

INTENTIONALITY IN BRENTANO: A MINIMAL,
POSITIVE INTERPRETATION IN THE FRAMEWORK
OF THE HIERARCHY OF PHENOMENA
IN HIS EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY

ION TĂNĂSESCU

Abstract. Intentionality has been interpreted in Brentano's empirical psychology both as the most salient feature distinguishing the mental from the physical, and as a theory of the way in which consciousness relates to existing or non-existing objects. In both cases, intentionality constitutes one of the main parts of Brentano's philosophy of mind. The aim of this paper is to put this basic understanding in brackets and to highlight the relevance of Brentano's thought on intentionality to the positive philosophy of the 19th century, in particular for the problem of the hierarchy of phenomena and the sciences in Comte and, following him, in Brentano. For this purpose, I will begin with an analysis of Comte's principles of the hierarchy of phenomena: dependence, emergence, and continuity, and then show how Brentano receives these principles in his major work *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874). While he admits the first two principles, the principle of continuity of phenomena does not continue to apply in his writing, for in his opinion psychological phenomena do not constitute a continuity with physiological phenomena in the way the latter are continuous with chemical phenomena. On the contrary, for Brentano, consciousness represents a completely new world in relation to the physical world, and its phenomena are "absolutely heterogeneous" in relation to physical phenomena. Against this background, intentionality in Brentano is the most salient distinguishing feature that, (i) separates the mental from the physical and consequently, (ii) enables psychology to be established as an empirical science, and consequently (iii) constitutes the fundamental distinction in the field of empirical research: the distinction between physical and mental science. In this way, the minimal, positive interpretation proposed here makes clear how deeply rooted Brentano's intentionality is in a central problem of 19th century positive philosophy.

Keywords: intentionality; empirical psychology; hierarchy of phenomena in Comte and Brentano, classification of theoretical sciences in Comte and Brentano

Ion Tănăsescu ✉
Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy
E-mail: iontanasescu964@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

As is well-known, intentionality is for Brentano the most salient distinguishing feature that separates mental phenomena from physical phenomena.¹ The phrases Brentano used in his *Psychology from an empirical standpoint* (1874; henceforth PES) to describe this feature are as follows: “the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object” (“*die intentionale (auch wohl mentale) Inexistenz eines Gegenstandes*”), “the relation to a content” (“*die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt*”) and “the direction toward an object” (“*die Richtung auf ein Objekt*) (PES, p. 106/88; trans. modified). In two footnotes to the passage these expressions occur in, Brentano takes the first expression to be synonymous with “to exist as an object (objectively) in something,” or “to exist immanently as an object” and points to the historical antecedents of this idea in Aristotle, Philo, St. Augustine, St. Anselm and Aquinas (PES, pp. 106 f./88 f.). It is not the aim of this paper to deal with the traditional aspects of Brentano’s thought on intentionality in his empirical psychology. However, I will provide an overview that follows the historical order

¹ The basis of the present paper is the second part (pp. 196–215) of the article I wrote together with Michel Bourdeau: Michel Bourdeau, Ion Tănăsescu, “Intentionality and the Classification of Sciences and Phenomena in Comte’s Cours de Philosophie Positive and in Brentano’s Empirical Psychology”, in I. Tănăsescu, A. Bejinariu, S. Krantz Gabriel, C. Stoenescu (eds.), *Brentano and the Positive Philosophy of Comte and Mill. With Translations of Original Writings on Philosophy as Science by Franz Brentano*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 185–222. Since it was not the aim of that paper to shed light on the significance of my explanations for the interpretation of the question of intentionality, I fill this gap here by completing and substantially extending those explanations with analyses that are intended to elucidate both the historical-systematic framework of Brentano’s intentionality thesis in his PES and the significance of my account within that framework. In doing so, I address, pursue, and bring to a final form the analyses of intentionality in Brentano published over time: Ion Tănăsescu, “Die intentionale Inexistenz. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der scholastischen Interpretation des Intentionalen bei Brentano”, *New Europe College Yearbook* 1997/1998, 2000, pp. 489–527; “Empfindung, äußere Wahrnehmung und physisches Phänomen als Gegenstand der Naturwissenschaft in Brentanos empirischer Psychologie”, *Revue roumaine de philosophie* 1–2 (2011), pp. 103–131; “The two Theories of Intentionality in Brentano and the Program of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*”, in G. Fréchette (ed.), *Consciousness and Intentionality. Franz Brentano’s Heritage in Philosophy of Mind*, special issue of *Brentano Studien* 13 (2015), Dettelbach, J.H. Roll Verlag, 2015, pp. 211–231; “The Intentionality of Sensation and the Problem of Classification of Philosophical Sciences in Brentano’s empirical Psychology”, *Axiomathes* (2017) 27, pp. 243–263; “The Two Theories of Intentionality in Brentano and Chisholm’s Ontological and Psychological Theses”, *Revue roumaine de philosophie*, (2/2020), pp. 341–350; “Franz Brentano and Auguste Comte. The Theory of Stages and the Psychology”, in I. Tănăsescu, A. Bejinariu, S. Krantz Gabriel, C. Stoenescu (eds.), *Brentano and the Positive Philosophy of Comte and Mill. With Translations of Original Writings on Philosophy as Science by Franz Brentano*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 45–138. I shall further refer first to the German original and then to the English translation of Brentano’s PES: Franz, Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte* (1874), in Franz Brentano, *Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften*, Band 1, Th. Binder, A. Chrudzimski (eds.), Frankfurt, Ontos, 2008, pp. 1–289 / Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, transl. by A.C. Rancurello *et al.*, O. Kraus, L. McAlister (eds.), London, Routledge, 1995. This paper was written as part of the funding program: *Applications of category theory in contemporary philosophy* 1/3/2023 of the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy.

of the exegetical reception of his theory of intentionality and as relevant to my purpose here.

1. The interpretation of Brentano's intentionality *from a historical, Aristotelian-scholastic perspective*. The following are to be noted here: (i) the debate Marras – Spiegelberg (1936–1981) about the Thomistic aspects of Brentano's intentionality in his 1874 work. Both authors agree that Brentano's phrase "the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object" means the presence of the known form, *species* or *intentio* in the sensory or mental faculty of the knowing subject.² Their disagreement involves what Brentano means to stress in his intentionality passage, the *immanence* of the form in the knowing faculty (Spiegelberg) or the *reference* of the known form to the thing it represents (Marras).³ (ii) Hedwig's conceptualist interpretation starts from Brentano's use of the term "objectively" as synonymous with "the intentional [...] inexistence of an object". Hedwig argues that Aquinas' conception of intentionality is not at the background of Brentano's intentionality passage – Aquinas doesn't know the expression "objectively" – but rather the use of this concept by medieval, conceptualist authors like Henry of Gent, Hervaeus Natalis, Peter d'Ailly, Durandus, Ockham, whose conceptions were known by Brentano due to the books of the history of philosophy of Hauréau, Ueberweg, Stöckl and Werner. Just as in these authors, the term 'objectively' characterized in Brentano the "immaterial presence" of the known object in the human faculty of knowledge and emphasized "the immanence of the process of cognition".⁴ All these interpretations have in common a general thrust, that they

² In the background of this conception is the Aristotelian thesis on sensory knowledge (see below).

³ Herbert Spiegelberg, „«Intention» und «Intentionalität» in der Scholastik, bei Brentano und Husserl", *Studia Philosophica* (1969) 29, pp. 206–208; *idem*, "«Intention» and «Intentionality» in the Scholastics, Brentano and Husserl", in *idem*, *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement*, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1981, pp. 14–16, 25; Ausonio Marras, "Scholastic Roots of Brentano's Conception of Intentionality", in L. McAlister (ed.), *The Philosophy of Brentano*, London, Duckworth, 1976, pp. 133 ff. Spiegelberg's paper (1969) is a reprint "in almost unaltered form" of Spiegelberg, „Der Begriff der Intentionalität in der Scholastik, bei Brentano und bei Husserl", *Philosophische Hefte* (1936) 5, pp. 75–91, whereas Spiegelberg's essay (1981) is the translation of the original German paper. Spiegelberg adds to this translation a "Supplement" written in 1979 (*idem*, *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement*, pp. 242–246) where he replays to Marras' criticism.

⁴ Klaus Hedwig, „Der scholastische Kontext des Intentionalen bei Brentano", in R.M. Chisholm, R. Haller (eds.), *Die Philosophie Franz Brentanos*. Beiträge zur Brentano-Konferenz Graz, 4–8 September 1977, Amsterdam, Rodopi, pp. 76–79; *idem*, "Intention: Outlines for the History of a Phenomenological Concept", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1978–79) 39, pp. 329–331; *idem*, „Vorwort", in Franz Brentano, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Philosophie im christlichen Abendland*, K. Hedwig (ed.), Hamburg, Meiner, 1980, p. XIII; *idem*, „Über die moderne Rezeption der Intentionalität: Thomas-Ockham-Brentano", in J. Follon, I.J. McEvoy (eds.), *Finalité et intentionnalité: doctrine thomiste et perspectives modernes*. Actes du Colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve et Louvain, 21–23 mai, 1990, Paris/Louvain, Vrin/Peeters, 1992, pp. 223–225. According to Hedwig, this concept is connected with the idea of a certain ontological persistence of the cognized object in the soul (Hedwig, „Über die moderne Rezeption", pp. 223 f., 248). Regarding this ontological persistence it should be added that though Brentano does not build further on this idea, yet he says in his dissertation: "Nothing we can form in our mind is so denuded of all *reality* that it is altogether excluded from the domain of the

understand Brentano's intentionality as the most salient feature distinguishing mental phenomena from physical phenomena and, following Brentano, they try to interpret it by means of scholastic terminology.⁵

2. The interpretation of Brentano's intentionality *from the systematic perspective of analytic philosophy*. This interpretation was impressively advocated by Roderick M. Chisholm, who from the outset interpreted Brentano on intentionality as a theory about the way consciousness refers to *non-existent objects*.⁶ Chisholm's considerations were very influential among analytic philosophers. In the last two decades, they have been criticized as an inaccurate historical reconstruction of Brentano's intentionality thesis by scholars who, despite Hedwig's substantive

on hos alethes" (Franz Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (1862), Nachdruck Olms, 1984 / Franz Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, R. George (ed. and trans.), California, University of California Press, 1975, p. 37/25; my emphasis). This assertion, however, alludes to a certain 'reality' of concepts in the soul. To my knowledge, this is the only passage in Brentano's published early writings that justifies Chisholm's ontological interpretation of Brentano's concept of intentionality, i.e. Chisholm's claim about a mode of being of the object immanent to the act in Brentano "that is short of actuality but more than nothingness" (Roderick M. Chisholm, "Intentionality", in P. Eduard (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Bd. 4, New York, Macmillan, 1967, p. 201; a critical interpretation of Chisholm's ontological thesis is provided by Marras, "Scholastic Roots", p. 131; Werner Sauer, „Die Einheit der Intentionalitätskonzeption bei Brentano“, *Grazer Philosophische Studien* (2006) 73, pp. 1–26; Mauro Antonelli, „Eine Psychologie, die Epoche gemacht hat“, in Th. Binder, A. Chrudzimski (eds.) Franz Brentano, *Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften*, Band 1, pp. IX–LXXXVI). Neither Chisholm nor the other authors point to this passage; on the same problem see also I. Tănăsescu, "The Two Theories of Intentionality in Brentano and Chisholm's Ontological and Psychological Theses". Hedwig's interpretation is widely accepted today, including by analytic authors (see, for example, Arkadius Chrudzimski, Barry Smith, "Brentano's Ontology: From Conceptualism to Reism", in D. Jaquette (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 197–220). Despite all of this, in *Critical Assessments of Brentano*, only the Thomist dimension of Brentano's concept of intentionality is emphasized (Mauro Antonelli, Federico Boccaccini (eds.), *Franz Brentano (Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers)*, vol. I. London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 241–261, 274–285). In this way a picture of the scholastic origins of Brentano's intentionality is provided that hinges on the results of the Marras – Spiegelberg debate and contributes to spreading an interpretation of Brentano's scholastic background on intentionality that, in its one-sidedness, has not been valid for more than forty years.

⁵ Within the same category: interpretation of Brentano's intentionality passage *from a historical, Aristotelian-scholastic perspective*, one can further distinguish the interpretation that put in brackets the scholastic influence of Brentano's intentionality and understand it directly from the perspective of Aristotelian psychology (Dieter Münch, *Intention und Zeichen, Untersuchungen zu Franz Brentano und zu Edmund Husserls Frühwerk*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1993; *idem*, "Brentano and Comte", *Grazer Philosophischen Studien* (1989) 35, pp. 33–54). I do not go here further into details of the debate Spiegelberg – Marras – Hedwig. I have thoroughly analyzed it in I. Tănăsescu, „Die intentionale Inexistenz. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der scholastischen Interpretation des Intentionalen bei Brentano“.

⁶ Chisholm, "Intentionality", p. 201; *idem*, "Brentano on Descriptive Psychology", in E.N. Lee, M.H. Mandelbaum (eds.), *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Baltimore, Hopkins Press, 1967, pp. 7–8. I have dealt with Chisholm's interpretation in "The Two Theories of Intentionality in Brentano and Chisholm's Ontological and Psychological Theses". For a criticism of Chisholm's thesis see also Tim Crane, *Aspects of Psychologism*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 27 f.

paper on the conceptualist commitment of Brentano on intentionality, continue to understand Brentano's theory of intentionality as one that is under the influence of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.⁷

3. The interpretation of Brentano's intentionality *from a historical, modern positive perspective*,⁸ that I propose here. This interpretation (i) doesn't start from the traditional, Aristotelian-scholastic feature of Brentano's thought, but from his modern conception of science as studying phenomena and not substances; (ii) it interprets Brentano's expression "the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object" at the level of sensory act as physical phenomena that "have only a phenomenal and intentional existence," i.e., only as a content of the sensory act (PES, p. 109/92);⁹ (iii) it leads to the modern hierarchy of phenomena and to the modern classificatory-methodological framework Brentano's empirical psychology is built on: physical phenomena as object of natural science – mental phenomena as object of the mental science. This correlation is fundamental in Brentano's 1874 work because it constitutes the fundamental division of empirical, inductive knowledge: empirical psychology is built in constant reference to natural science and mental phenomena are analyzed by constant reference to physical phenomena.

From a more general perspective, the main features of this modern, positive interpretation of Brentano's intentionality are as follows: (iv) Though it pays close attention to Brentano's famous intentionality passage, it does not start from it, but from his considerations concerning the classification of phenomena and sciences in the first book of his work. (v) Consequently, it reads Brentano's PES not as *a work on the philosophy of mind*, as it has been read up to the present, but as *a methodological work*; for this reason, of the two books of Brentano's PES it puts the emphasis not on the second book, on the philosophy of mind, but on the first methodical book. (vi) It considers Brentano's empirical psychology as a contribution to the positive philosophy of Comte and Mill in the 19th century since it is based on the conception of positive science and method developed by them, and since the problem resolved stemmed from taking over the comtean hierarchy of phenomena and sciences in Brentano's empirical psychology.¹⁰

⁷ Sauer, *op. cit.*; Antonelli, *op. cit.*, pp. LXVIII–XLVII.

⁸ In what follows I will speak of the positive and not of the positivist interpretation of the PES in order to highlight the fact that the interpretation I propose here is inspired by the positive philosophy of Comte and Mill, i.e., by the works *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830–1842) and *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), and not by 20th century positivism.

⁹ In Brentano's empirical psychology this has to be contrasted with the real existence of the mental act (PES, pp. 25 f., 35 f., 109/9 f., 19 f., 92).

¹⁰ I do not go here into details of this questions that I have thoroughly analyzed in the second part of I. Tănăsescu, "Franz Brentano and Auguste Comte. The Theory of Stages and the Psychology", pp. 94–131. I only confine myself to mention the main arguments in favor of this thesis and to point to the fact that Brentano's 1874 work is built on Mill's inductive-deductive model of science: the inductive establishing of the most general psychological laws, deducing from them the laws of more complex phenomena, and the inductive verification of these deductive inferences (PES, pp. 90 f./72 f.).

As I will further show, what comes to the fore from this perspective are neither traditional, Aristotelian-scholastic aspects of Brentano's theory of intentionality, nor the question of how consciousness relates to (non)existent objects, but the irreducibility of the mental world to the physical world. Also salient is the role intentionality plays in establishing Brentano's psychology and in resolving a central problem of the positive philosophy of the 19th century with regard to which Brentano and Comte take such different stances: the problem of the homogeneity and continuity of the hierarchy of phenomena studied by theoretical, abstract sciences. From my point of view, this presents the central argument for a minimal interpretation of Brentano's intentionality thesis, i.e., for the thesis that Brentano's intentionality theory, as stated in his empirical psychology, is not primarily a theory of the way consciousness relates to existent or non-existent objects, but a theory of the most salient distinguishing feature that separates the mental world from the physical world and makes the former irreducible to the latter. This theory clearly shows Brentano's antinaturalist and antireductionist stance regarding the relation between consciousness and its physiological substratum. Against this backdrop it becomes clear that what I intend to offer here is to establish the meaning of his stance according to the role it plays in separating mental phenomena from all other physical phenomena in the hierarchy of phenomena Brentano borrowed from Comte.

While the role played by intentionality in separating the abovementioned worlds of phenomena is well known, there is no work in the literature that relates Brentano's intentionality thesis to Comte's hierarchy of phenomena and classification of the sciences. The historical significance that Brentano's theory of intentionality receives from this point of view has therefore not yet been disclosed. The reason for this is that his remarks on intentionality have always been read from the point of view of the role they played for Brentano's students and successors (e.g., Chisholm). However, they have never been read from the perspective of A. Comte's positive philosophy, i.e., as Brentano's original contribution to one of the main problems of Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive*, the problem of the hierarchy of phenomena and of the classification of sciences correlated to them. As I will further show, this problem was of huge importance for building Brentano's *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*. This is a historical fact that deserves to be known 150 years after the publication of Brentano's masterpiece, and this is also the main reason, why I called the interpretation proposed here a positive interpretation.

Since this interpretation is based on Brentano's hard-to-doubt claims about the role of intentionality in distinguishing the mental from the physical and in building mental science, I do not consider it as a maximal, but as a minimal interpretation, i.e., one that is easier to endorse than a maximal interpretation of his theory of intentionality as a theory about the manner consciousness relates to objects, be they existent or non-existent. Despite the fact that the latter has a certain base in Brentano's intentionality passage, i.e., Brentano's statement that the object toward which the act is directed does not need to be a real one (PES, p. 106/88),

Brentano's conception of intentionality in his empirical psychology is not elaborated to solve this problem, but to trace the fundamental distinction in the field of empirical research, to explain what are the main features that distinguish the mental from the physical, what role they play in the classification of mental phenomena and in the establishing psychology as a theoretical science in Comte's modified ladder of sciences.¹¹

Therefore, in what follows I will present not a new interpretation of the 'nature' of intentionality in Brentano's work from 1874, but a minimal, positive interpretation of his intentionality thesis, starting from: 1. Comte's conception of the hierarchy of phenomena and sciences; 2. the role they play in the formation of Brentano's psychology; and 3. the role Brentano's intentionality plays within Comte's scale of sciences and phenomena as modified in PES.

II. INTENTIONALITY AS THE POINT OF CAESURA IN THE BRENTANO'S SCALE OF SCIENCES

As it is known, in the first lesson of *Cours de philosophie positive* Comte presents the three stages of the evolution of the human spirit: in the theological stage of human thinking phenomena are explained via supernatural forces, in the metaphysical stage via abstract entities, and in the positive stage via general laws of phenomena.¹² In the second lecture Comte goes a step further and presents the ladder of positive sciences explained by his law of the stages. Comte introduces this ladder starting from the very idea that there is a natural order of phenomena that goes from the simplest, independent and general phenomena to the most interdependent, individual and complex phenomena. Corresponding to it there is a scale of sciences dealing with these phenomena: phenomena studied by mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and social physics or sociology. According to him the first five sciences of the scale have already gone into their positive stage and it is the task of the last three volume of his *Cours* to establish social physics as a positive science.¹³

¹¹ Regarding the relationship between intentionality as the most salient distinguishing feature of the mental and intentionality as a theory about the way consciousness relates to objects see I. Tănăsescu. "The two Theories of Intentionality in Brentano and the Program of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*".

¹² Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, Tome premier, Paris, Bachelier, 21864 / Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau (1853), first published in 1853, volume I, Ontario, Batoche Books, 2000, p. 9/28. For the first two lectures of Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* (pp. 1–89), I have used a sample of Brentano's own copy that appeared in 1864. I do thank Professor Dr. Klaus Hedwig for the copies of the materials from Brentano's personal library that he put at my disposal in 2015.

¹³ Comte, *Cours*, pp. 22 ff./32.

As regards Brentano, he has recourse to Comte's scale of sciences in order to justify the claim of his empirical psychology to become a modern science, i.e., a science that deals not with substances and their proprieties, but with phenomena and their constant relationship, the laws (PES, pp. 24–35/8–19). However, in Brentano Comte's scale of sciences is submitted to a fundamental change: Unlike Comte, who reduces psychology to phrenology and eliminate it from his scale of the positive sciences, considering it as a false science that lacks of any positive method,¹⁴ Brentano introduces it within the ladder of sciences. Furthermore, he considers not sociology, but psychology to be the fundamental human science and wants to found sociology on psychology (PES, pp. 38 ff./23 ff.)¹⁵. Exemplary of the role Comte's hierarchy of phenomena plays in his empirical psychology are Brentano's explanations in the first chapter of his work. This highlights both the unilateral grounding of phenomena and their corresponding theoretical sciences as well as their *continuity*. This perspective appears clearly in the following passage:

The general theoretical sciences form a kind of hierarchy in which each higher step is erected on the basis of the one below it. The higher sciences investigate more complex phenomena, the lower ones phenomena that are simpler, but which contribute to the complexity. The progress of the sciences which stand higher in the scale naturally presupposes that of the lower ones. [...] It is easy to explain why physiology developed so late. The phenomena it studies are much more complex than those studied by the earlier sciences and are dependent upon them, just as the phenomena of chemistry are dependent upon those of physics and the phenomena of physics are dependent upon those of mathematics. But it is just as easy to understand, then, why psychology has not borne more abundant fruit up until now. Just as physical phenomena are under the influence of mathematical laws, and chemical phenomena are under the influence of physical laws, and those of physiology under the influence of all these laws, so psychological phenomena are influenced by the laws governing the forces which shape and renew the bodily organs involved. (PES, pp. 38 f./23 f.)

We observe that the fundamental thought of this passage is the one concerning the relation of dependence between the different classes of phenomena, their corresponding sciences, and also the idea of a constant transition from one order of phenomena to another one, which is in accordance with the idea of

¹⁴ Comte, *Cours*, pp. 30 ff./2000a, 36 f.

¹⁵ Franz Brentano, „Über die Gründe der Entmutigung auf philosophischem Gebiete“ (1874), in O. Kraus (ed.), *Über die Zukunft der Philosophie*, Leipzig, Meiner, 1929, pp. 94, 100 / Franz Brentano, „On the Reasons for a Loss of Confidence in the Area of Philosophy“, in I. Tănăsescu, A. Bejinariu, S. Krantz Gabriel, C. Stoenescu (eds.), *Brentano and the Positive Philosophy of Comte and Mill. With Translations of Original Writings on Philosophy as Science by Franz Brentano*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 495, 500.

continuity in Comte's scale. As we will further see, an important moment of Comte's hierarchy consists in the transition from phenomena of inorganic to those of organic bodies or from chemistry to biology.¹⁶ Moreover, it should be added that this approach is especially expressed in the first book of Brentano's *Psychology* and also in his inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna. (PES, pp. 3, 38 f., 43/XXVIII, 23 f., 28 f.).¹⁷

The problem raised here concerns the way in which a discipline, that works mainly with a method – inner perception – that can never become observation (*Beobachtung*), could be integrated in an encyclopedic ladder of sciences to which pertain only those disciplines that respect without exception the condition of being based on observation. The implicit answer that Brentano gives in his *Psychology* can be interpreted to the effect that this is possible precisely because empirical psychology is not the same as his later descriptive psychology. Unlike this discipline, which must discover the elements of consciousness and the way in which they connect,¹⁸ empirical psychology sets goals that concur with those of natural science, e.g., establishing the empirical laws of succession and coexistence of mental phenomena, and explaining them through ultimate mental laws (PES, pp. 59–63/44–48). These goals are especially important for the integration of Brentano's psychology in Comte's scale, because precisely the possibility of psychology to attain them offers the necessary justification for it to assert itself as a member of the mentioned scale.

Beside this continuity perspective on the phenomena and their corresponding sciences there is in *Psychology from an empirical standpoint* another perspective, that reveals Brentano's real opinion about these problems and is the one of the *total heterogeneity* between mental phenomena and all other phenomena preceding them in Comte's scale.

In order to understand this other perspective, we have to start from the three principles that lie at the basis of Comte's hierarchy of phenomena:

1. The *principle of dependency* that consists in the fact that each new class of phenomena builds upon the preceding order of phenomena and can function only on their basis.

2. The *principle of continuity* that consists in the fact that each new class of phenomena functionally contains the phenomena that precede it in the hierarchy.

3. The *principle of emergence*: Each new order of phenomena appears as something new in relation to the other phenomena, since it brings to the table new

¹⁶ Comte, *Cours*, pp. 49 f./27.

¹⁷ Brentano, „Über die Gründe“, pp. 85–100/489–500.

¹⁸ Franz Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, R.M. Chisholm, W. Baumgartner (eds.), Hamburg, Meiner, 1982, p. 1 / Franz Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology*, B. Müller (ed. and trans.), London, Routledge, 1995, p. 3.

elements and relations that integrate the preceding phenomena and change their effect.¹⁹

As I will show further, in Brentano's case we are not dealing with the *principle of continuity*, but with the *principle of heterogeneity*, because for him mental phenomena do not contain really and functionally the phenomena preceding them, but only intentionally, being in relation to them something totally different. On this background it is important to stress that unlike Brentano, who ascertains the presence of a new quality on the side of mental life, considers it something totally heterogeneous, and marks in the case of this heterogeneity the discontinuity with the physiological and in general with the whole physical domain, for Comte, the emergence of phenomena goes hand in hand with the continuity of his hierarchy. Although for Comte higher phenomena have a different quality than the phenomena preceding them, the latter are really embedded in the composition and in the functioning of the first. In this sense it can be said that the higher phenomena contain in a real manner the phenomena preceding them, and not just intentionally and phenomenally as is the case for Brentano (PES, p. 109/92). The life of a cell as biological phenomenon, for example, is something radically new compared to the properties of the chemical elements and compounds like oxygen, glucose, fatty acids, etc. Despite all this, the life of a cell is constituted by the chemical processes of assimilation and dissimilation, that are further constituted by certain chemical reactions (e.g., oxidation) in which the just mentioned chemical factors are involved. However, the cell does not contain these elements intentionally and phenomenally as in Brentano the mental phenomenon contains the physical phenomenon, and it is not itself a chemical or physical phenomenon, but an autonomous biological phenomenon, which is characterized by its own functions (reaction to stimulus, metabolism, growth, etc.). Thus, in Comte we are dealing with relations of functional dependency, which are closely connected with the fact that the higher phenomena really contain the lower ones. This also shows clearly, in what sense for him the emergence goes along with the continuity of phenomena: As already mentioned, we're not also dealing with biological phenomena in every case of physical and chemical phenomena. Conversely, we cannot consider life and its own phenomena without also considering the chemical and physical processes of which it is composed. As it will be shown below, we cannot find an analogy for these relations in Brentano because, although the mental plane depends on the physiological one, for him there is no real physiological part of the mental phenomena that would be taken over and integrated by the mental phenomena in

¹⁹ In this sense, Comte claims: "Therefore it is that physiological study should begin with inorganic phenomena; since the organic include all the qualities belonging to them, with a special order added, viz., the vital phenomena, which belong to organisation." (Comte *Cours*, p. 69/49). On the level of positive sciences, the dependency and at the same time the epistemological autonomy of each positive science correspond to these principles in Comte's scale with respect to preceding disciplines (Vincent Guillin, "Comte and Social Science", in M. Bourdeau, M. Pickering, W. Schmaus (eds.), *Love, Order, and Progress: The Science, Philosophy, and Politics of Auguste Comte*, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 2018, p. 137).

their structure in order to bring about a new quality, namely that of mental life. For this reason I would say that regarding Brentano's heterogeneity we could speak about an *emergence without continuity* and in Comte's case about an *emergence with continuity* or about a *functional containment* that must be distinguished from Brentano's *intentional containment*, i.e., from his "intentional [...] inexistence of an object " in the mind."²⁰ In Comte, on the contrary, we shouldn't emphasize the word "containment," but rather its adjective "functional," because what is relevant for the purposes of our analysis – namely the way in which the higher phenomena intentionally, i.e., as *intentio*, *species* or form in Aristotelian-scholastic sense or as content of sensory act in modern sense contain the lower ones – is from Comte's point of view irrelevant. The reason for this is that what are of importance for him are the relations of functional dependency, and not the ones of being-in (*Insein*).

We thus see that the positive interpretation of Brentanian intentionality from the perspective of its role in Comte's hierarchy of phenomena brings to light the same aspect that most interpretations from an Aristotelian-Scholastic perspective bring to light, namely the immanence of the object to the mental act. However, there are radical differences in the interpretation of what is immanent between the two perspectives. I will highlight these differences by starting from three central theses of Aristotelian thought and then expounding how they have been negated in the modern framework of scientific knowledge in which PES is elaborated.

The Aristotelian-Scholastic perspective works with a substantialist conception of the physical world and our knowledge of it. According to this conception:

1. The world consists of things interpreted as physical substances and their properties;²¹
2. Sensory knowledge consists of taking on the form of the thing without its matter; the known forms are real forms that exist independently of knowledge as properties of things.²²
3. Sensory knowledge is infallible since the „sense cannot be deceived about a proper object“ (the eye about the color, the ear about the tone).²³

²⁰ I adopt the terminology of containment and being-in of Münch, *Intention und Zeichen*, pp. 68–73.

²¹ Aristotle, *Met.* VI 1, 1026 a 13 ff., XI, 7, 1064 a 10 ff.

²² Aristotle, *De an.* II, 424a17–21, III, 431b30–432a1; Franz Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom Nous Poietikos* (1867), Nachdruck Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, pp. 80 f. / Franz Brentano, *The psychology of Aristotle, in particular his doctrine of the active intellect. With an appendix concerning the activity of Aristotele's God*, R. George (ed. and trans.), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977, pp. 54 f., 210; on this problem see Richard Sorabji, "From Aristotle to Brentano: the Development of the Concept of Intentionality", in H. Blumenthal (ed.), *Aristotle and the Later Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Supp. 9, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 226 f., 247 f., and Victor Caston, "Aristotle and the Problem of Intentionality", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1998) LVIII, pp. 249 f., 254 ff., 291 ff.)

²³ *De an.* II, 418a12–15; Franz Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles*, pp. 84 f./57.

On the contrary, the modern, positive conception embraced by Brentano in PES and other early writings is as follows:

1. On the positive view, traditional notions such as physical substances with their properties are fictions constituted by the human mind in the metaphysical stage of thought for the purpose of explaining the world. As such, they must be excluded from scientific and philosophical research and replaced by notions corresponding to the positive stage of thought such as the notions of phenomena and their constant relations, the laws.²⁴

2. In this perspective the world is no longer made up of things considered as physical substances, but of things considered by science as bearers of certain physical forces whose action on our sense organs produce our sensations. Their sensory content is precisely the physical phenomena studied by science. The correlations of coexistence or succession specific to those phenomena are considered by science as an expression of the correlations specific to the forces that cause them: “We could express the scientific task of the natural sciences by saying something to the effect that they are those sciences which seek to explain the succession of physical phenomena connected with normal and pure sensations [...] on the basis of the assumption of a world which resembles one which has three dimensional extension in space and flows in one direction in time, and which influences our sense organs. Without explaining the absolute nature of this world, these sciences would limit themselves to ascribing to its forces capable of producing sensations and of exerting a reciprocal influence upon one another, and determining for these forces the laws of co-existence and succession.” (PES, pp. 115 ff./98 f.)²⁵

²⁴ Comte *Cours*, pp. 9 ff./28 ff.; Franz Brentano, „Auguste Comte und die positive Philosophie” (1869), in O. Kraus (ed.), *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie*, Leipzig, Meiner, 1926, pp. 103 ff. / Franz Brentano, „Auguste Comte and Positive Philosophy”, in I. Tănăsescu, A. Bejinariu, S. Krantz Gabriel, C. Stoenescu (eds.), *Brentano and the Positive Philosophy of Comte and Mill. With Translations of Original Writings on Philosophy as Science by Franz Brentano*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 439 f.; Franz Brentano, *Geschichte der Philosophie der Neuzeit*, K. Hedwig (ed.), Hamburg, Meiner, 1987, pp. 101 f., 247 f.

²⁵ Until now this quote has never been juxtaposed with Brentano’s affirmations in his paper on Comte from 1869. However, Brentano in the passage just quoted adopts the positive idea of the relative, phenomenal character of our knowledge that he plainly sustains in 1869. The broader context of his affirmations is made up of his attempt to defend Comte against the objection of skepticism: “[...] And what else remains to distinguish us from them (skeptics; my addition) if not the claim that the relations between things are knowable? – The absolute size of a body cannot be determined, the relative size we can measure and calculate accurately; the absolute time of an event is unknown to us, [115] though perhaps we can specify earlier and later in terms of hours and minutes. That is what separates us from the skeptics, then, and it distances us widely from them, a thousand miles away. For we must not believe that knowing those relations between things is something trivial, since it is rather something overwhelmingly important. [...] But relative spatial and temporal determinations, the differences of together or separated, simultaneous or earlier or later, relative motion and rest, the relationships of sizes and dimensions are of far greater consequence to us. Mechanics and art, theory and practical life depend entirely on knowledge of these things. Comte, therefore, has not granted too much to skepticism in this regard, he has not sacrificed the interests of science. He is no more skeptical than we ourselves are, no more skeptical than any genuine philosopher must be.” (Brentano, “Auguste Comte”, pp. 114 f./445 f.)

3. Sensory knowledge no longer consists in taking on the form of the thing without its matter, but in the sensations caused by the very action of the physical forces attributed to bodies. The result of this action is no longer the known sensible form existing both in the soul and in the thing, but the physical phenomenon. That phenomenon does not exist as such in reality, but is only a sign or symbol of the action on the sense organs of physical forces (PES, pp. 25 f., 35/9 f., 19).²⁶

4. Unlike the Aristotelian-Scholastic conception which assumed that there is a correspondence between thought and world and that reality exists as it appears to us, the PES is developed within the modern view of sensory knowledge which, through the theory of primary and secondary qualities, emphasized precisely the difference between the way things are and the way they appear to us. For this reason, sensory knowledge is no longer considered infallible, but as fallible, the fallibility of external perception being strongly emphasized in PES (PES, p. 109/91). The phenomenal and intentional character attributed by Brentano to physical phenomena is closely linked to that feature of external perception and is permanently set by him in opposition to the real character of mental phenomena and the infallibility of inner perception (PES, pp. 109 f./91 f.). The reality of mental phenomena in question here is an epistemically guaranteed reality in the sense that Brentano's reason for claiming that mental phenomena exist as they appear to us is not that they somehow exist independently of perception, as is the case with Aristotle's physical substances, but is precisely the evidence of inner perception, the fact that it is not mistaken about the phenomena to which it is oriented – if we were to renounce this thesis then, Brentano believes, knowledge would lose all firm support and we should fall victim to skepticism (PES, p. 159/140). However, on the other hand, the repeated evidence gathered over time against the credibility of the results reached by outer perception clearly shows that the only existence that can be attributed to its sensory contents is the phenomenal and intentional existence, attempts to consider them as really existing as they appear to us more often than not leading to contradictions (PES, pp. 25 f., 110 f./9 f., 93 f.).

As a result, the following expressions: self-evident internal perception – misleading outer perception and really existing mental phenomenon – merely phenomenally and intentionally existing physical phenomenon are essential to PES. Therefore, it is no accident that in elaborating his phenomenology Husserl felt the need to reject precisely these fundamental Brentanian theses in the appendix to his *Logical Investigations*.²⁷

We thus see how the traditional conception of the world and our knowledge of it, under which Brentano developed his first Aristotelian writings, the dissertation

²⁶ Hermann Helmholtz, „Ueber die Natur der menschlichen Sinnesempfindungen“, in H. Helmholtz, *Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen*, II. Band, Berlin, Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1883, p. 180.

²⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900/01), Zweiter Band, Zweiter Teil, U. Panzer (ed.), Hua XIX/II, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff 1984, pp. 751–775 / Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (vol. 2), D. Morand (ed.), J.N. Findlay (trans.), London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 335–358.

and the habilitation work, is put aside in PES in order to be replaced by the positive conception of the world. On the other hand, his idea of clarifying what he means by “the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object”, by resorting frequently and exclusively to expressions proper to the Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition with which he was so familiar, does not fit at all into the modern framework of PES, but constitutes an extension in PES of the analyses of his earlier Aristotelian works.²⁸ Due to the numerous traditional references it contains, this extension has directed research towards investigating and clarifying the Aristotelian-Scholastic sources of intentionality for decades, while at the same time hiding modern aspects and problems of PES, for example, the role of intentionality in the solution of problems arising from the Comtean hierarchy of phenomena and the corresponding sciences taken over in PES. The abundance of Aristotelian-Scholastic sources has also favored, among other things, the inadequate interpretation of his thought by putting into circulation theses that might have made sense if PES had been elaborated within the Aristotelian-Scholastic framework of the habilitation work devoted to Aristotle’s psychology. But they lose any meaning in the modern, positive framework on which PES is built. For example, Chisholm’s ontological interpretation of the intentionality thesis argues that what exists intentionally in Brentano is characterized by a way of being, “that is [...] more than nothingness”, an idea that refers to a certain ontological persistence in the mind of objects in medieval conceptualism so convincingly highlighted by Hedwig.²⁹ It is entirely in line with the spirit of phenomenal knowledge in which PES is built that the phenomenal and intentional existence of the physical phenomenon as immanent object to the act of sensation should not be qualified ontologically by the use of a terminology that can be interpreted as substantialist precisely because the modern, positive framework of PES does not favor such metaphysical interpretations. Moreover, there is no statement in Brentano’s text that refers to the idea of ontological persistence (see above n. 4). Therefore, when Brentano speaks of the phenomenal and intentional existence of physical phenomena, he does not mean that they somehow exist in a diminished way in the mind, whereas mental phenomena have something like full substantiality, but only that they do not exist as such in a real way, as is the case with mental phenomena that appear to us as they exist (PES, pp. 108 f./91 f.).³⁰

Let’s now come back from this shared idea by Brentano and Comte to their different way of dealing with the continuity of phenomena. As already suggested, Brentano, takes another path in approaching this question, because in his hierarchy of phenomena and of sciences there is a special moment which can be described not as a point of transition, but as a point of caesura, and it shows that in his case there is no continuity in Comte’s sense between the world of mental phenomena

²⁸ See, for example, Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles*, pp. 80 f./54 f., 210; PES, pp. 106 f./88 f.

²⁹ Chisholm, “Intentionality”, p. 201; *idem*, “Brentano on Descriptive Psychology ...”, p. 8; Hedwig, „Über die moderne Rezeption”, pp. 223 f.

³⁰ Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, p. 129/137.

and that of physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena. Unlike Comte, but in full accordance with his earlier classification of sciences³¹ this point of caesura does not lie between chemistry and biology and accordingly between inorganic and organic bodies or organisms and environment as in Comte,³² but between the last member of the scale of natural sciences, namely physiology, and psychology, and accordingly between physiological and mental phenomena.³³ The context in which he discusses this point of caesura is the analysis of Horwicz's attempt to found psychology on physiology, in that he wanted to attain information about the "most general organization and structure of the mental life" from the "organization and structure of corporeal life" (PES, p. 63/49).³⁴ Horwicz's approach is based on the thought that each process of the soul has a material substrate. This thesis leads him to consider physiology as the "methodological vehicle of research" of psychology.³⁵ Horwicz's reasoning is as follows: Each individual science is formed by a threefold borrowing: it borrows (i) the general principles (e.g., the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction) from philosophy, (ii) the basic concepts that are necessary to it (e.g., the concept of magnitude) and also (iii) the very important material of experience from other sciences.³⁶ The question that arises in this case is: from what science should psychology draw its experiential material? Horwicz's answer is: from the discipline "which deals with the next higher generic concept," namely physiology, because it deals with the concept which, in view of its generality, is closest to the concept of the soul and forms its genus, namely the concept of life. Horwicz's attempt to reconstruct the relationship between the two concepts is characterized precisely by the fact that his aim of deriving mental life from physiological processes is at risk of losing sight of the specific difference of mental life, something Brentano also accuses him of.³⁷ The relationship just described between the concept of life and that of the soul is also expressed by the fact that there is an intimate interaction between physiological and psychological processes and that the former form the immediate conditions for the occurrence of

³¹ See I. Tănăsescu, "Franz Brentano and Auguste Comte. The Theory of Stages and the Psychology", pp. 248–262.

³² Comte, *Cours* 1864, pp. 49 f./2000a, p. 27.

³³ In I. Tănăsescu, "The Intentionality of Sensation and the Problem of Classification of Philosophical Sciences in Brentano's empirical Psychology", I have proposed an interpretation of Brentano's concept of intentionality that is compatible with both his early taxonomies of philosophical sciences, and his early program for the establishment of a new, empirical and non-speculative psychology and philosophy (see also Ion Tănăsescu, "Empfindung, äußere Wahrnehmung und physisches Phänomen als Gegenstand der Naturwissenschaft in Brentanos empirischer Psychologie", in *Revue roumaine de philosophie* 1–2 (2011), pp. 103–131).

³⁴ Adolf Horwicz, „Methodologie der Seelenlehre“, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik. Neue Folge*, (1872a), pp. 189 f.

³⁵ Adolf Horwicz, *Psychologische Analysen auf physiologischer Grundlage. Ein Versuch zur Neubegründung der Seelenlehre* I. Theil, Halle, Pfeffer, 1872, p. 175, apud PES, p. 64; see also Horwicz, „Methodologie der Seelenlehre“, pp. 190, 201.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p 183.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 203; PES, pp. 67 f./52.

the latter. Due to these intimate relations, Horwicz is of the opinion that physiology would not only be an auxiliary but also a basic science for psychology, which would provide it with the same help as mathematics does for physics. On this basis, he wants to derive the “higher mental structures” from “the lower physiological” processes.³⁸

This is exactly the point at which Brentano’s polemic against Horwicz’ conception of the relation between physiology and psychology ignites. On the one hand, Brentano recognizes the dependence of psychological research on physiology. On the other hand, he adheres all the more to the principle of the irreducibility of mental life and rejects every reductivist position (Comte, Horwicz, Maudsley), because exactly like Mill (see below) his opinion is that the solution to psychological questions is to be found on the basis of the study of the life of consciousness and not of its physiological conditions. This is why he asserts that between the two sciences we can speak of a relation that is fundamentally different not only from the one that holds between mathematics and physics, but from all other relations in Comte’s scale of sciences. In order to stress this difference and to underscore the special importance of mental phenomena, Brentano compares the phenomena studied by psychology and physiology, on the one hand, and by physiology and chemistry, on the other hand:

[...] But the result of a more careful comparison and an analysis of all pertinent facts certainly seems to us to prove that much more information about physiological phenomena is to be expected from chemical phenomena than from physiological phenomena about mental phenomena. The difference between physiological processes and chemical and physical processes really seems to be only that physiological processes are *more complex*. [...] The more comprehensive concept of chemical phenomena has been shown to apply uniformly to inorganic changes and to life in the physiological sense. We can hardly say the same thing of the concept of life when we apply it to the physiological and psychical realms. On the contrary, if we turn our attention from the external world to the inner, we find ourselves, as it were, in a new realm. The phenomena are *absolutely heterogeneous*, and even analogies either forsake us completely or take on a very vague and artificial character. It was for this very reason that we separated the psychical and physical sciences as the main branches of empirical science in our earlier discussion of the fundamental divisions of that realm. (PES, pp. 65 f./50 f.; my emphasis)³⁹

³⁸ Horwicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 188 f., 203, 205.

³⁹ Concerning this passage, we should note two things: Using the word “analogies,” Brentano refers to Horwicz’ thesis that important physiological differences could serve psychologists as “vehicles of research,” in order to discover important corresponding psychological differences, like according to him the psychological differences “between the theoretical and practical orientation” of the life of the soul which we can attain on the basis of the physiological differences between sensible and motor nerve function (see PES, pp. 66 ff./51 f., and Horwicz’ text quoted there). Husserl counts among the few interpreters who captured the importance of this passage for Brentano’s psychological conception (Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, pp. 757 f./2001, 337 f.).

As this passage clearly shows, the expression that best captures the relation between the meanings of the concept “life” on the physiological and psychological planes is not the expression “*greater complication*,” as in Comte, but “absolute heterogeneity.” Interpreted in terms of the features by which Brentano separates mental phenomena from physical phenomena in the first chapter of the second book in PES, it can be said that the absolute heterogeneity in question is specified by a number of six features that are exclusively valid for mental phenomena and to which physical phenomena are in no way subject. These features are as follows:

1) Psychical phenomena are either representations or are founded on representations – this is the law of the foundation of psychical phenomena; by contrast, physical phenomena are neither representations nor are founded on representations, as judgments and emotional phenomena are, but are objects immanent to them, sensory contents of the sensible acts of external sensations or perceptions.

2) Mental phenomena are non-spatial; by contrast, physical phenomena are spatial.

3) Mental phenomena are intentional in the sense that they intentionally contain an object; no physical phenomenon has the property of intentionally containing an object.

4-5) Mental phenomena *are perceived* in self-evident inner perception and *actually exist* as they are perceived; by contrast, physical phenomena *are the object* not of inner perception but *of outer perception*, and they *do not exist in reality* as they appear to us, but only intentionally and phenomenally, i. e., only as sensory contents of our mental states.

6) Mental phenomena exist as a unity; physical phenomena do not exist as a unity. (PES, pp. 95–117/77–97)

As is well-known, of all these features, the „intentional inexistence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it.” (transl. modified PES, p. 107/89). Although he does not explain why he gives this privileged status in characterizing mental phenomena to the feature of intentional inexistence, I nevertheless believe that Brentano’s reasons for doing so are as follows: among all the features listed, the intentional inexistence of the object is the only one that characterizes the mental act according to its primary relation to the object, a relation that constitutes the fundamental feature of mental acts. Unlike three of the other six features listed, which either characterize acts negatively, non-spatiality, for example, or refer to the relationship between acts, as in the case of the unity of acts or the law of the foundation of mental phenomena, it brings to light a fundamental feature of the act, intrinsic to it. This feature is already implied both in the property of the various mental phenomena given simultaneously in consciousness to form a unity, and in the law of the foundation of mental phenomena which establishes the relations between phenomena separated into distinct classes precisely on the basis of the intentional relation to the object.

Another intrinsic feature of the act listed above is that it is apprehensible in internal perception exactly as it is (PES, p. 109/92). However, according to the Brentanian theory of the act, the primary relation to the object holds primacy: for Brentano every mental act is oriented primarily towards an object and secondarily towards itself. That secondary orientation is a real part of the act and is constituted by the internal representation of the act, by the judgement of internal perception concerning it – the mental act I am experiencing now exists, and along with the sensation of pleasure or displeasure felt in experiencing it. Although the two relations cannot exist without each other, the primary relation to the object is the most important of them, since it establishes the intentional quality of the act and makes the act what it is, namely an act of representation or a judgment or an emotional phenomenon, the three fundamental classes of mental acts in Brentano. The secondary relation of the act or inner consciousness is oriented precisely towards this quality of the act which is grasped in inner consciousness according to its three parts (PES, pp. 173 f./153–154). Moreover, although the secondary relation of the act to itself could be used as a criterion for distinguishing mental phenomena from physical phenomena – no physical phenomenon is self-conscious! – it could not be used as a criterion for classifying mental phenomena since it is valid for all classes of mental phenomena. Instead, the way in which the object exists in consciousness or the relation of intentional containment constitutes the very criterion for establishing and classifying the main classes of mental phenomena into representations, judgments and emotional phenomena (PES, p. 218/197).

In conclusion, there are three arguments why Brentano regards intentional inexistence as the distinctive trait that best characterizes mental phenomena (i) it captures the feature that characterizes the most important distinction part of the act, the primary relation to the object,⁴⁰ (ii) allows the separation of the mental from the physical and thus the tracing of the most important division in the sphere of empirical knowledge, and (iii) allows the separation and classification of mental phenomena.

Returning now to the question of the relationship between the meaning of the term “life” at the physiological and psychological level addressed in the polemic with Horwicz, for Brentano, life on the mental plane is made up of the coexistence and succession of mental phenomena. However, on the physiological level, it is composed of the processes of the organic life of the brain. Although these processes are something qualitatively new as opposed to other classes of phenomena in Comte’s hierarchy, they function on the basis of physical and chemical processes that represent real components of the physiological phenomena of the brain. Concerning mental life, it essentially depends on cerebral physiological life,⁴¹ but it is not constituted of physiological processes, rather being something

⁴⁰ According to his descriptive psychology, distinctional parts are those parts which cannot be separated from the act in a real way, but only by way of thought (Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, p. 13/16).

⁴¹ Despite this dependency, according to Brentano it could be very possible that mental life can persist after death (PES, pp. 41 f./25 f.).

totally different these processes. If we further search the component parts of mental life, then Brentano's remarks from his lectures on descriptive psychology show that we are not dealing with a physiological, but with a real psychological part of mental phenomena, which are one-sidedly separable.⁴² Regarding these parts, we can distinguish further distinctional parts, namely the real distinctional parts: the primary relation of the act to its immanent object and its secondary relation to itself, and the intentional distinctional parts, the immanent object of the act, that does not really exist in the act, but intentionally and objectively, namely as form or intention or object in the traditional sense. There are also no real physiological components of the act, rather the physiological phenomena, like all other phenomena, can only become intentional parts, i.e., immanent objects or contents of the act. It follows that of the three principles of Comte's hierarchy of phenomena: the principles of dependency, of continuity, and of emergence, only the first and the last one remain valid in the case of the relation between the mental and the physical. In other words, for Brentano the mental domain depends on the physiological one and cannot be reduced to it, yet mental phenomena do not contain physiological phenomena in the way in which biological phenomena contain the phenomena that precede them in Comte's hierarchy. Consequently, in Brentano the principle of continuity is no longer valid, and in place of Comte's real, functional containment specific to his hierarchy of phenomena, for Brentano intentional being-in (in-existence) comes into play, that is, a mental phenomenon can contain as its object any sort of phenomenon, including mental phenomena.⁴³ Moreover – and here we can see the strict distinction of Cartesian origin between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* in Brentano's psychology⁴⁴ – in comparison to other classes of phenomena, mental phenomena appear in Brentano as something "absolutely heterogeneous," something that does not happen in Comte's hierarchy of phenomena. This is closely connected with the fact that in Brentano mental phenomena are studied by means of a method, inner perception, that can never become observation. This is why this method differs essentially from the method of natural science which works with a perception that can become observation: astronomy works with observation, physics and chemistry with experiments, biology with comparison, and sociology with the historical method.⁴⁵ As a consequence of this, Comte allows in his encyclopedic ladder of sciences from his *Cours* no discipline that, like Brentano's psychology, is not based on external perception, but on inner perception, and that accordingly does not focus on external, but on inner phenomena. Furthermore, all sciences in Comte's scale constitute a homogeneous continuum, since all of them proceed in a positive manner: they exclude in particular

⁴² Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, pp. 12 ff./15 ff.

⁴³ PES, pp. 106, 114 f., 117/88, 97 f., 100; see also Münch, *Intention und Zeichen*, pp. 68–73.

⁴⁴ Franco Volpi, „War Franz Brentano ein Aristoteliker? Zu Brentanos und Aristoteles' Auffassung der Psychologie als Wissenschaft“, *Brentano Studien* (1989) 2, pp. 16, 24.

⁴⁵ On the method of positive sciences in Comte, see Warren Schmaus, "Comte's General Philosophy of Science", in M. Bourdeau, M. Pickering, W. Schmaus (eds.), *Love, Order, and Progress*, pp. 46–51.

theological and metaphysical concepts, in order to concentrate only on phenomena and on their laws. Although Brentano introduced psychology in Comte's scale of sciences, it is not as clear in his case that psychology constitutes together with the other positive sciences a homogeneous continuum, as is the case in Comte with sociology. The reason for this is that he does not advocate a "purely phenomenalist science" of psychology, i.e., a psychology that excludes any metaphysical question from its field of research, as Mill did. On the contrary, Brentano's opinion is that there are problems, for example the question concerning the immortality of the soul, that philosophy and psychology as a main philosophical discipline – in the interest of humanity – may not renounce.⁴⁶ This is why psychology must deal, not only with positive problems, but also with metaphysical ones that cannot be integrated in the continuum of positive theories and sciences. And this is also why despite his great philosophical debt to Comte's and Mill's philosophy Brentano never considered the two authors as representatives of a new ascending philosophical phase as he considered himself. On the contrary, he holds them to be representatives of the second phase of philosophical decline, skepticism, more precisely hyperempiricism, i. e., a philosophical orientation that excludes from the philosophical discourse any question the solving of which transcends the boundary of experience.

Most of all, it is this strongly emphasized heterogeneity between the mental and the physical worlds that highlights Brentano's concept of intentionality, and that constitutes the frame in which his work is developed. Although Brentano constantly underlines the interaction between spirit and body and criticizes Descartes for postulating a "gaping separation" between the two worlds,⁴⁷ his expression *absolute heterogeneity* gives voice precisely to the Cartesian dichotomy *res cogitans – res extensa*, that comes back in his thought "in a changed form," namely as the opposition between mental and physical phenomena in general.⁴⁸ This opposition, that Husserl criticizes again in the Appendix to *Logical Investigations*, lies at the basis of his psychology as much as the Cartesian evident inner perception. It represents a main pillar of his work and is closely connected with the question concerning the persistence of mental life after death.

The mentioned caesura between the two classes of phenomena also corresponds exactly to "the main branches of empirical science" (PES, p. 66/51) and their corresponding inductive sciences: natural science and psychology. Further, this is closely connected with the fact that, although the embedment of his psychology in Comte's scale gives the impression that it employs the same methods (observation, experiment, etc.) like all the other natural sciences, Brentano's psychology is based

⁴⁶ Brentano, „Über die Gründe", p. 98/498.

⁴⁷ PES, pp. 21 f./6. In Brentano (*Geschichte der Philosophie der Neuzeit*, p. 19) he claims: "[Spirituality is] not [to be found] in every case of the lack of extension; thus he should rather have discovered the unity of body and mind, whereas instead [a] gaping separation [exists]. This [is] the biggest and most irremediable mistake."

⁴⁸ Volpi, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

in fact on Cartesian evident inner perception, that from Comte's point of view cannot be accepted as a positive method.

In the end the opposition between the two worlds of phenomena is confirmed also by Brentano's ambiguity regarding the relations between psychology and physiology. On the one hand, we're dealing with J.S. Mill's position that Brentano quotes at the end of the first book of his *Psychology* as a conclusion for the debate concerning the relation between the two disciplines:

To reject the resource of psychological analysis, and construct the theory of mind solely on such data as physiology affords, seems to me [a great] error in principle and an even more serious one in practice. Imperfect as is the science of mind, I do not scruple to affirm that it is in a considerably more advanced state than the portion of physiology which corresponds to it; and to discard the former for the latter appears to me an infringement of the true canons of inductive philosophy, which must produce, and which does produce, erroneous conclusions in some very important departments of the science of human nature.⁴⁹

J. St. Mill's endorsement of psychological analysis corresponds completely to Brentano's preference for the treatment of mental phenomena on the grounds of inner perception. On the other hand, in the quoted passage, a different view on the relation between physiology and psychology is expressed than in Horwicz's or Comte's encyclopedic ladder. According to this scale, physiology is a young science that on the path toward its positivization has not yet made considerable progress. Despite all of this, it is riper and more advanced than psychology, that being the youngest positive science which just began to establish itself on the basis of physiology (PES, pp. 38 f./23 ff.). We can thus clearly see that the here intended psychology can only be one founded on physiology (for example, Maudsley's or Horwicz's physiological psychology). Concerning Mill, he sees things differently, because he recognizes the importance of physiological research for psychology, arguing however that psychology is more advanced than physiology. Brentano agrees with his thesis, because he does not mean physiological psychology here, but rather mental science based on inner perception or the old psychology (PES, p. 58/43).

The two approaches mentioned in the discussion so far can explain well this state of affairs: The thesis about physiology as a science that is riper than psychology fits well with Comte's ladder of sciences, with the opinion that emphasizes the continuity of phenomena and their unilateral dependency, as well as with Brentano's later genetic psychology. Although Mill does not advocate the thesis of the total heterogeneity of mental and physiological phenomena, his approach – to

⁴⁹ John St. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (1843), Books IV–VI and Appendices, Robson J. M. (ed), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974, pp. 851 f.

treat mental life on the basis of psychological and not physiological analysis – harmonizes very well with the position defended by Brentano in his polemic against Horwicz. In this context, it concerns an approach that does not aim to explain the mental domain on the basis of the physiological one, but treats the mental domain as if it were independent from its physiological substrate. Although this standpoint can offer for Brentano an essential contribution to the elucidation of the mutual relations between the two domains, e.g., to the identification and characterizing of the mental elements embedded in this relation, for example the sensations,⁵⁰ his mission is however not a physiological one, but rather psychological: Establishing the features of mental phenomena, their main classes and subclasses, the laws of their succession and coexistence and the highest mental laws.

The common denominator of all these goals consists in the fact that all of them are to be accomplished on the ground of inner perception. As already said, examination of inner perception is the main method of Brentano's psychology. Its task is to provide direct access to the object of psychology's investigation, the world of mental phenomena. Regarding this problem, Brentano maintains at the beginning of the second book of his empirical psychology: "The entire world of our phenomena is divided into two great classes – the class of physical and the class of mental phenomena." (PES, p. 95/77; trans. modified) Through this division are constituted "the main branches of empirical science", namely the natural and the mental science (PES, p. 66/51, see also p. 21/6). As the "feature which [undoubtedly] best characterizes mental phenomena" (PES, p. 115/98) intentionality has precisely the role of marking the separation between the two sciences and of performing one of the main distinctions of empirical scientific research. However, in this way Brentano's intentionality establishes a different relationship between physiology and its posterior science in Brentano's scale of sciences than it does in Comte. As a theory of the most salient feature distinguishing the mental from the physical, Brentano's intentionality thesis solves problems that have nothing to do with the way consciousness relates to objects as in the case of Twardowski, Husserl or Chisholm. On the contrary, it has much to do with a central problem of the positive philosophy of the 19th century, especially in Comte, namely, the problem of the hierarchy of phenomena and of their corresponding sciences. As I have just shown, Brentano's statements about this issue are quite clear and can be regarded as the basis for what I have called above the minimal interpretation of his intentionality, i.e., an interpretation on which it would be easier to agree than on the way to solve the problem of mental reference to non-existent objects. As is clear from his psychology, Brentano's intentionality was not meant to answer this question, but to solve a problem stemming from Comte's and Mill's positive philosophy, namely, the problem of the classification of phenomena and sciences and of the role empirical psychology plays within it.⁵¹

⁵⁰ PES, pp. 21 ff., 28 f./6 ff., 12 f.; see also Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 849.

⁵¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Susan Krantz Gabriel for her comments and linguistic corrections of the paper.