



BRILL  
RODOPI

GRAZER PHILOSOPHISCHE STUDIEN 94 (2017) 332-358

Grazer  
Philosophische  
Studien  
brill.com/gps

# Knowing Things in Themselves

## *Mind, Brentano and Acquaintance*

*M. Oreste Fiocco*

University of California, Irvine  
*mfiocco@uci.edu*

### Abstract

A perennial epistemological question is whether things can be known just as they are in the absence of any awareness of them. This epistemological question is posterior to ontological considerations and more specific ones pertaining to mind. In light of such considerations, the author propounds a naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves, one that makes crucial use of the work of Brentano. After introducing the resources provided by Brentano's study of mind, the author reveals the ontological framework in which it takes place. Doing so is instrumental to illuminating acquaintance, the state that enables the direct engagement of a mind and some other thing. The author discusses this state and shows how it has the epistemic heft, with a Brentanian account of judgment, to provide the foundations of one's knowledge of the world. A naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge is open to a compelling objection; the author presents this objection with the means of undermining it. In conclusion, the author recurs to the opening theme of the primacy of ontology and suggests that familiar misgivings about knowing things in themselves are all based on questionable—and ultimately untenable—ontological presuppositions.

### Keywords

intentionality – acquaintance – Brentano – foundationalism – naïve realism – disjunctivism

## 1 Introduction

Consider the *world*, the all-inclusive totality encompassing one. One might wonder whether this world or the things it comprises can be known as they

are in themselves, that is, as they are in the absence of any awareness of them. Of course, the only access one has to things is via the means one has to know them. It is not possible, then, simply to compare a thing in itself with that thing as it is known in order to determine whether knowing it corrupts it in some way. One only ever engages (and could only engage) the thing as it is known. Thus, the question here regarding the bounds of one's knowledge of the world is whether to know a thing is ipso facto to modify it in some way—or construct it in the first place—or, at least, to introduce something mediate that might obscure that thing in itself.

In light of these considerations, it seems an answer to this crucial epistemological question is posterior to metaphysical investigation. Ontological inquiry is needed to determine what a *thing*, in the most inclusive sense, is.<sup>1</sup> Determining this provides an account of what, in utmost generality, the thing is that is supposed to be knowable and what the thing is that enables knowledge. Such ontological inquiry would also yield insight into the ways in which things are related and how they can relate to one another. What is also needed is more specific metaphysical inquiry directed at that certain kind of thing that enables knowledge of anything at all. Call such a thing a *mind*. Accounts of what a mind is and what it does would provide the basis of principled answers to how a mind can engage something in the world—how it enables knowledge—and whether this engagement is compatible with knowledge of a thing in itself.

If addressing the crucial epistemological question regarding the bounds of knowledge requires some understanding of mind, it is worthwhile to examine the work of Franz Brentano. I believe this seminal work, the font of modern philosophy of mind, contains the theoretical resources for an account on which things can be known pristinely and without mediation of sense data, concepts or anything else, that is, as they are in themselves. The immediacy of this account of knowledge makes it a variety of *direct realism*, more specifically, it is a version of *naïve realism*;<sup>2</sup> yet, in primary cases, one's justification

---

1 I take up such inquiry in my "What Is a Thing?"

2 *Direct realism* is the general position according to which one has immediate (in some sense) access to mind-independent things via perceptual experience. *Naïve realism* is a specific version of direct realism, according to which mind-independent objects—rather than representations thereof—are fundamental to an account of perceptual experience. Naïve realism can be contrasted with *intentionalism* (or *representationalism*), another version of direct realism. According to the intentionalist, a perceptual experience has accuracy conditions that must be met for that experience to be veridical; thus, the experience is fundamentally representational. Nonetheless, the experience does not involve the awareness of any representation or any intermediary. This is why the view is a version of direct realism. For a helpful discussion of these positions, see Genone 2016. In certain passages, Brentano seems to indicate that he

for believing things are as they appear is both non-inferential and internally accessible and so it is also a variety of traditional *foundationalism*.

Such a Brentanian account of knowing things in themselves might initially seem farfetched. There are supposed to be obvious problems with naïve realism, stemming from cases of illusion or hallucination. For the last several decades, foundationalism has had to vie with a style of objection that is widely supposed to be damning. The combination of naïve realism and foundationalism is thought to give rise to yet further problems, which even contemporary proponents of foundationalism deem insuperable. Moreover, and perhaps most pointedly, it seems clear from Brentano's best-known work that he rejects direct realism and, although he is a foundationalist, his foundationalism is of the sort that makes knowledge of anything beyond one's own mental states seem problematic. So the prospects of a *Brentanian* directly realist foundationalism might seem especially unpromising. Nonetheless, I argue that it is in Brentano's work that one finds the means for this sort of account of knowledge.

In order to see this, one must bear in mind, as pointed out above, that ontological issues—and more specific metaphysical ones pertaining to the nature of mind—are prior to epistemological ones, and appreciate that within a certain ontological framework standard objections to an account of knowing things in themselves are ineffectual. To the end of propounding this account, I first characterize, in §2, the resources provided by Brentano's study of mind. These resources are yielded by Brentano's project of descriptive psychology, a project whose goals hide the ontological framework in which it takes place. In §3, I expose this framework. Doing so is instrumental to illuminating *acquaintance*, the state that enables the direct engagement of a mind and some other thing. I discuss this state in §4, and in the following section, §5, show how it has the epistemic heft, with a Brentanian account of judgment, to provide the foundations of one's knowledge of the world. A naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge is open to a compelling objection, based on the ostensible subjective indistinguishability between veridical and non-veridical experiences. I present this objection in §6 with the means of undermining it. In the concluding §7, I recur to the opening theme of the primacy of ontology and suggest

---

is an *indirect realist*, holding that one's perceptual access to the world is mediated by a mental phenomenon. If so, Brentano is not a direct realist at all and, a fortiori, not an intentionalist in the sense relevant here (though he might be an intentionalist in some other sense). One of the purposes of this paper is to show how some of Brentano's theoretical apparatus provides the means for a plausible naïve realist account of perception. However, I certainly do not think Brentano avails himself of these means to adopt this view.

that familiar misgivings about knowing things in themselves are all based on questionable—and ultimately untenable—ontological presuppositions.

## 2 Insight and Innovation in the Work of Brentano

I must state at the outset that my interest here is not in Brentano per se. This is, then, by no means a work in Brentanian scholarship. Rather, I am interested in this ingenious thinker because one finds in his writings a fruitful view of mind and an original theory of judgment that are useful—within a certain ontological framework, one that Brentano seems to presume—in illuminating how one can engage the world in a particularly direct and intimate way. I do not take myself to be articulating Brentano's general position on how one engages the world via one's mind, and so it is irrelevant to my objectives if Brentano himself would reject my applications of his insights.

Brentano's magnum opus is *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Although his views underwent various changes and refinements over his career, this book contains the crux of those views, the basis of later development. As its title suggests, Brentano's stated object in the book is to establish, with "experience alone" as his teacher, "a single unified science of psychology", one that would be on equal standing with mathematics, physics, chemistry and physiology.<sup>3</sup> *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* contains a wealth of careful discussion and innovative views regarding mental phenomena and their study. Although an account of knowledge of things in themselves is clearly not among Brentano's goals in this work, I contend that it contains the theoretical resources for just such an account. In this section, I sketch the features of Brentano's theory of mind and mental phenomena that make feasible the account.

### *Intentionality*

The notion most associated with Brentano is *intentionality*. The use of this notion is his key insight. Though certainly insightful, its use cannot really be regarded as innovative for, as Brentano himself notes, he is merely reintroducing a scholastic notion from the Middle Ages. The notion is key because it provides him with the means of defining the very subject matter of psychology. According to him, one is aware of but two sorts of thing, *physical* and *mental phenomena*. (I maintain below that one is aware of much more, but that an account of this awareness is beyond the purview of psychology, Brentano's

---

3 See the Foreword to the 1874 edition, included in the 1995 Routledge edition. All references to this work are to the latter.

focus here.) Brentano considers several ways of distinguishing these two sorts, but concludes the best is in terms of the *intentional inexistence*—or *immanent objectivity*—of mental phenomena: each such phenomenon is directed towards or about something (which might or might not exist). Physical phenomena, for example “a color, a figure, a landscape which I see, a chord which I hear, warmth, cold, odor which I sense,” (Brentano 1874, 79–80) do not display such a pointing beyond themselves. Psychology is devoted to obtaining an account of one’s awareness of mental phenomena, as well as to classifying them and articulating their relations.

Despite this foundational role that intentionality plays in his enterprise, Brentano says nothing about it *per se*. Indeed, the term ‘intentionality’ does not appear in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. This leaves quite open how to understand the notion. Given his initial use, one might be tempted to regard intentionality as a feature of a mental phenomenon, that is, of a mental state, to wit, the relational feature that makes that state about something or the (relational) feature that state exhibits when it is so directed. Such construals of intentionality as a feature of a mental state seem largely taken for granted in contemporary discussions of the philosophy of mind.

I believe they are misguided. To regard intentionality as a relational feature of a mental state—or as constitutively *relational*—yields intractable problems in connection to mental states about what does not exist. More importantly, if one accepts (as Brentano does and I do) that intentionality is in some sense essential to the mental, then to regard intentionality as in the first instance a feature of a mental state is to overlook how there are such exceptional states at all. There are, I submit, intentional states because there are minds. Thus, intentionality should be regarded not as a feature of a mental state, but rather as a feature of a mind. It is the capacity, the definitive feature of a mind, to be related to another thing in a unique way: to be related so as to allow consideration. A mind just is a thing with intentionality, and it is the only such thing.<sup>4</sup> There is, then, no accounting for the unique relation intentionality enables except in mental terms. Although, in appropriate circumstances, intentionality enables a unique relation, the capacity is not relational *per se*. It is non-relational in

---

4 Thus, I concur with Uriah Kriegel’s interpretation of Brentano that intentionality is a feature of the subject of a mental act, rather than a mental state, but disagree that this is the feature of *phenomenal intentionality*, a felt directedness, and think that Kriegel overstates his point when he claims that intentionality “has nothing to do with mental states’ capacity to track elements in the environment.” (Kriegel (forthcoming): Chapter 2) Intentionality, as I understand it, is the capacity that gives rise to phenomenal intentionality and also makes possible any state that tracks elements in one’s environment.

the sense that intentionality, this capacity, does not need a relatum, something in addition to its bearer, to exist or to be manifest. As I take up below, this understanding of a mind and of intentionality is consistent with what Brentano writes in the opening pages of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, and the framework it illustrates is crucial to an account of knowledge of things in themselves.

### *A Heterodox Tripartite Classification of Mental Phenomena*

Brentano argues that there are no unconscious mental states: no mental state that is not the object of some mental state. Furthermore, he argues that one is infallible with respect to one's own mental states as revealed through *inner consciousness* and judged via *inner perception*. He considers arguments that purport to establish that the latter is infallible, but dismisses these as fallacious, concluding that its infallibility is "immediately evident ... Thus, there is no need to justify our confidence in inner perception." (Brentano 1874, 140) So there are some mental states that are evident without further justification from other mental states (or anything else). One sees here Brentano's allegiance to a principal tenet of foundationalism.

Two more significant insights in Brentano's work are a heterodox<sup>5</sup> classification of mental phenomena and an account of the dependent relations among these classes. According to Brentano, both the classification and the relations are revealed by inner consciousness. What it reveals is that "Every mental act is conscious; it includes within it a consciousness of itself. Therefore, every mental act, no matter how simple, has a double object, a primary and a secondary object. The simplest act, for example the act of hearing, has as its primary object the sound, and for its secondary object, itself, the mental phenomenon in which the sound is heard. Consciousness of this secondary object is three-fold: it involves a presentation of it, a cognition of it and a feeling toward it." (Brentano 1874, 153–154) Thus, there are but three classes of mental phenomena: presentations, judgments and emotions (what Brentano calls "phenomena of love and hate"). Each mental state is a complex of all three classes; in the simplest case, a mental phenomenon is a presentation—as basis—a judgment with respect to this basis, and a positive or negative emotion toward it.<sup>6</sup>

5 Brentano's classificatory scheme is different from the orthodoxy of Aristotle or that of Kant, which was adopted by most of his contemporaries; it cannot be considered innovative, for the scheme is shared by Descartes (though Brentano did demur to certain details of the Cartesian scheme).

6 Brentano later rejected this view that every mental state includes an emotion. I set this detail aside, for it is not relevant to the substance of my discussion.

### *An Original Theory of Judgment*

One might be dubious of this last point, regarding the inherent treble complexity of each mental phenomenon, which I present as a significant insight. Consider the straightforward sort of case that Brentano introduces to illustrate the point: an act of hearing. In regards to such an act, the appropriate attendant judgment (in normal circumstances) would be affirmative; through inner consciousness one simply *accepts* the act of hearing (and thereby the sound heard). On the standard account of judgment, though, a judgment consists in the combination of two things: one, the subject of the judgment—the second, some property of the first. In this case of simple acceptance, however, it seems the only relevant property is *existence*. Awareness would then consist of combining this act of hearing with *existence*. Yet not only is *existence* suspect as a property, the supposition that anyone, even the smallest child, must have the concept of existence (which would be needed to combine the property of existence with something) and must apply it to an act of hearing in order to be aware of this act—that is, in order to hear—is incredible.

Considerations such as these lead to what is perhaps Brentano's greatest innovation, to wit, an original theory of judgment. By means of this theory, he is able to defend the foregoing point about the treble complexity of each mental phenomenon. There are two key features of this novel theory. The first is that every judgment is ultimately *existential*, pertaining to the existence or non-existence of something. However, in order to avoid the sort of problem just considered, Brentano denies that existence is part of the content of the judgment. Some thing is not judged to be existent via the application of the concept of existence to that thing; its being an existent thing is not what is judged. Rather, in the judgement, that thing is judged to be and accepted (in a positive case) as existing; as being existent is how the thing is judged therein, and this is the mark of judgment.<sup>7</sup> Despite every judgment being existential, neither existence—nor any less contentious property—need be included in judgment. Consequently, since a thing itself can be the appropriate content of a judgment,<sup>8</sup> a judgment need not involve the combination of a subject

7 Kreigel expresses this pivotal insight in the following way: “The existence-affirmation is not an aspect of *what* the judgment presents but *how* it presents” (Kriegel (forthcoming): Chapter 4). Johannes Brandl expresses the point in terms of the *content* versus the *quality* of the judgment: a judgment, like other mental states, has a thing as content, but has the distinctive quality of *accepting* (*rejecting*) that thing as existent (or non-existent). (Brandl 2014) Both Brandl and Kriegel provide very useful expositions of Brentano's iconoclastic theory of judgment.

8 For much of his career, Brentano distinguished between the content (*Inhalt*) and the matter (*Materie*) of a judgment. The content of the judgment *the table exists* is supposed to be the

and property that is evaluable as true or false. Thus, the second key feature of Brentano's theory of judgment is that it is broadly *reistic* (or *objectual*) rather than propositional. One judges—accepts or rejects—things, not that things are thus-and-so. These two features make Brentano's theory of judgment quite different from any accepted by his predecessors or by almost every philosopher today.

Brentano says much in defense of his classification of mental phenomena, the treble complexity of each such state and, especially, his theory of judgment. For present purposes, I take these insights and this innovative theory for granted. My main objective is to show how they can be combined with an appropriate understanding of intentionality—in a certain ontological framework—to yield a naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves.

### 3 Descriptive Psychology or Ontology and a Metaphysics of Mind?

From the theoretical resources introduced in the previous section, one can develop a plausible naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves. This is likely surprising to anyone with some familiarity of the context in which these resources are presented. This context, however, merely hides an ontological framework indispensable to the proposed epistemology.

#### *Brentano's Apparent Phenomenalism, Clear Indirect Realism and Limited Foundationalism*

In as prominent a place as the analytical table of contents of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano writes: “*Physical phenomena can exist only phenomenally; mental phenomena exist in reality as well*”.<sup>9</sup> In the text of this section, Brentano concludes: “we will nevertheless make no mistake if in general we deny to physical phenomena any existence other than intentional

---

*being of the table*; the matter of this judgment is supposed to be the *table itself*. Given a suitable account of what a thing is, I do not believe the being of a thing is anything at all; if it is, it is merely that thing itself. Since the distinction between content and matter turns on what seems to me to be an untenable ontological distinction, I reject the former one (as Brentano came to, as well). Regardless of the distinction between content and matter, the key point in the text holds: a judgment need not involve the combination of a subject and property. I thank Guillaume Fréchette for discussion of Brentano's views here.

9 Book Two, Chapter 1, Section 7. Brentano 1874: vii.



existence," (Brentano 1874, 94) and adds in a subsequent section that mental phenomena are "the only phenomena which possess *actual existence* in addition to intentional existence." (Brentano 1874, 97–98) Earlier in the text, he states: "We have no right ... to believe that the objects of so-called external perception really exist as they appear to us. Indeed, they demonstrably do not exist outside of us. In contrast to that which really and truly exists, they are mere phenomena." (Brentano 1874, 10) Such claims certainly suggest a sort of idealism, a phenomenalism on which those things that appear to exist independently of any mind in fact are somehow constructed from mental phenomena.

These claims are puzzling in light of the many more passages in the text where, endorsing an indirect or representational realism familiar from modern philosophy, Brentano acknowledges physical things existing independently of any mind.<sup>10</sup> Still, even granting such things that give rise to one's experiences of physical phenomena, it is clear—at least at this point in his thinking<sup>11</sup>—that Brentano believes one can know little about them: "We can say that there exists something which, under certain conditions, causes this or that sensation. We can probably also prove that there must be relations among these realities similar to those which are manifested by spatial phenomena shapes and sizes. But this is as far as we can go. We have no experience of that which truly exists, in and of itself, and that which we do experience is not true. The truth of physical phenomena is, as they say, only a relative truth". (Brentano 1874, 19) Deeper in the text, he amplifies this indirect realism: "We can say that such realities exist and can attribute to them certain relative properties. But what and how they are in and for themselves remains completely inconceivable to us. Consequently, even if the physiology of the brain had reached its full development, it could give us no more information concerning the true nature of the realities with which these acquired dispositions are connected than pure psychological reflection could. It would tell us only about certain physical phenomena which are caused by the same unknown X." (Brentano 1874, 60)

As noted above, Brentano maintains that one is infallible regarding one's own mental states as revealed through inner consciousness. One's judgements about these states, regarding their contents and other qualities, are directly

10 For Brentano's faithful student and editor's, Kraus', vehement denial that Brentano was a phenomenalist, see *Ibid*: 94, 402.

11 In much later work, published posthumously (Brentano 1925), Brentano argues against Kant's claim that things in themselves are unknowable. This work remains untranslated from the original German. I thank Johannes Brandl for bringing relevant passages to my attention.

evident, requiring no justification from other mental states. It is obvious, then, that Brentano accepts immediate justification: one knows one's own mental states, and the justification for such knowledge is not inferred or derived. Presumably, for he suggests nothing to the contrary, Brentano thinks that justification for all of one's judgments in the end derives from one's (infallible) judgments about one's own mental states, and so he is a foundationalist.

Although Brentano acknowledges that one makes judgments regarding the existence and features of things in the world, he holds that these judgments are "blind". They are wholly unjustified and, though useful, are the result of instinct and become habitual.<sup>12</sup> If a blind judgment about something independent of one's mind were ever to acquire any justification, it seems it would come on the basis of a probabilistic inference. From the regularity of one's mental phenomena in certain circumstances, one would infer the likely presence of a uniform cause. However, unless the inductive principle on which such an inference is based were itself justified, it does not seem like any judgment on which it relies could be justified. Yet it is not obvious where the justification for such an inductive principle could be found. It seems unlikely, to say the least, that it would be found among one's mental phenomena, but it is only one's judgments concerning such states that need no further justification. Consequently, it seems one's justification and, hence, knowledge, cannot extend beyond the foundations of one's knowledge of one's own mental states. Brentano's foundationalism is, therefore, just the sort that threatens skepticism, casting doubt on the legitimacy of all judgments about anything beyond one's own mind.<sup>13</sup>

### *Different Projects vis-à-vis Mind*

In light of the foregoing, it seems that Brentano had little sympathy for direct realism (let alone naïve realism). He accepts that there are things existing independently of any mind, but seems to maintain these are largely unknowable. Defending direct realism is, then, certainly not among his goals in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Moreover, although he is clearly a

12 In several places in his editorial notes to Brentano 1874, Kraus attributes such a view to Brentano. However, at no point in this work does Brentano discuss "blind judgments". He does employ this notion in the fragments and correspondence collected in Brentano 1930. See pages 37, 38, 69, 75, 80 (page numbers refer to the 2009 e-Library edition).

13 Richard Fumerton, a foundationalist, attributes much of the resistance to foundationalism to the concern that it cannot avoid skepticism. See Fumerton 2001: 18–19. In the posthumous work cited in Note 11 above, Brentano, considering Hume, maintains that skepticism can be avoided by means of analytic judgments and probabilistic inferences. An evaluation of this claim is beyond the scope of this paper.

foundationalist, he seems to espouse a variety of this position that is not easily extended to justified belief about things beyond one's own mental phenomena. As such, his foundationalism appears ill-suited for an account of knowledge of things in themselves. These epistemological issues, however, are not Brentano's concern in this work.

Consider two projects vis-à-vis mind that one might undertake. One might restrict one's attention to features of a mind per se, thereby focusing exclusively on mental phenomena, things that depend for their existence on a mind. The goals of such a project might be to discern the variety of mental phenomena and their relations, *irrespective of anything beyond them*. Or one might consider a mind to determine, first, what such a thing is in order to focus on how such a thing relates to other things in the world, most of which do not depend for their existence on any mind. Here *what is beyond a mind is precisely the focus of the project*, for its purpose is to discern how a mind relates to these things (and vice versa). In the first project, connections between mind and world are irrelevant; in the latter, they are essential. Both projects are important if one is to understand not only the workings of a mind, but the place of mind in the world.

A survey of the contents of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* indicates that in this work Brentano's project is clearly of the former sort. Later, Brentano characterizes this project as *descriptive psychology*.<sup>14</sup> If one takes the crux of epistemology to be the relations between a mind and the world (and, perhaps, a subjective awareness of these), then given its limited scope and purposes, descriptive psychology is not epistemological. Indeed it is inimical to epistemology insofar as it disregards what is independent of any mind. Moreover, as noted in the introduction, epistemology is posterior to metaphysics, yet descriptive psychology is presented as eschewing metaphysics. At the very beginning of his book, Brentano characterizes psychology as the *science of the soul*, where a soul is a substance, "the substantial bearer of presentations and other activities which are based upon presentations." (Brentano 1874, 5) This is a metaphysical characterization of the subject, with a focus on the

---

14 Brentano distinguishes *descriptive psychology* from *genetic psychology*. See Brentano 1982. The latter is only indirectly (if at all) a metaphysical-cum-epistemological project of the second sort that I characterize above. The primary focus of genetic psychology is the relations between mental phenomena and the physiological states of an organism. A failure to recognize in his early work a distinction between descriptive psychology and a metaphysical-cum-epistemological project pertaining to mind (of the sort pursued in later work, e.g. Brentano 1925) perhaps explains Brentano's puzzling claims redolent of phenomenalism.

substance that has mental phenomena, raising the questions of what exactly this substance is, what a thing more generally is, and how this substance is related to other things.

But Brentano, well aware of the leeriness most have toward metaphysics (then as today),<sup>15</sup> and not wanting to undermine from the outset his efforts to establish psychology as a serious science, seeks to downplay the metaphysics in his investigation. In a conciliatory move to accommodate those who are suspicious of a soul—and metaphysics more generally—Brentano offers a different characterization of psychology: “We, therefore, define psychology as the *science of mental phenomena*.” (Brentano 1874, 19. The italics are mine.) Mental phenomena, those “‘mental states,’ ‘mental processes,’ and ‘mental events,’ as inner perception reveals them to us,” (Brentano 1874, 10) are taken to be indubitable and, as such, unimpeachable. This alternative characterization, which is presented as a slight change of focus, in fact has profound theoretical consequences. In this change, one has the source of the method of phenomenological reduction, the seeds of Husserlian *epoché*. A science of mental phenomena, of dependent features of a mind, is an investigation that is, by design, cut off from the world independent of mind and, thus, rather limited.

However, one cannot undertake any substantive inquiry without some ontological assumptions (too often left implicit) pertaining to what a thing is and how things relate so as to compose the world. There are, therefore, ontological and more specific metaphysical underpinnings in Brentano’s work. These are revealed by his original characterization of psychology, as the science of the soul, and of his use of the notion of substance. Both indicate an Aristotelian framework (and, of course, Brentano’s thought is steeped in Aristotelianism). Given such a framework, the world consists of *natured entities*—things that are constrained in their being and are so-constrained simply because of what they are—standing in necessary relations. These entities, including the relations to which they give rise, structure the world and are as they are independently of the organizational or classificatory activity of any mind. They are the ultimate bases of rational investigation. I am sympathetic to just such an ontology and accompanying metaphysics, and have defended both elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

Within this Aristotelian framework, the resources introduced in the preceding section can be deployed in order to answer the crucial epistemological question regarding the bounds of one’s knowledge of the world. I argue

15 Speaking of psychology, Brentano states: “There is no area of knowledge, with the single exception of metaphysics, which the great mass of people look upon with greater contempt.” (Brentano 1874, 3).

16 See Fiocco 2015 and my “What Is a Thing?”. Also see Note 34 below.

that the means are here for a plausible naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves. As noted above, the account I give is not supposed to be Brentano's; from this point my project ceases to be in any way exegetical. It is, nevertheless, *Brentanian*, an application of Brentano's insights and innovation in an attempt to answer a perennial philosophical question.

#### 4 Intentionality and Acquaintance

It has proven difficult to say much substantial and, thus, illuminating about the relational mental state that is supposed to enable direct engagement between a mind and some other thing (be it a property, a fact or something more mundane, such as a tree), a state traditionally called *acquaintance*.<sup>17</sup> Usually those who make theoretical use of this state rely on a negative characterization—acquaintance is *unmediated* or *immediate*—or a spatial metaphor—it puts a thing *in* mind or *before* it—or a combination of the two—when a mind is acquainted with a thing there is *nothing between* the two.<sup>18</sup> The state is supposed to be simple and, hence, unamenable to definition or robust characterization; those who make use of it seem to acquiesce to this.<sup>19</sup>

Yet one might want more for a state that is supposed to play a crucial role in an account of how a mind relates to things. Indeed, one needs more if one is to defend the controversial claim that it is via acquaintance that one can know things pristinely and without mediation. The account of intentionality

17 The *locus classicus* of this tradition is Russell 1910–11. There are many who make use of acquaintance in contemporary discussions. See, for just a few examples, BonJour 2003, 2001; Brewer 2011, 1999; Chalmers 2010; Fales 1996; Fumerton 2001a, 1995; Gertler 2012, 2011, 2001; Martin 2001. For an older source, see Lewis 1946.

18 See, for one instance, Fumerton 2001a: 14. Fumerton acknowledges that metaphors here are “as likely to be misleading as helpful.”

19 It is interesting to note that although in general Russell treats acquaintance as simple and unanalyzable, he is not committed to it being so. As an anonymous referee pointed out to me, in his 1913 unpublished *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, Russell says, “It is not necessary to assume that acquaintance is unanalyzable, or that subjects must be simple; it may be found that a further analysis of both is possible. But I have no analysis to suggest, and therefore formally both will appear as if they were simple, though nothing will be falsified if they are found to be not simple.” (45) This referee also observed that in some places Russell characterizes acquaintance in terms of *presentation*, suggesting the influence of Brentano and Brentano's student, Meinong (whose work was introduced to Russell by his teachers James Ward and G.F. Stout).

as a (non-relational) capacity of a mind, proposed above, considered within an Aristotelian framework provides the basis of a robust characterization of acquaintance.

### *Acquaintance as Passive Intentionality*

So assume that a thing just is a natured entity: it is constrained in its being and is as it is because of what it is, and because it is as it is, it (necessarily) relates to other things as it does. The world comprises all the things there are and is structured by them, by the relations holding among things in virtue of what they are. Within this natural structure are minds. A mind is a thing with intentionality, the capacity to be related to (and to relate to) some other thing in a unique way—to be related so as to allow consideration. According to Brentano, a mind has three general classes of state, so a mind can interact with other things in but three ways: it can present a thing, judge a thing or love (or hate) a thing. As Brentano notes, among these states, presentation “deserves the primary place, for it is the simplest of the three phenomena, while judgement and love always include a presentation within them.” (Brentano 1874, 266) A state of presentation is, then, the basic link between a mind and some other thing. It is in terms of presentation that acquaintance is to be understood.

Throughout *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano disregards significant differences between *imaginings* and *sensations*, classifying both as presentations. These two specific classes of presentational state are indeed similar in important respects: both introduce a thing to a mind, neither involves the positive–negative duality of judgment or feeling, neither in itself seems to depend on a judgment or feeling. For the purposes of descriptive psychology, then, it seems entirely appropriate to subsume the two states under presentation. However, if one’s interests are epistemological, in examining the connections between a mind and things independent of mind, the differences between these two kinds of state become salient. The most important of these is that an imagining requires a certain spontaneity—a mental activeness—that a sensation seems not to.

This difference among presentations can be explained and thereby elucidated in terms of intentionality. Like other capacities, intentionality can be either passive or active. Consider the capacity of a stone to both be warmed and to warm or that of wax to be shaped and to shape. Hence, in virtue of a single capacity, in some circumstances a thing can be the agent, and in others the recipient. Consequently, a mind—something with the capacity of intentionality—can passively yield a thing in presentation, yet it can also actively proffer a thing in presentation. It does both in virtue of intentionality.

So there are active and passive presentational states of mind. There also appear to be different kinds of passive presentational states. There are *sensations*, which occur when a mind is activated by something in space via one of the senses. There are also, it seems, *intuitions*, which occur when a mind is activated by something not in space (or not in time).<sup>20</sup> Call any state of passive presentational engagement of a mind *acquaintance*.

Acquaintance enables unmediated engagement between a mind and some other thing—there is nothing between the mind and that thing—because the mind is wholly passive, making no contribution to the engagement. There is no mental particular (like a sense datum), nor any representation produced that might occlude the engagement or even be constitutive of it. As presentational, the engagement is intentional, and so requires the existence of the mind so engaged, but given its passivity in acquaintance, the engagement also requires the existence of the thing with which the mind is engaged. Without either, this very state of acquaintance could not exist, and because the mind is wholly passive, the features of this state are determined by the natured entity acquainting itself with the mind. Thus, this relational state of a mind and thing could not be more intimate.

Intentionality itself, as a capacity, is not relational, but it is precisely this capacity that enables a mind to be—passively—in such an intimate relational state, one that requires the existence of the thing with which the mind is presentationally related. Nevertheless, it is this very capacity of intentionality that also enables a mind to be—actively—in a non-relational presentational state, as when one imagines a mountain of gold. Some might doubt that it is possible for a mind to be totally passive in its engagement with a thing. I address such doubts in the final section below.<sup>21</sup>

### *Acquaintance and Naïve Realism*

It is acquaintance that makes possible knowledge of things in themselves. From a metaphysical vantage, acquaintance is simply a relation between two things (in the most inclusive sense). Given that acquaintance is presentational, that is, intentional, one of these things must be a mind; however, the other relatum could be literally *anything*: a property, a familiar concrete object, a number, a kind, a fact, etc. Some things that contribute to the world depend for their existence on a mind and some do not; some exist in space, some do not; some exist in time, some do not; some have instances, some do not; some are bigger than a breadbox, some are not—the variety of things is staggering, but

20 Recall Russell, who maintained that one can be acquainted with universals.

21 In Fiocco 2015, I argue that such passive engagement must be possible.

each, qua thing, has the same status. Each, as a natured entity, makes its own contribution to the world (as determined by what it is). So each is as suitable as any other to be an object of acquaintance.

This account of acquaintance can address the misgivings of those who, while accepting acquaintance (as a state of immediate presentation), limit its application to features of a mind. Such philosophers reject a direct realist—and, a fortiori, a naïve realist—account of perception and would consequently deny that acquaintance can provide knowledge of things in themselves. Thus, Laurence Bonjour maintains that any account on which a mind can be acquainted with, say, a bell tower, is “metaphysically unintelligible. Phenomenalism and similar idealistic views aside, I simply do not understand how material objects, understood in a realist way, can be literally parts of experiences.” (Bonjour 2004, Note 32) The experience in question is, however, a (passive) relational presentational state; the bell tower can literally be part of it in the sense that that state could not be as it is—nor even exist—in the absence of the bell tower.

In the same vein, Bonjour insists that “Material objects, understood in a realist, non-phenomenalist way, are plainly outside the mind, metaphysically distinct from any sort of experience or awareness of them, and related to conscious experience only via a highly complicated causal chain. They are thus inherently incapable of being directly given to consciousness in the way that things like sense-data are claimed by the Cartesian to be.”<sup>22</sup> First of all, the spatial metaphor is inapt; nothing is literally inside or outside a mind. A mind is simply a thing with intentionality. A thing can relate no more closely, directly, intimately with a mind than by being intentionally related to it. Although something like a bell tower is certainly metaphysically distinct from any awareness of it—it is a mind-independent thing—this makes it no less suitable as an object of acquaintance. A mind can be acquainted with anything, and the specific features of that thing, in particular whether it can exist independently of a mind, is irrelevant to whether it can stand in a passive relational presentational state with a mind. Whether this intentional state is *causal* is an open question, depending on how one understands causation. Within an Aristotelian framework, as I am working in here, causation is an explanatory notion, to be understood in terms of the (necessary) connections among things as determined by what they are. In this light, the causal connection between a mind and a thing with which it is acquainted is quite simple: in virtue of its being natured, its existence as what it is, a thing activates the intentional capacity

---

22 Bonjour 2004: 356. Fumerton presses a similar concern against direct realism. See Fumerton 2001b: 76.



of a mind.<sup>23</sup> So, pace Bonjour, it is incorrect to claim that some things, such as familiar concrete objects, are inherently incapable of acquainting themselves with a mind.

There is nothing, then, with which a mind cannot be acquainted. However, if acquaintance is a completely passive relational presentational state, in that a mind makes *no contribution* to the relation (other than being a mind), then, in particular, a mind employs no concepts in being acquainted with something. Acquaintance is in no way conceptual, *nor even representational*.<sup>24</sup> This raises the question of whether this state is feasibly the basis of knowledge of anything.

## 5 Judgment and Foundationalism

Since acquaintance involves no concepts, and concepts are the means one has for differentiating and organizing one's experience—and, hence, the means of having reasons and making rational judgments about the world—one might think that acquaintance is not an epistemic state at all. Moreover, given that acquaintance is merely relational and not even representational, it seems this state is not of the right sort to imply or otherwise support one that is representational. Thus, if one presumes that knowledge must be representational, acquaintance could not support it. Were this the case, acquaintance would be epistemically inert. Yet, above, I maintain that it is acquaintance that makes knowledge of things in themselves possible. If this is so, some account is needed of how acquaintance can indeed yield knowledge of things in themselves, the foundation of one's knowledge of the world.

---

23 This simple causal process is certainly accompanied by distinct, much more complex (chemical, physiological, neurological, etc.) causal processes in the case of an embodied mind of the sort human persons presumably have.

24 Over his career, David Smith has given a good deal of attention to acquaintance, even devoting a book to this subject, see Smith 1989. As indicated by his most recent discussion, in Smith 2017, Smith takes acquaintance to have a complex structure partially understood in terms of (indexical) *content*. Thus, according to Smith, acquaintance is a crucially *representational* state, one that has *satisfaction conditions* that determine the *object* of that state. However, as I characterize it, acquaintance is in no way representational; rather, it is entirely and merely *relational*. It is this subtle yet important difference that makes my account of acquaintance—and not Smith's—compatible with naïve realism.

*Concerns about “the Given”*

It is precisely the concern that there can be no such account that has led to the widespread rejection of foundationalism over the last several decades. This concern is based on considerations first presented in a debate between Moritz Schlick and Carl Hempel<sup>25</sup> and developed famously by Wilfrid Sellars in his animadversions on “the given”. What Sellars decries as “the myth of the given” is the idea that there is acquaintance between a mind and something in the world—in the sense of engagement that is direct in being entirely independent of any other relation between that mind and the world—where such acquaintance provides the bases, the foundations, of all one’s knowledge of the world. His argument against the so-called myth is by no means straightforward.<sup>26</sup>

Its upshot, however, is that in the case of a putative foundational judgment, an example of knowledge justified by something with which a mind is acquainted, there are two distinguishable mental phenomena. There is the relational state of acquaintance—a presentation—and a judgment regarding this presentation. The former is supposed to justify the latter. The problem is this: On the one hand, if a presentation presents a thing as being a certain way, then that presentation seems suitable as justification, the basis, for the judgment that that thing is indeed that way. However, in this case, the presentation would, it seems, have to be conceptual insofar as it presents a thing as being a certain way. (One would need, at least, the concept of that way of being.) That presentation would not then be direct in the sense of being independent of any other relation between that mind and the world, for the presence and appropriate application of a concept seems to require prior engagement between that mind and things that fall under that concept. Moreover, if the presentation were conceptual—presenting a thing as being a certain way—then some justification for judging that thing to in fact be that way would now be needed. But such justification is precisely what the presentation was supposed to provide. It is implausible and, hence, unsatisfactory merely to assert that that thing must be as presented.

On the other hand, if the presentation does not present a thing as being a certain way, then it need not be conceptual, and so may be regarded as direct. Furthermore, it need not itself require some justification for judging it to be apt. But then the presentation is not suitable as justification, the basis, for a judgment. This is because a judgment is supposed to be a mental state with the content that something is a certain way. If the presentation does not present

---

25 See Schlick 1934, 1934/5 and Hempel 1934/5a, 1934/5b.

26 It is developed by many threads in a long and intricate essay. See Sellars 1956.

a thing as being a certain way, it can provide no support for any judgment. Therefore, in neither case, can a presentational state of acquaintance provide a justificatory foundation for knowledge.<sup>27</sup>

### *Embracing the Given*

The effect of this argument, in various guises, has been enormous. It is uncritically accepted by such influential figures as Karl Popper, Richard Rorty and Donald Davidson, as well as many others.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, anyone who attempts to defend foundationalism, of any variety, must contend with it.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the received cogency of the argument, it is easily undermined with Brentano's theory of judgment in combination with the foregoing account of acquaintance as passive intentionality. Thus, it does not present a problem to the naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge being propounded here. To see this, consider a purported case of foundational knowledge of a thing in itself, for example, my knowledge of the rectangular stone bell tower (with a bulbous patinated cupola) outside my window. Via my mind, I am acquainted with this bell tower. This acquaintance is a relational presentational state that, to indulge in a metaphor, just impresses the bell tower upon my mind. Passive in this engagement, my mind makes no contribution to it; in particular, it employs no concepts. (Concepts are, of course, employed in my articulation of this experience, but this is an act posterior to—and made possible by—the initial, passive confrontation with the bell tower.) The bell tower as it is is constitutive of this very state of acquaintance, so this rectangular stone bell tower is presented to my mind in all its complexity, though it need not be presented as a bell tower or as a rectangular thing or as one made of stone.

The state of acquaintance is, then, not conceptual; nothing is presented as being a certain way. Nevertheless, this state is a suitable basis—an apt justificatory foundation—for a judgment, to wit, the acceptance of the stone bell tower. Here Brentano's theory of judgment is crucial. On this theory, a judgment is not, in the first instance, a mental state with the content that something is

27 For other succinct accounts of Sellars' sprawling argument, see BonJour 2001: 23–24 and Fumerton 2001a: 13.

28 See Popper 1959: §§ 25–30, Rorty 1979: Chapters 3 and 4, Davidson 1983. For an account of the significance of the argument see Rorty's introduction to the Harvard University Press edition of Sellars 1956.

29 See, again, BonJour 2001 and Fumerton 2001a, for two prominent examples. For an excellent discussion of this style of argument, presented as the *Master Argument for coherentism*, see Pryor 2014.

a certain way (though there are the means here for more complicated judgments to this effect). Rather, it is a mental state of accepting (as existing) what is presented to one's mind. That the presentation does not present a thing as being a certain way is, therefore, irrelevant to its epistemic force. The judgment has, as a part, the presentation of a rectangular stone bell tower, which is as it is because the bell tower is as it is. Because the bell tower is constitutive of this state, the state could not present the bell tower incorrectly (nor could it exist without it). My justification for accepting the rectangular stone bell tower is that I am being presented with that very rectangular stone bell tower; the judgment is appropriate because it is the acceptance of the presentation, which must be correct. I could be in no better epistemic position with respect to knowing the stone bell tower. The presentation of it is accessible via inner consciousness, which cannot mislead, and the judgment is just the acceptance of this presentation (and thereby its object). In general, with regards to perception, one has reason to accept things as presented because the act of judgment has as part a presentational state, whose presence is indubitable and which could not be incorrect.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, one can have pristine knowledge of things and without any mediation, where one's justification for this is internally accessible and non-inferential. One's knowledge of these things in themselves can then serve as the foundation of further knowledge of the world, which just comprises all such things.

## 6 Acquaintance and Disjunctivism

This naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves, on which one's justification for knowing something in the world is an internally accessible state of acquaintance, is open to a pressing objection. Many philosophers, some of whom are staunch foundationalists, maintain that one cannot know directly mind-independent features of the world on the basis of internally accessible justification. This is because of the possibility of illusions or hallucinations, non-veridical presentational states that appear to be subjectively indistinguishable from veridical ones.

---

30 This is not to deny that one can be mistaken about the world around one. However, the complications involved in such cases need not be considered here. My focus is on the best case scenario in which one is in fact acquainted with something and one simply accepts this thing as it is.

The concern is that a case in which one is acquainted with a bell tower—and so knows the bell tower—is indistinguishable, from the perspective of the knower, from a case in which one is, say, hallucinating a bell tower (with the same appearance). Because the cases seem to be subjectively indistinguishable, the presentational states in each are presumably the same, and so any internally accessible justification one could have for knowing the bell tower must be available in both cases. However, since one cannot know a bell tower when one is merely hallucinating such a thing—and one has, it seems, just the same epistemic resources available by reflection in this case as one in which there actually is a bell tower—one cannot know via acquaintance the bell tower even when it is before one.<sup>31</sup>

This sort of objection to a naïve realist foundationalism is based on the mistaken presumption that the same epistemic resources are available to a subject in both veridical and non-veridical presentations. This is incorrect because the two presentational states are quite different, and these differences are relevant to their epistemic standing. In the present context, the differences between a state of acquaintance and an hallucination can be characterized in terms of the passivity of the former and the essential activity of the latter. Both states are intentional, in particular, presentational, and both have, perhaps, the same phenomenal feel. Nonetheless, a mind must do more to present a bell tower when none is there than when one is, and can just acquaint itself with that mind. This crucial difference distinguishes the states not only metaphysically, but also epistemically. The passive, relational state of acquaintance is factive, providing the best sort of justification for accepting the bell tower; the active non-relational hallucinatory state provides no justification. In recent work, several philosophers have defended an epistemological disjunctivism similar in general respects to the sort I sketch here.<sup>32</sup>

One might concede that a state of acquaintance and a similar hallucinatory state are indeed different, but press the objection by insisting that their differences are irrelevant epistemically. After all, despite these differences, they seem no more distinguishable via reflection, and if one's justification for accepting the bell tower is a veridical state that cannot be told apart from a non-veridical one, it seems one still has no justification considering only this state. This sort of objection presumes that one must in all cases be able to discriminate between relevant alternatives if one is to have (perceptual) knowledge.

---

31 Such an argument, presented by foundationalists, can be found at Bonjour 2004: 363 and is suggested at Fumerton 2001a: 15–16.

32 See, for example, Pritchard 2012, Byrne and Logue 2008, Snowdon 2005 and McDowell 1995.

In this case, the relevant alternatives are being acquainted with a bell tower before one and merely hallucinating a bell tower (when none is present). This presumption is deeply plausible, so there is no dismissing it out of hand.

In defense of his version of epistemological disjunctivism, Duncan Pritchard gives much consideration to the role discriminatory capacities play in obtaining perceptual knowledge. While recognizing they play an important role, in order to avoid urgent epistemological problems that arise independently of disjunctivism, he introduces a distinction that indicates it is not necessary in all cases for one to be able to discriminate relevant alternatives. The distinction is between *favoring* and *discriminating* epistemic support.<sup>33</sup> Pritchard argues convincingly that in many cases favoring support, evidence that indicates one alternative is more likely than another, can yield knowledge even in the absence of the ability to discriminate introspectively between the relevant alternatives. Thus, for example, one might be looking at a zebra and thereby acquire favoring support that one is looking at a zebra rather than a cleverly disguised mule. This support, in conjunction with other considerations (concerning the cost of disguising a mule, the difficulty of doing so, its unlikelihood, etc.) can, it seems, yield knowledge that one is looking at a zebra rather than a cleverly disguised mule, even though one cannot discriminate the two.

In being acquainted with a bell tower before one, then, one's passive presentational state need only provide favoring support for accepting the bell tower. It certainly is able to do this, for the state is factive: it does not merely make it likely that there is a bell tower before one, it entails the presence of the bell tower. Consequently, this state precludes hallucinating a bell tower or any other alternative in which there is no bell tower before one. Hence, the state itself can yield knowledge without other considerations (pertaining to the likelihood of there being a bell tower before one). Of course, one might be unable to tell by the intentional or phenomenal features of the state whether it is an hallucination, but—bearing in mind the distinction between favoring and discriminating epistemic support—it does not follow that one does not know a bell tower when acquainted with one. Therefore, this objection to a naïve realist foundationalism based on the possibility of illusion or hallucination is misplaced.

Note that given the Aristotelian framework underlying this discussion—one on which the world comprises natured entities and their myriad relations—the sort of metaphysical-cum-epistemological disjunctivism proposed here is entirely appropriate. Indeed, this framework can even be seen as requiring and, hence, justifying such disjunctivism: Where there is no thing of one kind,

---

33 See Pritchard 2012: Part Two.

in this case the bell tower, the explanation of the appearance of such a thing must be some entirely different thing, viz., a (non-relational) presentational state of a mind.

## 7 Conclusion: The Questionable Ontological Basis of Epistemological Misgivings

I have propounded an account of knowledge of things in themselves, one based on acquaintance—where this is the passive activation of a mind's nature, its capacity for intentionality—and Brentano's novel theory of judgment. In the preceding three sections, I entertain familiar misgivings concerning this sort of naïve realist, foundationalist epistemology. These concerns are to the effect that not enough can be said about acquaintance to make it feasible, and even granting such a relational state it cannot establish a connection between a mind and something independent of it; that any genuinely direct connection between a mind and something independent of it would not be epistemic, and so could not serve as a foundation for one's knowledge of things; that the mere presentation of a thing is insufficient to provide internally accessible justification for knowing that thing.

In conclusion, I suggest that all these misgivings have a common source: a certain ontology and corollary view of the structure in the world. On this ontology, a variety of realism, there are things independently of any conscious being; yet a thing is not natured and, hence, its very existence does not constrain what it is, nor the features it has. Nothing must be as it is in itself. Anything that exists, though it actually has certain features, nevertheless might (in a metaphysical sense) be any way whatsoever, and so can interact with anything anyhow. Consequently, there are no necessary connections among things themselves. Any necessary connection—any real structure in the world—is introduced only via the classificatory, that is, conceptual, activity of conscious beings. Therefore, any constraint on how the world is experienced and so any explanation of how things do in fact interact in regular (law-like) ways must take recourse to the classificatory capacities and practices of conscious beings. Ignoring these capacities and practices, there are things, but they are not determinate enough to be known; ignoring these capacities and practices, there is really nothing to be known about the world independent of one's mind.

This ontological view, broadly Kantian and arising from Humean empiricist assumptions about one's experience of the world, is widely taken for granted. Indeed, it seems to be held unquestioningly by a majority of contemporary philosophers. It is the underlying dogma of analytic philosophy, the heritage

of summary rejection of a decrepit scholasticism at the beginning of modern philosophy, and subsequent empiricism, idealism, positivism, and vague anti-realisms. On this view, there is nothing to be known about a thing in itself and so—of course!—any claim to know a thing in itself is suspect.

Against the backdrop of such a view, the familiar misgivings concerning an account of knowledge of things in themselves are not only credible, they are compelling. If acquaintance is supposed to be a direct, that is, non-conceptual, connection between a mind and some determinate thing independent of it, then there can be no such connection, for the determinacy of a thing requires conceptual activity. Moreover, if knowing a thing requires the determinacy of that thing, then mere acquaintance, as non-conceptual, cannot provide an epistemic connection between a mind and something independent of it. Finally, if a thing in itself has no nature, then how it presents to a mind is not sufficiently determinate or distinctive to provide internally accessible justification to accept that thing (rather than something introspectively indistinguishable from it).

It is, however, just this sort of ontological view of things and structure that I (and Brentano) reject. It is a quite different realism, a broadly Aristotelian one, that enables a useful account of intentionality as the definitive feature of a mind and a robust characterization of acquaintance.<sup>34</sup> It is this Aristotelian framework, on which the world comprises natured entities—some of which are minds—standing in necessary relations, that makes Brentano's theory of judgment natural.<sup>35</sup> Hence, within this alternative ontological framework, a plausible naïve realist, foundationalist account of knowledge of things in themselves is forthcoming.

### Acknowledgments

It is a privilege to contribute to this special issue in honor of David Woodruff Smith. David has been a mentor, a friend, an ally since the moment I arrived

34 In my "What Is a Thing?" and Fiocco 2015, I argue that a broadly Aristotelian ontology must be correct, that the ontology underlying the Kantian and empiricist traditions is ultimately incoherent.

35 An observation made by Kriegel is acutely relevant here. In Kriegel (forthcoming) Chapter 4, he points out that Brentano's views do not sit well with our intuitions about belief and judgment as 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophers. One must recognize, though, that many of these so-called intuitions have been inculcated by a philosophical environment of unquestioned Kantianism and empiricism. They lose their sway when the relations between mind and world are examined critically in a different ontological framework.



at the University of California, Irvine and became his colleague. David is a fine philosopher, gentle and insightful and with an appreciation for the wonder in the world; it is just these qualities that make him among the finest of human beings. This paper is dedicated to him with gratitude and love.

I would like to thank Johannes Brandl for a great deal of helpful discussion of the issues considered in this paper and for insightful written comments on a draft of it. I would also like to thank Guillaume Fréchette for his written comments and for many illuminating conversations concerning these issues and Brentano and his students more generally. I am grateful to Carlo Ierna for his assistance through correspondence and to audiences at the 2016 European Epistemology Network Conference, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Sussex, King's College London, and the University of Zurich for their comments, criticisms and questions, especially: Duncan Pritchard, Kathleen Stock, Michael Morris, Bill Brewer, Clayton Littlejohn, Matthew Parrott, Nils Kürbis and Hans-Johann Glock. I am also very grateful to an anonymous referee whose comments led to a number of significant improvements in the paper. This work was supported by a Lise Meitner Fellowship from the Austrian Science Fund (grant M 1881-G24).

## References

- BonJour, Laurence. 2004: "In Search of Direct Realism". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69, 349–367.
- BonJour, Laurence. 2003: "A Version of Internalist Foundationalism". In: Laurence BonJour and Ernest Sosa, *Epistemic Justification: Internalism vs. Externalism, Foundations vs. Virtues*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- BonJour, Laurence. 2001: "Toward a Defense of Empirical Foundationalism". In: DePaul 2001.
- Brandl, Johannes. 2014: Brentano's Theory of Judgement, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/brentano-judgement/>>.
- Brentano, Franz. 1982: *Descriptive Psychology*, edited by Roderick Chisholm and Wilhelm Baumgartner, translated by Benito Müller, London: Routledge 1995.
- Brentano, Franz. 1930: *The True and the Evident*, edited by Oskar Kraus, translated by Roderick Chisholm, Ilse Politzer and Kurt Fischer, London: Routledge 1966.
- Brentano, Franz. 1925: *Versuch über die Erkenntnis*, edited by Alfred Kastil. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- Brentano, Franz. 1874: *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, translated by Antos C. Rancurello, Burnham Terrell and Linda L. McAlister, London and New York: Routledge 1995.

- Brewer, Bill. 2011: *Perception and Its Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brewer, Bill. 1999: *Perception and Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Byrne, Alex and Logue, Heather. 2008: "Either/Or". In: *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, edited by Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 57–94.
- Chalmers, David. 2010: *The Character of Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, Donald. 1983: "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge". In: *Kant oder Hegel*, edited by Dieter Henrich, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- DePaul, Michael. 2001: *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Fales, Evan. 1996: *A Defense of the Given*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fiocco, Marcello Oreste. 2015: "Intentionality and Realism". *Acta Analytica* 30, 219–237.
- Fiocco, Marcello Oreste. (unpublished) "What Is a Thing?"
- Fumerton, Richard. 2001a: "Classical Foundationalism". In: DePaul 2001.
- Fumerton, Richard. 2001b: "Replies to Pollock and Plantinga". In: DePaul 2001.
- Fumerton, Richard. 1995: *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Genone, James. 2016: "Recent Work on Naïve Realism". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 53, 1–26.
- Gertler, Brie. 2012: "Renewed Acquaintance". In: *Introspection and Consciousness*, edited by Declan Smithies and Daniel Stoljar, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 93–128.
- Gertler, Brie. 2011: *Self-Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Gertler, Brie. 2001: "Introspecting Mental States". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, 305–328.
- Hempel, Carl. 1934/5a: "On the Logical Positivists' Theory of Truth". *Analysis* 2, 49–59.
- Hempel, Carl. 1934/5b: "Some Remarks on 'Facts' and Propositions". *Analysis* 2, 93–96.
- Kriegel, Uriah. (forthcoming) *Mind and Reality in Brentano's Philosophical System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving. 1946: *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*. La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- Martin, Michael G.F. 2001: "Out of the Past: Episodic Recall as Retained Acquaintance". In: *Time and Memory*, edited by Christoph Hoerl and Teresa McCormack, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 257–284.
- McDowell, John. 1995: "Knowledge and the Internal". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, 877–93.
- Popper, Karl. 1959: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. New York: Harper.
- Pryor, James. 2014: "There Is Immediate Justification". In: *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Matthias Steup, John Turri, and Ernest Sosa, Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 202–222.
- Pritchard, Duncan. 2012: *Epistemological Disjunctivism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Rorty, Richard. 1979: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1910–11: “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 11, 108–128.
- Schlick, Moritz. 1934: “Über das Fundament der Erkenntnis”. *Erkenntnis*, 4.
- Schlick, Moritz. 1934/5: “Facts and Propositions”. *Analysis* 2, 65–70.
- Sellars, Wilfrid. 1956: *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Smith, David Woodruff. 2017: “Acquaintance in an Experience of Perception-cum-Action”. In: *New Essays on Acquaintance*, edited by Jonathan Knowles and Thomas Raleigh, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, David Woodruff. 1989: *The Circle of Acquaintance: Perception, Consciousness, and Empathy*. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Snowdon, Paul F. 2005: “The Formulation of Disjunctivism: A Response to Fish”. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 105, 129–141.