

NEGATIVE STATES OF AFFAIRS: REINACH VERSUS INGARDEN

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In Reinach's works one finds a very rich ontology of states of affairs. Some of them are positive, some negative. Some of them obtain, some do not. But even the negative and non-obtaining states of affairs are absolutely independent of any mental activity. Despite this claim of the "ontological equality" of positive and negative states of affairs, there are, according to Reinach, massive epistemological differences in our cognitive access to them. Positive states of affairs can be directly "extracted" from our experience, while to acquire a negative belief we must pass through a quite complicated process, starting with certain positive beliefs. A possible and reasonable explanation of this discrepancy would be a theory to the effect that these epistemological differences have their basis in the ontology of the entities in question. Our knowledge of the negative states of affairs is essentially dependent on our knowledge of the positive ones precisely because the negative states of affairs are ontologically dependent on the positive ones. Such a theory has, in fact, been formulated by Roman Ingarden. According to him, negative states of affairs supervene on some positive ones and on certain mental acts of the conscious subjects.

Phenomenological theories of propositional entities have grown out of a dissatisfaction with Brentano's non-propositional theory of judgement as presented in his *Psychology*.¹ According to this theory, a judgement doesn't consist in any relation to a propositional entity (is not a "propositional attitude") but is, rather, a kind of mental ac-

ceptance or rejection of a (nominal) object. Even as early as 1892, this approach had been criticised by Meinong, who pointed out two problems that can be labelled (i) "negation" and (ii) "composition." First of all, Brentano's non-propositional theory needs *negative properties*, which are very problematic entities. Second, some of his nominal objects must be very, very *complex*. This raises the question, Do these objects still deserve to be called "nominal"? Ten years later, in his book *Über Annahmen*,² Meinong claimed that they must in fact be interpreted as disguised states of affairs. A similar criticism can be found in the second volume of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.³ Basically accepting this diagnosis, Reinach was convinced that we need states of affairs in our ontology. He developed an extremely Platonic approach. In addition to the (real and ideal) nominal objects, we need states of affairs. Some of them are positive, some negative. Some of them obtain, some do not. But even the negative and non-obtaining states of affairs are "objective" entities. In particular, they are absolutely independent of any mental activity. Now, in spite of this claim of the "ontological equality" of positive and negative states of affairs, there are, according to Reinach, massive epistemological differences in our cognitive access to them. Positive states of affairs can be directly "extracted" from our experience, whereas in order to acquire a negative belief, we must pass through a quite complicated process, starting with certain positive beliefs. A possible and reasonable explanation of this discrepancy would be a theory to the effect that these epistemological differences have their basis in the ontology of the entities in question. Our knowledge of the negative states of affairs is essentially dependent on our knowledge of the positive ones precisely because the negative states of affairs are ontologically dependent on the positive ones. Such a theory has, in fact, been formulated by Roman Ingarden. According to him, negative states of affairs supervene on some positive ones and on certain mental acts of the conscious subjects. They thus enjoy a curious "half-subjective" kind of being.

* The work on this paper was supported by the *Austrian Foundation for the Promotion of Scientific Research* (FWF) and the *Foundation for Polish Science* (FNP, "Master" programme, directed by Tadeusz Szubka).

¹ Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, first published in 1874, reprinted in Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte. Von der Klassifikation der psychischen Phänomene. Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften* vol. 1, (ed.) T. Binder and A. Chrudzinski (Frankfurt a.M.: Ontos Verlag, 2008). Hereafter referred to as PES.

² Alexius Meinong, *Über Annahmen*, 1st ed. (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1902). Hereafter referred to as UA. Partially reprinted in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. IV (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1969–78), 385–489. Hereafter referred to as GA.

³ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. II, part 1/2, in *Husserliana* XIX/1, XIX/2, (ed.) U. Panzer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984). Hereafter referred to as LU.

1. Brentano's Non-propositional Approach

Do we need in our ontology, beside the familiar entities of the nominal form, such as my computer and the cup of tea on my table, propositional entities such as that my computer is five years old or that the cup of tea on my table is getting cold? The answer to this question divides the philosophical community. The partisans of propositional entities argue that without them, we won't be able to explain the semantics of our "propositional attitudes," while their opponents deny the very supposition that there are any propositional attitudes at all. Whoever is concerned with getting rid of propositional entities is well advised to study the philosophy of Franz Brentano, who developed a particularly ingenious non-propositional theory of all those mental acts that were later labelled "propositional attitudes." Brentano himself would say that "propositional attitude" is a clear misnomer based on a confused ontology. According to his official view, all our mental acts are directed at nominal objects; in particular, neither judgements nor emotional attitudes need any propositional content.⁴ Brentano's non-propositional theory of intentionality will be also a convenient starting point for this paper, because the phenomenological theories of propositional entities that I am going to discuss have grown out of a critique of certain shortcomings (or apparent shortcomings) of his approach.

So what does this theory look like? Our mental life has, according to Brentano, a hierarchical structure. At the basic level, we encounter mental states that Brentano calls presentations (*Vorstellungen*). In a presentation, an object (of the nominal form) is simply put before the subject's "inner eye," the subject is intentionally directed at it, and that's all. In a presentation, the subject has no other attitude toward the presented object beyond the mentioned "presenting", i.e., beyond "having it" before his or her mind. In particular, in a pure presentation, no claim concerning the existence or non-existence of the presented object is involved.

⁴ But in his unpublished lectures, Brentano introduced propositional entities as correlates for judgements and emotional acts. See Arkadiusz Chrudzinski, *Intentionalitätstheorie beim frühen Brentano* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 62ff. Hereafter referred to as IB. That was the source of inspiration for the theory of propositional "contents" developed by his students such as Anton Marty and Carl Stumpf. On the history of the category *state of affairs*, see Artur Rojszczak and Barry Smith, "Urteilstheorien und Sachverhalte," in *Satz und Sachverhalt*, (ed.) O. Neumaier (Sankt Augustin: Akademia Verlag, 2001), 9–72.

Beside presentation, we have two further classes of mental phenomena: judgements and emotions (or "phenomena of love and hate," as Brentano calls them). This is the level at which we expect propositional entities. Particularly in the case of judgements, we tend to suppose that their objects must contain significantly more structure than a nominal object of a presentation. But that wasn't the official theory of Brentano. True enough, he claims that judgements and emotions are higher-order mental states involving presentations as their basis, but they are directed at exactly the same objects as the underlying presentations. The difference between a presentation, on the one hand, and a judgement or an emotion on the other, consists not in a more structured object, but in a new mental *modus* through which the presented object is apprehended. A judgement is an existential acceptance or rejection of a presented object, while an emotion is a similar acceptance or rejection, but with emotional character.

In this paper, I put aside emotions and concentrate solely on judgements. What is important for the remainder of my analysis is the fact that, according to Brentano, the semantics of a judgement doesn't force us to introduce any propositional entities. A judgement is a mental acceptance or rejection of a (nominal) object. A positive (accepting) judgement is true if and only if the accepted object exists. Otherwise it is false. A negative (rejecting) judgement is true if and only if the rejected object doesn't exist. Otherwise it is false.⁵

At first sight, this theory seems to work for simple existential judgements of the form "a exists / a doesn't exist," but what about judgements of other forms such as (i) "The successor to John Paul the Second is a German," (ii) "Bill Clinton isn't true to his wife," or (iii) "All bachelors are unmarried"?

Brentano tried to show how these more complicated forms can be transformed into his basic existential figure: "a exists / a doesn't exist." According to him, sentence (i) should be translated as (i*) "The successor of John Paul the Second who is a German exists"; sentence (ii) as (ii*) "Bill Clinton who is true to his wife doesn't exist"; and sentence (iii) as (iii*) "A married bachelor doesn't exist."

The third sentence is one of the four traditional Aristotelian forms, called a, i, e and o. In his *Psychology*, Brentano proposed an existential reduction of all of these forms. It goes as follows (see PES, 236):

⁵ To be precise, Brentano's explication of the concept of truth takes the shape of an epistemic theory in which a true judgement is defined as a judgement that can be judged with evidence. See IB, 62ff. However, this point has no relevance to the main topic of this paper.

Aristotelian Forms		Brentanian Forms
AaB	All A are B	There is no A which is non-B
AiB	Some A are B	There is an A which is B
AeB	No A are B	There is no A which is B
AoB	Some A are not B	There is A which is non-B

If we symbolise the existential accepting/rejecting as “+/-” and use a negation operator “*”—allowing us to build the negative counterpart of any given term, so that “*A” means “non-A”—then the four Brentanian forms will look like this:

-A*B
+AB
-AB
+A*B

(We assume that the operator “*” always has the minimal scope, so that, e.g., “*AB” means “non-A which is B” and not “non-A which is non-B.”)

This is a fascinating piece of philosophical logic (and in Brentano’s opinion, also an important piece of descriptive psychology) that has direct and formidable ontological consequences. If Brentano’s existential reduction and his non-propositional theory of existential judgement really works, then one of the central reasons for the introduction of propositional entities disappears, and a brave, simple world without propositions seems within reach. But does Brentano’s theory really work?

2. Meinong’s Criticism

Brentano’s reduction of all traditional forms of judgement was enthusiastically defended by the majority of his students. One of them, Franz Hillebrand, wrote an exposition of this theory under the title *The New Theories of Categorical Reasoning*.⁶ One year later, the book was reviewed by another student of Brentano—Alexius Meinong.⁷

We all know that Meinong eventually became one of the greatest proponents of propositional entities, but this happened ten years later.

⁶ Franz Hillebrand, *Die neuen Theorien der kategorischen Schlüsse* (Wien: Hölder, 1891).

⁷ Alexius Meinong, “Rezension von: Franz Hillebrand, *Die neuen Theorien der kategorischen Schlüsse*,” in GA, vol. VII, 197–222. Hereafter referred to as RFH.

Yet, even at the time of his Hillebrand review, he wasn’t happy with the details of Brentano’s theory. His criticism is based mainly on the observation that the Brentanian world without propositions wouldn’t be as simple as it seems. If we look carefully at the symbolic formulation of the categorical forms above, we can easily observe that some essential aspects of the complexity traditionally located in propositions have been tacitly transferred into Brentano’s objects. These objects involve a *composition* of many properties and their *negation* (symbolised here by the concatenation of terms and their prefixing by the term-negation-operator “*”). Concatenation often tends to be overlooked as something ontologically innocent, but in fact it isn’t. It is a symbol of composition which leads us to perplexing ontological topics such as bounding relations, bare substrata, Aristotelian substances, and, last but not least, to states of affairs and propositions. Also, the term-negation, which seems to introduce a strange kind of negative object, is, of course, very far from being ontologically innocent.

At least this latter problem was seen clearly by Brentano. Like many other philosophers, he was convinced that no negative characteristic can ever be given to a conscious subject by a pure presentation. In his appendix to the second edition of some selected chapters of the *Psychology* from 1911⁸, he claims that the negative properties, which play a crucial role in the existential reduction as outlined in 1874, should be interpreted only as useful fictions. The real structure of the Aristotelian forms (and, in particular, of the forms *a* and *o*, where the negative properties seem to appear) is much more complex. Instead of negative properties, they involve psychological *modi* of *double judgement*.

How is this supposed to work? Consider the most straightforward case of the form *i* (some A are B). A double-judgement type of analysis says that we have here a special mental *modus* of a two-ray judgement. First of all, both the contents A and B must be presented, each one in a distinct presentation. Second, content A is accepted in a simple positive judgement. Finally, the content B is identified with the (already accepted) object A. This identification is accomplished in a double-judgement mode that has the first judgement (the one accepting A) as its psychological foundation or “presupposition.” This double judgement has a positive (“identifying” or “predicative,” as Brentano puts this) character. It connects A with B, saying that there is an A (namely

⁸ Franz Brentano, *Anhang. Nachträgliche Bemerkungen zur Erläuterung und Verteidigung, wie zur Berichtigung der Lehre*, first published in 1911, reprinted in *Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften*, vol. 1, 391–426. Hereafter referred to as ANB.

the one already accepted in the first judgement) which “in addition” is B. (ANB, 413)

Consider now a case with negative properties—the form *o* (there is A which is non-B). The analysis begins just like form *i*. Contents A and B have to be presented and the content A has to be accepted in a judgement. After this comes the double judgement, but this time it has negative character. It denies the connection between A and B and says that *there is not* an A (namely the one already accepted in the first judgement) which “in addition” is B. (ANB, 414) The first simple judgement (accepting A) “restricts” here the negative judgement: there is no A which is B. Without the parenthesis “(namely the one already accepted in the first judgement),” we would have here simply a general negative judgement.

We see that both double-judgement forms contain a simple existential component:

(1) There exists an A

and a double-judgement component:

(2-*i*) There exists an A [namely the one accepted in (i)] which is B;

or

(2-*o*) There doesn't exist an A [namely the one accepted in (i)] which is B.

But it must be stressed that the parenthesis “[namely the one accepted in (i)]” shouldn't be construed as something that belongs to the *content* of the judgement in question. It rather symbolises a part of the *psychological modus* of the double judgement connecting (or disconnecting) the contents A and B. This replacement of unwanted entities by various *psychological modi* was the standard technique used by Brentano in the name of ontological parsimony. This parsimony was always gained at the expense of psychological complication.⁹

Meinong didn't regard this way out as successful. He says that the theory of double judgements amounts *de facto* to giving up the whole (no doubt attractive and elegant) idea of existential reduction. (RFH, 214) Indeed, it seems that, even if we agreed that Brentano's theory of double judgements succeeds in explaining the *psychology* of judgements solely in terms of simple nominal contents (and extremely complicated psychological *modi*), the *semantics* would still pose a problem. It seems that as truth-makers for the forms *i* and *o*, we still have to postulate composed objects such as *A's being B* or *A's not-being B* involving connecting and disconnecting ties well known from Aristo-

⁹ Brentano's double-judgement analysis of the forms *e* and *a* involves a presentation of a subject that judges the forms *i* and *o* and classifies this subject as somebody who doesn't judge correctly. See ANB, 416.

tle's *Metaphysics*. Do such composed objects still deserve to be called “nominal”?¹⁰

In his review of Hillebrand, Meinong's conclusion was that what is accepted or rejected in Brentano's existential judgement is not a (simple or composed) object, but rather a *relation* between A and B. (RFH, 210) Ten years later, in his book *Über Annahmen*, he puts forward another theory. What stands before the subject's mind in acts of judgement are neither simple objects nor relations between them, but rather entities composed of simple objects connected by relations. Meinong calls them *objectives*, but the majority of us know them by the name of *states of affairs*. Applied to Brentano's theory, this would mean that his objects only pretend to be nominal. In fact, they are states of affairs in disguise.

3. Reinach's Classification of Mental Acts

From Reinach's works it is clear that he accepted Meinong's and Husserl's critique of Brentano's non-propositional approach. To compare his views directly with those of Brentano, however, is not an easy task because of the differences in terminology. In particular, when Reinach speaks of *presentations* (*Vorstellungen*) he means something quite different from Brentano.

But let us begin with some judgement-like propositional attitudes. The two most important classes, according to Reinach, are *assertions* (*Behauptungen*) and *beliefs* (*Überzeugungen*). The first category is to be understood as an actual (in a paradigmatic case, verbally expressed) judgement, while the second corresponds to a habitual, dispositional state of mind. Reinach lists some characteristic features of them: there are various grades of belief, while an assertion involves a binary “yes” or “no”; beliefs have certain duration, assertions are punctual; and, finally, every assertion has to be founded on a belief (of the same content) and no belief is founded on a (mere) assertion.¹¹

Now, are beliefs (and *a fortiori* assertions) founded on presentations, as Brentano claimed? Reinach's answer is in the negative. True

¹⁰ However, to be fair to Brentano, it must be said that in fact he needs no truth-makers at all. As mentioned in footnote 5, his theory of truth is not a version of *adequatio*-theory defining truth by relation to the truth-making reality, but an epistemic theory construing truth in terms of possible evidence.

¹¹ Adolf Reinach, “Zur Theorie des negativen Urteils,” first printed in 1911, reprinted in *Sämtliche Werke. Textkritische Ausgabe in 2 Bänden*, vol. I, (ed.) K. Schuhmann and B. Smith (München: Philosophia, 1989), 95–140, here 99ff. Hereafter referred to as TNU.

enough, beliefs and assertions are always directed at “some objectivity” (i.e., are intentional), but this directedness can be secured not only by presentations.

“To be presented” means “to be (intentionally) before a subject” and indeed, in many cases, the psychological foundation of our judgments has this presentational character. But imagine that I merely pronounce a meaningful name (and understand it). In this case, I am intentionally directed at something, but the relevant mental act is here, according to Reinach, not a presentation but a (mere) *act of meaning*. The same content that in a corresponding presentation can be *presented* is here merely *meant* (TNU, 102), and the intentional directedness can be secured not only by presentations but also by such acts of meaning. In particular, a necessary foundation of an assertion is not a presentation but an act of meaning. (TNU, 107)

Reinach’s presentations and acts of meaning are partially analogous to his beliefs and assertions. Acts of meaning are punctual and spontaneous, while presentations have a temporal duration and are passive. (TNU, 103) But on the other hand, acts of meaning don’t need presentations as their foundation. (TNU, 103) If we take into consideration that the defining feature of Brentano’s presentations is the intentional directedness at something, then of course both Reinach’s presentations and his acts of meaning are to be classified as presentations in Brentano’s sense.

Reinach’s distinction between acts of meaning and presentations (and *a fortiori* between beliefs and assertions) corresponds roughly to Husserl’s distinction between purely signitive intentions and intuitively fulfilled acts. True enough, Reinach emphatically stresses the difference between Husserl’s views and his own. In both groups, he claims, we have more and less fulfilled acts. (See TNU, 104) But the concept of fulfilment he employs in the case of acts of meaning is quite different from the concept of fulfilment which is relevant for presentations. For an act of meaning, a fulfilment amounts to a presence of “accompanying illustrating pictures.” (TNU, 106) These pictures are something external and one can easily find acts of meaning that are totally devoid of such pictures. In the case of presentation, the fulfilling content is something much more essential. Reinach says that in this case, the fulfilment has an important function of *representing* the aspects of the presented object (whereas the illustrating pictures merely accompany the mental intention), and he is not sure if we can find presentations totally devoid of such fulfilling content. (TNU, 106) So it seems that the “fulfilment,” which, according to Reinach, can be attached to acts of meaning, is not the fulfilling content in Husserl’s sense, and that his distinction between presentations and acts of meaning corresponds

more or less to Husserl’s distinction between empty and fulfilled intentions.¹²

Now, are Reinach’s presentations and acts of meaning *nominal acts* in the sense that they are intentionally directed at nominal objects? From his writings, it is clear that this is not the case. Reinach’s analysis of the structure of mental acts is very similar to Husserl’s theory in the *Logical Investigations*. Like Husserl, he distinguishes in every mental act a part that secures intentional directedness (Husserl’s *intentional matter*) and a part that corresponds to the aspect that later was to be called “illocutionary force” (Husserl’s *quality*). (See LU V, §20) The same content can be claimed, asked, hypothetically supposed, etc. It seems that this content must be propositional, and, according to Reinach, it is indeed a *state of affairs*.

Now, Reinach says explicitly that what secures the intentional directedness at the state of affairs in question in the case of an assertion is nothing other than the involved act of meaning.¹³ Reinach’s acts of meaning are thus propositional attitudes, and since acts of meaning and presentations differ not in their content but in the character of their possible fulfilment, it follows that presentations must be propositional acts as well. So, on this point, Reinach agrees with Meinong: Brentano’s theory to the effect that presentations have nominal contents is a huge mistake.¹⁴

¹² Of course, this is a simplification. As soon as one goes into a little bit of detail, one realises that Reinach’s views diverge in many respects from Husserl’s theory. In his posthumously published preparatory studies to TNU, we can read that acts of meaning as such allow for no fulfilment at all. To be fulfilled, the meant content must be first presented in a new kind of mental act (namely in a presentation). See Reinach, “*Wesen und Systematik des Urteils*,” first published in 1908, reprinted in *Sämtliche Werke. Textkritische Ausgabe in 2 Bänden*, vol. I., 339–45, here 339. Further, we read that, according to Reinach, the acts of meaning (and *a fortiori* assertions) are essentially connected with linguistic expression. See TNU, 108. Husserl’s concept of empty and fulfilled intentions has nothing to do with their being linguistically expressed or not, while Reinach apparently connects these issues. He seems to suggest that a genuinely empty intention is possible only at the level of linguistically expressed intentionality. This thesis is indeed very interesting, but it goes beyond the topic of this paper.

¹³ “*Wir können innerhalb des Gesamtkomplexes, den wir als das Behaupten eines Sachverhalts bezeichnen, das spezifische Behauptungsmoment und den Meinensbestandteil unterscheiden.... Durch den Meinensbestandteil gewinnt das Behauptungsmoment Beziehung auf den Sachverhalt; in ihm ist es notwendig fundiert.*” (TNU, 107)

¹⁴ Beside presentations and acts of meaning, there are, according to Reinach, many other kinds of mental reference that can serve as foundations for beliefs. See TNU, 108. Reinach doesn’t investigate them, but it seems that to be able to fulfil this function, they must have propositional content as well.

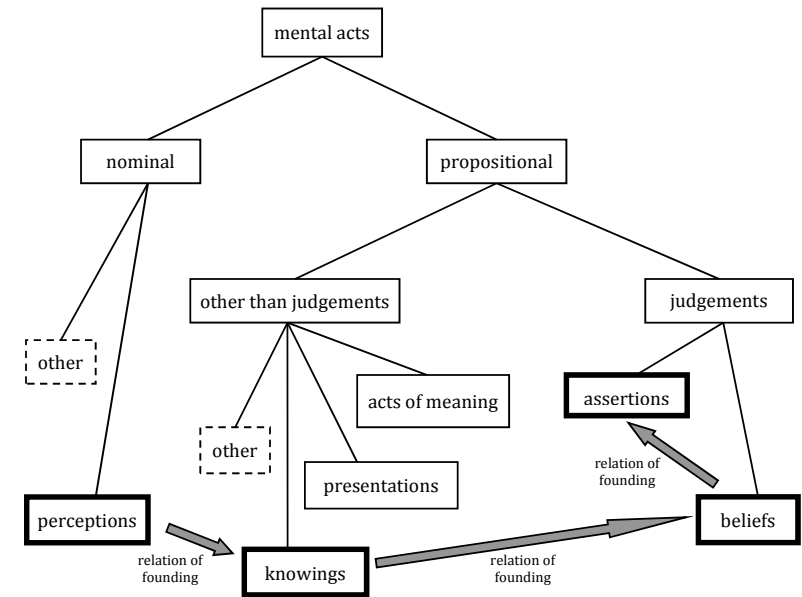
Beside presentations and acts of meaning, Reinach importantly distinguishes acts of *knowing* (*Erkennen*). A knowing (of a state of affairs) is a fulfilled mental act in which a state of affairs presents itself to the conscious mind with a particular pregnancy. As intuitively fulfilled acts, knowings resemble presentations, but they are punctual, like acts of meaning, and the involved “conviction” is not gradual. (TNU, 120) At this point, Reinach corrects his previous loose formulations and says that, in fact, not presentations but only knowings serve as a foundation of beliefs.¹⁵

No doubt Reinach here uses the word “know” in a somewhat idiosyncratic way. According to contemporary standard usage, we would expect that knowing involves belief, but Reinach states explicitly that his knowings are not judgements. And this is not the end of the story; even more surprising, we read that Reinach’s knowing doesn’t imply the truth of what is known either (which means that the known state of affairs need not obtain). An example of such a non-veridical knowing is every sensory illusion. Purely descriptively, or “phenomenologically,” it is like a knowing based on perception, and according to Reinach this means that a sense illusion simply *is* a knowing. (TNU, 120) This latter feature strikes the contemporary reader as particularly strange, but it wasn’t so uncommon for German philosophical language of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the works from this time, we quite frequently read of “false knowledge.” It is important to remember that Reinach’s knowings shouldn’t be directly associated with the contemporary concept of knowledge, defined as “justified true belief.”

Beside propositional mental states, there are also nominal ones. A particularly important group of them is that of *perceptions*. What is given in a perception is a nominal object (e.g., *a red rose*), and a corresponding knowing (*that this rose is red*) is founded on such a perception.¹⁶ Among other things, this means that the internal structure of the nominal objects that are given in Reinach’s perceptions must allow that the corresponding states of affairs can be directly “extracted” from them. Of course, philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Meinong would claim that such objects don’t deserve the name “nominal,” that

they are in fact states of affairs in disguise, but in this paper I need not decide this (partially terminological) question. If we don’t forget that Reinach’s perceived objects have nothing to do with the *simple* Wittgensteinian objects, we can still call them *nominal* (and perception can still be classified as a *nominal* mental act).

Finally we obtain the following classification of mental acts:



The arrows of founding signify that knowings are gained from perceptions, beliefs are ultimately grounded in knowings and assertions in beliefs. The qualification “ultimately” is necessary because it is of course possible that one assertion is grounded in another assertion and one belief in another belief (as in a long chain of reasoning). What is necessary is that, at the end of the day, every such chain terminates in knowings and perceptions.

4. Reinach’s Ontology of States of Affairs

As we have seen, almost all of the important kinds of mental acts listed above are *propositional attitudes*, and I have already mentioned that, according to Reinach, the objectual correlates of these are *states of affairs*. He stresses this particularly for the case of judgement (but it

¹⁵ “Ich erkenne das Rotsein der Rose; in der Erkenntnis präsentiert sich mir der Sachverhalt, und auf Grund der Erkenntnis erwächst in mir die Überzeugung, der Glaube an ihn.” (TNU, 120)

¹⁶ “Das Gegenständliche, welches die Elemente der Sachverhalte bildet, wird wahrgenommen, wird gesehen, gehört oder kategorial erfasst. Und auf Grund dieser ‘Vorstellungen’ werden die Sachverhalte selbst in eigentümlichen neuen Akten erkannt.” (TNU, 118)

can be generalised to presentations and acts of meaning, as they give to judgements their intentional directedness). Reinach rejects the views that interpret objectual correlates of judgement as objects (as in Brentano) or relations (as in the early Meinong). The only kind of entity that is apt to play this role is, according to him, the category of the state of affairs. (TNU, 111ff.)

Referring to the works of Meinong and Husserl, Reinach lists some characteristic features of this category (TNU, 114–16):

- (a) states of affairs are what is believed (or asserted) in a judgement;
- (b) they function as terms of logical relations (like the relation of incompatibility, or the relation of premise to conclusion in a logical proof);
- (c) they are the bearers of modalities, such as “necessarily,” “possibly,” “probably,” etc.;¹⁷
- (d) unlike nominal objects, states of affairs divide into positive and contradictory-negative (which means that there are negative states of affairs but no negative objects).

Later he stresses that

- (e) only states of affairs can be *known* (i.e., grasped in the acts of knowing). (TNU, 120)

A further important point concerning Reinach’s ontology of states of affairs is the thesis that

- (f) there are both obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs.

Reinach says that *obtaining* is not internal to the concept of state of affairs, just as *existence* is not internal to the concept of (nominal) object. This sounds very Meinongian, but it is not clear how strongly this thesis should be interpreted.¹⁸ If we take Reinach’s words at face value, it seems that we have here an extremely Platonic approach. His claim would be that, beside the (real and ideal) nominal objects, we must introduce states of affairs. Some of them are positive, some negative. Some of them obtain, some do not. But even the negative and non-obtaining states of affairs are “objective” entities in the sense that they are absolutely independent of any mental activity.

¹⁷ Also, according to Reinach, the concept of *apriority* pertains primarily not to the judgements that we call “a priori” but to the corresponding states of affairs. See Adolf Reinach, *Die apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechtes*, first published in 1913, reprinted in *Sämtliche Werke. Textkritische Ausgabe in 2 Bänden*, vol. I, 141–31, here 144.

¹⁸ Even Meinong’s original claim allows for various interpretations. See Arkadiusz Chrudzinski, *Gegenstandstheorie und Theorie der Intentionalität bei Alexius Meinong* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), ch. 8.

The difficult question of the mode of being of non-obtaining states of affairs will have no relevance for my further analysis. The only important point is that, according to Reinach, there is no difference in the mode of being between positive and negative states of affairs. If a negative state of affairs obtains, then it obtains exactly as objectively and is as “ontologically committing” as any positive one.¹⁹

5. Reinach’s Epistemology of Negative Judgement

In the light of this theory, the concept of negative judgement turns out to be equivocal. First of all, “judgement” can mean either a belief or an assertion. Moreover, “negative” can mean a negative quality of judging (“disbelief” or “counter-assertion”) or a negative matter (or content). According to Reinach, the basic form of judgement-matter is “A is b”; and the negative matter is interpreted as “A is not b.” However, the sentence “A is not b” can be read in at least three ways:

- (1) “A isn’t b” (negative copula);
- (2) “A is non-b” (positive copula and negative property);
- (3) “Non (A is b)” (negation interpreted as a sentential connective prefixing a content involving no negative copulas or properties).

Of these three readings, Reinach favours the first. The second reading would introduce negative properties and in this respect would be a kind of return to Brentano; and the third reading he would probably interpret as a judgement with the positive matter and negative quality, namely:

(3*) Disbelief/counter-assertion: “A is b”
according to the (highly problematic) rule that the putative positive attitude:

(3**) Belief/assertion: “Non (A is b)”
is always to be interpreted as a negative attitude of the form (3*). Consequently, he totally rejects the idea that the sentential negation can be regarded as an element belonging to the judgement-matter.

So according to Reinach, we have two places at which the negativity appears: (a) the negative mental *modus* of disbelief or counter-assertion, and (b) the negative state of affairs interpreted as (1). The traditional approaches (including Brentano’s) focussed on the first aspect, but this was only because the true nature of the judgement

¹⁹ “Die negativen Sachverhalte bestehen genau in demselben Sinne und genau mit derselben Objektivität wie die positiven Sachverhalte.” (TNU, 122)

correlate was misunderstood. As soon as we acknowledge states of affairs (and among them the negative ones) as legitimate citizens of our ontological universe, most philosophical problems concerning negativity in the second sense disappear.

Still, some difficulties revolving around the concept of negative matter remain. Reinach himself observes an interesting discrepancy between the ontology and the epistemology of the negative judgement.

A positive judgement is a relatively straightforward matter. According to Reinach, a positive state of affairs can be directly “extracted,” or “read off,” from the corresponding perception. If I see a red rose, I almost directly “see” that the rose is red. This means that on the ground of an appropriate perception, I can directly gain a knowing of some states of affairs that are “encapsulated” in the internal structure of the perceived object; and, as we already know, this knowing can in turn serve as a psychological basis for the corresponding judgement.

Now, the states of affairs that can be gained in this way from nominal objects are without exception positive. Reinach was not alone in his conviction that no perception can ever give us the information that a particular object is not green, for example. The idea that negative characteristics appear only at the level of relatively highly developed propositional intentionality is widespread and in fact not implausible.²⁰

But what about the structure of this higher-order negative intentionality? To acquire a belief that A is not green will take several steps. First of all (i) we must have a positive attitude (e.g., a question, a supposition, a hypothesis) directed at a certain positive state of affairs (say, that A is green). Then we must (ii) acquire a belief in a certain positive state of affairs that is incompatible with it (e.g., a belief that A

is red). On this basis, (iii) we can build a negative belief (a disbelief) that A is green. (TNU, 123ff.)

So, finally, we can reach a negative mental attitude (a disbelief) directed at a positive state of affairs. But what about the apprehension of the negative state of affairs that A is not green? According to Reinach, it is possible (iv) to build a positive mental attitude (question, supposition, etc.) directed at the correlative negative state of affairs (in our case, at the state of affairs that A is not green) on the ground of a negative mental attitude directed at a positive state of affairs (that we already have). What is further needed to transform this attitude into belief is (v) a positive belief from which this negative belief would follow. In our case, it could be a belief in the positive state of affairs that A is red. If we have all that, we can finally build (vi) a positive belief directed at a negative state of affairs (i.e., the belief that A is not green). (TNU, 124)

The mental states listed under (ii) and (v) Reinach calls *foundations* (*Fundamente*) of the corresponding negative judgements. They are positive beliefs in positive states of affairs from which the negative beliefs in question follow.

6. Ingarden and the Partial Subjectivity of the Negative States of Affairs

We have seen that, in spite of the claim of “ontological equality” of positive and negative states of affairs, there are, according to Reinach, massive epistemological differences in our cognitive access to them. A possible and reasonable hypothesis would be that these epistemological differences have their basis in the ontology of the entities in question. As we have seen, our knowledge of the negative states of affairs is essentially dependent on our knowledge of the positive ones. A possible explanation of this fact would be a theory to the effect that the negative states of affairs are ontologically dependent on the positive ones. Such a theory has been formulated by Roman Ingarden. His ontology of states of affairs was, in fact, deeply influenced by Reinach, but Ingarden doesn’t share Reinach’s thesis of the ontological independence of negative states of affairs.²¹

For a philosopher who is persuaded to accept the category of states of affairs as such, it would be difficult to claim that the negative variety

²⁰ Cf., among others, Anton Marty, “Über subjectlose Sätze und das Verhältnis der Grammatik zu Logik und Psychologie 1,” *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, no. 8 (1884), 56–94, especially 71, reprinted in Anton Marty, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II/1, (ed.) J. Eisenmeier, A. Kastil and O. Kraus (Halle: Niemeyer, 1918), 1–35, especially 21; Meinong, UA, 136; Alexius Meinong, “Hume Studien II: Zur Relationstheorie,” in GA, vol. II, 103; Gottlob Frege, “Die Verneinung. Eine logische Untersuchung,” *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, 1 (1918/19), Heft 2 (1919), 143–57, especially 155, reprinted in Gottlob Frege, *Kleine Schriften*, (ed.) J. Angelelli (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967); Gottlob Frege, “Logische Untersuchungen. Dritter Teil: Gedankengefüge,” *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, 3 (1923–26), Heft 1 (1923), 36–51, especially 37, also reprinted in Frege, *Kleine Schriften*; Roman Ingarden, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*, vol. II/1 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964/65), 296, hereafter referred to as SEW. Frege interprets negation as a sentential connective which makes clear that it can appear only at the level of propositional intentionality.

²¹ Ingarden explicitly refers to the discrepancy between Reinach’s ontology of negative states of affairs and his epistemology of negative judgement. See SEW, 299–302.

enjoys only a subjective status without any anchor in the mind-independent reality. Remember that states of affairs have been introduced primarily as truth-makers for our propositional attitudes. Now, some negative judgements are just as objectively true as the positive ones, and if the positive ones are made true by the obtaining states of affairs (let me call them *facts*), then we should expect a similar mechanism in the case of true negative judgements. So, if the claim “Bill Clinton has had (after all) sexual relations with Monica Lewinski” is made true by the fact *that Bill Clinton has had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski*, then what else could make true the claim “Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife” than the very (negative) fact *that Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife*? And if we accept all that, we also need a theory explaining how it is possible that the negative state of affairs *that Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife* obtains while the negative state of affairs *that Bill Clinton isn’t a democrat* doesn’t obtain.

Ingarden gives us such a theory. There are, according to him, some obtaining negative states of affairs, and they are indeed anchored in the mind-independent reality. However, they are not self-sufficient entities, but are ontologically dependent on the positive ones. It’s not difficult to grasp the intuitive appeal of this approach. Just ask why we believe that it is true *that Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife*. The answer is that we believe this because we believe *that Bill Clinton has had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski*. Of course, we cannot say that being untrue to his wife *amounts*, in the case of Bill Clinton, to having had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski, since we don’t know if she was the only one beside Hillary, but what we know is that having had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski is, in this case, *enough* for Bill Clinton to be untrue to his wife. In the currently fashionable philosophical jargon, we would say that the (positive) state of affairs *that Bill Clinton has had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski* is one of the possible *supervenience-bases* for the negative state of affairs *that Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife*.

This is the first half of Ingarden’s theory. According to him, negative states of affairs are ontologically dependent on positive ones. The state of affairs *that A is not red* supervenes on a (positive) state of affairs of the form *that A is ϕ* , provided only that ϕ represents a particular colour, and is not replaced by *red*.²² Each of the following states of affairs—*that A is green, that A is yellow, that A is white* etc.—“emanates” as its “ontological consequence” the negative state of

affairs *that A is not red*.²³ In a similar fashion, the *general* state of affairs that *something is red* supervenes on each of the following states of affairs: *that A is red, that B is red, that C is red*, etc.

Now, such a supervenience-thesis can be interpreted in two possible ways: (A) it can mean that the supervenient entities are ontologically dependent but nonetheless that they are to be taken *ontologically seriously* as a genuine addition to our ontological universe, or (B) it can mean that the supervenient entities are ontologically dependent, and precisely because of this, they are “reducible” and, in the strict sense of the word, *they don’t exist* at all; that is, they are even less than, to use D. M. Armstrong’s phrase, an “ontological free lunch.”

Ingarden’s position *vis-à-vis* the category of negative states of affairs tends toward the second reading.²⁴ His thesis is that (i) all obtaining positive states of affairs obtain independently of the question of whether they are considered by any conscious subject or not; (ii) all negative states of affairs supervenient on the obtaining positive ones obtain *prima facie* only *potentially*; and (iii) from all the potentially obtaining negative states of affairs, only those that are “in addition” *actually meant by a certain conscious subject actually* obtain.²⁵ According to Ingarden, negative states of affairs thus enjoy a curious “half-subjective” mode of being.²⁶

Why should we ever hold such a position? To answer this question, consider first what happens if we accept an unrestricted (A)-reading.

²³ See “*Sofern die positiven Sachverhalte in einem seinsautonomen Gegenstande seinsursprünglich sind, sind die in ihm auftretenden negativen Sachverhalte von denselben seinsabgeleitet.*” SEW, 308. It is important to note that, according to Ingarden, not only does the negative state of affairs of the form *that A is not c* supervene on the positive state of affairs *that A is b*, but so too does the correlative positive state of affairs with the negative property of the form: *A is non-c* (i.e., in our case, the state of affairs *that Bill Clinton is untrue to his wife*). See SEW, 295ff.

²⁴ To avoid misunderstanding, I hasten to add that the positive states of affairs are, according to Ingarden, *also supervenient entities*. They supervene on structured nominal objects. (See SEW, 283, 286.) This time, however, it is clearly the (A)-reading of the supervenience thesis that prevails in Ingarden’s ontology.

²⁵ And Reinach’s description of the way in which we come to mean such a negative state of affairs (see section 5, above) was, according to Ingarden, quite accurate. See SEW, 305ff.

²⁶ Cf. “*Ebenso werden die negativen Sachverhalte dadurch hervorgerufen und bestimmt, daß einerseits entsprechende positive Sachverhalte in dem betreffenden Gegenstande bestehen, andererseits aber ein Erkenntnissubjekt für einen bestimmten Bereich gegenständlicher Bestimmtheiten interessiert ist.*” SEW, 308. “*Gäbe es das entsprechende Erkenntnisinteresse des Subjekts sowie die Aussagefunktionen nicht, dann würde es auch die entsprechenden negativen Sachverhalte nicht geben.*” SEW, 311.

²² On Ingarden’s theory of negative states of affairs, see also Wojciech Krysztofiak, “The Phenomenological Idealism Controversy in Light of Possible Worlds Semantics,” *Axiomathes*, vol. 17 (2007), 75–97, section 5.

In this case, we have a kind of “ontological explosion.” Each positive state of affairs (say, the state of affairs *that A is green*) would emanate a whole cloud of negative states of affairs (*that A is not black, that A is not yellow, that A is not a prime number, that A is not a mental act*, etc.) and another cloud of general ones (*that something is green, that something is colourful, that something is not a prime number*, etc.). The fact that all of these entities are grounded in the single state of affairs *that A is green* suggests strongly that they are definitely too numerous (and too easily produced) to be taken seriously ontologically. (See SEW, 294ff.) Ingarden also stresses that from this magnitude, only the original positive state of affairs can have genuine causal powers. (SEW, 313)

But it would be unwise to banish negative states of affairs altogether from the ontological paradise. Why? The reason is that beside entities that can serve as truth-makers for our negative judgements, we also need ones that are apt to play the role of their *contents*. Unfortunately, only the first of these two functions can be efficiently fulfilled by the positive states of affairs. Consider once more the sad case of Bill Clinton. True enough, the (negative) claim “Bill Clinton isn’t true to his wife” is made true by the (positive) fact *that Bill Clinton has had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski*, but this latter fact is not necessary for the truth of this claim (it would suffice if Bill Clinton had had sexual relations with any other object not identical with Hillary). The aforementioned fact is only a *sufficient*, not a *necessary* condition for the truth of the claim. And this means that the *content* of the claim cannot be identical with the state of affairs *that Bill Clinton has had sexual relations with Monica Lewinski*.

In fact, if we wanted to analyse the content of a negative judgement in terms of positive states of affairs, we would have to define it as *the set of all positive states of affairs that would make it true*, and in most cases, such a set would contain an infinite number of (mostly non-obtaining) states of affairs. Now, the contents of our attitudes are something we are supposed to be able to grasp, something that “stands before our minds,” something to which we have a privileged epistemic access. An infinite set of states of affairs seems to be very badly suited to play such a role.

This problem of negative states of affairs is, in fact, only a special case of the problem of the *generality* of our thinking. Consider the claim *that something is red*. It would be made true by any state of affairs of the form *that x is red*, where “x” could be replaced by anything. And generality can reside not only in the subject but also in the predicate. Even the claim *that this rose is red*, which has so far been treated as made true by a single positive state of affairs, can in fact be

made true by infinitely many states of affairs (as there seem to be infinitely many shades of red). So, if we are convinced that all that can be found in the world around us is individual (in the sense that it is fully specified)—that there are no roses that are “simply red,” but only roses of certain particular shades of red—then we would have serious trouble in composing the content of our thoughts of such fully specified states of affairs.

This is why every philosopher who is seriously concerned with the ontology of intentionality will sooner or later be forced to take seriously negative (and, in fact, all general) states of affairs. Even if they are not to be found in the world outside our minds, they seem to play an important role as the contents of our thoughts.

7. Conclusion: The Ontology of Intentionality

Now I will try to suggest an answer to the question of whether Ingarden’s theory of negative states of affairs is to be preferred to Reinach’s view. No doubt, Ingarden’s approach seems to have certain advantages:

(1) First of all, if we choose Ingarden’s way, we have fewer entities in our ontology. If we discredit all “merely potential” negative and general states of affairs, we remain with a restricted domain of states of affairs. As primarily “real” states of affairs, we have only the positive (and fully specified) ones; from the remaining “potential” negative and general states of affairs, we have to accept only those that are actually meant by a certain conscious subject.

(2) Second, it seems that there is some highly problematic ontology involved in the concepts of negative and general states of affairs. I mean such things as a *negative ontological tie* (a kind of *counter-exemplification*) symbolised by the negative copula and the idea of *incomplete objects*, such as a rose that is simply red (without having any particular shade of this colour). It would doubtless be a great ontological achievement were we able to locate these problematic concepts in our thoughts rather than in the real world around us.

The real weight of the second point depends, of course, on the question of whether our theory of intentionality is able to deal with these problematic concepts. In fact, Ingarden developed a quite sophisticated and ontologically articulated theory of purely intentional objects and states of affairs²⁷ and it can be hoped that both negativity

²⁷ Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1931; 4th ed., Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972). See also SEW.

and generality can be explained within its framework. I have no room here to describe Ingarden's theory of intentionality in detail²⁸, so let me offer only a rough idea.

The central category of Ingarden's ontology of intentionality is *purely intentional object* (and state of affairs). This theory was intended as an ontological refinement of Husserl's doctrine of *noematic entities*.²⁹ Ingarden's claim is that intentional reference consists in the subject's mind producing peculiar entities called "purely intentional objects." An imagining of a centaur consists thus in having before one's mind an intentional centaur. Such a centaur has, of course, the property of being a centaur (otherwise it couldn't constitute an intentional reference to a centaur), but it has this property only in a "non-genuine" or "improper" sense (in contrast to such properties as *being ontologically dependent on a conscious subject*, which intentional objects have in the standard sense of the word). Ingarden thus introduces a kind of *non-standard exemplification*. (SEW, §47) Similar ideas can be found in Brentano³⁰ and contemporarily in Zalta. Zalta calls his non-standard exemplification "encoding"³¹, and I will adopt this convention here.

So how can we deal, within the framework of this ontology of intentionality, with the problem of negativity and generality? Here is the answer: We can claim that the real world around us contains neither negative states of affairs nor incomplete objects, but that the purely intentional objects we use in our thinking about this world involve both *negative* and *general encodings*. Beside (i) intentional objects encoding the property of having a certain particular shade of red (let's call it red₁₃₄), we can produce (ii) intentional objects "counter-encoding" this property and (iii) intentional objects "disjunctively"

encoding a whole family of properties (say, from red₁ to red₁₀₀₃). In the first case, we have an intentional reference to an object that has a certain particular shade of red, in the second case, an intentional reference to an object that hasn't this particular shade of red, and in the third case, an intentional reference to an object that is "simply" red. Thus it seems that the content of our general and negative thoughts can be modelled in this way; and concerning the truth-makers, we already know that all these mental acts can be made true (or false) by fully specified positive states of affairs.

To close, I must stress that this theory of negative and disjunctive encoding is not to be found in Ingarden's works. This is just my speculation (or rather, the beginning of a speculation) on how his ideas could be further developed.

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²⁸ Arkadiusz Chrudzimski, "Von Brentano zu Ingarden. Die phänomenologische Bedeutungslehre," *Husserl Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2002), 185–208; Arkadiusz Chrudzimski, "Brentano, Husserl und Ingarden über die intentionalen Gegenstände," in *Existence, Culture, and Persons: The Ontology of Roman Ingarden*, (ed.) A. Chrudzimski (Frankfurt a.M.: Ontos-Verlag, 2005), 83–114.

²⁹ Noematic entities were officially introduced by Husserl in 1913. See his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch* [Halle, 1913], in *Husserliana* III, (ed.) K. Schuhmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), but in 1908, one can already find a well-developed theory of *noemata* (called there *phenomenological* or *ontic meanings*). See Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre. Sommersemester 1908*, in *Husserliana* XXVI, (ed.) U. Panzer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1986).

³⁰ Franz Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie*, (ed.) R.M. Chisholm and W. Baumgartner (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982), 26ff. (Brentano's lectures from 1891).

³¹ Edward N. Zalta, *Intensional Logic and the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 16ff.