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## Brentano in America. Three episodes

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(Article begins on next page)

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate the role that the notion of intentionality played in the thought of some American philosophers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its connections with the issue of realism. Since the notion of intentionality was introduced into modern and contemporary philosophical discourse mainly thanks to Franz Brentano, the paper may also be regarded as an examination of whether and how Brentano's notion of intentionality (or some interpretation of it) played any role in these philosophers' reflections concerning realism.

Brentano meant different things for different people; and it meant different things for the three American philosophers which are here taken into consideration: Gustav Bergmann, Reinhardt Grossmann and Roderick Chisholm. Bergmann's and Grossmann's philosophies were very close to each other; yet there are subtle differences in their analyses, which are reflected in subtle differences concerning their interpretations of Brentano. By contrast, Chisholm is rather distant from both Bergmann and Grossmann, and that is reflected in not so subtle differences in his approach to Brentano.

No attempt is made to deal directly with Brentano's philosophy, and consequently to decide whether the interpretations provided by Bergmann, Grossmann and Chisholm are faithful to the historic Brentano. Therefore no attention is paid to the scholarly or quasi-scholarly work on Brentano done by these philosophers. Rather the focus is on the way in which they used Brentano's notions in their own philosophical pursuits, and on how they saw themselves and their work with respect to Brentano's place in the history of philosophy, or to what they regarded as Brentano's place in the history of philosophy. That means that there will be room neither for Chisholm's scholarly work as an editor and translator of Brentano's works, nor for Bergmann's most significant work on Brentano: the third part of Bergmann (1967)<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. An ontological framework

As a preliminary step, a rough scheme of Bergmann's analysis of what he called the "knowing situation" is here put forth. Such a scheme will contribute a context in which it will be possible to assess Bergmann's own views on what realism amounts to. That will also be helpful in dealing with the views entertained by Grossmann, who shared Bergmann's basic scheme, and in evaluating Brentano's role in the whole story.

A knowing situation is any situation in which something is known (in this context the verb "to know" must be meant in the broadest possible way; furthermore, Bergmann does not intend it as a factive verb). According to Bergmann, a knowing situation must be analyzed as an *act* that *intends* an *intention*. Instead of "intention", Grossmann used the term "object".

Ontologically speaking, an *act* is a fact. It consists in a particular exemplifying at least two universals. One of these universals is the *species* of the act, that is the property in virtue of which the act in question is an act of perceiving, or an act of remembering, or an act of sensing, or an act of believing, or whatever. Instead of "species" Grossmann used the term "quality". The other universal is the *thought* (Bergmann, 1960) of the act, that is the property which distinguishes, for instance, the act of perceiving a dog from the act of perceiving a cat. Instead of "thought" Grossmann used the term "content".

The thought of the act *intends* its *intention*. Such an intending connects the act's thought and the intention; yet in Bergmann's ontological inventory the intending does not belong to the category of relations, but rather to that of *subsistents*, and more specifically of *nexus*. It is the *M* nexus (where "M" stands for "means"), or the *intentional nexus*. Grossmann's ontology does not countenance subsistents, and therefore the *intending* is categorized as a relation (although it is usually called "intentional nexus").

An intention (or object) is always a fact. That is what Bergmann called its *propositional* nature. For Bergmann (as well as for Grossmann) every knowledge is propositional.

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<sup>1</sup> On this topic cf. Tegtmeier (2009).

It is interesting to notice that – contrary to Bergmann’s – Grossmann’s terminology (quality, content, object) is directly and explicitly inspired by Twardowski (1894).

### 3. Bergmann: minimal realism

It may be helpful to distinguish two phases in Bergmann’s developing views on realism. The early phase lasted approximately until 1960; the late phase from 1960 onwards. With the aid of the scheme just sketched it is possible to formulate Bergmann’s conception of realism in the early phase.

According to Bergmann, a view may be said to be realistic (at least in a minimal sense of “realism”) if:

(i) acts are distinct from their intentions;

(ii) the distinction between acts and their intentions is such that intentions are not parts or properties (or *constituents*, in Bergmann’s terminology) of the acts.

Of course, condition (ii) includes condition (i), but it is useful to distinguish between them for expository reasons.

In fact, Bergmann’s own formulation of this criterion for (minimal) realism is not as articulate as it could be, in that it often tends to blur the difference between condition (i) and the stronger condition (ii). One way in which this difference is blurred is by means of a more or less implicitly suggested identification of realism with the “philosophies of the act”. When Bergmann speaks of the philosophies of the act, Brentano and G.E. Moore are usually his main examples.

A philosophy of the act is such that it admits the existence of (mental) acts, by distinguishing them from their intentions. That means that a philosophy of the act must be capable of distinguishing between the situation described by the sentence ‘*p*’ and that described by the sentence ‘It is known that *p*’.

Examples of philosophies not-of-the-act – so to speak – are Hume’s phenomenalism or any form of materialism. Phenomenalism and materialism may seem opposite views, but they are really very close to each other, in that both of them envisage a “one-level” world.

The opposition between philosophies of the act and philosophies not-of-the-act (one-level philosophies) may also be illustrated, according to Bergmann, by that between the views of the so called “act psychology” of the Würzburg school (ultimately stemming from Brentano) and the so called “content psychology” of Wilhelm Wundt. Such an opposition is one of the main organizing principles of Boring (1929), which deeply influenced Bergmann (the book famously begins with a presentation of the two grounding figures of modern psychology: Brentano and Wundt).

Yet it must be remarked that a philosophy of the act is not necessarily a realistic philosophy. A philosophy of the act needs to satisfy only condition (i), whereas a realist philosophy needs to satisfy condition (ii) as well.

Berkeley's views provide a case in which, according to Bergmann's classification, we have a philosophy of the act. A spirit's having an idea is an act, while the idea itself is its intention. Act and intention are distinct, and in this sense acts are clearly recognized. Condition (i) seems to be satisfied. Yet Berkeley's philosophy is clearly not realistic: it is usually picked up as a paradigmatic example of idealism. That is because condition (ii) is not satisfied. The intention (i.e., the idea) is a part (a modification) of the act: if we were to use Bergmann's way of assaying the situation, we could say that the act is a fact and the intention is a constituent of the same fact.

In any case, Bergmann's own assay of the knowing situation clearly meets both conditions (i) and (ii), and thus qualifies as a realist view.

Some passages by G.E. Moore are regarded by Bergmann as conveying the central thesis of realism, or at least of some sort of "minimal" realism:

"Blue" is as much an object, and as little a mere content, of my experience, when I experience it, as the most exalted and independent real thing of which I am ever aware. There is, therefore, no question of how we are to "get outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations". Merely to have a sensation is already to *be* outside that circle. It is to know something which is as truly and really not a part of my experience, as everything which I can ever know. (Moore, 1903, p. 27)

One thing that must be noticed concerning this passage is that it emphasizes the fact that conditions (i) and (ii) are satisfied even when the intention consists of sense data, or similar kinds of phenomenal entities. The nature of intentions is not relevant, provided that they are distinct and separate from acts.

In his early phase Bergmann only considered the case of sense data and of the corresponding species of acts, i.e., sensing. At the time Bergmann held that a genuinely realist view can be secured even within the limited context of sensing and sense data, without considering other kinds of acts, such as perceiving. That does not mean that he denied that perception, for instance, is a distinct kind of act; rather, he seemed to imply that for methodological reasons it is better to limit oneself, at least at first, to the simplest case, i.e., that of sensing. He also seemed to imply that, once realism is secured within this context, it should not be difficult to extend the result to other cases as well.

All that is consonant with Brentano's views, at least as interpreted by Bergmann. Indeed, Brentano's examples of intentional objects (the physical phenomena) approximately correspond to Bergmann's sense data (cf. Brentano, 1973, p. 61).

In his early phase Bergmann also held that in the case of false facts the intentional nexus does not have a second term. In such cases there is no intention to be intended, so that one could almost say that the act does not intend anything. But one could also say that a false act intends exactly in the same way in which it would intend if it were true, since the act has a thought as a constituent, and such thought «is just that *kind* of entity that can bring something before one's mind even when there is no such thing at all» (these are not words by Bergmann, but by Douglas Lewis, a student of his, which nevertheless can be taken as faithfully expressing Bergmann's views: Lewis, 1965, p. 166).

That is in part just a verbal question, but it also involves a genuine awkwardness: there is a relational entity (the intentional nexus) which in some cases lacks its second term. Bergmann tried to alleviate the discomfort that may be caused by such a circumstance by observing that (a) the intentional nexus is not an ordinary relation, but rather a subsistent; and (b) that it is not the only nexus (subsistent) that exhibits this

feature. In fact there are other examples of nexus that do not need a second term. An instance is the disjunction: in ‘It rains or it does not rain’, one of the two facts does not exist.

It is interesting to notice that with respect to this question, i.e., the possible non-existence of the intention of an act, which is often regarded as one of Brentano’s main insights into the nature of intentionality, Bergmann never explicitly made reference to Brentano himself. The only hint that he was aware of Brentano’s contribution to the question is a testimony by Douglas Lewis, who, after having explained the nature of the thought of an act in the passage just quoted, said in a footnote: «I gather from Professor Bergmann that this account of intentionality of acts is virtually the same as Brentano’s» (Lewis, 1965, p. 166).

To sum up, Brentano is frequently referred to by Bergmann as a philosopher who put forth a view that clearly satisfies conditions (i) and (ii), which encapsulate the core of (minimal) realism. For this reason he deserves a major place in the history of philosophy, according to Bergmann. Brentano’s own views on intentionality certainly meet requirement (i); with respect to requirement (ii), the situation is more uncertain, as Bergmann himself seems to have recognized in Bergmann (1967). But here no question is made of the “authentic” Brentano.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that the question of the possible non existence of the intentional object is only casually hinted at by Bergmann.

On the whole, it seems that Bergmann’s views on Brentano during the early phase were rather sketchy, and that at that time Bergmann’s knowledge of Brentano’s philosophy was rather indirect. Probably it came mainly through the mediation of Boring (1929) and of Moore (1903) and (1953)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4. Bergmann: accomplished realism**

Bergmann himself acknowledged Grossmann’s role in first prompting him to the reflections that ultimately engendered the transition to the late phase. In the late phase Bergmann came to think of his previous characterization of realism as incomplete. After 1960, meeting conditions (i) and (ii), i.e., the full separation of acts and their intentions, becomes just a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for a fully realist view. To achieve an accomplished form of realism something more is required.

Let us imagine an ontology that comprises only (mental) acts belonging to the species of sensing and intentions that are made up of sense data. According to Bergmann’s early characterization of realism, such a view should be regarded as a realist view. But in such a case, ordinary objects (tables and chairs, dogs and cats, etc.) could only be assayed as complexes made up of sense data (as “congeries of sense data”, as Bergmann says). Sense data are not mental indeed, yet they are in some sense “phenomenal”, and after 1960 Bergmann came to think that assaying ordinary objects as congeries of sense data does not amount to a fully realist position. At most, it could be viewed as an imperfect form of realism or as a form of “moderate phenomenalism”. Bergmann’s early view did not explicitly embrace moderate phenomenalism, yet it could easily be misunderstood for it: in a way, Bergmann’s fault in the early phase was a sin of omission.

To understand Bergmann’s late view, a distinction must be introduced. The classifications of entities put

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<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Bergmann probably tended to assimilate Brentano’s contribution to Moore’s.

forward by Bergmann belong to two different kinds: ontological and functional<sup>3</sup>. Ontological classifications are based on “intrinsic” features of the entities to be classified. In the case of complex entities, ontological classifications are based on the intrinsic features of their constituents. Functional classifications depend on the functions that the entities to be classified perform, i.e., on the “context” in which they happen to be embedded (in other words: on the relations in which they stand to other entities).

In Bergmann (1960), in which the new view on realism is first presented, two fundamental dichotomies are introduced, one ontological and one functional. Ontologically speaking, entities may be either *perceptual* or *phenomenal* (never both). Examples of perceptual entities are: a chair, its shape, its colour, a nerve cell. Examples of phenomenal entities are: a visual sensum, its (phenomenal) colour, a memory image, a sensing, a seeing, a remembering. Bergmann is not fully clear about the question, but it seems that the difference between perceptual and phenomenal entities is phenomenologically given to us.

The second dichotomy is between acts and intentions. That is a functional dichotomy, at least with reference to intentions. Being an intention is a functional notion. Both perceptual and phenomenal entities may be or become intentions; and something is or become an intention in so far as it is in a certain relation with another entity which is an act. Acts themselves may be or become intentions of other acts. In this sense, one and the same entity may be regarded as an act – with reference to its intention –, and as an intention – with reference to its act. Being an act has both an ontological component and a functional one. As to the former, only phenomenal entities (but not all phenomenal entities) are acts; furthermore, if something has certain “intrinsic” features (i.e., it has two universals belonging to the groups of *species* and *thoughts* as constituents), it cannot help being an act. On the other hand, something that is an act in the ontological sense may also become an intention (functionally, so to speak) with respect to another act.

By combining these two dichotomies, two interesting subkinds of entities can be obtained. Phenomenal entities can be split into those that can be or are acts (or constituents of acts) and those that cannot be or are not acts (or constituents of acts). The former are called by Bergmann *mental* entities, the latter *primary phenomenal* entities. Examples of mental entities are: a sensing, a seeing, a remembering. Examples of (primary) phenomenal entities are: a visual sensum, its (phenomenal) colour, a memory image (briefly, sense data). Mental entities coincide therefore with acts in the ontological sense.

Once these distinctions have been drawn, Bergmann can put forth his new notion of accomplished realism. Accomplished realism incorporates the feature of minimal realism, i.e., the separation between acts and intentions, but something new is also required: in an accomplished realism there must be room for ordinary objects (such as tables and chairs, dogs and cats, etc.), and ordinary objects cannot consist of sense data (phenomenal entities), but must be (or consist of) perceptual entities. Accomplished realism must therefore recognize the existence of perceptual entities in addition to phenomenal ones.

The distinction between phenomenal and perceptual entities runs parallel to that between acts of *direct* and *indirect* apprehension. According to Bergmann there are several kinds of acts: perceiving, remembering, directly apprehending, judging, etc. Such kinds are ontological kinds, since they depend on the nature of one of the constituents of the act itself (i.e., its *species*). All kinds of acts which are not direct apprehensions may be regarded as cases of *indirect apprehension* (the distinction between direct and indirect apprehension is therefore itself ontological). Acts of direct apprehension always have phenomenal entities as intentions. All acts of indirect apprehension have perceptual entities as intentions. Since the distinction between direct and indirect apprehensions, as well as that between phenomenal and perceptual entities, are ontological, the two distinctions are completely independent, and the circumstance that there is a correlation between the nature

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<sup>3</sup> As to the latter, Bergmann usually calls them “contextual”.

of the acts and that of their intentions is just an empirical fact<sup>4</sup>.

The reasons why Bergmann speaks of “indirect” apprehensions with reference to acts that intend perceptual objects are rather complex. What follows is a simplified explanation.

According to Bergmann, whenever we perceive something (or in general indirectly apprehend something), we are conscious of our own perceiving, i.e., we know that we are perceiving. To be conscious of our perceiving means that the act of perceiving itself must be the intention of another act, which can only be an act of direct apprehension. It seems, though Bergmann is rather reticent on the question, that this must be regarded as an empirical truth: as a matter of fact, whenever we perceive (indirectly apprehend) something, we are also aware of our perceiving (indirectly apprehending) something. That may explain in what sense perceiving and the other acts of indirect apprehension may be called “indirect”: when I perceive something I am also conscious of my perceiving, so that the perceiving itself may be regarded as a sort of obstacle that prevents my directly reaching the perceptual object.

A connected notion is the functional concept of *conscious state*: something is a conscious state in so far as it stands in certain relations with other entities. Perceptual entities cannot be conscious states; phenomenal entities are conscious states in so far as they are the intentions of an act, which is always an act of direct apprehension; the act of direct apprehension that makes a phenomenal entity into a conscious state is not part of that conscious state. For Bergmann, successions of conscious states may be identified with *minds* or *selves*. Therefore, when I am perceiving something, my conscious state is the act of perceiving (which is the intention of an unconscious act of direct apprehension), and I *am*, in a sense, this act of perceiving. When I sense some sense data, the conscious state consists of the sense data themselves, and I *am* these sense data («I [...] lose myself in the object», Bergmann, 1960, p. 37).

A couple of comments are in order. The first concerns Bergmann’s account of acts’ being intended, which is obviously very different from Brentano’s. For Bergmann not all acts are necessarily intended; more than that, the highest act – so to speak – in a hierarchy of acts intending other acts must always be unintended. Moreover, for Bergmann no act intends itself: there is no “peculiar deflection” (*eigentümliche Verflechtung*), no act has itself as a secondary object (or better, there are no secondary objects at all); any act that is intended at all is intended by another act.

The second remark concerns the notion of mind. We have just seen that in this late phase minds are identified by Bergmann with successions of conscious states. In the early phase, in which the case of acts intended by other acts was not explicitly considered, minds were more simply identified with successions of acts. From this difference derives another difference. Let us consider the case in which some sense data are directly apprehended. According to the older conception of minds, one could say that the sense data are not in the mind. On the contrary, according to the new conception, sense data are in the mind (i.e., in the conscious state).

In Bergmann (1964) some changes are introduced in Bergmann’s views on accomplished realism.

The first change has to do with the intentions of false acts. Bergmann came to be convinced that all acts, even false ones, must have intentions endowed with ontological status. In order to provide the intentions of both true and false acts with a suitable ontological status, he introduced the two modes of *actuality* and *potentiality*. A false act can now be said one whose intention possesses the mode of potentiality; and now there is no need to allow for intentional nexus lacking a second term. It should be observed that with this innovation Bergmann distanced himself from Brentano’s notion of intentionality, at least as it is usually

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<sup>4</sup> Otherwise intentions would become dependent on acts in a way that would undermine even the minimal form of realism.

interpreted, to adopt a view that could be defined – in a loose and popular sense – Meinongian.

The second change concerns the ontological classifications recognized in Bergmann (1960). In Bergmann (1964) the ontological distinction between phenomenal and perceptual entities is dropped, and replaced by another ontological distinction between *mental* and *nonmental* entities. Mental entities are acts and their constituents; nonmental entities include perceptual ones. For expository reasons, Bergmann chooses to ignore primary phenomenal entities (i.e., sense data) for the main part of the paper, and to assume provisionally that perceptual entities are the only kind of nonmental ones. This tactical choice serves one important purpose: to show that every important phenomenon, every significant distinction can be accounted for in an ontological scheme in which sense data are not envisaged, so that the question of their existence and their nature becomes largely irrelevant from an ontological point of view, and may be left on one side as an empirical question, to be settled according to phenomenological data.

Only at the end of the article Bergmann comes back to the question of sense data. Now they are characterized in a functional way. In order to define them, Bergmann has recourse to the notion of *phenomenal entity*. But whereas in Bergmann (1960) that was an ontological kind, now it is defined in purely functional terms: something is phenomenal if it is in a mind, i.e., in a conscious state. Sense data, in their turn, are those phenomenal entities which are not mental, i.e., which are not acts. Therefore, being in the mind, or being in a conscious state seems to become the base on which the traditional notion of sense data is functionally reconstructed.

## 5. Grossmann

As already said, all of Bergmann's views concerning accomplished realism were developed with the prompt of Grossmann. And Grossmann himself, approximately in the same years, developed his own views on these issues, which were first put forth in Grossmann (1965)<sup>5</sup>. On the whole, Grossmann and Bergmann's theories on the nature of acts, perception, error, realism, etc. are very close indeed, so that it is not easy to understand to what extent the elaboration of these views is due to a common effort.

Yet, there is a shift in emphasis. Grossmann is not as focused as Bergmann on the establishment of the distinction between act and intention, and of the independence of intentions from acts. That is probably due, at least in part, to the fact that Grossmann regarded these questions as already settled once and for all. The shift in emphasis can be easily accounted for if we consider the different philosophical backgrounds from which Bergmann and Grossmann came. Grossmann was very well versed in the Austrian Brentanian tradition, where the distinction between act and intention was an unquestionable cornerstone. On the other hand, Bergmann "discovered" the Brentanian tradition only relatively late in his life, and his first teachers were the logical positivists, who «were all either phenomenalists or materialists» (Bergmann, 1964, p. 302), i.e., did not recognize the distinction between act and intention, so that Bergmann had to find it out by himself.

Another difference concerns the analysis of false acts. Grossmann remained faithful to Bergmann's original view, i.e., that in false acts the intentional nexus has no second term. And, contrary to Bergmann,

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<sup>5</sup> But cf. also Grossmann (1984, pp. 51-56), (1990, p. 91-96).

Grossmann is very explicit in attributing this view to Brentano<sup>6</sup>.

To be more exact, Grossmann identifies three periods in Brentano's philosophical development with reference to the question of intentionality and false acts (Grossmann, 1965, pp. 50-51):

- (1) In the early period B. resolved the problem with the theory of intentional inexistence: the objects of intentional acts (whether true or false) inexist intentionally in the acts themselves.
- (2) In the middle period B. recognized the existence of two kinds of relations: those that cannot and those that can obtain even if one of their terms does not exist.
- (3) In the late period B. replaced intentional relations with relational properties of mental substances.

No textual references are made and no absolute chronology of the periods is provided, in particular with respect to solution (2)<sup>7</sup>, which is of course also Grossmann's solution.

A subtler difference between Grossmann and the late Bergmann concerns sense data (or primary phenomenal entities; Grossmann calls them *sense impressions*). Contrary to the late Bergmann, Grossmann holds that sense data constitute an *ontological* kind: being a sense datum is not a functional notion. That means – among other things – that we can distinguish sense data from other kinds of entities (in particular perceptual entities) as soon as we are acquainted with them. That may seem a negligible detail, but it has important consequences.

On the whole, Grossmann's and Bergmann's accounts of acts are extraordinarily alike. Also for Grossmann perceptual entities can only be intentions of indirect apprehensions, while acts and sense data can only be intentions of direct apprehensions (*awarenesses* in Grossmann's terminology). The notion of conscious state, which is functional, is defined exactly in the same way as in Bergmann. Yet a few minor differences can be recognized (as has been just remarked with reference to sense data), and they may reveal a somewhat different attitude towards realism, hidden behind undisputed similarities.

An interesting clue about such partly different attitudes is Bergmann's and Grossmann's assessment of Moore's achievement. In his later phase Bergmann came to admit that Moore's realism is seriously defective, and that his identification of ordinary objects with congeries of sense data is irremediably misconceived. Yet he maintained his positive appraisal of Moore's distinction (which for Bergmann is also Brentano's distinction) between acts and intensions, which he always regarded as the main cornerstone of any realist position.

By contrast, Grossmann had many doubts concerning the real import of Moore (1903). He claimed that the famous passage by Moore which has been quoted before can be interpreted in two different ways. If it is interpreted as Bergmann interpreted it, nothing is gained with reference to realism, for sense data, when they are not *attended to* (like in introspection), but are *merely experienced*, are still part of a conscious state, and therefore they are not in any sense "outside the mind". On the other hand, if one assumes that what is in the conscious state is itself an act, then such an act can carry us "outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations", since its intention is truly outside the mind. Everything may be ultimately formulated in terms of

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<sup>6</sup> Later Grossmann came to credit Twardowski for this view: cf. Grossmann (1977), (1983, pp. 197-200).

<sup>7</sup> It does not seem possible to find an exact correspondence with the periodization proposed by Chudzinski (2004).

the distinction between sense data and perceptual entities, which is an ontological distinction. In Bergmann's late view, on the other hand, such a distinction is not ontological, and everything ultimately depends on the distinction between acts and intentions, which is at least partly functional<sup>8</sup>.

From what has been said so far, two considerations can be made concerning (a) the different meanings attached by Bergmann and Grossmann to Brentano's contribution to the issue of realism; and (b) the bigger or smaller role Bergmann attributed to what he regarded as Brentano's fundamental insight in his early and late phase.

As to (a). According to Bergmann the most important contribution by Brentano to the issue of realism is his clear distinction between act and intention. The idea that intentional nexus may lack a second term is paid considerably less attention (and it is discarded in the late phase); furthermore, it is not explicitly attributed to Brentano.

With Grossmann the situation is specular. The distinction between act and intention is not emphasized (probably because it is taken more or less for granted), and therefore it is not associated with Brentano's name. The idea that intentional nexus may lack a second term is regarded as being Brentano's peculiar contribution to the issue of realism.

As to (b). There is a sense in which the distinction between act and intention plays a smaller role in the late than it played in the early Bergmann. First of all, such a condition is a sufficient condition for realism in the early phase, whereas it is only a necessary condition for accomplished realism in the late phase.

Moreover, one could also raise some doubts concerning whether the distinction between act and intention can secure even a minimal form of realism in the late Bergmann. We have just seen that Grossmann raised similar doubts about Moore's (and Brentano's) insight. But we also saw that Bergmann himself, by equating minds with (successions of) conscious states rather than with (successions of) acts, came to the conclusion that sense data are, after all, "in the mind".

Does that mean that an ontology comprising only direct apprehensions would not be realistic, not even in a minimal sense? The answer is uncertain, since among Bergmann's notions of "being mental", "being in the mind", "being dependent on the mind", "being actual", "being real", "carrying with itself the idea of external existence", etc. there are complex relationships, which are not always univocally defined. That makes the whole question rather blurred. Yet the doubts remain.

On the other hand, there is also a sense in which the functional distinction between act and intention plays in the late phase of Bergmann's philosophy an even bigger role than in the early phase, since not only the notion of conscious state, but also that of sense data comes to be based on it.

## 6. Chisholm

Roderick Chisholm was probably the philosopher who more than any other contributed to making Brentano a relevant figure in American philosophy.

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<sup>8</sup> Bergmann's functional and Grossmann's ontological characterization of sense data have significant consequences also for their account of error: cf. Bonino (2010).

We have just seen that Bergmann and Grossmann focused on two different themes in Brentano's philosophy: the distinction between act and intention, and the idea that mental acts intend objects that may or may not exist, respectively. It is immediately evident that Chisholm sides with Grossmann. In almost all his presentations of the doctrine of intentionality, Chisholm's emphasis is on the fact that the intentional object may or may not exist. Such a characterization is also famously expressed by Chisholm's first criterion of intentionality, formulated in a linguistic fashion: «A simple declarative sentence is intentional if it uses a substantival expression [...] in such a way that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies either that there is or that there isn't anything to which the substantival expression truly applies» (Chisholm, 1957, p. 170). This feature of intentional phenomena is presented as being opposed to what happens with physical phenomena: relations among physical phenomena are such that they always require existing terms.

This way of presenting Brentano's doctrine of intentionality was severely criticized by Linda McAlister for being wrong, or at least misleading, from an exegetical point of view (cf. McAlister, 1974). According to McAlister, Chisholm's interpretation of Brentano's distinction between what is and what is not intentional can be schematized in the following way:

Mental phenomena	—— take	—— objects which exist
		—— objects which do not exist
Physical phenomena	—— take	—— objects which exist

For McAlister, the correct interpretation of Brentano's view would rather be:

Mental phenomena	—— take	—— objects
Physical phenomena	—— do not	

She observed that in Brentano the non-existence feature (so to speak) is not possessed by all cases of intentionality, and therefore it cannot be regarded as the distinguishing characteristic of intentionality. In any case, Chisholm's emphasis would be misplaced.

Be all that as it may with respect to the exegetical question, Chisholm seems to have had some reasons for his interpretation of intentionality. As Jaegwon Kim suggested (Kim 2003), the main use for intentionality in the context of Chisholm's own philosophical agenda was instrumental to proving the existence of the mental. That would be the significance and ultimate purpose of Chisholm's criteria of intentionality (the first among which is that of the possible non existence of the intentional object).

To sum up Kim's suggestion in a very rough way: Chisholm defined three criteria for intentionality of sentences; he held that non mental phenomena can be described by sentences that are not intentional; therefore, if intentional sentences cannot be eliminated or reduced to non-intentional ones, then there are mental phenomena. If this suggestion is correct, and this is really Chisholm's purpose, then the reasons for his choice as to the emphasis and the overall interpretation of the doctrine of intentionality are clear.

It can be observed that such a purpose is wholly alien to Bergmann (or Grossmann, for that matter). The

existence of mental phenomena is for Bergmann (and Grossmann) a phenomenological datum; mental phenomena are something whose existence must not be *proved* by philosophy, but just taken account of and accommodated within an appropriate ontological scheme.

As often happens, differences in philosophical views or interests are linked to differences in metaphilosophical views, concerning the purpose, the sense and the method of the philosophical enterprise. That seems also true with respect to the different attitudes towards the other Brentanian theme that has been dealt with so far: the distinction between act and intention.

It is clear that for Bergmann such a distinction is a useful tool in the development of his ontology of the knowing situation.

According to Bergmann's view on the nature and purpose of philosophy, epistemology must be conceived as the ontology of the knowing situation, that is, it must put forth an ontological scheme that is descriptively adequate, i.e., such that within this scheme all the facts that are to be accounted for find their place. Neither proving the existence of something, nor providing criteria for knowledge (certain, probable, etc.) are among the tasks of epistemology conceived as the ontology of the knowing situation.

According to this metaphilosophical view, a realist epistemology (conceived as the ontology of the knowing situation) must not *prove* the existence of ordinary objects, but rather provide an ontological assay in which ordinary objects find an adequate place. In the same way, epistemology (conceived as the ontology of the knowing situation) must not formulate criteria for certain knowledge, but rather explain what certainty is and what its place is in an overall ontological scheme (in this case Bergmann's conclusion is negative: certainty is a spurious concept, which should not have any place in the ontological scheme).

Chisholm's conception of epistemology is of course completely different. Probably his view is closer to the traditional conception of the subject, according to which proving the existence of some categories of entities, or providing criteria for knowledge *are* among the purposes of epistemology. In such an enterprise, the ontological niceties concerning the relationship between act and intention do not seem to be very helpful.

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**Abstract.** The article aims to investigate how Gustav Bergmann, Reinhardt Grossmann and Roderick Chisholm used Brentano's notion of intentionality in their own philosophical pursuits, and on how they saw themselves and their works with respect to what they regarded as Brentano's place in the history of philosophy. It is shown how the differences among their interpretations depend mainly on their different philosophical agendas.

**Key words:** realism; intentionality; Brentano; Bergmann; Grossmann; Chisholm.

**Sommario.** L'obiettivo dell'articolo è indagare come Gustav Bergmann, Reinhardt Grossmann e Roderick Chisholm si siano serviti della nozione di intenzionalità per i loro scopi filosofici, e come abbiano posizionato se stessi e la propria opera rispetto al ruolo da essi attribuito a Brentano nella storia della filosofia. Si mostra che le differenze tra le loro interpretazioni dipendono principalmente dai loro differenti programmi filosofici.

**Parole chiave:** realismo; intenzionalità; Brentano; Bergmann; Grossmann; Chisholm.