



## A Critical Analysis of Brentano's Intentionality in Relation to Meinong's Object Theory

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### Abstract

*Our thoughts are certainly about things(objects), however, what kind of things(object) are our thoughts directed at? What is the relationship between mental objects and external world object? What is the nature and character of mental and extra mental objects? An attempt at answering these meta-epistemological questions, brought to light the ideas of Franz Brentano on 'Intentionality' and Alexius Meinong's Theory of object. Through proper method of philosophical analysis, it was discovered that both philosophers agreed that intentionality is a unique character exhibited by the human mind. However, Meinong went further to develop a more comprehensive object theory which attempts at clarifying some of the ontological difficulties associated with Brentano's notion on intentionality. The research concluded that, though, both philosophers had areas of divergence and convergence in their respective epistemological thoughts, but insisted that the influence of Brentano's ideas on Meinong cannot be overemphasized, which is to say, Meinong's object theory, could be said to be a reaction towards the problem of referential opacity present in Brentano's account of Intentionality.*

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## Introduction

Meinong's theory of object and Brentano's concept of intentionality (the mind's potential to be concerned with anything) deal with the ontological nature and character of conceivable things (mind). Assumptions and inferences, according to Alexius Meinong, are complex objects known as goals. They're made of other things, according to Meinong. We can imagine and imagine things that don't exist by utilising the things we've seen in the actual world. Golden-Mountain and Centaur are only two examples of the many combinations that may be made with these two elements. Meinong argues that an item may be an object of thought in any situation, such as when someone thinks about the fact that Otukpo is located in Benue.

A person's intentions are not visible to others; hence Brentano (1995) believes that intent is a mental rather than physical condition. Love and caring may be shown via body language, but the full meaning of such sentiments is only known to those who have access to the person's thoughts and feelings. Suppose a five-year-old boy is carrying a glass cup to his father, and he drops it. The cup breaks, and the boy's father has to pick it up. There is no doubt that the goal was noble, but the consequences are disastrous. Brentano's account of ontological concerns in intentionality helps us understand Meinong's theory of Objects. It is Meinong's belief that intentional interactions are always the result of a mental act and an object, rather than the immanent content idea. In certain situations, the intended object does not exist in the physical world; but, an object that is compatible with the mental act toward which they are meant does.

## Literature Review

### An Exposition of Alexius Meinong's Object Theory

Meinong defines the goal of a mental act as anything that may be experienced in some way as a consequence of the mental act itself. An object cannot be discussed without bringing into account mental activity, which is defined as "object" (1888-1903). Meinong does not describe an object as something that can be seized, but rather as something that can be grasped by mental processes that can be represented, to mention a few instances, since the term "object" does not reflect an ontological reliance, but rather a conceptual dependency. He accepts that "everything" and "object" are linked in this way. Regardless of the fact that everything is a physical object, everything is pre-given to the mind in order to be grasped.

In Meinong's view of things, no matter how impossible a thing is or how "defective" it is, it is included (the thought about itself, for example). Similar to Twardowski, Meinong asserts the existence of non-beings does not need a discussion of nothingness. An objectless representation or notion, on the other hand, is impossible. For the contradictory statement "there are things of which it is true that there are no such objects," we must find a way to resolve it. First, he defines "there are" as "outside being" (pre-giveness). Second, he alludes to two closely linked principles: (1) independence of so-being and (2) the pure object's indifference to so-being. Meinong, (Meinong, 1981) stated: The next year (Meinong, 1981).

The independence principle, first defined by Ernst Mally in 1903, states that "the so-being of an item is not influenced by its non-being," which indicates that an object's having properties are unaffected by whether or not it exists. This principle includes Meinong's claim that any object has the properties that it is characterized as having (e.g. "the AB is A and B"), and the denial of the ontological assumption, which holds that there are no true propositions about what does not have being (e.g., "the AB is A and B, respectively") (Routley, 1982).

Even if one of the object's two beings or non-beings occurs in every scenario, the object is inherently indifferent to being according to the indifference principle (Meinong, 1981). "The pure object stands 'beyond being and non-being,'" as opposed to this terminology, is meant to be more clear. The latter word suggests that an item's nature does not include either being or non-being (it is so being, but it should not be interpreted to imply that an object is beyond being and non-being in the sense that it neither has being nor does not have being). In the second statement of the indifference principle, there is no ambiguity. It is possible that the non-existence of an object is guaranteed by the object's nature, but this does not hold true for all objects. Law of excluded middle states that every object must be either a reality of being or non-being at any given time (Findlay, 1963). While it is important to keep in mind that there are two meanings of the term "negativity," it is also important to keep in mind that there are two versions of the law of excluded middle (narrower, predicate, or ontological negation and larger, external, sentence logical negation). Only in the case of sentence negation objects does Meinong accept the rule of excluded middle. There is a difference between reading a book and fantasizing about a fictional character like Sherlock Holmes, for example.

That is the point of my representation, how Meinong sees things. It's not clear what Meinong is talking about. The introduction of this item may seem to be problematic, and it may even appear to contradict prior remarks by Meinong. First, "the object of my representation" seems to be something that cannot either represent an object in the extra-mental world, or a fact about that item. The idea that knowledge is based on an object's agreement with itself would be absurd if this were the case. Second, "the object of my representation" cannot be the same as the content (or representation), as the content is mental, and Meinong aims to predicate only

predicable things from its qualities, such as the feature of being quadrangular, since the content is mentally.

### **Types of Object**

Meinong divides objects into three categories based on their ontological status. Objects may exist in either one of three states: being, not-being, or neither. The concept of "existence" or "real actuality" may be used to describe an object's physical and temporal existence. When we use the word "subsistence," we indicate the object's unchanging existence in the long run. The condition of being a thing without having any existence is referred to as absistence or being-given.

Some things, like mountains and birds, are possible in theory, while others, like numbers and theorems, are just not (numbers, theorems, and so on). Things that cannot be created, such as impossible objects, fall into a third category altogether (e.g square circle, wooden iron etc.) In order to be considered a "minimum" person, you must know that you have received anything. To be "given," on the other hand, is merely to receive something. As J.N. Findlay put it, "being-given," or "absistence," is better understood as a sort of non-being rather than as a manner of being in and of itself. Because nothing exists, everything has a negative connotation, unlike the ideas of existence and sustenance. Despite the fact that some subset of the whole number of possible things exists, only a tiny fraction of them are really real.) In light of the conclusion that nothing exists, Meinong may deal with our ability to declare the non-existence of a specific object. This is shown by our determination to continue doing so, which exists logically before our denial of its existence.

### **Object and Subject**

As you can see, Meinong divides the world into four distinct divisions. (1) "Object" (Objekt), which may be real (as in horses) or ideal (as in a human being); (like the concepts of differences, identity, etc.). the affirmation of being (Sein) or non-being (Nitchsein), of a particular kind of being (such as Sosein), or of a certain kind of thing with which it is associated (Mitsein), are examples of "objective" judgments. What philosophers call "states of affairs" are intimately tied to objectives (which may or may not be real, "obtainable," or otherwise). Examples include the truth, the good, and the beautiful, all of which are "dignitative." Desirable things like responsibilities, objectives, and so forth.

Mental activity fall into four categories: Representation (das Vorsetellen) for objects, Thoughts and Feeling (das Fuhlen) for dignitaries and desiderative, and Representation (das Vorsetellen) for desiderative.

### **An Exposition of Brentano's Concept on Intentionality**

A new area of psychology, "the study of mental processes," was Brentano's principal goal in life (Brentano,1995). He provides a more detailed account of mental happenings as part of the discipline's quest to complete this definition. According to Brentano (1995), there are six ways to discriminate between mental and physical things: First, and first, mental phenomena are the exclusive focus of inner perception. Second, mental phenomena are also the sole focus of exterior perception. Third, mental phenomena are also the sole focus of outside perception. They always seem to be one and the same. They are usually focused towards a specific item or collection of items. Psychological phenomena and only those based on presentations or presentations must also meet the following three conditions: they seem to have no spatial expansion; they must not only have genuine existence, but they must also lack purposeful existence as well.

Mental events have one thing in common: "that they can only be experienced in one's own consciousness; while physical occurrences can only be observed externally" (Brentano,1995). According to Brentano, it is the first of these two forms of perception that provides unambiguous evidence for what is true. "Wahrnehmung," which means "taking-true" in German, is the only sort of perception that exists in a formal sense, according to Brentano. Because the latter implies that one is engaged in a mental act—the act of observing—directed toward another mental act (the action viewed), the phrases "inner perception" and "inner observation" should not be used interchangeably. Inner perception, on the other hand, should not be seen as a background activity to other mental activities. Every mental act is accidentally oriented towards itself as a secondary object as a consequence of its main direction, which is linked with the former. As an example, when I gaze at a tree, my visual experience is focused on the tree, not the surrounding landscape. Nonetheless, I am also aware of the fact that I am having a mental experience that is directed toward the tree. Consequently, I am aware of the fact that I am seeing the tree rather than hearing or feeling it. Consequently, my visual experience is not just focused on the tree, but also on me as a secondary object.

Brentano is most recognized for introducing the notion of intentionality into contemporary philosophy. A famous articulation of the intentionality thesis may be found in these first sentences from his writings: To use the Scholastic terminology, "all mental occurrence is defined by the intentional(or mental) inexistence of an object and by what we could name, though not fully explicitly, reference to a content, orientation toward an object" The author claims that 'every mental phenomenon includes something as an object inside itself' One of Brentano's goals is to give one of six criteria for separating mental from physical experiences, rather than to develop a comprehensive explanation of intentionality as a consequence of his study.

On the other hand, the purposeful object of our attention is a part of the psychological act. The problem stems from a mental rather than a physical one. Brentano seems to have advocated a kind of immanentism, in which the purposeful aim is "in the mind," rather than "out there." It is claimed that Brentano distinguishes between intentional correlate and object, and that the existence of the latter does not depend on our orientation toward it. As a result of this lack of clarity, Brentano's pupils frequently challenged his idea of intentionality when they used it to build more systematic accounts. If the intended object is part of the act, we are confronted with a duplicate of the object, it was said.

This kind of behavior is often targeted towards a mental and purposeful objective in addition to a tangible, real-world object that is experienced, remembered or thought about. My thoughts on the city of Abuja are essentially about a mental object that is part of my act of thinking, rather than the actual city itself. As a result, there are a number of issues, the most important of which is the inability to steer two individuals toward the same goal. We must first explain how it is possible to have mental experiences that are directed towards non-existent entities such as Hamlet, the golden mountain, or a round square if we assume that the targeted object and the actual object are equal. Like my ideas about Abuja, these actions likewise have an aim in mind, but the difference is that their objectives don't exist in the same way that my thoughts about Abuja exist.

Mental events are orientated toward themselves as secondary objects, according to Brentano's theory. In this approach, inner perception is a technique through which we become conscious of our mental experiences (David, 1968). Thus, Brentano rejects the idea of unconscious mental acts: because every mental act is incidentally directed toward itself as a secondary object, we are instantly aware of every mental act that happens. It is possible for people to participate in varied degrees of mental activity, he admits. For further explanation, he argues that the intensity

with which the object, or the secondary object (the act itself), is shown is equal to the intensity with which it is presented. Our inner knowledge of the act, or our "secondary consciousness," will also be very low intensity if we participate in a mental act of low intensity, he claims.... According to Brentano, it is common for humans to describe an experience as "unconscious" even if it was really a low-intensity conscious mental event.

To put it another way, Brentano's consciousness is constantly united. Mental phenomena, unlike physical phenomena, can only be seen one at a time, despite the fact that we may be able to witness a variety of physical occurrences simultaneously. To use Brentano's language, when we seem to be involved in more than one mental act at the same time, such as when we are listening to a tune while drinking a glass of red wine and looking out the window, various mental phenomena combine into a single instant. Despite the fact that one of the elements has been eliminated, such as when I drink the wine and look away from the fire, the collective will continue to exist in its present shape. We can't do two distinct mental acts at the same time or anticipate future mental acts because of the unity of consciousness. This means that inner observation is a non-starter since it would need us to perform two distinct mental acts, one of which is aimed at the other, at the same time.

### **A Critical Analysis of Meinong's Object Theory in Relation to Brentano's Intentionality**

For Meinong, an answer to Brentano's ontological concerns with his concept of Intentionality is possible in the fullest sense. Meinong maintains that the intentional link is always a relation between the mental act and the object, rather than a future content (Chisholm1982).. The intentional object may not exist in all situations, but even in these scenarios, there is some object outside of the mental act that we are directed towards. In Meinong's view, even things that don't exist might be called genuine. In order for us to focus our attention on them, they must exist (bestehen). Circular squares, for example, are theoretically impossible to exist, and hence cannot exist at all (Meinong 1981). To build Husserl's theory of consciousness, the notion of intentionality was critical in Husserl's phenomenological work. In contrast, Husserl uses the concept of "noema," which he defines as the intentional correlate of the act, to resolve the problem of directedness.

### **The similarities Between Meinong's Object theory and Brentano's thought on intentionality**

This idea of intentionality is a form of cognition on a certain topic that is used by both of them. On the basis of Meinong's view, it is aboutness and attention to objects that are the most essential qualities of mental states. According to him, the "content" of an experience is what distinguishes one from another in terms of meaning. As a result, Brentano is credited for reinvigorating the concept of intentionality in contemporary philosophy. For him, "intentionality" is simply "aboutness," which he defines as the relationship between mental operations and the external world. As a result, he considered it to be the most significant feature of mental processes. Psychological acts have a certain goal in mind, and each one has a specific purpose (the intentional object) (Rollinger, 1993). All beliefs and desires have an object: the item that the believer or desirer believes in or desires.

Some external objects, like as mountains and birds, exist according to Meinong, but he denies that ideas and emotions exist ( square-circle, wooden-iron etc) Meinong believes that certain things exist in the actual world, while others don't exist in the truest sense of the term. The concept of "internal inexistence" was also coined by Brentano to characterize the mental condition in which a thought object exists only in one's own mind and awareness. When it comes to the distinction between psychological and physical phenomena, Brentano said that the former lacks the power to produce intentionality in the first place while the latter can only

enable intentional relationships in the second place. Psychological events are distinguished from physical occurrences by their ability to have an intentional object, he argues (Dölling 2017). We can see from the beginning that Meinong studied under Brentano, and it is because of this that Meinong has taken the position to write about his object theory, which is based on the foundation of his studies as a student of Brentano. On the other hand, Meinong was influenced by Brentano's ideas on the concept of purpose.

### **Areas of Divergence**

Emotions may be divided into two categories: feeling (Gefühle) and desire (Gefühle). This is Meinong's first deviation (Begehrungen). In his second alteration, he introduces a contrast between serious (ernstartige) and fantastical (phantasiartige) experiences (which he refers to as "assumptions") experiences. There are three components to mental phenomena, according to him: the act, content, and object. Humans may be guided to the same thing in different ways, i.e., via different kinds of mental activity; thus he advocates for acceptable non-real (ideal) objects that correspond to mental actions of evaluation, emotion, and desire.

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