

Franz Brentano's ontology: from conceptualism to reism*

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1. Conceptualism (1862–1874)

It is often claimed that the beginnings of Brentano's ontology were Aristotelian in nature; but this claim is only partially true. Certainly the young Brentano adopted many elements of Aristotle's metaphysics, and he was deeply influenced by the Aristotelian way of doing philosophy. But he always interpreted Aristotle's ideas in his own fashion. He accepted them selectively, and he used them in the service of ends that would not have been welcomed by Aristotle himself. The present paper is an exposition of the development of Brentano's ontology, beginning with the *Lectures on Metaphysics* first delivered by Brentano in Würzburg in 1867 and concluding with his late work from 1904–1917.

1.1. *Being and truth*

Aristotle distinguished various ways in which being can be predicated.¹ There is first of all the ontologically serious use of the word "is": being in the sense of the categories, also called "real being" in what follows. The two other ways of saying "is" relate respectively to what Aristotle called "purely accidental being" and "being in the sense of being true". It is especially the notion of being in the sense of being true that will concern us in what follows.

We often say that something *is* simply because the judgements reporting or describing that something are true. (Compare: "Is it so that Franz Brentano was born in 1838?" – "Yes, it is so.", or "There is a fictitious detective which is more famous than any existent detective – Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.") It is not clear whether for Aristotle this being in the sense of being true has any genuine ontological import. On the one hand Aristotle contrasts the truth of judgements with the being of things,² and he claims explicitly that being in the sense of being true pertains to judgements and thus does not belong to the subject-matter of metaphysics. On the other hand one should not forget that, according to Aristotle, for each true judgement there must be some (composite) entity which makes it true;³ and such truthmakers certainly belong to the subject-matter of metaphysics. The claim that the being true of a judgement is something very different from the being of a thing is thus by no means the end of the ontological problems invoked by Aristotle's theory of truth.

For the young Brentano, in contrast, such a claim *is* the end of such problems. As he points out, even a non-existing entity is, in the sense of the word "is" here at issue, since it is *true of* each putative non-existent that it does not exist. That Brentano takes this line follows from his adoption of a reading of the Aristotelian concept of being in the sense of being true

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¹ Cf. *Categories* and *Metaphysics*, 1117a 7–32.

² *Metaphysics*, 1028a 25–27.

³ Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1051a 34–1051b 9.

in terms of the scholastic doctrine of *ens objectivum*.⁴ According to the latter, when a subject is thinking of an object *A*, he is said to have that object *objectively* (i.e. *as object*) in his mind. At the same time, however, this mode of speech is designed to have no special ontological consequences. Brentano often uses the Aristotelian concept of being in sense of being true and the scholastic concept of *ens objectivum* as mutually interchangeable tools of philosophical analysis, both of which he supposes to be ontologically innocent.

A further reason why being in the sense of being true has no ontological import for Brentano lies in his epistemological concept of truth itself. The notion of the truth of a judgement is elucidated by Brentano not by reference to an entity which makes the judgement true, but rather by reference to certain epistemological peculiarities of true beliefs or assertions.

Aristotle's explanation of the notion of truth by reference to the idea of "connecting of what is connected" and "separating what is separated" makes sense at best for *categorical*, not however for those *existential* judgments (of the form "*A* is" / "*A* is not") which Brentano had pointed to already in 1867 as constituting the basic form of judgement. The element "is" / "is not" of such existential judgements expresses, according to Brentano, not a kind of predicate but rather only a mental attitude of acceptance or rejection in relation to whatever is referred to by the mental presentation corresponding to the term "*A*". It is, thus, in cases such as this, not the judgement as a whole which is in the market for standing in a relation of correspondence to reality, but rather only its constituent *presentation*.⁵

An affirmative existential judgement (of the form "*A* is") is true, if such a correspondence exists, i.e., if there is in the world an object which is *A*. A negative existential judgement is true if there is no such object.

Even for many affirmative existential judgements, however, the issue of correspondence with an object can be quite problematic. Consider judgements about the past and the future ("*A* was" / "*A* will be"). If a judgement of this kind is to be true, then there need not *be* any object which corresponds to its constituent presentation. *A* must *have been* or it must be such that it *will be*, but it need not exist in the present moment.

Time, and all that exists in time (which means for the young Brentano everything) is properly speaking, only in that punctual boundary which is the present moment. This view however conflicts with what he takes to be a conceptual truth, namely that no boundary can exist alone, separated from the continuum which it bounds – in this case a continuum extended beyond the present moment along the temporal dimension.⁶ Brentano resolves this problem in his early period by allowing also a looser mode of speech, which allows us to refer to time as something which exists also as an extended whole, as a kind of unfinished reality.

The claim that an existential judgement about the past or future corresponds to reality can then be translated as: "If time were a finished reality like space ... then there would be a reality corresponding to [the given judgement's] presentation."⁷

The young Brentano operates here essentially with counterfactuals whose ontological force is not further explained. He does however suggest that tensed judgements need no special truthmakers of their own.⁸

⁴ This identification is to be found already in Brentano 1862, pp. 31–37 (English translation, pp. 20–25). Cf. also Brentano 1967, p. 80 (English translation, pp. 54f.).

⁵ M 96, XXXVIII. (Roman numerals refer to the individual lectures into which the manuscript is divided.)

⁶ The formal implications of Brentano's ontology of boundaries are presented in Smith 1997b.

⁷ M 96, XXXVIII.

⁸ Brentano often resorts to counterfactuals when he wants to eliminate entities of some unwanted category, and it seems that he believes counterfactuals to be ontologically innocent. See for example Brentano 1930, p. 139 (English translation, p. 122) and Brentano 1977, p. 357f. He thus stands in marked conflict with those who

For many other types of judgement, too, the formula *adaequatio rei et intellectus* has no clear sense. Consider for example a disjunctive judgement such as “Either *A* exists or *B* exists”. Such a judgement is true if and only if at least one of its constituent presentations corresponds to reality. And the truth conditions for a hypothetical judgement of the form “If *A* is not, then *B* is” are exactly the same. Such compound judgements thus involve no relation of correspondence of their own. Rather, their truth-conditions are specified recursively, as functions of the truth-conditions of their constituents.

Finally we have apodictic judgements such as “it is necessary that *A* exists” or “it is necessary that *A* does not exist”. Such judgements are accounted for by Brentano epistemically. They are true, if and only if the existence or non-existence of *A* is evident “on the ground of the concepts involved”. Later, Brentano insisted that the only apodictic judgements whose truth can be known by human beings are such negative truths as: “Necessarily, there is no triangular circle.” Even then, however, he does not exclude the possibility that positive apodictic knowledge might be accessible to more sophisticated minds. In particular, he believed that, if we were only able to grasp the concept of God in an adequate way, then we would recognize that a version of the Anselmian ontological argument is valid.⁹

Given this variety of cases Brentano concludes that, to the extent that the *adaequatio* notion of truth can be defended at all, there is not one but a whole series of correspondence relations at work, and the truth theorist must construct the relation anew for each new kind of judgement. From this, however, Brentano concludes that it cannot be this relation that is at the core of our concept of truth. Rather we must already have some prior concept of truth which we use in constructing the relevant type of *adaequatio* in each successive case. This primary concept of truth is, according to Brentano, precisely the *epistemic* concept outlined above. At one point he even states that “truth and knowledge are one and the same”.¹⁰

This formulation could hardly be accepted as it stands, however, not least because truths can be produced by chance, without any epistemic justification. In his later manuscripts, accordingly, Brentano defines a true judgement as one which *could* be judged by a subject who is acting in an epistemologically correct way, which in turn means: by a subject who is judging with evidence, i.e., with maximal epistemic justification (which according to Brentano involves infallibility). His final definition of truth might thus be formulated as: “It is true that *p*” means: “*p* could be judged with evidence”.¹¹

It is commonly believed that this epistemological (and thus evidently anti-Aristotelian) definition of truth is characteristic only for the late Brentano. We see however that it is present already in the Würzburg *Lectures on Metaphysics*.

1.2. *Real beings and their parts*

There are of course many problems with Brentano’s epistemic definition of truth. The central notion of evidence and the modal force of “could be” both remain obscure. For our purposes here, however, it is important to note only that the young Brentano believed himself to have shown that the explanation of the concept of truth requires no special entities or modes of being which would need to be postulated for specifically semantical reasons.

When Brentano turns to the topic of real being in the Würzburg lectures, therefore, he does this independently of any reference to semantics, seeking to establish the structure of being, rather, in light of the classical questions of ontology. What is the relation between a

believe that a philosophical explanation of counterfactuals must involve something like an ontology of possible worlds.

⁹ Cf. Brentano 1929/1980, pp. 48–52, 58 (English translation, pp. 43–46, 49f.).

¹⁰ Brentano M 96, XXXVIII.

¹¹ Cf. Brentano 1930, p. 139 (English translation, p. 122).

thing and its properties? Can properties be shared in common by a plurality of things? Are there essential and accidental characteristics? What is the correct analysis of change, persistence, coming into being and passing away?

1.2.1. *Physical parts*

The core of Brentano's ontology lies in his treatment of the different kinds of *parts* of things. He distinguishes first of all *physical* parts, which are those detachable pieces of things which are governed by the basic principles of mereology. The treatment of the mereological composition of the world was one of the points in which the young Brentano was a faithful disciple of Aristotle. This means that pieces not actually detached – for example your arm or my leg – and wholes not actually connected exist only potentially. The only things that exist actually, for Brentano and for Aristotle, are complete substances, whether physical or mental.¹²

The young Brentano had a place, too, for the Aristotelian concept of *boundary*,¹³ though while he sees the physical parts of things as being at least potentially real, the mode of being of boundaries is for him something still weaker. This is because, while the physical parts of real things can in principle be isolated, so that they can become real things in their own right, boundaries cannot even in principle be isolated from the extended substances which they bound. Boundaries are as Brentano puts it, fictions *cum fundamento in re*. Their foundation consists in the fact that real things can be measured, and measurements are expressed by reference to corresponding boundaries.¹⁴

1.2.2. *Logical parts*

Brentano distinguishes also what he calls the *logical* parts of an entity, which he conceives *via* an analogy with the parts of a definition in Aristotle's sense. In a concrete human being there are, according to Brentano, at least two logical parts: an animal nature and a rational animal nature. Like the parts of an Aristotelian definition they are arranged in the manner of a chinese box, with general parts (like the animal nature) being included within less general parts (like the rational animal nature).¹⁵ The coloredness of a patch of red is included in this sense in the corresponding redness. The underlying idea here is that a proper part of something can remain the same even if this something as a whole ceases to exist. A speck in the visual field need not be red; but it must have some color.

There are some who accept logical parts as special denizens of reality, conceiving each concrete individual as comprehending an onion-like hierarchy of universal constituents of decreasing grades of generality. This picture is embraced specifically by those immanent realists who hold that it is certain universal constituents of individual things which serve as the semantical correlates of general terms.¹⁶ This is not however a picture which Brentano himself was able to accept. At no stage in his career did Brentano believe in universals, no matter how rich his ontology was in other respects.

Brentanian logical parts are, rather, fictions in a sense which is best explained by reference to the following semantico-ontological theory.¹⁷ Words refer to objects in the world by means of presentations. The latter are themselves accidents of the soul or mind. Individual terms are associated with presentations specifying exactly one object. General terms (and predicates) are associated with presentations which specify only those characteristics of the object of reference which could be shared by many objects (as for example the presentation of

¹² Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1019a 8–10, 1039a 3; Brentano M 96, L; and Smith 1994, pp. 76–79.

¹³ Cf. *Physics*, 220a 22, 221a 25, 234a 1f., 251b 20–28.

¹⁴ M 96, XXV.

¹⁵ Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1018b 34–37.

¹⁶ Cf. Smith 1997a.

¹⁷ M 96, XLI.

a horse specifies only one characteristic shared by its putative objects, namely that of being a horse).

Yet Brentano insists that the correlate of a general term is still, ontologically speaking, exactly the same thing as the correlate of an individual term. What corresponds to the general term “man” is always this or that individual human being, exactly as in the case of a proper name like “John” or of a definite description like “the only woman in this room”.

Brentano thus postulates no special semantical values for general terms. How, then, is the role of general terms to be explained? Brentano’s answer is that, while the division of a real thing into its logical parts is a fiction, this fiction is *cum fundamento in re*, as is seen in the fact that some divisions of this sort reflect *correct*, and others *incorrect*, presentations. We can make this distinction between correct and incorrect, Brentano holds, even though there exist in the underlying structure of reality no corresponding special entities (called “universals”) which would legitimate it.¹⁸

Normative terms are thus employed in the same way both in Brentano’s treatment of the concept of truth and in his treatment of generality. Just as he needs for the former no truthmakers but rather only a notion of correct and incorrect judgements, so he needs for the latter no universal entities but rather only a notion of correct and incorrect general presentation.

1.2.3. *Metaphysical parts*

Brentano distinguishes, finally, the notion of *metaphysical* parts, which he introduces for the purpose of giving an analysis of the Aristotelian notions of substance and accident. Among properties one can distinguish two groups: the essential and the accidental. The properties of an object are essential if they could not be lost without bringing about the destruction of the object itself. Examples of essential properties are: *is a man*, *is a horse*. Accidental properties, in contrast, are those properties which can be gained and lost at will with no effect on the existence of their bearer. Examples are: *is hungry*, *is a student*. Only substances (which, according to Aristotle, are constituted by the essential properties) are ontologically independent, in the sense that only they can exist without requiring some other entity which serves as their ontological support. Accidents, in contrast, must be *in* a substance in something like the way in which an electric charge is in a conductor or a smile is in a human face. Substances are concrete; accidents are abstract: they do not exist in and of themselves but only in the sense that they can be isolated within their bearer by abstraction.

Aristotle spoke both of individual and universal accidents,¹⁹ but according to Brentano both substances and accidents are individual entities. Brentanian accidents are analogues of what some nowadays call “tropes” or “individual properties”. They are individual in the sense that they cannot be shared by a plurality substances. Each red apple must have its own individual accident of redness and the issue of shared properties is to be explained by reference to the similarity obtaining between the accidents in question.

But Brentano’s conclusion is that such metaphysical parts (substances and accidents) are not to be counted as denizens of reality in the fullest sense of the word. Just as the logical parts they are fictions *cum fundamento in re*;²⁰ and this “foundation” is, again, explained in normative terms. It is not that there is some ontologically serious inner structure in a thing involving both a substantial core on the one hand and its accidents on the other. Rather each real thing is such that it is correct to consider it as being such that it would remain the same

¹⁸ M 96, XXXI.

¹⁹ Cf. *Categories*, 1a 20–1b 9.

²⁰ M 96, XLIII.

even if it lost some of those accidents which are now correctly predicated of it, as a man may lose a headache and as a mind that is seeing and hearing may cease to see or hear.²¹

1.3. Relations

Aristotle regarded relations as the weakest form of being. He calls them the least of all realities,²² and Brentano agrees with this statement.²³

The first point to note is that Brentano never believed in external relations in Russell's sense, i.e. relations whose obtaining cannot be inferred from truths about the terms of the relation taken separately. According to Brentano it is a conceptual truth that each relation must have its basis in the constitution of the terms involved, or in other words that all relations supervene on certain monadic properties of their terms, a principle which we can express as follows: If there is a relation *R* between the objects *a* and *b*, then there must be monadic properties *F* and *G* which are such that (i) *a* is *F* and *b* is *G*, and (ii) for each *x* and *y*, if *x* is *F* and *y* is *G*, then, necessarily, the relation *R* holds between *x* and *y*. It follows from the fact that John is six feet tall and Mary is five feet tall that Mary is smaller than John.

Since monadic properties themselves are fictions, it becomes clear that relations could only be still more fictitious.²⁴

2. Ontology of intentionality (1874–1904)

From around 1870 Brentano concentrates on psychological questions. In the *Psychology from an Empirical Point of View* (1874) he introduces the notion of “having something immanently as an object” as the defining feature of mental phenomena. Every such phenomenon, we read, “includes something as object within itself.”²⁵ Such objects are called by Brentano “immanent objects”, “contents” or “intentional correlates”. The most important aspect of the “immanence” of an immanent object is its undetachability from the corresponding mental act. This is the sense in which an immanent object is “in” the mind.

It is not clear whether in 1874 this mode of speech was intended to carry any ontological commitment. It is not excluded that at this time Brentano still wanted to construe all apparent reference to special entities as a mere *façon de parler* in the spirit of the medieval doctrine of objective existence referred to already above.²⁶ In light of the way Brentano's analysis of intentionality developed after the *Psychology*, however, the reference to such immanent objects must be interpreted as signifying the introduction of a new ontological category with all the ontological commitments that go together herewith. In the following we will thus project this ontologizing interpretation of immanent objects also on those passages of the *Psychology* in which Brentano introduces his doctrine of intentionality, passages which in and of themselves are, notoriously, difficult to interpret.

2.1. The role of immanent objects

It seems that the main factor leading Brentano in the direction of accepting immanent objects as forming an ontological category in their own right was his growing awareness of the important role which such objects would have to play in his theory of intentionality. The main goal of the latter is of course to give an account of mental directedness in a way which does justice to the phenomenological homogeneity of such directedness in both veridical and non-

²¹ Cf. M 96, XXVI.

²² *Metaphysics*, 1088a 30–31.

²³ Cf. M 96, XLVII.

²⁴ The only exception that Brentano allows are certain relations to God, particularly the relation *is-a-creature-of*. Cf. M 96, XLVII.

²⁵ Brentano 1874/1924, p. 124 (English translation, p. 88).

²⁶ Cf. Münch 1993, Antonelli 2000 and Antonelli 2001.

veridical cases. The latter are marked by the failure of the principle of existential generalization (so that from a sentence like (A) “John believes that Santa Claus is bald” we cannot infer that there is something which John believes to be bald).

Sentences expressing mental directedness are marked also by a failure of the principle of substitution (so that from (B) “John believes that the victor at Jena was a Corsican”, together with the true identity of the victor at Jena with the vanquished at Waterloo, we cannot infer that John believes that the vanquished at Waterloo was a Corsican).

The first inference is invalid, as Brentano would have it, because it is only the existence of an *immanent* Santa Claus which can be deduced from (A). The second is invalid because the *immanent* victor at Jena, which is the object of (B), is not identical with the *immanent* vanquished at Waterloo.

Ontological theories of intentionality – theories committed to special entities in addition to acts and objects in external reality – can be divided into two groups, which can be labelled *object theories* and *mediator theories*, respectively. An object theory situates the entities it postulates in the target-position of the relevant intentional acts. Such entities thus serve as objects of reference. A mediator theory postulates entities which function instead as structures mediating our intentional access to external objects.

Frege’s theory of sense and reference is clearly a case of a mediator theory. That the theory outlined by Brentano in the *Psychology* is an object theory becomes clear when we see how he uses the medieval conception of *ens objectivum* in presenting his ideas. Recall that whenever a subject thinks of an object *A* we are entitled, on the *objectivum*-conception, to say that *A* is, objectively, in the subject’s mind. Where earlier Brentano had seen this reference to an object in the subject’s mind as being free of any ontological commitment, in the *Psychology* he moves toward the view which grants a genuine ontological status to the postulated entity. Talk of the “immanence” of an immanent object means now not that the ontological commitments putatively associated with terms like “object” have to be suspended but rather, quite to the contrary, that they are to be embraced to the full: an immanent object exists in every case of mental directedness, whether veridical or non-veridical.

This full-fledged object-theory of intentionality dominates both the *Psychology* (1874) and the lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* of 1890/91 in which the immanent object is referred to by Brentano as an “intentional correlate”.²⁷ Along the way however Brentano considers also a theory of intentionality which uses immanent objects as mediating structures. In his *Logic Lectures* from 1877 and from the second half of the 1880’s he proposes a semantical theory according to which a name refers to an external object while the corresponding immanent object functions as a mediating meaning.²⁸

Yet the theory of the *Logic Lectures* also contains some elements of an object theory. While investigating the problem of names without designata, Brentano writes that “signifying (naming) nothing should not be confused with signifying (naming) something which does not exist”.²⁹ It is, however, not clear, whether Brentano is here committed to a view according to which every presentation would have, besides a mediating immanent object, also its own (existent or non-existent) referent.³⁰

²⁷ Brentano 1982, p. 21 (English translation, pp. 23f.).

²⁸ Cf. the copy of Brentano’s lectures *Alte und neue Logik* from 1877 (manuscript EL 108*, p. 21) and his *Logic Lectures* from the second half of the 1880’s (manuscript EL 80, pp. 34f.). Cf. also Chrudzimski 2001, pp. 33–46. This theory was almost certainly the (unacknowledged) source of the theory of intentionality presented in Höfler 1890. This book was written together with Meinong, and the theory presented there was later developed by Twardowski and then also taken further by Meinong and Husserl. See Jacquette 1990/91.

²⁹ EL 80, p. 35.

³⁰ In this case Brentano could be regarded as a true forerunner of Twardowski and Meinong.

It seems thus that in his middle period, which is to say from 1870 to 1904, Brentano did not formulate any truly consistent theory of intentionality. Rather, he oscillated between an object-theory and a mediator-theory.

2.2. *The ontology of immanent objects*

Immanent objects were conceived by Brentano as satisfying three conditions: (i) for each mental act the existence of the appropriate immanent object must be guaranteed, so that a suitably modified principle of existential generalization can be accepted; (ii) each immanent object must be able either to substitute for or to represent the object of reference (depending on whether we assume an object- or a mediator-theoretic interpretation of Brentano's views); (iii) immanent objects must be distinguished from each other in a sufficiently fine-grained way to save some form of the principle of substitutivity.

That Brentano's Theory satisfies condition (i) follows from the fact that an immanent object is no less a part of the structure of every mental act as is the moment of inner perception (that in virtue of which we are conscious of our mental acts as we have them). The mental act and its immanent object are called by Brentano "parts of the intentional correlate-pair". These parts are separable, as Brentano puts it, "only in the distinctional sense", i.e., only in our thoughts, and not in reality.³¹

Condition (ii) follows from the fact that an immanent object is defined as having exactly those properties which would be possessed by a corresponding real transcendent object, though it has these properties only *in a modifying sense*.³² Thus immanent objects are for example red or green or warm or cold only in a modifying sense (compare the modifying sense of the word "healthy" used in phrases like "healthy drug" or "healthy bicycle").

A conception along these lines is consistent with both readings of Brentano's theory of intentionality. According to the object-theoretic reading, one could claim that each subject in fact refers only to immanent objects, though he has before his mind exactly the same properties which he would have if, *per impossibile*, he were able to refer directly to the corresponding transcendent object. The fact that the immanent object has these properties only in a modifying sense is then not apparent to the subject in the act itself.³³ A partisan of the mediator-theoretic interpretation, in contrast could claim that for an object to have a certain property in a modifying sense means precisely for it to represent an object which has this property in the normal sense.

Condition (iii) is satisfied by virtue of the fact that an object such as the immanent victor-at-Jena may be construed as having only one property, namely that of being victor at Jena, and as thus being distinguished from (for example) that immanent object which has the single property of having been vanquished at Waterloo.³⁴

We can see also that the Brentanian version of the principle of substitutivity must speak, not of identity, but rather of a kind of similarity between the immanent objects of distinct acts. Since every immanent object is an inseparable correlate of a particular mental act, it follows that there could be no two mental acts with numerically identical immanent objects. There could, however, be two immanent objects which do in a sense have "the same content", namely immanent objects which have (in a modifying sense) the same properties. Since Brentano does not believe in universals, "same" means here that each immanent object would then have (in a modifying sense) its own collection of individual properties which are pairwise strictly similar.³⁵

³¹ Brentano 1982, p. 21 (English translation, pp. 23f.). Cf. also Smith 1992/93, p. 43.

³² Brentano 1982, p. 27 (English translation, pp. 29f.). Cf. also Smith 1992/93, p. 45 and Smith 1994, pp. 129f.

³³ It is plausible to assume that this aspect of the ontological structure of the immanent object presents itself only from the perspective of inner perception. Cf. Chrudzimski 2001, pp. 104–111.

³⁴ Cf. manuscript *Abstraktion* (1889 or 1899), Ps 21, p. 4. Cf. also Chrudzimski 2001, p. 155.

³⁵ Cf. Chrudzimski 2001, pp. 35, 218–226.

2.3. Propositional contents, temporally modified objects and truth

Brentano's official theory of judgement was at every stage a non-propositional theory.³⁶ A judgement consists in the acceptance or rejection of a presented object, and this acceptance or rejection needs no objectual correlate in addition to the object itself. In the *Logic Lectures* from the second half of the 1880's, however, Brentano toys with a refinement of this view according to which judgements have, in addition to the correlates of their underlying presentations, special immanent and transcendent correlates of a quasi-propositional sort. The special immanent correlate is referred to by means of the phrases: "accepted object" or "rejected object", the special transcendent correlate, at least in the case when the judgement in question is true, by means of the phrases: "being/non-being of the presented object". Compare the following passage from the mentioned *Logic Lectures*:

Like names, assertions too have a double reference:

- (a) to the content of a psychical phenomenon as such;
- (b) to a putative external object.

The first is the meaning.

The phenomenon at issue in this case is however not a presentation, but a judgement. The judged as such is the meaning. Similarly in the case of the request: the desired as desired is the meaning.

Because [in the case of a judgement] that which mediates the reference to the putative object is a different type of phenomenon, we designate it differently, calling it not a naming, but rather an announcing [*ein Anzeigen*]. The announced [*das Angezeigte*] is that which is accepted or rejected. We can call it indication [*andeuten*] or counter-indication [*abdeuten*] (and for the latter we can speak also of an indication of non-being).³⁷

Brentano thus anticipated later ontological doctrines of *Sachverhalte* and *Objective* proposed by Stumpf and Meinong.³⁸

These special judgement-correlates are "propositional" in the sense that they are composite entities involving as parts correlates not only of the constituent presentations but also of the moment of acceptance or rejection on the side of the judgement. Their introduction thus amounts to giving an ontological interpretation of judgemental acceptance and rejection (which, according to the young Brentano, needed no such interpretation).

Another group of entities that rose to prominence in Brentano's middle period are temporally modified objects. Such objects *exist* in the fullest sense, Brentano now holds, which means that they exist *now*. Each time we judge something about the past or future our judgement consists in a (temporally neutral) acceptance or rejection of such a temporally modified object. The deep logical form of the sentence "Yesterday the weather was beautiful" is "The-yesterday-beautiful-weather *is*". An ontologically perspicuous language must then situate all tenses in the role of modifiers of nominal expressions.³⁹

With this rich ontology, Brentano was able to formulate the version of the correspondence theory of truth which we find in his lecture *On the concept of truth* of 1889. In this work Brentano sees every true positive existential judgement as being correlated with an appropriate existing object: the transcendent correlate of the underlying presentation, while to every true negative existential judgement there corresponds an appropriate non-existing transcendent object, namely the object which is rejected in the judgement. Consequently, the ontological universe divides smoothly into two parts. On the one hand we have existing

³⁶ See Chisholm 1982b and Simons 1992.

³⁷ Manuscript EL 80, p. 36. Cf. also Chrudzimski 2001, pp. 62–66.

³⁸ Cf. Smith 1992.

³⁹ For further details of Brentano's theory, its influence and the objections raised against it, see Smith 1990. On Brentano's theory of time consciousness see Chrudzimski 1998/99.

entities, which can be correctly accepted, and on the other hand we have non-existing entities which can be correctly rejected.⁴⁰

Yet Brentano hastens to add that the sphere of existing entities should not simply be identified with the totality of real things. For there are, according to his theory at this stage, many non-real existents.⁴¹ He lists in addition to immanent and temporally modified objects also aggregates, properties, relations, boundaries, negativa, privativa, simple and modalised propositional contents (such as the existence of a horse or the necessary non-existence of a triangular circle). Analogically, among non-existents there are both non-real as well as real entities (or entities, that *would* be real, if only they existed) such as for example a centaur.⁴² In general, the non-reality of an entity no longer signifies that it is ontological without standing or merely fictitious.

2.4. Properties and relations

In particular, between 1874 and 1890 Brentano classifies individual properties as non-real parts, but nonetheless he treats them as entities to be taken ontologically seriously. A property (metaphysical part) such as an individual blackness is still an abstract individual part of its concrete individual bearer (the pertinent black thing) but it is no longer construed as a fiction. The pairs consisting of a property and its bearer are called “correlative pairs”. The members of such a pair are neither really, nor conceptually, independent,⁴³ but nonetheless they are distinct entities, both of which are to be taken ontologically seriously. A property is no longer a fiction, a mere mode of speech or the shadow of a conceptual construction. The correctness of a property attribution now has its objective correlate on the side of the truthmakers in the world.

The majority of relations are still classified as non-real entities which supervene on the monadic properties of their terms. In his *Logic Lectures* from 1884/85, however, Brentano points to certain special relations which he wants to call *real*.⁴⁴ These are the relations which hold among the metaphysical and also among the logical parts of real things, relations which cannot be construed as supervenient on the monadic properties of their terms. The fact that two metaphysical parts (two individual abstract properties) – say, *whiteness* and *triangularity* – are united in one thing, amounts to an external relation in Russell’s sense. There are no characteristics of the whiteness and triangularity in question from which we could infer this fact. And similarly, the fact that the logical parts *colour* and *redness* are united in one thing is not implied by the nature of the logical part *colour*, though it is implied by the nature of the logical part *red*. Some coloured things are not red, but every red thing must have some colour. The relations between logical parts are thus external, as it were, only in one direction.

Notice that the relations among logical and among metaphysical parts of things are very different from the relations between concrete individuals. All of the latter are still seen by Brentano as supervening on their monadic properties.

3. Reism (1904–1917)

As is well known, the rich ontology of the middle period was not Brentano’s last word. It seems that the overpopulated universe of non-real entities was something that Brentano felt himself forced for a time to accept, but something with which he was never really happy. In the final period of his life a house-cleaning took place on a number of different fronts. Some

⁴⁰ Cf. Brentano 1930, p. 24 (English translation, p. 21).

⁴¹ Cf. Brentano 1930, p. 23 (English translation, p. 20).

⁴² Brentano’s disciple Marty developed this ontology in great detail. Cf. Smith 1994, ch. 4.

⁴³ Cf. manuscript Ps 21, pp. 9ff.

⁴⁴ Manuscript EL 72, pp. 218–220.

types of non-real entities (including physical parts, aggregates, boundaries and accidents) are reinterpreted as real entities; others (including immanent and temporally modified objects as well as propositional entities) are rejected as the product of an inadequate interpretation of language. The world of the late Brentano thus contains only real entities, and as he calls all real entities “things” or “*res*”, his late ontology is commonly labeled “reism”.

3.1. *The transitory period 1893–1904*

In the period between 1893 and 1904 the rich ontology of the middle period was gradually deflated. In a letter to Marty of November 24, 1893 Brentano reports an idea which had occurred to him in “a dreamless night”: that what is common to all putative non-real entities is that they involve a hidden reference to some mental activity. What he means by this can be made clear if we examine its implications for the treatment of the past and the future.

Instead of introducing special temporally modified objects, Brentano suggests, we should operate with temporally unmodified objects but let them be apprehended in mental acts of certain specific *temporal modes*.⁴⁵ The main idea is then that talk of entities of the given sort can be replaced without loss by talk of a certain special mental activity operating with “normal” objects. Ontological categories are eliminated at the price of added psychological complexity.

In 1901, Brentano uses this technique to bring about the elimination of the category of properties. He criticises his earlier theory and claims that to say that a thing *a* has a property *F* is in principle nothing other than to say that *a* could be correctly presented as an *F*. To be sure, a presentation which presents its object merely as *F* (as a horse, a human being, etc.) presents its object in an incomplete way, but even incomplete presentations can be correct.⁴⁶ The similarity with the Würzburg conceptualist position is then apparent.

3.2. *Wholes, parts and boundaries*

The official late ontology of Brentano, as presented for example in the manuscripts collected by Alfred Kastil in 1933 under the title *Theory of Categories*, is however very different from his Würzburg position.

The first reason for this lies in the fact that Brentano has become much more permissive in relation to mereological questions. After 1900 he moves to a conception according to which all aggregates and physical parts of things exist as things in their own right. In 1904 it is absolutely clear that not only is each physical body and each non-material soul or mind a thing, but so also, on Brentano’s new dispensation, is every physical part of a thing and every aggregate of things.⁴⁷

The second reason for Brentano’s move to reism relates to the fact that the reduction of properties along conceptualist lines could never be completed. If to say that an object *a* has a property *F* is nothing other than to say that *a* could be correctly presented as an *F*, and if a presentation is construed as an accident (and thus as a property) of the soul, then it seems that the problem has only been shifted to another level. The having of properties has been analysed in terms of possible correct presentation, but presentation itself turns out to be a *property* of a certain kind, namely an accident of the mind. According to the young Brentano even such mental accidents had been fictitious, i.e. explainable only in terms of the possibility of their being correctly presented. Now, however, it seems to have occurred to Brentano that an explanation along these lines threatens an infinite regress.

⁴⁵ Cf. Brentano 1895, p. 7. ?????????????????????????????????

⁴⁶ Cf. Brentano 1930, p. 74 (English translation, p. 64).

⁴⁷ Brentano 1933, p. 4 (English translation, p. 16).

The new proposal is to construe an accident as a whole which contains its substance as a part.⁴⁸ Accidents, too, are therefore things, exactly like the substances which they include as parts. Yet the relation of parthood involved in this theory is a very special one. An accident is a whole which is “something more” than the underlying substance; the former “enriches” or “enlarges” or “modally extends” the latter. Yet Brentano insists that an accident adds to its substance nothing which would be “entirely different” from the substance itself. The main idea is that there is nothing (no thing) in the accident which would remain if the substance were somehow removed.⁴⁹

One of the principles of classical mereology is the so-called remainder principle. This affirms that if an individual has a proper part, then it has a further proper part, disjoint from the first and constituting, as it were, the difference between the two.⁵⁰ As we see, this principle does not hold for the parthood relation to which appeal is made in Brentano’s theory of accidents, and this means that his mereology is of a non-standard type.⁵¹

Brentano’s late ontology includes also a new and interesting treatment of the category of boundaries. The objects which are presented to us in the most typical cases of outer perception are spatial continua. It was Brentano’s firm belief that no such continuum could ever be constructed out of discrete points. A continuum is, rather such as to involve what Brentano calls a coincidence of boundaries. Each boundary can continue to exist even though a part of the continuum which it bounds should be destroyed (as the surface of an apple can continue to exist even though parts of the inside have been eaten away by maggots), but no boundary can exist except as part of *some* larger extended whole which it serves as the boundary of.⁵²

After 1904 we might expect that boundaries would be classified as things. After all, a reistic world consists exclusively of things. Brentano himself sometimes classifies boundaries as substances;⁵³ but they would have to be a very strange kind of substance indeed, given that they are in each case ontologically dependent on some other, larger substance of which they form a part.⁵⁴ Chisholm claims that Brentanian boundaries ought most properly to be construed as constituting a *sui generis* category of entities, which are neither substances nor accidents.⁵⁵

3.3. Relations

The category of relation finds an extensive treatment in Brentano’s late philosophy. On the one hand he speaks of one-sided relations, which means: relations which require for their existence only the existence of one of their terms.⁵⁶ Intentional and temporal relations (for example: is thinking of, being before) he now sees as being of this kind. We can conceive such one-sided relations also as monadic properties of their only term. The apparent reference to the second term is then just the reflection of a particular mode of describing the situation,

⁴⁸ Brentano 1933, p. 11 (English translation, p. 19).

⁴⁹ Brentano 1933, p. 108 (English translation, p. 85). See also Chisholm 1982a and Smith 1994, pp. 69–71.

⁵⁰ This principle has been called by Simons (1987, p. 28) the *Weak Supplementation Principle*. In point of fact classical mereology assumes much stronger principles. Cf. Simons 1987, pp. 25–37 and Lesniewski 1992, pp. 230–232, 316.

⁵¹ Cf. Baumgartner/Simons 1992/93, p. 68.

⁵² Cf., e.g., Brentano 1976, p. 14. ???

Cf. also Smith 1997b, pp. 248f.

⁵³ Cf. Brentano 1933, p. 249 (English translation, p. 179).

⁵⁴ “Brentano’s thesis runs: if something continuous is a mere boundary then it can never exist except in connection with other boundaries, including those which possess no dimension at all, such as spatial points and moments of time and movement: a cutting free from everything that is continuous and extended is for them, too, absolutely impossible.” (Smith 1997b, p. 536)

⁵⁵ Chisholm 1982a, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Cf. Brentano 1933, pp. 167–170 (English translation, pp. 125–127).

perhaps the only possible one for subjects with cognitive powers like ours, but one having, as such, no ontological consequences.

And indeed, in the case of temporal relations Brentano asserts that there must be absolute temporal positions which from the ontological point of view are nothing other than the monadic properties of objects. Still, these absolute temporal positions are cognitively inaccessible to us. All we can do is to describe temporal positions relationally, e.g. “before the Second World War”, “100 years before Christ” etc.⁵⁷

On the other hand other relations require the existence of both of their terms, for example every spatial relation between physical parts of a compound substance. Such relations are now referred to by Brentano as “collective determinations”;⁵⁸ they are monadic properties of the corresponding aggregates.

Each relation is thus either an accident of one of its (putative) terms, or it is an accident of an aggregate of things; and since all accidents and all aggregates are, in the end, things, the late Brentano can claim that the world consists of things exclusively.

3.4. *Intentionality*

The late Brentano has an ontologically robust theory of mental accidents. They are concrete individual things constituting modal extensions of their substances (minds) and thus containing the latter, somehow, as parts. Consequently, he can speak of mental presentations as genuine entities and the conceptualist reduction of non-mental properties in terms of “being correctly presentable in such and such a way” no longer appears flagrantly circular.

The theory of intentionality which seems at first glance to be suggested by this reduction is an *adverbial* theory. If the only ontological building blocks out of which we can reconstruct our world are concrete individuals, including those accidents which are modally extended concrete individuals, then the only way in which we could speak of (possibly non-existent) objects of presentation is to translate such talk into the adverbial idiom. To have a presentation of a triangular object is to present triangularly. “To present”, here, refers to a certain accident of the soul and “triangularly” specifies the kind to which this accident belongs. The adverbial complement thus refers in a sense to an accident of an accident, an accident of second order.⁵⁹

On the other hand Brentano needs to consider more than just the modes of presentation. He stresses very often that if we want to specify a presentation we can do this only by referring to its object, and indeed, it seems that an adverbial specification such as “triangularly”, “bluely”, “dogly” or “horsely” is understandable only by a kind of linkage to the objects whose properties the given terms would convey. We understand what it means “to present bluely” only because we know what it means for the object of the presentation involved to be blue. This raises a problem for those champions of the adverbial theory who see it as providing a method for the elimination of objects of intention.

This conception suggests another picture of Brentano’s ontology of intentionality. In place of a simple adverbial theory in the frame of which one would speak only of mental substances (minds) and their monadic accidents, we obtain a theory which introduces an intentional relation which is irreducibly non-extensional in the sense that for the sentences describing this relation the principles of existential generalisation and substitution simply fail.⁶⁰

Now, it is clear that the adverbial interpretation concurs better with the general reistic attitude of the late Brentano. For is unclear, to say the least, where in a reistic world such irreducibly non-extensional intentional relations could find their place. The solution that we

⁵⁷ Cf. Brentano 1968, p. 118 (English translation, p. 86).

⁵⁸ Cf. Brentano 1933, p. 57 (English translation, p. 50).

⁵⁹ The late Brentano accepted such accidents of accidents. See Smith 1994, pp.72f.

⁶⁰ This interpretation is assumed in Chrudzimski 1999.

propose is to assume that the true Brentanian ontology of intentionality is an adverbial ontology as outlined above, but to insist at the same time that the only specification of the meaning of the corresponding adverbial determinations which a human being would be able to give is in terms of putative objects of presentation. According to this interpretation, the ontology of intentionality is at bottom adverbial, but the “ideology” of intentionality must for cognitive agents like ourselves refer to the putative objects of intentions.⁶¹

Brentano’s ontology of intentionality thus remains, in the end, at least compatible with solipsism, and with the view that we have no evidence that there exist entities other than ourselves.

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⁶¹ This solution is argued for in Chrudzinski 2001, pp. 243–247.

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