arises: given the objective $(c_1; (c_1; e_1); e_1)$, two other connections $(c_1; (c_1; e_1))$ and $(e_1; (c_1; e_1))$ are also given; but then new objectives would arise like $(c_1; (c_1; (c_1; e_1))); (c_1; e_1)$, and so on.

Now, what is this connection which links the inferiora either with a *Relation* or with an objective as their superius? Bergmann answers: a function, whose arguments are the inferiora and whose value is the superius. Therefore, «Meinong's is a function ontology» (R, p. 349). He argues that Meinong is unaware of this, and hence he does not distinguish between complexes and functions, but mistakes cryptoclusters, which are collections of particulars, for objects⁴⁴. This is the *function inaccuracy*. Related to this, Bergmann mentions the *second inadequacy*, that is, that

⁴⁴ Cf. R, p. 371-372; cf. also R, p. 337.

Meinong does not give an ontological status to functions; in other words, there are no functions in his ontology. But this is not a serious gap in Bergmann's view:

Radical as it is, the inadequacy is yet easily remedied. One merely has to add the required number of functions to the basic ontological inventory. (R, p. 349)

The latter argument is very peculiar: Meinong's is a function ontology, but there are no functions in his ontology, which is in fact «*an implicit function ontology*»; now, it is enough to add functions and all is well. I shall forgo comment on this argument and proceed to recapitulate the result of the whole reasoning. Meinong's *Relation* – the same holds for the objective – is a particular, i.e., a simple thing, which by connecting other things causes an infinite regress; this could be averted only by the notion of nexus, which Meinong does not have. It follows that in his ontology there are no complexes. And if there are no complexes, then there are no facts, since, according to Bergmann, only facts are complex. Therefore, he concludes that Meinong thinks he distinguishes simple things from complexes and these from facts (i.e., objectives), but actually in his ontology there are only things.

What can one say about such a reading? I limit myself to three remarks. The first concerns the reference texts used by Bergmann. He declares that these are the first section of “Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung” (1899) for connections, and chapter three of the second edition of *Über Annahmen* (1910) for objectives⁴⁵. Now, the latter text is a reworking and profound rewriting of chapter seven of the first edition, in which Meinong exposes for the first time his theory of objectives. Hence, Bergmann pegs the third ontology to the first edition of *Über Annahmen*, but in fact he refers – when he does it – to the second one (the significance of this remark will become clear later). The former text, the first section of the essay on objects of higher order is, as Meinong expressly declares⁴⁶, only a sketch and is not finished; unfortunately, he will never expand it, rather he seems to invite the readers to complete themselves what he did not accomplish. However, in *Über emotionale Präsentation* (1917) Meinong recognizes that the theory was initially formulated in relationship with relations and complexes, and that objectives were at that time unknown⁴⁷. Now, Bergmann interprets both *Relationen* and objectives from the standpoint of the essay on objects of higher order. His approach is partly justified by the fact

⁴⁵ Cf. R, p. 345, fn. 17.

⁴⁶ Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, p. 401 [1978, p. 155].

⁴⁷ Cf. Meinong, 1917: GA III, p. 389 [1972, pp. 93-94].

that Meinong refers to this text even when he is speaking about objectives, but at the same time it prevents Bergmann from interpreting them in a more sympathetic light.

As regards the concept of objects of higher order, it seems that Bergmann fails to understand what Meinong's *Komplexe* effectively are. He interprets Meinong's *Komplex* as a mere collection of particulars, that is, as a cryptocluster; then he deduces from a principle of general ontology, according to which «a collection of entities is not itself an entity» (R, p. 16) – a principle which, in Bergmann's view, is accepted by Meinong too⁴⁸ –, that a cryptocluster or *Komplex* is not an entity. On the contrary, Meinong strongly distinguishes between a *Komplex* and a mere collection, for which he uses the term “objective collective” (*objektives Kollektiv*)⁴⁹. Meinong explicitly claims that a *Komplex* is more than an objective collective of component parts, and he states a «principle of partial coincidence» which aims to account for the fact that each *Komplex* needs a *Relation* and hence is not a mere collection: rather, a *Komplex* is a relation together with its members. On the basis of this principle – which is however judged «both specious and opaque» by Bergmann (R, p. 414) –, relations are distinguished from *Komplexe*, since they are parts of the latter, but not conversely. Substantially Bergmann mixes up Meinong's *Komplex* with the objective collective⁵⁰. Thus he comes to the conclusion that in Meinong there are no complexes and, since Meinong's relation is different from the nexus, because it opens the way to Bradley's regress, there is also no adequate notion of facts. Since Bergmann identifies complexes and facts, he questions that subsisting objectives are facts.

Concerning objectives, Bergmann points out a significant question: that of the relationship between an objective and its inferiora, that is, the elements upon which it is built. However, I am doubtful whether it is correct to interpret the objective as something which is connected with three particulars (the members of the relation and the relation itself). In this way the objective is wholly assimilated to the *Komplex*. A careful examination of this issue requires an analysis both of Bradley's regress and of Meinong's and Bergmann's interpretations of the latter. I will not deal with

⁴⁸ Cf. R, p. 337.

⁴⁹ Cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, pp. 388 ff. [1978, pp. 145 ff.].

⁵⁰ As Tegtmeier, 2000, pp. 97-98 correctly points out; cf. also p. 95: «Meinong's explicit statement that relations are parts of complexes is clearly inconsistent with Bergmann's interpretation».

this topic⁵¹, and will limit myself to remarking that the objective can be understood as playing a new function compared to that of the other objects of higher order, which escape the infinite regress, thus resolving problems which remained open in the previous treatment⁵².

2.2. *The ontological catastrophe (Meinong's final ontology)*

The theory of objects of higher order of 1899 and that of objectives of 1902 are preparatory to object theory, which appears officially in 1904. But Bergmann – as we will see – rejects its programme of a science of objects as such and in their totality.

Between the first and the second edition of [*Über*] *Annahmen* – says Bergmann – their author changed his mind on an issue so fundamental that more or less directly it affects virtually all others. (R, pp. 415-416)

This change is witnessed by several Meinongian texts, which Bergmann refers to: “*Über Gegenstandstheorie*” (1904), *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens* (1906), *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften* (1906-1907) and, of course, the second edition of *Über Annahmen* (1910). It is here, particularly in chapter seven, that, according to Bergmann, Meinong displays his final ontology, a true ontological catastrophe. This was already implicit in his third ontology, where «the seed of the nature inaccuracy was sown» (R, p. 416). Now, what is *nature inaccuracy*? It is the failure to confer an ontological status on natures. A nature is not a thing, and therefore it does not exist for a reist. According to Bergmann, Meinong did acknowledge only in the final ontology, «when it was too late», that natures might exist⁵³. Hence the diagnosis Bergmann makes for a patient who is – in his own words⁵⁴ – virtually incurable:

Meinong's reism caused him to commit the most fatal error an ontologist can make. He insisted, without knowing it, on a specialized use of ‘exist’, i.e., on a use narrower than the only one proper and safe in ontology. (R, p. 417)

⁵¹ About which Orilia, 2006, 2007 has written interesting things. Moreover, Bergmann gets a bit mixed up: according to him, Meinong rejects infinite regress as regards relations, while he accepts it when he is examining objectives (cf. R, pp. 347, 348); actually, Meinong does exactly the opposite (cf. Meinong, 1899: GA II, pp. 390-391 [1978, pp. 147-148]; 1902, pp. 122-129, 164; 1910, GA IV, pp. 260-268 [1983, pp. 187-193]).

⁵² As Lenoci, 1997, pp. 262-264, 266, 279 suggests. A critique of Bergmann's interpretation of the objective is offered by Sierszulaska, 2005, pp. 86 ff.

⁵³ Cf. R, p. 353.

⁵⁴ Cf. R, pp. 440-441.

Bergmann defines this “proper” use in the first sentence of *Realism*: «To exist, to be an *entity*, to have *ontological status* are the same»⁵⁵. In another passage he explains: «*There are several kinds (categories) of existents, but there is only one kind of existing. [...] ‘Exist’ is univocal*» (R, p. 362). Existence has two modes, actuality and potentiality; the latter has «an ontological status all of its own, which is the lowest of all» (R, p. 10, fn. 1), while actuality «has the ontological status which in a very obvious sense is the highest of all» (R, p. 63). Therefore, Bergmann assumes a single concept of existence, yet he allows *variations in degree*. Even though a fact may be either actual or potential⁵⁶, he believes that this does not undermine in any way the univocality of existing. Potentiality is the mere foundation of the possibility of any complex; in linguistic terms, «it is what makes any sentence, either true or false, well-formed»⁵⁷. As Bergmann sharply declares:

Kinds and degrees of independence (as I use the term) establish status differences among the categories of fact, things, and subsistents. But these differences among existents do not in any way involve different kinds of existing. (R, pp. 362-363)

We have already seen, as we introduced the principle of exemplification, the relation connecting independence and existence.

Meinong’s argument is quite different, since he distinguishes kinds of being (*Seinsarten*), while assuming, according to Bergmann, a single category of existents, the particulars, thus proving his nominalism⁵⁸. Meinong’s ‘*Sein*’ is translated into the language of the foil as ‘existing’, hence he would distinguish kinds of existing, or else – since in Bergmann’s view «‘kind of existing’ is clumsy» – «*levels of existence*» (R, p. 363). Just like Russell in *The Principles of Mathematics*⁵⁹, Meinong does not identify ‘existing’ and ‘being an entity’, as he acknowledges both entities that exist and others that do not exist. This means that what exists in Meinong’s sense does also exist in Bergmann’s sense, but not always conversely. Bergmann correctly points out the theoretical opposition between assuming one or more kinds (or categories) of existents and one or more kinds of existing, or being (in Meinongian terms). Now, he concludes, if «only particulars “exist”, or, synonymously, every “existent (being, *Sein*)” is a

⁵⁵ R, p. 3; cf. also Bergmann, 1963: CW II, p. 76.

⁵⁶ Cf. R, pp. 10, fn. 1, 61, 198, 352, fn. 54, 434.

⁵⁷ R, pp. 362, fn. 60; cf. also R, pp. 214-217.

⁵⁸ Cf. R, p. 15: «Nominalism, as I shall sometimes use the term, very broadly, is the doctrine that there is only one type (subcategory) of things».

⁵⁹ Cf. Russell, 1903, p. 449.

particular», then natures, which exist in his own sense, do not “exist” in Meinong’s sense.

Thus a collision course is set. The result is an absurd ontology, aggravated by a terminology not only clumsy but bizarre. (R, p. 417)

Below we will see how Bergmann rejects Meinong’s concept of *Daseinsfreiheit* and therefore the two fundamental principles of object theory: the principle of independence of so-being from being and the principle of the *Außersein*. Let us follow Bergmann’s argument, which is made up of three steps, each presenting a different stage in the evolution of Meinong’s thought from the third ontology to the final one. The extract deserves to be read carefully⁶⁰.

Meinong – Bergmann says – divides being in three ways. We leave out the first division into *Sein* (being), *Sosein* (so-being) and *Wiesein* (how-being), which is, according to Bergmann, «merely a clumsy tripartition of facts into the presumably existential, the categorical, and the relational». Another division of all being is already familiar to us, i.e., the one into the real and the ideal, which – as we know – Bergmann identifies respectively with existence (*Dasein*) and subsistence (*Bestand*). A third division of being is however more important: this brings out the notion of “pure object” (*reiner Gegenstand*), which stands, according to Meinong, «beyond being and non-being»⁶¹. Bergmann interprets ‘pure object’ as ‘pure particular’, that is as a synonym of ‘nature’. In Meinong’s view, pure objects (or natures) do not exist, yet they are not a mere nothing; besides being and non-being he theorizes *Außersein* (literally translatable as ‘extra-being’), which belongs to all pure objects (or natures). What is the *Außersein*? According to Meinong, it is the sphere of all that is «given», that is, of *all possible combinations among properties and objects*⁶². In this sense, it is the sphere of the pure object, where no assumptions are made concerning its existence or non-existence, and even its possibility or impossibility. Thus understood, the notion of *Außersein*, insofar as this includes all possible combinations of objects and properties, and therefore all possible objectives, shows some similarities with Bergmann’s concept of potentiality or possible₁, which is pure combinatorial possibility. Conversely, the domain of nonsense (or Bergmann’s impossible₁) would coincide, according to a late view of Meinong’s, with the domain of defective objects,

⁶⁰ Cf. R, pp. 417-418.

⁶¹ Meinong, 1904: GA II, p. 494 [1960, p. 86].

⁶² Cf. Meinong, 1904: GA II, pp. 492-493, 500 [1960, pp. 85, 92]; 1910, GA IV, pp. 79-80 [1983, p. 62]; 1915: GA VI, p. 181.

which are devoid even of *Außersein*⁶³. Bergmann is not aware of these similarities, and – following Russell⁶⁴ – interprets the *Außersein* as a third kind of being. Hence the conclusion of the first part of his argument (whose textual reference is the first four sections of “Über Gegenstandstheorie”)⁶⁵:

If they existed, there would thus be three sorts (*Arten*) of being, affirmative (positive) *Sein*, *Nichtsein*, which he [Meinong] holds is in its own way “positive”, and *Aussersein*. Thus the height of the absurd (in things) and the bizarre (in words) would be reached. (R, p. 417)

The second step concerns the principle of independence. Meinong states it in “Über Gegenstandstheorie”, but Bergmann refers to the more articulate second section of *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie*⁶⁶. Bergmann’s natures are the same as Meinong’s so-being (*Sosein*), in the sense that so-being is the whole nature of a particular. We know from the principle of *Außersein*, that being and non-being are not part of the nature of an object⁶⁷. Now, according to the principle of independence, a pure particular does not need to exist or to subsist in order to have properties. This means that «*Sosein ist daseinsfrei*», so-being is existence-free, and consequently, that we can assert the so-being of an object without assuming that it exists or subsists. Bergmann translates the principle of independence into the foil’s language as follows: simple natures of simple particulars do not have an ontological status. But this is unacceptable from his standpoint, because if something has no ontological status, then it does not exist, i.e., it is not a part of the world, and therefore we may not talk about it at all. In Bergmann’s view, the principle of independence conflicts with the concept of *Außersein*.

Let us now look at the third step. Bergmann grants that Meinong eventually establishes the proposition which had already surfaced in the passage between the first and the second ontology: all intentions exist. According to Meinong, properties can be attributed to an object without assuming it either as existent or as subsistent; nevertheless, asserting that an object does not exist implies that «somehow» it is there; in other terms, it has to be «given beforehand» (*vorgegeben*) in a pure manner, prior to the

⁶³ Cf. Meinong, 1917: GA III, p. 24 [1972, p. 21].

⁶⁴ Cf. Russell, 1905/1973, p. 78.

⁶⁵ Cf. R, p. 418, fn. 40.

⁶⁶ Cf. R, p. 418, fn. 41.

⁶⁷ Cf. Meinong, 1904: GA II, pp. 493-494 [1960, p. 86]; on this topic cf. Lambert, 1983, pp. 19-21.

inquiry over its being or non-being⁶⁸. Now, what is this «givenness» (*Gegebenheit*), which Meinong also defines as «a most general property», i.e., one that can be ascribed to all objects without exception?⁶⁹ Initially, we said that Meinong's philosophy – following a late reading he gave of his own research – is built on the given; yet, between the *Hume-Studien* and his mature works, the notion of «given» has been extended to include not only what is given in immediate experience, but equally what is given in the sense of subsistence and even of mere *Außersein*⁷⁰. Bergmann reads this through his own philosophical categories: all that is given exists, it must exist. Actually, he writes:

What is “given beforehand” exists in its own right. *Aussersein* is recognised as a third “positive” sort of *Sein*.

In his eyes, this conclusion has a twofold meaning, at once positive and negative:

Thus the nature inaccuracy has finally been cleared up. But at the same time the height of the absurd and the bizarre has been reached. (R, p. 418)

Officially Meinong is still a reist, but in fact natures «have become a positive sort of ‘existent’». Supposedly, then, he has laid the foundations of a new beginning, even though he was not fully aware of this. As for himself, Bergmann insists that he does not discriminate between being and existence: to him, talking about kinds of being is sheer nonsense – let alone *Außersein*.

Need I add – he writes – that I have not the slightest notion of what a *Seinsart* could possibly be? The one thing I am sure of is that it is something even more absurd than a level. (R, p. 418)

This conclusion should not astonish: as we have seen, it is implied in the first sentence of *Realism* and it is restated throughout the whole book, as well as in previous writings. Meinong distinguishes between kinds of being, while according to Bergmann existence is univocal, there are no different kinds of existing, but different degrees of independence which establish differences of status among categories of existents (facts, things and subsistents); however, he speaks about modes of existing and a lower existence as regards subsistents. But what exactly does it mean that «‘exist’ is univocal», if there are modes of existing and differences of degree as to the ontological status? What is a lower or a higher ontological status? In

⁶⁸ Cf. Meinong, 1904: GA II, p. 491 [1960, pp. 83-84].

⁶⁹ Meinong, 1904: GA II, p. 500 [1960, p. 92].

⁷⁰ Cf. Meinong, 1921: GA VII, pp. 42-43.

which sense does nexus exist, but its status «is lower than that of a thing»? (R, pp. 363-364). Substantially, Bergmann's degrees of ontological status try to answer the same question as Meinong's kinds of being.

3. *An assessment*

Let us recapitulate the path taken by Bergmann. He starts from the theory of relations exposed in *Hume-Studien II* (first phase), he then examines its new formulation in the first section of "Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung" (second phase), and uses this to give an explanation of the objective, whose theory has already been exposed in the first edition of *Über Annahmen* (third phase) and subsequently rewritten in the second one (in which Bergmann fixes the emergence of the final ontology). He reads the second edition, not the first, but he considers the theory of objectives exposed there as belonging to the third phase. Of course Bergmann's purpose is structural, but pursuing it he splits a work and puts in the middle of it Meinong's writings between 1904 and 1907! Adopting this very peculiar approach, Bergmann can only appreciate the Meinong that predates the elaboration of object theory. What comes later and culminates in his opinion in the seventh chapter of *Über Annahmen*, especially in § 38 entitled "Zur Selbstkritik. Die Außerseinsansicht", that is, the Meinong of object theory, is simply dismissed.

3.1. *Bergmann and Meinongian studies*

We can now try to explain why Bergmann's analysis of Meinong's ontology did not produce a great impact on Meinongian studies. The question is not insignificant, if we consider that in the 60s of the last century Bergmann played a part in the rediscovery of Meinong's thought together with Roderick M. Chisholm, John N. Findlay and Rudolf Haller. The answer is implicit in what we said before. If my reconstruction of Bergmann's reading of Meinong is correct, through the critique of the principle of independence and of the *Außersein*, Bergmann rejects the main concept of object theory, that is, *Daseinsfreiheit*. Thus it is hardly surprising that his reading of Meinong has remained far from the mainstream which has interested many scholars in recent decades. It is certainly distant from those who are seeking in Meinong the means, or at least the theoretical intuitions, to speak about non-existents or fictions (like Terence Parsons

and Richard Routley), or who lay stress on the principle of independence (Karel Lambert) or on the theory of *Außersein* (Dale Jacquette).

If indeed, as Rosaria Egidi maintains, «by proposing the realistic₂ alternative, Bergmann intends to carry out the Meinongian programme» (Egidi, 2005, p. 65), then this happens through a weakening of object theory. Bergmann's proposal would be a way of rethinking object theory without the different kinds of being, the principle of independence and the *Außersein*. This evidently runs counter to Meinong's intent, which was to give increasing importance to these concepts, so much so that not only did he exercise self-criticism and reformulate whole parts of *Über Annahmen*, but he also reconsidered such concepts in later works which Bergmann completely ignored. In *Über emotionale Präsentation* Meinong speaks of defective objects, to which even *Außersein* does not belong⁷¹.

The Meinong Bergmann is interested in is not the Meinong of object theory. This has some effects on Bergmann's ultimate judgment about Meinong's nominalism – which, supposedly, characterizes his thought from the ontology with which he started till «the one over which he died». But what could Bergmann have said on this subject, if he had ventured into considering Meinong's mature work as well?

3.2. *What could Bergmann have said, if he had examined Meinong's mature work?*

Let us take some statements by Bergmann about nominalists like Brentano and Meinong. He writes:

There are thus no universals in either the First or the Second of their worlds. (R, p. 142)

And again:

[...] there are no *indeterminate* objects. A triangle is either equilateral, or isosceles, or rectangular, and so on. There is none which is not either the one or the other, just as there is no spot which is colored without being (a completely determinate shade of) either red, or blue, or green, and so on. This specious argument for nominalism swayed many, Brentano and Meinong among them. Speaking of abstract objects, they all insist that there are none and that, therefore, nominalism is true. (R, pp. 191-192)

All objects, that is ordinary objects like chairs, trees and rocks, are completely determinate. Hence Bergmann infers:

In asserting their premiss the nominalists are thus right. Of course they are. But they are disastrously wrong in deducing from this truism under the influence of

⁷¹ Cf. Meinong, 1917: GA III, pp. 304 ff. [1972, pp. 18 ff.].

their more or less explicit reism what it does not imply, namely, that there are no derived characters (things), having some ontological status.

Bergmann states instead that «derived characters have ontological status, though of course not that of objects» (R, p. 192).

Derived characters or universals differ from other universals like ‘red’ or ‘square’, because they have a form such as ‘being both green and square’⁷²; a derived universal is the *definiens* of a definition as well, since Bergmann maintains that «[t]he linguistic reflection of derivation is definition» (R, p. 93). While non-derived universals are always exemplified on the basis of the principle of exemplification, derived universals are not always exemplified; therefore, they often exist only potentially. For instance, according to Bergmann, both the dog and the centaur are derived universals: the former is exemplified by the form ‘being both a mammal and a quadruped and with a very sharp sense of smell and so on’, and therefore it is an actual derived universal; the latter is not exemplified by ‘being both a man and a horse’, and therefore it is a potential derived universal⁷³.

Let us now look at what Meinong says about indeterminate objects such as ‘the triangle’. Actually – as we have already seen – Meinong is (or appears to be) a nominalist in the essay on objects of higher order, when he says that relations should be considered in their specificity; or in *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*, when he says that the green of a leaf is not the green in general, but the specific green of that individual leaf, which has been generated and dies with it⁷⁴. Yet, another view is growing in him, a view concerning incomplete or indeterminate objects. His reflection about such objects begins – if we bear with Bergmann’s periodization – during the second stage of his ontology, in “Abstrahieren und Vergleichen” (1900)⁷⁵, it continues in *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie*⁷⁶, and reaches an organic arrangement after what Bergmann calls «Meinong’s final ontology», in a book published in 1915, *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*⁷⁷. Bergmann does not examine at all

⁷² Cf. R, p. 13.

⁷³ Cf. R, p. 94. Cf. also Angelone – Minocchio – Pagliardi, 2004, pp. 67-71.

⁷⁴ Cf. Meinong, 1906: GA V, p. 394.

⁷⁵ Cf. Meinong, 1900: GA I, pp. 464 ff. [1993, 155 ff.].

⁷⁶ Cf. Meinong, 1906-1907: GA V, pp. 326-329.

⁷⁷ For a genetic reconstruction of this line of thought cf. Modenato, 2006, pp. 115-124.

this book, of which the reader of *Realism* apprehends very little, besides what is already deducible from the title⁷⁸.

Now, the triangle is, according to the mature Meinong, an indeterminate object in precisely the same sense in which Bergmann is speaking of it. The triangle «as such is neither equilateral nor isosceles, neither rectangular nor scalene: it is in this respect and in many others just indeterminate»⁷⁹, or incomplete. Such objects possess a peculiar ontological status, which is different from that of ordinary objects. Let us recall that complete objects, which are determined in all their respects, exist or subsist⁸⁰, and hence exhaust the domain of Meinong's being; conversely, incomplete objects have a being which Meinong calls "implexive being" (*implexives Sein*): this means that they exist or subsist not separately, but insofar as they are "implected" (*implektiert*), that is, involved or embedded in complete objects. Meinong gives the example of the incomplete object 'the ball', and asks in which relationship it stands to the billiard balls of his friend X. Now, the incomplete object does not exist in the individual balls in the same sense as in the relationship of parts to a whole, because all parts of a complete object are complete as well. The incomplete object 'the ball' is implected by an implecting object (*Implektant*), in our example the friend's billiard balls. An incomplete object is implected by all complete objects which can be thought through it; this means that its being is determined through the existence or subsistence of such an implecting object. In this sense we can speak of an implexive existence or subsistence: an incomplete object does not exist separately, but it exists or subsists as implected, if its implecting objects exist or subsist. Such implexive being belongs *by variations in degree* to the incomplete objects. Thus the round square is impossible, since it is never implected, while the rectangular square is possible⁸¹.

Is Meinong here not dealing with the question of universals and their exemplification? Is not the triangle or the ball which he is speaking of a universal as Bergmann understands it? Meinong explicitly speaks of

⁷⁸ In six lines, Bergmann (R, p. 436) appreciates the work but criticizes the notion of *Wahrscheinlichkeitsevidenz*. In the related fn. 29 he adds: «All together, *Ueber Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* is as dreary as are Brentano's reflections about probability, causality, and induction in *Versuch ueber die Erkenntnis*. But his essay is at least short; Meinong's treatise is very long». And that is all.

⁷⁹ Meinong, 1915: GA VI, p. 178.

⁸⁰ Meinong, 1915: GA VI, pp. 185, 191, 202.

⁸¹ Cf. Meinong, 1915: GA VI, pp. 210-17.

genera and species (like ‘triangles’ and ‘vertebrates’) as universal objects⁸² and states more than once that incomplete objects play the role of universals⁸³. What then did Bergmann find in *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*?

From representationalist positions, Meinong eventually came to realistic positions. A fixed point of his philosophy is that there is a world outside us and independent of us, and yet not only real objects, but also ideal and incomplete ones are not subjective; to those who dislike the expression ‘realism’, Meinong suggests replacing it with ‘objectivism’⁸⁴. If Bergmann had ventured into considering the mature Meinong, surely he would have criticized – as is inevitable – single points, but he would have found in him a fellow traveller not only in the battle against representationalism, but also in that against nominalism. The point is not merely that Bergmann does not examine the mature Meinong: he does not examine him because he dismisses object theory, and this is what barred him from discovering in Meinong an ally in the battle against nominalism.

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⁸² Cf. Meinong, 1915: GA VI, p. 208.

⁸³ Cf. Meinong, 1915: GA VI, p. 740; 1921: GA VII, p. 19 [1974: 227]; on this topic cf. Jacqueline, 1995.

⁸⁴ Cf. Meinong, 1921: GA VII, p. 46.

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