



Presentative Character of Intentionality in Franz Brentano

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Abstract

The article aims to explain an absolutely central or even founding aspect of the entire speculative framework of Brentano's thought: the primarily presentative character of consciousness or, more specifically, of the intentionality of acts of consciousness. As is well known, the sphere of *mental phenomena* is divided by Brentano into three different fields, that relating to acts of representation (*Vorstellung*), of judgement and so-called acts of sentiment. This tri-partition is however interconnected with the absolutely unique and fundamental role that Brentano assigns to the phenomenon of *Vorstellung*, which, for reasons that will be explained in the article, is better to translate with the term "presentation". According to Brentano, psychic phenomena are either presentations or are based on presentations, so that at the basis of any psychic phenomenon - that is, of any act of consciousness - there is always a presentation of something. In the text it will be explained how it is precisely at this level that the foundation of intentionality resides, which in Brentano's view constitutes that character which more than any other qualifies mental phenomena. Relevant conclusions from this conception of intentionality of the consciousness will be highlighted in the text: the fundamentally neutral character of presentational intentionality, as well as the primacy of the object in the structuring of it. This interpretation of the intentionality has its capital point in the rigorous distinction between psychic phenomena and the physical ones, so that according to Brentano on the mental level everything is strictly psychic. The article will attempt to highlight this distinction with reference to Brentano's decisive detachment from the orientations of experimental or genetic psychology prior to him that tended towards a reductionist position of mental processes to those of a physiological nature: the objective content of the conscience is referred to the object itself and not the result of a sort of physiological causality.

Critique and Overcoming of Genetic Psychology on the Analysis of the Psychic Phenomena

One of the fundamental deficiencies of so-called *genetic psychology* was the failure to distinguish between psycho-physical activity, sensation and conscious psychic phenomenon. The consideration of psycho-physiological processes as the fundamental basis of the act of thinking in all its facets, thus also of the specifically cognitive ones,

related to the constitution of meanings, was precisely characteristic of the psycho-physiological orientation of late 19th century psychology, which largely took up the characteristic traits of the British associationism introduced by Hume. It was a psychology of content based on the idea of applicability to the acts of thoughts, in particular the perceptual ones, as this was then the fundamental field of research of psycho-physiological psychology, of a psychology built on scientific foundations. This is basically a kind of science of an essentially experimental nature that proceeds from the philosophical assumption of what is known as the

psychic-physical parallelism, according to which physical and psychic phenomena correspond in such a reciprocal way that can even be measured with mathematical precision. The psychical datum becomes nothing more than the correlate of a nervous fact, which, in turn, is considered in a dependent relationship to some stimulus whose exact magnitude can be determined.

This was, for example, the standpoint expressed by Fechner in his work *Elemente der Psychophysik*, published in 1860, in which psychophysics was fundamentally defined as the exact science of functional relations or dependency relations between body and mind¹. In a follow-up definition, Fechner emphasises the functional dependent ties between the two fields in this way: «By psychophysics is meant here an exact doctrine of the functional or interdependent relationships between the physical and spiritual, physical and mental, worlds»².

Although this functional relationship could be studied in principle from either side indifferently, it is nevertheless emphasised by Fechner that the physical side is to be preferred, since only on the basis of it is it possible to carry out verifiable measurements³. The relationship between mind and body must therefore be measured in relation to the physical states, so that as to establish an arithmetic series of proportion between psychic intensity and corresponding geometric series of material force. In this way the increase in bodily energy becomes the measure of corresponding increase in psychic intensity⁴. Given the relation of this idea to the results expressed by Weber in his work *Tastsinn und Gemeingefühl*, published in 1846, this relationship between mind and body has been named the '*Fechner-Weber Law*', which is nothing more than the application of mathematical laws to psychic events, according to which the intensity of

sensations is expressed as a function of the intensity of the stimuli. This law purports then to determine a supposedly exact correlation between physical and psychic quantities which would consist of a 'psychophysical conversion' of the increasing magnitude of external stimuli into an accompanying increase in the intensity of sensation. In other words, by measuring stimuli one could indirectly measure psychic phenomena on the basis of their functional relationship, and this relationship could be identified and expressed accurately, although the magnitude of a sensation could not be determined directly⁵.

Such a perspective gives rise to a considerable number of problems that are absolutely unresolved by such a theory⁶. They are problems that comes from failing to distinguish, or even to confuse, sensation as an act from stimulus as a physiological process⁷. Brentano underlines one point in particular in his objections to Fechner's and Weber's theory: that the measurement of phenomena and the perception of differences among them involve *qualitative* psychic factors which prevent their accomplishment in accordance with the *Weber-Fechner law* [cfr. pp. 103-104]. This is a radical critique, as it undermines at the root the *operational validity* of the mere mathematical construct of logarithmic transformation of the stimulus. In fact, that construct doesn't take into account the complexity of the perceptual organization of stimuli, which does not have quantitative dimensions alone. For example, in the *perception of a difference* in brightness between two surfaces it is evident that this perception is not only due to the magnitude of the sensitive stimulus resulting from the brilliance measure, i.e. it is not only a mere

1 «Unter Psychophysik verstehe Ich [...] eine exacte Lehre von den Beziehungen zwischen Leib und Seele», G.T.Fechner, *Elemente der Psychophysik*, Verlag von Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig 1860, p. V.

2 «Unter Psychophysik soll hier eine exacte Lehre von den funktionellen oder Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen zwischen körperlicher und geistiger, physischer und psychischer, Welt verstanden werden», *ivi*, p. 8.

3 «Insoweit ein funktionelles Verhältniss zwischen Körper und Seele besteht, würde an sich nichts hindern, dasselbe eben so in der einen als in der anderen Richtung ins Auge zu fassen und zu verfolgen [...] Ein Grund aber für die Psychophysik, den Verfolg der Seite der Abhängigkeit der Seele vom Körper vor der gegenteiligen zu bevorzugen, liegt darin, dass nur das Physische dem Masse unmittelbar zugänglich ist, indess das Mass des Psychischen erst in Ahängkeit davon gewonnen werden kann», *ivi*, p. 9.

4 «He realized there must be a discernible quantitative relationship between sensations and stimuli. Unaware of Weber's research, Fechner believed there was not a one-to-one relationship between perceived increases in stimulus intensity and physical increases in stimulus values. Indeed, he concluded that perceived increases were related to the amount of existing physical stimulation. His conclusion is consistent with Weber's discovery», D.B.King, W.D.Woody, W.Viney, *A History of Psychology. Ideas and context*, Boston ecc., Pearson Education 2013, p. 238.

5 «Fechner discovered Weber's work and launched a vigorous experimental program. [...] Weber's formula provided the intellectual spadework for Fechner to develop a more ambitious formula for the measurement of sensation. By integrating Weber's formula, Fechner generated the new formula: $S = k \log R$, where S is the mental sensation and R is the *Reiz* or stimulus magnitude. The formula specified that the strength of a mental sensation is a constant logarithmic function of the stimulus. It further specified that as a mental series increases arithmetically, the stimulus series must increase geometrically», *ibidem*.

6 «Is the *perception of difference* of sensations quantitative (as between two surfaces) or qualitative (as between two nuances of 'red')? Moreover, does the perception of difference apply to the intensity of the sensations themselves, i.e. to the *apprehension* processes, or to their *contents*, i.e. the related 'red', 'dark', 'high', etc.? Finally, more in general, the status of sensations as regards their belonging to the physiological and/or phenomenal level, and thus their possible cognitive significance, remains undefined», L. Albertazzi, *Introduzione a Brentano*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, p. 39.

7 It is interesting to note, from a historical point of view, how Fechner's position, which takes no account of the essential difference between the psycho-spiritual and material levels of the human being, later found in Fechner a metaphysical justification that should account for the relationship he established between two such differing domains. In his work *Die Tagesansicht gegenüber der Nachtansicht* (Leipzig 1879) he found the solution in a pamphysical conception: the material and the spiritual world would be unified, somewhat undistinguished, within a universe seen as a whole, penetrated by the spirit of God.

phenomenal outcome, but also hinges on the *perception of a change* in brightness, and this is a qualitative and subjective datum⁸.

From this first fundamental objection two others follow as a consequence: that in their theory it is treated as *equal* what was only *equally perceivable*⁹; that «the possibility of measuring intensities according to their method is restricted entirely to those phenomena which are produced by external stimulation of the sense organs» [p. 52]. In fact, Fechner's theory was limited to the study of the external psychophysical dimension. But, Brentano points out, psychic phenomena that are generated by external stimuli are only a part, and not even the majority:

«We still lack, therefore, a measure of intensity for all psychic phenomena which have their foundation in physical processes within the organism or which are caused by other psychic phenomena. But the majority of psychic phenomena including the most important ones belong in this category: the whole class of desires and actions of the will, as well as convictions and opinions of all kinds, and a wide range of presentations which have their origin in the imagination. Of all psychic phenomena, sensations alone, and not even all of them, remain measurable [...] I admit that if, on the basis of Fechner's method, a measurement could be found for the physical phenomenon, it could also be found for the psychic phenomenon in which the physical phenomenon is presented. Yet, it seems to me necessary to add the new restriction that only *one* aspect of the psychic phenomenon should be measured according to its intensity, namely its reference to its primary object, for we shall see that the psychic phenomenon has

still other aspects and is not exhausted by this one reference» [p. 52].

These considerations lead Brentano quite clearly to outline a definite or, as we shall see, radical differentiation between psychic and physical phenomena.

It should be noted though that the necessity to provide an adequate distinction between psychic and physical phenomena was very much alive in the philosophical and psychological de psychic bate of Brentano's time. Indeed, the issue of a descriptive analysis, beyond a merely genetic one, applied to the field of psychic phenomena, was felt in the second half of the 19th century as an actually urgent necessity. As scholar Melandri attests, this issue «constitutes a profound desideratum in the years between 1870 and 1900, in which there is an aspiration for an organ of thought that does not compress the imagination within narrow naturalistic schemata, since the subjective but communicative approach to the problem of meaning in psychic life is at stake»¹⁰.

Wundt himself, who is historically the founder of modern experimental psychology - it is well known that he created the first experimental laboratory of psychology in world history, set up at the University of Leipzig in 1879, which set an example for psychology departments all over the world - though was convergent with the idea of an essential continuity between the domains of the psychical and the physical, so much as to proclaim in his fundamental work, *Grundzüge der Physiologischen Psychologie (Principles of Physiological Psychology)*, published in 1873 and 1874, a sort of an alliance between physiology and psychology¹¹, detaches himself from it on fundamental aspects, outlining on an experimental basis the necessity of postulating a higher level of psychic activity not derivative by reduction from

8 The objection obviously applies even more in the case of emotions and feelings: «Fechner's psycho-physical law, even were it assured, whereas it awakens continually increasing doubt and opposition, could only be used as a means of measuring the intensity of the content of certain concrete perceptions, not, however, for measuring the strength of the emotions like joy and sorrow», F. Brentano, *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1969. Cf. on this issue: D. Seron, *The Fechner-Brentano Controversy on the Measurement of Sensation*, in I. Tanasescu (ed.), *Franz Brentano's Metaphysics and Psychology*, Bucharest, Zeta Books 2012, pp. 344-365.

9 «It has been found that the increase of the physical stimulus which produces a just barely noticeable increase in the strength of the sensation always bears a constant relation to the magnitude of the stimulus to which it is added. And since it was assumed to be self evident that each barely noticeable increase of sensation is to be regarded as equal, the law was formulated that the intensity of sensation increases by equal amounts when the relative increase of the physical stimulus is the same. In reality, it is by no means self-evident that each barely noticeable increase in sensation is *equal*, but only that it is *equally noticeable*. In addition, the quantitative relationship between equally noticeable increases in sensation remains to be examined. This investigation leads to the conclusion that all increases in sensation which have the same relationship to the intensity of the sensations to which they are added, are *equally noticeable*» [p. 50].

10 Melandri E, *Le "ricerche logiche" di Husserl. Introduzione e commento alla prima ricerca*, Bologna, Il Mulino 1990, p. 27.

11 The first one would «informs us about those life phenomena that we perceive by our external senses», and in the second «the person looks upon himself from within. [...] The result of the alliance was to be a new science, *physiological psychology*, whose tasks were: first, to investigate those life processes [consciousness] that, standing midway between external and internal experience, require the simultaneous application of both methods of observation, the external and the internal; and second, to throw light upon the totality of life processes from the points of view gained by investigations of this area and in this way perhaps to mediate a total comprehension of human existence. [This new science] begins with physiological processes and seeks to demonstrate how these influence the domain of internal observation. [...] The name *physiological psychology* points to psychology as the real subject of our science. [...] If one wishes to place emphasis on methodological characteristics, our sciences might be called *experimental psychology* in distinction from the usual science of mind based purely on introspection», W. M. Wundt, *Principles of physiological psychology*. Portions of translation by S. Diamond; reprinted in R. W. Rieber (Ed.). (1980). *Wilhelm Wundt and the Making of a Scientific Psychology*. New York: Plenum, pp. 157. pp. 157-158.

lower processes of a sensitive or sensory nature¹². A real and total comprehension of the human life therefore requires that we turn our attention to the processes concerning *inner experience*, in which that synthesis is realised that includes as its elements the phenomena of exteriority. The sphere of physical phenomena is so subset of the more comprehensive one of psychic phenomena. All physical phenomena are also, insofar as we have a representation of them, psychic phenomena, although the reverse is not true¹³. The two phenomena differ in the character of constancy and relative independence of the object with respect to the subject's modes of representation¹⁴. In practice, the experience of the reality require a perspective duplication, and so the duplicity of physical and psychical phenomena¹⁵.

12 «One theoretical possibility opened up by the creation of physiological psychology was reduction: not simply borrowing physiological concepts for psychological usage, but explaining mental and behavioral events in terms of physiological causes. To take a familiar modern example, it appears that the cause of long-term depression is disordered levels of certain neurotransmitters in the brain rather than repressed psychological conflicts. All three of the main founders of psychology—Wundt, Freud, and James—were initially attracted by the idea of jettisoning psychological theories altogether in favor of explaining consciousness as the outcome of neural causes, without positing a level of unconscious, mediating psychological processes. Ultimately, all three rejected this reductive vision because reduction might turn into replacement. Wundt moved very slowly away from reduction; Freud was briefly enchanted with the idea; and James struggled mightily with it eventually giving up psychology for philosophy. Nevertheless, the idea of reduction lived on in the succeeding generations of psychologists, sometimes hidden but never dying, and today it is reasserting itself with new vigor in the field of cognitive neuroscience», T. H. Leahey, *A History of Psychology from Antiquity to Modernity*, New York, Routledge, 2017, p.228.

13 «It is, indeed, true that there are certain contents of experience which belong in the sphere of psychological investigation, and are not to be found among the objects and processes studied by natural science; such are our feelings, emotions, and decisions. On the other hand, there is not a single natural phenomenon that may not, from a different point of view, become an object of psychology», W. WUNDT, *Outlines of Psychology*, Etext Conversion by Nalanda Digital Library, Calicut, pp. 5-6.

14 «Since natural science investigates the content of experience after abstracting from the experiencing subject, its problem is usually stated as that of acquiring "knowledge of the outer world". By the expression outer world is meant the sum total of all the objects presented in experience», *ivi*, p. 4.

15 «It follows, then, that the expressions outer and inner experience do not indicate different objects, but different points of view from which we take up the consideration and scientific treatment of a unitary experience. We are naturally led to these points of view, because every concrete experience immediately divides into two factors: into a content presented to us, and our apprehension of this content. We call the first of these factors objects of experience, the second, experiencing subject. This division indicates two directions for the treatment of experience. One is that of the natural sciences, which concern themselves with the objects of experience, thought of as independent of the subject. The other is that of psychology, which investigates the whole content of experience in its relations to the subject and also in regard to the attributes which this content derives directly from the subject. The point of view of natural science may, accordingly, be designated as that of mediate experience, since it is possible only after abstracting from the subjective factor present in all actual experience; the point of view of psychology, on the other hand, may be designated as that

This consideration appears in all its poignancy in relation to the acknowledgement that any perceptual act is always absolutely unitary with regard to the object being perceived. Our visual experience is such that all our individual sensations, for instance the brilliance or hue of colour or the roughness of a tree, are unified in the unity of the vision of the tree as such, and not perceived in their individuality. Wundt explains this phenomenon through his particular theory of apperception, that he calls *law of psychic resultants*, which is basically an active process whereby consciousness is not merely in a passive position in relation to the sensory and/or emotional elements, but actively acts on them in a creative way so as to form - Husserl would say *constitute* - objects as wholes¹⁶. This process of building up, combining and organizing psychic elements into a whole is even referred to as creative synthesis¹⁷ and its unitary product a sort of "new creation"¹⁸. The active moment of this process appears to emerge in its independence, albeit still partial. So much so that active apperception presupposes a choice based on intrinsic meanings, while passive apperception is based on extrinsic associations¹⁹.

These positions clearly indicate that the fundamental problem of the cultural position that was emerging with the experimental psychology was to formulate a precise distinction between the field of the physical-natural and that of the psychic-spiritual. Moreover, in Wundt it is clearly apparent that this problem is closely associated with the

of immediate experience, since it purposely does away with this abstraction and all its consequences», *ivi*, pp. 7-8.

16 «The law of psychical resultants finds its expression in the fact that every psychical compound shows attributes which may indeed be understood from the attributes of its elements after these elements have once been presented, but which are by no means to be looked upon as the mere sum of the attributes of these elements. A compound clang is more in its ideational and affective attributes than merely a sum of single tones», W.M.Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology*, op.cit., p. 638.

17 «The law of psychical resultants which expresses a principle which we may designate, in view of its results, as a principle of creative synthesis. This has long been recognized in the case of higher mental creations, but generally not applied to the other psychical processes», *ivi*, pp. 639-640.

18 «The fact that in all psychical combinations, the product is not a mere sum of the separate elements that compose such combinations, but it represents a new creation», Wundt, W, *An introduction to psychology*, New York: Arno Press 1973, (Original work published 1912), p. 164.

19 «Wundt repeatedly stressed that simple elements never occur in experience, that they are abstractions or even "invented sensations", and that the compounds that do occur in experience are always the product of apperception. The latter occurs in two forms, called *passive* and *active*. Both are forms of volitional activity, which led Wundt to calling his system of psychology *voluntarism*. The difference is that active apperception involves an act of choice, whereas passive apperception does not. Active apperception leads to the establishment of connections on the basis of intrinsic meaning, passive apperception to the establishment of extrinsic associations». Kurt Danziger, *Wundt and the Two Traditions in Psychology*, in R. W. Rieber (edd.), *Wilhelm Wundt and the making of Scientific Psychology*, New York, Plenum Press 1980, p. 79.

idea of the fundamental phenomenon of representation. Brentano fully fits into this new perspective and in his major work will understand the significance of acts and processes of consciousness in their unequivocal and essential independence from all the psycho-physiological processes that could be in any way in some relation to the psychic processes themselves. Although it does take into account the connection between physical and psychic phenomena, since they share a common origin in the phenomenon of sensation, he does not fail to highlight the demarcation point between the two phenomena, thus avoiding the assumption of hypotheses and methodologies that could be in any way reductionist²⁰.

To the psychology of content based on experimental and physiological grounds Brentano thus decisively opposes a *descriptive* and *nativistic psychology* of the acts of consciousness via «a theory of direct and internal reference without having to accept reductionist hypotheses, i.e. without having to trace psychic phenomena back to physical, chemical or physiological phenomena»²¹. Over time, he would rigorously specify the difference between the domains of physical and psychic phenomena, assigning the

task of identifying the elements of psychic manifestations to descriptive psychology, and conversely the investigation of the laws of physiological nature relating to the origin, duration and transition of the psychophysical state to genetic psychology²². Nevertheless, even before formally separating these two disciplines, Brentano always maintained a clear separation between descriptive and genetic issues.

Radical Distinction and Separation of Physical and Psychic Phenomena

The Brentano's confrontation with and critique of the experimental physic-psychology, in particular according to the Fechner's theory, is theoretically important because it highlights a series of essential steps in his elaboration of *descriptive psychology*, that could be named as the development of a *sui generis* inner psychophysics²³.

The foundation of descriptive psychology is outlined in its essential features in the first and fundamental 1874 work *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, which is a remarkable attempt to found a scientific psychology with an absolutely non-reductionist character²⁴. In this work it is outlines a clear distinction between psychical and physical phenomena: «All the data of our consciousness», Brentano states, «are divided into two great classes - the class of

20 «For the facts which the physiologist investigates and those which the psychologist investigates are most intimately correlated, despite their great differences in character. We find physical and psychic properties united in one and the same group. Not only may physical states be aroused by physical states and psychic states by psychic, but it is also the case that physical states have psychical consequences and psychic states have physical consequences. Some thinkers have distinguished a separate science which is supposed to deal with these questions. One in particular is Fechner, who named this branch of science "psychophysics" and called the famous law which he established in this connection the "Psychophysical Law." [...] Let us not, then, be unduly disturbed by the inevitable encroachment of physiology upon psychology and vice versa. These encroachments will be no greater than those which we observe, for example, between physics and chemistry. They do nothing to refute the correctness of the boundary line we have established; they only show that, justified as it is, this distinction, like every other distinction between sciences, is somewhat artificial. Nor will it be in any way necessary to treat the whole range of so-called psychophysical questions twice, i.e. once in physiology and once in psychology. In the case of each of these problems we can easily show which field contains the essential difficulty. Once this difficulty is solved, the problem itself is as good as solved. For example, it will definitely be the task of the psychologist to ascertain the first psychic phenomena which are aroused by a physical stimulus, even if he cannot dispense with looking at physiological facts in so doing. By the same token, in the case of voluntary movements of the body, the psychologist will have to establish the ultimate and immediate psychic antecedents of the whole series of physical changes which are connected with them, but it will be the task of the physiologist to investigate the ultimate and immediate physical causes of sensation, even though in so doing he must obviously also look at the psychic phenomenon. Likewise, with reference to movements that have psychic causes, the physiologist must establish within his own field their ultimate and proximate effects», F. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, London and New York, Routledge 1995, pp. 4-5. In this translation, the German term "psychisch" is translated with "mental". In order not to cause confusion with the text of the article, I have taken the liberty of replacing the term mental with the usual "psychic".

21 ALBERTAZZI L, *Introduzione a Brentano*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, p. 39.

22 «By the end of the 1880s, Brentano was completely clear about the distinction between a genetic psychology and a descriptive psychology», *ivi*, p. 46. Cfr. on this point F. Brentano, *Meine letzten Wünschen für Österreich*, Stuttgart, Cotta 1895.

23 «In Brentano, the term *deskriptiv* assumes the specific meaning of *morphological* or *classificatory*; it therefore contrasts with the 'explanatory' nature of the genetic method used by Fechner and Wundt in investigation of the developmental laws of psychic facts. However, the term does not appear in *Psychologie 1*, but only subsequently in Brentano's course of lectures delivered in 1887/1888 (*Deskriptive Psychologie*). He would later adopt the term *intentional referent* in important, and the other two are consequences of it *Psychognosie*. [...] Brentano defined his descriptive psychology as an *exact science* and as a *pure psychology* (*reine Psychologie*) which analysed and classified the elements of psychic life and the laws that govern it. The fact that he regarded his descriptive psychology as a pure psychology demonstrates that he intended it to be a theoretical science, wholly distinct from physiology. The task of descriptive psychology was to determine the elements of human consciousness and their connections», M. Libardi, *Franz Brentano (1838-1917)*, in L. Albertazzi (edd.), *The School of Brentano*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers in 1996, pp. 44

24 «*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* [...] is a first attempt to construct a psychological theory without having to accept reductionist hypotheses of any kind; or in other words, without having to relate psychic phenomena directly to physical, chemical or physiological ones. In this sense, Brentano represents a development of Aristotle's theory of perception independent on psychophysics. But for precisely this reason, because Brentano's book addresses the same problems on the basis of the same scientific literature, it can also be viewed as a contribution to this work it is outlines antano's psychology according to the Fechner's theory the psychophysical debate of the time», L. Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism*, op.cit., p. 94.

physical and the class of psychical phenomena»²⁵.

The expressions “*physical phenomenon*” (*physisches Phänomen*) and “*psychic phenomenon*” (*psychisches Phänomen*) are two locutions whose philosophical meaning is quite circumstantial. Brentano tries to explain their meaning by providing, first of all, a list of concrete examples that can intuitively illustrate the primary meaning of the two phenomena and their difference. From this point of view, it is worth reading the following text in full:

«Every idea or presentation which we acquire either through sense perception or imagination is an example of a psychic phenomenon. By presentation I do not mean that which is presented, but rather the act of presentation. Thus, hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, feeling warmth or cold, as well as similar states of imagination are examples of what I mean by this term. I also mean by it the thinking of a general concept, provided such a thing actually does occur. Furthermore, every judgement, every recollection, every expectation, every inference, every conviction or opinion, every doubt, is a psychic phenomenon. Also to be included under this term is every emotion: joy, sorrow, fear, hope, courage, despair, anger, love, hate, desire, act of will, intention, astonishment, admiration, contempt, etc. Examples of physical phenomena, on the other hand, are a color, a figure, a landscape which I see, a chord which I hear, warmth, cold, odor which I sense; as well as similar images which appear in the imagination. These examples may suffice to illustrate the differences between the two classes of phenomena» [pp. 60-61].

In this text clearly emerges both the tri-partition of psychic phenomena into the basic types of *presentations*, *judgements* and the third very large class comprehensive of *emotions*, *desires* etc., and how the phenomenon of presentation plays a prominent role over the other two. We will return to these issues later.

Let us focus for now on four very important, indeed fundamental, clarifications concerning the meaning of *phenomena*.

1) It is crucial to realise that the term ‘*phänomen*’ in Brentano has the sense of an authentic manifestation or appearance of something, in contrast to the meaning of mere appearance that it has in Kant: «‘Phenomenon’ is not intended in the Kantian sense of ‘noumenal manifestation’ [...] but in the positivistic sense of a fact or something that

appears or manifests itself to consciousness. From time to time it indicates a state, a process, an event, but these are always genuine psychic manifestations and not mere appearances»²⁶. The term phenomenon has thus a clear objective meaning: that of a fact, event, process, namely - as underlined in the quoted text - of “something that appears or manifests itself to consciousness”. From this point of view, its use could be a harbinger of some confusion²⁷. That said the basic datum nevertheless remains: the ‘*phenomenon*’ (which translates the terms *Phänomen* and *Erscheinung*) «is which that appears, that manifests itself immediately, over and beyond all intellectual mediation»²⁸.

2) Next, we should emphasise the importance attributed to the function of consciousness in the generation of psychic phenomena themselves. In the text cited it is said that they are *acts* of a certain kind (primarily presentational, secondarily judgmental and emotional), expressible by verbal forms (seeing, hearing, imagining, etc.). They hence imply the activity of consciousness, without which they could not be explained in their nature, nature that cannot be reduced to the passive function of psychic-body interaction alone, moreover understood in a strictly organic-material sense. The psychic phenomenon is thus first of all a proper act in the Aristotelian sense of an *enérgeia*, the actualisation of a potentiality initially present in the subject in a merely dispositional manner. Nevertheless, such an actuality is always something complex, being formed of a double reference, to an object and to itself as an act. As we shall see, this feature is the one that, precisely because it determines the character of intentionality, differentiates psychic phenomena from physical ones.

3) This gives rise to one of the specific features that characterise psychic phenomena with respect to physical ones, that of their ontological self-consistency compared to the essential incompleteness of physical phenomena: «Physical phenomenon and psychic phenomenon are not species of one kind but ontologically distinct and irreducible

26 Albertazzi J, *Franz Brentano: un filosofo mitteleuropeo*, in: F. Brentano, *La psicologia dal punto di vista empirico*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1997, p. XV.

27 Kraus himself states that the term ‘*phänomen*’, as well as the term ‘*object*’, synonymous of object, is in his opinion not quite appropriate precisely due to its ambiguity: «We meet equivocations at every step. It is possible to say “I have an object as an object”, with a different meaning of the first and second ‘*object*’; likewise, it is possible to say “I have a physical *phenomenon* as a *phenomenon*”, i.e. phenomenally, and again the first ‘*phenomenon*’ has a different meaning than the second ‘*phenomenon*’: the first *phenomenon* signifies a status, process or occurrence, while the second ‘*phenomenon*’ is, like the term ‘*object*’, synsemantic and merely means that we are presenting something physical. [...] This should be enough to understand that the use of the word ‘*phenomenon*’ is not advisable, even if one is aware of its multiple meanings. Not least because the word is used now in a self-meaningful way, now in a co-meaningful one, just like the word ‘*object*’”, O. Kraus, *Introduzione all’edizione del 1924*, in: F. Brentano, *Psicologia dal punto di vista empirico*, Roma-Bari, Laterza 1997, pp. 44-45.

28 Antonelli M. *Franz Brentano psicologo. Dalla psicologia del punto di vista empirico alla psicologia descrittiva*, Pitagora editrice, Bologna 1996, p. 24.

25 Brentano F, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. by O. Kraus, London and New York, Routledge 1995, p. 59. From now on, indications of pages cited from this text will be given in brackets after the citation itself.

entities. Whereas physical phenomena are 'mere phenomena' (*Blosse Phänomene*), 'unsaturated' and essentially incomplete entities, which do not find their justification in themselves, psychic phenomena are ontologically complete entities, for which being and appearance are completely and unreservedly identified. On the contrary, the objects of our senses, such as colours, sounds, heat and taste, possess merely a phenomenal nature. Thus, even though they are referred to something existing, of which in fact are signs, they have reality only within our sensations. Therefore, while in the case of physical phenomena what manifests itself is not self-consistent but purely circumstantial and receives satisfaction only in the assumption of an independent external world, psychic phenomena are consistent in themselves - and incomplete only insofar as they do not occur in isolation, but only as parts or moments of a more complex whole»²⁹.

4) The specific ontological status of the self-consistency of psychic phenomena is fundamentally linked to another remarkable characteristic, that of relationality to an object, as clearly emerges in the text quoted above where Brentano writes: "By presentation I do not mean that which is presented, but rather the act of presentation. Thus, hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, feeling warmth or cold". We will later address this property when dealing with the topic of presentation and intentionality in more detail. However, it is now worth emphasising that psychic phenomena are in their truest nature *relational*, unlike physical phenomena which are not³⁰.

29 *Ibidem*. This Brentanian conception of the psychic phenomenon will mark the development of Husserlian phenomenology, which, freed from a not yet purely transcendental background present in Brentano, will radically fix its analysis on this independence and structural self-consistency of the psychic phenomenon, through the analysis, conducted precisely in transcendental purity, particularly present in the *Fifth Logical Investigation* and in *Idean I*. Cfr. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2001; Volume II; E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*; Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: The Hague, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA; Lancaster, PA, USA, 1983.

30 «The critical difference between psychic and physical phenomena, i.e. between psychic acts and sensible qualities, as Brentano understands it, consists in the fact that the former necessarily exhibit a particular type of relationship, which is completely alien to the sphere of physical phenomena. What are these relations? They are relations to something as an object; relations of which a sensible quality cannot be part at all, except as an objective term of reference. Under no circumstances may it function as subjective terms. Sound A can be louder than sound B, or be subsequent to B, or similar to B, or have any other relationship with it. In none of these cases, however, can one sound be the object of the other or vice versa. As much as both A and B can be objects of a psychic phenomenon, they are completely incapable of either having or being directed towards an object. Physical phenomena simply do not have this directional nature, which is a logical and necessary character of psychic phenomena, L.L. Mc Alister, *Chisholm and Brentano on Intentionality*, *The Review of Metaphysics* 28, 1974, pp. 328-338; republished in L.L. McAlister (edd.), *The Philosophy of Brentano*, London, Duckworth 1976, pp. 151-159, p. 158.

Evidence of Psychic Phenomena and of their Object

This specific ontological self-consistency of psychic phenomena is at the basis of their modality of presentation, that of the evidence proper to inner consciousness. Indeed, psychic phenomena are identified through a peculiar form of perception, that Brentano calls *inner perception* (*innere Wahrnehmung*). This is a special immanence principle whose characteristic is to present the object with absolute evidence, directly, in itself, without any form of representational mediation:

«Another characteristic which all psychic phenomena have in common is the fact that they are only perceived in inner consciousness, while in the case of physical phenomena only external perception is possible. [...] It could be argued that such a definition is not very meaningful. In fact, it seems much more natural to define the act according to the object, and therefore to state that inner perception, in contrast to every other kind, is the perception of psychic phenomena. However, besides the fact that it has a special object, inner perception possesses another distinguishing characteristic: its immediate, infallible self-evidence. Of all the types of knowledge of the objects of experience, inner perception alone possesses this characteristic. Consequently, when we say that psychic phenomena are those which are apprehended by means of inner perception, we say that their perception is immediately evident. Moreover, inner perception is not merely the only kind of perception which is immediately evident; it is really the only perception in the strict sense of the word» [p. 70].

In this special immediate perception of psychical phenomena at the very moment they occur, lies the very foundation of psychology as a science:

«Psychology, like the natural sciences, has its basis in perception and experience. Above all, however, its source is to be found in the *inner perception* of our own psychic phenomena» [p. 22].

The strict separation between physical phenomena, of which we are allowed to have an empirical experience proper of the natural sciences, and psychic phenomena, about which we instead have an *internal* experience, consists therefore in the fact that the latter are *self-evident*: not only psychic phenomena can not in principle be called into doubt, but, since they are absolutely direct, a completely clear knowledge of them can be acquired³¹. Consequently, internal

31 «What has been said about the objects of external perception does not, however, apply in the same way to objects of inner perception. In their case,

perception also inheres the character of infallibility and accordingly of indubitable certainty³².

The instantaneous and infallible evidence of knowledge obtained through internal perception need not and cannot even be demonstrated. We have the concepts of *presentation*, of *thinking* and all other psychic phenomena precisely for the reason that we perceive them immediately, i.e. we apprehend them clearly and distinctly, not because we prove them through observational attention. Let us again resort to Brentano's own words, which better than all explanations can render the idea of what he actually thought: «just as inner perception cannot confuse seeing and hearing, neither can it mistake a strong auditory sensation for a faint one nor a faint for a strong one» [p. 93].

It is important - and Brentano points this out quite promptly - not to confuse internal perception with internal observation. The importance of this specification resides mainly on one point: in the evident impossibility of observing one's own psychic states as they unfold, without objectifying and thus modifying them essentially³³. In this regard, Brentano is going so far as to speak of a psychological law of universal validity³⁴. In his opinion, to have confused these

no one has ever shown that someone who considers these phenomena to be true would thereby become involved in contradictions. On the contrary, of their existence we have that clear knowledge and complete certainty which is provided by immediate insight. Consequently, no one can really doubt that a psychic state which he perceives in himself exists, and that it exists just as he perceives it. Anyone who could push his doubt this far would reach a state of absolute doubt, a skepticism which would certainly destroy itself, because it would have destroyed any firm basis upon which it could endeavor to attack knowledge» [p. 7].

32 «Inner perception possesses another distinguishing characteristic: its immediate, infallible self-evidence. Of all the types of knowledge of the objects of experience, inner perception alone possesses this characteristic. Consequently, when we say that psychic phenomena are those which are apprehended by means of inner perception, we say that their perception is immediately evident» [p. 70].
sent in the Fifth Logical Investigation

33 The same important distinction can also be found in Wundt: «Wundt made a critical distinction between *self-observation* and *internal perception*. The distinction has been blurred over the years, and both terms have been called introspection. Self-observation is the traditional philosophical attempt to analyze life's experiences through introspective reflection. This was unsystematic, and because such observations by definition take place some time after the experienced event has occurred, they rely heavily on faulty memory. Wundt rejected self-observation as nothing better than philosophical speculation. Internal perception, on the other hand, was like self-observation, but was a much narrower process of responding immediately to precisely controlled stimuli», C.J. Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*, Danvers, John Wiley & Sons 2015, Inc., p. 91.

34 «We said that inner perception [*Wahrnehmung*] and not introspection, i.e. inner observation [*Beobachtung*], constitutes this primary and essential source of psychology. These two concepts must be distinguished from one another. One of the characteristics of inner perception is that it can never become inner observation. We can observe objects which, as they say, are perceived externally. In observation, we direct our full attention to a

two fundamentally different acts of *internal perception* and *internal observation* with each other would have resulted in the regrettable consequence of considering not only impossible internal perception itself, but also illusory the very idea of being able to discover the laws of the human spirit³⁵.

The character of the internality of perception highlights precisely the circumstance that this is directly related to the current occurrence of psychic phenomena occurring within us: «we designate by it [consciousness] all kinds of immediate knowledge of our own psychic acts, especially the perception which accompanies present psychic acts» [p. 78]. In other words, there is an absolute identity between the perception of psychic phenomena and the consciousness of them. In a note to the passage quoted above, Brentano emphasises this point with precision: «Just as we call the perception of a psychic activity which is actually present in us "inner perception", we here call the consciousness which is directed upon it "inner consciousness"» [*ibidem*]. For example, «there are undoubtedly occasions when we are conscious of a psychic phenomenon while it is present in us; for example, while we have the presentation of a sound, we are conscious of having it» [pp. 97-98].

Nonetheless, the fact that psychic phenomena cannot be the object of observational analysis remains: «do we perceive the psychic phenomena which exist within us? This question must be answered with an emphatic "yes", for where would we have got the concepts of presentation and thought without such perception? On the other hand, it is obvious that we are not able to observe our present psychic

phenomenon in order to apprehend it accurately. But with objects of inner perception this is absolutely impossible. This is especially clear with regard to certain psychic phenomena such as anger. If someone is in a state in which he wants to observe his own anger raging within him, the anger must already be somewhat diminished, and so his original object of observation would have disappeared. The same impossibility is also present in all other cases. It is a universally valid psychological law that we can never focus our attention upon the object of inner perception» [p. 22].

35 With regard to Comte's position, expressed in his *Course in Positive Philosophy* Brentano notes: «Comte rejects not only inner observation, whose impossibility he has rightly recognized, even though the explanation which he offers in this connection is of dubious value, but, without making any distinction between them, he rejects at the same time the inner perception of one's own intellectual phenomena», [p. 24]. In any case, the impossibility of internal observation in relation to psychic phenomena had long been established in the area of experimental psychology. Already Wundt, noting how mere observation is only possible in relation to objects that are relatively constant and thus always available to be examined at any time, wrote: «If we apply these considerations to psychology, it is obvious at once, from the very nature of its subject-matter, that exact observation is here possible only in the form of experimental observation; and that psychology can never be a pure science of observation. The contents of this science are exclusively processes, not permanent objects», W. WUNDT, *Outlines of Psychology*, op.cit., p. 54.

phenomena» [p. 99].

How, then, is it possible to perceive the psychic act without objectifying it in an observation, which would then have the character of an autonomous and independent act of reflection? This possibility subsists in the structure of the psychic act, which consists of a twofold orientation: one towards its content-object and the other towards itself. We will elaborate on this aspect further on.

It is also essential to be clear that the evidence of internal perception does not only concern the psychic phenomenon as a whole, but also the so-called “internal” parts that structure it and particularly its content. This is what is stated in this important passage:

«Inner perception shows us with immediate evidence that hearing has a content different from itself, and which, in contradistinction to hearing, shares none of the characteristics of psychic phenomena. This term [sound] refers to the phenomenon which constitutes the immanent object of our hearing, an object different from the act of hearing» [pp. 94-95].

What is the effective status of the content of the psychic phenomenon ‘hearing’, what does it consist of the locution ‘immanent object’, this are questions that will require extensive study. But what is at any rate certain is the fact that inner perception clearly shows that every psychic phenomenon has not only a content as its object- referred to in the above passage as “*immanent object*” - to which it is inseparably related, but that this object cannot be considered as belonging to the ontological sphere characteristic of the psychic phenomenon itself, and therefore as a real part of it ; and yet it pertains to it.

Referring therefore to the aforementioned text, we can summarise the characteristics of *internal perception* as follows. This consists of

- 1) A knowledge
- 2) Immediately evident
- 3) Of the *hearing in itself* (i.e. of the *psychic phenomenon as an act*)
- 4) And of the *content (immanent object)* of such hearing
- 6) And of *their ontological difference*, whereby the content - as it is textually specified - “does not take part in any of the peculiarities of psychical phenomena”.

We have achieved here a fundamental insight into Brentanian thought. The psychic phenomenon is structured and this structure comprises two parts that are ontologically different from each other, even though they are included in an indissoluble and inseparable unity: the part that belongs to the psychic phenomenon as an *act* and the part that concerns the *content-object* that is presented in the

psychic phenomenon. The interrelation of these two parts has therefore the fundamental characteristic of being an internal relation within the overall and unitary structure of the psychic phenomenon. In such a basic unity, the *content/object* stands out precisely as the pole that is presented.

We can at this point try to clarify this absolutely salient and diriment aspect of psychic phenomena: their primarily presentational nature. We shall see how in this consists the most fundamental attribute of consciousness, that of intentionality. Psychic phenomena are primarily presentational and then also judgmental and/or related to the sphere of feeling. In this sense, this presentationality will be qualified as neutral.

The Primarily Presentative and Neutral Nature of the Psychic Phenomena

Our argument is that the topic of intentionality can be adequately comprehended only if one is aware of the primarily presentational nature of psychic phenomena, and that this function is carried out in a principally and exclusively manner by the phenomenon of *presentation*. This characteristic is absolutely fundamental in order to understand not just Brentano’s thought, but also that of the movement that had developed around his philosophy and of phenomenology in general.

Brentano states:

«the term “men psychic tal phenomena” applies to presentations as well as to all the phenomena which are based upon presentations» [p. 61]³⁶.

Hence, first of all psychic phenomena are presentations, in the sense that they present [*vor-stellen*] something. Since, as we have seen, the psychic phenomenon is an act of consciousness, it must be said that consciousness presents something. That is to say, the first and most basic form of consciousness of an object is the presentational consciousness: «Presentation, for Brentano, is the fundamental way of being conscious of an object»³⁷.

If thus the most qualifying characteristic of consciousness is intentionality, this intentionality must first and foremost be understood as *presentational intentionality*. This aspect of psychic phenomena is at the basis of all the discussions

36 «Mit dem Namen der psychischen Phänomene bezeichneten wir die Vorstellungen, sowie auch alle jene Erscheinungen, für welche Vorstellungen die Grundlage bilden», F. Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Erster Band, Hamburg, Felix meiner Verlag Unveränderter Nachdruck 1973 der Ausgabe von 1924, p. 112.

37 Crane T, *Brentano on Intentionality*, in U. Kriegel (edd.), *The Routledge Handbook of Franz Brentano and the Brentano School*, New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 45.

that were to develop in the vast and composite field of the Brentanian school and the phenomenological movement around the nature of intentionality and object and/or intentional object.

Let us try to frame however here another very important property, closely linked to that of intentionality itself. It derives as a consequence of the fact, always held by Brentano throughout the course of his thought and also considered by Husserl as fundamental, that all acts of consciousness are representations or have a representation as their basis.

«It is hardly necessary to mention again that by “presentation” we do not mean that which is presented, but rather the presenting of it. This act of presentation forms the foundation not merely of the act of judging, but also of desiring and of every other psychic act. Nothing can be judged, desired, hoped or feared, unless one has a presentation of that thing» [p. 61]³⁸.

As can be clearly seen different types of psychic phenomena are named here: *representing, judging, desiring, hoping, fearing*.

They correspond to the subdivision, based on the different modes of intentional reference to the object they exhibit, of psychic phenomena into the three fundamental classes of *representations, judgments* and the very extensive class of psychic phenomena which is generally referred to as *the motions of the mind*³⁹.

By *presentations* Brentano means all those psychic phenomena in which the object, unlike other phenomena, is *simply* presented. Emphasis should be placed on the adverb “simply”. This class embraces all sensible representations, including simple sensations and representations of fantasy, as well as all representations of conceptual character⁴⁰.

38 «Unter Vorstellung [...] nicht das Vorgestellte, sondern das Vorstellen verstehen [...] Dieses Vorstellen bildet die Grundlage des Urteilens nicht bloss, sondern ebenso des Begehrens, sowie jedes anderen psychischen Actes», *ibidem*.

39 «To state our view at the outset, we, too, maintain that three main classes of psychic phenomena must be distinguished, and distinguished according to the different ways in which they refer to their content. But my three classes are not the same as those which are usually proposed. In the absence of more appropriate expressions we designate the first by the term “presentation,” the second by the term “judgement,” and the third by the terms “emotion,” “interest,” or “love.” None of these is such that it cannot be misunderstood; on the contrary, each of them is often used in a more restricted sense than the one in which I use it. Our vocabulary, however, provides us with no unitary expressions which coincide better with the concepts» [p.152-153].

40 «We speak of a presentation whenever something appears to us. When we see something, a color is presented; when we hear something, a sound; when we imagine something, a fantasy image» [p. 153].

That the object is *simply* represented means that there is no stance on our part, whereas this is clearly the case in the other two psychic phenomena: in judgement, the object is affirmed or denied, accepted *as true* or rejected *as false*⁴¹, while in the affective motions, the object is liked, desired, loved etc. *as good* or disliked, despised, hated etc. *as bad* [cfr. p. 153].

It becomes therefore clear from this viewpoint that the psychic phenomena of judging and emotions presuppose presentations in an essential way and are founded on them. Brentano states quite clearly in this regard:

«In view of the generality with which we use this term [presentation] it can be said that it is impossible for conscious activity to refer in any way to something which is not presented. When I hear and understand a word that names something, I have a presentation of what that word designates; and generally speaking the purpose of such words is to evoke presentations» [p. 153].

It can be inferred therefrom that presentational consciousness is a mode of consciousness that is, so to say, *neutral*. The object as *merely* represented in the phenomenon of representation «is present to consciousness in a neutral mode, devoid of any judgmental or affective connotations»⁴².

41 «By “judgement” we mean, in accordance with common philosophical usage, acceptance (as true) or rejection (as false)», [p. 153].

42 M. ANTONELLI, *Fanz Brentano psicologo. Dalla psicologia del punto di vista empirico alla psicologia descrittiva*, op.cit., p. 39. This very important aspect of Brentano’s philosophy cannot be stressed enough. It is precisely this conception of *Vorstellung* as radically distinct from judgement that is at the heart of phenomenology and that makes a more comprehensive understanding of the Husserlian doctrine of *epoché* possible. This neutral characteristic of presentational consciousness is conveniently respected by the choice to translate the term ‘*Vorstellung*’ with ‘*presentation*’ rather than the traditional ‘*representation*’ in the English edition of *Psychology from the Empirical Point of View*. The choice of the locution *representation* derives from Kant’s introduction of the term *Vorstellung* by placing it alongside the corresponding Latin *repraesentatio*: «Die Gattung ist Vorstellung überhaupt (*repraesentatio*)», I. KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Verlag von Felix Meiner, Hamburg 1956, B. 376, p. 354. However, it is too semantically undermined. In particular, the particle *-re* transliterated into English is rather misleading, because it recalls the idea of a presenting *again* what has already been presented, and can even lead to the thought of a symbolisation process, an idea that is totally alien to the concept of *Vorstellung* in Brentano. Scholar Albertazzi expresses this position as follows: «*Vorstellung* has been translated as ‘presentation’, indicating the act or the psychic phenomenon. Its meaning is clearly distinguished from that of *Darstellung* (representation); in fact, the German prepositions *vor* and *dar* refer to different spatial relationships, from the exterior to the interior and vice versa. Specifically, the concept of *Vorstellung* refers to the concrete act of pre-sentation here and now in the time of presentness. The concept of *Darstellung*, vice versa, is related both to the concept of *representance* (*Stellvertretung*) that is, the function of symbolising objects and states of affairs which in particular characterises the representative function of language (*Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*) and to the concept of *communication* (*Mittheilung*)», L. Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism. An Introduction to Brentano*, Dordrecht, Springer 2006, p. XI.

This fundamental *neutrality* of the act of *Vorstellung* is stated clearly in this following important statement:

«[Something] is affirmed or denied or there is a complete withholding of judgement and - I cannot express myself in any other way than to say - it is presented. As we use the verb “to present,” “to be presented” means the same as “to appear» [p. 62].

The object is thus “firstly” presented and only “subsequently” is intended in a more complex, judgmental and/or affective act, which, by necessity, includes the presentational component as its own fundament⁴³. This is a real relationship of necessary foundation - obviously of non-temporal but transcendental nature - between the act of presentation and that of judgement or any other act, which expresses a fundamental law of descriptive psychology:

«Nothing can be judged, desired, hoped or feared, unless one has a presentation of that thing. Thus the definition given includes all the examples of psychic phenomena which we listed above, and in general all the phenomena belonging to this domain» [p. 61]⁴⁴.

43 This primacy of the phenomenon of presentation over those of judgement and sentiment, as well as the primary object over the secondary one, must of course be understood not in a temporal but strictly transcendental sense. At this level, it is essential to take into account the doctrine of the complex and real unity of consciousness, i.e. the unity of consciousness both in relation to the various moments that constitute a single mental phenomenon and to the different mental phenomena that combine to form a complex psychic state. This is fundamentally what may well be called a mereological theory of mental phenomena, i.e. the conception of the mental act as a whole endowed with parts (which Brentano also calls *divisive*) that cannot be separated, i.e. partial (psychical) phenomena dependent on the whole (or rather relatively so) act. This doctrine of the unification of partial psychic phenomena into a unified totality of consciousness will find its ontological foundation in *Descriptive Psychology*, where it will be spoken of parts of *mental (psychic) dienergy* (*Teile der psychischen Diplosenergie*). The mental act is *dienergetic* because it is carried out in two directions: towards the primary reference, constituted by the intended object, and towards the secondary one, that is towards itself. Primary and secondary consciousness are thus *distinctive* parts of the one act, and therefore neither really nor unilaterally separable, but only distinctively so. Cfr. A. Chrudzinski, *Die Ontologie Franz Brentanos*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers 2004, pp. 152-159.

44 It is worth noting, as Kraus points out, that this is a law obtained not inductively, but through the consideration of the concepts of the presenter, the judging and the desiring. Therein we can consider one of the concrete differences of descriptive psychology, which Brentano later also called by the not quite happy term ‘psychognosy’, as opposed to genetic psychology, whose method is predominantly inductive and thus empirical, as with all natural sciences; «The method of descriptive psychology», says Kraus, «could also be called empirical, as it is based on internal experience; descriptive psychology, however, uses experience and the perception of psychic processes also to derive more general presentations from the intuition contained in that experience. Likewise, mathematics cannot do without certain intuitions to obtain the most elementary concepts for its axioms. On the basis of the general concepts thus obtained, descriptive psychology attains general knowledge immediately, at once, without any induction». It must therefore be borne in mind, Kraus continues, that these kinds of laws express «immediately evident (but in all cases negative!) apodictic knowledge [...] They are not psychophysical laws. They are not *matter-of-fact* knowledge, they are not *vérités de fait*, but *vérités de raison*,

The relationship, therefore, between presentation and judgement (but this applies a fortiori to all emotional and affective phenomena of the third class) is «a relationship of *monolateral separability*, since the latter may cease to exist while the former continues to subsist, but not vice versa; if the act of judgement is lacking, the object affirmed or denied may remain present to consciousness in the neutral mode of presentation; if, on the other hand, the presentation is absent, all forms of intentional reference will cease *eo ipso*»⁴⁵.

Attention must be paid to the fact that Brentano understands the psychic phenomenon of presentation in a very broad sense, such that it encompasses every form of datum, even those that are conceived as categorical relations⁴⁶. This aspect appears most clearly in the reply to the position of J. B. Meyer, who argued that at the beginning of higher animal life and human life is not the act of *Vorstellung* but a mere sensing and desiring. The presentation would only occur later, when a change in one’s inner state is interpreted as the consequence of an external stimulus. This seems to be a distinctly Kantian position: the sensible data are synthesised through the a-priori category of succession, contiguity and cause-effect principle. Brentano’s response to Meyer is basically a rebuttal to the entire approach of Kant’s transcendental aesthetics, which he obviously rejects:

«Meyer has a narrower concept of presentation than we have, while he correspondingly broadens the concept of feeling. [...] If Meyer means by “presentation” the same thing that we do, he could not possibly speak in this way. He would see that a condition such as the one he describes as the origin of presentation, already involves an abundance of presentations, for example, the idea of temporal succession, ideas of spatial proximity and ideas of cause and effect. If all of these ideas must already be present in the mind in order for there to be a presentation in Meyer’s sense [...]. Even the “being present” of any single one of the things mentioned is

i.e. aprioristic apodictic judgements», O. KRAUS, *Introduzione all’edizione del 1924*, in F. Brentano, *La psicologia dal punto di vista empirico* 1, Roma-Bari, Laterza 1997, p. 7. The procedure described here by Kraus corresponds to what Husserl would call *formalisation*, understood as the generalisation typical of formal logic, thus not to be confused with the eidetic one.

45 Antonelli M, *Franz Brentano psicologo. Dalla psicologia del punto di vista empirico alla psicologia descrittiva*, op.cit., p. 75.

46 «Presentations include both intuitive presentations - i.e. those relative to perception - and conceptual ones. In the former case, we are aware of having an object in mind as a direct experience; in the latter case, the mental object is given, not in an intuitive presentation, but directly through the concepts based upon it», M. Libardi, *Franz Brentano (1838-1917)*, in L. Albertazzi (ed.), *The School of Brentano*, op. cit., p. 49. This point is too of considerable importance and seems to be fully convergent with the doctrine of categorical intuition as exposed by Husserl in the *Sixth Logical Investigation*.

“being presented” in our sense. And such things occur whenever something appears in consciousness, whether it is hated, loved, or regarded indifferently, whether it is affirmed or denied or there is a complete withholding of judgement and—I cannot express myself in any other way than to say—it is presented. As we use the verb “to present,” “to be presented” means the same as “to appear”» [p. 62].

Sensing the change is a feeling that already contains a presentation, that of the changing as such. Feeling, therefore, «emerges [...] as the second element. It is preceded by another element which falls under the concept of a presentation as we understand it, and which constitutes the indispensable precondition for this second phenomenon» [p. 63]. From these texts emerges that for Brentano categories are *presented* with and through the object in an immediate and intuitive way.

The Primacy of the Object in Acts of Consciousness

The most conspicuous consequence of the primarily presentational nature of psychic phenomena is the primacy of the object over the act of consciousness, i.e. the essential impossibility to conceive consciousness as independent of the object of which it is conscious. There is no consciousness that can be observed and whose operating principles can be deduced independently of the object. Whereas from a correct conception of the phenomenon of presentation, exactly the opposite is the case. Brentano states firmly on this very important point:

«We can say that the sound is the *primary object* of the *act* of hearing, and that the act of hearing itself is the *secondary object*. Temporally they both occur at the same time, but in the nature of the case, the sound is prior. A presentation of the sound without a presentation of the act of hearing would not be inconceivable, at least *a priori*, but a presentation of the act of hearing without a presentation of the sound would be an obvious contradiction. The act of hearing appears to be directed toward sound in the most proper sense of the term, and because of this it seems to apprehend itself incidentally and as something additional» [ivi, p. 98].

The separation of the act of presentation from that of judgement gives rise to the clear possibility, in principle, of an act of consciousness that is not reflexive. In reality this does not take place⁴⁷. Yet consciousness, by virtue of the fact

47 «There are undoubtedly occasions when we are conscious of a psychic phenomenon while it is present in us; for example, while we have the presentation of a sound, we are conscious of having it» [p. 98].

that it is primarily non judgmental but presentational, is first and foremost intentional and as such is also reflexive. And not the other way around! There is therefore an inherent interconnection between the presentation of the object and the consciousness of this presentation, i.e. the presentative act of consciousness⁴⁸.

However, there are not two different presentations and hence two different psychic acts, but «in the same psychic phenomenon in which the sound is present to our minds we simultaneously apprehend the psychic phenomenon itself. What is more, we apprehend it in accordance with its dual nature insofar as it has the sound as content within it, and insofar as it has itself as content at the same time» [p. 98].

The object of representation and the representation itself belong consequently to one and the same psychic act. This is why it is not possible to observe our actual psychic phenomena:

«The truth is that something which is only the *secondary object of an act* can undoubtedly be an object of consciousness in this act, but cannot be an object of observation in it. Observation requires that one turn his attention to an object as a primary object. Consequently, an act existing within us could only be observed by means of a second, simultaneous act directed toward it as its primary object. There just is no such accompanying inner presentation of a second act, however. Thus we see that no simultaneous observation of one's own act of observation or of any other of one's own psychic acts is possible at all. We can observe the sounds we hear, but we cannot observe our hearing of the sounds, for the hearing itself is only apprehended concomitantly in the hearing of sounds» [p. 99].

The act of representation thus differs in virtue of the number and diversity of the primary objects presented, but in no way differs in relation to the presentation of the so-called secondary object, i.e. the psychic phenomenon as an act. In other words, consciousness can never be aware of its own acts in a straightforward way. At most, it is possible to speak of a consciousness that embraces the act of presentation in the totality of its moments, encompassing the presentation itself, but only subordinately to the primary object, the actual object:

48 «Rather, inner experience seems to prove undeniably that the presentation of the sound is connected with the presentation of the presentation of the sound in such a peculiarly intimate way that its very existence constitutes an intrinsic prerequisite for the existence of this presentation. This suggests that there is a special connection between the object of inner presentation and the presentation itself, and that both belong to one and the same psychic act» [p. 98].

«These results show that the consciousness of the presentation of the sound clearly occurs together with the consciousness of this consciousness, for the consciousness which accompanies the presentation of the sound is a consciousness not so much of this presentation as of the whole psychic act in which the sound is presented, and in which the consciousness itself exists concomitantly. Apart from the fact that it presents the physical phenomenon of sound, the psychic act of hearing becomes at the same time its own object and content, taken as a whole» [p. 100].

In this respect it is a «characteristic fusion of the accompanying presentation with its object» [p. 100].

This conception, according to Brentano, would reflect Aristotle's classical position, also taken up by St. Thomas, in reference to the problem of awareness implicit in every act of perception. And in fact in the pages we are commenting on, he quotes in a footnote the notorious passage from the 2nd paragraph of the 3rd book of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

The Object's Centrality in the Intentionality of Presentation

If one reads the first Book of *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint* with care, in which Brentano introduces the phenomenon of intentionality as one of the characteristics, indeed the most important one, of psychic phenomena, and *the second Book*, where the problem of their classification into the three fundamental classes of presentations, judgements and emotional acts is dealt with at length, it can be noticed that the subject of intentionality does not have such a large space. The main theme is invariably that of *presentation*, and indeed, at this point in our examination, it should be apparent that intentionality is first of all and fundamentally a character proper to the phenomenon of presentation. It is also of judgement and emotional phenomena, but only in a secondary and derivative way, since they are founded on presentation.

Brentano introduces the subject of the *intentionality* in the 5th paragraph of chapter I of the second Book titled: *What is characteristic of psychic phenomena is their reference to an object*. Intentionality is described as the positive feature that characterises psychic phenomena more than any other, as it is exclusive to them. Physical phenomena, in fact, are absolutely devoid of it.

Let us read the famous text in which Brentano - to his undisputed merit - reintroduces the subject of intentionality into the field of Western philosophy:

«Every psychic phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called

the intentional (or psychic) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every psychic phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of psychic phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define psychic phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves» [p. 68]⁴⁹.

The text appears on a first reading to be easily comprehensible. The basic idea it is trying to convey is related to the metaphor of the inclusion of one object in another. However, metaphors in philosophy and science in general must always be taken *cum grano salis*: in fact, one runs the risk of getting the feeling of having understood, while in reality many obscure and unresolved questions are being left.

To begin with, let us note the important remark "the *intentional or psychic* inexistence of an object", which underlines what has been mentioned above about the character of intentionality belonging exclusively to the sphere of psychic acts. In practice, intentional is synonymous with psychic, when the term "psychic" is strictly defined in relation to the Brentanian conception of psychic phenomena.

Another important point to highlight is that in the text the term of the intentional reference is expressed in different words, so we have: *Object* (which translates two different

49 «Welches positive Merkmal werden wir nun angeben vermögen? [...] Schon Psychologen älterer Zeit haben eine besondere Verwandtschaft und Analogie aufmerksam gemacht, die zwischen allen psychischen Phänomenen bestehe, während die physischen nicht an ihr Teil haben. Jedes psychische Phänomen ist durch das charakterisiert, was die Scholastiker des Mittelalters die intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes genannt haben, und was wir, obwohl mit nicht ganz unzweideutigen Ausdrücken, die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt, die Richtung auf ein Object (worunter hier nicht eine Realität zu verstehen ist), oder die immanente Gegenständlichkeit nennen würden. Jedes enthält etwas als Object in sich, obwohl nicht jedes in gleicher Weise. In der Vorstellung ist etwas vorgestellt, in dem Urteile ist etwas anerkannt oder vorgeworfen, in der Liebe geliebt, in dem Hasse gehasst, in dem Begehren begehrt u.s.w. Diese intentionale Inexistenz ist den psychischen Phänomenen ausschließlich eigentümlich. Kein physisches Phänomen zeigt etwas Ähnliches. Und somit können wir die psychischen Phänomene definieren, indem wir sagen, sie seien solche Phänomene, welche intentional einen Gegenstand in sich enthalten», F. Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Erster Band, op. cit., pp. 124 - 125.

German words: *Gegenstand* and *Object*) - *Content (Inhalt)* - *Objectivity (Gegebständigkeit)* - *Something (Etwas)*.

This will give rise to a series of different interpretations regarding the nature of the object of the intentional act, especially in relation to the distinction - which Brentano will however clarify over time - between the *content* of the psychic phenomenon as its significant substratum, hence as its content of signification, and the *object* understood instead in the usual sense as the term and objective of the intentional cognitive process.

Another aspect that comes to light in the text is the extensive use of synonymous expressions even to describe the very nature of intentionality, expressions which by Brentano's own admission can be ambiguous. They may, however, be divided into two groups, which betray the twofold sense in which the intentionality of consciousness is to be intended:

1. • Intentional (or mental) *inexistence* of an object ('*die intentionale auch wohl mentale Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes*');
 - *To include* something as object *within itself* ('*enthalten etwas als Object in sich*');
 - *To contain* an object intentionally *within themselves* ('*intentional einen Gegenstand in sich enthalten*');
 - *Immanent* objectivity ('*immanente Gegebständigkeit*').
2. *Reference to* a content ('*Beziehung auf einen Inhalt*') - *direction toward* an object ('*Richtung auf einen Objekt*').

In this formulation of the intentionality we can distinguish two equivalent but not identical descriptions, which grasp and link constituent elements or moments of the psychic phenomenon:

- 1) the reference to an object that is specified in the sense of a sort of movement towards it and 2) at the same time the fact that this object is contained within the psychic phenomenon in this intentional process, so much so that one speaks of its - psychical - existence in it.

Basing ourselves on the letter of this quoted passage, we try to articulate, in a coherent and unitary manner, the essential meaning of the different terms used in this fundamental text of *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint*, which could rightly be qualified as one of the turning points in the history of contemporary philosophy precisely because of its original resumption of the theme of intentionality.

It is quite clear that Brentano tries to explain intentionality by linking the metaphor of *being-contained-in* with the metaphor of the *relation-to (something)*, of *directing-oneself-towards (something)*. The intentionality of acts of consciousness would therefore seem to refer to a

characteristic of psychic phenomena that can be described by means of two interconnected ideas, the overall meaning of which seems to be as the following: by the intentional character of psychic phenomena, and first and foremost, let us repeat, that of presentation, is meant a characteristic feature according to which these phenomena always possess an object, the nature of which is ontologically different from the act of consciousness itself, so that its possession never takes place in the form of acquisition obtained once and for all, but in the sense of a relationship, rather of a proper tending towards it, which ultimately never comes to an end.

In other words, psychic phenomena are characterised by an "internal" dynamic. If, on the one hand, one can speak of psychic phenomena only insofar as an object in them is actually already intended, on the other hand, such intending is always a tending-*in*: tending-*towards* the object, with prospect of an ever more complete and adequate comprehension of it. The present intentional possession of the object, therefore, never means the definitive overcoming of the *re-latedness*, of the *rap*-porting, of the *ten*-sion with respect to it. In psychic phenomena there is always a sort of discrepancy, not of an ontological but of a gnoseological order, between the object that is currently being intended and what is left to be understood of it.

This standpoint, which reflects one of the underlying motifs of Tommasian cognitive intentionality and is the basis of the dynamic structuring of intentional acts in Husserl in the dual correlative tension of empty intention and intuitive filling⁵⁰, will lead Brentano to a more precise exposition of the theory of intentionality, i.e. to a more complex stratification of the psychic act, which will include the *content* as a structural mediating moment - of a meaningful nature - between the intentional act and the intended object⁵¹.

50 It is notable to notice that the theory of *empty intention* and *intuitive filling* elaborated by Husserl in the *First Logical Investigation* and completed in the first part of the *Sixth* will excellently develop precisely this fundamental sense of intentionality. This doctrine will even see in another important work of Husserl *Formale und transzendente Logik* its complete expression from a formal point of view, where the need for an intuitive-experiential completion of what consciousness already possesses in an analytical and formal sense will be formulated as an ontological characteristic of knowledge. Cfr. G. Heffernan, *Isagoge in Die Phänomenologische Apophantik. Eine Einführung in die Phänomenologische Urteilslogik durch die Auslegung des Textes der formalen und transzendentalen Logik von Edmund Husserl*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Berlin 1989, pp. 96-101; id., *Am Anfang war die Logik. Hermeneutischen Abhandlungen zum Ansatz der "Formalen und transzendentalen Logik" von Edmund Husserl*, Verlag B. R. Grüner, Amsterdam 1988.

51 One must take into account, as we have mentioned, that the definition of the intentionality of psychic phenomena in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* was in fact not entirely clear and contained elements of ambiguity, especially concerning the meaning to be attributed to the *immanence* of the object within the intentional cognitive grasp. Twenty years after the publication of that work, in 1894 appeared *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und*

The centrality of the object in the psychical acts reflects the fundamental position held by the phenomenon of presentation in the structuring of consciousness and indeed its foundation as such. The presentation of the object - irrespective of its nature - is the pivotal point, the condition *sine qua non*, for consciousness to exist. The alternative would simply be unconsciousness, as Brentano makes clear in this passage:

«But every presentation, considered by itself, is a good and recognisable as such, because an activity of the mind characterised as correct can be directed towards it. There is no doubt that anyone, if he had to choose between the state of unconsciousness and the possession of any presentation whatsoever, would welcome even the poorest presentation and would not envy lifeless things. Every presentation appears to be an enrichment of the value of life» (my translation)⁵².

According to Brentano, therefore, every presentation is in itself of value and this holds even for those presentation that become the basis of a correct but negative judgment: while judgments (but this holds also for all the phenomena of the third class) consist in taking either a positive or a negative stance, the value of a presentation is always positive, although this positiveness has different degrees, in the sense that some presentations are of higher value than others. In other words, all presentations are valuable, but one must distinguish between presentations in which we experience objects that are of different consistency.

Gegenstand der Vorstellungen, a short but dense and important paper by the Polish philosopher Twardowski, who explicitly introduced the distinction between *act*, *content* and *object* precisely in order to resolve the problem of the immanence of the intentional object. However, Brentano addressed this issue extensively in his studies, although not in a linear manner. Brentano's doctrine is somewhat complicated and his doctrine of intentionality is much less simplistic than it might seem at first glance. His thinking did not remain fixed to 1874, and he himself was aware that he had to specify the factors involved in structuring the intentional dimension of the psychical phenomenon: «What is clear [...] is that by 1911 Brentano had developed a much more textured account of the nature of intentionality. In 1911, the last four chapters of the *Psychology* were reprinted, in slightly reedited form, along with eleven appendices, under the title *The Classification of Psychic Phenomena* (Brentano 1911). In the first of these appendices, Brentano presents a more determinate and worked out account of intentionality, [...] the 'mature account', U. Kriegel, *Brentano's Philosophical System. Mind, Being, Value*, New York, Oxford University Press 2018, p. 55. Cfr. U. Kriegel, *Brentano's Mature Theory of Intentionality*, *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, Volume 4, Number 2.

52 «Jedes Vorstellen ist aber, an und für sich betrachtet, ein Gut und als solches erkennbar, weil sich eine als richtig charakterisierte Gemütsätigkeit darauf richten kann. Ohne Frage würde jedermann, wenn er zwischen dem Zustande der Bewußtlosigkeit und dem Besitz irgendwelcher Vorstellungen zu wählen hätte, auch die ärmlichste begrüßen und die leblosen Dinge nicht beneiden. Jede Vorstellung erscheint als eine Bereicherung des Lebens von Wert», F. Brentano, *Grundzüge der Ästhetik*, ed. by F. Mayer-Hillebrand, Hamburg, Meiner 1988, p. 144.

As we have seen, every psychical act always refers to a presented object. This relation has an absolutely general character, not only, it should be noted, in relation to psychical acts, but also in relation to presented objects, whatever they may be:

«This is the case whether this something is a common sensical thing, a directly or indirectly given thing, or a thing in specie or in general, the thing *as thing*, a conceptual thingness, i.e. something thingly»⁵³.

In this sense, the object of a possible presentation is absolutely anything, even a contradictory or impossible object. The only limit to the presentability of an object is that there is no presentation at all⁵⁴.

It is, however, clear that the objects of presentations are normally oriented towards individual things or *entia realia* (for instance to such things as horses, trees, unicorns. ecc.). Indeed, in Appendix 3 of *Descriptive Psychology* titled *On the Content of Experience*, Brentano asserts, «an experience is a fundamental presentation of *real* physical phenomena (objects) [(*Gegenstände*)]»⁵⁵, and he adds: «'real' excludes all modifications, such as [the ones] brought about through negative [formulations] through 'false', 'impossible', but also through 'past', 'future'»⁵⁶. Real is what is possible to be present in the actual presentation and that could be not be denied in its reality: what it can be object of a possible truth-affirmative judgment.

The Intentional Object as "Real" Object: The Objective Nature of Intentionality

The bivalence of the expressions used by Brentano have generated different interpretations of his theory of intentionality, especially in relation to the nature of the 'intentional object and/or content' (*Gegenstand, Gegenständlichkeit, Inhalt*) and the character of the referential and/or directional nature (*Beziehung auf, Richtung auf*) of mental phenomena.

53 Baumgartner W, *Akt, Content and Object*, in L. Albertazzi (edd.), *The School of Brentano*, op.cit., p. 240.

54 It may be of interest to mention the similar position of Bolzano on this important point: «Ferner muß man die bloße Denkbarkeit einer Sache nie mit der Möglichkeit, nicht einmal mit der sogenannten inneren Möglichkeit, welcher das sich selbst Widersprechende entgegengesetzt wird, verwechseln. Denn auch das Widersprechende, z.B. ein viereckigen Kreis, oder $\sqrt{-1}$ ist denkbar, und wird von uns wirklich gedacht, so oft wir davon sprechen. Undenkbar ist uns etwas nun dann und insofern, als wir gar keine Vorstellung Davon besitzen; wie etwa die rote Farbe undenkbar sein mag für einen Blindgeborenen», B. Bolzano, *Wissenschaftslehre*, Sulzbach, Seidelsche Buchhandlung 1837, p. 24.

55 Brentano F, *Descriptive Psychology*, London and New York, Routledge 2002, p. 148.

56 *Idem*.

In a school-leading interpretation, that of Chisholm, the distinctiveness of psychic phenomena would not so much be to be found in the nature of the intentional relation itself, but rather in the ontological status of their object correlate. Psychic phenomena are phenomena that contain an object in themselves as a merely intentional object. The reason for postulating a particular ontological nature of intentional objects would lie in the fact that we can also think of objects that do not in fact exist or are even impossible.

In such a view the nature of the intentional relation is interpreted in a quite ordinary way, as a relation between two actually existing entities, so it is necessary to conceive of intentional objects as merely intentionally in-existent relata. Szredniki expresses this position very clearly:

«According to Brentano, intentional inexistence of their object is the main and most significant of all the features of psychic acts. Since the psychical act consists in an intentional relation between two termini, and since a relation can only take place between two real termini, the existence of both termini is *prima facie* implied. The existence, however, is not necessarily the concrete being, i.e., like the existence of this book, the chair on which you sit, and the lamp that gives you light. This can be seen easily when we consider someone thinking of a unicorn, or the fact that Mr. Pickwick did not really exist. But since we have here a relation we must have two existent termini. The thinker, he who desires, loves or thinks, is concretely just like this typewriter which I am using now. But what about Mr. Pickwick and the unicorn, a chimera, etc.? Well, they have intentional inexistence. But then we could say that all psychic contents are so characterised; there is no reason to deny that this follows»⁵⁷.

The consequence of this interpretation of intentionality would seem to be to remain within the framework of a representationalist, or at any rate phenomenalist conception of consciousness: the intentional relationship is between two terms that are both immanent to the flow of consciousness. Quite apart from the question of whether Chisholm's position is to be understood in this way, such a position in any case contrasts both with the general sense of Brentano's philosophy, as well as with the very letter of his texts.

On 17 March 1905, Brentano addressed a letter to Marty in which he decisively and almost passionately sought to correct a deeply rooted error in the way the theory of the immanent object was conceived even among his disciples. He recalls in the letter a criticism expressed by Höfler in his

lecture at the Fifth Psychology Congress held in Rome in 1906, in which he expresses his disapproval of the synonymous use of the terms 'content' and 'immanent object' in Brentano's psychology. Brentano writes:

«As for your account of Höfler's comments, I was baffled by the reference to the "content and immanent object" of thought (*"inhalt" und "immanentes Objekt" der Vorstellung*). When I spoke of "immanent object", I used the qualification "immanent" in order to avoid misunderstandings, since many use the unqualified term "object" to refer to that which is outside the mind. But by an object of a thought I meant what it is that the thought is about, whether or not there is anything outside the mind corresponding to the thought»⁵⁸.

The term 'immanent' does not stand, therefore, for a particular ontological dimension of a so-called 'internal object', but has only a functional character, to express the fact that the *Vorstellung* is always relative to an object. However, the existence of the object itself is not part of the real phenomeno-gnostic structure of the psychic phenomenon presentation. This point is so much on Brentano's mind that he feels the need to resort to examples to conclusively clarify his thinking:

«It has never been my view that the immanent object is identical with "object of thought" (*vorgestelltes Objekt*). What we think about is the object or thing and not the "object of thought". If, in our thought, we contemplate a horse, our thought has as its immanent object—not a "contemplated horse", but a horse. And strictly speaking only the horse - not the "contemplated horse" - can be called an object. But the object need not exist. The person thinking may have something as the object of his thought even though that thing does not exist»⁵⁹.

In thinking, Brentano seems to say, I always have something as the object of my thought. But whether or not the object exists is quite another matter, because this clearly implies no longer *mere* thinking, i.e. the act of presentation, but an act of judgement. Referring, in fact, *merely* to the act of thinking, as in the sense of a presentation in the strict sense, the threefold distinction between 1) intentional act, 2) content as immanent object and, finally, 3) object in itself is not phenomenologically tenable, because this distinction implicitly contains the question of whether or not what I am thinking actually exists. Remaining at the level of pure and simple presentation, therefore, clearly two points regarding the immanent object stand out: 1) its identity with the "*object*

58 Brentano F, *The True and the Evidenz*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd 2009, p. 52.

59 *Ibidem*.

57 Szredniki J, *Franz Brentano's Analysis of the Truth*, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1965, p. 53.

which the thought refers to" and 2) its distinction with the "object as thought" (the 'completed horse' in Brentano's own example).

The *object as thought* is no longer the object *tout court* in the actuality of the presentation, what Brentano calls the *intentional* or even *primary* object, but is the mere correlate of the inner perception of the act.

If we assume, Brentano argues, that the *thought horse* and not the *horse itself* must be considered as the *object of thought*, then this 'immanent object' - the *thought horse* - would be the correlate of the *thinking of the horse*. But the correlates are such that one cannot think the one without the other, so thinking the *thought horse* one must necessarily think the *act of thinking the horse* and vice versa. Since obviously *thinking the horse* is an object of inner perception, then the *thought horse* will also be an object of inner perception.

However, the objects of our perceptual experience and the objects of our conceptual thought, are objects exclusively of our primary consciousness, never of inner perception or secondary consciousness. Therefore, Brentano concludes, and this is a truly fundamental assertion, to hold that the *thought horse* is the intentional object is practically to hold that primary consciousness has no object, and therefore, that there is no primary consciousness at all, or rather, that primary consciousness collapses into secondary consciousness.

Let us read Brentano's own words as he endeavours to clarify this very important issue, which, among other things, represents a profound refutation at the phenomenological level, of the representationalist conception in general:

«The "contemplated horse" considered as object would be the object of inner perception, which the thinker perceives whenever he forms a correlative pair consisting of this "contemplated horse" along with his thinking about the horse; for correlatives are such that one cannot be perceived or apprehended without the other. But what are experienced as primary objects, or what are thought universally as primary objects of reason, are never themselves the objects of inner perception. Had I equated "object" with "object of thought", then I would have had to say that the primary thought relation has no object or content at all [...]. Naturally I did say that "horse" is thought or contemplated by us, and that insofar as we do think of it (n.b., insofar as we think of the horse and not of the "contemplated horse") we have "horse" as (immanent) object»⁶⁰.

The problem of identifying the immanent object with the *thought object* stems, therefore, from a failed or at least inadequate understanding of the radical difference that Brentano posits between the phenomenon of presentation and that of judgement, and of the absolute independence of the former with respect to the latter. The presentation, as we have seen, is completely independent, in its meaningfulness, from the moment of the judgmental stance. The question of whether the object intended in the presentation also exists outside consciousness is not in itself a question pertaining to the presentation itself.

The argument of the representationalist conception of intentionality analyses the primary object precisely from a perspective that overlooks the true nature of presentation in Brentano, which is then its fundamental core. There is no need whatsoever to pose the problem of the existence or non-existence of Pegasus when I simply think it. And therefore it is not necessary to postulate an immanent object as existing in any case, in order to justify the intentional relation, in the case that the object does not exist in effectual reality.

The intentional relation, in fact, is not to be understood in the ordinary sense, as a relation between two reals, not least because the description of intentionality as a relation is somewhat relativised, in its metaphorical staticity, within Brentano's overall thought. Brentano therefore undoubtedly means that if I think of an object that does not exist, I nevertheless have a true object to which I am thinking, and not a mere immanent object. Obviously, if the object of thought does not exist in reality, the question of a certain dependence on consciousness arises; it will not be presently an object in itself. However, the sense of its being is that of a *Wirklichkeit*, and therefore, regardless of the circumstance of its actual existence, it can certainly be taken as an object of a possible truth-affirming judgement.

The Husserl's theory of the phenomenological epoché is remarkably similar to this Brentano's position. Indeed, it is clear that when I put myself on a plane of simple analysis of the structure of thought, the question of whether the object I am thinking about exists or not can well be put out of the question, put in brackets as Husserl says. Bracketing in the context of Brentano's thinking is no more than distinguishing the act of presentation and that of judgement, totally omitting or transcending the realm of *Wirklichkeitssuggestion*, i.e. the question of accepting or believing the existence of the thought object, concentrating instead on the objective scope of the thought of the object, i.e. assessing whether or not the object has an ontological consistency that can justify a possible judgement of existence relative to it and thus a possible evaluation of it as factual reality.

60 Ivi, pp. 52-53. Cf. in this regard the remarkable clarifications contained in F. Hillebrand, *Die Neuen Theorien Der Kategorischen Schlüsse: Eine*

Logische Untersuchung, Fb&c Limited, London 2017, pp. 37ss.

In this sense, Brentano catches the true meaning of cognitive intentionality, which is a conception opposite to the representationalist one, and this in perfect continuity with Aristotle's thought, as he explicitly states:

«Aristotle also says that the *aisthesis* receives *thn eidos* without the *ulh* just as the intellect, of course, takes up the *eidos nohton* in abstraction from the matter. Wasn't his thinking on the so-called "Immanent or Intentional Object" essentially the same as ours? [...] I have always held (in agreement with Aristotle) that "horse" and not "contemplated horse" is the immanent object of those thoughts that pertain to horses»⁶¹.

In these words, we can clearly find confirmation of how Brentano keeps intact one of the fundamental cornerstones of Aristotelian realism, namely the priority of the object over its knowledge. The theory of the intentional relation, in fact, remains within the framework of the Aristotelian theory of relations, and to try to understand it out of this context is likely to distort it. Brentano refers explicitly to Aristotelian thought regarding the non-correlative character of thought and being⁶². Indeed, in the work *Von den mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seindes nach Aristoteles* of 1862, addressing the problem of the concordance of the intellect with the thing, he explicitly mentions the fact that for Aristotle the relationship between thought and being, although reciprocal, like any relationship, is nevertheless not simply correlative⁶³. The important consequence of this doctrine is that the intentional character of the object in no way changes the nature of the object, as Chisholm seems to claim in a manifestly representationalist interpretation of intentionality, but rather the contrary is true, i.e. that the cognitive act in general

is absolutely dependent on the object. Brentano is very clear on this point:

«The harmony or disharmony between our thought and the thing has no influence whatever upon the existence of the latter; they are independent of our thought and remain untouched by it. He says in *Met.* IX. 10: "you are not white because we believe truthfully that you are white. Conversely, our thought depends upon things, and must agree with them in order to be true: "Rather because you are white, we, who say it, speak the truth. Similarly, in the fifth chapter of the *Categories*: "we say of a statement that it is true or false because something is or is not the case". It is not the case that the things are images of our thoughts, rather, our thoughts are fashioned after them, as the words after the thoughts (*De int.* I. 16a6) and our understanding achieves its aim only if it arrives, through science, at this conformity with things, at truth»⁶⁴.

Intentionality, then, can be said of the object not because of its intrinsic nature, but only because of the mere positionality of the intellect towards it. The object is not such because it essentially requires to be in relation to the cognitive operation, as if it were a real part of it. In phenomenological language: the object does not contain in itself the character of intentionality as its real moment. On the contrary, the attribute of intentionality characterises the nature of thought in an essential way, in the sense that it cannot define itself except in relation to that which it shall *in-tend*, of which it is thinking, to which it must conform. In other words, whereas thinking is intentional insofar as it must modify itself and conform to the object it intends, thus becoming, in a certain sense, the object [insofar as] thought - the thought of the object -, the object is intentional only insofar as thinking relates to it, i.e. *in-tends* to it, not because the object, by modifying its nature, becomes an intentional correlate of thinking.

Within such a fundamental conception of the true meaning of the so called intentional correlation, which is too easily understood in the Cartesian sense, as a necessary reciprocal relationship between two poles, that of thinking and that of being, thus distorting its essential value, one can fully understand the identity between the intentional object and the real object. Brentano, in the wake of Aristotle, makes a radical distinction between the intentional object, as the primary object of intentional understanding, which corresponds to the object of thinking, and the object as thought, i.e. the thought of the object.

61 Brentano F, *The True and the Evident*, op.cit., p. 54.

62 According to Aristotle, the relationship between thought and object, although reciprocal, develops asymmetrically. Cfr. *Metaphisica D 15 1021 a 31* and the explanation of Schwegler: A. Schwegler, *Aristoteles, die Metaphysik. Grundtext, Übersetzung und Kommentar nebst Erläuternden Abhandlungen*, Tübingen 1847 - 1848, vol. III, p. 231 (rist. in 2 voll., Frankfurt am Main, 1960).

63 «All this confirms the claim which we made above that, according to Aristotle, truth consists in the agreement of the understanding with the thing, in the conformity of the two. This relation between thought and being, like all other relations, is mutual. But its converse is not obtained in the same way as that of most other relations. While the relation between knowledge and the known has its real basis in that knowledge, the converse relation of the known to knowledge obviously comes about only through the operation of the understanding; hence, the proper basis of the relation remains in that which now has become its relatum; the known in not a relatum [*pros ti*] because it stands in a relation to another, but because another stands in a relation to it», F. Brentano, *On the several senses of being in Aristotle*, Los Angeles, University of California Press 1975, pp. 18-19. Cf. on this point: H. Taieb, *Relational Intentionality: Brentano and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Cham, Springer International Publishing AG 2019, esp. pp. 63-112; A. Marchesi, *Husserl's early theory of intentionality as a relational theory*, Grazer Philosophische Studien 95(3), 2018, pp. 343-367.

64 Brentano F, *On the several senses of being in Aristotle*, op. cit., p. 19.

Conclusion

In this brief study, an attempt has been made to outline the main aspect of the Brentanian doctrine of the intentionality of acts of consciousness, that of its presentational character. Consciousness is first and foremost a presentation of the object.

We have seen, firstly, how this acquisition was made possible by a precise delimitation of the field of study and applicability of genetic experimental psychology and by an equal firm rejection of any form of reductionism of the sphere of acts of consciousness to the sphere of physical phenomena. In this way, Brentano radically bracketed the primitive components of sensations in the constitution of acts of consciousness, i.e. the connection between the content of the presentation and its triggers, the physical stimuli or what are now also called trans-phenomenal correlates of consciousness. One could say that this radical critique of genetic psychology probably plays the same role in Brentano as the Husserlian critique of psychologism played in the development of phenomenology.

The primarily presentational nature of intentionality entails the absolute primacy of the object as the fundamental pivot of acts of consciousness. Consciousness is fundamentally objective, in the sense that its interest is directed first and foremost and immediately towards the object, and to itself only secondarily and derivatively. For this reason, it is fundamentally neutral, that is, it relates to the object as that which is given or offered and not as that which is the result of a reflexive act of judgement. This is a fundamental point: in Brentano, presentation of the object and thought of it are not the same thing; object presented does not mean the same thing as object thought. This is the main reason for the Brentanian distinction of presentational phenomena from those of judgement. The latter play only a secondary role and their purpose is basically to confirm or deny what is intentionally presented.

The fact that the acts of presentation are strictly distinct from those of judgement means that presentative consciousness is a *neutral* mode of consciousness, so to speak. This means that the object as merely presented is first of all present to consciousness in a neutral way, devoid of

any judgmental or affective connotations. In this sense, the object is first of all presented and only then understood in a more complex, judgmental or affective act, which, however, will necessarily include the presentative component as its own foundation. This is a real relationship of necessary foundation between the act of presentation and that of judgement or any other act, which expresses a fundamental law of descriptive psychology. Brentano states: «nothing can be judged, nor even desired, hoped for or feared, unless it is presented».

This aspect will have an influence on the whole current of Husserlian phenomenology: the presentation takes place in the punctuality of the assertive evidence of internal perception, and not in the judgmental reflection.

One of the most conspicuous consequences of the primarily presentative and neutral nature of psychical phenomena is the primacy of the object over the act of consciousness. In the unity of the psychical phenomenon as an act, the object possesses a kind of transcendental primacy over the intentional consciousness that presents it.

This means that consciousness is primarily objective and only secondarily reflexive. There is no consciousness that may be observed and whose principles of its functioning may be deduced independently of the object. Whereas, as Brentano explicitly states, from a correct conception of presentation the opposite is true. It is at this level that Brentano introduces the famous distinction between the primary and secondary object. Consciousness, by virtue of the fact that it is primarily presentative and not reflexive, is ontologically intentional, i.e. it is directed towards the intentional object (*primary object*), and only as such it is also reflexive, i.e. it is directed towards itself (*secondary object*). And not the other way around.

Of notable interest is the fact that Brentano takes up in this context the Aristotelian principle of the *non-correlative* and *non-convertible* relationship being-thought and applying it to his doctrine of intentionality explicitly speaks of a *non-correlativity* of the intentional relationship. This is a much neglected aspect, despite the fact that it probably constitutes one of the central of Brantano's doctrine of intentionality.

