

Brentano and the parts of the mental: a mereological approach to phenomenal intentionality

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We are often told about the legacy of Franz Brentano (1838-1917).¹ In this paper I explore one particular dimension of this legacy, namely, Brentano's theory of *mental analysis*. This theory has received much less attention in recent literature than the intentionality thesis or the theory of inner perception.² In my view, however, it is probably Brentano's most important contribution to current debates about the unity of the mind. My own sympathies, in these debates, lie with supporters of the claim that intentionality and phenomenality are intimately connected features (e.g., Horgan & Tienson 2002, Loar 2003, Graham et al. 2007 and 2009, Kriegel 2013). Yet I think this claim might benefit from interesting clarifications if we go back to Brentano's theory of mental analysis.

My proposal is to conceive the connection at issue as a certain combination of part/whole-relations rather than as a supervenience or identity relation, as recently suggested (Pautz 2008, Mendelovici 2010: 79ff, Kriegel 2013: §1.4). The analytical or mereological approach I am inclined to favor is very close to the view held by Brentano in his *Psychology*

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¹ See Dummett 1993, Smith 1994, Fissette/Frèchette 2007.

² See this paper, §1. One exception is Seron 2012, who compares Brentano's concept of analysis to Carnap's notion of 'quasi-analysis'.

from an Empirical Standpoint (1874/2008) and, more particularly, in his lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* (1890-1/1982). Hence it may be referred to as Brentanian. This doesn't mean that I take Brentano's own position to be definitive and beyond improvement, nor that all the claims I shall support are Brentano's. But I think the proposed view is quite consistent with the spirit of his own psychological research program, which aims at giving the best possible description of mental occurrences as they are first-personally experienced.

The plan of this paper is as follows. To begin, I will discuss some reasons for being a (neo-)Brentanian about the mind (§1) and will briefly introduce the main characteristics of Brentano's internalist description program (§2). Then, I will turn to the current 'inseparatist' way of dealing with intentionality and phenomenality, focusing on the demand for unity coming from advocates of phenomenal intentionality (§3). I will suggest that the unity of the mind may be put in a new light if we put aside metaphysical-epistemological questions, go back to Brentano's description program, and endorse his thesis that the mental is something unified in which various parts must be distinguished (§4). In the last section, I will draw some lessons from this approach with respect to the connection between intentionality and phenomenality (§5). More pointedly, I will hold that, for any representational content R , R is (in Brentano's terms) an abstractive or 'distinctional' part of the relevant state, and that, for any qualitative aspect Q , Q is an abstractive or 'distinctional' part of the relevant representational content R .

1. Why Go Back to Brentano?

What, if anything, can we expect to gain by adopting a Brentanian approach to the mind? Within contemporary philosophy of mind, two distinct motivations are usually put forward to justify something like a return to Brentano: his intentionality thesis and his theory of inner perception.

Brentano is best known for having introduced intentionality as a preferential criterion for the mental. Contrasting with a physical state, a mental state is intentional in the sense that it is directed at something or that it represents something as being a certain way. Accordingly, intentionality might be taken as the ‘mark’ of the mental. The classical way to unpack this idea is to say that everything mental is intentional (this is the so-called *Brentano Thesis*) and everything intentional is mental (the *Converse Brentano Thesis*). These theses are commonly regarded as the core of Brentano’s legacy. However, whereas the intentionality criterion for the mental may be traced back to Brentano,³ it may be doubted that contemporary philosophers of mind have understood this view in exactly the way Brentano did, and this for two reasons.

First, the Brentano Thesis, arguably, has been widely misunderstood. At least for Chisholm (1955-6, 1957), the intentionality criterion was interpreted in an ontological or metaphysical way. Chisholm’s line of thought is well known. It goes somewhat like this: If ‘intentional idiom’ proves to be irreducible or ineliminable, then mind is irreducible to matter, and metaphysical dualism is true. As suggested by Moran (1996), Brentano, unlike Chisholm, probably never made such an antireductionist use of the intentionality criterion, which he rather takes as a classificatory and descriptive factor. I will go back to this descriptive dimension below (§2).

Second, it is known that Brentano does not have explicitly developed a coherent theory of intentionality. In his 1874/2008, he simply uses the notion of ‘intentional in-existence’, which is deeply controversial. For this reason, it has sometimes been held that Brentano bequeathed to his heirs not so much a philosophical theory as a problem, namely, the problem of objectless presentations, which he himself left ‘unresolved’ (Dummett 1993: 48). Against

³ See Brentano 1874/2008: 125/107 [1995, 89]: “This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it,” as well as 137/115 [98]: “That feature which best characterizes mental phenomena is undoubtedly their intentional in-existence.”

such an interpretation, some Brentanian scholars during the last fifteen years have attempted to provide us with a historical reconstruction of Brentano's theory of intentionality (see, e.g., Chrudzimski 2001, Albertazzi 2006). Without discussing such tentative reconstructions, I shall restrict myself to saying that, *at least at first sight*, the conception of intentional content developed by Edmund Husserl (1857-1938) offers a much more promising framework in order to construe a phenomenological theory of intentionality. This claim is supported by the fact that the semantic dimension of Husserlian contents—the so-called 'noematical sense' (Husserl 1913/1982: §89)—makes it easier to accommodate a series of descriptive and experiential features that are often associated with intentionality, such as existential opacity (i.e., the ability to be directed at *A* even if *A* does not exist), referential opacity (the ability to be directed at *A* without being directed at *B*, even if *A* is *B*), and the publicity of intentional objects (the ability for several people to be directed at one and the same object). In this respect, it might be urged that we should return to Husserl rather than to Brentano.⁴

More recently, however, another motivation for developing a Brentanian or neo-Brentanian account of the mind has been found in Brentano's theory of inner perception. This theory is designed to cover another basic dimension of the mental, namely, the fact that our mental life, or at least a good deal of it, is conscious rather than unconscious (viz. is conscious in the intransitive sense). According to Brentano, this holds for every mental phenomenon or mental occurrence. He therefore supports the view that every mental phenomenon is accompanied by an 'inner perception' in virtue of which it may be said to be conscious in the intransitive sense. For instance, when I am hearing a sound, I do not only perceive the sound, but simultaneously perceive that I am hearing a sound. The 'external' perception of the sound is accompanied by the 'internal' perception of the act of hearing the sound (Brentano 1874/2008: 179/146 [1995: 127]).

⁴ On the difficulty to accommodate the publicity of intentional object from the Brentanian viewpoint, see Jacquette 2004: 103 and 107ff.

What makes this Brentanian theory so attractive for a series of authors is that it seems to offer a way to escape one important difficulty facing so-called higher-order theories of consciousness (HOT). According to HOT, a mental act or state being conscious amounts to it being grasped by a higher-level act or state. Thus, a mental state m_1 is conscious if and only if there is a suitable mental state m_2 that refers to m_1 or has m_1 as its object. The main trouble with this kind of approach is that it is exposed to infinite regress, since the condition for m_2 to be conscious is that it is in turn referred to by a third-level state m_3 , and so on. Brentano's theory escapes this objection, for inner perception is not conceived as a higher-level act that would be distinct from the first-level act, e.g. from the act of hearing. Rather, Brentano maintains that there is 'a single mental phenomenon', the act of hearing, with two objects: The <sound> as 'primary object' and the <hearing of the sound> as 'secondary object' (*ibid.*). The act is self-representing or self-perceiving in a way that allows us to avoid infinite regress (see also Brentano 1911: 138-9 [1995: 276]). To sum up, the theory of inner perception seems to pave the way for a more promising *self-representational* approach of consciousness (see Kriegel 2003 and forthcoming).

This second motivation, however, brings new issues to light. One objection that can be raised against the Brentanian version of self-representationalism is that it conceives of consciousness on the model of object-reference, as if we were directed at the hearing of the sound in roughly the same way as we are directed at the sound. Yet this is a hardly plausible view. Suppose I am actually hearing a sound. Unless I have already accomplished an act of psychological reflection, the hearing of the sound is not an object for me in any sense of the term. Husserl (e.g., 1900-1/1993: 385 [1970: 567]) had already raised the same objection against Brentano. The core-idea of his criticism may be rendered as follows: In pre-reflexive consciousness the hearing of the sound is certainly experienced, but not perceived or contemplated. Only reflection turns it into an object. Following this line of argumentation,

there is no reason to admit one single act with two objects. Experience rather suggests that we are at one time directed at one single object, namely, the intentional object (the sound itself). In this respect, too, Husserl's approach might well prove to be superior to Brentano's. The objection just outlined suggests that the self-representational approach, if not rejected, should be at the very least appropriately modified, for instance by saying that a conscious mental state is self-presenting rather than self-*representing*. Still, as noted by Zahavi (2004), such modifications imply an important departure from Brentano's own position and probably conform better to what can be found in Husserl, Sartre or Heidegger.

If these remarks are right, then the two motivations usually proposed to justify a return to Brentano are much more controversial than sometimes believed. However, as I have suggested in the opening paragraph, my contention is that there exists another, more convincing motivation for adopting a (neo-)Brentanian approach to the mind. This third motivation is tied to another aspect of Brentano's legacy that appears to me to be deeper and, at the same time, more general than the intentionality thesis and the theory of inner perception, namely, his theory of *mental analysis*. As we shall see, this theory rests upon the idea that the mental is, in some important sense, something unified. But beside this, Brentano also holds that the mental is something complex that requires to be described, viz. analyzed into parts of various kinds. To put it shortly: Unity does not imply simplicity.

The exploration of this analytical or mereological dimension that attaches to the study of the mind certainly is much more explicit in Brentano than in Husserl.⁵ It is presented in the chapter devoted to the unity of consciousness in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* and, more explicitly again, in his lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* at the University of Vienna during the years 1887-1891.⁶ Significantly, the so-called 'problem of analysis' has

⁵ Husserl himself occasionally refers to this analytical or mereological approach as being part of Brentano's legacy. See, e.g., Husserl 1901/1993: 436 [1970: 604].

⁶ See Brentano 1874/2008: 221-251/175-196 [1995: 155-176] and 1982: 10-27 [2002: 13-30].

also been subject to passionate discussions by several members of the Brentano School, such as Stumpf (1873),⁷ Cornelius (1892-93, 1897), Meinong (1894) and Stout (1896).

Nevertheless, my concern here is not with the historical development of the theory inside the school. Rather, it is to explore the way in which Brentano's view of mental analysis may provide us with substantive resources to deal with the connection between intentionality and phenomenality. The first step we have to make, to reach this goal, is having a look at Brentano's own program of psychological investigation.

2. Brentano's Internalist Description Program

It is certainly not incorrect to say that the main ambition of contemporary philosophy of mind of the last half century has been to explain the mind in a way that is consistent with the scientific-naturalistic picture of the world. This quest for a naturalistic *explanation* of the mind contrasts with the primacy of *description* that characterizes the writings of Brentano, Husserl, and their followers. However divergent proto-phenomenologists may be in their conception of mental features, they agree that, before explaining mental states, we need to describe what makes them the states they are. For instance, before explaining perceptual episodes by appealing to causal relations with the world surrounding us and to neural connections in our brain, we need to know what perceiving properly is, and in what it differs from sensing, imagining, thinking, judging, believing, and the like. As George Stout noticed, Brentano is "the only modern writer who appears to have fully realized the importance of this preliminary inquiry" (Stout 1896: 36; see also Stumpf 1924: 46).⁸

⁷ Carl Stumpf (1848-1936) probably is the first member of the Brentano School that has developed an abstractive theory of 'psychological parts' (see Stumpf 1873). As far as I know, he also introduced the central notion of 'partial content' (*Teilhalt*), which will be used by his pupil Hans Cornelius (1863-1947) and which certainly form one important source of Husserl's mereology in the third *Logical Investigation*.

⁸ The idea that describing is prior to explaining goes back at least to Brentano's (1890-1/1982) lectures on *Descriptive Psychology*. It has been propagated by the members of his school and by their followers. See Marty

Interestingly, most of proto-phenomenologists also maintain that, in order to reach descriptive goals, we do not have to endorse any theory about the relationship between mind and world or between mind and body: When describing, we may remain ‘metaphysically neutral’ on such topics. All we need to do is to methodically scrutinize our mental states as they are first-personally experienced, so to say ‘from the inside’. Let us label this the *internalist description program*.⁹ This program is motivated by the conjunction of the two following claims: (1) Any tentative explanation of the mental first and foremost requires us to explicitly specify *what is it* we want to explain, otherwise explanation could miss its target; (2) the describing of first-personally experienced mental states is the best—not to say the only—way to meet this requirement.

Supporters of the naturalistic explanation program may resist the demand of preliminary description either by rejecting (1) or by rejecting (2). There is no need to enter this debate here. Suffice it to insist that Brentano’s program is quite compatible with an explanatory approach to the mind, since it aims at nothing but providing explanatory theories with a usable descriptive basis.¹⁰

Be that as it may, one important issue for supporters of the internalist description program comes from the fact that introspection, when uncontrolled, may be inaccurate. Brentano’s own position, on this point, is more nuanced than is often believed. In particular, he never held that introspective accessibility to our own mental states is a guarantee for us to

(1894-95/2011: 5-7, 1908: 52-53, 1916: 98), Cornelius (1897: 4-10), Höfler (1897: 4-7, 1890: 2, 1906: 184-185, 1930: 50-72), Husserl (1901/1993: 1-22), Stumpf (1906: 35, 1907/1928: 55, 1917: 4), Pfänder (1900: 7, 1920: 162-165), Reinach (1914/1989: 533ff), among others. See also the most quoted passage from Brentano (1895: 34): “My school distinguishes between Psychognosie and genetic psychology (on the basis of a remote analogy with geognosy and geology). The task of the former is to exhibit all of the basic mental elements. All other mental phenomena are derived from the combination of these ultimate psychological elements, just as words are built up out of letters.”

⁹ In my view, internalism is a methodological, not a metaphysical option. It does not imply any form of idealism, antirealism, or solipsism.

¹⁰ As recently suggested (Gallagher/Zahavi 2008: 6), it is probably all the more appropriate to pursue this program today as most of the lively debates in the philosophy of mind press us to endorse metaphysical or epistemological options without providing us with a clear description of the phenomena under study.

have a clear apprehension of them, nor that this apprehension cannot be improved. To be sure, Descartes has shown the evidential character of self-apprehension or, to put it in Brentano's terminology, of inner perception: When I undergo the experience of such and such mental state or *cogitatio*, I cannot possibly doubt that I am in such and such a state. But this evidence of inner perception does not prevent us from apprehending our own mental states somewhat confusedly. For instance, even if I know that I am presently undergoing some perceptual experience (I am seeing Brentano's books lying on the table in front of me), it is not so easy to say what qualifies that experience as perceptual in contrast with, say, a 'mere presentation' with roughly the same content.¹¹ To generalize, Brentano and most proto-Phenomenologists held that there is a gap between my ability to say *that* I am perceiving (imagining, judging, believing, and the like) and my ability to say *what* perceiving (imagining, judging, believing, and the like) exactly is. This implies that it is not sufficient to refer to paradigmatic examples in order to fix what we are talking about, since our ability to refer to paradigm *examples* does not imply us to have a clear understanding of what makes them *paradigm* examples.

On Brentano's view, this lack of distinctness results from the fact that most of our mental states show a high level of complication. The following passage seems to me to be particularly important to understand Brentano's position (Brentano 1928: 3 [1981: 4]):

Mental activity always includes the evident consciousness of that activity. On the other hand, in cases where the activity is complicated, we cannot always clearly distinguish between its various elements, and thus our knowledge of ourselves as mentality active beings is sometimes clearer and sometimes more confused.

¹¹ Within the phenomenological Husserlian tradition, this point has been emphasized in Reinach 1914/1989: 373 ff. and 385: "Cartesian philosophers fail to see that. In natural attitude, the differences between experiences [are] not given, though experiences are not mixed up. [The] average man is not clear at all about differences, nuances, and the like in inner life. Ask you, for example, how wanting and wishing differs from one another!"

More exactly, Brentano maintains that every mental occurrence, as a matter of fact, is something more or less complicated. This is why the required description aims at identifying the *parts* or *elements* of the mind and the way they are connected (Brentano 1890-1/1982: 1, 10 [2002: 3, 13]). To put it shortly, it aims at *analyzing* the mind.¹² Mental analysis is precisely supposed to compensate for the lack of distinctness that attaches to the apprehension of mental occurrences. Hence describing a mental state is nothing but analyzing it, i.e., making distinctions that let appear its constitutive parts without destroying its actual unity. This brings me to my next point.

3. Inseparatism and the Demand for Unity

So far I have briefly sketched Brentano's internalist description program from consideration for the current research situation. In this section, I shall suggest that what is at stake in recent theories of phenomenal intentionality is not so much the rise of a new explanatory paradigm as the rise of a new descriptive framework. Otherwise put: The question at issue is not first and foremost that of the reducibility (or irreducibility) of mental occurrences to physical states, but that of the nature and the structure of the mental as it is first-personally experienced.

At least since the late seventies, it is commonly held that paradigmatic mental states have two basic features: They are phenomenally conscious or have a phenomenal character, in the sense that there is 'something it is like' for the subject to undergo them (Farrell 1950,

¹² Mental analysis is sometimes compared to chemical analysis. See, e.g., Stumpf (1873:5) and Stout (1896: 61). One important difference between mental analysis and chemical analysis, however, is that the former has a descriptive dimension while the latter has an explanatory dimension. See Pfänder (1920: 163): "Unter Analyse versteht man eben in der Chemie *nicht* eine Untersuchung über die wirkliche Beschaffenheit der Stoffe, sondern eine Zerstörung der zusammengesetzten Stoffe, um zu erkennen, aus welchen einfachen Stoffen sie unter bestimmten Umständen als etwas Neues *entstehen*. Das Resultat der *chemischen* Analyse des Wassers, daß es nämlich aus 2 H und O ,besteht', besagt daher nicht, wie *beschaffen* das Wasser ist. Die *psychologische* Analyse dagegen will gerade feststellen, wie *beschaffen* die psychischen Tatsachen sind, wie sie wirklich ,*aussehen*', *nicht*, wie sie so *geworden* sind."

Nagel 1974), and they are intentional or have a representational content, in the sense that they represent something as being in a certain way (Harman 1990: 34, Crane 1992: 139). To refer to a classical, maybe oversimplified example, consider a visual perception such as seeing the blue sky. Your visual experience may be said to have a phenomenal character *P*, namely, what it is like as you see the blue sky, and a representational content *R*, namely, the sky as being blue. (In addition to that, it is often claimed that *P*, in perceptual states, is tied to the presence of a qualitative character *Q*. For example, when you see the blue sky, there seems to be a certain bluish character, which is part of your visual experience: The sky *looks blue* to you.¹³ But we can avoid such complications for the time being.)

Clarifying the nature of these two features is a fairly difficult task. One important issue of investigation recently has been how *P* and *R* relate to one another. Supporters of the naturalistic explanation program typically regard them as separable features, and try to deal with them separately—with more or less success. They endorse what could be called the *separability claim*: Representational content and phenomenal character may exist separately. This claim, however, has been recently challenged to the effect that phenomenal character and representational content are not separable but intimately connected features. This alternative line of thought is at the origin of a family of views—including versions of representationalism and theories of phenomenal intentionality—which may be referred to under the broader head of ‘inseparatism’ (Graham et al. 2007: 468-69 and 2009: 522).

On the inseparatist outlook, the separability claim must be rejected. This can be done in two ways: Either by arguing that phenomenal character is not a nonrepresentational extra ingredient besides intentionality, or by arguing that intentionality is not genuinely

¹³ I follow Crane (2001: 74-76) and distinguish the qualitative character that attaches to sensory experiential states from the more controversial notion of *qualia*, which refers to non-intentional properties of the experience. The basic idea behind this is that the qualitative character of sensory experiences is an explanandum (it is something that any satisfactory theory needs to account for), while the notion of *qualia* is a much-disputed explanans (it is advocated by some philosophers in order to account for the qualitative character of sensory experiences).

disconnected from phenomenality. The first road has been travelled by representationalists or intentionalists such as Dretske (1995), Tye (1995), and others, while the second road has been travelled by supporters of phenomenal intentionality such as Loar (2003), Kriegel (2003, 2011, forthcoming), or Graham et al. (2007, 2009). Putting these differences aside, a good way of introducing the basic idea behind inseparatism is to consider what happens when switching from the third-person perspective to the first-person perspective. Classically, phenomenal character is something that first-personally manifests itself. Hence it is often claimed that there is more to the mind than what is captured by third-person accounts (this is the view championed by Nagel 1974, 1986). However, on the inseparatist outlook, such a formulation should be regarded as misleading, for it suggests that *P* is simply added to *R* as a nonrepresentational extra ingredient. Against this picture, inseparatism, as I take it, asserts that it is simply wrong to conceive of *P* as something that would occasionally lie beside *R*, just as it is wrong to conceive of the representational capacities of the mind as something originally disconnected from phenomenality. Inseparatists hold that, when we switch from a third-person to a first-person point of view, we do not have access to something distinct from representational content or intentionality. Rather, we do have access to another kind of content, namely, *phenomenal content*, or to another kind of intentionality, namely, *phenomenal intentionality*.

Three cases can be made for inseparatism. First, (a) when introspecting ourselves, we do not discover *P* (or *Q*) as something distinct from *R*. When I am seeing the blue sky, the fact that ‘it feels bluely’ is not separable from the fact that my visual perception represents the sky as being blue. Most of the time, philosophers who endorse this view also endorse the so-called transparency argument, due to Harman (1990: 39) and Tye (1995: 30-1): Experience is said to be ‘diaphanous’ or ‘transparent’ in the sense that nothing can be introspectively ‘observed’ except what is represented in that experience. The introspective case for

inseparatism, however, is not dependent upon our acceptance of the transparency argument. It is quite possible to reject this argument—for instance by claiming that intentional ‘mode’ (Searle 1983, Crane 2001: 86) is another element discovered by introspection beside representational content—and hold that Q introspectively reveals itself as involved in R (more on this in §5).

Second, (b) P and R are somehow correlated and co-vary, so that any change in P is a change in R and vice-versa. For example, if I wear colored sunglasses, the feeling of blue that I had when looking at the blue sky undergoes a certain modification, and this modification ends up changing the representational content: My visual perception no longer represents the sky as being blue. Conversely, it may be held that representing the sky as being blue and representing the sky, say, as being yellow are states with a different what-is-likeness or phenomenal character, just as representing Jastrow’s duck-rabbit as a duck or representing it as a rabbit are states with a different what-is-likeness (Mendelovici 2010: 83).

Last but not least, (c) another case that can be made for inseparatism is its theoretical attractiveness. Inseparatism is theoretically attractive, for it implies that we do not need two distinct theories to give a satisfactory account of the mind: A non-phenomenal theory of intentionality *plus* a putative non-intentional ‘theory’ of phenomenality. If phenomenal character and representational content go hand in hand, then one single theory—a theory of phenomenal intentionality—will do the job, providing us with a unified picture of the mind.

Since theoretical attractiveness has nothing to do with the description of mental occurrences, we can safely restrict ourselves to the first two cases. Let us call them the argument from introspection and the argument from co-variance. Further, let us assume that these arguments are compelling and that inseparatism is true. If we want to construct a satisfactory theory of phenomenal intentionality, we have to think of the connection between intentionality and phenomenality in a way that accommodates both introspective unity and

co-variance. Granted that *P* and *R* are intimately connected features, what kind of connection holds between them? In recent literature, two predominant theories have been suggested.

The first theory is what I will call the supervenience theory. One possible version of representationalism consists in supporting the view that *P* supervenes on *R*.¹⁴ This position is usually labelled ‘weak representationalism’ or ‘weak intentionalism.’ On the other hand, one possible theory of phenomenal intentionality consists in supporting the view that *R* supervenes on *P*. Such a claim captures the fact that phenomenal intentionality may be defined as the kind of intentionality “that is constitutively determined by phenomenology alone” (Horgan & Tienson 2002: 520) or the kind of intentionality that “a mental state exhibits purely in virtue of its phenomenal character” (Kriegel 2013). What is striking in the supervenience theory is that it implies a certain priority of *R* over *P* or, conversely, of *P* over *R*. Such interpretations therefore suggest that what is at stake in phenomenal intentionality is not only the descriptive claim according to which “the mental is a unified rather than a bifurcated phenomenon” (Graham et al. 2007: 470). The supervenience theory rather refers to an *explanatory* dimension. Supporters of phenomenal intentionality, for example, seem inclined to endorse at least one of the following theses: (i) Phenomenal intentionality is explanatorily prior to non-phenomenal intentionality; (ii) phenomenality is explanatorily prior to intentionality.¹⁵

Whatever version of the supervenience theory we may be inclined to favor, one important objection against this kind of approach is that it does not fit with the argument from co-variance, which implies no asymmetry and, therefore, no priority between *P* and *R*. Facing

¹⁴ This version of intentionalism is defended in Byrne 2001.

¹⁵ Each of these claims is likely to admit two interpretations depending on whether we understand priority in an ontological or in an epistemological sense. For instance, phenomenal intentionality may be said *ontologically prior* to non-phenomenal intentionality to the effect that phenomenal intentionality is that in virtue of which intentionality comes into being or is ‘injected into the world’ (to use a phrase from Kriegel 2011: 5). On the other hand, phenomenal intentionality may be said *epistemologically prior* to non-phenomenal intentionality to the effect that phenomenal intentionality is that in virtue of which we come to form the *concept* of intentionality. This last line of investigation has been developed in Kriegel (2011: Chap. 1).

this difficulty, some supporters of inseparatism have suggested what is sometimes called the ‘no-priority-view’ (Pautz 2008). The proposed alternative is to appeal to the notion of *identity*, to the effect that *P* and *R* would be identical. Let us call this the identity theory. Strong intentionalists (Tye 2003: 166ff, Crane 2001: 85)¹⁶ hold that *P* is identical to *R*, and advocates of the ‘phenomenal intentionality identity theory’ (e.g., Mendelovici 2010) hold that *R* is identical to *P*. Since identity is a symmetrical relation, this amounts, in any case, to thinking of the *P-R* connection in roughly the same way (if divergences are to be found between Strong intentionalists and supporters of the phenomenal intentionality identity theory, they come from additional claims.) Thus, admittedly, adopting the identity theory seems to be the best way of accounting for the argument from introspection and the argument from co-variance. To use an often-mentioned metaphor, *P* and *R* would be, on this approach, like the two faces of the same coin.

This last theory probably deserves a lot of commentary. I shall restrict myself to two short remarks. First, one issue with the identity view, at first sight, is how to accommodate the publicity of representational content: If *P* is something private or subjective, and if *R* is something public or inter-subjective, viz. can be common to mental states experienced by different persons, then *P* and *R* cannot be identical. I do not wish to discuss this kind of worry here. Suffice it to say that the identity theory seems to me to be underdetermined by the argument from co-variance: After all, co-variance does not necessarily imply identity. Pending a satisfactory account of the phenomena of unity and co-variance, we should do well not to exclude too fast other ways of describing the connection between intentionality and phenomenality. Second, in addition, supervenience and identity theories are hardly compatible with the historical claim according to which phenomenal intentionality is the kind of intentionality that Brentano and proto-Phenomenologists were dealing with (Graham et al.

¹⁶ Tye no longer supports strong representationalism in his 2009.

2007: 468, Kriegel 2013).¹⁷ On Brentano's view, the unity of the mind does not imply in any sense the identity of intentionality and self-consciousness, nor does it imply the identity of representational content and qualitative character. Generally speaking, the mind's unity does not imply the mind's simplicity.

4. Unity not Simplicity

Central to Brentano's internalist description program is the idea that every mental occurrence is something that proves to be more or less complicated. According to the key distinction between *act* (or mode) and *content*, the complex (*Verwicklung*) that characterizes every mental occurrence may take two forms: It may be a multiplicity of acts or a multiplicity of contents. In the first case, we may experience at the same time various acts with the same content. This occurs, according to Brentano, when we represent *p* and judge that *p*, or when we represent *p* and desire that *p*, etc. Yet it is also the case that we experience one and the same act with various contents. For instance, when we make a syllogism, the very same act of thinking is directed at the same time both at the premises and at the conclusion; when we perceive a multi-colored picture, the very same act of representing (in this case an act of sensing) is directed at various colors. Such examples speak for the claim that the mental is something intrinsically complex. Furthermore, even if we put aside the cases just mentioned (the different-acts/same-content case and the same-act/different-contents case), there is an additional complexity that arises from the fact that every mental occurrence is self-perceiving. Inner perception, on Brentano's view, shows a very peculiar structure. On the one hand, it

¹⁷ As far as I know, the first formulation of this historical claim is to be found in Chalmers (2004: 153): "In the work of philosophers from Descartes and Locke to Brentano and Husserl, consciousness and intentionality were typically analyzed in a single package." This formulation, however, is somewhat misleading, for it neglects the fact that intentionality, within the phenomenological tradition, has developed partly *against* Descartes' and Locke's pictures of the mind. Husserl's methodological internalism has nothing to do with the (mistaken) claim that the mind always refers to its own 'ideas' or 'presentations'.

implies that one and the same act is directed at two ‘objects’, e.g., the act of hearing is directed at the <sound> and simultaneously at itself (see above: §1). On the other hand, inner perception is a kind of *perception* and as such it involves a multiplicity of acts or modes: The <hearing of the sound>, when self-perceived, is not only presented but also known as existing and felt as pleasant or unpleasant.¹⁸ Thus, at any time *t*, our consciousness involves a multiplicity of elements in the widest sense of the word. As Brentano explicitly adds (1874/2008: 228/180 [1995: 161]), the variety of the parts therefore excludes any identity between them:

It is clear that such real identity never holds between our concurrent mental activities, and that it will never be found between the diverse aspects of the simplest mental acts which were differentiated earlier. The perception of hearing is not identical with the feelings we have toward hearing.

Granted that every mental occurrence involves a multiplicity of elements, what kind of multiplicity is that? In Chapter IV of the second book of his 1874/2008, Brentano discusses the following alternative: Either it is a mere collection or ‘bundle’ of elements (a ‘collective’), or it is a real unity, viz. a single thing which simply is divisible into various parts.

Roughly speaking, the first option goes back to Hume’s famous bundle theory (Hume 1739). By definition, a collective is a sum of several items that are likely to exist separately and that have, so to say, a merely *nominal* unity. It often occurs, indeed, that we refer to a collective by means of a single name. We use the name ‘herd’ to refer to a sum of individuals, the name ‘city’ to refer to a sum of houses, the name ‘house’ to refer to a sum of rooms, etc. (Brentano 1874/2008: 222/176 [1995: 156]). All these words simply denote collectives, viz. merely nominal unities made up of distinct things (individuals, houses, rooms, etc.). It is plain

¹⁸ See Brentano 1874/2008: 218/174 [1995: 154]: “Consciousness of this secondary object is threefold: it involves a presentation of it, a cognition of it and a feeling toward it.” It is plain that these modes must be conceived as the integral parts of the act of self-perception.

that the fact that we use a single word to refer to these sums does not imply that they are ‘real’ unities. To be sure, the herd and the city have *some* sort of unity—the sort of unity we could contrast, for instance, with the mere collection of various pieces of furniture in some furniture store— but this is not the unity of a single thing (*res*). Moreover, another characteristic of collectives is their ontological dependency: They are ontologically dependent upon their constituents (e.g., the herd has no reality besides that of the individuals that compose it). If the parts of a collective no longer exist, the collective itself no longer exists (e.g., demolishing the houses amounts to demolishing the city). To the contrary, each item that is part of a collective may exist separately or individually. Thus, holding that the elements of the mind form a collective amounts to taking the mind as a mere sum of items whose unity is merely nominal. This is the view supported by some of Brentano’s contemporaries, like Ernst Mach (1886).

Against such a view, Brentano holds that the elements of the mind form a real unity, viz. one single ‘thing’. Still, “this does not mean that no multiplicity can be distinguished in it,” for “unity and simplicity [...] are concepts which are not interchangeable. Even if one real thing cannot be a multiplicity of real things, it can nevertheless contain a multiplicity of parts” (Brentano 1874/2008: 223/176 [1995: 157]). So, the mind’s unity, on Brentano’s view, is made up of parts that are not distinct things and, consequently, that cannot exist separately like in the case of a collective. In order to make a clear distinction between those inseparable parts and the parts of a collective, Brentano introduces the notion of ‘divisive’ (*idem*). The term is designed to refer to ‘partial phenomena’ (*Teilphänomene*), i.e., phenomena that exist as parts of broader phenomena. For instance, when I desire that *p*, the experience I undergo is that of a complex mental state that involves the act of representing *p* as a divisive, for it is not possible for me to desire that *p* without *p* being simultaneously represented. For sure, I can represent something without desiring it. Yet the contrary is not possible. There is no connection of this sort between the parts of a collective, which are mutually independent from

one another. The representing act is thus a divisive of the whole experience that is called ‘desiring *p*’.

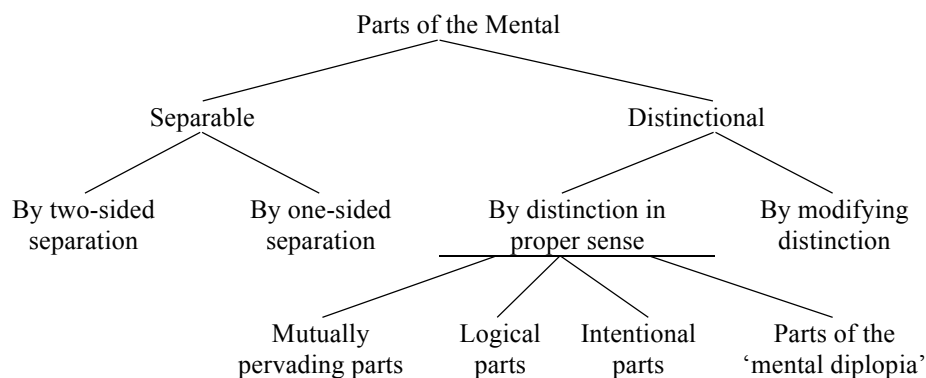


Fig. 1. Brentano's Mereology

5. A Mereological Framework for Inseparatism

As this last example suggests, parts of the mental can be connected more or less intimately.¹⁹ In his 1890-1/1982, Brentano explores this variety of connection modes and offers a typology of the parts of the mental. He distinguishes between (i) elements that are mutually separable or separable by two-sided separation (e.g., seeing and hearing), (ii) elements that are unilaterally separable or separable by one-sided separation (e.g., seeing and noticing, representing and desiring), and (iii) elements that are inseparable. Now, even in the cases where no actual separation is possible, he insists that conceptual separation may yet be possible; conceptually separated parts he calls ‘distinctional parts’, viz. parts obtained by distinction (e.g., the act of seeing and its content).²⁰ (Fig. 1)

¹⁹ See Brentano 1874/2008: 230/181 [1995: 162]: “When we are dealing with parts which belong to one and the same reality, we can conceive them to be connected with one another in many ways and with greater or lesser intimacy.”

²⁰ He introduces the concept of ‘distinctional part’ along the following lines (1890-1/1982: 13 [2002: 16]): “Someone who believes in atoms believes in corpuscles which cannot be dissolved into smaller bodies. But even so he can speak of halves, quarters, etc. of atoms: parts which are distinguishable even though they are not actually separable. To differentiate these from others, we may refer to them as distinctional [*distinktionelle*] parts. And, since distinguishing goes beyond actual separability, one could speak of parts or elements of elements.” Among distinctional parts within the field of mental analysis, he further distinguishes between distinction proper and modifying distinction, and within the first group, between ‘mutually pervading’ parts

The notion of ‘distinctional part’ is probably the key for Brentano’s conception of the unity of the mind. It provides us at once with a definite framework to think of the intimate connection between intentionality and phenomenality that Inseparatists are seeking. Indeed, following Brentano, the notion of ‘distinctional part’ applies both to the so-called qualitative aspects of experience and to representational content. This approach may be represented using the following two theses:

- (1) For any representational content R , R is nothing but a distinctional (proper) part of the relevant mental state M .²¹
- (2) For any qualitative aspect Q , Q is nothing but a distinctional (proper) part of the relevant representational content R .²²

In my view, these theses provide us with an interesting alternative to supervenience and identity theories. Unlike such theories, they accommodate the analytical dimension that attaches, according to Brentano, to any tentative description of the mental as it is personally experienced. Consider for instance the act of judging ‘There is a truth.’ In Brentano’s terminology, the fact that this act is directed upon the object <truth>, hence its intentionality or directionality, is one of the judgement’s distinctional parts, in addition to its affirmative quality, its self-evidence and its apodeictic modality (Brentano 1890-1/1982: 20 [2002: 22-3]). More importantly, the representational content itself is a distinctional part of the intentional act-content correlation, for it cannot be *separated* from the relevant act but only

(e.g., affirmative quality and directionality of a judgement), ‘logical’ parts (e.g., presenting and feeling, feeling and visual feeling), parts of the intentional correlation, and parts of the inner perception (or, as he calls them, parts of the ‘mental diplopia’).

²¹ Like Crane (2001), I contend that our mental states are individuated by intentional mode as well. Any intentional mode, on the proposed view, is another ‘distinctional’ part of the relevant mental state.

²² I add the qualification ‘proper’ in order to avoid the interpretation according to which the part could be identical to the whole (this would bring us back to the identity-version of phenomenal intentionality, see §3).

distinguished from it. To put it briefly, what is called ‘representational content’ is nothing but the result of an abstractive analysis of the whole experienced state, which shows, in any case, a complex structure. A whole state is at least made up of act or mode *plus* content *plus* self-perception or self-consciousness, each of which, in turn, likely to be subject to further analysis.

Consequently, this means that *representational content itself* has to be regarded as something that is likely to be analyzed, viz. something that consists of a series of distinctional parts as well. Obviously, the unity of representational content is a sub-case of the unity of the mind. Consider, e.g., the previous, often-quoted example of visual perception. While I see the blue sky, I have a feeling of blue. According to the classical story, the felt blue may be described as a *quale*, namely, as a nonrepresentational ingredient of the experience we enjoy when looking at the blue sky. But Brentano’s analytical approach allows us to challenge this classical story and reject the ‘pure-qualia view’ (Loar 2003) in a promising way. On this approach, there is nothing like qualia, if under ‘qualia’ we understand nonrepresentational properties of the experience. Such properties are mere fictions. Rather than a *quale*, blue is a qualitative aspect of *what is represented* or, to use Brentano’s terminology, a distinctional part of *R*.²³

Picking out such qualitative characters may be more or less difficult. Somebody well trained may succeed in discovering a number of qualitative characters that other people fail to grasp. Here is another example coming from Stout’s *Analytic Psychology* (1896: 58), arguably a text in the vein of Brentano:

²³ In my view, the qualitative character <blue> is a nonconceptual part of the content or, say, a nonconceptual partial content R_p , which is likely to enter into combination with conceptual elements. Representational content, thus, is an articulated content involving both conceptual and nonconceptual parts. I have argued for this kind of approach in Dewalque 2011.

A highly cultured smoker may spend hours in describing the delicate variety of experiences which a single superb cigar gives him, while ordinary mortals can only look on in amazement and wonder what he is talking about. The same holds good of the connoisseur of wines.

Whatever the cultured smoker describes as qualitative aspects, these aspects are *distinctional* parts of the relevant representational content; they contribute to make it the content it is. The same applies to qualitative characters that the amateur of wines is able to distinguish, and so on.^{24 25}

Interestingly, this analytical or mereological approach accommodates the argument from introspection and, on some conditions, the argument from co-variance. First, Introspective unity is captured by the fact that, as *distinctional* or abstractive parts, *R* and *Q* cannot be taken as occasionally co-occurrent things, yet they necessarily occur as ‘partial phenomena’ which belong to a broader structure. Every time we speak of such and such representational content (the sky as being blue, this cigar as being a Havana, this wine as being a Burgundy, and the like), what we do is to pick out that very content, which qualifies as one *distinctional* part of the relevant (self-conscious) mental state.²⁶ And every time we speak of such and such qualitative aspect (e.g., that particular feeling of blue, that particular smell, that particular taste, and the like), what we do is to pick out that very qualitative aspect as one *distinctional* part of the relevant representational content. Second, this approach also

²⁴ Compare with what Tye (2003: 31) says about the unity of the ‘multi-modal’ experience that is enjoyed by the wine taster.

²⁵ One way of challenging the proposed view is to claim that analyzed phenomenon and unanalyzed phenomenon are very different things or that *analyzing is modifying*. Therefore, mental analysis would not provide us with a description of the original phenomenon. What is described would always be a *modified* phenomenon. This objection has been disputed by Brentano’s followers (e.g., Meinong 1894, Stout 1896). One crucial aspect of the notion of mental analysis lies in the fact that analysis is not supposed to create anything. Rather, it aims at *finding out* or at *making explicit* some preexistent parts that already lie (implicitly) in the unanalyzed phenomenon. Still, mental analysis is always open to introspective verification. As Stout remarks, it is not necessary that the analyzed phenomenon is identical to the unanalyzed one. Suffice it to admit that the analyzed phenomenon *corresponds* to the unanalyzed one. “In this way”, Stout concludes (1896: 61), “it is possible that we may come to know the original experience by the very same process which transforms and modifies it.”

²⁶ Accordingly, we should take literally the claim that “intentional content appears to be part and parcel of phenomenology” (Chalmers 2004: 179).

makes it possible to do justice to the alleged phenomenon of co-variance. Let us call phenomenal character *P* the kind of consciousness made up at least of mode *plus* content. And let us call qualitative aspect *Q* the way something appears to a sentient being. According to (1), changing the representational content amounts to changing the state, since the representational content is a distinctional part of the state and if a distinctional part modifies, then the whole which involves this part modifies as well.²⁷ Now, insofar as the state is self-perceiving or self-conscious, the representational content is also part of what is captured by self-consciousness. Therefore, when we change representational content, the what-is-likeness or phenomenal character of the experienced state ends up changing as well. For example, suppose I look at the duck-rabbit and perceive it as a rabbit: The experience I undergo may be described as that of perceiving a rabbit (or a picture of a rabbit), and this experience is obviously different from that of perceiving a duck (or a picture of a duck). Conversely, according to (2), changing one qualitative aspect of the representational content amounts to changing that very content, since the qualitative aspect is a distinctional part of the relevant content. As such, it contributes to the individuation of that content, making it the content it is.

6. Conclusion

The main goal in recent theories of phenomenal intentionality is to conceive the mind as something unified, something in which intentionality and phenomenality are closely related to one another. Recent suggestions that have been made in order to conceptualize this intimate

²⁷ Compare with Brentano (1982: 16-7 [1995 : 19]): “If we have two spots before us which agree in lightness, in quality and maybe in other parts, and which differ only spatially [spatiality being taken here as an abstractive, distinctional part of the spots; AD], then they will appear as two, regardless of the manifold agreement. And, in fact, we do not only talk of two spatial determinations, but also of two individually different qualities [and] of two individually different lightnesses [...]. An equal lightness precisely does not mean that it is individually and actually the same.” Just like changing one abstractive part of a colored spot amounts to changing the spot itself, changing one abstractive part of a mental state (e.g., its content or its mode) amounts to changing the state itself, and hence this amounts to changing ‘what it is like’ to undergo that very state (see Horgan & Tienson 2002: 522).

connection rest upon supervenience and identity claims. In this paper, I have suggested that there is little evidence supporting such claims, and that going back to Brentano may provide us with a more promising alternative.

Generally speaking, I think that the Brentanian distinction between description and explanation places us in a better stand to deal with the phenomenality-intentionality articulation or, more exactly, the PQR articulation (where *P*, *Q*, and *R* stand for *Phenomenal*, *Qualitative*, *Representational*). Within contemporary philosophy of mind, tentative descriptions of mental occurrences are often combined with explanatory, reductionist, naturalistic or physicalist theses. In this respect, one important lesson that can be drawn from Brentano is that description of mental occurrences is not dependent upon metaphysical or epistemological assumptions. Note that the proposed view, in particular, is neutral on *why* a given state has such and such content. No matter whether we hold that representational content is ‘wide’, i.e., determined by physical properties of objects in the world (as Tye and others claim), or is ‘narrow’, i.e., immune to what is going on ‘outside the brain’ (Horgan & Tienson 2002: 526-7; Graham et al. 2007: 471 and 2009: 524; Kriegel 2013: §1.3), any experienced qualitative character *Q* is best described as a part of the relevant content. So the claim that phenomenal character is not disconnected from intentionality may be said to be ‘descriptively true’ independently from the way we explain the rise of our mental states. Conversely, provided we are in search for the best description of our mental states as they are first-personally experienced, it is ‘descriptively true’ that intentionality is not disconnected from phenomenality, no matter whether we conceive of intentional content as ‘broad’ or ‘narrow’. Each time we speak of representational content or qualitative character, we pick out some abstractive part of a single unity, which is the relevant mental state. Representational content and qualitative character are nothing but the result of an analyzing process that let the unity of the mental unaltered.

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