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Arnaud Dewalque and Venanzio Raspa

Introduction

The contributions gathered in this volume address various facets of the philosophical psychology elaborated on by Alexius Meinong and some of his students. They cover a wide range of topics, from the place of psychological investigations in Meinong's philosophical programme to his thought-provoking views on perception, colours, *Vorstellungsproduktion*, assumptions, values, truth, and emotions. Although psychological themes are omnipresent in the works of Meinong and his students, it is probably not unfair to say that their theory of the mind received considerably less attention in literature than their object theory, which somehow became the hallmark of the Meinong School. Our hope is that this volume will help restore the balance and, indirectly, foster a novel understanding of Meinong's philosophy in the context of his time.

Meinong's Philosophy in Context

Understanding Meinong's philosophy in context amounts to seeing it as the result of a development which is both internal and external to Meinong's thought, and therefore as the result of a broad intellectual process. It means explaining how his philosophical views developed from, and interacted with, other, competing views. In this respect, it is important to recall that Meinong's philosophy – his object theory – is the upshot of collective work carried out by Meinong himself and some of his students. It is common knowledge that Witasek and Benussi assisted Meinong in his psychological investigations, while Mally and Ameseder contributed to the development of the object theory. Furthermore, this collective work also bears the mark of philosophers who indirectly contributed to the development of Meinongian philosophy (like Bolzano, Brentano, Twardowski) or debated with Meinong and his heirs (Husserl, Russell, Lipps), thus pushing the former towards a refinement of his views.

Over the last decades, a great amount of attention has been devoted to the object theory. Accordingly, the primary focus of Meinong studies so far has been

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on logic, semantics, and formal ontology, as manifest in the writings of Héctor-Neri Castañeda, Karel Lambert, Richard Routley (Sylvan), Terence Parsons, Edward Zalta, William J. Rapaport, Jaakko Hintikka, Dale Jacquette, and Jacek Paśniczek – to name but a few. This line of research has great merits. In particular, it contributed to develop Meinong's insights into directions that he himself could not have predicted. Moreover, the expansion and modification of his views in line with the results obtained on the basis of scientific investigations is entirely consistent with Meinong's scientific spirit, especially if it can help address current philosophical issues. While such studies drawn on Meinong's writings to improve some of his most interesting theses (as Parsons, Lambert, Jacquette, and Paśniczek themselves state), some related debates – like those opposing Neo-Quinean and Neo-Meinongian philosophers – developed more independently from the study of Meinong.

However legitimate, such lines of inquiry are not the only ones which are worth pursuing today. Our own feeling is that addressing Meinong's philosophy in context does not simply mean to do some philology. We can start with the reading of the writings by Meinong and his students, and then move on to examine current issues, or put the philosophy of the Graz school in relation with other philosophers – and, of course, criticise it. All these approaches amount to revitalising Meinong's fundamental intuitions in the present-day research situation while accepting what he calls the principle of critical non-conclusiveness of knowledge.

Now, if one looks back at Meinong's writings in their historical context, the importance of his psychological investigations could hardly be overestimated. Like Brentano before him, Meinong takes it that (scientific) philosophy is not possible without (descriptive) psychology. This is not to say that philosophy and psychology are one and the same discipline. Rather, psychology is but a “part” of philosophy, indeed its “fundamental discipline”, while philosophy is the name of “a whole group of sciences”, whose commonality is that they are all dealing with mental phenomena in some way.¹ On Meinong's view, thus, there is a pretty tight connection between philosophy and psychology. Although he most decidedly rejected any form of psychologism, he never gave up the thought that philosophy was not separable from psychological investigations. In this respect, his reaction to the antipsychologist struggle is quite telling. When, in 1912, the Neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert asked him to sign a joint statement against the attribution of philosophical positions to experimental

¹ See Meinong 1885, GA V, p. 5.

psychologists, Meinong replied by highlighting again the importance of psychology for philosophy: “As you know, my personal field of work grew ever more apychological. And yet, it seems to me inconceivable to forget the endeavours which arose for me from the close contact with the lively psychological empirie [...]. I wouldn’t like to encourage the tendency to separate experimental psychology, and thereby psychology in general, from its connection with the remaining philosophical disciplines”.²

Meinongian Psychology

Meinong’s ten “Essays on Psychology” (*Abhandlungen zur Psychologie*) gathered by Alois Höfler in 1913 within the framework of the *Collected Essays* (*Gesammelte Abhandlungen*) were intended as contributions to the then ongoing psychological research.³ The same holds true of his two important books *On Assumptions* (*Über Annahmen*) and *On Emotional Presentation* (*Über emotionale Präsentation*). As is obvious from those writings, Meinong’s views about mental phenomena are not a mere repetition of Brentano’s, in fact they sometimes present themselves as corrections of things Brentano said. This raises the following question: What, if any, are the distinctive features of Meinongian philosophical psychology? Putting aside a number of analyses dedicated to more or less local phenomena, we believe that Meinongian psychology as a whole is characterised by a *triad of distinctions*, namely: the distinction between (1) content and object, (2) activity and passivity, (3) mental phenomena and mental dispositions. Let us briefly comment on each distinction in turn.

1. The distinction between content and object is usually traced back to Twardowski’s habilitation thesis *On the Content and Object of Presentations* (*Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen*). Yet, Twardowski acknowledges that he himself took it from the Höfler-Meinong handbook of logic:

What we called ‘content of the representation [*Vorstellung*] and the judgement’ lies just as much completely within the subject as the act of representation and of judgement itself. The words ‘thing’ and ‘object’ are used in two senses: on the one hand for that *independently existing* entity [...] at which our representation and judgement aim, as it were; on the other

2 Undated letter to Rickert (reply to Rickert’s letter of the 7th December 1912), Meinong-Nachlaß, Box LX, n° 6224, quoted in Dölling 2001, p. 157.

3 See Meinong 1921, GA VII, p. 9.

hand, for the mental, more or less approximate, ‘picture’ of that real entity which *exists ‘in’ us*.⁴

By systematically applying the content-object distinction to both presentations and judgements, Twardowski moves away from Brentano’s traditional doctrine. However, he still remains close to Brentano insofar as he maintains that representations and judgements refer to the same object, that is, to the representational object (*Vorstellungsgegenstand*).⁵ In a letter to Meinong dated 11th July 1897, Twardowski speaks of the state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) as the object of judgement.⁶ In his reply, Meinong states that his epistemological viewpoint is not fully expressed in the *Logik* he wrote with Höfler.⁷ In his review of Hillebrand’s book on inference (*Die neuen Theorien der kategorischen Schlüsse*), he introduced a new class of judgements, namely: relational judgements (*Beziehungsurteile*), which are a first step towards the postulation of judgements which have a state of affairs as their object. Twardowski himself made a similar move in his 1894/95 logic lessons.⁸ The thoughts of Twardowski and Meinong clearly exhibit some affinities in respect to the distinction between content and object of judgements and (re)presentations. In the essay “On objects of higher-order” (“Über Gegenstände höherer Ordnung und deren Verhältnis zur inneren Wahrnehmung”), although Meinong refers to Twardowski’s habilitation thesis only in a footnote, he nevertheless takes up the latter’s arguments in favour of this distinction, as is obvious from a comparison between the two texts.⁹ More importantly, Meinong presents the distinction of content and object – which originates from considerations “in part really, and in part only supposedly, psychological”¹⁰ – as a crucial step towards the object theory. Indeed, the distinct types of objects (objecta and objectives) correspond to the content of representations and judgements, respectively. Meinong dealt with this view in several writings throughout his career. In his *On Emotional Presentation*, the notion of content is defined as that part of an experience (*Erlebnis*) which varies or remains constant regardless of the variations of the cor

4 Höfler 1890, § 6; Twardowski 1894, p. 4 [1977, p. 2].

5 See Twardowski 1894, § 4, p. 9, § 7, p. 38.

6 See Meinong & Twardowski 2016, p. 85.

7 See Meinong & Twardowski 2016, p. 92.

8 See Twardowski 2016, p. 34–35, 91–92.

9 See Twardowski, 1894, § 6, p. 30–34; Meinong 1899, GA II, p. 186–188.

10 Meinong 1904, GA II, p. 503 [1960, p. 94].

responding object.¹¹ It is a central tenet of Meinong's psychological theory of presentation (*Präsentation*).

2. One further distinctive feature of Meinong's theory of the mind lies in the claim that the mind is *active* and *productive*, or that many mental phenomena are best described as involving, as Höfler puts it, some "mental work".¹² Interestingly, the activity-passivity distinction seems to have been utterly absent from Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. The notion of "mental action" (*psychische Aktion*) is, however, clearly stressed by Meinong in his 1894 "Contributions to the Theory of Psychological Analysis" ("Beiträge zur Theorie der psychischen Analyse"). Distancing himself from Carl Stumpf, he writes:

The psychological analogon of the opposition between movement and rest is provided by the opposition between activity and passivity, which in [the psychological] field is no less fundamental than the former in the physical field.¹³

Arguably, this view had significant consequences for Meinong's way of conceiving of mental phenomena. First of all, it led him to endorse a quadripartite classification of mental phenomena into (i) representations, (ii) thoughts, (iii) feelings, and (iv) desires. This division may be arrived at by adding the activity-passivity distinction to Aristotle's distinction between "cognition" (*noûs*) and "desire" (*orexis*): representations are passive cognitive phenomena, while thoughts are active cognitive phenomena; similarly, feelings are passive emotional phenomena, while desires are active emotional phenomena. Another consequence of this view is the famous introduction of "assumptions" as an "intermediary field" between representations and judgements. Very roughly, Meinongian assumptions are cognitive activities of the mind which lack the belief component proper to judgement.

3. Probably no less central to Meinong's philosophical psychology is the distinction between mental *phenomena* and mental *dispositions*. It is common knowledge that Herbart rejected the so-called "psychology of faculties" or "psychology of powers" (*Vermögenspsychologie*) as unscientific. Yet, Meinong notices, it is striking to see how the thought of a capacity, or power, still

¹¹ See Meinong 1917, *GA* III, p. 339, 347 [1972, p. 49, 55].

¹² Höfler 1894.

¹³ Meinong 1894, *GA* I, p. 382. See also Höfler 1894, p. 31; 1930, p. 106, fn. 1.

“permeates the most ordinary conception of mental life”.¹⁴ The fact is, there are many aspects of mental life which seem unaccountable without having a full-blown theory of dispositions in hands. Meinong’s interest in dispositions dates back at least to the beginning of his academic career. When he took up his professorship at the University of Graz in 1882, he held a course on “Educational Theory, or Psychology of Dispositions” (*Pädagogik oder Psychologie der Dispositionen*).¹⁵ For more than two decades, he then worked on a theory of dispositions which he made public in his lecture courses only,¹⁶ before eventually publishing a sketch thereof in the *Festschrift* for Eduard Martinak’s 60th anniversary.¹⁷ One idea that became prominent in the Meinong School was that the goal of teaching is to create in the learner some “dispositions to judge in an evident way”.¹⁸ Yet, considerations on dispositions are far from being limited to education. In 1889 Meinong insisted that the theory of dispositions is a prerequisite for a correct understanding of imagination (*Phantasie*).¹⁹ Similarly, in 1894, Höfler argued for a dispositional theory of attention, according to which “attending to something” is best understood in terms of “making oneself ready for some mental work”,²⁰ etc. Admittedly, the study of mental dispositions is not an independent chapter of psychology and cannot be entirely disconnected from the study of mental phenomena. After all, as Meinong puts it, “every disposition is specified, first and foremost, according to that which it is disposed to”, that is, according to its phenomenal “correlate”.²¹ Still, Meinong argues, it is important to see that there is more to one’s mental life than just mental phenomena.

¹⁴ Meinong 1889, *GA* I, p. 196.

¹⁵ See Höfler 1919, p. 24 fn.; 1921, p. 370.

¹⁶ According to Dölling 1999, p. 235–37, Meinong held a course on *Psychologische Prinzipien der Pädagogik* in the Summer Semester 1884, on *Psychologische Prinzipien der Pädagogik (Lehre von den psychischen Dispositionen)* in the Summer Semester 1887, and on *Psychologische Prinzipien der Pädagogik (Dispositionspsychologie)* in the Summer Semester 1892.

¹⁷ See Meinong 1919.

¹⁸ Höfler 1919, p. 24 fn.

¹⁹ See Meinong 1889, *GA* I, p. 196.

²⁰ Höfler 1894, p. 100.

²¹ Meinong 1889, *GA* I, p. 197.

Plan of the Book

This volume comprises three sections. Section 1 is dedicated to the relationship between psychology and philosophy. It discusses critically the place of psychology in Meinong's programme, his theory of colours, and his theory of *Vorstellungsproduktion*. Section 2 is dedicated to Meinong's views on assumptions and emotions. Section 3 addresses Meinong's and Benussi's analyses of perception. It is plain that the contributions gathered in those three sections are very far from giving an exhaustive picture of Meinongian psychology. Much more needs to be said, especially about Meinong's theory of emotion, imagination and disposition. Yet, the present volume will have reached its goal if it gives the reader a taste of Meinong's theory of the mind and paves the way to a more thorough exploration and reception of the latter.

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Riccardo Martinelli

Meinongian Psychology

Abstract: Meinong's early writings include a number of discussions that are in line with the mainstream psychological research of his time. This is not at odds with the parallel theorizing tendency of his philosophical psychology. Even after developing the theory of objects, and despite handing psychological research over to his pupils, Meinong kept thinking highly of psychology. Meinong's psychology is in tune with his most relevant philosophical doctrines. The theory of "production" virtuously integrates that of founded objects. The manifold "dispositions" (including phantasy) and the different subjective "attitudes" (gestalt-like or analytical) lead to regular, lawful deviations from standard responses that can and should be investigated experimentally. While being an independent discipline, Meinongian psychology nevertheless fits into a full-fledged system of philosophical assumptions.

1 Critical Issues

To many philosophers, the theory of objects may well be the only relevant thing in Meinong's thought. Of course this is a legitimate view: in the long wake of Russell's criticism, Meinong's thoughts concerning ideal and non-existing objects are certainly among his most discussed contributions. Still, there is no point in making the theory of objects a sort of black hole, which swallows everything else that Meinong has done. From a historical point of view, this is simply wrong. In fact, such an interpretation is not only at odds with many of Meinong's own pronouncements, but it also prevents us from making sense of the relation between Meinong's thoughts on psychology and the activities he carried out at the Graz laboratory with his pupils. As far as psychology is concerned, Meinong has devoted much effort to both theoretical and empirical aspects of it, occasionally complementing his research with experimental studies.

In 1913, seven years before Meinong's death, Alois Höfler started collecting his writings: *Alexius Meinongs Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Collected Essays). Of the three planned volumes, only the first two were eventually published: respectively *Abhandlungen zur Psychologie* (Essays on Psychology), and *Abhandlungen*

zur Erkenntnistheorie und Gegenstandstheorie (Essays on the Theory of Knowledge and the Theory of Objects).¹ In the Preface, reprinted in both volumes, Höfler explained why the collection was needed. Meinong had been frequently asked for a new edition of his barely available early articles, but was permanently too pressed by new projects. Thus, his pupils undertook the publication in his place, supplementing the essays with additional notes (*Zusätze*) in order to update them to “the current state” of 1913.²

Admittedly, Höfler had a hard time singling out Meinong’s “psychological” essays from the rest of his production. He opens his introduction with the frank confession that the “ten psychological essays in this volume do not form a neat unity and do not exhibit a continuous, linear progress, as happens with the five essays of the second volume”.³ As far as the *philosophical* essays are concerned (2nd volume) – the editor goes on – the crucial aspect of Meinong’s intellectual evolution is the development from a former “psychological, indeed psychologicistic”⁴ point of view to that of the theory of objects. Now, Höfler claims, the opposite applies to Meinong’s *psychological* essays (1st volume): in fact, a comprehensive glance upon them reveals that – “from the very beginning” – these essays “mostly attended theoretical needs”.⁵ Accordingly, Höfler ideally links Meinong’s “psychological” essays to some of the “philosophical” ones: Hume-Studies 1 (1st volume) to Hume-Studies 2 (2nd volume);⁶ the essays on complexions and relations and on analysis (1st volume)⁷ to that on objects of higher order (2nd volume),⁸ and so on.

A discussion of Höfler’s criteria is all the more important since they influence the modern standard edition of Meinong’s works, started in 1969. Reprinted unaltered, Höfler’s two volumes of 1913-1914 make up the first two of the seven volumes (plus supplement) of the *Alexius Meinong Gesamtausgabe*. As the editors

1 Meinong 1913; Meinong 1914. The projected volume *Zur Werttheorie – Vermischtes* (On the theory of value – Miscellaneous) was never published.

2 Höfler 1913, p. v.

3 Höfler 1914, p. ix. Volume 2 appeared in 1913, *before* volume 1.

4 On closer inspection, this phrase favors confusion between two different things. Meinong’s abandonment of his early “psychologism” does not necessarily affect his psychology, which he never stopped dealing with. Meinong defines psychologism as “the inappropriate use of psychological method”, mostly based “on the neglect or misunderstanding” of the objective side of cognition (Meinong 1904, p. 95–96). See also Meinong 1912.

5 Höfler 1914, p. ix.

6 Meinong 1877, Meinong 1882.

7 Meinong 1891, Meinong 1894.

8 Meinong 1899.

Rudolf Haller and Rudolf Kindinger note in their Preface, added to the *Essays on psychology* (volume 1), some of the above mentioned “supplements” by Meinong’s pupils might be “misleading” from a historical point of view: in fact, they “strove to interpret [...] Meinong’s psychological early essays from the point of view of his late developments in the theory of objects, and even to correct them accordingly”.⁹ As a consequence, future scholarship may run the risk of downgrading these psychological essays as opposed to later ones. Yet – the editors point out – that would be unjustified. The essays included within the first volume have great value of their own, because they exemplify the close kinship between Meinong’s “way of philosophizing” and the current “analytic philosophy (of language)”.¹⁰ Needless to say, this claim is in line with the broader assumption that the roots of analytic philosophy can be found within the Austrian philosophical tradition, elsewhere developed and defended by Haller.

In sum, we are told that Meinong’s essays on psychology are relevant either as preliminary to the theory of objects (Höfler) or as samples of early analytic philosophy of language (Haller). With such claims, both editors end up dismissing a considerable part of Meinong’s psychology as irrelevant and – so to speak – almost invisible. Clearly, Höfler’s and Haller’s editorial choices are not devoid of wisdom, and I am far from suggesting that their interpretative criteria should be disregarded. Editing the writings of a sophisticated thinker like Alexius Meinong is a highly complex task, which involves difficult choices.¹¹ A strictly chronological edition (preferable, in my view) would have been less biased in suggesting a certain interpretation of Meinong’s thought; whereas the available thematic edition is possibly helpful in orienting readers who are not too familiar with the philosopher’s work. Anyway, when it comes to assessing Meinong’s concept of psychology, the least that can be said is that these editorial criteria call for commentary and – perhaps – a few corrections.

Meinong’s compliance with psychologistic stances in his early essays makes his essays on psychology neither irrelevant nor merely preparatory to the theory

9 Haller and Kindinger 1969, p. vii. The supplements have been nevertheless included in the new edition as well, provided that they had been approved by Meinong himself at the time, and that they are neatly separated from Meinong’s texts.

10 Haller and Kindinger 1969, p. viii.

11 I fully agree with this statement by Marie-Luise Schubert Kalsi (1996, p. v): “Meinong poses an immense challenge to his interpreters. He did not develop a system. He tackled many problems, he developed intriguing and innovative ideas, and, over the long years of his productive life, he changed his basic philosophical attitude in profound ways. His texts are often obscure, and the interpreter is faced with the task of bringing order into Meinong’s thought and with constructing a cohesive system from his ever-changing and diffusive analysis of ideas”.

of objects; and the value of those essays does not exclusively reside in the philosophical arguments which forerun the style of analytic philosophy of language. Meinongian psychology is neither a self-deceptive preliminary draft of the theory of objects, nor exclusively an analytic-styled philosophy of language *ante litteram*. To be sure, the “psychological” element of Meinong’s production should be understood within the context of the philosophical psychology of the time. As I shall show, however, not all of Meinong’s essays in psychology are “philosophical” in equal degree and in the same sense; accordingly, their retrospective interpretation in terms of the theory of objects does not always succeed. Many of Meinong’s discussions concern psychological topics which are perfectly in line with the mainstream psychological debates of the time, in a rather broad sense. What is more, such discussions can be found in the essays included by the editors both in the volume on psychology *and* in that on the theory of knowledge and the theory of objects. Höfler’s editorial selection is indeed no longer a reliable criterion to single out Meinong’s “psychology”, both as a thematic field and a methodological stance.

Along with the hitherto discussed editorial problems, two more obstacles stand in the way of a sound understanding of Meinong’s psychology: his *style* as a thinker, and his *personal engagement* in psychological research. As to the former question, one should keep in mind that Meinong’s style strongly suggests continuity. Reinhardt Grossmann correctly notes that Meinong refrains from sudden changes and – despite his bad reputation of entity multiplier – preferably avoids the introduction of new concepts or terms.¹² Unsurprisingly, in spite of his substantial intellectual evolution, scholars never speak of a “first” and a “second” Meinong. Reluctant to dramatic withdrawals, Meinong rather reformulates and corrects. Accordingly, his early psychology occasionally fades into his theory of objects, especially with the help of the above mentioned “supplements”. As I will show, however, this happens in a relatively narrow number of instances. In any case, it would be completely misplaced to argue that Meinong assigned legitimacy to psychology only as a transient phase.

The latter question, concerning his individual engagement, is perhaps thornier. After a certain point in time, Meinong left all the psychological work to his collaborators in Graz. This fact can be interpreted in different ways. Höfler’s commentary could mislead one to conclude that Meinong’s commitment to the theory of objects eventually made psychology unimportant or superfluous in his

¹² Grossmann 1974, p. x.

eyes.¹³ By contrast, I argue that Meinong simply applied a labor division strategy. A reformed psychology, consistent with the theory of objects, undoubtedly represents a strategic demand of his mature thought. As known, the turning point is represented by Meinong's distinction between content and object.¹⁴ While opening the fascinating new field of study of objects, the distinction between object and content sheds new light on the previously analyzed characteristics of contents and – at the same time – raises brand new *psychological* problems. Even if there is no late psychological writing by Meinong in the standard edition, then, there is a *Meinongian* psychology before and after the theory of objects, as a part of a scientific program directly inspired by the philosopher.

A supplementary question lies in the relation between theoretical and *experimental* psychology. Meinong must be credited with the foundation of the first experimental laboratory of psychology in the Habsburg Empire, at Graz.¹⁵ Like many others pioneers of the same generation – think of William James – he was of course more inclined to speculation than to the enormously time-consuming experimental work. Speaking as a historian of psychology in the 1950s, Edwin Boring put it quite directly: “Meinong, for all that he founded the first Austrian laboratory at Graz, was a philosopher and not an experimental psychologist”.¹⁶ This is basically true, but calls for further explanation. The relation between Meinong's theoretical psychology and the experimental activities in Graz is a question that cannot be evaded with ready-made categorizations. Even though he eventually entrusted pupils like Witasek or Benussi with all experimental activities, Meinong always gave importance to experimentation.¹⁷

Finally, speaking of Meinong's sources, the most important critical issue is surely that of Brentano's influence.¹⁸ With his lectures in Vienna, Brentano un-

13 See Lindenfeld 1980, p. 220: “[t]o a psychologist, he seemed to have wandered off into the ethereal realms of Gegenstandstheorie and value theory, leaving humble experimenters behind in their laboratories”.

14 See below, § 3.

15 See Huber 2012. Meinong himself, already in Vienna, occasionally did some experimental work: Meinong 1921, p. 105.

16 Boring 1957, p. 437. Boring refers to Meinong almost only for his contribution to the debate on “form-qualities”.

17 Besides, Meinong also lectured on experimental psychology. According to Lindenfeld (1980, p. 220) “his lectures notes reveal that he expected experiments to be limited to questions of sensations and not to address fundamental theoretical problems”; however, this was not only the case with Meinong, at the time.

18 The influence of Brentano is particularly stressed by Albertazzi / Jacquette / Poli 2001, and Chrudzimski 2007.