

# 18 General theses of the theory of objects

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## Introduction

According to mainstream opinion, Meinong is a difficult author: he writes badly, and he presents bizarre, unintelligible, false or even absurd ideas. Ryle's scornful verdict is exemplary: 'Let us frankly concede from the start that *Gegenstandstheorie* itself is dead, buried and not going to be resurrected' (Ryle (1973), p. 255). Despite such confidently dismissive opinions, however, in reality interest in Meinong has never entirely disappeared: indeed, at certain times and in certain situations it has been substantial, which is perhaps evidence that his theories are not as groundless as his denigrators claim. The two different attitudes towards Meinong, those of dismissal and of esteem, can both be traced back to Bertrand Russell, whose well-known 'liquidation' of the theory of objects followed declarations of great respect for Meinong's 'empirical manner of investigating.' Russell states, for example:

Although empiricism as a philosophy does not appear to be tenable, there is an empirical manner of investigating, which should be applied in every subject-matter. This is possessed in very perfect form by the work we are considering. A frank recognition of the data, as inspection reveals them, precedes all theorising; when a theory is propounded, the greatest skill is shown in the selection of facts, favourable or unfavourable, and in eliciting all relevant consequences of the facts adduced. There is thus a rare combination of acute inference with capacity for observation. The method of philosophy is not fundamentally unlike that of other sciences: the differences seem to be only in degree (Russell (1973a), p. 22).

This article was written in 1904. In his review of *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, the 1904 book edited by Meinong, Russell wrote:

Meinong's [essay] and the two which immediately follow it [respectively written by Ameseder and Mally]... are largely concerned with matters of fundamental philosophical importance... The philosophy set forth in them is a development of that

contained in Meinong's *Über Annahmen*, and its value appears to me to be very great (Russell (1973b), p. 77).

The accusations in 'On Denoting' that Meinong was guilty of logical confusion were instead made by Russell in the year that immediately followed (Russell 1973c). Such an explicit change of opinion was obviously due to Russell's conviction that he had discovered something of great importance in the meantime. Having reached the end of the century, we are now able to assess the effective importance of Russell's 'discovery' and to re-examine Meinong's theories more thoroughly. At the time, Meinong's rebuttal of Russell's accusations was not regarded as particularly convincing, and the dispute was adjudicated in Russell's favour (see Voltolini, this volume).

In the decades that followed, the reasons adduced to justify Meinong's dismissal have often been no more substantial than hearsay, without any serious study of his work. On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that some—if not many—of the authors sympathetic to Meinong have been so on the basis of a somewhat cursory knowledge of his writings. Perhaps, therefore, the least controversial way to make fair assessment of Meinong is to read his works. This may not be sufficient, but at least it is a first step. It may not be enough because, as in the case of many original thinkers, knowledge of Meinong's work must be accompanied by thorough presentation and commentary. Nevertheless, as said, it is at least a first step.

In this regard, Hintikka has recently written:

I believe strongly that his (= Meinong) views on existence and being cannot be fully appreciated and evaluated without knowing their historical background (and also their topical foreground). And, perhaps surprisingly, this background—that is to say, the earlier history of the notions of existence and being—is not at all well understood (Hintikka (1995), p. 29).

However, there are other factors that at least partly explain the difficulty of correctly interpreting Meinong. For example, Findlay notes that 'Meinong was infinitely analytic and argumentative' (Findlay (1972), p. xvii): in other words, 'The fascination of his thought is the fascination of the minute' (Findlay (1933), p. 128). The point has been well expressed by Lindenfeld when he points out that Meinong's 'written works were forbidding, not because of an obscure or difficult terminology... but because of his preoccupation with detailed investigation of seemingly minute problems rather than with building grand and bold syntheses' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 8). Although extreme attention to detail makes reading more laborious, it is always a positive, strictly scientific, attitude. Consequently, it is somewhat unfair to treat a positive attitude as grounds for criticism.

More important is another of Meinong's shortcomings, also pointed out by Lindenfeld: 'one of his (= Meinong) major weaknesses... was his failure to update his older ideas in accordance with his new ones' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 8). This second feature is undoubtedly more serious, and it partly accounts for the difficulties that arise when trying to interpret Meinong's thought. But in this case, too, it must be borne in mind that Meinong worked constantly throughout his lifetime on developing his theory, ceaselessly addressing new problems. And it is precisely because his theory is in constant evolution that tensions may arise among parts of it developed at different times. Meinong never had occasion to look backwards and to take stock, so to speak. The almost total blindness that afflicted him after his thirties may have been a contributory factor.

A fourth consideration is that Meinong developed his ideas in close and constant contact with the work of his pupils (in particular Mally, Witasek, Ameseder, von Ehrenfels and Benussi). If our understanding of his theories is still inadequate, even more so is our understanding of the theories of his pupils.

There are obviously further reasons for the situation outlined above. Some of them have been discussed in the introductory chapter to this book (see Albertazzi, Jacquette and Poli, this volume).

In this article I shall seek to provide an *initial* map of the theory of objects. This will furnish the reader with the necessary coordinates—terminological and conceptual—with which to navigate through the theory of objects without excessive difficulty. The other articles in this book will provide more detailed analysis of the theory.

Confirming the profoundly empirical character of Meinong's philosophical inquiry (witness the above quotation from Russell), is that his theory of objects is not the result of abstract postulations. It derives instead from systematic analysis of the data of experience—and of psychological experience in particular. One may accordingly state that Meinong arrived at his theory of objects almost without realizing it: it was a theory that was imposed on him by the systematic development of the problems on which he was working. As further confirmation of the empirical character of his theory, Meinong declared on several occasions that he had 'discovered' the theory of objects: 'for years—indeed for decades—my scientific endeavors have been under the influence of interests pertaining to the theory of objects without any suspicion of the true nature of these interests having occurred to me' (Meinong (1960), p. 114).

Generally speaking, Meinong's theory of objects sprang from his development of the theories of intentional reference and evidence of Franz Brentano, whose pupil Meinong had been (cf. Albertazzi, Libardi and Poli (1996)). Within this more general setting, Meinong arrived at his theory of

objects starting from study of values, relations and higher-order objects. As already said, the aim of this article is to provide a propaedeutic on the theory of objects. For this reason, I shall not reconstruct the theory's genesis from Meinong's early works.

The theses of the theory of objects are elaborated mainly in the following works: 'Über Gegenstandstheorie' (1904), 'Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften' (1906), *Über Annahmen* (1910), *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit. Beiträge zur Gegenstandstheorie und Erkenntnistheorie* (1915) and *Über emotionale Präsentation* (1917). Three of these works are also available in English: 'On the theory of objects' (1960), *On Assumptions* (1983) and *On Emotional Presentations* (1972). Fortunately, these works suffice to gain adequate understanding of the theory of objects, so that readers without a knowledge of German can—should they wish—acquire a reasonably precise idea of its key components.

The first work, 'On the Theory of Objects,' was originally published in a collection of essays edited by Meinong himself and intended to publicize the work of the Graz school (Meinong 1904). Meinong's article begins the book, and it contains the first systematic account of the theory of objects. His book on assumptions was published in two different versions. The first edition came out in 1902 and *preceded* the discovery of the theory of objects; the second one, published in 1910, was thoroughly revised by Meinong precisely in order to take account of the consequences of that discovery. The 1910 edition (the one translated into English) contains a number of important chapters in which Meinong explicitly states the difference between 'the being view'—the theory that preceded his discovery of the theory of objects—and 'the *Außersein* view,' the mature version of his thought which also incorporated the theses of the theory of objects.

The third work, *On Emotional Presentations*, 1917, is one of Meinong's last publications. But this is not to imply that the book is a minor work, for it contains several new proposals and a number of significant developments of the theory.

The foregoing brief survey should have made it clear that Meinong (1) did not start from the theory of objects but *arrived* at it, and that (2) it was his mature position, the one to which he devoted the last decades of his life.

For clarity of exposition, I shall group the main components of the theory of objects into five sections—which can also be viewed as comprising the main *dimensions* of the theory of objects. The term 'dimensions' is not Meinong's but mine, and it plainly reflects the influence of two of Meinong's contemporaries, Edmund Husserl and Nicolai Hartmann. There are extremely important similarities among the theories of Meinong,

Husserl and Hartmann, although systematic study of their differences and overlaps has yet to be conducted.

The theses of the theory of objects will be grouped with reference to the following problems:

- Spheres of being
- Modes of being
- Moments of being
- Dependences
- Modalities.

The section on the various spheres of being analyses the difference among the *existence* of the reals, the *subsistence* of the ideals and the '*Außersein*' of the 'pure' objects (or of what is neither real nor ideal).

The section on modes of being presents the difference among objecta, objectives, dignitatives and desideratives.

The section on moments considers the distinction between being properly said and so-being (that is to say, between substance and determination or individual and property).

The section on dependences is bound to consider a bunch of differences: those between first-order and higher-order objects; between relations and complexions; between production and foundation; the difference among complete, incomplete and completed objects; the difference between intuitive and non-intuitive presentations; between precise and imprecise objects. The last section shall briefly present the major modalities: factuality, possibility and necessity.

The five sections into which the analysis of the dimensions of the theory of objects is divided are preceded by a presentation of the starting-point for the entire theory: analysis of the term 'object.'

## Object

Meinong uses 'object' as a general term. Note that 'object'—as a general term—is not a 'category' of ontology, in the same sense in which 'being' or 'one' are not categories of Aristotelian ontology. This means that a table of the categories or a theory of the categories may not contain all the concepts of the ontological system of which they are a part (Johansson (1989), pp. 4 and 129).

The proposal to use 'object' as a general term is obviously not the only option available in the philosophical literature. Other general terms that have been used are:

- process (or 'continuant')
- system (or 'complex')
- state of affairs
- energy.

Each of these terms conveys a particular emphasis. While 'object' contains an allusion to the presentation, 'process' and 'continuant' stress the eminently temporal nature of the real, 'system' and 'complex' stress its non-elementary nature, 'state of affairs' stresses the independent character of whatever constitutes the real and alludes to the presence of a fundamental level, while 'energy' stresses the component of activity. (For an excellent introduction to 'process metaphysics' see Rescher (1996); for systems see Bunge (1979); for complexes see Buchler (1990); for the position that starts from 'states of affairs' see Armstrong (1997); for an example of the last position see Bohm (1994).) In many respects, these various emphases are inter-related. The way to which they are depends in particular on the elaboration of the *categories* of the ontology.

The first move of Meinong is to conceive objects—in Brentano's sense—as everything that is present in a presentation. In this case, via Wolff, 'object' correlates with the medieval concept of *ens* (= what is thought). It has also been claimed that 'The theory of objects is nothing but Wolff's ontology' (Capone Braga (1914-15), p. 317). That the relationship between Meinong and Wolff was closer than might appear at first sight was pointed out and analytically described by Pichler (1910), a book considered by Meinong 'the first solid as well as clear monograph on the history of the theory of objects' (Meinong (1983), p. 61).

Brentano and his school devoted much attention to the analysis of objects. Among the many contributions of this school, particular mention should be made of higher-order objects (Ehrenfels), of the scheme of objects (Husserl), and of the objects' levels and points of indeterminacy (Ingarden and Hartmann—from a historical viewpoint, both of them can be considered Brentanians only in a very general and loose sense).

For Meinong, the theory of objects is the theory of all objects: Concrete and abstract, real and unreal, possible and impossible, present, past and future, independent and non-independent, etc. The different kinds of object will be distinguished by the further criteria that shall be introduced from time to time.

### **Spheres of being**

Many philosophers acknowledge that the chief distinction in the realm of

being is that between real being and ideal being. Meinong began by accepting a position of this kind (i.e. 'the being view'), but he then discovered the *Außersein* of the pure object and was forced to restructure the entire theory.

In this regard, it is useful to quote a passage in which Meinong explains his shift from the former to the latter position. According to the 'being view,'

presentations would have an object in the really strict sense of the word only when they are directed toward existents or subsistents, or in a word, toward beings. But it seems just as clear to me now that the interpretation starts to detach itself from this point of departure during the course of its prosecution. For there are presentations that would be directed to objects with being, if only these objects did have being; and the interpretation must allow these presentations, too, to pass as objective. And there are presentations that are not even directed to beings, but are merely so constituted that under favorable circumstances they could be thence directed, at least in the fictive sense just specified; and even these presentations are potentially objective. In all this, there is more than a mere 'weakening' of the initial definition of objectivity. For if objectivity consists in the 'having' of an object and the 'had' object must be one that has being, then a presentation simply does not have an object in any of the instances of fiction, and at this point one really cannot quite see why objectivity is still ascribed to the presentation, despite its dependency on a fiction. At bottom, it is a presentation without an object.

Yet even now this attitude strikes me as being completely in conflict with the facts. ... when I think of unclouded human happiness or of the perpetual motion machine, my thoughts are directed to 'something,' i.e. to an object.

If the object is *Außersein* and we recognize this, then right there we have an object-apprehension that is unconfined by the limits of being. With the detachment of the notion of an object from factuality, there is no longer any compulsion to accord a central position in our considerations to knowledge (Meinong (1983), p. 170, modified tr., 'presentation' instead of 'representation' and '*Außersein*' instead of 'absistence').

Clearer light can be shed on this shift if we examine the premises on which it is based.

Meinong defines as 'real' everything that by its nature can exist. Something is real when its nature *does not exclude* existence. Reals exist now, existed in the past, and will (hopefully) exist in the future. In other words, 'real' coincides with 'temporal.' Otherwise stated, the realm of real objects comprises every object that can have a position in time, *i.e.*, that can exist. Everything that is not located in time is ideal. Defined as 'ideal' is everything that by its nature could never exist. Instead of existence (and non-existence) ideal objects have subsistence (and non-subsistence). Therefore, something is ideal when its nature excludes existence, but does not exclude subsistence.

According to the above definitions, Julius Caesar, the computer with which I am writing, the President of the United States in 2003, are real.

And so too are their qualities and their parts. Ideal, by contrast, are objects which by their nature could never strictly speaking be called existent: lack, similarity, past. But also values, numbers, mathematics, and the entire spectrum of the formal sciences are ideal; so too are infinity and immortality and 'limit, gap, and even the notorious nothing [*Nichts*]' (Meinong (1983), pp. 14-15). Also included among ideal objects are objectives and higher-order objects, to which I shall return below.

Reals and ideals are characterized by the presence of a twofold opposition between positive and negative cases whereby real objects exist or do not exist, and ideal objects subsist or do not subsist. Evidently, the distinction between reals and ideals depends on their form of existence: reals, and therefore existents in the strict sense, are objects with a temporal characterization, while ideals, and therefore existents in the broad sense, or subsistents, are those objects which do not have a temporal characterization.

Meinong's analysis of presentation convinced him that real and ideal objects do not exhaust the category of objects. He articulated this new position by analysing the difference between presentation (*Vorstellung*) and judgement. The former can be defined as the level at which something is simply presented, while judgement operates at the level of the positive or negative evaluation of the something presented. While the opposition between positive and negative characterizes judgement, presentation can only be positive. Figuratively, 'wherever we find a negation we have passed beyond the boundaries of the mere *Vorstellung*' (Findlay (1933), p. 81). This distinction between an initial level concerned with the simple presentation of something, and a subsequent one concerned with the positive or negative evaluation of the something presented, originated not only in Brentano's corresponding theory but also much earlier in the difference between noetic logic (single-value) and dianoetic logic (two-value), which can be traced back to Aristotle's *De Anima* (Calogero 1927).

Meinong calls the simply presented something the 'pure object.' It precedes evaluation in terms of being or non-being (existence or non-existence, subsistence or non-subsistence). For this reason, Meinong states that 'the pure object is beyond being and non-being:' it is *Außersein*. He also notes that "'there are" also objects that do not exist or subsist, and I have designated this fact as the "*Außersein* of the pure object"—a somewhat barbaric word-formation, I fear, but one which is hard to improve' (Meinong (1983), p. 62, slightly modified).

The realm of *Außersein* is very difficult to handle because of its extreme plenitude. Pure objects are a chaos of incoherent fragments. The only relations among them are those of similarity and difference. They are isolated objects of no interest to science, with its constant endeavour to discover laws and systems.

In order to define the realm of *Außersein*, Jacquette (1995) and (1996) proposes the distinction between ontology and extra-ontology, where ontology comprises real and ideal objects, while extra-ontology comprises 'pure' objects. The expression 'extra-ontology' seems to render Meinong's term '*Außersein*' effectively.

Meinong's position is summarized in the following table:

	real objects	ideal objects	<i>Außersein</i> objects
theory of objects	x	x	x
ontology	x	x	
metaphysics	x		

According to this classification, metaphysics is the science that is most restricted in its range: it considers only real objects (those whose nature does not exclude their existence). Analysis of the objects of thought—values and mathematical objects, for example—shows that the domain of metaphysics does not include all objects. As well as real objects, though, one must also consider ideal ones. Ontology is the science that studies both real and ideal objects. If we use the notion of 'being' with its authentic generality, ontology is the true science of being. The analysis of the objects of thought that forces us to go beyond the bounds of metaphysics, however, also forces us go beyond those of ontology and to postulate a science even more general than the science of being. In the strict sense, the objects specifically analysed by this latter science are no longer 'beings' because they lack the fundamental characteristic of everything that 'is:' the distinction between being and non-being. The opposition between positive and negative (in its two forms of existence versus non-existence and subsistence versus non-subsistence) does not apply to *Außersein* objects.

The statement that negation immediately takes us out of the domain of presentation is of particular interest, for it reveals at least one of the ways in which we may pass from extra-ontology to ontology. In effect, in a world characterized by simple presence, 'the most incompatible objects will lie peacefully side by side' (Findlay (1933), p. 82). The shift to the level of judgement and assumptions introduces a first fundamental organization of the field by counterposing whatever is positive against whatever is negative (the existent against the non-existent, the subsistent against the non-subsistent). Of course, the crucial role here is played by the operations of affirmation/negation. In this regard, we find that for Meinong (1) the apprehension of negatives proceeds by objectives; that (2) negatives are higher-order objects; and that (3) the ontological characterizations that I have pointed out (the existence or non-existence of reals, the subsistence or non-subsistence of ideals) belong to the domain of objectives. The base units of

Meinong's ontological analysis, the 'objecta,' acquire 'being' only within objectives; outside them, objecta are 'indifferent to being.'

For Meinong, real and ideal objects are perfectly determined objects characterized by infinite properties. For this reason we are never able to apprehend them completely. As Lindenfeld writes:

Meinong's reason for denying that we can ever apprehend concrete objects fully is revealing... A concrete physical object is complete, according to Meinong, not only by virtue of its positive properties, but also by virtue of its negative ones... The number of positive ones would of course be finite, but the number of negative ones would not be (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 162).

Besides complete objects, there are also those which have a finite number of properties and for which reason can be apprehended perfectly. These are incomplete objects of the form 'something that is such and such:' for example, 'something black.'

It will be seen from this preliminary discussion that the various dimensions of the theory closely interweave. In the next sections I shall analyse objectives and higher-order objects.

### **Modes of being**

The problem of modes of being is an area of Meinong's theory fraught with linguistic pitfalls. In fact, Meinong uses 'object' in two different senses. On the one hand, he employs 'object' as a general term in his theory of objects. In this case he utilizes the German word '*Gegenstand*.' On the other, some objects in the extremely general sense are also objects in a different and narrower one. In this second case Meinong employs the German word '*Objekt*' (pl. *Objekta*). To distinguish between the two cases I shall use 'object' for '*Gegenstand*' and '*objectum*' for '*Objekt*.'

Having defined the terminology, we may now consider how objects can be distinguished in various ways. We have already seen that they can be divided among real, ideal and pure. Meinong now introduces a second partition, this time among objecta, objectives, dignitatives and valuatives. Again evidencing the empirical character of his inquiry, he summarizes the situation as follows

For the time being, the following quadripartition for all objects suggests itself: objecta, objectives, dignitatives, and desideratives; and the addition 'for the time being' will emphasize once more that we are not in a position to tell whether this classification is complete or not (Meinong (1972), p. 100).

Meinong only gradually came to the fourfold distinction of objects just indicated. In the first phase of his theory of objects, he acknowledged only the difference between objecta and objectives, although he perspicaciously declared: 'At present (1910) we are not in a position to make it rationally evident that the disjunction of all objects into objecta and objectives is a complete one' (Meinong (1983), p. 50).

Synoptically, the main differences among the various types of objects are the following.

- (1) Objectives presupposes objecta; dignitatives and valuatives presuppose both objecta and objectives. Objecta are therefore the true bedrock of the theory.
- (2) Only objecta can exist. Objectives, dignitatives and valuatives at most subsist.
- (3) Any claim about the being or non-being (that is, existence or subsistence, and their opposites) of objecta can be made only in the context of objectives. Objecta without objectives are 'indifferent to being' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 154), which means that 'the dependence of the objective on the objectum is not a dependence as regards being' (Findlay (1933), p. 72).

In other words, being and non-being are properties of objectives, not of objecta. Although at first sight this is a rather peculiar position, it is not difficult to find arguments in support of it. At bottom, everything that exists does so in a context, and it is precisely the contextual meaning of a proposition that enables evaluation of both what exist and does not exist. Apart from references to Meinong, a position of this kind has recently been put forward by Sommers (1996).

In short, objectives depend on objecta. An objectum is always *in* an objective. An objective is therefore a higher-order object, while objecta are the matter of relative objectives.

In reality, an objective may be formed by other objectives, but in the end we always have an objective whose matter is an objectum.

As I have repeatedly pointed out, the outstanding peculiarity of objectives is the dominating contrast between the positive and the negative. A contrast of this kind also exists between dignitatives and desideratives: 'neither objects of feeling nor objects of desire are therefore to be regarded as objecta' (Meinong (1972), p. 97).

The principal types of dignitatives or objects of feelings are (a) the hedonic (the agreeable and the disagreeable); (b) the aesthetic (the beautiful and the ugly); (c) the logical (the true and probably true and the false and

doubtful) and (d) the valuational (the good and the disvaluable or bad). For details, see Meinong (1972).

### **Moments of being**

Having divided objects into (1) real, ideal and pure, and into (2) objecta, objectives, dignitatives and valuatives, Meinong then distinguishes between (3) being and so-being. He writes, however, that 'the difference between being and so-being is not so important as the difference between being in the proper and narrow sense and *Außersein*' (Meinong (1972), p. 62, slightly modified tr.).

The being of an object concerns the frequently-mentioned oppositions between the existence and non-existence of real objects and between the subsistence and non-subsistence of ideal ones.

The introduction of the difference between being and so-being initiates Meinong's analysis of *Sosein* and his specification of the relationships between *Sein* and *Sosein*. In both cases, Mally's influence is of particular importance (see Zecha, this volume).

In his treatment of the structure of *Sosein*, Meinong draws on Mally's notion that there are fundamentally two different types of property: nuclear and extra-nuclear. Their difference can be specified as follows:

The properties collected under the nuclear category are ordinary properties like being red, round, ten centimeters in diameter, and their complements... Extranuclear properties by contrast include special properties that supervene on the totality of an object's nuclear properties, and include the properties of being existent, determinate, incomplete, impossible, and their complements. Extranuclear properties are strictly excluded from the *Sosein* of any existent or nonexistent Meinongian object, and from the *Außersein* of the pure object considered in itself as constituted by its nuclear properties (Jacquette (1996), p. 16).

Extra-nuclear properties, therefore, are higher-order properties grounded in the nature of the object.

As for the relationships between *Sein* and *Sosein*, Meinong states that one tries to determine the extent to which so-being always presupposes a being 'What then comes out is a certain principle of the independence of so-being from being, formulated by Ernst Mally. I have followed out this principle into some of its consequences elsewhere (cf. Meinong (1960))' (Meinong (1983), p. 61). 'The independence thesis must then be understood to say that the *Sosein* of an object has whatever nuclear properties... are attributed to it' (Jacquette (1996), p. 81).

In other words, the *Sosein* of an object does not depend on the *Sein* of the object. This amounts to saying that the way in which the object is given or shaped does not depend on its existence.

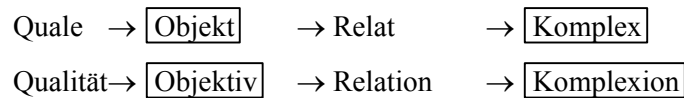
This is an appropriate moment to point out that Meinong's analyses of the various classes of objects must also be viewed in the light of his pupils' theories, especially those of Mally and Ameseder. In order to provide the reader with at least an outline of the work of Meinong's pupils, I shall briefly consider one of Mally's first writings, 'Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie des Messens,' published in 1904. As mentioned, by that time Meinong had only drawn the distinction between objects and objectives.

The thesis that anything is an object (the *gegenstandstheoretisch* aspect of the work) is elaborated by Mally on four different levels. We can also say that there are four connected but nevertheless different theories: of objecta, of qualities, of relations and of complexions (*Komplexionen*). Each of the four theories has two sides: the side of the objecta and the side of the objectives. Thus:

objecta:	<i>Objekt</i>	<i>Objektive</i>
qualities:	<i>Quale</i>	<i>Qualität</i>
relations:	<i>Relat</i>	<i>Relation</i>
complexions:	<i>Komplex</i>	<i>Komplexion</i>

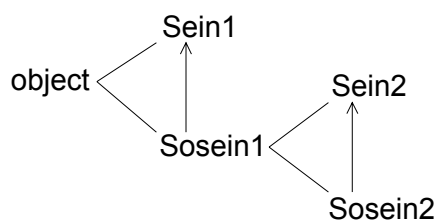
*Qualen*, *Relaten* and *Komplexen* are objecta; *Qualitäten*, *Relationen* and *Komplexionen* are objectives. We may start by assuming the following three theses: The *Quale* is an inner determinant of the objectum. The *Qualität* is an inner determinant of the objective. The *Relat* is an external determinant between or among objecta. The *Relation* is an external determinant between or among objectives.

The *ratio* is quite simple:



We shall now shortly consider some of the subsequent features of the theory. The first point to note is that for Mally both real and ideal objects are possible objects. An impossible object is an object whose nature excludes the being (*Sein*) of its object. That is, it is an object whose nature excludes *both* the existence *and* the subsistence of its object. An impossible object is for instance an object with a contradictory *Sosein*. Another impos-

sible object is an object whose *Sosein* has a contradictory *Sosein*. For a better understanding of the situation, we can use the following diagram:



The object is impossible when its *Sosein* (*Sosein1*) is contradictory. In such a case *Sosein1* excludes the being (both in the sense of existence and in the sense of subsistence) of *Sein1*. In the same way, we shall say that *Sosein1* is an impossible object when its *Sosein* (*Sosein2*) excludes the being of its *Sein* (*Sein2*). Etc. Impossible objects do not have being, that is they do not exist nor do they subsist. They are not real nor ideal objects.

As a matter of fact, Mally presents both a principle of dependence and a principle of independence. The principle of dependence states that the *Sein* of an object depends on the *Sosein* of the object (Mally (1904), p. 126). The principle of independence states that the *Sein* of the *Sosein* of an object does not depend on the *Sein* of the object (Mally (1904), p. 127). One should be careful not to confuse the realm of the contradictoriness of the determinations of the *Sosein* with the realm of the impossibility of the object. These are two hierarchically distinct levels (For a more detailed analysis see Poli (1990)).

In his 1904 paper Mally develops an analysis of the *two* fundamental modes of determination. The first mode answers the question 'what is A?', the second mode answers the question 'what is A like?' The examples are, respectively, the following: 'this thing is a lever' and 'the sky is blue.' In Mally's words, to the *what* there corresponds a *quid*, to the *what... like* there corresponds a *quale*. Although the opposition of quids and quales is not amenable to definition, for Mally it is always recognizable with certainty (Mally (1904), pp. 135-136). Mally then observes that every *quid* is entirely determined by a *quale*, and vice versa.

According to Mally, the coincident objects of the same *quale* are 'essentially coincident objects.' This means that they can be distinguished only formally. Mally's exemplification is that the *quale* 'red' in '*A* is red' coincides essentially with the *quid* 'something red' in '*A* is something red.' In order to conduct better analysis of the theory of the *quid* and the *quale*, we must analyse the structure of the objective, and this is a rather complex task.

At first sight, it is usually maintained that the objective presents *three* different objects: the object of determination; the determinant object, and the determination. However, for full understanding of the many subtleties of the theory, it is much more correct to state that the objective is connected to *four* different objects: as well as the three just mentioned, we must also consider what Mally calls the *Eigenschaftsgegenstand*.

The difference among all these objects becomes clearer if we consider the judgements or the assumptions 'this thing is a lever' or 'the sky is blue.' In the first case, 'this thing' is the object of determination, 'lever' is the determinant object, 'the being a lever of this thing' is the determination. The same applies to the other judgement: 'the sky' is the object of determination, 'blue' is the determinant object and 'the being blue of the sky' is the determination. The difference between the two examples is the fact that in the former case the determinant object (lever) is a *quid*, whereas in the latter case the determinant object (blue) is a *quale*.

If we adopt a two names plus copula structure—that is the traditional '*A* is *B*' structure—we can easily realise that object of determination (*A*), determinant object (*B*) and determination (the being *B* of *A*) are *explicitly* present in the objective. We could also say that the determination is represented by the structure 'is-*B*' (Mally (1904), p. 131, note). Adopting a Fregean framework of the type  $P(a)$ , we could instead say that '*a*' is the object of determination, '*P*' is the determinant object and '*P*( )' the determination.

But Mally claims that the objective has also another object, the *Eigenschaftsgegenstand* (henceforth, EG). As far as I can understand, the EG is the object described by the objective. More precisely, it is the object described by the objecta that compose the objective, the aforementioned 'object of determination,' 'determinant object' and 'determination.'

The subsequent opposition among explicit, implicit and fictitious objects is one of the Mally's main contributions. In Mally's theory, 'explicit' mainly means 'grasped by judgement.' Later on he notes that 'explicit' means 'immanent' and 'implicit' means 'transcendent' (Mally (1904), p. 145).

There are explicit objectives, explicit objects of determination, explicit determinant objects, explicit determinations and explicit EG. This amounts to saying that any one of the distinct objects we have so far introduced into the theory can be grasped by judgements.

If we pass to the implicit objects, we find a first important difference. In fact, Mally speaks only of implicit determination, and of implicit EG. Objectives, determinant objects, and objects of determination are *always and only explicit*. This means that they can be *grasped only by judgements, they are judgement-dependent*.

But what does 'implicit' mean? Mally's definitions run as follows:

1.  $x$  is an implicit determination iff  $x$  is a determination and it *essentially coincides* with an explicit objective without being an explicit objective.
2.  $x$  is an implicit EG iff  $x$  is an EG and it *essentially coincides* with an explicit EG without being an explicit EG.

The two definitions exhibit the same structure. In order to understand their exact meaning, it is necessary to understand the clause 'essentially to coincide with a so-and-so without being a so-and-so.' The first step is recognizing that anything that is implicit is always coincident with something (of the same type) that is explicit. That is to say it has to be grasped by some judgement (because it coincides with something explicit), even if it is not a judgement (because it is implicit), but something of a different ontological realm (for instance it is something transcendent).

The third 'category' introduced by Mally is the category of the fictitious. This is used for objectives, determinations and EG. Mally says that an object is fictitious when it is explicit and contains the determination 'being implicit.' Fictitious objects are impossible objects. Generally speaking, they are referred to by abstract names. More generally, we may say that every 'general object' or every 'universal' is a fictitious object (Mally (1904), p. 166, note). The introduction of the fictitious objects is a decisive step in the development of *Gegenstandstheorie*, because it significantly widens the field of impossible objects. From this point on, impossible objects are not only objects with a contradictory *Sosein* (as in the famous 'round square' example), but also all the explicit objects determined as implicit objects.

Everything can be explicit, that is, grasped by a judgement. But it is not true that everything does exist in the world. As far as we consider 'real' objects, we can say that objectives, objects of determination and determinant objects are only 'psychological' objects; they are non 'mundane' objects. What is 'real' is the determination, that is the mode in which something is given (the being  $B$  of  $A$ ) and the EG ( $A$ , that is  $B$ ). Mally then adds that any implicit object is existent or subsistent.

The picture is now quite complete. Mally's theory has a place for the objects in the world (implicit EG), for the immanent objects (explicit EG), for abstracta (fictitious EG) and for the objecta that compose the objectives.

One of the most difficult points of the 1904 paper is the definitions of the fictitious. We can perhaps explain the idea that Mally was trying to express as follows. The problem is finding a general characteristic able to explain the coordination between abstract terms and the things in the world. But since the *Gegenstandstheoretisch* analyses always start from the *Sosein*, if the abstract terms contain an inner determination of the type 'being

exemplified,' then the problem is preventing the inference from this determination to its actual exemplifications. According to Mally, we obtain this result if we realise that the objects so determined are impossible objects. What matters is the fact that, according to this theory, abstract terms denote objects that act in the same way as impossible objects, and impossible objects cannot be exemplified.

This device can be of some help in also solving the famous objection to Meinong advanced by Russell in his famous 1905 paper published on *Mind*. We know the point. If the round square is round and square, the existing round square should be round, square and existing. But 'existing' is an exemplification of the determination 'being implicit' (that is transcendent). It follows, by definition, that the existing round square is a fictitious object. And every explicit but-implicitly-determined object is an impossible object.

### Dependences

*Gegenstandstheorie* presents a number of different forms of dependence. The first form of dependence we shall consider is the dependence between first-order and higher order objects.

Higher-order objects are constructed on other objects which are their indispensable foundations. To be precise, at least 'for one principal group of objects of higher order the notion of necessity is essential and these objects have been labeled "founded objects" ' (Meinong (1972), p. 63).

In presenting his theory of higher-order objects, Meinong distinguished objects into *inferiora* and *superiora* according to the position that they occupy. From his earliest writings onwards, he recognized that (1) an *inferius* can equally be or not be the bearer of a higher-order object; and that (2) a *superius* always requires *inferiora* as its bearers (Meinong 1899).

In other words, the presence of an *inferius* tells us nothing about the presence or otherwise of a *superius*. Conversely, whenever there is a *superius*, necessarily given with it are its *inferiora*.

Secondly, a *superius* requires not only *inferiora* but also *infima*. A higher-order object may be grounded on another higher-order object, but in the end one arrives at objects which are not grounded on other objects: 'at the beginning of any series formed by increasingly higher-order objectives, there must be at least one objectum' (Meinong (1983), p. 101).

Higher-order objects founded on other higher-order ones comprise, for example, aesthetic objects and objects of emotional presentations:

there are reasons which exclude a simple subsumption of aesthetics objects under the notion of objects of higher order... Beauty... does not connect the tones of a beautiful melody, but the already unified object melody is its basis. And such a basis does not necessarily consist in a plurality of objects (Meinong (1972), p. 93).

Thirdly, there is no reason to believe that a *superius* should have a multiplicity of *inferiora* as its basis. As we saw in the case of negation, a *superius* may have only one *inferius*.

Meinong also points out that, objects themselves may be the basis of several *superiora*. When faced with the same given objects, on one occasion I may find that they are several, on another that they are two (Meinong 1899).

Alongside higher-order objects, there are other objects which probably or certainly cannot be apprehended as higher-order objects: colours, for instance.

Among the numerous types of higher-order objects, there are at least two that we have already met: objectives and negatives. Besides these, the domain of higher-order objects comprises existence and subsistence (and their complements), as well as relations and complexions. Examination of some of these cases now follows.

Meinong's analysis of relations and complexions was the starting-point for his theory. The main difference between relations and complexions is that the former can be considered independently of their terms (groundings or *inferiora*), while the latter require the presence of their terms.

The relationship between complexions and relations is so close that Meinong claims coincidence between them: 'where there is complexion, there is relation, and vice versa' (1899). In a slightly different form, we have already met this principle of coincidence when discussing Mally's ideas.

The crucial difference between relation and complexion is that a complexion is not formed *solely* by the relation *and* its terms. Otherwise, the complexion  $aRb$  would be formed by the relation  $R$  and by its terms  $a$  and  $b$ . Meinong states that the set formed by  $R$ ,  $a$  and  $b$  is only the objective collective of the complexion, not the complexion itself. He maintains that we can properly speak of complexion only when the relation is given together with its elements. The difference is a rather subtle one, and can be correctly grasped only by avoiding a 'classical' set-theoretical interpretation. Perhaps the best way to understand the point is to think of the 'product' (or of analogous operations) in the mathematical theory of categories. A product is not given by something like  $A \times B$  alone, but by the complex constituted by  $A \times B$  *together with* the projections  $p: A \times B \rightarrow A$  and  $q: A \times B \rightarrow B$ .

Obviously, Meinong was unaware of the theory of categories. However, what he says seems canonically interpretable only in this manner. From a historical point of view, it is of interest to note that Erdmann's (1892) logic anticipated many of Meinong's observations on relations and complexions.

At this point, we may specify the conditions under which we may talk of higher-order objects, or, in other words, state that the object concerned is constructed on other objects but without being constituted by their objective collective. Meinong's favourite example is the following:

a melody of four tones is certainly not a fifth tone. In general: given some objects, these are not united into a complexion simply because a further object entirely similar to those objects is added to them... the new element added in these cases... is the relation coincident with the complexion (Meinong 1899).

To resume analysis of relations and complexions, their next articulation is into real relations and complexions and ideal relations and complexions. Colours, tactile qualities, temperatures, produce real relations and complexions. On the ideal side we find 'similarity,' or the number 4, or any other natural whatever.

Real relations (*Verhältnisse*) differ from ideal ones (*Beziehungen*) as follows: ideal relations leave their terms unaffected, they do not constrain them to intimate unity, whereas real relations (like melodies, for example) involve some sort of fusion (*Verschmelzung*) in the object that they constitute.

The difference between real and ideal relates to that between grounded and ungrounded objects. All ideal complexions and all ideal objects are grounded objects.

In the book of 1904 which presented the work of Meinong and his pupils, the theory of non-grounded objects is set out by Ameseder, who envisions two types of non-grounded object: objects which are things (*Dinggegenstände*) and the objects of sensation, like colours, sounds, tastes, tactile qualities, and so on. These are not simply *erfasst*, but they are always *miterfasst*, grasped together with other objects. Non-grounded objects are produced objects, so that we may say that, while the term 'grounding' denotes the *gegenstandstheoretisch* part of the theory, the term 'production' characterizes its psychic part. The grounding that governs ideal objects is the counterpart of the perceptive production that governs real objects (for further details see Albertazzi (ch. 18) and Sinatra in this book).

Besides the very general distinctions that we have just seen, Meinong also drew some more concrete and specific ones: for instance, (a) among complete, incomplete and completed objects; (b) between intuitive and non-intuitive presentation; and (c) between precise and imprecise objects.

In the introductory section, I pointed out the difference between the completeness of reals and ideals and the incompleteness of other objects. For Meinong, incomplete objects are impossible. Nevertheless, they enable us to refer to complete objects. Note that Meinong offers a positive account of incomplete objects. He wants to move beyond the purely negative

statement that incomplete objects are *other than* or that they are *not* complete objects' (Jacquette (1995), p. 240).

Incomplete objects may be incomplete at various levels. The incomplete objects that we use to refer to complete objects are called 'auxiliary objects' (*Hilfsgegenstand*), while the complete objects that are the final point of our referential acts are 'ultimate objects' (*Zielgegenstand*) (Meinong (1915), pp. 196-7). Linguistically, 'The auxiliary object is what words mean, the ultimate object is what they name' (Meinong (1915), p. 741; quoted by Lindenfeld (1980), p. 163).

The distinction between auxiliary and ultimate objects is a particular case of the more general distinction between remote and immediate objects. Ultimately, this latter distinction

is grounded... on a difference in their respective characteristic modes of apprehension... the mode of apprehending immediate intentional objects is primarily by way of reference to their being or *Sein*, whereas the mode of apprehending a remote object is always by way of reference to its being thus-and-so or *Sosein* (Jacquette (1996), p. 44).

As regards incomplete objects, Meinong elaborates a theory of universals and of reference. Incomplete objects are 'embedded' in complete objects. The term used by Meinong is '*implektiert*,' properly translated by Findlay as 'embedded.' For Meinong, however, the relation between an embedded object and the object in which it is embedded is not a mereological relation between part and whole. Incomplete objects *are not parts* of complete objects (Findlay (1933, p. 168, my emphasis).

Meinong further distinguishes incomplete objects having 'implexive being' by their being embedded in complete objects, from incomplete objects having 'implexive nonbeing' by their being embedded in beingless objects. This means that there will be incomplete objects having being and incomplete objects without being. For Meinong, universals are beingless incomplete objects.

As well as complete and incomplete objects, Meinong also envisions *completed* objects. A completed object is an incomplete one to which the property of completeness has been added. Consider, for example, the case of a door. This is a presentation of an incomplete object because, for example, it does not possess any particular weight. However, if we transform the presentation of the door into the presentation of the 'door *qua* presented,' we obtain a different object. Unlike the previous incomplete object, this new one can be called a completed object (Simons (1995), p. 177). Although the theory is not thoroughly developed in all its details, this particular use of reduplication is extremely interesting, because it calls

attention to novel aspects of the theory (on reduplication see e.g. Bäck (1996) and Poli (1998)).

The difference between intuitive and non-intuitive presentations is as follows:

In nonintuitive representing, use is made of object determinations that are strictly speaking incompatible with each other; whereas in intuitive representing only compatible elements appear united in the complex of the intuitively represented object (Meinong (1983), p. 179).

An example may be of help. The expression 'cross that is red' is not intuitive because the cross may be white and it may be the table that is red, not the cross. To become an intuitive representation, 'cross' must contain the feature 'red,' and 'red' must contain the feature 'crossed.' In other words, both must have the same substrate. By contrast, the abstract representation of 'cross' has no room for 'red,' just as the abstract representation of 'red' does not have room for 'cross' (Meinong (1983), pp. 180-1). It follows that

In the case of intuitive apprehension, the traditional expression concretum naturally suggests itself, and the etymological picture of coalescence exhibits the characteristic difference between intuitive apprehension and the mere patchwork of the nonintuitive. The term disconcretum might fittingly be applied to the latter (Meinong (1972), p. 21).

And again:

one can simply say that for the apprehension of impossible objects one always has available a disconcretum but never a concretum. It is wrong to say that I cannot apprehend the round square at all but that the intuitive apprehension of it is by its very nature excluded. It can also be said that though a round square neither exists nor subsists, the round square has *Außersein* as a disconcretum; but it does not have *Außersein* as a concretum. Here we have a typical case of something which lacks *Außersein*, and in this respect our defective objects are not alone (Meinong (1972), p. 21).

One may also add that

a simultaneous apprehending of the part-objects is generally characteristic of an intuitive representation, and a successive apprehending is generally characteristic of nonintuitive representation (Meinong (1983), p. 184).

In conclusion, therefore:

If one and the same object can be apprehended in an intuitive representation as well as in a nonintuitive one, it seems beyond doubt that the object cannot be what bears the difference in question. Thus it seems that the contrast between intuitive and

nonintuitive representation must lie elsewhere than in the object (Meinong (1983), p. 181).

Meinong specifies the difference between intuitive and non-intuitive by distinguishing between composition (*Zusammensetzung*) and juxtaposition (*Zusammenstellung*).

Representations can combine into more complex representations in two different ways; they can form representational compositions, but they can also form representational juxtapositions. In the first case, the object apprehended by means of the representational complex is intuitively represented, in the second case nonintuitively (Meinong (1983), p. 183).

Composition and juxtaposition are distinguished by

a fact long familiar... determinability in respect of the antithesis of yes and no. Nonintuitively, I can combine the representations 'cross' and 'red' not only into the representation of the 'cross that is red' but also into the representation of the 'cross that is not red;' and in this freedom, nonintuitive representation has an advantage over intuitive representation (Meinong (1983), p. 185).

Meinong then distinguishes between precise and imprecise objects. It is plain that objects can be apprehended in more or less precise manner. Besides this form of imprecision, which is due to the subject, there is also the imprecision due to the properties and nature of the object. For Meinong, precise objects are higher-order objects *without* their *inferiora*, or higher-order objects whose *inferiora* do not permit threshold errors. Thus, the object 'equality' is absolutely precise in abstract. By contrast, the object 'equality of these colours' involves inferiora which admit the possibility of threshold errors and is therefore an imprecise object.

### **Modalities**

Meinong's modal theory is among the lesser known sections of his theory of objects. Findlay thinks it is 'quite probably the most vulnerable point in the theory of objects' (Findlay (1933), p. 76).

The positive modalities envisaged by Meinong are factuality, possibility and necessity: 'At all events, it seems that there are not, strictly speaking, any distinctive modal properties in objectives beyond factuality, possibility, necessity and their opposites' (Meinong (1983), p. 73).

As regards the category of factuality, Meinong states that when an objective is a fact, the corresponding judgement is true (Meinong (1906b), pp. 399-400). On the basis of this definition one may also assert that

Aristotle's truth is not truth but factuality (Findlay (1933), p. 186). The analogy between the two positions is further confirmed when one notes that, precisely as for Aristotle, 'Meinong's definition... does not include a criterion for distinguishing a factual situation from a non-factual one' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 158).

As Lindenfeld points out, for Meinong 'the factuality of an objective is the upper limit of a series of possibilities, with unfactuality as the lower limit' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 168). 'Factuality, Meinong claims, is by its very nature located at the end of a scale of magnitude, a scale whose points can be conceived of as representing every degree of possibility' (Meinong (1983), p. 68). 'Evidence... admits of degrees, of which certainty is but the highest' (Lindenfeld (1980), p. 167).

In this situation 'the impossible is that which is not possible or which stands at the zero-point of the possibility-line' (Meinong (1983), p. 71).

For Meinong, necessity and possibility are not convertible. 'The traditional definition of necessity as the impossibility of the opposite seems already prohibited by direct observation' (Meinong (1983), p. 70). Just as the possibility (factuality) of an objective is fundamentally *a posteriori*, so is necessity *a priori*: 'An objective is necessary as far as it can be seen or realized a priori' (Meinong (1983), p. 70).

### **Conclusion**

Although we have seen only a minimal part of Meinong's ideas and inquiries, the general features of his theory should now be delineated. By way of conclusion, I wish to make three points in particular.

The first is that Meinong's theories are not as isolated and eccentric as his critics would have us believe. Not only did Meinong belong to a distinct context of inquiry—that of the school of Brentano—but his investigations revived problems and proposals put forward by other significant thinkers. This brings to mind another important philosopher—perhaps the foremost ontologist of the twentieth century—who has suffered perhaps even a worse fate than Meinong. Whereas Meinong has been unjustly derided, Nicolai Hartmann seems to have been completely forgotten. And yet he is a thinker who may easily stand comparison with the other great thinkers of our century, Husserl, Meinong, Ingarden or Whitehead. To restrict discussion to the relationship between Hartmann and Meinong, both of them analytically elaborated the distinctions between real and ideal, the problem of levels of reality, the theory of modalities, and the problem of the aesthetic object, and they reached very similar conclusions. Unfortunately, I know

of no author who has even attempted to conduct serious comparison between Meinong and Hartmann.

The second point that I wish to emphasise is that Meinong's thought is profoundly anchored in the facts, so that it does not flinch from any of the consequences arising from careful and dispassionate analysis of the data under observation. Meinong was aware that he had no talent for self-promotion: 'the art of making what is popular even more popular, and thereby becoming popular myself, has always been denied me' (Meinong (1921), p. 58). But he was a scrupulous, precise and courageous thinker.

My third and final point concerns the nature of Meinong's theory. As I have sought to show, its various components interweave, and every problem is systematically analysed from many points of view. For example, an objective is simultaneously an ideal object, a founded object, and a higher-order object. Specification of each of these objects involves the others, but each of them clarifies aspects of the theory. In this sense they are all relevant.

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