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MEINONG'S Theory of Objects and Values

BY

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PREFACE

ALEXIUS VON MEINONG, fitly described by a distinguished English philosopher¹ as the 'infinitely courageous and pertinacious Meinong', was born at Lemberg in Poland in 1853.² We have, for purposes of information, given him the ennobling 'von' of which he never made use, shrinking, as he says, from 'privileges that lack an inner foundation'. He belonged, however, to a noble German family that had moved over to Austria: it was his father's professional duties that took them all to Poland. Meinong's education was in Vienna, first at the Academic Gymnasium, and, after 1870, at the University; in his doctorate examination in 1874 his *Haupttrigorousum* was History, but Philosophy was his *Nebenrigorousum*. For the purposes of the latter, he had studied Kant entirely without the help of commentaries: it would be interesting to be able to hear once again his no doubt audacious, autodidactic sallies. After some further dalliance with history, and some profitable attendance at Carl Menger's lectures on economics, which were to influence his value-theory, Meinong gave himself unreservedly to philosophy. He devoted himself to the study of Hume under the supervision of Brentano, whom he had first encountered in connexion with his *Nebenrigorousum*. While much less intimate with Brentano than others were, partly, he says, owing to a deep desire for independence, he was able to write in his last years of the radiant memory-image of his master, in which a 'spiritualized beauty' was 'made golden by the sunshine of his own and my youth'. Of his two profound and sympathetic *Hume-Studien*, done under

¹ Gilbert Ryle in 'Plato's Parmenides', *Mind*, 1939, p. 328.

² The biographical facts in this Preface are taken from Meinong's brief autobiography in *Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, ed. Raymund Schmidt, series I, 1923.

Brentano's supervision, the first (1877), on Hume's theory of abstraction, secured his 'habilitation', the second, on Hume's theory of relations, appeared in 1882: both were published in the Proceedings of the Imperial Academy of Sciences at Vienna, of which Meinong was later to be a Fellow. That Meinong should have served his first serious philosophical apprenticeship with Hume, places him in the Anglo-Saxon rather than the Germanic philosophical tradition, and it was in this tradition that he continued mainly to work. It was in the Anglo-Saxon world, likewise, that his philosophical reputation and influence were at their greatest.

Meinong spent four years (1878-82) as a Privatdozent at Vienna, and then moved on to Graz, where he remained for the rest of his life, first as Professor Extraordinarius (1882-9), and then as Ordinary Professor (1889-1920). Graz is one of those rare places, in the furthestmost corner of one world and on the edge of another, where everything seems set in fixed perfection: its river, its plain, its town, its castle, its not too high and not too distant mountains with their many exquisite vantage-points, are all wholly beautiful, whether in sunshine or in snow. The inhabitants share in the grace of the landscape and the architecture, and like these they stay, and do not alter: if they go away for a time, they hardly ever fail to come back. It is agreeable to think of Meinong spending all those years in this delightful place (from which even a call to Vienna did not tempt him), while the theory of objects slowly burgeoned and took shape. Apart from the foundation of an Institute of Experimental Psychology in 1894, the first in Austria, there seem to have been few events during Meinong's professorship. His history was the history of his publications and of the academic activities of his small school of pupils.

Among these publications the most notable were the *Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie* (1894),

which almost succeeds in formalizing ordinary morality; the composite school-publication *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* (1904), to which Meinong contributed an article 'Über Gegenstandstheorie'; the valuable but now little accessible epistemological essay *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens* (1906); the programmatic *Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften* (1906-7); the brilliant *Über Annahmen* (1910), with its manifold contributions to psychology, value-theory, &c., and its important introduction of 'objectives', the *Sätze-an-sich* of Bolzano, as peculiar *entia rationis*; the long treatise *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* (1915), with its important doctrine of 'incomplete objects'; the treatise *Über emotionale Präsentation* (1917), a uniquely original essay in the epistemology of valuation; and the somewhat unpersuasive *Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes* (1918). Meinong wrote many important articles which were collected by his pupils in the two volumes of *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, one volume devoted to psychology, the other to epistemology and object-theory: a third, to be devoted to value-theory, was never issued. Several important articles on value-theory, as well as the unreprinted *Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen*, are therefore practically inaccessible. The *Grundlegung zur allgemeinen Werttheorie* was published posthumously in 1923, and a work entitled *Ethische Bausteine* is still in manuscript in the Library at Graz.

Among Meinong's pupils probably the best known are Ernst Mally, his successor in the Chair at Graz, who died during the second World War; Stefan Witasek (d. 1915), author of a Meinongian *Grundlinien der Psychologie* and of a little known but valuable *Ästhetik*; and V. Benussi, the psychologist. Christian von Ehrenfels, himself the author of an influential *System der Werttheorie* (1897-8), and a remarkable metaphysical *Kosmogonie*, was a pupil of Meinong's at Vienna, and so were Alois Höfler and

A. Oelzelt-Newin. Other Meinong-pupils, such as R. Ameseder, E. Martinak, and R. Saxinger, have more or less been forgotten.

The school of Graz never achieved the eminence and influence of the phenomenological school of Husserl, though both had their roots in Brentano, and taught similar doctrines at many points. Husserl's great influence began, however, when he forsook the brilliant dryness and systematic carefulness of his early *Philosophie der Arithmetik* and *Logische Untersuchungen*, for the exciting programmatic vistas and systematic transcendentalism of his later phenomenology. After about 1907 he may be said to have become absorbed in the main stream of German philosophical thought, accepting its unqualified idealism, and its somewhat dogmatic way of exploring the *a priori*, and it is to this change, as much as to his philosophical genius, that his immense later influence is due. Meinong, however, never became part of that stream, and his latest writings show the same spirit of logical dryness and piecemeal caution as his first. He tells us that 'the continuously increasing preoccupation with Kant has made it into a tradition to give new thoughts, where possible and even beyond this, the form of Kantian conceptions. If one considers, however, how uncertain the interpretation of Kant has become, it seems to me that one can become more than doubtful whether this is a good tradition. I have thus not thought, in any case, that the method of justifying positions by way of Kant was indispensable, and have even thought it detrimental, where it made one's treatment circuitous. I have therefore avoided it.'¹ It is not remarkable, therefore, that Meinong and his school came to be regarded as travellers on a philosophical by-path or even dead-end, and that they were described as 'scholastic' or merely as 'queer' (*fremdartig*). 'Scientific research', Meinong remarks, 'is generally a lonely business, and one that produces

¹ *Philosophie der Gegenwart*, p. 55.

loneliness.' It is plain (see *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, pp. ix and x) that Meinong rejoiced in the coincidence between many of his independently formed views and those of Husserl, and would have welcomed fruitful co-operation from that quarter had not Husserl, with his jealously proprietary attitude towards certain conceptions, made this impossible.¹

Meinong stoically encountered an expected death towards the end of 1920. The character-profile that emerges from his writings and from report is the somewhat old-fashioned one of a crusty, formal exterior concealing deep loyalties and attachments to persons and things, many extremely pure and lofty motives and sentiments, great generosity, complete honesty, vast patience and courage, and a somewhat oversensitive, readily injured pride.

Philosophically, as well as personally, there is no one Meinong so much resembles as G. E. Moore. They share the same independence of tradition, the same unwillingness to be browbeaten by the 'deep' utterances of philosophers—Meinong gently sets aside Schopenhauer's explanation of morality by an underlying identity of the 'will', much as Moore sets aside Bradley's assertion of time's unreality—the same reluctance to make declarations too firm or too wide, the same cautious quasi-empiricism of approach even in the realm of the *a priori*, the same sensitiveness and deference to what people actually believe and commonly say, coupled with the same willingness to put forward highly daring analyses of common notions, the same unrepentant, almost obsessive realism, and lastly, though many would question it, the same common sense, in the sense of an unwillingness to abandon what we plainly understand and know, and what forms the firm foundation of our discourse, at the behest of theories much less lucid and indubitable. With this go the typical Mooreian faults of elementarism and atomism, and of a piecemeal

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

progress so myopic as often to miss the large connexions essential to philosophical insight.

A few quotations may here be given as typical. 'It is certainly desirable to find an exact conceptual formulation for the mutual relevance, evident in practice, of all that is traditionally done under the name of philosophy. So far I have not been successful in doing so.'¹ 'The theory of objects is no doubt an *a priori* science, possibly the *a priori* science, and subsistence and *extraexistence* (*Außersein*) must be garnered from the nature of these objects, therefore *a priori*. None the less this knowledge of being goes back to a direct apprehension of these objects as a sort of quasi-experience, so that even the theory of objects permits us to tread the path from below upwards, like the empirical sciences.'² 'Like all apprehension knowledge is also, to a quite particular degree, an entirely peculiar performance, not reducible to anything more elementary. But whoever believes in knowledge will also, wherever he recognizes it, and provided he is consistent, not be able to doubt this performance. It is essential to this performance that it relates to something that in no manner coincides with the knowing experience . . . but always *transcends* the latter.'³

Meinong's most famous and characteristic doctrine, that of an unbounded realm of objects which are *daseinsfrei*, indifferent to the antithesis between being and non-being, and his frank espousal of the anti-Parmenidean position that *what is not* is as much the object of significant reference and valid examination as *what is*, might seem to prove Meinong's extravagance and unsoundness, his wide exceeding of the bounds of common sense. The doctrine, however, is eminently arguable at a common-sense level, and was once even justified by Russell on the basis of 'perception'.⁴ Certainly it initially approved itself both to

¹ *Phil. der Gegenwart*, p. 12.

³ *Phil. der Gegenwart*, pp. 42-43.

⁴ 'Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions,' *Mind*, 1904, p. 217.

² *Em. Präs.*, p. 103.

Russell and Moore, and might have continued to deserve their approbation, had they sufficiently considered the qualifications with which Meinong held it. It is strange, further, that Meinong's object-theory should have been regarded by some as a bewildering and tangled 'jungle':¹ it resembles rather an old formal garden containing some beautiful and difficult mazes.

Meinong's thought had a relatively poor and rapidly dwindling reception in the German philosophical world. In the obliteration of practically all philosophical landmarks by the blanketing snowfall of Heidegger—one of those great natural cataclysms to which even philosophy seems liable, and to which recent British philosophy offers analogies—the work of Meinong was plunged into neglect. It was in the Anglo-Saxon world that his thought, that certainly belongs to the tradition of Ockham and Hume, achieved both a temporary influence, and a lasting, if equivocal, respect. Meinong's teachings certainly did not penetrate to the rank and file of British philosophers, but they impinged on the most eminent and understanding, and through them affected the rest.

Russell was early aware of Meinong's great merits, and devoted the generous, brilliant 'Meinong's Theory of Complexes and Assumptions' (*Mind*, 1904) to their exposition and partial defence. It is well known that Russell's Theory of Descriptions, that famous and historically important piece of logical analysis, was, in part at least, an attempt to provide an alternative to Meinong's doctrine of *Außersein*, of extraexistential objectivity. Russell also discussed Meinong's theory of content in the first chapter of *The Analysis of Mind*. Unfortunately Russell was far too concerned to advance from Meinong to his own notions and conclusions to bother to get Meinong quite straight, and the accounts he put into circulation of Meinongian contents as consisting of sense-data and images, and of

¹ W. Kneale, *Probability and Induction*, p. 12.

Meinong's non-existent objects as 'subsistent', are simplifying travesties of Meinong's complex opinions.

In Moore, Meinong met with a far more careful and receptive student: the doctrine of content is correctly expounded and valuably criticized in 'The Subject-Matter of Psychology' (*Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1909-10, pp. 36-62), and Moore's remarkable Morley College Lectures, delivered in 1910-11 and published as *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* in 1953, deal mainly with Meinongian problems in an almost wholly Meinongian manner. We may note that Mooreian analysis found itself unable to deal satisfactorily with the problem of meaningful reference to the false or non-existent, the precise problem with which Meinong struggled so valiantly, and that Moore never thought that the Theory of Descriptions had solved all the philosophical difficulties connected with this sort of reference, nor imagined that Russell had worsted Meinong in the manner attested by the prevailing legend.

Through Russell and Moore the echoes of Meinong were carried to Wittgenstein: no one who considers the stress on facts and being-the-case in the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, or the frequent references to the puzzling character of thought about the non-existent in *The Blue Book* and elsewhere, can doubt that Meinong is here exercising a remote influence. Meinong also had a considerable influence on C. D. Broad, who reviewed the second edition of *Über Annahmen in Mind*, 1913, and on G. Dawes-Hicks, who contributed a valuable article entitled 'The Philosophical Researches of Meinong' to *Mind*, 1922. In the United States the direct influence of Meinong extended more widely. The writers of the co-operative volume called *The New Realism* (1912) explicitly associated themselves with Russell, Moore, and Meinong as their 'big brothers overseas'. Edwin Holt's theory—stated in *The Concept of Consciousness* (1913)—of a world of 'neutral entities', variously divided up by 'conscious cross-sections',

represents a greatly simplified, behaviouristically modified version of Meinong's doctrine of *Außersein*, and the same applies to Santayana's beautifully phrased, but less exactly thought-out, doctrine of a 'Realm of Essence'. It is not widely known that T. S. Eliot wrote a doctoral dissertation on Meinong which still reposes in the Library at Harvard: it seems a pity that no reference to *Außersein* has strayed into *The Waste Land*.

There was, however, a second season of Meinongian influence in Britain, the time at the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties when the Cam overflowed into the Isis, and Oxford for the first time took serious cognizance of the thought of Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein, and of those who had influenced them. Among these last Meinong held an honourable place. The author of the present book belongs to this period, and so do his contemporaries or near-contemporaries William Kneale and Gilbert Ryle. Ryle's estimate of Meinong at that time may be gauged from the following quotation: 'Meinong was the sort of reformer who makes revolutions inevitable, yet himself stops short of seeing that they are even possible. He was a philosophical Kerensky. Both in epistemology and in logic, with terrifying assiduity and remarkable rigourousness of reasoning, he carried to their extreme conclusions the implications of presuppositions which no one had yet questioned, and which he himself did not question. But of these conclusions he never said what has to be said, "By God, this is impossible." He was perhaps the supreme entity-multiplier in the history of philosophy, and yet, I suppose, the main service which he really rendered philosophy was to force logicians to see that "wherever possible logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities" . . . Meinong is in my opinion important for . . . three main reasons. First, he was very largely responsible for the de-psychologizing of logic. Next he raised, and raised together, the logical and metaphysical questions of

the nature and status of relations, numbers, facts, universals, negation, possibility, probability, necessity. He also forced philosophers to investigate the whole problem of what is meant by such predicates as "exists", "subsists", "is an object", &c. But thirdly, and chiefly, he accepted the traditional doctrine of Terms in logic, and by generalizing the issues and remorselessly drawing the conclusions from the premisses, he showed, though he did not see, that the whole structure was rotten. If the orthodox theories of terms were true almost the whole fantastic hierarchy of Meinong's non-actual entities would have to be accepted.¹

It will be seen from the above that the role of Meinong in modern British philosophy has been largely that of a philosophical Aunt Sally, who is honoured in being struck down. Except to a very few like Ryle, he was known only by hearsay. Possibly his fate is happier than that of Moore who, imperfectly read, has been treated as the mere 'forerunner' of another philosopher, and whose most characteristic and valuable doctrines have been interpreted in a manner quite at variance with their obvious sense. Recently there have been signs that Meinong may come to be more understandingly treated: the formal discipline of semantics has found it profitable to revive something like his object-theory, and a philosopher like Chisholm has translated some of his work. Meinong's importance as a thinker ought, in our day, to be no longer a matter for debate or doubt.

The present work was first published in 1933, and is being reissued now, since some have found it useful in understanding Meinong's work, and since it seemed proper that an easy access to Meinong should be possible for English-speaking readers. I have made only trivial changes in its eight original chapters. If I rewrote them now, I should no doubt write them rather differently, but I should not write them better, and my present ideas might obtrude

¹ *Oxford Magazine*, 26 October 1933.

on a body of doctrine with which I was then, to a much greater degree, identified. I have, however, added a ninth and a tenth chapter on Meinong's extremely important value-theory, which has incidentally left more mark on my thought than any other part of Meinong's teaching. Others have discussed the value-theory (for example, H. O. Eaton in *The Austrian Philosophy of Values*, 1930), but not, to my knowledge, in close connexion with the theory of objects, of which it forms the completion. And in a final eleventh chapter entitled 'Appraisal of Meinong' I have tried to fulfil an injunction given me by Ryle in 1933, that I should write one more chapter in which I stood back from my canvas and asked: 'What does it all amount to? What is Meinong for? Why is it useful and not only hard work for philosophers to discover what Meinong thought?' I do not imagine that my answers to these questions would have satisfied him then, nor that my present answers will be satisfactory now, but I give them for what they are worth.

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NOTE

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- Hume Studien I. Zur Geschichte und Kritik des modernen Nominalismus*, 1877, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i (Barth, Leipzig), referred to as *Krit. Nom. Gs. Abh. I.*
- Hume Studien II. Zur Relationstheorie*, 1882, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. ii, referred to as *Relth. Gs. Abh. II.*
- Zur erkenntnistheoretischen Würdigung des Gedächtnisses*, 1886, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. ii, referred to as *Gedächtnis Gs. Abh. II.*
- Über Begriff und Eigenschaften der Empfindung*, 1889, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i, referred to as *Empfindung Gs. Abh. I.*
- Über Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie*, 1889, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i, referred to as *Phantasie Gs. Abh. I.*
- Zur Psychologie der Complexionen und Relationen*, 1891, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i, referred to as *Psy. Kom. Gs. Abh. I.*
- Beiträge zur Theorie der psychischen Analyse*, 1893, reprinted in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. i, referred to as *Psy. An. Gs. Abh. I.*
- Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie*, 1894 (Leuschner and Lubensky, Graz, out of print), referred to as *Psy.-eth. Unt.*
- Über Werthhaltung und Wert*, 1895, in *Archiv für systematische Philosophie*.
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I

THE DOCTRINE OF CONTENT AND OBJECT

I

MODERN realism has, in the course of its development, proved itself quite as difficult and unstable as any other philosophical theory; it may be claimed, however, that it has left certain distinctions clearer than they were before. In the case of intelligences as confused as ours, which cannot hold more than three points together in thought, which cannot think of *B* without forgetting *A*, and which cannot see the most obvious implications of a view unless made to do so by the grossest absurdities, this is quite a considerable achievement for thirty years of discussion and polemic.

Realistic theory has strengthened our insight in one most important respect: we are no longer tempted to confuse the experiences which we live through with the objects, physical, mental, or ideal, which are presented to us by their means. We are no longer able to profit by the ambiguities of language in order to pass from those peculiar modifications of our inner life which we call sensations and emotions, or those peculiar inner activities which we call judging and willing, to those wholly different entities whose nature it is merely to be there, to exemplify or to be an essence, to stand in certain relations to each other, but not to act or suffer. (An 'idea' as an inner process, as something which happens to us, has once and for all been distinguished from an 'idea' as the term which stands before our thought.) A judgement with its peculiar colour of belief, and its reaching out beyond the subject and his states, will never be confused with the colourless piece of

fact which is, in favourable circumstances, apprehended by its means. Whether we should be justified if we went farther and distinguished between a beauty which consists in the fulfilment of certain objective requirements, and the pleasure by which we are aware of such a fulfilment, or between a wholly objective goodness inherent in certain states of affairs, and a felt impulsion to produce such states, is a harder question, with regard to which it seems quite clear that agreement will never be reached. But the distinction between an experience, as something which is a real moment in our mental life, and an object which we can handle and look at, or apprehend in a less concrete way, but which we can never really live through, remains an ultimate one.

This does not prevent us from returning to idealistic explanations if we wish to; we are quite free to hold that the independence of objects is an independence of abstraction, that they have no being unless there are experiences in which they are presented; this also is an issue into whose insolubility we have almost an *a priori* insight. But, however we decide such difficult and unprofitable questions, it seems clear that the absolute *distinctness* of experiences and their objects must remain unaffected. Higher unities may be introduced, but the terms which are unified in them will not fuse into a featureless identity.

Realism in English-speaking countries has in general contented itself with exposing the fallacies of idealistic arguments, with showing that it is perfectly possible for our minds to gain a foothold in a world of things to which reflection is alien; it has then proceeded to deal with the world of objects, among which minds are included as an eccentric species, without troubling itself much further about epistemology. The theory of Twardowski, Meinong, and Husserl, which we propose to study in this chapter, holds that the relation between an experience and the object to which it points is not really the simple, straight-

forward thing which it appears to be, and that we can only understand how an experience can point beyond itself, if we suppose that there is in that experience a peculiar element which makes such a self-transcendent reference possible. This element was called the content (*Inhalt*) of an experience by Twardowski and Meinong, while Husserl, partly because this name was unsuitable and partly because he could not make use of names which other people had invented, called it the matter (*Materie*) of a mental act.¹ (It is only because we live through contents that we can refer to objects; these two sorts of things stand in a necessary relation to each other, which does not, however, prevent them from existing quite independently in totally different contexts, and having no vestige of mutual resemblance.)

II

In approaching this theory, it will be well to begin by turning to a well-known passage from Brentano's *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*, a passage which almost attained the position of a *Credo*, inasmuch as all the philosophers who made Brentano's remarkable work the starting-point of their investigations begin their treatises by repeating it or something very like it. Brentano had attempted to discover some characteristic which would distinguish mental states, or, as he called them, 'psychical phenomena', from all other types of phenomena. This, to quote his own words, he believed himself to have found in a property 'which the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and which we, although such expressions are not free from ambiguity, should describe as the relation to a content, or the direction to an object (by which we need not understand a reality), or an immanent objectivity. Every mental state possesses in itself something which serves as

¹ See *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. ii, part i, p. 415.

object, although not all possess their objects in the same way.¹ In the states of mind known as presentations (*Vorstellungen*) something is presented to us, in those states known as judgements we either accept or reject something that is presented, in the emotional states of mind we either desire or feel averse from objects and states of affairs. The ability to direct itself to something different from itself is, according to Brentano, altogether peculiar to mental phenomena; it is evident that no purely physical phenomenon could exhibit such a power.

The subject-matter of psychology becomes therefore the study of the various ways in which a state of mind can direct itself to an object, of the various fundamental types of 'intention': of these Brentano held that there could only be three. The most fundamental of them was the *Vorstellung*, an untranslatable word, for which 'idea' or 'presentation' may serve as inadequate equivalents. Whenever anything stands before consciousness, whenever we see a colour or hear a tone, construct an image in our fancy, or understand the meaning of a word, we are living through a *Vorstellung* in Brentano's sense. A judgement distinguishes itself from a *Vorstellung* in that, when we judge, we accept something as true or reject something as false; such judgements are present even in simple cases of perception and memory where we trust our experiences too implicitly to express such trust in words. Finally we have 'the phenomena of love and hate', in which something is accepted as good or rejected as bad; the pleasure and displeasure which objects awaken in us, the desires and hopes which spring from such pleasure and displeasure, and finally the voluntary decisions in which desires terminate: all these are regarded by Brentano as variants of one fundamental type of attitude, whose two opposed forms are loving and hating.²

¹ *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, II. i. 5.

² See *Psychologie*, II. vi. 3; II. viii. 1.

These three types of intention stand to each other in relations of one-sided dependence. A *Vorstellung* is the logical *prius* of all other types of experience, in that we can perfectly well conceive of a being who had ideas of objects but who never passed any judgements on them or had any emotional attitudes towards them; on the other hand, a person must have ideas of objects in order to judge or feel about them. The judgement is built on the *Vorstellung*, but is independent of the phenomena of love and hate; the *lumen siccum* of scientific thought proves that this is so. On the other hand, Brentano holds that the phenomena of love and hate presuppose both the judgement and the *Vorstellung*; joy, grief, hope, and fear are states of mind which stand in the most intimate and necessary relation not only to our ideas but also to our beliefs.¹

Brentano's threefold division of intentional experiences has not found general acceptance; the distinction between the idea and the judgement maintains itself in his successors with various modifications, but the phenomena of love and hate tend to be divided in the traditional way into experiences of feeling and experiences of desire or will. It is also far from clear that Brentano has really discovered the distinguishing characteristic of the mental when he points to the way in which states of mind are directed to objects; it is, in fact, doubtful whether any such single distinguishing characteristic exists. The characteristic in question seems to be much more strongly present in those states of mind, such as judgement or desire, which we class as activities, than in more passive states, in which our experiences have a certain quality or a certain 'colour', but in which hardly any reference to an object is discernible.

In Meinong's later theory, he holds that a *Vorstellung*, so far from actually setting an object before the mind, only provides the necessary basis for such an explicit apprehension. The *Vorstellung* in itself is a wholly passive experience,

¹ *Ibid.*, II. ix. 2.

to which we surrender ourselves without endeavouring to make anything out of it; such experiences are, in their pure form, infrequent in adult mental life, but of their occasional occurrence there can be no doubt.¹ If some one were to look at a coloured pattern in a wholly passive frame of mind, he would presumably live through or enjoy certain mental modifications or *Vorstellungen*, but he would only be aware of the pattern and its properties if he abandoned this passivity. The potential direction to an object which we find in the *Vorstellung* becomes a complete and explicit apprehension of something when the active experience of judgement or assumption supervenes, when the presence of an object is acknowledged or its nature is recognized.

It is therefore doubtful whether the direction to objects is as fundamental a property of mental states as Brentano supposed, but it seems to be evident that it is a property which no non-mental thing could possibly possess. Whether stones refer to objects or not, it is impossible to say, but, if they do, they undoubtedly have, or are, minds. This rules out as *a priori* unthinkable all those modern theories in which something analogous to a mental reference is attributed to entities which are nevertheless not held to have minds. The events of Professor Whitehead are held to enjoy 'uncognitive apprehensions' of other events, and to 'mirror' the modes of their predecessors and successors;² if Brentano is right, there is no good sense which can be given to such statements.

III

(It will be noted that Brentano makes no distinction between the content (*Inhalt*) of a mental state and its object (*Gegenstand*). Both words mean for him the 'something' which has intentional inexistence in the mental

¹ *U. A.*, pp. 227, 228.

² *Science and the Modern World*, p. 86.

state, to which the state is directed. Meinong's original use of the words *Inhalt* and *Gegenstand* is quite as indiscriminating. If I think of white or black, round or oval, these things are said by Meinong to be contents, and if I emphasize their relation to my thought, I may call them objects. They are in any case purely mental, and are each an integral part of an idea.¹

The notion that such entities as white or black, round or oval, could in some way find lodgement in a mind, gave rise to a manner of speaking in which they were described as immanent objects; we have seen Brentano using such language and Meinong adopted it without question in his earlier phases.² We may quote a typical passage from the *Logic* of Höfler, published in 1890, in whose production Meinong assisted:

(1) What we have called the 'content of the presentation and the judgement' lies entirely within the subject, like the presenting or the judging act itself. (2) The word 'Object' (*Gegenstand* or *Objekt*) is used in two senses: on the one hand it means the independently existing thing . . . to which our presentation or judgement directs itself, on the other hand it means the more or less accurate image of such a reality, which exists in our mind; this quasi-image, or rather sign, is identical with the content which we mentioned above. In order to distinguish it from the object which we take to be independent of our thinking we call the content of a presentation or judgement (or of a feeling or act of will) the 'immanent or intentional object' of these mental phenomena.³

Behind the immanent object lies the transcendent object, the real thing in itself; of this we can know nothing except that it is the cause, or part of the cause, of the presentation of the immanent object. When a relation such as causality is in some manner given to our thought, and one of its terms, the presentation of the immanent object, is also

¹ See *Relth. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 140.

² See *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 382; *Erfgl.*, p. 56.

³ Höfler, *Logik*, § 6, quoted from Twardowski, p. 4.

given, we are able to describe indirectly the other term of this relation, that is, the transcendent object or thing in itself.¹

Meinong's original doctrine was therefore entirely on orthodox representational lines; he started with a theory as to whose complete impossibility most schools of philosophy are in agreement, but which will maintain its hold on our minds till the end of time, because all its consistent alternatives are difficult and doubtful. The absurdity of locating the mountain-ranges of Asia, my neighbour's state of envy, my own experiences of yesterday, in my thoughts about such objects, or, on the other hand, of holding that I am not really thinking about these things, but about other, wholly private objects, will always seem slight in comparison with the extravagance and strangeness of a fully developed realism or idealism.

IV

Meinong acknowledges that he owes his recognition of the distinction between content and object to Twardowski's study on this topic.² This is unquestionably one of the most interesting treatises in the whole range of modern philosophy; it is clear, concentrated, and amazingly rich in ideas. It represents a transitional phase between the image-theory of knowledge exemplified in the passage quoted above and the fully developed content-theory of Meinong.

According to Twardowski both judgements and ideas direct themselves to objects which are taken to be independent of our thinking. He agrees with Mill that a person who uses the word 'sun' is thinking primarily of a mind-independent physical thing, and not of an idea or of any part of an idea which is passing through his mind.³

¹ *Relth. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 123.

² *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen*, 1894.

³ *Ibid.* § 3.

The true object of an idea or a judgement is not the mental image of that object, but the object itself. There is therefore in his thought no tendency to confine the mind to the narrow circle of its own creations, or to deny that we can think about realities. But he holds that in order to pass beyond ourselves in this way we have to build up within our minds an image or sign of the object to which we are going to refer;¹ we require some link (*Bindeglied*) which will make it possible for an idea to refer to one definite object and no other.² We therefore require three terms, an idea (*Vorstellung*) as a mental act, an object which is presented to us by means of this idea, and a content which exists *in* our idea, and *through* which, as intermediary, the reference to the object takes place.³

There are passages in the earlier parts of Twardowski's treatise in which the content presents itself altogether in the familiar guise of a mental image. He writes:

If we compare the idea as an act with the act of painting, the content with the picture, and the object with the subject, a landscape, for instance, depicted on the canvas, we shall have expressed approximately the relation between the idea as act, its content and its object. For the painter the picture is a means by which he depicts the landscape; he wishes to represent, paint, a real or imaginary landscape, and he does this inasmuch as he paints a picture. He paints a landscape, inasmuch as he prepares, paints, a picture of this landscape. The landscape is the 'primary' object of his painting activity, the picture the 'secondary' object. The case of an idea is similar. The thinking subject has an idea of some object, e.g. a horse. In having this idea, he sets a mental content before his mind. The content is an image of the horse in much the same way as the picture is an image of the landscape. If the thinker has an idea of an object, he has at the same time an idea of a content which refers itself to that object. The object of the idea as an act is its primary object; the content through which we have an idea of the object is the secondary object of the idea as act.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

If we take this passage at its surface-value, it expresses a theory of knowledge which it is by no means easy to accept. Orthodox representational theories make the object of an idea something wholly immanent in that idea; if a transcendent real object is introduced at all, this is only possible if the theorist forgets that he can neither think nor speak about such a thing. But on Twardowski's theory we genuinely think about transcendent real objects, only we think of them by means of other immanent objects. There ought therefore in some way to be *two* objects before our minds when we think of a horse, the mental picture and the real horse. It is not easy to maintain that we can observe such a duality. No doubt there is a stream of more or less inaccurate imagery, verbal and visual, which accompanies any idea, but it is clear that we are not thinking about this, and that, if we require to think by means of such irrelevant material, it is possibly because of some mental weakness on our part. But we shall find that Twardowski is very far from holding the rather naïve theory which his more metaphorical statements suggest.

(Twardowski gives four important reasons for distinguishing the content of an idea from its object, of which the first two recur in the exposition of Meinong.) The first is that the content of an idea necessarily exists as an integral part of that idea, whereas the object need not exist at all. We can only think of a golden mountain by having an idea with a certain content; the content exists in the idea, whereas the object has no existence in the idea or anywhere else.¹

Twardowski discusses with great subtlety Bolzano's doctrine that ideas in whose content incompatible attributes are united have no objects. Bolzano had held that, when I think of a round square, I am having an idea to which no object corresponds.² If this view is correct it would follow that the *content* of my idea had contradictory

¹ Twardowski, *Zur Lehre*, &c., p. 30. ² *Wissenschaftslehre*, vol. i, p. 304.

attributes, since there is nothing else to have them; since, however, something with contradictory attributes cannot exist, the content of my idea is also non-existent, and I am therefore not really thinking of anything, which is absurd. Twardowski deduces from this the consequence, that it is not the content of my idea which is round and square, since this content undoubtedly exists, and is therefore free from contradiction. It is only the *object* which exhibits a contradiction, for which reason it is excluded from the realm of existence. Our idea of a round square has therefore an object, as much as any other idea; this object is distinct from the content, since the latter exists, whereas the former, by virtue of its possession of incompatible properties, is incapable of existence.¹ We may note in passing the important point that an object's non-existence does not make it in the least impossible for it to be an object of thought. Many of Meinong's most characteristic doctrines spring from this consideration.

The second reason given by Twardowski for distinguishing the content of an idea from its object lies in the fact that the content is necessarily mental, whereas the object may possess properties which no mental existent can possibly have. A golden mountain is an extended object, it is made of gold, it is greater or smaller than other mountains. None of these properties can be attributed to our ideas, or to any component of those ideas.² This is probably the most important and permanently valuable of the reasons which he gives; no one who has a clear idea of what a mind is, that it is made up of experiences, which cannot be divided into anything but experiences, will ever entertain the grotesque notion that a golden mountain can find a habitation in it.

The two remaining reasons adduced by Twardowski are of less importance, because they involve the difficult problems of an indirect or descriptive reference to objects.

¹ *Zur Lehre*, &c., p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

The same object can be referred to in many ways; we can think of the same city as the birthplace of Mozart or as the city which stands on the site of ancient Juvavum; the difference between the two ideas, which we thus form of one and the same object, must lie in the content of those ideas.¹ The weakness of this argument lies in the fact that it seems fairly clear that there is some difference even in the *objects* of the two ideas; if they concern the same city, they certainly also introduce us to other objects and relations which would suffice to distinguish them. For Mozart and ancient Juvavum are as much objects as the modern city of Salzburg.

The fourth reason given by Twardowski is that a single idea may have many objects; the idea of a triangle cannot be held to have more than one content, but it has as its objects all actual and possible triangles.² Here again, as Twardowski himself admits, the argument is not of great worth. He comes to the conclusion, which we shall find fully developed in Meinong, that 'a triangle' *in abstracto* is as much a genuine object of thought as any particular triangle, though it is of course incapable of existence.³

V

When we consider Twardowski's further statements about the content of an idea, it becomes less and less like any entity which is familiar to popular thought. An idea divides itself into two elements, an act and a content, and these form together a single mental reality; at the same time, if we consider these elements separately, we shall see that the act is always something real, whereas the content is never real.⁴ It might seem very curious that Twardowski denies the reality of the content, after having affirmed its existence with great vehemence, but we must

¹ *Zur Lehre, &c.*, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³ Meinong also makes use of these last two arguments in a footnote. See *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 384.

⁴ *Zur Lehre, &c.*, p. 31.

understand that both he and Meinong use the word 'reality' in a peculiar sense. The real is that which is capable of concrete existence; a tree, a note, a state of grief, a movement, are given by Twardowski as instances of real objects. On the other hand we have objects such as lack, absence, possibility, which, in the language of Twardowski, exist but are not real, in the language of Meinong subsist but cannot exist.¹ The content of an idea is genuinely 'there', it is an element which can be distinguished in the idea, but it has not the same crass reality as the idea or its object. (In this doctrine Twardowski's theory differs from Meinong's, for Meinong holds that the act-element and the content-element in an idea exist in precisely the same way.²)

When we come to Twardowski's account of the relation between the content and the object of an act, the last vestiges of the image-theory disappear. That an idea contains within itself an image of the object, to which it has some sort of photographic resemblance, is rejected as the fancy of a primitive psychology.³ This conclusion is implied in what has been already said: the content of the idea of a golden mountain was, as we saw, something mental, and, being mental, it could not have any size or be made of any sort of physical material. In these circumstances it is quite clear that there can be no question of photographic resemblance between content and object. Similarly in the case of the idea of the round square, the object is round and square, and is incapable of existence because it is infected with contradiction; the content, on the other hand, is neither round nor square, since it exists, and nothing can exist which involves a contradiction. Here again the possibility of a resemblance is excluded.

It might be imagined that the content-theory of Twardowski is a modern version of the Aristotelian theory of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36; *Ü. A.*, p. 73.

² *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, pp. 382, 384.

³ *Zur Lehre, &c.*, p. 67.

knowledge, according to which the knowing mind receives in itself the pure form, but not the matter of the objects which it knows. Thus it might be held that when I think of an apple, I do so by receiving into my mind its constitutive properties, a certain shape, colour, size, and so on, bound together in a certain characteristic way. The content of my idea would then be made up of those properties (*Merkmale*) by means of which I refer to the physical thing, which, as a concrete physical existent, can of course not enter into my mind. Such a conception of content would recommend itself to many philosophers, and Twardowski points to Sigwart and others who have adopted it.¹ But it requires very little thought to perceive that such a view is open to precisely the same objections as the image-theory which was rejected above. The size, shape, and colour of an apple are quite as much *objects* of our idea as the apple itself; the apple is the whole object of our idea, the properties mentioned are parts of that object.² That, when we think of an apple, they are specially emphasized in comparison with less known properties, cannot take them out of the realm of objects into the realm of ideas. Moreover, it is as impossible for such properties as extension, shape, and colour to characterize a mind, or any part of a mind, as it is for the concrete apple to be absorbed into an idea.

Twardowski considers therefore that no part of an idea is made up of any properties of an object, but only of *ideas* of those properties; an idea cannot resolve itself into anything that is not itself mental. He remarks with regard to the idea of gold:

It is not the content of the idea of gold, but gold itself, i.e. the object of the idea, to which the determinations heavy, yellow, shining, metallic, &c., belong. These determinations are given by means of the idea of gold, but the sum of these determinations does not constitute the content of the idea of gold. Rather must we say

¹ *Zur Lehre, &c.*, p. 41.

² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

that the latter is made up out of just as many (or more) parts as the determinations which are distinguished in the gold; these determinations are presented by means of the various parts of the idea, i.e. also by means of ideas. (The content of the idea of gold is therefore not made up out of the sum of its properties, but out of the sum of the ideas of its properties.)¹

The whole conception of a mental picture therefore falls away: the content of the idea of gold is not yellow or shining, but we can distinguish in it other ideas which present these properties. In the case of an idea of a simple object, or of some object which we apprehend as simple, the relation between content and object is primary, original, and irreducible, and it is not a relation of resemblance.² The content of the idea of a certain shade of red is nothing but that content which, in conjunction with a certain act, constitutes the idea of that shade of red. Whenever we have an idea with that content, that shade of red will be given to us as *object*; nothing more can be said.

The only case in which there is any shadow of resemblance between content and object is where the object is thought of as complex and as built up out of many constituent objects. In this case there will be a resemblance between content and object inasmuch as they will exhibit a similar structure;³ the elements of the content will be totally unlike the elements given in the object, but to each element in the content an element in the object will correspond, and each set of elements will enter into its own systematic unity. Thus if I have an idea of an apple, the content of my idea will be composed of contents which are correlated with the various moments distinguished in the apple; these partial contents will be fused in the unity of the whole content, just as the moments of the apple are fused in the unity of the object. This structural resemblance will therefore be like the purely structural resemblance which is believed to hold between our sense-data

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

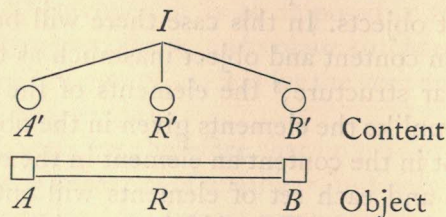
² *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 81.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 81.

and their physical causes; common sense is so little inclined to regard such similarities as genuine resemblances that it would probably say that content and object, like sense-datum and physical stimulus, were in all cases 'wholly dissimilar'.

We may notice in passing one curious notion of Twardowski's. (He thinks that the content of an idea will exhibit a higher order of complexity than the object, since there will be *material* elements of the content which correspond to *formal* or structural components of the object.) In my idea of the apple are not only ideas of its colour, shape, &c., but also of the peculiar unity which these aspects constitute. The structure of the elements of the content cannot present this structural unity of the object *because a relation between contents is not itself a content*.¹ The mental synthesis of my ideas, not being an idea, cannot set before me the non-mental synthesis of the moments of the object.

A diagram may make this complicated situation a little clearer. *I* is an idea of an object *O*, which is made up out of *A* and *B* bound together in a characteristic manner *R*. The content of



I, has as parts *A'*, *R'*, and *B'* which present *A*, *R*, and *B* respectively. The manner, however, in which *A'*, *R'*, and *B'* are bound together, is not a material constituent of the content, but a purely formal one, and does not therefore present anything. This curious doctrine leads inevitably to the most hopeless difficulties; to have an idea of *O*, it is surely not enough to have ideas merely of *A*, *R*, and *B*

¹ *Zur Lehre*, &c., p. 93.

as three separate entities, one must also have an idea of them as bound together in the unity of the object. On Twardowski's theory, it is hard to see how we ever cognize more than a set of independent moments, which cannot possibly constitute a unitary object. We shall see that Meinong suffers from the same atomistic prepossessions; he devotes a whole chapter in *Über Annahmen* to overcoming, by heroic means, the difficulties involved in our apprehension of complex objects.¹

VI

We have sketched Twardowski's theory to a sufficient extent to be able to understand Meinong's brief and rather puzzling introduction of the notion of content in his treatise entitled *Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung*.² In reality, Twardowski merits a much more thorough study, but, as the work of Meinong has carried investigations much further and rectified many of Twardowski's mistakes, it will be better to leave aside a detailed criticism of his views. We may sum up Twardowski's doctrine in the following way: ideas are directed to objects which lie beyond those ideas, but we cannot understand such self-transcendence unless we discover, in the idea itself, an element which corresponds to the object and to each of its presented nuances. This element is mental, its correspondence with the object is not one of resemblance in its individual constituents, but involves, in the case of complex ideas, a resemblance of structure. Lest it should be imagined that a content is something entirely hypothetical, we may note that Twardowski holds that it can become the object of an introspective idea which is directed to the idea of which it is the content.³ But whether it is easy to distinguish the content from the act-component of the

¹ *Ü. A.*, ch. viii.

³ *Zur Lehre*, &c., p. 63.

² 1899. *Gs. Abh.* II, p. 377 et seq.

idea, or whether we merely have an idea of an idea as a whole, in which we *believe* the content to be an element, is far from clear. We shall find similar obscurities in Meinong's account of our knowledge of contents.

Like Twardowski, Meinong bases his distinction between the content and the object of an idea in the first place on the fact that we are able to think of objects which do not exist. Of these non-existent objects he distinguishes three types: we have such objects as golden mountains, whose non-existence is merely a matter of brute empirical fact; then we have such objects as round squares, which cannot exist because they involve a contradiction; finally we have such entities as the equality between three and three, or the diversity between red and green—even in ordinary language we recognize that such things may subsist (*bestehen*), but not exist 'like a house or a tree'.¹ According to Meinong existence and subsistence are two forms of being whose distinctness is indescribable but immediately evident:² we shall discuss this doctrine later, but may observe here that it is in accord with ordinary notions. Equality and diversity have undoubtedly some sort of being, but they do not fulfil the same function in the universe as the existents which are its elements. Hence it is not unreasonable to hold that they are, in a sense quite different from the round square, incapable of existence.

We are able to think of objects which do not exist, and this proves that these objects, at least, are not literally contained in the ideas which refer to them. If they were, they would necessarily exist, as much as the idea of which they formed a part. If the round square or the relation of diversity is really the content of my idea of either of these objects, then it must share in the existence of the complex which it helps to constitute. Hence a suitable mental state can give existence to an absurdity or to

¹ *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 382.

² *Ü. A.*, p. 73.

something purely ideal; this is nonsense, and we must draw the conclusion that these objects are not parts of the corresponding ideas.

Once this has been established in the case of ideas of non-existent objects, Meinong's conclusion would naturally extend itself to ideas of objects which really exist. Whatever be the correct analysis of the experience which takes place when we are said to be thinking about something, it is clear that it is in every case qualitatively the same, whether the object to which it is directed actually exists or not. We should gain no deeper insight into a certain idea, e.g. that of a material object, if we knew that there were material objects, or that there were no such objects. The attitudes which we have to real entities need not differ in any respect from those which we have to wholly fanciful creations. Even the intuitive element, which might seem to be peculiar to ideas of real objects, can be present in its full vividness in hallucinations. To assume that the real object *X* is a constituent of the idea *X*, although an idea qualitatively indistinguishable from *X* could exist even if *X* had no existence whatever, is an astonishingly futile piece of thinking. It seems therefore likely, if we adopt the point of view of this argument, that an object is not a part of the idea which presents it.

Similar arguments apply to those cases in which we have ideas about objects which belong to the past or the future. The difficulty is not, on Meinong's view, that such objects are not yet in existence, or have lost the existence which they once enjoyed, and are therefore unable to be a part of something that exists at the present moment. If this were the argument, it would only be a special case of the previous one. But Meinong holds that there is a purified concept of existence in which all reference to the position of a judging observer, and hence all distinctions of past, present, and future, fall away; from this point of view last year's melted snows, or the snows

that will fall next year have a timeless existence (or persistence, to use Meinong's technical term), at a certain position in the time-series, which is for them present.¹ But, even if this is so, we cannot hold that last year's melted snow, which stands at one point in the time-series, is also a part of my idea which stands at another point in the time-series. If such multiple ingression of an object into the history of the universe were possible, there would be no sense in locating an object, of which I am thinking now, at some date before the date of my idea: it would be as much present as my idea, and this is plainly not the case.

The next reason for holding that objects of ideas are not parts of them lies in the fact that we can have ideas of physical objects and their properties, while no one would contend that extended and ponderous objects, and properties which presuppose such objects, can be literally parts of something which consists of acts and experiences.² If we had ideas of mental states, which Meinong, like Berkeley, was afterwards led to deny, it might be conceivable that they could be a part of the ideas which were directed to them, provided they occurred at the same time as those ideas. In the case of physical objects, such a contention would be nonsense. The mountain-ranges of Asia cannot be an element in any experience: vast masses of matter cannot possibly be 'lived through'. They cannot enter into the stream of private, inalienable happenings which constitutes a mind. The same argument might have been applied to purely ideal objects such as the diversity and equality which were mentioned above; we may think of such objects as often as we like, and such thought may alter the course or the 'colour' of our experiences, but we cannot 'live through' them in the same way that we 'live through' a judgement, a decision, or a state of grief.

¹ See *Ü. A.*, p. 77.

² *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 384.

Meinong considers the attempt to get rid of the difficulties involved in thinking of what is non-existent by saying that golden mountains and round squares exist 'in my thought'. He thinks it clear that this is a subterfuge. The predicate 'existence' has a totally different meaning when it is predicated of things *simpliciter*, and when it forms a part of the expression 'existence in thought'. For we do not mean to affirm that a golden mountain really exists, still less do we wish to affirm the even stranger proposition that a mountain, which is an extended object, is a part of my thought. It is clear that the misleading sentence 'A golden mountain exists in thought' is really equivalent to the proposition: 'There exists a thought about a golden mountain.'

Meinong wishes us to distinguish clearly between the primary sense of existence, and all those cases in which we say that there is (*es gibt*) such and such an entity, without being willing to say that it exists. Like Aristotle he believes in the fundamental ambiguity of the word 'being'. In the next chapter we shall deal with the widest sense of the words *es gibt*; here we may consider a rather limited sense. If I say 'There are many unpleasant characters in this novel', I may merely mean that there exist in myself and others certain mental processes in which those characters are contemplated with pain, not that such characters have existence in the ordinary sense. If we must attribute some sort of being to them we may say that they have pseudo-existence; this means that there exists, in the primary sense, a state of mind in which they are presented.¹ The gulf between existence and pseudo-existence becomes very clear when we consider that any sort of entity may have pseudo-existence: not only the round square, but also purely ideal entities such as relations, numbers, or facts, may be the objects of appropriate states of mind.² Whether Meinong uses the word 'pseudo-existence' merely as a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 383; *Erfgl.*, p. 56.

² *Ibid.*, p. 62; *Mög.*, p. 40.

verbal equivalent for 'being present to thought', or whether he means to indicate by it a genuine variety of being, is not entirely clear. Quite possibly the latter is his intention, for even the pseudo-existent comes into relation with things that genuinely exist, and may, by such indirect participation in the actual world, acquire some *simulacrum* of being.

VII

We have given a number of cases in which it is impossible that the object of an idea should be a part of it. On this fact Meinong bases his doctrine of contents; if the object is not a part of an idea, there must be *something* in that idea which gives it direction to a given object. Meinong writes:

Whether I have an idea of a church-steeple or a mountain-peak, a feeling or a desire, a relation of diversity or causality or any other thing whatsoever, I am in every case having an idea. In spite, therefore, of the unlimited variety of their objects, all these mental processes manifest a common feature, which makes them ideas, and this is the act of having an idea. On the other hand ideas, in so far as they are ideas of distinct objects, cannot be altogether alike; however we may conceive the relation of the idea to its object, diversity of object must in some way go back to diversity of idea. That element, therefore, in which ideas of distinct objects differ, in spite of their agreement in the act, may be properly called the content of the idea. This exists, is therefore real and present, and is of course mental, even when the object presented by its aid does not exist, is not present, and is not mental.¹

The argument as it is here stated has an unconvincing, *a priori* sound, but it rests on a very important consideration. The object has been shown in many cases to lie outside and to be indifferent to the idea which is directed to it. It might now occur to us to suppose that the idea is purely a mental act, in which nothing corresponding to the object is discernible, and that this act stands in some

¹ *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 384.

relation to its object, a relation which may be necessary but which nevertheless falls outside of the act. Theories of this crude type have often been held by realist philosophers. But they ignore one important and extraordinary fact, that our introspection reveals to us not only that we have ideas but also *that they are ideas of such and such objects*.¹

If I contemplate my ideas, I do not discover in my mind a set of naked acts, qualitatively indistinguishable from each other. The notion that a mind must be made up of such entities has caused many philosophers to cast doubt on the existence of mental acts, or the possibility of introspection. But what I do perceive are ideas of church-towers or mountains or equality. In fact, to isolate the act-element in any experience always requires a certain amount of abstraction: (in the case of strong emotions or powerful desires such an abstraction comes easily and naturally, whereas it is almost impossible to isolate the act-element in the 'seeing' of a church-tower.²) The ordinary man is quite sure that he is going through the whole experience denoted by these words, but he would find it hard to fix his attention on the mere 'seeing'.

We do not look into our minds and perceive a certain naked idea, then look outwards and see a certain object, and then finally perceive that they are related in a certain way, such that the one is the idea of the other. If this were our procedure we might quite conceivably connect an idea with the wrong object. If we were 'living through' two ideas *A* and *B* of two objects *A'* and *B'*, there would on the theory be nothing in the ideas as pure acts to distinguish them from each other; hence if we did not carefully observe their relation to the objects *A'* and *B'*, we might easily imagine that *A* was the idea of *B'* and *B* of *A'*. That such errors in connecting ideas with objects not only do

¹ See *ibid.*, p. 404; *Erfgl.*, p. 57.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61; *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 404.

not occur, but are *a priori* unthinkable, proves that the act-element in an idea is only an abstract moment, and that every idea, as a concrete experience, *bears on its face a reference to a certain object*, which reference is immediately accessible to introspection. We do not, in ordinary introspection, see ideas *and* objects, which we then proceed to relate; we simply see ideas *of* objects, beside which we may set the object if we wish. To consider an analogous case, it would be an absurd account of our perception of a red object to say that we saw the object as a naked thing together with the characteristic red, and perceived also that the latter inhered in the former; a red thing is a concrete whole, in which no naked substrate can be discerned. It is just as absurd to attempt to see an idea *per se* without its reference to an object, as to see a red thing without its redness.

It is also very difficult to understand how, if the mind consisted merely of acts, we could have any particular object before our minds. The idea of the Himalayas and the idea of jealousy would be nothing but transparent intentions; their objects would lie outside of them, and nothing in our experience would tell us to what they were directed. We should have as little conception of the objects of our ideas as we have of the cerebral changes that accompany them. It is impossible to see how any philosophy which builds the mind out of mere acts can avoid this consequence. But we find that even when *A* and *B* are objects which cannot by their nature be 'lived through', the reference to *A* is nevertheless a different experience from the reference to *B*; *es ist uns anders zu Mute*, as Meinong says:¹ we can only translate this by saying that 'it feels different'. The reference to one definite object and no other is therefore one of the most intimate properties of an idea; if it is not the whole nature of the idea, it is certainly involved in that nature. The surprising fact that,

¹ *Erfgl.*, p. 59.

in the very bosom of an idea, we can find a clear reference to something which is not in any way a part of that idea, but is entirely beyond and indifferent to it, demands some elucidation, and this Meinong provides when he holds that an idea must have a content as well as an object.

Let us dwell for the moment on the other element in an idea which Meinong has called the 'act'. It would be natural to apply the word 'act' to a whole experience, the act of judging that there is snow, for instance, or of desiring the end of a journey. (Meinong, however, means by the 'act' in an experience that element which exhibits a variability independent of the reference to a given object.) So defined, the 'act' involved in an idea is the function of presenting which is common to all ideas, the 'act' involved in a judgement is the function of judging which is present in all judgements, the 'act' involved in a desire is a function present in all desires. Meinong conceives of an 'act' as a qualitative moment in a complete experience, the way in which the mind directs itself to an object; it is not itself a complete experience. (It would perhaps have been better if, like Husserl, he had spoken of an 'act-quality' instead of an 'act';¹ we shall, to avoid confusion, speak of his 'act' as the *act-element* in a mental state.)

The act-element may of course vary while the content remains unaltered. Meinong gives as an instance of this the way in which the hearing of a tone passes over into an imaginative reproduction: the 'act' alters, the experience changes in quality, but the same object is presented.² This is even clearer if we consider our attitudes to those objects which are usually called propositions; we may believe them, or we may merely assume them, or we may surmise their truth with varying degrees of certainty. All such variations in the quality of our experiences have nothing to do with the object which is in every case set before the

¹ See *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. ii, part i, p. 413.

² *Em. Präs.*, p. 57.

mind.¹ The act-element is therefore that moment in our experience which varies in a wholly subjective way, and which does not by itself present anything.

It will be seen that Meinong's 'act' has nothing to do with activity as opposed to passivity; Meinong believes that ideas and feelings are passive experiences, as opposed to judgements, assumptions, and desires which involve an active 'doing' on the part of the subject, but this does not prevent him from speaking of the act-element in the former as much as in the latter.²

VIII

We now come up against two difficult questions. Are contents things which are genuinely given to us in inner experience, or are they merely hypothetical entities, like the microscopic objects postulated by physical science as the causes of certain appearances? Can we 'live through' contents in full intuitive consciousness of the fact that they are there, or do we merely infer their existence as the result of arguments like the ones which we have given above? The second question we must ask is whether the conception of a content, or the existence of a content, if that can be proved, really makes the self-transcendence of the mental more intelligible.

As regards the first question, if we were to identify contents with the fragmentary sense-data and images which illustrate our referential experiences, their existence and accessibility to introspection would be beyond all doubt. Professor Stout, in his *Fundamental Points in the Theory of Knowledge*, interprets *Inhalt* in this way. He writes:

Sensuous experiences fulfil a peculiar function in our mental life which requires to be explicitly recognized in our terminology. They constitute a link between mental acts and objects which are not themselves present contents of immediate experience. Thus sense

¹ *Em. Präs.*, p. 62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

impressions and images are means by which we perceive or imagine material things and their qualities, states and processes. A special term is required to designate contents of immediate experience which thus fulfil, or are capable of fulfilling, the function of presenting or introducing objects which are not themselves contents of immediate experience. The term selected for this purpose by the group of writers I am dealing with (Meinong, Husserl, &c.) is '*Inhalt*'.¹

There can be no doubt that the conception to which Professor Stout refers is a very important one, and it is clear that the entities of which he speaks are open to our observation. Unfortunately, however, they do not correspond to Meinong's 'contents'. For sense-data and images are objects quite as much as the remoter objects which they introduce; they are not the sort of thing a person could 'live through'.² In pointing to them we only shift the problem of the reference to objects a stage farther back; our objects are simpler, and their presentation involves intuition: that is all. They still have extension and shape, in common with physical objects, as well as other properties, such as blueness, warmth, heaviness, which no state of mind can possibly have.³

In *Über Annahmen* Meinong discusses the whole question of what he calls the *adequateness* of states of mind. An idea is adequate to a given entity when it presents that entity as it really is. Meinong asks whether such adequateness involves any resemblance between idea and object, and comes to the conclusion that this is quite impossible in many cases. To have an idea of a square table, I do not require to have an idea which is square in any part, but merely an idea of a square thing. The content of my idea, being mental, can be neither round, nor oval, nor square.⁴ This excludes the notion that contents are illustrative sense-data and images, since these can undoubtedly be

¹ *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p. 355.

² For the whole position of sense-data see *Stellung*, § 2.

³ *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 384.

⁴ *Ü. A.*, p. 263.

round, oval, or square. It is possible that Meinong has not dealt sufficiently with the part played by sense-data and images in referential thought; even his conception of the *Hilfsgegenstand*, or auxiliary object, does not tally with that of Professor Stout.¹ But the whole question is not of fundamental importance; if a philosopher can explain how we can see coloured patches or feel square surfaces, there is no great difficulty in explaining how we can think of the Taj Mahal or the Milky Way. We must therefore look for our contents in some other direction.

IX

Meinong admits that the contents of our ideas are not easy to discern. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that we have no suitable words to describe them by. Language serves a double function: it *expresses* our states of mind and it *means* or refers to the objects of those states of mind.² A man who utters the words 'red' or 'blue' gives expression to a peculiar inner experience through which he is living, but he is not meaning or referring to this experience. He is talking about certain properties which can only be manifested in extended objects. If he wishes to compare red and blue, he can only do so by experiencing the transition from one content to another, but he will not be thinking about this transition, but about the difference between red and blue. (The fact that, when we are living through contents, our attention is usually not directed to them at all, has as a consequence our total lack of words to describe their qualitative nuances.) We have accustomed ourselves to carry their peculiarities over into the object, so that, if we are to refer to them at all, we must speak of 'the content of the idea of red' or 'the content of the idea of blue'.³ As a result of this absorption in objects, we have

¹ See *Mög.*, p. 196.

² *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 385; *Ü. A.*, p. 24 et seq.

³ *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 385; *Erfgl.*, p. 59.

to describe our experiences in a roundabout way by means of their objects, and the most indubitable data of our inner life assume the appearance of hypothetical entities.

We must admit that Meinong is right, and that language fails us almost entirely when we attempt to describe the quality of inner experiences. The Lange-James theory of emotion, in which a unitary state of mind is resolved into a set of sense-data, and other similar theories, are a consequence of this difficulty. They all ignore the important fact that, at the moment when our heart is beating hard or our hair is rising, our experience is something *purely qualitative* in which localized sense-data have melted away; these can only present themselves when the flood of emotion has subsided, and we can then say, not that they were present previously, but that *if* attention to objects were compatible with strong feeling, our experiences *would* have presented us with certain sense-data which they did not, in fact, present. If our vocabulary for qualities of mind were as precise as our vocabulary for colours, we should not be exposed to the fallacy. We may note here how, in the case of smells, where our terminology is inadequate, we also speak of 'the smell of sweet-peas' or 'the smell of tar', describing them by means of their relation to other objects instead of treating them as objects in their own right.

Meinong maintains, as we saw, that our inner perception revealed to us not only the act-element in our mental states but also their objects. I perceive that I am hearing a note, or that I am judging that it is four o'clock. It is very hard to see why we should perceive the object and not the content. Meinong admits that, owing to the difficulties of attending to our mental state, contents retreat behind the objects which they present; we perceive that we are thinking of such and such an object, but the content is obscured by the pseudo-existent object. It is much easier to hold before our mind a red square, or a green

circle, than to maintain unchanged before the introspective judgement the elusive modification of our inner life by which we are aware of these objects. (An object which is used in introspection as a substitute for the corresponding content is called by Meinong a *pseudo-object*¹ because we are not treating it as an object in its own right, but as a mere means towards the apprehension of something else.) The relation between content and object shows a curious reciprocity; objects cannot enter into the mind but are made accessible to thought by means of contents; contents, though they are in the mind, are difficult to apprehend directly, and so are generally grasped by means of objects.

Nevertheless, if the theory is not to be a mere construction, there must be some occasions on which contents are directly observable, even if they are elusive. (Can we find anything in our inner life which corresponds to Meinong's contents? It seems to be quite clear that we can. If I compare the experiences of looking at a red square and a green circle, there can be no doubt that these experiences differ in a *wholly indescribable qualitative way*. It 'feels different' to be considering the object given in each case; the 'colour' of the experience is different.) This 'feeling' is not an emotional feeling, whose connexion with the objects presented would be rather fortuitous. We seem to see something necessary in the way in which we are affected by the smooth roundness of a circle and by the straight lines and pointed corners of the square. The green similarly 'feels' different from the red, and by this we do not mean that the one is restful while the other is stimulating, but something far more elementary, which such qualities presuppose. It is not that our experiences are red or green, smooth or with edges and corners, round or straight, but such language would be a good way of indicating the intimacy and necessity of the relation between them and their objects.

¹ *Erfgl.*, p. 57.

It seems to be a self-evident proposition that, if any one had that curious experience which is involved in looking at a red square, he would, if he chose to refer his experience to any object, necessarily be aware of a red square and nothing else.

Visual experiences are, however, rather unfavourable to the presentation of contents; we can observe them much more readily in such experiences as auditory sensations, or sensations of movement, or pains. If we 'live through' an auditory sensation or a sensation of movement, we need not hear a sound or perceive a movement. It is easy *not* to pass beyond the experience as a peculiar change in our inner life. The contents of our experience may then be revealed to our introspection as purely mental qualities. It is a sheer fallacy to suppose that there are full-blown sense-objects given in such experiences, to which we happen not to attend.¹ It would be like thinking that we could see equally well with all parts of our retina because we can turn our fovea in the direction of any object we wish to observe. It is only when, instead of merely living through the passive sensuous experiences in question, we pass to an active apprehension of something outside ourselves, that the qualitative peculiarities of the auditory sensation will present to us a tone of a certain pitch, loudness, and timbre, the sensation of movement will present an interesting phenomenon located in some part of the body. It is because certain experiences, e.g. headaches, are not generally used to apprehend objects, that we are in doubt whether to place them among objects or experiences. The truth is that there are *two* distinct headaches, an unextended, unpleasant headache through which we can live, and a headache which consists in the intermittent pervasion of certain parts of our head by a certain peculiar quality; this second headache is as much an object as a flash of lightning.

¹ See *Ü. A.*, p. 236.

It seems then to be possible, if we resolutely banish any tendency to think of a non-mental object, even a sense-object (which psychologists examine under the absurd impression that they are introspecting), to discover in any experience a set of simple subjective phases which underlie all ideas and judgements. To every nuance of quality, every configuration, every relation in the outer world, correspond indefinable variations of our state of mind. In some spheres, such as the visual, where the trend towards the object is dominant, they are not easy to seize; in others, such as the sphere of organic sensations, they offer themselves readily to our inspection. There seems little doubt that, if no such mental variations existed, none of the higher intellectual references would be possible.¹

x

That contents are in some cases perfectly accessible to observation, and that their relation to objects is intelligible, can be shown by considering a few other instances given by Meinong. We choose them from fields that are widely removed from that of simple sensation. We may first consider the property of being a fact, which distinguishes all facts from all fictions. That there is an integer between 3 and 5 is a fact, that there is one between 3 and 4 is not a fact, and this is so whether these circumstances are conceived by any one or not. We can consider such circumstances without in any way deciding whether they are facts or not; we can also, in certain experiences, see that the first is a fact and the second not. By what moment in our experience is this purely objective element, which we may call 'factuality' (to translate Meinong's *Tatsächlichkeit*),

¹ It is interesting to inquire whether the distinction between the content and the object of an idea corresponds to the distinction between the objective and the formal essence of an entity which we find in Descartes and Spinoza. Spinoza, in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, § 35, identifies *essentia objectiva* with the *modus quo sentimus essentiam formalem*; the content would certainly be described as the mode in which we 'felt' the object.

apprehended? Meinong points to a quality which he calls evidence (*Evidenz*). A judgement unaccompanied by this inward evidence may as easily get hold of something which is not a fact as a fact, whereas a judgement that has evidence is the adequate mode of apprehending that quality in facts which makes them facts.¹

It cannot be doubted that in this case Meinong has succeeded in pointing to two things, one mental and one non-mental, between which we can nevertheless see a necessary connexion. The evidence which accompanies certain judgements, e.g. the judgements passed on our own contemporary mental states, or on certain ideal objects, such as numbers, is clearly a property of experiences, not of their objects. To describe this property is very difficult; one may regard it, rather unsatisfactorily, as a sort of compulsion which certain circumstances exercise upon our judgements, or we may say that something *leuchtet uns ein*, 'bursts on us with a flood of light'. In whatever the essence of evidence may lie, it is clearly something which we live through, and which is ultimately the only testimony by which a fact can show us that it is a fact. It is the factual hardness of the circumstances which we are considering, which appears in our experience as the penetrative power of evidence.

Our second example is chosen from our consciousness of the experiences of other minds, or of our own past states of mind. According to Meinong this can only take place in so far as we live through imaginary experiences, which resemble the experiences we are thinking of.² I can only present to my thought some belief which I held or which other people hold, by assuming for the time being the proposition believed; I can only think of feelings and desires of e.g. characters in a novel, by having similar feelings in which that peculiar element which we call

¹ *Ü. A.*, p. 88.

² *Erzgl.*, p. 76; *Mög.*, p. 252; *Em. Präs.*, p. 28. See below, Ch. VIII, v.

seriousness, is lacking. I have to 'put myself in the place' of the subject whose states I wish to apprehend; such a putting myself in his place need not involve real belief or serious feeling. It is very probable that this is the right theory of our awareness of foreign mental states; how we could have them before our minds without in any way living through them, or anything like them, is quite unintelligible. Here I can clearly distinguish the content, an imaginary experience of my own, to which I do not ordinarily attend, but which I can observe if I wish to, and the object, a serious experience of some other mind, or of my own mind in the past. It is true that Meinong is unwilling to regard the state which functions as a content in this case as a genuine content, because the *whole* experience, inclusive of the act, is used in presentation, and not merely a portion of it. From this point of view he prefers to speak of it as a *quasi-content*.¹ But the example shows that we can sometimes definitely observe a subjective phase which helps to present an object different from itself.

We may give a third rather dubious example from the world of values. There are certain experiences of approbation or disapprobation in which an object is given to us as beautiful or ugly. That this beauty or ugliness is an *object* is clear when we consider that it may be seen in a thing by some one who is not in the least considering his mental states, or passing self-conscious judgements. Yet such an object is given to us by means of a peculiar sort of approbation or disapprobation, of which it is possible to be introspectively aware; these emotions must therefore function as contents.² We have a similar case when some one perceives that something *ought* to be. This 'ought' is also an object, because it can stand before us when we are not considering our states of mind at all. That the last war *ought* not to have taken place, or that the oceans *ought*

¹ *Ü. A.*, p. 264.

² *Em. Prä.*, p. 37.

not to be so large and unvariegated: these circumstances seem to have the same evident truth and the same independence of our minds as the truths of mathematics or biology. Yet nobody could possibly think of such a mind-independent 'ought' if he had never demanded anything of the universe, if he had never had the experience of desire. An 'ought' is the appropriate object of a purified desire, and cannot be apprehended unless this desire is present in some degree. The desire therefore functions as the content by which the 'ought' is grasped,¹ and this desire is of course an observable entity.

The three instances we have given indicate sufficiently that, in spite of the obscurity and haste with which Meinong treats the whole conception of content, he nevertheless supposes that contents, or entities that function like contents, are observable in certain cases.

XI

The relation of content to object is, according to Meinong, an *ideal* relation.² We cannot deal fully here with the important distinction which he draws between ideal and real relations, but we may say briefly that if an ideal relation holds between two existents, it binds them into a unity, but that this unity is not a complex existent of which the two existents are constituents.³ The similarity between two peas certainly binds them together, but the result is not a complex existent like a house or a tree. Similarity is called an ideal relation because it does not bring its terms into any real touch: the two peas 'have nothing to do with each other'. A second characteristic* of ideal relations is that their subsistence is always necessary.⁴ It is not merely an accident that this pea is like that pea, that this point is between these two points, that this

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ *Geg. höh. Ord. Gs. Abh.* II, p. 395.

² *Ü. A.*, p. 265.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

moment is later than that moment: that they stand in these relationships follows with absolute necessity from the fact that they are the entities they are. Once two objects are given their degree of similarity is fixed, once two points or moments are picked out their relative positions cannot be otherwise.

The relation between the content of an idea and its object is an ideal relation because it fulfils both these conditions. It does not generate any real complex, and its subsistence between its terms is always necessary, never contingent. As regards the first point, it is clear that the object known does not coalesce with the knowing act to form any complex existent.¹ It is as unaffected by my knowing it as one pea is unaffected by the existence of another similar pea. If I have an idea of the Himalayas, my idea and the Himalayas are not compounded in some monstrous symphysis of the mental and the material. The stream of my experiences and the stream of events known as the Himalayas each go their own way, but there is for the moment an ideal *adequateness* between them. The content of my idea 'fits' the Himalayas and nothing else: I must be living through the sort of content that can present a snowy range of mountains in a country called Asia. There are peculiar modifications of my mind which occur when I think of a many-sided object like snow, similar modifications are necessary to apprehend the meaning of a word like 'mountainous'. All the aspects of the Himalayas which are actually brought to mind presuppose such inner qualitative changes; in experiencing them all, and in experiencing their synthesis by means of appropriate judgements, I am at last aware of those snowy ranges which are so utterly unlike anything that I can ever live through. In making my ideas of the Himalayas adequate I receive no assistance from the Himalayas; their existence is irrelevant to the whole process. I have, by my own

¹ *U. A.*, p. 266.

activity, constructed a reference which points in one unambiguous direction, and in that direction the Himalayas happen to lie. In all this there is no real touch, much less a mystical fusion of knower and known.

If the relation of adequateness between a certain content and a certain object is an ideal relation, it must also subsist in the necessary, *a priori*, intelligible way in which a relation like similarity or distance subsists. Meinong does not think that there is only *one* content which is adequate to *one* object and vice versa.¹ A single content, according as it is used, will enable us to refer either to a certain property or to a thing which has that property.² We may also refer to one object by means of different contents according as we think of it as having this property or that.³ But all such complexities are subsidiary: given a content which is correlated to redness, it may enable us to think of all red things, but it will not assist us to think of things that are blue or green. We must be able to see, by a mere examination of the content, that redness and red things are its appropriate objects; if we could not do this, the adequateness would be a contingent, and therefore not an ideal relation. These considerations dispose of the view that a content is merely a hypothetical entity invented to account for our reference to definite objects. Contents must be observable entities, if we are to see that a certain relation is grounded in their natures.

XII

It throws a certain amount of light on the theory of content and object to compare it with Aristotle's picture of sensation. The sense-organ in Aristotle receives the forms of the objects perceived without their matter, just as wax receives the form of a ring without its matter. The content, as a purely mental modification, is vaguely

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

³ *Mög.*, p. 187.

analogous to the form left in the wax, the object to the ring which fits that form. We may notice that, in this case too, there is no exact similarity between the shape of the ring and the shape left in the wax; where the former is convex the latter is concave, and vice versa. Spatial shapes fit each other, as content and object are adequate to each other, without needing to be similar. We might further imagine the wax capable of looking out of itself and making judgements, when the shape in it will permit it to think of one object only, namely the ring which fits it. This will resemble the way in which a content, by its presence in the mind, enables it to 'aim' at one object and no other. The analogy is also apt in that the wax may retain the impression left by the ring, or might, by some internal activity, assume a shape that would fit a ring, although no such ring existed. In this way it would resemble a mind which thinks of an object which has ceased to exist or which has never existed.

The comparison is of course only a pictorial analogy; there is infinitely more resemblance between the shape of the ring and the shape of the impression that it leaves, than there is between, say, a physical object and a mental content. And it would be wrong to imagine that objects are capable of any direct impact or impression on the mind. But the analogy has the advantage of showing up the whole nature of the theory, as well as one of its weaknesses, or rather one point which it fails to explain. This point concerns the fundamental nature of intentionality.

In the case of the wax, we cannot see *how* it can pass beyond the form which it receives to the form of a totally different entity which fits the impression in itself. That one term of a relation should reveal or present another, even when the relation in question is necessary and intelligible, still remains mysterious. In the case of intentionality Meinong believes that it is the activity of a judgement or assumption which makes use of the content of an idea in

order to pass beyond the circle of inner experiences, and to 'hit' a certain object. The pure idea is a passive experience; to live through its content is not to have an object actually presented to one, but only to have the power of apprehending it.¹ To have an auditory sensation or fancy is not to hear a sound, but only to have the power of hearing it, should we judge: 'There is a sound', or, in the case of imagination, merely assume it. How the judgement or assumption makes use of the content to 'hit' the object is not a fact which the theory completely explains. If we found a paralytic seated on a roof, the discovery of a ladder at the side of the house would give us some assistance towards understanding his presence there, but it would hardly be a sufficient explanation. The same is true with regard to contents; their presence in the mind helps us to understand the way in which it 'aims' beyond itself, but fails to make this completely intelligible. With such aid we do not yet altogether see how an experience, in which an object *O* is neither a moment nor a part, can nevertheless be the experience of that object and no other.

It may throw some light on the extraordinarily difficult problem of intentionality if we compare the reference to an object, which is peculiar to mental states, with other relational properties. The Philippine Islands are to the east of China; the subsistence of this relation between them endows the Philippine Islands with what is called a relational property, which we may write as the 'being-to-the-east-of-China'. Is it possible to regard this property, as its verbal symbolization might suggest, as a complex of which the country China and the relation 'to-the-east-of' are constituents? The grotesque absurdity of such a notion is evident. How one could make anything out of a relation and a *single* term it is impossible to see, still less how such a monstrous combination could be a *characteristic* of anything. Characteristics may certainly be complex, but it is

¹ *Ü. A.*, p. 225; *Erfgl.*, p. 58.

incredible that any analysis of them should reveal constituents which are not themselves characteristics. If A is a constituent of B , and B is a characteristic of C , then it seems evident that A must also be a characteristic of C . Consequently if China is really a constituent of the relational property 'to-the-east-of-China', then China must inhere, in all its solid immensity, in the Philippine Islands. By similar arguments one could prove that the Stock Exchange inhered in this teapot, or that mind was a property of matter. These absurdities force us to believe that China is *not* a constituent of the property 'being-to-the-east-of-China', but that this latter, in spite of its complicated descriptive name, is probably a perfectly simple characteristic, or, if it is in any way complex, is only capable of analysis into characteristics. We call such properties as 'being-to-the-east-of-China' *relational* properties, not because they involve relations as a part of themselves, but because they are generated by the subsistence of relations, presuppose such relations, whereas other properties, such as green or blue, do not. Relational properties seem to be a wholly unique class of object, and it is extremely odd that they have never been properly studied.

If we now turn to intentionality, the facts about the Philippine Islands will be helpful. If I think of X or think of \mathcal{X} , my thinking-of- X or thinking-of- \mathcal{X} are mental relational properties, of which X and \mathcal{X} are not constituents. The direction-to- X , if it permits an analysis at all, can only be analysed into such terms as direction-to- A , direction-to- B , &c., where A , B , &c. are the distinguishable moments of X ; X itself, or its moments, cannot be discovered in it. But the oddity of this relational property is that it is not generated by any relation of adequateness between the state of mind and its object, but that this relation of adequateness presupposes the relational property. It is not because my state of mind is adequate to X

that it has the relational property of being-directed-to- X , but it is adequate to X because it has the relational property of being-directed-to- X . Thus we see that not only are relational properties a unique class of objects, but that relational properties involving mental reference are unique among relational properties.¹

We have shown that Meinong's theory of content and object does not altogether explain away the difficulties to overcome which it was constructed. It remains, however, a most illuminating doctrine in epistemology. That, wherever any sort of object is apprehended, there are characteristic experiences correlated to that object, enables us to use experiences to throw light on objects and objects to throw light on experiences. It is the very nerve of the type of research which Meinong pursues. We shall, in the following chapters, which are for the most part concerned with objects, point to many interesting cases where it is used.

¹ These suggestions owe a great deal to Brentano's article 'Die psychische Beziehung im Unterschied von der Relation im eigentlichen Sinne.' See *Psychologie*, Appendix i, 1911 edition.