

BRENTANO'S INFLUENCE ON HUSSERL'S EARLY NOTION OF INTENTIONALITY*

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ABSTRACT. The influence of Brentano on the emergence of Husserl's notion of intentionality has been usually perceived as the key of understanding the history of intentionality, since Brentano was credited with the discovery of intentionality, and Husserl was his disciple. This much debated question is to be revisited in the present essay by incorporating recent advances in Brentano scholarship and by focusing on Husserl's very first work, his habilitation essay (*Über den Begriff der Zahl*), which followed immediately after his study years at Brentano, and also on manuscript notes from the same period. It is to be shown that (i) although Brentano failed to enact a direct influence on Husserl's notion of intentionality (much in line with K. Schuhmann's claim), (ii) yet the core of Brentano's notion remained operative in Husserl's theory of relations, which is seemingly influenced by John Stuart Mill and Hermann Lotze. This investigation is intended as a contribution towards the proper understanding of the complexities of Husserl's early philosophy.

Keywords: intentionality, history of; theory of relations; Husserl, Edmund; Brentano, Franz Clemens; Mill, John Stuart; Lotze, Hermann

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the possible influence of Brentano, who was a teacher of Husserl, on the formation of Husserl's notion of intentionality. This goal, a seemingly innocent historical undertaking, is burdened with many difficulties, most of them resulting from the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of this question.

Intentionality is, for Husserl, an all-encompassing question; and for many it seemed that Husserl's notion of intentionality is best to understand from a historical point of view. A manifest candidate for these investigations was Franz Clemens Brentano, who, at the same time, re-introduced the term "intentionality" into modern philosophy and, as a teacher of Husserl, played a key role in turning Husserl's attention from mathematics to philosophy¹. The presumed influence of Brentano on

* The research was supported by a research grant of the Austrian Research Council (ÖAD) and by a Hungarian National Research Fund project (OTKA/72360). Citations from unpublished material of Husserl are by the kind permission of Prof. Ulrich Melle, director of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven.

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¹ A detailed, and, probably, the most authentic third-person account of Husserl's special personal relationship towards Brentano is to be found in Malvine Husserl's retrospective *Skizze eines*

the formation of Husserl's notion of intentionality therefore quickly became the Holy Grail of the researchers. The quest has been abruptly ended, however, by Karl Schuhmann, who proved² that it was rather the various debates of inside Brentano's circle of disciplines, especially a book by Kazimierz Twardowski³, the Polish-born logician, what exercised a decisive influence on the young Husserl's notion of intentionality. This discovery even led to the claim that "Husserl did not get his concept of intentionality from Brentano as is generally supposed to be the case, but rather developed it in the context of his reflections on Twardowski's well-known work."⁴

What this essay intends is, as a first characterisation, a more balanced view of Brentano's influence on Husserl's early notion of intentionality. In order to achieve this, I will first briefly revisit Brentano's account of intentionality to establish, what an influence could possibly consist in. To uncover the influence of Brentano on Husserl, I will consider the period *before* the supposed influence of Twardowski. I will therefore investigate the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, the only extant part of Husserl's *Habilitationsschrift* in 1887, for signs of influences. The essay will conclude with an evaluation of its results from a broader perspective.

I – Revisiting Brentano

Brentano is usually considered as the one who re-introduced the notion of intentionality into the modern philosophy.⁵ The work and the passage that is most often quoted in respect to this discovery, is the beginning of a chapter from the *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* of 1874:

Jedes psychische Phänomen ist durch das charakterisiert, was die Scholastiker des Mittelalters die intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes genannt haben, und was wir, obwohl mit nicht ganz unzweideutigen Ausdrücken, die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt, die Richtung auf ein Objekt (worunter hier nicht eine Realität zu verstehen ist), oder die immanente Gegenständlichkeit nennen würden. Jedes enthält etwas als Objekt in sich, obwohl nicht jedes in gleicher Weise. In der Vorstellung ist etwas vorgestellt, in dem Urteile ist etwas anerkannt oder verworfen, in der Liebe geliebt, in dem Hasse gehaßt, in dem Begehren begehrt usw.⁶

This passage, no matter how many times it was cited, does not occupy a central position in the *Psychologie*. It is touched in the course of searching for a

Lebensbildes von E. Husserl (published in Schuhmann, 1988). The first attempt to evaluate the relationship between Husserl and Brentano that is based on their correspondence is done by H. Spiegelberg (Spiegelberg, 1978).

² Schuhmann, 1991a

³ See K. Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen*, (unveränderter Nachdruck der 1. Auflage, Wien, 1894) (Philosophia Verlag, München: 1894) (The original edition of the book is, due to the low number of copies printed, now practically unavailable.)

⁴ Mohanty, 2004, v

⁵ See Baumgartner, 1985 for an example of such classical account of the history of the notion of intentionality.

⁶ Brentano, 1973, 124-125

demarcation criterion between two groups of phenomena, the psychical and physical phenomena. Before it, Brentano has already proposed some criteria, but he is unsatisfied with them, as they did not provide a positive and uniform characterisation of the phenomena in question. Though he seems to be content with the present proposal, he will nevertheless continue to establish further criteria (amongst them the spatial localisation of physical phenomena). Of course it does not exclude at all that the main focus of later interest could be on Brentano's re-introduction of the notion of intentionality; and, concerning that, it must be said that both Brentano seems to be conscious of that he is doing a re-introduction of a mediaeval philosophical notion into contemporary use, thereby justifying the retrospective characterisation of his achievement as a rediscovery, and, furthermore, even a cursory glance at the coming literature, especially in the circles of phenomenology, suffices to show how much impact his rediscovery indeed had.

The exact content of Brentano's original notion of intentionality is, however, less trivial to establish. A first look at the passage cited above would suggest that Brentano's account of intentionality consists in the claim that the object of the presentation is somehow contained in the presentation itself. A major consequence of this claim would be that the object is then devoid of independent existence, i.e. its existence is linked to that of the presentation. This rendering of Brentano's position is reinforced by the received interpretation of his work. As Roderick Chisholm, the main protagonist of Brentano's rediscovery for the analytical philosophy in the 1960s put it:

These passage contains two different theses: one, an ontological thesis about the nature of certain objects of thought and of other psychological attitudes; the other a psychological thesis implying that reference to an object is what distinguishes the mental or psychical from the physical. According to the doctrine of intentional inexistence, the object of the thought about a unicorn *is* a unicorn, but a unicorn with a mode of being (intentional inexistence, immanent objectivity, or existence in the understanding) that is short of actuality but more than nothingness.⁷

What Chisholm calls “psychological thesis” is definitely indubitable: Brentano *expressis verbis* claims that it is the “intentional inexistence” which “characterizes” the psychical phenomena. Moreover, in the *Psychologie* the introduction of the notion of intentionality occurs, as I have already mentioned, in the context of a search for a criterion of the division between psychical and physical phenomena. He considers intentionality to provide a positive characterisation of the psychical phenomena, and refers back to it many times.

Concerning the second thesis of Chisholm, the passage seems to provide equal justification. Brentano speaks about “inexistence”, “immanent objectivity”, and, in a rarely cited sentence phrase, he adds that “the object is not to be understood as something real”.

⁷ Chisholm, 1967, 201

This thesis of the received interpretation, however, has been recently came under fierce criticism in the literature on Brentano.⁸ The main occasion not to content ourselves with Chisholm's second, ontological thesis is provided by a retrospective remark of Brentano in 1906, responding to a criticism made by one of his former disciplines. In order to understand Brentano's response, we must first familiarize ourselves with the critique itself.

The introduction the notion of intentionality seems to succeed in delineating the psychological phenomena. The main feature of these phenomena therefore consists in their reference to a certain object. However, the above characterisation does not succeeded in describing the reference itself. It is undeniable that presentations are always presentations of something. But it could be argued that the objects, which are intended by the presentations, necessarily possess such properties that are incompatible with the ontological thesis outlined by Chisholm. E.g. when I have a presentation of an actual apple tree, then the object of my presentation is the apple tree itself, existing in the physical world. It is an essential property of this apple tree that it exists in the unmodified sense of the word, i.e. without any restrictive qualification. Though I can have a presentation of an apple tree whose existence is "short of actuality but more than nothingness" (like when I present myself an apple tree that does not really exists, e.g. an apple tree that is merely thought of), that presentation would differ from the former one. Brentano's account of intentional reference thus, it seems, substitutes the object *qua* intentional object (an object that is merely thought of) in place of the object of an intentional relationship.⁹

This same critique was presented by Alois Höfler, a former discipline of Brentano, on the psychologist's congress in 1905, Italy, in which Brentano himself could not participate due to his failing health. When Brentano was informed about that by Anton Marty, he protested with strong terms:

Von dem, was Sie über Höflers Äußerungen sagen, war mir dies über „Inhalt“ und „immanentes Objekt“ der Vorstellung befremdlich. [...] Es ist aber *nicht meine Meinung*

⁸ First by A. Chrudzminski (Chrudzminski, 2001; see p. 22 n. 14 for the sign of a possible first occurrence of the interpretation debate), then, for different reasons, by M. Antonelli (Antonelli, 2001) and W. Sauer (Sauer, 2006). We will have occasion below to examine the latter two critiques.

⁹ This critique needs some refinement in order to precisely address Brentano, since he draw a line between phenomena and things in the real world. Brentano would probably consider the apple tree *qua* physical entity to be the subject matter of pure natural sciences, to which the presentation of the apple tree stands merely in a signitive relationship; or at least he would claim that the properties we normally ascribe to the apple tree itself (like its colour, shape etc.) are only physical phenomena which stand merely in an indirect relationship with the physical entities that are explored by the natural sciences. Therefore in my critique I should distinguish between the apple tree *qua* physical entity and the physical phenomena forming part of its "appearance". However it does not endanger the above argument since the argument could be reformulated using the example of sound (*Tone*) that is *expressis verbis* called physical phenomena by Brentano, and yet it is possible to directly stand in an intentional relationship to it (without worrying about the underlying natural mechanism that can be outlined by the natural sciences). As the debate between Höfler and Brentano seems to ignore this subtlety, I will not change my example.

gewesen, daß das immanente Objekt = „vorgestelltes Objekt“ sei. Die Vorstellung hat nicht „vorgestelltes Ding“, sondern „das Ding“, also z.B. die Vorstellung eines Pferdes nicht „vorgestelltes Pferd“, sondern „Pferd“ zum (immanenten, d.h. allein eigentlich Objekt zu nennenden) Objekt. [...] Das „gedachte Pferd“ als Objekt genommen, wäre Gegenstand der inneren Wahrnehmung, die das Denkende wahrnimmt, wenn dies mit dem Gedachten ein Paar Korrelative bildete, da korrelative ohne einander nicht wahrnehmbar sind. Das, was als primäres Objekt empfunden oder vom Verstand universell als primäres Objekt gedacht wird, ist aber doch nicht Gegenstand der inneren Wahrnehmung. Entweder müßte ich der primären Vorstellungsbeziehung gar kein Objekt und gar kein Inhalt zugeschrieben haben, oder ich konnte ihn nicht = „gedachtes Objekt“ gleichgesetzt haben. Ich protestiere also gegen die mir angedichtete Albernheit.¹⁰

Brentano claims here quite clear that the critique is mistaken. But what does he bring forward in defence of his claim? In the last sentence of the citation, writing from the distance of thirty years, Brentano claims that either he has not ascribed any object to the presentation, or he has not equated it with the “thought object.” Since he has definitely spoken about the object intended by the presentation, it remains the claim that he had not equated the object of the presentation with the “object that is merely thought of”. This claim is also contained in the second part of the citation.

Brentano's protest, which was usually ignored as a self-defensive distortion, or a lapse of memory, has been recently taken up by some scholars who claim that Brentano was in fact right about his former position, i.e. Chisholm's second, ontological thesis is mistaken. There are several arguments in favour of this recent change in interpretation¹¹, but the one provided by Mauro Antonelli stands out of them, since it also provides an explanation of what the “object that is merely thought of” could consist in. The argument of Antonelli could be demonstrated even on the above retrospective remark of Brentano: “The horse that is merely thought of”, says Brentano, “would be an object of the inner perception when it perceives the thinking.” But, adds Brentano, the primary object (i.e. the real object intended by the presentation itself) “is not perceived by the inner perception.” This somewhat cryptic remark becomes clear when we consider that the horse, being a physical object, is perceived by the outer perception (which is the perception in the normal sense of the word). The “horse that is merely thought of” and the horse as such therefore must be different. But it does not mean that the “horse that is merely thought of” does not exist or it does not have any significance for the theory of perception. *It is given in the inner perception when we perceive the thinking (i.e. the perception of the horse) itself.* Antonelli claims that it is possible to understand Brentano's position in the *Psychologie* along these lines. He calls the “horse that is merely thought of” intentional correlate, which might be only a terminological clarification, but it paves the way for a concise formulation of his interpretation: intentional correlates are different from intentional objects. The former are given by the inner perception, which, according to Brentano, accompanies every perception itself; and they are

¹⁰ Brentano an Anton Marty (17.3.1905) (Brentano, 1962, 87-89)

¹¹ See note above.

therefore parts of the consciousness in the strict sense of the word. The intentional objects, on the other hand, are the *objects proper*, they are not part of the perception in any sense of the word, and, in case of non-existing objects, they do not exist at all. Brentano's theory of intentionality, therefore, does not fall a prey to such a straightforward objection Höfler (and many others) proposed.

This short review of the current historical research concerning Brentano's introduction of intentionality has, I believe, provided some important lessons for the present investigations: The received view of Brentano as the one who has rediscovered intentionality for the contemporary philosophy is, despite of every divergence in Brentano's own intention, basically justifiable. But there is one important addition which is easy to overlook: *the real challenge in Brentano's conception of intentionality is to provide such an account of the relation between the presentation and its object that avoids the devastating consequence of Chisholm's second thesis*. Brentano, at least according to some recent interpretations, did exactly that, and this complexity is to be taken into account when examining the possible emergence of Brentano's notion of intentionality in other authors.

Let us now turn our attention to Husserl.

II – Looking for Traces of Intentionality in the Habilitationsschrift

As I have already mentioned, the recent *consensus* puts the decisive period in the formation of Husserl's notion of intentionality at 1894¹², and it is usually claimed that Husserl has seldom cared about intentionality as such in the *Über den Begriff der Zahl* or in the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*¹³. While it is undeniable true, a closer look at these works could uncover that Brentano's concept of intentionality has not failed to bear its mark upon the young Husserl. In this section I will attempt to identify traces in the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, the only extant part of Husserl's *Habilitationsschrift*, which could tell about how, and in which extent, Husserl was influenced by Brentano's concept of intentionality.

There are two sporadic locations in the *Über den Begriff der Zahl* where Husserl speaks about questions concerning the intentionality.

In a footnote annexed to his introductory examples Husserl makes *in passim* a short claim concerning the relation between the presentations and their objects:

¹² It is the year in which Husserl authored the *Intentionale Gegenstände* (Hua XXII 303-348), on the occasion of his acquaintance with K. Twardowski's new book (see n.). Some of the philological uncertainties by the editor of the Hua XII concerning the origin of this work (see esp. p. XLIX) were amended by K. Schuhmann (Schuhmann, 1991b).

¹³ Most recently by C. Ierna in his excellent survey of Husserl's early philosophy: "In 1894 Husserl will be deeply concerned with the issue of intentional objects, but at the time of *ÜBZ* and *PA* it hardly plays any role. In fact, in both of these works the expression « intentional object » is used only once: *ÜBZ* 36/317, later taken over in *PA* 45/45." (Ierna, 2006, 57-58) R. D. Rollinger also bases his presentation of Husserl's position towards Brentano's notion of intentionality on later texts, namely on the *Logical Investigations* and on Husserl's essay on intentional objects of 1894 (Rollinger, 1999, 50sqq). Th. De Boer distinguishes between intentionality as possessing immanent contents and intentionality as a directedness towards an objects, and maintains that the second sense of intentionality appears at Husserl only at 1894 (see De Boer 1978, 51)

Es bedarf wohl kaum Erinnerung, daß wo es sich um objektiv-wirkliche Dinge handelt, diese doch durch Vorstellungen in unserem Bewußtsein repräsentiert sein müssen. Der vorgestellte Inbegriff verhält sich dann zu dem intendierten Inbegriff der wirklichen Dinge, wie sich auch die Vorstellung eines einzelnen wirklichen Dinges zu diesem selbst verhält.¹⁴

Husserl also makes a cursory reference to the conceptual apparatus of the intentionality in the course of his critical investigations:

Gewiß ist es richtig, daß es sich bei der Bildung von Zahlen wie auch von Vielheiten in concreto nicht um ein passives Aufnehmen oder ein bloß heraushebendes Bemerkens eines Inhaltes handelt; wenn irgendwo, so liegen hier spontane Tätigkeiten vor, die wir an die Inhalte knüpfen. [...] Ein auf die sämtlichen Inhalte gerichtetes einigendes Interesse und zugleich mit und in ihm (in jener gegenseitigen Durchdringung, wie sie psychischen Akten eigen ist) ein Akt des Bemerkens heben die Inhalte heraus, und das intentionale Objekt dieses Aktes ist eben die Vorstellung der Vielheit oder des Inbegriffs jener Inhalte. In dieser Weise sind die Inhalte zugleich und zusammen gegenwärtig, sind sie *eins*, und mit Reflexion auf diese Einigung gesonderter Inhalte durch jene psychischen Akte entstehen die Allgemeinbegriffe Vielheit und (bestimmte) Zahl.¹⁵

Though both citations appears in the text unconnected with their direct context, they can be made to bear on the main argument of the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, and even on an important issue of the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*. As it is widely known, Robert Sokolowski convincingly argued that Husserl's analysis of the collective connection (*kollektive Verbindung*) is already an example of constitutional analysis.¹⁶ Although Sokolowski has based his argument on the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*, his results shed a different light on the corresponding parts of the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, which are now usually investigated as being possible precursors of the constitutional analysis in the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*. This could lend an important role to two passages cited. Most recently Carlo Ierna has used them to prove that the constitutional analysis of Husserl already involves higher-order objects.¹⁷

However it is important to distinguish between advances concerning the constitutional analysis of the presentation of numbers, and concerning the more general notion of intentionality: The *Über den Begriff der Zahl* is intended by Husserl as a study of the particular kind of presentations that lay beneath our concept of the number,¹⁸ i.e., a study in a particular kind of intentionality, and it is Husserl's advance in this field that is usually emphasized. However it is also possible to ask which general view on intentionality is manifest in this work; and it would be a *petitio principii* to claim that Husserl's advances concerning the presentation of multitudes go hand in hand with his advances concerning a general view of intentionality. Quite contrary, it will turn out that Husserl's inventive analysis of the origin of the

¹⁴ Hua XII 298 Anm. 1

¹⁵ Hua XII 316-317

¹⁶ See Sokolowski, 15sq. This interpretation has its origin in a self-interpretative remark of Husserl (Hua XVII 90sq).

¹⁷ A claim that De Boer denies (De Boer, 1978, 25). See Ierna, 2006, 61.

¹⁸ Cf. Hua XII 298

presentations of numbers co-exist with his less developed and less articulated general notion of intentionality.

In fact, when the two citations are investigated from this point of view, they prove to be less conclusive than from the point of view of the aforementioned constitutional analysis. First of all, it is uncertain what kind of distinction Husserl intends to signal with his use of “intentional object” in the second citation. Is “intentional object” the same as the single object of the intentional act, or is it its “intended” object (two use the terminology of the first remark), or its “presented” object? The distinction between “intended” and “presented” objects itself seems to be problematic, at least in its present form. The representational relationship between the presented and intended object, displayed in the first citation, will be later seriously attacked by Husserl himself, and it is also to remember that Brentano drew a different line between phenomena and real world things, namely that he restricted the intentional relation to the domain of the phenomena.

The most serious problem with these two sporadic occurrences is that they fail to have any connection with either their intermediate context or with the conceptual apparatus of the rest of the work, and the passages themselves do not explicate their terms. Any further interpretation of these remarks is bound therefore to make unwarranted presuppositions on the meaning of its terms. It is probably the best to consider these passages to be what their immediate positions in the text suggests: one occasion of a common sense truism, and one incidental reference to a conceptual framework which is itself not employed by Husserl.¹⁹

There is, however, place in Husserl's work, namely his excursus into the theory of relations²⁰, which provides a natural occasion to elaborate on the question of the *intentionality as such*, and Husserl actually takes this opportunity to do so. The interpretation of this excursus is, though, less trivial than it seems.

III – Interpreting Husserl's Theory of Relations: Intentionality and Encompassing

At first glance, it would seem that in elaborating his theory of relations, Husserl simply relies on James Mill to conceive relations as contents of the consciousness, and then involves the Brentanoian distinction between physical and psychical phenomena to classify relations, according to the *Relationsphänomenon* itself, into physical relations (content-relations) and psychical relations. The latter class of relations thus “intentionally encompass”²¹ its *fundamenta*. Husserl then treats the collective connection (*kollektive Verbindung*) as psychical relation and goes on to explore its structure and exact role in the formation of the concept of numbers.

¹⁹ This said, I think that, in order to establish his claim, Ierna (see note) pushes these passages to their limits. Some of his readers might have been conveyed the impression that he relies there on the main course of argumentation of the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, while that is in fact not the case.

²⁰ Hua XII 328-331

²¹ Cf. Hua XII 329.27

The interpretation of this excursus is, however, a bit more tricky. In order to uncover it, I will first consider what is really implied by Husserl's reference to Mill's theory of the relations, then I will investigate how it is possible to cast out the theory of intentionality in the terms of a theory of relation (as did by Brentano himself), and then I will attempt to determine the exact position Husserl seems to take.

At the beginning at the excursus, Husserl claims that, though there is no universally accepted theory of relations, a commentary of John Stuart Mill on his edition of a book of fathers suffices us to understand what relations really are. Husserl then quotes the text of J. St. Mill in German:

Objekte, physische oder psychische, sind in Relation zueinander vermöge eines komplexen Bewußtseinszustandes, in den sie beide eintreten, auch für den Fall, daß der komplexe Zustand in nichts weiter bestände als im Denken an beide zusammen. Und sie werden aufeinander in so vielen verschieden Weisen bezogen, oder, mit anderen Worten, sie stehen in so vielen distinkten Relationen zueinander; als es spezifisch verschiedene Bewußtseinszustände gibt, von denen beide Teile ausmachen.

Any objects, whether physical or mental, are related, or are in a relation, to one another, in virtue of any complex state of consciousness into which they both enter; even if it be a no more complex state of consciousness than that of merely thinking of them together. And they are related to each other in as many different ways, or in other words, they stand in as many distinct relations to one another, as there are specifically distinct states of consciousness of which they both form parts.²²

Although after this citation Husserl expresses his possible debt to Meinong by a reference to his *Hume-Studien II*, the insistence of Husserl on the lack of any accepted theory of relations has bought him the anger of Meinong when he sent him a copy of the *Philosophie der Arithmetik* in 1891.²³ However, there is a far bigger problem with this reference to Mill, namely that *it deceptively suggests that Mill's notion of relation is in accordance with Brentano's classification of phenomena, and, more specifically, his theory of intentionality*. This deceiving suggestion might be further accelerated by the translation's rendering of *physical-mental* as *physische-psychische*.

Let us take a closer look at the issue. The cited text, as I have already mentioned, is in fact from John Stuart Mill, who annexed several commentaries to his father's work. This situation would make it hard to establish the exact position

²² German text according to Hua XII 328-329, English original according to Mill, 1868, 10. The same citation also appears, with slight deviations in punctuation, in a manuscript of Husserl (K I 32 / 3b).

²³ In the corresponding part of the *Philosophie der Arithmetik* Husserl opted for an English citation and omitted his reference to Meinong, which might have contributed to avoid the indignation of the latter (expressed in a letter to Husserl at 19 June 1891, see BW I 129). (The *Über den begriff der Zahl*, though printed, never was available in bookshops.) Ierna has also noted that in the *Über den Begriff der Zahl* Husserl has copied the verbatim translation of Mill's text from Meinong (Ierna, 2006, 63)

implied here, but the remark by J. St. Mill is, fortunately, extensive enough to address the general theory of relations it relies on:

In order to make quite clear the nature of this peculiarity, it will be desirable to advert once more to the double mode of signification of concrete general names, viz. that while they denote (or are names of) objects, they connote some facts relating to those objects. The fact connoted by any name, relative or not, is always of the same nature; it is some bodily or mental feeling, or some set of bodily or mental feelings, accompanying or produced by the object. (...) The peculiarity in the case of relative names is, that the fact connoted concerns two objects, and cannot be understood without thinking of them both. It is a phenomenon in which two objects play a part. (...) Now, when in a series of phenomena of any interest to us two objects are implicated, we naturally give names expressive of it to both the objects, and these are relative names. The two correlative names denote two different objects, the cause and the effect, or the parent and son; but though what they denote is different, what they connote is in a certain sense the same: both name connote the same set of facts (...). This set of facts, which is connoted by both the correlative names, was called by the old logicians the ground of the relations, *fundamentum relationis*.²⁴

The complex state of consciousness, referred to by Husserl, is thus the *fundamentum relationis*, in virtue of which we give relative (correlative) names to the corresponding objects (and we name these names as “relation”). The overall problem with this conception is that it *already implies a theory of reference* and therefore it is incompatible with the claim that the relationship between the presentation and its object is supposed to consist in the “intentional inexistence” of the intentional object in the presentation. Let us look at the details of this problem!

After referring to Mill, Husserl goes on to classify the relations based on the complex state of consciousness. Husserl takes the “thinking together”, as described by Mill, to mean the encompassing (*Umfassen*) two or more contents, which Husserl calls “fundaments” of the relation. Now it is possible, says Husserl, that this encompassing occurs intentionally or not intentionally. Apart from a reference to the corresponding parts of the *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* and the manifest use of Brentano's *termini technici*, Husserl says comparable little on what this difference of encompassing is supposed to consist of:

Eine jede [*sc.* eine physische] Relation ruht auf „Fundamenten“; sie ist ein komplexes Phänomen, welches in einer gewissen (nicht näher zu beschreibenden) Weise Teilphänomene umfaßt; aber keineswegs umfaßt eine jede Relation diese ihre Fundamente intentional, d.h. in jener spezifisch bestimmten Weise, in der ein „psychisches Phänomen“ (ein Akt des Bemerkens, Wollens etc.) seinen Inhalt (das Bemerkte, Gewollte etc.) umfaßt. Man vergleiche z. B. die Art, in welcher die Vorstellung, die wir Ähnlichkeit zweier Inhalte nennen, diese selbst einschließt, mit irgendeinem Fall der intentionalen Inexistenz, und man wird anerkennen müssen, daß es sich um ganz verschiedene Arten des Einschlusses handelt. (...)

Jede dieser Relationen repräsentiert ein eigenartiges „psychisches“ Phänomen (in der hier zugrunde liegenden Bedeutung dieses Terminus) und gehört mit Bezug darauf in dieselbe Hauptklasse. (...)

²⁴ Mill, 1869, vol. II. pp. 8-9 (I suppose that the 1878-79 edition (see Hua XII 582) is a reprint of the 1869 edition.)

Auf der anderen Seite steht eine zweite Hauptklasse von Relationen, welche dadurch charakterisiert ist, daß hier das Relationsphänomen ein „*psychisches*“ ist.²⁵

Husserl will later complain that he has here confused the relation itself (the relational attribute) with the fundamentals of the relation, that is, he has confused the contents that are encompassed with the phenomenon that results from the encompassing.²⁶ While that complaint is undeniable true, the bigger problem is that Husserl seems to forget that intentionality is not solely a special mode of encompassing, but a *mode of encompassing which is introduced in order to account for the relationship between the presentation and its objects*. It is, of course, possible to further investigate the structure of the complex state of consciousness, and the “thinking together” of the contents could be, naturally, analysed in terms of the special mode of “inexistence” which is peculiar of the intentional acts. This analysis, furthermore, will go beyond what Mill intends, and it will further necessitate to distinguish between the parts which form the complex and the resulting complex (as it is exactly signalled by Husserl's retrospective critical remark). However, when Mill explains the origin of the relation via a complex state of the consciousness, he already supposes that the components of this complex state gives rise to names which denote real objects (and connote the components themselves), in other words, he *already makes use of a theory which substitutes the theory of intentionality*.

IV – *On the Possibility of a Relational Account of Intentionality*

Quite interestingly, Brentano's concept of intentionality could be well harmonised with a theory of relations which is very close to that of Mill – *though not in the way Husserl attempted*. Even more interestingly, this was presented by Brentano himself in the course of his lectures on psychology. At that time Husserl was already in Halle, though some signs indicate that he, at least to some degree, must have been familiar with Brentano's conception of intentionality as a relation.²⁷

²⁵ Hua XII 329-330

²⁶ In the *Philosophie der Arithmetik* he says: „*Um nun unseren Sprachgebrauch zu fixieren setzten wir fest, daß unter « Relation » jenes komplexe Phänomen, welches die Grundlage für die Bildung der relativen Attribute bildet, und daß unter « Fundament der Relation » [...] jeder der bezogenen Inhalte zu verstehen ist.*“ (Hua XII 67) Even more telling is another retrospective remark made by Husserl: „*Meine Unterscheidung in der Philosophie der Ar<ithmetik> zwischen primären Relationen (oder besser verknüpfungen, Komplexionen) und psychischen (intentionalen) Relationen scheint Verwandtschaft zu haben mit Meinongs Unterscheidung zwischen realen und idealen Relationen (und Komplexionen). Zunächst bemerke ich, daß ich in der genannten Jugendschrift das Wort Relation im Sinn Mill's nehme und demgemäß mit Komplexion identifiziere. [...] Und diesen Bewußtseinszustand selbst nenne ich dort (wenig passend) Relation, und erkläre ausdrücklich, daß er nicht bloß als ein intentionales Erlebnis, als ein Akt zu fassen sei, sondern als gleichwertig mit Phänomen überhaupt. Zwei Inhalte sind in Relation, zwei Inhalte sind Teil eines Phänomens, sagt also dasselbe.*“ (K I 19 / 16a The manuscript itself is not dated. Schuhman conjectures (see Husserl-Chronik p. 31) that it might have been written on the occasion of the above mentioned correspondence with Meinong in 1891.)

²⁷ Brentano lectured on descriptive psychology three times between 1887/88 and 1890/91. Husserl was in the possession of a (partial) college note from the 1887/88 lecture of Brentano made by Dr. Hans

Let us see how Brentano himself has explained intentionality in terms of a theory of relations in his 1890/91 *Psychognosie* lectures, just four years after Husserl had studied at him.

1. Vor allem ist es eine Eigenheit, welche für das Bewußtsein allgemein charakteristisch ist, daß es immer und überall, d.h. in jedem seiner ablösbaren Teile eine gewisse Art von Relation zeigt, welche ein Subjekt zu einem Objekt in Beziehung setzt. Man nennt sie auch „intentionale Beziehung“. Zu jedem Bewußtsein gehört wesentlich eine Beziehung.

2. Wie bei jeder Beziehung finden sich daher auch hier zwei Korrelate. Das eine Korrelat ist der Bewußtseinsakt, das andere das, worauf er gerichtet ist.

Sehen und Gesehenes,

Vorstellen und Vorgestelltes (...) usw.

Bei diesen Korrelaten zeigt sich, wie schon Aristoteles hervorhob, die Eigentümlichkeit, daß das eine allein real, das andere dagegen nichts Reales ist. So wenig ein gewesener Mensch, so wenig ist ein gedachter etwas Reales. Der gedachte Mensch hat darum auch keine eigentliche Ursache und kann nicht eigentlich eine Wirkung üben, sondern indem der Bewußtseinsakt, das Denken des Menschen gewirkt wird, ist der gedachte Mensch, sein nichtreales Korrelat, mit da. Trennbar sind die Korrelate nicht von einander, außer <wenn sie> distinktionell <sind>.

(...) 3. Erläuterungen des Ausdrucks Objekt: etwas innerlich Gegenständliches ist gemeint. Draußen braucht ihm nichts zu entsprechen. Zur Verhütung von Missverständnissen mag man es „inwohnendes“ „immanentes“ Objekt nennen.²⁸

This text, which is usually considered as a manifestation of the *received view* of Brentano's theory of intentionality, can be interpreted along the lines of the new conception of his theory of intentionality. This interpretation, which was pioneered by Werner Sauer²⁹, is basically a re-investigation of Brentano's underlying theory of relations. When we read at Brentano, that “*Wie bei jeder Beziehung finden sich daher auch hier zwei Korrelate*“, it is compelling to take in in the sense of the classical, simplest theory of relations, namely that Brentano here speaks about the two entities which are related to each other. „*Diese Sichtweise auf Brentano zu übertragen – says Sauer –, heißt aber, den Aristotelischen Hintergrund*

Schmidkunz (archival signature Q 10). Moreover, there exists some preserved notes taken by Husserl, probably from Brentano's 1884/85 WS lecture on *Elementary Logics and its Necessary Reform*, which already present intentionality as a relation: „*Die Relationen auf psychischen Gebiet [...] I. Die intentionalen Relationen Solcher gibt es 3 Klassen: Vorstellungen, Urteile, Liebe und Haß. [...] Von diesen Relationen gilt der Satz, daß ihr einer Terminus real, der andere nicht real ist. II. Die Relationen der Gleichheit und Verschiedenheit. Die Verhältnisse der Quasi-Gleichheit. Auf diesem Verhältnis der Quasi-Gleichheit beruht der Begriff des Wirklichen. Quasi-Gleichheit besteht zwischen dem zeitlich Modifizierten und dem nicht Modifizierten, ferner zwischen dem intentional Modifizierten und dem, was nicht modifiziert ist. (Immanentes Objekt – das äußere Objekt, das diesem entspricht). Das nicht Modifizierte im Unterschied vom Modifizierten heißt das Wirkliche.*“ (K I 19 / 3a)

²⁸ Brentano, 1982, 21-22

²⁹ See Sauer, 2006

*seines Denkens über relationale Sachverhalte zu ignorieren.*³⁰ According to Aristotle, claims Sauer³¹, there is a categorical difference between the substances related to each other (like Simmias and Socrates) and the relational properties considered as unary predicates (like “smaller-than”, “greater-then”). A relational state of affairs thus consists of two *relata*, that is, two substances, and two *correlata*, that is, two entities existing only in a modified sense. This makes it easy to interpret the case of intentional relation: One of the *correlata*, as Brentano said, is the act of the consciousness. As with every relation, always exists two correlates. The second *correlatum*, which always exists, is an inseparable part of the conscious act: “the seen”, “the presented”, „*das, worauf er [der Bewußtseinsakt] gerichtet ist*“. But it is only a *correlatum*, not the related substance itself!

Now, it is the *correlata* which always exists, and the *relata* could easily be non-existing. What are these *relata*? Let us look very closely what Brentano says in the opening paragraph of the citation: „*es [das Bewußtsein] immer und überall [...] eine gewisse Art von Relation zeigt, welche ein Subjekt zu einem Objekt in Beziehung setzt.*“ The *relata* are the subject and the object, the latter of them could easily be non-existing (like the centaur). “*Es ist nun leicht, das hinter der ontologischen Deutung der Intentionalitätsthese beim vorreistischen Brentano stehende Mißverständnis herauszustellen: Es ist einfach die Verwechslung der Korrelate mit den Relata*“ – concludes Sauer.³²

The similarity between this explanation of the intentional relation and the theory of relation Husserl is seeking to find in Mill is manifest: the *relata* are related in virtue of contents in the consciousness. It would be therefore eminently possible to reconstruct Brentano's relational theory of intentionality in the framework of the theory Husserl is pursuing: it is the complex state of consciousness in virtue of which an external object stands in relation to the subject. However, Husserl takes a totally different path when he tries to consider intentionality as a particular way of the togetherness of the contents.

V – Some Refinements in Husserl's Manuscript Notes on Mill and Lotze

Husserl, it seems, both oversees that Mill's theory of relations already implies a particular view on the relationship between contents of the consciousness and objects, a question which is supposed to address by intentionality itself, and he also missed the opportunity to rely on Brentano's conception of intentionality in the

³⁰ Sauer, 2006, 21-22

³¹ See Sauer, 2006, 21-23

³² Sauer, 2006, 23. A further advantage of his interpretation is that it makes clearly visible where the difference between Brentano's early (the so-called pre-reistic) and later (the so-called reistic) position really lies: In both phases Brentano denied that a relation necessitates the existence of two *relata*. However, in his later phase he thought that the second *correlatum*, the inseparable part of the conscious act is merely a fictional entity resulting from the abuse of language. When doing so, Brentano has essentially returned to Aristotle's position, who warned against the supposition of a *correlatum* in the case of the thought-relation. (Cf. Sauer, 2006, 22sq)

terms of a very similar theory of relations. The importance of this recognition is, methinks, not to identify some kind of “error” on Husserl's side, but to gain insight into how complex, how multi-faceted his early thought was, and to recognize how many separate influencing factors are present at the same time. I will return to the possible lessons such recognition could provide later.

I have already highlighted that Husserl conceives intentionality as a special way of encompassing contents. Let us further investigate this special role of intentionality! In a manuscript note which stems from a convolute written in the years around the completing of the *Über den Begriff der Zahl*, Husserl is clearly aware of the disadvantages of John Stuart Mill's constant references to outer objects in his psychology:

Dann geht es Seite 58 Gomp<erz> weiter:³³ „Es gibt in alle dem was die das Verhältnis bezeichnenden Worte ausdrücken, nichts, was sich nicht in Zustände des Bewusst<eins> auflösen ließe; wobei äußere Gegenstände ohne Zweifel durchgängig als die Ursachen vorausgesetzt werden, die einige dieser Bewusstseinszustände hervorrufen und Geister als die Subjekte, die sie insgesamt erfahren, wobei aber weder die äußeren Gegenstände noch die Geister ihr Dasein anders als durch Zustände des Bewusstseins kundgeben.“

Dieser Hinweis auf äußere Ursachen welche einige jener Bewusstseinszustände welche das Fundament im Sinne Mill's bilden, hervorrufen, haben doch bei der Beschreibung des allgemeinen Charakters der Relation nichts zu tun. Jedenfalls gehören sie nicht zum Begriff der Relation überhaupt. Dieser beständige Hinweis auf äußere Gegenstände trübt die Darstellung in der Logik [*sc.* das Werk von J. St. Mill]. Darum ist eben die Darstellung in der Analysis [*sc.* das Werk von James Mill] besser und wissenschaftlicher, da sie sich direkt an die Phänomene hält und darum psychologischer ist.³⁴

An expression of dislike is, of course, in itself insufficient as a delineation against an unwanted consequence of a philosophical position. It is to be asked whether Husserl succeeds in constructing a concept of relation which avoids this pitfall and which clarifies the position that is assigned to intentionality in his early theory of relations.

An another note in the above-mentioned convolute of manuscripts further corroborates that for Husserl the focus was on the being-together of the contents:

Mill gebraucht den Ausdruck Bewusstseinszustand (state of mind) in demselben Umfang wie wir den Ausdruck Phänomen. Es ist also nicht etwa ein geistiger Zustand als psychischer Akt derjenige, was hier gemeint ist. Ich betone dies hier, weil in der Tat eine Reihe hervorgehender Philosophen die Beziehung als 'psychisches Phänomen' angesehen haben. So zum Beispiel Lotze. Nach der Mill'schn Erklärung fällt der Begriff Relation zusammen mit dem Begriff des Ganzen in dem weitesten Sinn. Inhalte stehen in Relation wenn sie Teile eines Ganzen bilden; welcher Art übrigens dies Ganze sei; <gestr. ohne

³³ The sentence cited by Husserl appears at p. 58 of Th. Gomperz's “authorised translation” of J. St. Mill's *Logic* (Mill, 1872, vol. I p. 58), in the middle of the chapter on relations (Book I Section III Chapter IV, §§ 10-11). Husserl was in possession of this series by Th. Gomperz (archival signature BQ 318a).

³⁴ K I 32 / 6b

sinnliche> die Beschränkung die Mill macht, das nämlich nur zwei Inhalte gegeben seien, ist unnötig, ja hinderlich.³⁵

Unlike in his retrospective critique, which was cited above, here Husserl is keen to classify relations as phenomena. There is though a certain crumbling in his terminology: he calls the opposite class “mental state”, “psychical act” or “psychical phenomenon”, so it might be helpful to consider what Hermann Lotze, whom Husserl mentions as a representing the opposite view, says about relations (*Beziehungen*): „jede Beziehung, indem sie zwei Glieder verbindet, enthält den Gedanken einer Stellung jedes dieser Glieder innerhalb dieser Beziehung selbst, und die Stellung braucht nicht für beide dieselbe zu sein, sie wird im Gegentheil am häufigsten verschieden, das eine Glied das Umfassende, Ganze, Bedingende, das andere das Umfaßte sein, der Theil, das Bedingte.“³⁶

Husserl's opposition to Lotze is curious, since by postulating two positions (*Stellungen*), each for the corresponding *relata*, Lotze seems to imply a quite similar theory of relations. In order to identify what Husserl is combating in Lotze, an another location could be helpful (also recorded by Husserl in his manuscript): „[solche Beziehungen]...entstehen, wenn unsere ganz willkürliche Aufmerksamkeit irgend zwei Elemente oder vielmehr deren Vorstellungen mit einander in eine ihnen selbst ganz gleichgültige und unwesentliche Berührung bringt.“³⁷ Although this characterisation is offered by Lotze only in respect to a certain class of relations, Husserl, not unlike other philosophers in their relationship to their contemporaries, perceives only what is very similar to his position, and focuses clearly on the remaining difference: though it would be possible to draw a parallel between Mill's and Lotze's theory of relation, there is a remarkable difference, namely that Lotze's requires the active taking of a position by the consciousness (this seems to be intended by his chosen term „*Stellung*“).

What Husserl combats in Lotze is therefore his involving of an active moment of the consciousness. Against that, Husserl conceives the relation purely as some contents being together: “the notion of the relation coincides with the notion of the whole, taken in the broadest sense.”

It is finally to be examined whether this theory of Husserl, considered to be as close to the simple being together of contents as it is possible, is capable of accounting for the intentionality. First of all, it should be noted that Husserl, as it was already highlighted, misses the opportunity, prelineated by Brentano himself, to account for intentionality as a relation by considering the contents of the

³⁵ K I 32 / 42a

³⁶ Lotze, 1874, 22. The first part of the sentence, along with a reference to „*Logik 22*“ is noted by Husserl in the above-mentioned convolute (K I 32 / 17b). An edition of this book of Lotze (1880) was in Husserl's possession (archival signature: BQ 285).

³⁷ Lotze, 1883, 18. The whole passage is noted at K I 32 / 17b with the reference „*Dictate über Metaphysik Seite 18*“. Husserl was in possession of a copy of this edition (archival signature: BQ 283)

consciousness to be the corresponding *correlata*. Instead, Husserl opts for treating intentionality as being merely a mode of encompassing, of incorporation, of “inexistence.” Meanwhile, as I have mentioned in the beginning of this section, he seems to neglect the conceptual apparatus of intentionality when speaking about the relationship between presentations and its real-world object.

It might seem that the use of intentionality purely as a mode of encompassing, though not faithful to the intention of Brentano, is still a conceptual possibility. This is however not true. By introducing intentionality as a mode of encompassing Husserl posits a difference in the simple being together of the contents, originally envisaged by Mill. This difference implies different strata in the complex state of consciousness, since, to confine ourselves to Husserl's own examples, the willing and the willed definitely belongs to different layers. The use of intentionality as a mode of encompassing therefore tends to break up the simple structure of the contents of the consciousness and implies a structure that is similar to the structure of the act and its object. *It is only that Husserl does not treat this structure as being responsible for the relationship between the act of the consciousness and its object.*

VI - Conclusions

The claim that Brentano's notion of intentionality has influenced Husserl is, much in line with Schuhmann's characterisation, false. But, it has turned out, *both parts* of this claim are false, i.e. *Brentano's notion of intentionality differs from what it is usually supposed to be, and it was not Husserl's thinking about intentionality that Brentano notion of intentionality has influenced.* Brentano's concept of intentionality has not failed to exercise an impetus on Husserl's thought: Not only that Husserl makes occasional use of Brentano's technical terms related to intentionality, but he also tries to preserve the intentional inexistence as an operative concept when constructing his theory of relations. There is however a noteworthy difference: Husserl is not inclined to resort to the theory of intentionality when thinking about the relationship between the conscious acts and their objects.

The history of Husserl's notion of intentionality, and of his early philosophy in general, it seems, could be even more complicated than we would incline to think. I interpret these results as a call to a more differentiated account of the development of Husserl's early philosophy, and of his notion of intentionality in particular. The question might be asked why it is important to be aware of the heterogeneity of the sources and the complexity of the formation of Husserl's notion of intentionality. The importance of this recognition, methinks, stems from the fact that the development of Husserl's notion of intentionality is not only a piece of conceptual history, but a clue to the evaluation of his early work.

The early work of Husserl has seen many evaluations, sometimes quite rejective, focusing on the question whether Husserl's position is to be characterised

as realistic³⁸, metaphysically neutral³⁹ or idealistic.⁴⁰ Among the many factors such evaluations should consider, one is Husserl's notion of intentionality (or, in other words, his position about the relationship between the conscious acts and their objects). I believe that an investigation that incorporates the complexities hidden in this notion could show that many evaluative conclusions are, to a certain degree, *premature, because they disregard the heterogeneity of the traits in Husserl's thinking about the problems of intentionality and the transient nature of the (often aporetic) reconciliations he tries to achieve.* Such an investigation might also prove that all of these uncertainties and difficulties, are, much in accordance with Husserl's own characterisation, arrived at a satisfactory solution only after his breakthrough to transcendental phenomenology in 1906.

It is this longer investigation the present article has hopefully contributed to.

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| Hua XII | Edmund Husserl: <i>Philosophie der Arithmetik (1890-1901)</i> (Husserliana XII) (hrsg. Lothar Eley) (Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag: 1970) |
| Hua XVII | Edmund Husserl: <i>Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft.</i> (hrsg. Paul Janssen) (Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag: 1974) |
| Hua XXII | Edmund Husserl: <i>Aufsätze und Rezensionen (1890-1910)</i> (Husserliana XXII) (hrsg. Bernhard Rang) (Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag: 1979) |
| Husserl-
Chronik | Karl Schuhmann: <i>Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls.</i> (Husserliana Dokumente I) (Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag: 1977) |

³⁸ As it was widely conceived by Husserl's contemporaries in the so-called "phenomenological movement" of Göttingen and München. (See Stein, 2002 for a vivid account of that.)

³⁹ As advocated by D. Zahavi (see e.g. Zahavi, 2002).

⁴⁰ Most recently by J.-F. Lavigne, who claimed that a hidden subjective idealism is already present in Husserl's work before 1906. (Lavigne, 2005, e.g. 223). I think that the heterogeneity and inconclusiveness of the early writings renders such univocal judgements less tenable. For an illustration of that in this case, see H. Jacobs' critique of Lavigne's use of the *Psychologische Studien II* (Jacobs, 2007, 79-80). (It could be further added that the page in the *Psychologische Studien II* on the distinction between phenomenal and transcendent thing bears a question mark by Husserl (see Hua XII 444 ad 111:5-20); and also that this distinction is incompatible even with Husserl's own analysis about spatial perception in the preparatory notes for the *Psychologische Studien II*, which imply that the spatial object could not be equated with the sum of its intuitions (see Hua XXII 275:9-19, 282).)

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