

MEINONG STUDIES / MEINONG STUDIEN  
Volume 2

Venanzio Raspa (Ed.)  
Meinongian Issues in Contemporary Italian Philosophy

# MEINONG STUDIES / MEINONG STUDIEN

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## Vol. 2

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Meinong Studies  
Meinong Studien

Volume 2

Venanzio Raspa (Ed.)  
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Contemporary Italian Philosophy



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## Contents / Inhalt

VENANZIO RASPA <i>Introduction: Thinking with and on Meinong in Italy</i> .....	7
RICCARDO MARTINELLI Meinong and Music. On Musical Objects of Higher Order .....	39
FRANCESCA MODENATO Alexius Meinong on Ontology and Object Theory .....	73
ANDREA BOTTANI Three Kinds of Incompleteness .....	99
MARIO ALAI Speaking of Nonexistent Objects .....	119
ALBERTO VOLTOLINI Being, Existence, and Having Instances .....	161
CAROLA BARBERO <i>Cry for a Shadow</i> . Emotions and Object Theory .....	181
FRANCESCO ORILIA States of Affairs: Bradley vs. Meinong .....	213
GUIDO BONINO Why There Are No Facts in Meinong's World (according to Gustav Bergmann) .....	239

*INTRODUCTION*

THINKING WITH AND ON MEINONG  
IN ITALY

Venanzio Raspa

Today the debate in Italy about Meinong's philosophy and related themes is vibrant and varied, as can be seen from the contributions which are collected in this volume. Before proceeding to say something more specific with regard to this, I would like however to try to answer a question which came to me while reading Meinong's "Selbstdarstellung" and which – like Carroll's Alice – made me "curiouser and curiouser."

Meinong maintains that he established relationships with foreign (especially English and Italian speaking) scholars very early on, from the time of his *Hume-Studien* (1877 and 1882); and that he did not fail to remember with gratitude more than once these contacts, which were then terminated by the outbreak of the Great War.<sup>1</sup> As regards his relations with Anglo-Saxon philosophy, Meinong is known to have maintained scientific contacts and correspondence not only with Bertrand Russell, but also with John Stuart Mackenzie, H. Wildon Carr and George Frederick Stout,<sup>2</sup> to have been read by Charlie Dunbar Broad, George Dawes Hicks, John Laird, George Edward Moore,<sup>3</sup> even by Thomas S. Eliot,<sup>4</sup> and in a second wave, in the late 20s and early 30s, by Gilbert Ryle, William C. Kneale and John N. Findlay.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, from 1877 to 1879 Meinong re-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Meinong (1921), *GA* VII, p. 58. Translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise; references to English translations appear in brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kindinger [ed.] (1965), pp. 132-139, 150-153, 221-224, and *Meinong-Nachlaß*, LXIII/7019-7020, LXVII.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Moore (1909/1910), Broad (1913), Hicks (1922).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Eliot (1916/1964), pp. 50, 91 ff. and *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Findlay (1952) and (1963<sup>2</sup>), pp. xi-xiv, Simons (1986), Dappiano (1994) and

viewed no less than seven issues of *Mind* in the *Philosophische Monatshefte* and published a note in reply to a review of his *Hume-Studien I* which had appeared in *Mind* itself.<sup>6</sup> If his claim is borne out therefore as far as his relations with English speaking scholars are concerned, the situation seems to be very different as regards those with Italians: it seems particularly misleading to equate the two. Indeed, if we look through the entire work of Meinong, we find only rare citations of contemporary Italian scholars (with the sole exception of Vittorio Benussi, who trained and worked mainly in Graz<sup>7</sup>) – but literally these are only citations and not true theoretical discussions. The names that appear there are those of Alessandro Bonucci, Cesare Burali-Forti, Cesare Lombroso and Michele Losacco. Of these only the last maintained an effective scientific exchange with Meinong, about whose works he also wrote some articles. Who, then, are these Italian scholars Meinong refers to? As his published works are no help to us, all we can do is hunt through his *Nachlaß*. Here we discover the names of Mario Calderoni, Vittorio Castiglioni, Francesco De Sarlo, Federigo Enriques, Agostino Gemelli, Sante de Sanctis, Giuseppe Sergi and Steno Tedeschi. If we then search for the writings on Meinong published by Italian scholars during his lifetime, De Sarlo, Losacco and Tedeschi are joined by Antonio Aliotta, Gaetano Capone-Braga, Guido De Ruggiero, Francesco Orestano, Alberto Ratti, Giovanni Vailati and Bernardino Varisco. The only proof of relations between the other authors mentioned above and Meinong is their correspondence. But how did these relations actually develop?

Now if we examine together both the correspondence and the published writings in Italian on Meinong – excluding an exchange of letters with Vittorio Castiglioni in 1887<sup>8</sup> – two dates emerge, which we can take as the initial and final dates of the interrelation of Meinong's thought with

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(1997), Bell (1999).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Meinong (1879). The review of *Hume-Studien I* had been published in *Mind*, III (1878), n. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Benussi had arrived in Austria in 1896 and only returned to live in Italy in November 1918.

<sup>8</sup> Castiglioni had asked Meinong to accept a work of his in Italian as PhD dissertation, but after viewing it, Meinong gave a negative answer (cf. *Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXIV/636-640, LXVII).

Italian philosophy and psychology during his lifetime: 1905, the year following the publication of the *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*,<sup>9</sup> during which the Fifth International Congress of Psychology took place in Rome, and 1915, the year war broke out between Italy and Austria. The war had dire consequences above all for the peoples involved, but also for the sciences, including philosophy. Meinong was right when he said that the war had effectively severed scientific relations between intellectuals. I will come back to this later; for now I shall simply note that Benussi, who had been one of the first pupils and main collaborators of Meinong, was able to stay in Austria only

until the change in the world situation in the fall of 1918 took him back to his home in the south and, hence, away from the institute in Graz which he had adorned for nearly twenty years.<sup>10</sup>

In the following I will not deal with the relations between Meinong and Benussi,<sup>11</sup> but I will simply try to tell a story, from which we can deduce that the theoretical exchange between Italian culture and Meinong was practically unidirectional, that is, that we can only discover what Italians wrote about Meinong and how he was first acknowledged, then almost forgotten, and finally rediscovered – but this last has occurred in our time. The reason for analysing the way Meinong's thought was received and discussed in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century is not only to make a contribution to the history of its influence but also to study the relationships then existing between Austrian and Italian philosophy. The proximity is after all also geographical.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Meinong's work aroused interest not just in Italy but more generally throughout Europe. The volume *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* was reviewed as soon as it was published in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Britain, and also Italy.<sup>12</sup> This helped spread the reputation of the Graz School, as

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Meinong [ed.] (1904a).

<sup>10</sup> Meinong (1921), *GA* VII, p. 12 [(1974), p. 226].

<sup>11</sup> On this see Antonelli (1994), Stucchi (1996).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Russell (1905a) and (1905b), Vailati (1905), an anonymous review (F.) (1906), Dürr (1906), Höfler (1906), Urban (1906), Watt (1906), von Aster



witnessed by the fact that Giuseppe Sergi first invited, then begged Meinong to take part in the Fifth International Congress of Psychology, which he organised in Rome from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1905.<sup>13</sup> Though Meinong did not attend in person – indeed he did not participate in any of the congresses to which he was invited – he did however send three leading figures of his School to represent him: Alois Höfler, Eduard Martinak and Vittorio Benussi.<sup>14</sup> Höfler presented a paper, “Sind wir Psychologisten?”,<sup>15</sup> in which, besides giving a brief presentation of object theory, he publicly responded to the recent edition of the Ueberweg-Heinze, which numbered Meinong among the psychologists.<sup>16</sup> Martinak, referring to works by Meinong, Höfler, Ameseder and Mally, lectured on “Das Wesen der Frage” following the line of reasoning developed in Graz;<sup>17</sup> while Benussi received acclaim for his three contributions,<sup>18</sup> two of which (one on the nature of so-called optical-geometric illusions, the other on the tachiscope, a device he had invented to conduct collective experiments) were grouped together with those of the representatives of the Laboratories of Psychology of Leipzig, Leuven, Paris and Florence in the ‘Experimental Psychology’ session.<sup>19</sup>

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(1907), Gomperz (1908), pp. 30-37, 72-73, 84 ff., 213 ff. and *passim*. Obviously of particular relevance is the debate which Russell initiated with Meinong even before publication of the *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*; a debate which, though concentrated mainly in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was continued in later works published by Russell.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Sergi to Meinong, Rome, 25.XI.1904 and 31.I.1905 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, LXIII/6791 and LXI/6286).

<sup>14</sup> In this respect, cf. a postcard and a short letter sent to Meinong by the then secretary of the Congress, Sante De Sanctis (Rome, 9.II.1905 and 2.IV.1905; *Meinong-Nachlaß*, LXI/6287-6288).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Höfler (1905).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ueberweg (1902<sup>9</sup>), IV, pp. 312 ff.; cf. also (1923<sup>12</sup>), IV, pp. 534 ff. On the positive reaction to Höfler’s paper presenting the general outline of object theory, cf. Meinong (1906-1907), *GA* V, p. 212, fn. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Martinak (1905).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Benussi (1905a), (1905b) and (1905c).

<sup>19</sup> The proceedings of the Congress are reported by Chiabra (1905); on the last point, cf. p. 430.

The status of psychology in Italy could not be compared with that in Germany or North America: the total number of Italian psychologists amounted to but a few dozen and they had only just obtained (that same year) a government decree setting up the first chairs in experimental psychology.<sup>20</sup> However, as the fact that they organised the Fifth International Congress of Psychology in Rome shows, they were very interested in the work carried out by their colleagues beyond the Alps and overseas.

The Congress in Rome was attended by Francesco De Sarlo along with some of his pupils: Antonio Aliotta, Vincenzo Berrettoni, Sestilio Montanelli, Francesco Orestano, and Guido Villa. Of these, the first three took part in the same session as Benussi; they were thus able to meet him and discover the common purposes that united them. In 1894 Meinong had founded in Graz the first Austrian Laboratory of experimental psychology; his principal assistants were Stephan Witasek and Vittorio Benussi. And in 1903 Francesco De Sarlo had established a Laboratory of experimental psychology in Florence, the first of its kind in Italy. The studies carried out there, after being published in the first volume of the *Ricerche di psicologia* [*Investigations in psychology*] (1905),<sup>21</sup> were discussed by Benussi in a long article in the *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*.<sup>22</sup> Thus it was in Rome that the Graz School and De Sarlo's Florence School met. This is not to say that individual scholars were not familiar with Meinong, but the Rome meeting (thanks mainly to Benussi) gave rise to an intense scientific relationship between the two Schools, as is attested by a letter from De Sarlo to Meinong, sent only two weeks after the end of the Rome Congress:

Distinguished Colleague,

I am most grateful for your kind letter. I take great pride, believe me, in your friendship. I hope that the bonds between your School and

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Marhaba (1981), pp. 32, 46 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. De Sarlo [ed.] (1905). On De Sarlo and his School, cf. Albertazzi, Cimino & Gori-Savellini [eds.] (1999), Sava (2000), pp. 17-60.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Benussi (1906). On the relationship between De Sarlo and Benussi, cf. Poggi (1985), pp. 144 ff., Antonelli (1994), pp. 17-18.

mine grow ever stronger. I perceive that my thinking is moving along very similar lines to yours.

I have already had reason to appreciate the noble qualities of Dr. Benussi's mind and spirit. Allow me to congratulate you on having such a valuable assistant. Please give him my regards.

Thank you for the book you sent me.<sup>23</sup> I shall treasure it highly. Please accept the volume which details the work carried out in the Laboratory of Psychology which I direct.<sup>24</sup>

With kindest regards,  
F. De Sarlo.<sup>25</sup>

The activity of the Graz School had already drawn the attention of Aliotta who, in *La misura in psicologia sperimentale* [*Measurement in experimental psychology*] (1905),<sup>26</sup> makes a wide-ranging critical study of *Über die Bedeutung des Weberschen Gesetzes* (1896). After examining the entire scientific production of experimental psychology from around 1880 onwards, Aliotta becomes convinced – in Cesare Musatti's words – that

Mental events, the constituent elements of the life of consciousness, as such escape measurement, and no artifice can transform quality, which is what characterizes mental activity, into quantity.<sup>27</sup>

A little later, in 1907, another pupil of De Sarlo's, Orestano, in his book *I valori morali* [*Moral values*], paid ample attention to the Meinongian investigations into value theory expounded in the *Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen zur Wert-Theorie* (1894) and in *Über Werthaltung und Wert* (1895), examining the relationship between utility and value, the concepts of value and valuation, value feelings and their classification,

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<sup>23</sup> Very probably *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* (see above, fn. 9).

<sup>24</sup> *Ricerche di psicologia* (see above, fn. 21).

<sup>25</sup> De Sarlo to Meinong, Florence, 14.V.1905 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, LXI/6290). On the relationship between De Sarlo and Meinong, cf. Albertazzi (1999).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Aliotta (1905), pp. 69 ff. On this work by Aliotta cf. Poli (1999a), Sava (2000), pp. 77-106.

<sup>27</sup> Musatti (1951), pp. 54-55. Aliotta's criticism of Meinong is shared by Villa (1911<sup>2</sup>), pp. 137 and fn. 3, 138 fn. 2.

the distinction of absolute and relative value, and in addition the ethical conceptions of Meinong, the distinction of good and evil, the notion of ethical value and valuation, the altruistic, egoistic and neutral values.<sup>28</sup> After the exposition, comes Orestano's criticism: in particular, he rejects two points which are in his opinion essential for Meinong's value theory: its foundation upon the feelings of pleasure and pain, and the identification of morality with altruism.<sup>29</sup> In *L'orientazione psicologica dell'etica e della filosofia del diritto* [*The psychological orientation of the ethics and philosophy of law*] (1907) Alessandro Bonucci agrees with Orestano's first criticism, but appreciates the psychological analysis of Meinong's concept of value.<sup>30</sup>

Still in 1907, De Sarlo founded, in opposition to Croce's *La Critica*, the review *La Cultura Filosofica*,<sup>31</sup> which published many contributions on foreign philosophers and psychologists, including some on Meinong. In one of the first issues, De Sarlo himself wrote on the conception of imagination elaborated by the School of Graz. He gave a very sympathetic reading of this conception, of which he appreciated particularly the dynamic point of view, which goes beyond a merely associative consideration of imagination: we are indeed able to produce mental events and acts that are not accompanied by the coefficient of reality, that is "fictions", which follow laws that are different from those of real mental events. In the case of lies, games and artistic or literary fictions, the mind behaves "as if" it believed in the reality of their respective objects. In this all the mental phenomena are involved, the representation activity as well as thought, feeling and desire; indeed, reading a novel arouses in us emotions and feelings, and likewise imagining events (e.g. planning a journey or anticipating the first meeting with the person with whom one is in love). Thus, imagination activity is this capacity to experience all mental events in the absence of the coefficient of reality; such activity includes a volitive component, so the subject is not merely passive, as in the case of

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Orestano (1907), pp. 28-48, 74-83, 163-192, 271-274.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Orestano (1907), pp. 130-134, 271-274.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bonucci (1907), pp. 125-129.

<sup>31</sup> The polemic with Croce occurred in 1907 in their respective reviews. Croce's contributions are now collected in Croce (1942), pp. 174-193.

association. Hence, imagination is the capacity to simulate, it is the act to free oneself from the subjection to what is given in the perception, to real stimuli or excitements.<sup>32</sup>

So we see that the initial attention of Italian scholars for Meinong, above all of psychologists and philosophers with a strong interest in psychology, seems to turn mainly to his investigations into psychology and value theory, and not to object theory. An exception was Giovanni Vailati, who reviewed the *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* in 1905, giving a not really positive judgment of them. According to Vailati, the first three contributions (respectively by Meinong, Ameseder and Mally) do not seem to have any relationship with experimental psychology, but they owe their presence to Meinong's conviction that he had created a new science, the *Gegenstandstheorie*, "of which one does not understand the content and still less the method."<sup>33</sup> It would seem to have little in common with that science of things as simple things of which Gregorius Itelson speaks,<sup>34</sup> and even less with any logic or methodology. Of all other contributions, Vailati saves only that by Wilhelm M. Frankl. That Vailati already knew Meinong is shown by a letter from him to Brentano, informing him about the very positive judgment that Russell had expressed on some of Meinong's writings in an article in *Mind* in 1904,<sup>35</sup> as well as from the presence, in Meinong's library, of the offprints of three articles by Vailati, dated 1897 and 1903, that he had sent to Meinong complete with dedication.<sup>36</sup>

From the few points made it is clear that Meinong's theories, which were becoming known in Italy, aroused at the same time approval and disagreement – as often happens in philosophy. Meanwhile, Meinong had published *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wis-*

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. De Sarlo (1907).

<sup>33</sup> Vailati (1905).

<sup>34</sup> Itelson introduced this theory – which has evident affinities with object theory, as also Meinong (1906-1907, *GA* V, pp. 334-335) recognized – at the Second International Congress of Philosophy, held in Geneva from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September 1904 (cf. Couturat 1904, pp. 1037 ff.), which Vailati had also attended.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Vailati to Brentano, Como, 16.IV.1904, in Vailati (1971), p. 305.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mehle (1998), pp. 355-356; the articles concerned are Vailati (1897a), (1897b) and (1903).

*senschaften* (1906-1907): as the author himself said, “an apology of object theory”<sup>37</sup> to answer the many criticisms and discussions that the publication of the *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* had aroused in Europe. From a rapid look at the volume it emerges that there is no mention of Italian scholars, while a lot of space is given to the criticisms made by Russell, Ernst Dürr and others. This strengthens the initial thesis on the type of relationships established by Meinong with Italy; on the other hand, however, it could not be otherwise. Excluding the brief and, substantially, negative review by Vailati, the first encounters of Italian scholars with object theory involved specifically *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften*. This work was at once reviewed by Bernardino Varisco in the *Rivista Filosofica* (then continued in the *Rivista di Filosofia*), the other periodical that, together with De Sarlo’s *La Cultura Filosofica*, published in these years articles and reviews on Meinong. In the following year the same work by Meinong was discussed in the same review by Steno Tedeschi, who was from Trieste like Benussi and had also studied in Graz with Meinong and Witasek.<sup>38</sup>

Also this first discussion about object theory produced very different results: Varisco was very critical, while Tedeschi was of the opposite view. Varisco rejected some peculiar conceptions of object theory such as the distinction between judgment and objective, the thesis that truth and falsehood do not belong to judgement but to the corresponding objective, and the view concerning impossible objects: an expression like “round square” neither designates an object, even an impossible one, nor possesses some meaning, but it is like an envelope containing a white sheet of paper, which is not a letter at all. Varisco also dwells on mathematics, which – he says –, although its theorems do not come down to psychological laws, is not separable from psychology.<sup>39</sup> In this way he implicitly denies that there are ideal objects, because mathematical objects are the typical examples of this kind of objects, and therefore he also denies that there is a science corresponding to object theory. Of opposite tone to Varisco’s review is the article by Tedeschi, who shares substantially the

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<sup>37</sup> Meinong (1906-1907), *GA V*, p. 201.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Tedeschi (1913), p. VIII.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Varisco (1907).

fundamental theses of object theory as an aprioristic science, agrees clearly with its antipsychologistic direction, recognizes as genuine objects the so-called “homeless objects”, therefore sensation objects and objectives, and looks favourably on impossible objects.<sup>40</sup> The discussion of object-theoretical theses (like the thesis of the intentionality of every mental phenomenon, the assumption of unreal objects, the distinction of content and object, the theory of judgment and of objective, the idea of the object as *logical prius*, the doctrines of the objects of higher order and of the kinds of being) is continued by Tedeschi in some subsequent articles, which are not merely descriptive of Meinong’s thought, but argue “Sulla funzione conoscitiva del giudizio [On the cognitive function of judgment]” and “Intorno agli oggetti del pensiero [On the objects of thought]” from the point of view of Meinong’s philosophy, which he defends against the criticisms of Marty and Russell.<sup>41</sup> So, in the obituary that announced his premature decease (in 1911), Adolfo Faggi could truthfully write that “Steno Tedeschi was a pupil of Meinong, whose theory of *objects* he illustrated and studied;”<sup>42</sup> thus Faggi confirmed what Tedeschi himself had written in a letter to Meinong, in which he pledged to spread and to defend the ideas of the School of Graz that were, in good part, also his own.<sup>43</sup>

In 1910 Meinong was invited to take part to the Fourth International Congress of Philosophy, held in Bologna from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> April 1911 under the presidency of Federigo Enriques. From the letters sent to Meinong first by Mario Calderoni, at that time secretary of the Congress,<sup>44</sup> then by

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Tedeschi (1908).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Tedeschi (1910) and (1912). Tedeschi dealt also with Witasek’s aesthetics and Meinong’s value theory in some articles now collected in Tedeschi (1913), pp. 1-15, 16-29, 47-65, 66-75.

<sup>42</sup> Faggi (1912), p. 145.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tedeschi to Meinong, Pisino, 31.VII.1909 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, LXIV/7111).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Calderoni to Meinong, Florence, 2.VII.1910 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXIV/629):

“Monsieur,

Au nom de la Commission organisatrice de la Section de Morale, j’ai l’honneur de vous inviter à prendre part aux travaux du IV Congrès international de Philosophie, qui aura lieu à Bologne dans le printemps de 1910 [*sic!*].

Enriques, it emerges how keen they were for Meinong to participate personally. Because Alois Riehl would be absent for health reasons, Enriques wrote to Meinong:

This circumstance allows me to satisfy the aspiration that I had to make room for your excellent lecture on Psychology and against Psychologism in a plenary session. So everybody will have the pleasure of listening to you.

While acquainting you with this intention I allow myself to ask you if I can count on your *personal* presence at the Congress.<sup>45</sup>

Once more Meinong did not personally participate in the Congress, but confined himself to sending the much awaited paper, “Für die Psychologie und gegen den Psychologismus in der allgemeinen Werttheorie”, which was read in absence of the author the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1911.<sup>46</sup> From the title one can already see an evident relationship with the paper read by Höfler in Rome some years before. After the Congress, Enriques informed Meinong on the results and on the publication of the Proceedings.<sup>47</sup> However, these were late in coming out and – we do not know if because of a misdelivery or of Enriques’ carelessness – a letter sent by Meinong in the summer of the same year, in which he asked for informa-

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Votre présence et votre collaboration nous seront précieuses, et, comme nous avons peut constater dans les séances préparatoires, tout vivement désirées, aussi bien par les organisateurs du Congrès eux-mêmes que par bon nombre d’adhérents, qui voudraient bien pouvoir ajouter à la connaissance qu’ils ont déjà de vos écrits la connaissance personnelle de l’auteur et un échange direct d’idées avec lui.

Nous osons donc espérer, Monsieur, en une Communication de vous, et la Commission de Morale a délibéré de vous envoyer une invitation spéciale à cet égard.”

In a following letter, of 4<sup>th</sup> August 1910, Calderoni thanks Meinong for his acceptance, and confirms that his paper will appear among those of the Ethics Section (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXIV/630).

<sup>45</sup> Enriques to Meinong, Bologna, 5.III.1911 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXVIII/1481).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia*, Vol. I, p. 362. Cf. also a postcard by Losacco to Meinong (Pistoia, 13.IV.1911), in *Meinong-Nachlaß*, IL/3857.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Enriques to Meinong, Bologna, 24.VII.1911 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXVIII/1482).



tion on the offprints of his paper, remained without answer. On 19<sup>th</sup> December 1911 Meinong wrote to Enriques a letter full of resentment for the behaviour of the organization<sup>48</sup> and asked if the presidency of the Congress would agree to his publishing the paper in a German review. Enriques made no objections to this request,<sup>49</sup> so Meinong's article appeared first in *Logos*, then in the *Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Philosophy*.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile the reactions of Italian philosophers to object theory multiplied. From 1910 to 1915 appeared some articles and reviews by other Italian philosophers such as Michele Losacco, Alberto Ratti, the already mentioned Aliotta and Gaetano Capone-Braga. We said, at the beginning, that Meinong claimed to have established relationships with Italian scholars and not to have failed to mention them more than once; however, the only reference to an Italian author that seems to have some value appears in a footnote of the “Selbstdarstellung”,<sup>51</sup> in which an article of Michele Losacco is cited, “La teoria degli obbietti e il razionalismo [The theory of objects and rationalism]”. The article had originally appeared in *La Cultura Filosofica*, in a moment in which – as the author himself observes – “the name of Meinong is not unknown in Italy to philosophy scholars.”<sup>52</sup> Losacco had sent a copy of it to Meinong,<sup>53</sup> who greatly appreciated it and sent to the Italian scholar a volume of *Über Annahmen* (1910) – subsequently reviewed by Losacco<sup>54</sup> –, inviting him to continue the study of

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<sup>48</sup> Meinong to Enriques, Graz, 19.XII.1911 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, LVII/11 1911): “[...] so befinde ich mich nach im Ganzen drei oder vier Anfragen an verschiedene Mitglieder der Kongressleitung immer noch in der Lage, weder auch nur einen einzigen Reindruck meiner Arbeit in Händen zu haben, noch auch nur das Geringste darüber zu wissen, ob und wann ich in den Besitz von Abdrücken gelangen werde und auf wie viele ich rechnen kann. Ich glaube nicht, dass mir vorher schon einmal Aehnliches begegnet ist.”

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Enriques to Meinong, Bologna, undated (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, XXXVIII/1483).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Meinong (1912).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Meinong (1921), *GA* VII, p. 14, fn. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Losacco (1910), p. 164, and (1911a), p. 67.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Losacco to Meinong, Pistoia, 2.IX.1910 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, IL/3860).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Losacco (1911b).

his (Meinong's) works. Later on Losacco revised this article, and to this end he asked Meinong to send him a copy of *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*, which he had not been able to consult previously.<sup>55</sup> Meinong agreed to the request; on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1911 Losacco sent Meinong a copy of his volume *Razionalismo e misticismo* [*Rationalism and mysticism*]<sup>56</sup>, a collection of essays on contemporary gnoseology (on the relationship between will and knowledge, on the concept of truth, etc.), including also that on object theory.

Referring above all to *Über sie Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften* and to "Über Gegenstandstheorie", Losacco illustrates the outlines of the object theory (the Meinongian classification of objects, the principle of independence, the concept of objects of higher order and that of objective), of which he points out – following Hans Pichler<sup>57</sup> – the analogies with Christian Wolff's ontology. He reports and agrees with the reasons that Meinong adduces in support of the new discipline, which he distinguishes both from psychology and from logic and metaphysics; but he criticizes the excessive extension of object theory, which would lead it to invade the fields of mathematics, mechanics, metaphysics, etc., and the merely negative conception of the a priori as independence from the existence.<sup>58</sup>

Aliotta was much more critical. As we have seen, he had already dealt with Meinong's psychology, and now he specifically tackled object theory in an essay included in the volume *La reazione idealistica contro la scienza* [*The idealistic reaction against science*], which marked his passage from psychology to philosophy.<sup>59</sup> According to him, object theory is

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Losacco to Meinong, Pistoia, 13.X.1910 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, IL/3855).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Losacco to Meinong, Pistoia, 13.IV.1911 (*Meinong-Nachlaß*, IL/3857). Three years later, after a brief letter exchange between Losacco and Meinong on the theme of assumptions (cf. Losacco to Meinong, Pistoia, 28.V.1913, in *Meinong-Nachlaß* IL/3860a and IL/3861), Losacco published an article on *Über Annahmen* (cf. Losacco 1914).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pichler (1910).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Losacco (1910). These criticisms are moderated in the later revision (cf. 1911a, pp. 96-97).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Sava (2000), p. 67.

– against Meinong’s claims<sup>60</sup> – “the science of the *Sosein*”,<sup>61</sup> that disregards the *Dasein*. Therefore, it distinguishes itself from the empirical sciences and, inasmuch it deals with ideal objects, constitutes “a vigorous defence of rational knowledge against the intemperance of psychologism and empiriocriticism.”<sup>62</sup> Among its specific objects object theory includes sensation objects – Aliotta writes “sensation contents” (*contenuti sensoriali*) – and the so-called impossible objects. Actually, thought can only ascertain a contradiction, which is not always evident but emerges from the relations among properties; here however the thought’s activity ends, it cannot go on to build impossible objects.<sup>63</sup> As regards sensation objects, Aliotta ascribes them without any doubt to physics; according to him, object theory sets itself against phenomenism, distinguishing the felt from feeling, i.e. the content from the act, but it confuses the subject of the science with the laws and the explanatory concepts of a given phenomenon which it elaborates. At this point, after having eliminated also sensation

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Meinong (1904b), pp. 519-520 [(1960), pp. 108-109]: “Such an omission can be met simply by the stipulation that the theory of Objects concern itself with the given, without paying any attention to its being (*Sein*), and that it consider only the knowledge of its *Sosein*. Yet, something which might give us pause in connection with this definition is already intimately tied up with the theory of Objects. If the theory of Objects chose to make one of its fundamental principles that of indifference to being, then it would have to renounce all claims to be a science, and even the knowledge of *Sosein* would thereby be excluded. As we know, it is completely unnecessary that the Object of knowledge should have being. However, all knowledge must have an Objective which has being; and if the theory of Objects concerns itself with a *Sosein* which did not have being itself, then, provided that we ignore the exceptional situations to be passed over here, it no longer has any claim to be a theory. Of course, the fundamental principle could always be formulated as follows: the theory of Objects neglects being only in the case of its Objects, but not, however, in the case of (certain) Objectives. But why then the absence of uniformity? Moreover, or perhaps first of all: whether this or that Object is absurd by nature, whether it subsists or could equally well exist – these are questions which are actually of interest to the theory of Objects and which are ultimately questions about being. In brief, therefore: even the restriction to *Sosein* probably cannot be brought into harmony with the essential nature of the theory of Objects.”

<sup>61</sup> Aliotta (1912), p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> Aliotta (1912), p. 141.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Aliotta (1912), p. 152.

objects from object theory, Aliotta can propose his reading of the latter as a “science of the unreal, of the non-existent”:

Meinong, while fighting phenomenism, falls into the same error, by identifying the *real* with the *given*, and by setting all that is conceived, all relations that are thought, in the field of the unreal. But if we remove from the existent the whole network of relations, what remains if not an incoherent chaos of disconnected facts? Taking his doctrine to its ultimate conclusions, Meinong should deduce that the concept, inasmuch as it goes always beyond intuition, never gives anything real. And what remains then of the science of nature? This latter is possible insofar as one supposes that reality has an ideal structure, that the objectives of our mind are not bare logical fictions, but correspond to real relations.<sup>64</sup>

From this Aliotta concludes that the separation of the knowledge of the existent from the knowledge of the non-existent leads nowhere; rather, the ideal world makes the given intelligible, raising it to a higher degree of reality.

Aliotta’s criticism contains a misunderstanding of the original intentions of object theory: what Meinong calls “the given” (*das Gegebene*) is not at all only the real but all that can be apprehended; in this sense, given-ness is taken as a property more general than being<sup>65</sup> and the given extends to include even the absurd.<sup>66</sup> As regards the relationship between what exists and what does not, Meinong does not intend to keep them separate, nor does he intend to construct a theory of the mere non-existent, but rather he tries to show that, if we want to explain the totality of the world, then we must also take into consideration the non-existent and the connections between existent and non-existent.

Passing over Ratti’s merely descriptive review,<sup>67</sup> we shall proceed to deal with the ample study, still interesting, by Capone-Braga, “La teoria degli oggetti e l’ontologia [The theory of objects and ontology]”, which

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<sup>64</sup> Aliotta (1912), p. 157-158.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Meinong (1904b), p. 500 [(1960), p. 92].

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Meinong (1904b), p. 519 [(1960), p. 108].

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Ratti (1913).

was the crowning moment of the meeting between Italian philosophy and object theory while Meinong was still alive. Capone-Braga reconstructs the phases in the development of object theory from the essay on objects of higher order of 1899 to that of 1904, passing through the article on geometry of colours of 1903; he also examines the contributions of Rudolf Ameseder, Ernst Mally and Wilhelm M. Frankl, and he compares object theory with Husserl's pure logic and Schuppe and Rehmke's philosophy of immanence. At the end of his reconstruction, after presenting ideal objects and the concept of *Außersein*, Capone-Braga writes:

As we can see, Meinong's object is therefore not the real object existing in space and time but the object of thought, which is beyond being and non-being and receives the determinations of being and non-being only when it becomes a part of a proposition (objective). This being so, the object is not something perceptible with the senses, but it can be apprehended only through the intellect, hence a priori. The a priori knowledge and method is therefore the life and soul of the theory of objects.<sup>68</sup>

He recognizes the central value of the notion of a priori in Meinong, which he does not interpret as Losacco does in a solely negative sense, that is as "independent from experience", or "free from experience" (*erfahrungsfrei*), but also positively: knowledge is called a priori if it "is objectively founded, it is necessary, evident, certain and independent from experience."<sup>69</sup> Of the positive characteristics, the most important are the first two, which are based on the nature or the so-being of the object: our knowledge consists of objectives, and an objective is the ground, when another objective is its consequence; if then this consequence is necessary, then the objective is called necessary. "All that is rational has therefore an objective as its ground."<sup>70</sup> Certainty and evidence are also essential to the a priori, but they are not peculiar to it, inasmuch as they also belong to inner perception. The aprioristic method is therefore essential for object theory, which aims to be a fundamental science, the basis of the

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<sup>68</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 228.

<sup>69</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 229.

<sup>70</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 230.

other individual sciences, and it is therefore – according to a clearly platonic reading – a “science of ideas” and of their relations, which “offer themselves as objects to the mind.”<sup>71</sup> According to this interpretation, object theory seems to Capone-Braga “acceptable and worthy of all possible study, except in two points”: one cannot accept that the object is beyond being and non-being, because an object has always to be in a certain way, and then “also the round square is in a certain way, that is, in the ideal way;”<sup>72</sup> secondly, one cannot accept Meinong’s pertinacity in separating object theory and logic, since “logic, when it is not understood as formal logic or rather as the study of the conditions of thought, is especially a doctrine of concepts and of relations among concepts.”<sup>73</sup> And since object theory is a science of ideas, that is, of concepts considered in their objective moment, it is similar to logic considered as the theory of the ideal being (ontology).

In the post-war period, Italian philosophers’ interest in Meinong’s thought weakened considerably. The war – as noted above – had severed relations between intellectuals. A confirmation of this, which well reflects the general cultural climate, is offered by Meinong at the end of his “Selbstdarstellung”, where he quotes part of a circular letter printed in the *Geologische Zentralblatt*, which the Belgian geological society addressed to geologists in the Entente and neutral nations, inviting them to exclude

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<sup>71</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 312.

<sup>72</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 314. Later on Capone-Braga writes: “In the world of the purely thinkable, on which the theory of objects is founded, one cannot distinguish the object from the concept or idea, for the simple reason that, for the object to become part of this world, it must always be considered as an idea. [...] Having established this, that is having identified the object with the logical concept, one sees that the difficulty which Meinong mentions no longer has any sense. The round square for example has only an ideal objective existence, it is not something real, existing in space and time, and hence it is neither square nor round in the sense in which a chalk square or a really existing wooden square is square. The object ‘round square’ *has only the property of being square and round*: it is in short an idea that has the characteristics of squareness and roundness. But then the ‘round square’ object no longer differs from the logical concept of ‘round square’. Not even this latter in fact is square and round in the sense in which a wooden square is round; it only has the characteristics of squareness and roundness like the ‘round square’ object” (p. 316).

<sup>73</sup> Capone-Braga (1914-1915), p. 315.

German researchers from the scientific community.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, one should not forget that Meinong himself glorified the “just German cause”<sup>75</sup> in his letters from 1914 to 1918 and revealed himself to be an ardent nationalist also in his works published in 1915 and in 1917.<sup>76</sup>

Another factor to be considered is the rise of idealist philosophy in Italian culture and Universities, with the emergence of the public clash between Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, which resulted in the marginalization from the Italian philosophical scene of scholars with empirical leanings. Such is the background to Guido De Ruggiero’s extremely negative judgment on object theory, which shows his reluctance to understand a philosopher and thus dissuades others from reading him.<sup>77</sup>

Also the attention that has been turned to the phenomenological movement of Husserlian origin has not led to an analogous appreciation

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Meinong (1921), *GA* VII, p. 59, fn. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Dölling (1999), pp. 184-185.

<sup>76</sup> In *Über emotionale Präsentation* Meinong (1917, *GA* III, pp. 295, 315, 337) declares himself proud of the victories won in the field by the Central powers. Cf. also Meinong (1915), *GA* VI, p. XXI: “große Kulturvölker haben sich, vielleicht zum ersten Male in der Geschichte, ausdrücklich zu dem Ziele verbunden, ein großes Kulturvolk und zwei Kulturstaaten zu ‘vernichten’. Es ist mir versagt geblieben in diesem gerechtesten aller Verteidigungskämpfe selbst die Waffen zu ergreifen für Volkstum und Vaterland.”

<sup>77</sup> *La filosofia contemporanea* [*Contemporary philosophy*] by De Ruggiero was first published in 1912 and republished several times subsequently (1920<sup>2</sup>, 1929<sup>3</sup>, etc.); cf. (1912), pp. 50-52, 106 (on object theory), 111-112 (on the psychology of values). It is interesting to read what De Ruggiero understood of Meinong: “Beyond the ‘objective’, that is the object as existent and real, there is the pure object, free from existence. The passage from the former to the latter is the great mystery; but, after nonchalantly skirting the problem, Meinong can conclude that the knowledge of the objective, inasmuch as it is directed to a reality that is given only in empirical experience, is a posteriori; while the knowledge of the object, inasmuch as it is lacking in presuppositions, is a priori. From here Meinong tries to develop a logic of the object which is tightly connected to mathematics, that is another science which has nothing to do with empirical realities. This doctrine, which later on we will examine as professed in England by Russell and in France by Couturat, betrays the anxiety of Meinong and his pupils (e.g. of Höfler) to found a logic independent of psychology, but on a merely psychological basis” (p. 51).

for Meinong.<sup>78</sup> Antonio Banfi refers briefly to Meinong in the *Principi di una teoria della ragione* [*Principles of a theory of reason*] (1926), while Cornelio Fabro treats him more deeply in *La fenomenologia della percezione* [*The phenomenology of perception*] (1941);<sup>79</sup> otherwise, Meinong is mentioned only in encyclopaedia articles<sup>80</sup> and in a brief review of the *Meinong-Gedenkschrift* by Norberto Bobbio, who substantially judges the line of research started in Graz to be exhausted.<sup>81</sup> For a certain period, Meinong's thought persists in psychology, above all thanks to Benussi, who in the meantime returned to Italy, and Cesare Musatti, who, at the beginning of his scientific activity, acquires from Benussi and shares Meinong's theories – as he says himself referring to one of his first works, *Analisi del concetto di realtà empirica* [*Analysis of the concept of empirical reality*] (1926), which was written in the spirit of the School of Graz and was not really in line with the actualistic climate dominant at that time.<sup>82</sup>

Not until 1969 do other Italian works on Meinong appear, specifically by Massimo A. Bonfantini and Francesco Sirchia.<sup>83</sup> The following year Michele Lenoci publishes an accurate bibliography on Meinong, followed by a monograph on the Austrian philosopher.<sup>84</sup> This marks the beginning of a new story, which runs parallel to the renewed and growing international interest in Meinong, a story which is still in progress and that is not yet possible to tell. Since then Meinong has been investigated in different

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<sup>78</sup> However, after the break with Meinong in 1902, Husserl is scathing about him. For a reconstruction of the controversy between Husserl and Meinong, cf. Schermann (1970), 11-48; cf. also Lindenfeld (1980), pp. 244 ff., according to whom this break weighed heavily in the subsequent indifference for Meinong within the phenomenological movement.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Banfi (1926), pp. 70-71, 315, Fabro (1941/1961<sup>2</sup>), pp. 205-216 and *passim*.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Calogero (1934), Mathieu (1957), Merlo (1958).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Bobbio (1954).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Musatti (1964), pp. 7-8. This volume contains a reprint of the 1926 book (on which cf. Poli 1999b, pp. 131 ff.) and other articles. Cf. also Musatti (1929), pp. 356 ff., in which object theory and the theory of production of representations, together with the contributions of Ehrenfels and Benussi, is situated in the broader context that led to the development of *Gestaltpsychologie*.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Bonfantini (1969), Sirchia (1969), pp. 165-188.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Lenoci (1970) and (1972).



ways and with differing degrees of interest, intensity and detail by Mario Alai, Liliana Albertazzi, Carola Barbero, Stefano Besoli, Andrea Bottani, Guido Bonino, Paolo Bozzi, Roberto Brigati, Serena Cattaruzza, Luigi Dappiano, Michele Di Francesco, Rosaria Egidi, Vincenzo Fano, Maurizio Ferraris, ancora Lenoci, Marina Manotta, Riccardo Martinelli, Enzo Melandri, Francesca Modenato, Francesco Orilia, Roberto Poli, Alessandro Salice, Marco Santambrogio, Andrea Tabarroni, Albano Unia, Alberto Voltolini and myself. I have certainly skipped some names, and I apologize for this. Especially in the last fifteen years important works on Meinong have appeared.<sup>85</sup> The increasing interest in Meinong's philosophy is also testified by the translations of some of his writings,<sup>86</sup> as well as by two Congresses: the first, on "Meinong and his School", was held from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1994 in Trento and focused not only on Meinong, but also on his pupils and other contemporary philosophers;<sup>87</sup> the second, entitled "The prejudice in favour of the real. Alexius Meinong's object theory between ontology and epistemology", took place in Urbino ten years later from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2004, in the centenary of the publication of the *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*.<sup>88</sup>

From the above it is clear that the texts collected here represent only a part of the investigations and studies on Meinong that are currently being conducted in Italy. Nevertheless, they give a sufficiently varied idea of the different ways of thinking with and on Meinong. At the beginning we have primarily historical-systematic contributions of a phenomenological character. In accordance with his personal reading of Meinong's texts, Riccardo Martinelli offers a reconstruction of the Meinongian theory of musical objects of higher order in the historical-philosophical context in which it was conceived, relating it with the contemporary concepts of Helmholtz, Mach, Ehrenfels and Stumpf. Francesca Modenato gives the outlines of Meinong's object theory as a theory of the pure

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<sup>85</sup> See in particular the monographs by Brigati (1992), Orilia (2002), Manotta (2005) and Modenato (2006).

<sup>86</sup> The first is by Enzo Melandri and was published in 1979.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Albertazzi [ed.] (1996).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Barbero & Raspa [eds.] (2005).

object, separating it from ontology and associating it rather with gnoseology: object theory is not an ontology that also contemplates non-existent objects, on the contrary it is a general theory of the object of knowledge. Another group of contributors focuses specifically on the field of analytical philosophy. Andrea Bottani deals with incompleteness, distinguishing three types, which he compares both with the Meinongian concept and with other current points of view. This and the preceding contribution show two different approaches to the theme of incomplete objects. Mario Alai investigates the problem of propositions concerning non-existent objects, pointing out shortcomings in the approach to this question by Frege, Russell, and Orilia's neo-Russellian strategy; in agreement with both Meinong and Husserl, he holds that we do indeed sometimes speak of non-existent objects, but in so doing we neither state nor imply that they are there, we just express true propositions, although their subject lacks reference. Carola Barbero proposes, on the basis of Meinong's object theory, a realistic theory of the emotions aroused in us by reading literary texts: these are true emotions, distinguished quantitatively, not qualitatively, from those aroused by real objects. Other contributions, which are also located within the field of analytical philosophy, do not deal exclusively with Meinong, but with themes related to Meinongian ones. Thus Alberto Voltolini, discussing the concept of existence as a property, recently proposed by McGinn, recognizes a plurality of existential properties and, at the same time, takes into consideration the Meinongian thesis concerning the different kinds of being. Francesco Orilia, arguing on Bradley's regress with the aim of defending a conception that admits states of affairs, accepts the regress (adopting an approach called "fact infinitism") and validates an intuition of Meinong. While Guido Bonino, who deals with Gustav Bergmann's interpretation of Meinong's ontology, shows that, according to Bergmann, it admits no facts; and again Bradley's regress is involved. These are – as I said – different ways of thinking with and on Meinong.

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