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## MEINONGIAN OBJECTS\*

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This is a study of Meinongian “objects” – specifically, individual objects – and their motivations in intentionality theory. Others have dwelt on their “indifference to being” (Aussersein). Principally, I shall argue that, contrary to what we might have hoped for them, Meinongian objects must be intensional entities if, as asked, they are to serve as objects of thought in an appropriately Meinongian, “object-theoretic” account of intentionality. Briefly, the argument is as follows. (The roman numerals mark off roughly the content of parts I through V of the paper.)

I. Meinong’s theory of objects can in general be seen as motivated by the theory of intentionality, for “objects” are assumed to serve as the objects of thought or “intention”. What seems largely to distinguish a Meinongian approach to intentionality is the attempt to account for the peculiarities of intention in terms of peculiarities of the objects “intended”.

II. One class of objects Meinong propounded are “incomplete”, or “incompletely determined”, objects. An example is the golden mountain, which is golden and mountainous but otherwise “undetermined”.

III. For Meinong, incomplete objects serve to mediate the intention (or apprehension) of complete objects. Meinong believed we cannot properly “intend” complete objects. We intend them only indirectly insofar as we intend incomplete objects which are “embedded” in them. This is Meinong’s account of how, as best he thought we can, we intend everyday existing physical individuals, which are complete. (As stated, this is not quite gospel Meinong, which treats of “Soseinsmeinen”.)

IV. This theory of the indirect intention of complete objects via incomplete objects also explains another familiar fact about intention, though Meinong himself probably did not put it to this use. It explains in a straightforward way the distinction between, for instance, one’s conceiving the morning star and one’s conceiving the evening star – and hence, in the “formal mode” the failure of the logical law of substitutivity of identity for terms in intentional contexts. For, on Meinongian lines these intentions would be indirect inten-

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tions of the same complete object (Venus, we would say) but intentions proper of *distinct* incomplete objects (“The Morning Star” and “The Evening Star”, as we shall call them), and so they would be distinct intentions.

V. Different sorts of entities have been considered intensional, including Frege’s “senses” and Carnap’s “intensions”. What seems to qualify them as intensional is their *role vis a vis*, specifically, ordinary physical individuals in a Frege-like semantics. Further, it is intensional entities that determine the “directedness” or intentionality of mental acts. Meinong’s incomplete objects fill these bills and so, I argue, are intensional. However, since complete objects are continuous in kind with incomplete objects, complete objects too – including ordinary physical individuals – must be intensional.

Generalizing, the genre of Meinongian intentionality theory is characteristically “extensionalist”, treating intention straightforwardly as a relation and thus accounting for its peculiarities in terms of the objects intended. We may conclude that any such approach to intentionality must render the objects of intention intensional.

I conclude (in part VI) that such a Meinongian view of intentionality leaves the intensional playing the wrong role in intention. This can be remedied by replacing incomplete objects with something like individual concepts or senses (which are not themselves incomplete) and making them the mediators rather than the *objects* of intention.

I should stress that this essay is not an historical study in the interpretation of Meinong’s writings. It is rather a critical study of the genre of Meinongian object-cum-intentionality theory, of what happens if we make certain assumptions apparently fundamental to Meinong’s program. I shall here largely rely on Findlay’s lovely book<sup>1</sup> as a convenient and well-received gathering of Meinong’s views. At a few indicated points I shall extend, to some extent modify, or reconstruct Meinong’s views as I know them.

### 1. *Perspectives on Meinongian Object Theory*

1. As is well-known, Meinong held that there are objects which do not exist (or have being of any kind): objects per se are “indifferent to being” (*ausserseiend*).<sup>2</sup> He might have said today that quantifiers per se carry no com-

1. J.N. Findlay, *Meinong’s Theory of Objects and Values* (Oxford University Press, 1963; first published, 1933). Hereafter this work will be cited as simply “Findlay”.
2. Re. the next three paragraphs see Alexius Meinong, “The Theory of Objects”, in Roderick M. Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology* (The Free Press, New York, 1960), pp 76-117. Meinong said, “Those who like paradoxical modes of expression could very well say: ‘There are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects.’ ” (p.83) I do not. So I say: “There are objects which do not have being,” or perhaps better, “Some objects do not have being.”

mitments to existence (or being).<sup>3</sup> So objects may or may not have being. Further, objects have properties independently of whether they have being: being-so (*Sosein*) is independent of being (*Sein*).

There are two kinds of being that objects may have: concrete objects are open to *existence*, while abstract objects are open to *subsistence* but not existence. Of course, some concrete objects exist and others do not, and some abstract objects subsist and others do not. Objects which neither exist nor subsist do not have being, and objects which lack being neither exist nor subsist. Some objects which lack being cannot have being; these are the impossible objects, but we'll not be talking about them.

Objects (*Gegenstände*) divide into individual objects (*Objekte*: sometimes translated 'objecta') and propositional objects, apparently states of affairs, called "objectives" (*Objektive*). Here we will deal only with individual objects, calling them simply "objects". Since we will argue that Meinongian objects turn out not to be the ordinary objects they are supposed to be, when we wish to use an expression to refer to a Meinongian object we shall capitalize the first letters of the words involved, thus: 'The Morning Star'.

2. Meinong's *theory of objects* (*Gegenstandstheorie*) is probably most strongly motivated by the needs of a theory of *intentionality*.<sup>4</sup> For Meinong himself, objects deserve to be studied in their own right in pure object theory, but from the outset they are assumed to serve as the objects of thought or cognition and so to account for peculiarities of mental phenomena, specifically the fact that we can think of objects which do not exist (or have being).<sup>5</sup>

Brentano, Meinong's teacher, held that mental phenomena are characteristically *intentional*, in each case "directed" toward something in the sense of being a consciousness "of" something.<sup>6</sup> Many at least are. Let us adopt the technical term '*intend*' (from the Latin root meaning to point toward) as a generic verb of consciousness covering imagining, desiring, judging, believing, and so on.<sup>7</sup> And let us call instances of intending — believings, desirings, and

3. Let us stress that the mature doctrine of *Aussersein* does not propose a strange mode of being called *Aussersein*, a third kind of being, in addition to existence and subsistence, that objects which neither exist nor subsist have. Vide Meinong, op. cit., pp 84-86. Cf. Findlay, 47-49. And cf. Roderick M. Chisholm, "Beyond Being and Nonbeing", in R. Haller (ed.) *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein* (Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1972), p. 27
4. As Chisholm has argued nicely: vide Chisholm, op. cit., pp. 30-33.
5. Vide Meinong, op. cit. Cf. Findlay, Chapters I and II, especially, pp. 42ff.
6. Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (English edition and translation edited by Linda L. McAlister; Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973; German originally published, 1874), pp. 88ff. The same sections appeared in Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, pp. 50ff.
7. N. b. In talking about intention Meinong variously uses 'apprehend', 'is directed

so on – “*intentions*”, and the generic phenomenon “*intention*”.

Intentions (e.g. Smith’s thinking of the morning star or of Scarlett O’Hara) seem to consist in certain relations’ obtaining between persons and objects. But, as has often been stressed, if intention is a relation it is an unusual one. For, to begin with, the object intended (here, the morning star, or Scarlett O’Hara) need not exist for the relation (here, thinking of) to obtain. It is largely the purpose of a theory of intentionality to account for such peculiarities of intention.

Brentano proposed<sup>8</sup> that the *objects of intention*, the objects that are intended in mental phenomena, are “intentionally in-existent” entities (mental “contents”), which in each case exist but exist in the mental act or state itself. Meinong’s proposal was more straightforward with regard to what is intended: we intend objects – The Morning Star or Scarlett O’Hara or whatever; but objects are indifferent to being and can be intended independently of whether they have being. So, if we presuppose object theory, we can launch a straightforward theory of the objects of intention and so of intentionality:<sup>9</sup> intention *is* a relation; it is a relation to a Meinongian object.

3. Object theory readily serves semantic theory, too. For objects indifferent to being can serve as the referents of terms such as ‘Scarlett O’Hara’ and ‘the present king of France’, which might otherwise seem to lack reference since their prospective referents do not exist.

And of course if quantifiers carry existential commitment, *existential generalization* often fails. In particular, it fails for terms in intentional contexts: from:

Ponce de Leon sought the fountain of youth.

does not follow:

There is something which Ponce de Leon sought.

A Meinongian account is straightforward and left to the reader.

4. Philosophers interested in Meinong have attended to the problems of non-existent objects and of failures of existential generalization (in intentional and other contexts).<sup>10</sup> In this study I wish ultimately to stress rather the

toward’ (‘ist gerichtet auf’), and ‘meinen’ (translated as ‘refers to’). However, ‘intend’ is probably not a direct translation for any of his terms, unless it be ‘is directed toward’.

8. Or so he seemed to propose in his earlier work. Vide Brentano, *op. cit.*, pp. 88ff. Cf. Chisholm, “Brentano on Descriptive Psychology and the Intentional”, in Edward N. Lee and Maurice Mandelbaum (eds.), *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1967).
9. Meinong did not reject “contents”, but he gave them a different role in intention: cf. Findlay, *op. cit.*, Ch. I. But see the final section of this essay re “contents”.
10. See for instance Chisholm, in Haller, *op. cit.*, and Karel Lambert, “Being and Being So”, also in Haller, *op. cit.*

problems that arise for a Meinongian as he turns to failures of *substitutivity of identity* for terms in intentional contexts, or, more basically, to the associated features of intentionality.

Meinongian objects are to be the objects of intention. Now, importantly, it seems that, on a Meinongian, object-theoretic account of intentionality, *the objects of intention individuate (certain) intentional, or phenomenological, structures*. Thus, it is the objects intended that distinguish one's conceiving the moon from one's conceiving the sun. Further, it is the objects intended that distinguish one's conceiving the morning star from one's conceiving the evening star.<sup>11,12</sup> For, on what seems the basic of Meinong's tack on intentionality, intention is straightforwardly a relation between a person and an object. Here the person and the relation are the same, so all that is left to distinguish these two intentions is the objects intended. This suggests an account along Meinongian lines of failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts. And, I'll argue, it is the source of serious troubles for the Meinongian program. In particular, it forces Meinongian objects to be intensional, and it leaves the intensional playing the wrong role in consciousness.

It seems that Meinong's object-theoretic approach to intentionality provides at once the paradigmatic and perhaps the most developed attempt to account for the problems of intentionality solely<sup>13</sup> in terms of the objects of intention: Meinongian objects are it seems "intentional objects" par excellence.<sup>14</sup> This does not fully come out, however, until we attend not only, on a semantic plane, to failures of existential generalization but also to failures of substitu-

11. It would be preferable to say the same object (Venus) is intended through different "contents". This Meinong held, following Twardowski. (Cf. Findlay, p. 12, noting footnote 3.) If this view is properly developed, it obviates the need to distinguish intentional structures by distinguishing objects intended. But apparently it is not sufficiently developed in Meinong, as he needs a notion of objective content in addition to one of subjective content; this we consider in Part VI below. At any rate, as we shall see, Meinong did distinguish the objects intended in such cases, and that would be a natural, even quintessential move in a pure object-theoretic approach to intentionality.
12. In a propositional case, it is the objectives intended that distinguish believing that the morning star is risen from believing that the evening star is risen. Though we shall not address the propositional attitudes here, conclusions such as we draw here seem to call for a complete rethinking of the view – held also by Russell and many in his wake – that belief, for instance, is straightforwardly a relation between persons and propositional objects. We need to ask precisely what objectives or propositions or whatever are, in what respects they are intensional and in what respects they are not.
13. Eclipsing Meinong's account of the role of "content" in intention.
14. A recent, interesting, and detailed development of a similar program is Hector-Neri Castaneda's "Thinking and the Structure of the World", *Philosophia*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January, 1974), pp. 3-40.

tivity in intentional contexts. Similarly, a Meinongian semantics would in general try to account for semantic phenomena solely in terms of the objects of reference, probably striving for unailing extensionality.<sup>15</sup>

As we consider briefly in part VI, however, an “object” approach is not the only possible tack on intentionality. Where Meinong and others tampered primarily with the objects of intention, Husserl and others tampered rather with the relation of intention itself.

5. Meinong may have conceived objects as complexes of properties,<sup>16</sup> taking this as a point of pure object theory and of pure ontology. Depending on details of its development, this could directly render Meinongian objects intensional. My point is to show that, independently of any such point of ontology, whether or not it is correct and whether or not Meinong held it, Meinongian objects must be intensional given their assigned role in intentionality.

## II. *Meinong's Theory of Incomplete Objects.*

1. An important class of Meinongian objects (Objekte: individuals) are those Meinong called *incomplete*, or *incompletely determined*, objects.<sup>17</sup> They are the pivotal concern of this paper.

Consider The Golden Mountain. Is it taller than Mt. Vesuvius? Or take Vulcan—the once-hypothesized planet between Mercury and the sun. Has it an atmosphere loaded with nitrogen? Or take Scarlett O'Hara, beautiful heroine and despaired-of lover in the novel *Gone With The Wind*. At what time of day was she born, and who were her grandparents?

These questions have no answers. It is not that we cannot tell or know what the answers are — there are none. The Golden Mountain is just that: golden, a mountain, and unique. But only that and nothing more. It is neither taller than Vesuvius nor not taller than Vesuvius. Nor does Vulcan have or not have a nitrogenous atmosphere. Nor was Scarlett O'Hara born at any particular time of day.

For, Meinong would say, these objects — The Golden Mountain, Vulcan, Scarlett O'Hara — are “incomplete”, “incompletely determined”. An object *o* is *incomplete*, or *incompletely determined*, if and only if for some property *P* neither does *o* have *P* nor does *o* not have *P*.<sup>18</sup> The object is simply not determined (propertied) in that respect. Consequently, for certain sentences

15. But see Lambert, *op. cit.*

16. So Reinhardt Grossmann writes in his *Meinong* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974), pp. 2ff.

17. Vide Findlay, Ch. VI.

18. Findlay, p. 162.

about incomplete objects, the logical *law of excluded middle fails* – the law ‘Either A or not-A’.<sup>19</sup>

2. Incompleteness has a certain plausibility in such *non-existent* objects as The Golden Mountain. But it does not stop there. As Meinongian object, The Morning Star is incomplete: it is a star and the last one visible in the morning, but that’s all there is to it.<sup>20</sup> The Evening Star is similarly incomplete. And as a consequence, given something like Leibniz’s Law for incomplete objects,<sup>21</sup> *The Morning Star and The Evening Star are not identical objects*. Nor is either identical with the object Venus (probably incomplete too, as things will turn out). The incompleteness of *these* objects and the ensuing breakdown of their mutual identities must be seen as a sore point in Meinongian object theory. For, while it seemed nonsensical to expect an answer to the query about Vulcan’s atmosphere, in the case of Venus or The Morning Star, which we ordinarily take to be existent and complete objects<sup>22</sup> (and the same one), we not only expect an answer but have ways of finding it out. And yet, as I shall argue, if object theory is to achieve its goals then incomplete must Venus as well as Vulcan be.

3. Now, incomplete objects may be *embedded* (implektiert: involved, implicated) in complete objects.<sup>23</sup> The Morning Star, an incomplete object, is embedded in that complete object which is in fact the first visible heavenly body in the morning sky (if we may slight the less constant and less celestial moon). So are The Evening Star and Venus, as incomplete objects, embedded in that same complete object. Moreover, The Morning Star is embedded in *any* complete object that includes all the properties it includes. Importantly, an incomplete object is a *distinct* object from any complete object which embeds it – assuming again something like Leibniz’s Law.

Further, every *existent* object is complete. (Indeed, every object with being, whether existent or subsistent, is complete.)<sup>24</sup> I am not *sure* whether Meinong thought there are any *nonexistent* complete objects, but it seems there should be some on his view. At any rate, if an incomplete object is embedded in an existing complete object then the incomplete object exists “implexively”, “em-

19. Ibid.

20. We’ll take ‘the morning star’ as a (slightly elliptical) definite description.

21. I don’t know whether Meinong himself explicitly used such a criterion of identity for objects, incomplete or otherwise, but it does seem to fit well and in some respects Meinong’s complete objects compare with Leibnizian monads.

22. This, our ordinary assumption Meinong effectively attempted to restore with his notion of “completed” objects, which we examine below.

23. Findlay, p. 168, following his translation.

24. Findlay, p. 156.



beddedly”.<sup>25</sup> Incomplete objects never exist or have being in their own right but only in this way indirectly.

Complete objects, then, are to be what we normally think of as individuals, including typical physical objects. Each complete object embeds a great many incomplete objects, infinitely many since a complete object includes an infinite number of determinations or properties. And each incomplete object is embedded in a great many complete objects, infinitely many since there are an infinite number of different properties that might be added to it to determine it further.

4. But exactly which properties does a given object have – in particular, a given incomplete object?

As we noted earlier, Meinong may have tended to think of objects as bona fide complexes of properties. We shall not be concerned with the details of this specific ontological claim. What we need note is that, importantly, for Meinong objects in *some* sense “include” properties. And an object *has* or instantiates just those properties it *includes*.<sup>26</sup> One object is embedded in another, then, if and only if the properties it includes are all included in the other. (I take it that the incomplete object The Mountain is not the same thing as the property Mountainhood. The Mountain is embedded in The Golden Mountain and in each complete mountain, whereas the property Mountainhood is not embedded in but included in and had by these.)

Among the incomplete objects we’ve cited are Scarlett O’Hara (a figure of fiction), Vulcan (a mistaken scientific hypothesis), and The Golden Mountain (an object of imagination or “conception”). Exactly which properties are included in these objects? For The Golden Mountain, the answer is straightforward: the properties of being golden and being mountainous (and perhaps being unique). For Scarlett O’Hara, the answer at first appears to be: those and only those properties attributed Scarlett O’Hara (explicitly or by implication) in *Gone With The Wind*. (Still, buffs and critics may meaningfully debate over many of her psychological traits, tendencies, and motivations, among other things.) The answer is surely more difficult for Vulcan, and much more so yet for Venus (especially if taken as an incomplete object). Suffice it to say that proper names are troublesome for a Meinongian semantics. For simplicity we shall confine our attentions mostly to those incomplete objects corresponding to and designated by definite descriptions, e.g. The Golden Mountain. Meinong himself, though, also adumbrated incomplete

25. Findlay, p. 169.

26. To be precise we should say it has only the *nuclear* (konstitutorische) properties it includes. Nuclear properties are roughly those essential to the natures of objects; completeness and simplicity are extra-nuclear, for example. (Cf. Findlay, p. 176.) We shall consistently pass over the distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties, however, since it plays no role in our ensuing discussions.

objects such as: A Dog, Something Blue, Something (the most incomplete of all objects), This Dog, and This.<sup>27</sup>

### III. *The Indirect Intention of Complete Objects.*

1. A primary role of incomplete objects for Meinong is to mediate the intention of complete objects. For, according to Meinong, complete objects are accessible to human consciousness *only via* incomplete objects.<sup>28</sup> Since a complete object “includes” an infinite number of properties, we can never intend complete objects per se. We can intend them at best only *indirectly* insofar as we intend incomplete objects which are embedded in them. Such, then, would be a Meinongian account of our everyday intentions of everyday existing physical individuals, which are complete. We now detail this view.

2. Complete objects are, to borrow a term from Husserl,<sup>29</sup> *transcendent* (of human consciousness) in that there is more to them (more properties or aspects) than we can ever know – or grasp or conceive or otherwise intend. As a consequence, on a *Meinongian* theory of intentionality *we can never*, properly or strictly speaking, *intend complete objects*.<sup>30</sup>

For, a complete object “includes” an infinite number of properties.<sup>31</sup> There are, we may suppose, an infinite number of (nuclear) properties properly predicable of a typical physical individual, for example, and for each either it or its negation belongs to the object. And each (nuclear) property that belongs to an object is in the relevant sense “included” in it. Now it seems clear that, for Meinong, when we intend an object we have the whole thing before our mind, all of its included properties appropriately organized into the object. Consequently, since complete objects each include infinitely many properties and we are of only finite mind, we can never intend complete objects.<sup>32</sup> They can have for us only a sort of “quasi-presence” to consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

27. According to Grossmann, Meinong identified the objects The Horse, A Horse, and apparently Some Horse. (Vide Grossmann, *op. cit.*, p. 181 and n. 52 to p. 181.) If Meinong did, this seems a blunder. Let us treat it as such. Our considerations will be more interesting if the distinctions between such incomplete objects are observed, though little if anything we say will depend on the observance.
28. Findlay, p. 170. Cf. pp. 162, 177-179.
29. This term is drawn from Husserl, not Meinong. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas* (Collier Books, New York, 1967; German edition first published in 1913), §§ 44, 47, 52.
30. For Husserl, on the other hand, we *do* intend physical objects even though they are “transcendent”. Cf. Husserl, *op. cit.*, § 43.
31. Findlay, p. 173.
32. Findlay, p. 173.
33. Findlay, p. 173.

3. Yet we should *want* to say it is *complete* objects that we typically intend, that our everyday beliefs are about and our everyday experiences are of. When, for instance, I conceive my brother or my automobile, it is not incomplete but complete objects I conceive (personal and automotive deficiencies aside).

That we cannot quite say following Meinong. What we might say as Meinongians is that a person *indirectly* intends<sup>34</sup> a complete object if and only if he intends an incomplete object which is embedded in it. My contemplating the morning star, for instance, consists, for a Meinongian, in my intending the incomplete object The Morning Star and thereby indirectly intending that complete object which embeds it. (Actually, as we shall see shortly, the details are slightly more complicated.)

However, to stress an earlier point, there is a difference between a complete object and any incomplete object embedded in it. By definition the complete object includes and has properties the embedded incomplete one does not. And so the objects are distinct, assuming again something like Leibniz's Law for Meinongian objects. But therefore to intend an *incomplete* object (e.g. The Morning Star) is *not* to intend a *complete* object embedding it, since for Meinong intention is properly a relation.

Importantly, then, indirect intention is *not* intention proper. But it is apparently the best we can do with respect to complete objects, including everyday physical individuals.

4. My concern is to formulate what would be a Meinongian theory of intentionality: for intentions of complete objects, the theory of indirect intention just sketched. For this purpose, I should like to separate out what I have called indirect intention from what Meinong called “[mental] reference by way of so-being (or of being)” (Soseinsmeinen (or Seinsmeinen)).

Suppose I conceive, have an idea or presentation (Vorstellung) of, the dog on the log. Then, on the view we have described, I intend the incomplete object The Dog On The Log and so indirectly intend the (one existing) complete object that is a dog and on the log. Now suppose I think (judge or assume) that the dog is on the log – or, better, that some (one) thing is a dog and on the log. Then I intend the “objective” That Some One Thing Is A Dog And On The Log. This objective is “about” the (one existing) complete object that is a dog and on the log. Insofar as I intend the objective, I may be said somehow to intend the object it is about. (Meinong even says I “improperly apprehend” the objective and “properly apprehend” the object.)<sup>35</sup> This kind of intention

34. I'm unsure whether Meinong used the terms 'indirectly' or 'indirect'. Findlay uses them on pages 172 and 173. Cf. pp. 156, 170-174 for his presentation of Meinong's view. Be reminded that my use of 'intend' is not a translation of Meinong's 'refer' ('meinen') or 'apprehend'.

35. Findlay, p. 249.

of an individual Meinong called “reference by way of so-being”.<sup>36</sup>

The incomplete object The Dog On The Log is intimately (one-one) associated with the objective cited. We might say the “reference” to the complete object is *mediated* by either the objective *or* the associated incomplete object, and so it is “indirect”: it cannot be direct because the complete object is not itself a constituent of the objective intended. So “reference” by way of so-being is very like indirect intention by way of incomplete objects.

Meinong himself wove the two together.<sup>37</sup> His reason was his view that *Vorstellung* is a passive kind of experience and therefore only *potentially* directed to an object; thus he concluded that only in *actively* judging or assuming “about” an individual could we be actually directed to (intending) it.<sup>38</sup> This is not terribly compelling, and it appears quite late in Meinong’s development.<sup>39</sup>

So let us separate indirect intention from reference by way of so-being. Thus we treat the intention of individuals independently – as it does seem to occur independently – of propositional consciousness.

5. What we have so far seen of indirect intention is phenomenologically oversimplified. On reflection it seems that in daily life we do not normally intend *incomplete* objects. The subject of such as our everyday experiences would himself take it that what he is intending is a complete object (were he familiar with Meinongian terminology). Indeed, what he intends is given or intended *as* being complete. This is a phenomenological given,<sup>40</sup> and so it should be reflected in the intentional structure of such acts, that is, for a Meinongian, in the “structure” of the objects of such acts. Indeed it is on Meinong’s own account. To serve as objects of such acts Meinong proposed “completed” (*vervollständigte*) objects, e.g. The Complete Morning Star. A *completed* object is an incomplete object that includes the property of completeness itself, the property of being completely determined.<sup>41</sup> Thus, when at dawn I contemplate the heavens, I intend not The Morning Star but The Complete Morning Star.

The assumption remains in force, of course, that we cannot properly (directly) intend complete objects but must get at them as best we can (indirect-

36. Findlay, pp. 171ff, 219-21, 238-45. Here we pass over the related notion of reference by way of being.

37. Findlay, pp. 170-71.

38. Findlay, pp. 6, 38-9, 171, 219-21.

39. Findlay, p. 219.

40. Cf. Findlay, pp. 177, 245.

41. Findlay, pp. 175-179, especially 178.

ly) by way of intending incomplete objects. For, completed objects are by definition yet incomplete.<sup>42</sup>

6. The indirect intention of complete objects is thus more complicated than suspected. With respect to my contemplating the morning star, Meinong distinguishes *three* objects:<sup>43</sup> *The Morning Star*, which is incomplete; *The Complete Morning Star*, which is incomplete but completed; and that *complete* object which embeds *The Morning Star* and also (I take it) *The Complete Morning Star*. The object – we might say the “immediate”<sup>44</sup> object – of my intention is *The Complete Morning Star*. Yet my intention, in virtue of the inclusion of completeness in its immediate object, is “aiming” ultimately not at the completed object but at the complete object. So the “ultimate”<sup>45</sup> object of my intention is the complete object. The incomplete object on which the completed object builds (i.e. *The Morning Star*) serves as the “auxiliary”<sup>46</sup> object of my intention: it determines which complete object is the ultimate

42. This poses a problem with completed objects, as Findlay notes (p. 179). The Complete  $\emptyset$  includes the property of completeness. Therefore, it would seem, it has the property, that is, it is complete. Yet, completed objects are defined to be incomplete, as they must be if they are to serve their theoretical purpose of directing us finite minds to complete objects. So *The Complete  $\emptyset$*  is incomplete. But then it is both complete and incomplete, which cannot be. Of course, for Meinong there are impossible objects, but we should not have expected all completed objects to be impossible objects, for they were to direct us indirectly to (and hence must be embedded in) complete objects, which in many cases are not only possible but actual.

Findlay suggests that we simply have to accept this result that completed objects are impossible objects. This seems unacceptable to me. For, the role of completed objects is to direct us to complete objects in which they are embedded. But many of these complete objects are ordinary existing objects, which are possible objects, and we should not want to allow that impossible objects can be embedded in possible objects. Further, if completed objects really were (in every case) complete, then we could not intend them and so they could not play their role of allowing us to intend complete objects indirectly by means of intending them.

There seems to be a way to avoid the result, though. Carefully distinguish an object's including a property from its having a property. Hold that if an object includes a property P and P is a nuclear property then it has P. But allow that non-nuclear properties included in an object need not be had by the object. Now, completeness (determinateness) is a non-nuclear property (Findlay, p. 177). So the *Complete Morning Star* need not be complete.

This solution resists Findlay's claim (p. 179) that “the extra-nuclear property of determinateness does either in fact belong or not belong to an object”.

43. Findlay, p. 178.  
 44. Not Meinong's term.  
 45. Findlay, p. 177.  
 46. Findlay, p. 177.

object of the intention, namely, in this case (of contemplating what I see and take to exist), that unique existent complete object which embeds this incomplete object.

*Through* the incomplete object, we might say, I directly intend the completed object and indirectly intend the complete object. Including the property of completeness in the object of intention (the completed object), adding it to the incomplete object, serves to ensure that the intention gets, *as best it can*, to the complete object. But strictly, I do *not* intend the complete object: strictly, I intend the completed object. The complete object itself “transcends” human intention, and so the completed object (which is incomplete) must “do duty” for it.<sup>47</sup>

7. As a further matter of phenomenological fact, everyday objects are typically (perhaps always) given as *existing* as well as being *complete*. So contemplating the morning star should be, à la Meinong, an intention of The Existing Complete Morning Star, an incomplete object which includes the properties of existing and being complete.<sup>48</sup> In virtue of the inclusions of these properties in the object actually intended, the intention is “aimed” as best it can be toward – an “indirect” intention of – that one existing complete object that embeds it.

The inclusion of completeness in the object directly intended is important because it represents the Meinongian account of the mind’s explicit effort to transcend the partial aspects it can grasp of complete objects and intend complete objects themselves (albeit indirectly). The inclusion of the property of existing in the object intended is perhaps even more important. It represents the mind’s effort to intend (albeit indirectly) *actual* objects, which of course are complete. This cuts down dramatically on the number of complete objects that would be indirectly intended. For there are infinitely many complete objects that embed The Complete Morning Star, but there is at most one existing object that embeds it.

8. Conceiving the golden mountain will be very different, then, from conceiving the morning star. The morning star we take to exist and (so) to be complete; the golden mountain we do not take to exist and may or may not

47. Findlay, p. 177-178.

48. Thus cf. Findlay, p. 238. Objects which include the property of existing pose a problem. As Russell observed, The Existing Golden Mountain would it seems exist, but surely it does not, yielding contradiction. And The Existing Round Square would seem to exist, but it cannot. In response Meinong himself toyed with a distinction between ‘existing’ and ‘existent’. But existence or existing could more simply be claimed to be a non-nuclear property, and so we might hold it might be included in an object without belonging to it. Cf. Terence Parsons, “A Prolegomenon to Meinongian Semantics”, *The Journal of Philosophy* LXXI 16 (Sept. 19, 1974), p. 574. For an account of Meinong’s response to Russell, see Grossmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-160.

take to be complete, but let us suppose we take it to be complete. Then, à la Meinongian, conceiving the golden mountain consists in intending The Complete Golden Mountain, while conceiving the morning star as we normally do consists in intending The Existing Complete Morning Star. The latter object is embedded in exactly one existing complete object and so that one object is indirectly intended. But the former object is embedded in countless complete objects. Are all these indirectly intended? Apparently. It seems indirect intention grows unbearably “de dicto” in the case of thinking of the golden mountain.

Perhaps we should conclude that indirect intention can be genuinely “aimed” *only* at existing objects, that only they are ever indirectly intended.

At this point we might learn something about fictional objects and “fictive” intention. We take it that fictional objects do not exist. And we may well take it they are incomplete. Yet in the fictions that spawn them they are presented as existing and (implicitly) as complete: each story might as well begin, “Once upon a time there existed a (complete) individual . . .” Thus in reading *Alice in Wonderland* we find ourselves intending not simply The Mad Hatter, but The Existing Complete Mad Hatter, an object which neither exists (“implexively”) nor is complete, we considered above. There is no existing mad hatter, so we are not indirectly intending any existing object. Are we indirectly intending any (every) non-existing complete object that embeds this object we (directly) intend? Not likely. What we might say is that “fictive” intention feigns indirect intention (of an existing object). In this respect perhaps the mad hatter comes off a little bit better than the golden mountain, though.

#### IV. *Intention and the Motivations for Incomplete Objects.*

1. Meinong’s theory of objects is, we noted, primarily motivated by the needs of intentionality theory. If we assume that intention is properly and straightforwardly a relation, and we assume Meinong’s theory of objects, then we can account for certain basic characteristics or peculiarities of intention solely in terms of characteristics of the objects intended, Meinongian objects.

One commonplace about intention is the fact that folks variously intend everyday physical objects, which are complete and “transcendent” of human consciousness. As we saw, Meinong does not preserve this feature quite intact. For Meinong, we intend incomplete objects embedded in complete objects, but only in that indirect way do we intend complete objects themselves. Still, this Meinongian offering is an account, so far as Meinong believed legitimate, of intentions of complete objects e.g. existing physical individuals. Given Meinong’s view that we cannot strictly intend complete objects, then, a primary motivation for *incomplete* objects is their role in the indirect intention of complete objects.

There is another, utterly crucial feature of intention for which any adequate theory of intentionality must account. I'll argue that it too serves as a strong – indeed, the most basic – motivation for incomplete objects in Meinongian theory. It is the fact that, for instance, one may intend the morning star yet *not* intend the evening star even though the evening star *is* the morning star. I think the most (theory-) neutral way to formulate this fact is by a semantic ascent, as the failure of the logical/semantical law of *substitutivity of identity* for terms in intentional contexts – the law that:

The terms in a true identity sentence are inter-substitutable *salva veritate* in any sentence.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, for instance, the inference from:

(1) Smith conceives the morning star.

and:

(2) The morning star is the evening star.

to:

(3) Smith conceives the evening star.

may fail, since it may be the case that (1) and (2) are true but (3) is false.

2. How might a *Meinongian* account for such a case and hence for failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts? I do not know that Meinong himself addressed this specific feature of intention, much less its semantic counterpart. One answer, though, is readily available in the account we've seen of indirect intention: (1) and (3) describe experiences in which the same complete object is indirectly intended but distinct incomplete objects are intended proper, and so the intentions described are distinct. But exactly how should a Meinongian semantics go for sentences (1), (2), and (3)?

Interpretation of (1) would seem straightforward for a Meinongian: 'Smith' refers to Smith (never mind about this object), 'conceives' refers to the intentional relation of conceiving (never mind about the treatment of relations), and 'the morning star' refers to the incomplete object The Morning Star. (We may here ignore the fine structure of including existence and completeness in the object intended.) So (1) asserts the relation of conceiving to hold between Smith and The Morning Star. And (3), interpreted similarly, asserts this relation to hold between Smith and The Evening Star. Since The Morning Star and The Evening Star are distinct incomplete objects, the intentions described are distinct. And so (1) may be true and (3) false.

What about (2)? If 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' have the same

49. N.b. We employ this substitutivity principle rather than the semantically more loaded law: Terms are intersubstitutable *salva veritate* in any sentence in any occurrence in which they refer to the same thing.

Frege, of course, would have maintained the latter but not the former with respect to terms in contexts such as  $\ulcorner$ Smith believes that



referents in (2) as they respectively have in (1) and (3), and if 'is' refers to identity, then (2) is false. For The Morning Star and The Evening Star are not identical. But we want to interpret (2) so as to be true. One way to do this is to keep the proposed referents of its terms and weaken the relation it asserts to hold between them: say (2) asserts The Morning Star and The Evening Star to be, not identical, but commonly embedded in exactly one existing complete object – we might say they are “coincident”.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, a Meinongian might well say, the terms in (2) must refer to these incomplete objects, for what else could we as speakers of the language have (directly) in mind on uttering (2)? This seems a strange way with 'is' statements (though it is perhaps not so unlike some of Frege's musings on identity sentences).<sup>51</sup> If it is the proper Meinongian way, we would better rechristen our law “substitutivity of coincidence”.

On this interpretation of (1) - (3), (1) and (3) assert respectively intentions of distinct incomplete objects, and (2) asserts the embedment of those two incomplete objects in a single common existing complete object. Given the definition of indirect intention, here indirect conceiving, we can infer from (1) - (3) that the same complete object is indirectly conceived in the experiences described by (1) and (3). (However, to say explicitly in the language of (1) that Smith indirectly conceives a certain complete object, we would need explicit ways of referring to complete objects – if such is even possible on a Meinongian view.)

This interpretation may be the most straightforwardly Meinongian account of (1) - (3) and so, on generalizing, of failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts. It is not the only candidate, however, for surely a Meinongian is not bound to its treatment of identity sentences e.g. (2).<sup>52</sup> What is important for our purposes is the straightforward interpretation of intentional sentences e.g. (1) and (3).

50. This is effectively Castaneda's move in his essay cited above, *op. cit.*

51. Especially if incomplete objects compare with senses, as I argue in part IV. Cf. Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference”, in Peter Geach and Max Black (eds.), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*: see pp. 56-57 (note especially p. 57 on “difference in the mode of presentation of that which is designated”).

52. One alternative Meinongian semantics would be to take ‘the morning star’ to refer in (1) as before to The Morning Star but in (2) to a complete object, viz. the one existing complete object in which The Morning Star is embedded. Similarly for ‘the evening star’ in (3) and in (2). We would thus preserve (2) as asserting straightforward identity (rather than “coincidence”). But we would have terms taking different referents in intentional contexts than in ordinary contexts. This may seem unusual, but it is of course quite like Frege's proposal for terms in intentional contexts (especially if incomplete object compare with senses, as I argue in part V). (Cf. Frege, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.)

3. One motivation, then, for propounding *incomplete* objects in Meinongian object theory would be to account within Meinongian intentionality theory for – in semantical terms – failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts. We need distinguish, for instance, between Smith’s conceiving the morning star and Smith’s conceiving the evening star. Assuming Meinong’s tack on intentionality, we must do this solely in terms of the objects intended. For, if intention is properly a relation, then intentions will be individuated by the objects intended, the subjects intending, and the specific relations of intending (and of course the times at which they obtain). Here the subjects are the same and the intentional relations (and, we may suppose, their times) are the same. So the objects intended must be distinct. We cannot say the objects intended are the ordinary complete objects, the morning star and the evening star, since these are the same object. Suppose the objects intended are the *incomplete* objects, The Morning Star and The Evening Star. These are distinct. So that would explain the distinction in intentions and hence, with the semantical spadework above, such failures of substitutivity.

We could of course distinguish many other intentions – such as Smith’s conceiving the sun and Smith’s conceiving the moon – by claiming the objects intended are complete objects, if these objects – here, the sun and the moon – are indeed distinct. In the interests of a unified theory, however, as Meinongians we should say it is incomplete objects – The Sun and The Moon – that are intended even in these cases too.

4. The moral of failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts is well stated in a theoretically neutral idiom by saying: The same (complete) object may be intended in different “ways”, *via* or “under” *different aspects* (or concepts or conceptions or descriptions) of the object.

From this we may conclude that intention (of complete objects) – of the sort we’ve considered, that of intending the morning star – is always relative to and mediated by an aspect of the object intended.

Further, since complete objects are “transcendent” of human consciousness, in that we cannot grasp all aspects of them, the aspect (more or less complex)

A third Meinongian approach would be again to take (2) as asserting straightforward identity, but to complicate the interpretation of (1) and (3). Let (1) itself directly assert Smith’s indirectly conceiving a complete object – that is, let it ascribe a *three*-place relation, Smith’s conceiving The Morning Star and its being embedded in a certain complete object, viz. the one existing complete object in which The Morning Star is embedded. Similarly for (3). Here the rub is that ‘the morning star’ in (1) seems to have a double role, that of referring once to the incomplete object and once to the complete object. Further, the incomplete object referred to seems to have the role of determining which complete object is referred to. And in general we need an accounting of reference to complete objects such as in (2): is it perhaps to be mediated by incomplete objects in the way that sense mediates reference for Frege?

under which a complete object is intended must be a limited part of the object's complete determination. We might say the object "as" intended is incomplete, incompletely determined.

Now, the doctrine that the intention of an (complete) object is mediated by a limited aspect of the object, will be formulated differently on different theories of intentionality, perhaps with different ontological presuppositions. On a Meinongian approach, it comes out as the theory of indirect intention: an incomplete object incorporates in an obvious way an aspect of a complete object in which it is embedded, and through it the complete object may be indirectly intended. Meinong's basic tack is that intention is straightforwardly a relation to an object – and that means the object itself in all its aspects. This is effectively to say that intention is *not* relative to an aspect. And that forces indirectness of intention as an account of what on pre-theoretic grounds we saw as relativity of intention.

5. We first saw incomplete objects (cum indirect intention) prompted for Meinong by his view that we cannot intend complete objects. However, I believe that the failure of substitutivity in intentional contexts is a deeper motivation, on Meinongian lines, for incomplete objects (cum indirect intention).

For, as we just saw, the *incompleteness* of objects "as" intended is a consequence of the "*transcendence*" of objects together with, in semantical terms, the *failure of substitutivity* in intentional contexts. And the natural Meinongian response to incompleteness of objects "as" intended would be to make the objects intended themselves incomplete (thereby accounting for the peculiarity of intention in terms of a peculiarity of the objects intended).

#### V. *Meinongian Objects are Intensional.*

1. It has been a common maneuver to account for the failure of substitutivity of identity (as defined above) for terms in intensional contexts by assuming intensional entities associated with the terms. Thus, Frege proposed that in belief contexts terms refer to their customary *meanings* or *senses* (Sinne), and Carnap proposed effectively that in necessity and other intensional contexts terms refer to *individual concepts*.<sup>53</sup> (And so substituting terms in a context in which they refer to the same thing preserves truth.)

At first glance, a Meinongian theory of objects looks as though it affords a very different semantic theory – one that appeals only to extensional entities – when we seek to use it to develop a semantics for intentional sentences.

53. Cf. Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference", in Peter Geach and Max Black (eds.), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (see pp. 66-67); Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1947), §§ 40-43.

Since for a Meinongian an intentional sentence (e.g. ‘Smith imagines the golden mountain’) would assert a straightforward relation (of intending) to obtain between a person and a Meinongian object, we may propose that terms in intentional contexts refer to Meinongian objects, in particular, incomplete objects (or “completed” incomplete objects). Of course, in a Meinongian semantics terms would always refer to Meinongian objects, but the point is that the special character of Meinongian objects can be used, as we saw, to explain the logical peculiarities of terms occurring in intentional contexts, viz. failures of substitutivity of identity and (some) failures of existential generalization.

I want to argue that object theory as Meinong developed it turns out *not* to afford a genuine alternative to the drive to intension. For, Meinongian objects must be *intensional* if they are to do the job demanded of them. In particular, incomplete objects must be intensional, and *if* they are then so it seems by parity of type must complete objects be intensional. (Meinong says in context that “meaning is nothing but an object attached to the word in a peculiar way.”<sup>54</sup> This could merely suggest a referential theory of meaning – indeed, that is the thrust of a Meinongian semantics. My point, however, will be that the objects of reference Meinong chooses will have to be *intensional* entities.)

2. While philosophers have often talked of *intensional entities* they have usually offered no bona fide general criterion for an entity’s (as opposed to a context’s) being intensional.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, I expect that, in a sense to be explained, there can be none. The following is, however, I believe, a natural beginning on a characterization of intensional entities.

54. Quoted in Findlay, p. 158.

55. Karel Lambert has offered the only ontological characterization of intensional entities that I have encountered. His proposal is that entities of a given *ontological kind*  $K$  are of course intensional if and only if not extensional, and they are extensional if and only if:

For any entities  $e$  and  $e'$  of kind  $K$ , if for any (actual) individual  $x$   $xRe$  if and only if  $xRe'$ , then  $e = e'$ ,

where the relation  $R$  varies with the kind  $K$ . Thus, for individuals  $R$  is identity; for classes, it is the relation of class-membership; for properties, that of property-exemplification.

The virtue of this criterion is that it is purely ontological; it is not tied to linguistic conditions such as the condition that terms referring to entities of the given kind be substitutable *salva veritate* in all contexts.

As stated here, though, the criterion needs be developed into a truly general condition, with a general characterization of the relation  $R$  that is pertinent to a given kind  $K$ . (Professor Lambert has remarked in conversation that intuitively,  $R$  must be somehow constitutive for  $K$ , involved in the definition of  $K$ .)

It may be that this criterion can be developed in such a way as to be compatible with the line I have pursued below. However, given the very different kinds of

Intensional entities are, I think, best thought of as *posits* of semantic theory. Intensional entities of a specific class are associated with linguistic expressions of a specific syntactic kind – singular terms, predicates, sentences. *It is the various relations assumed among intensional entities themselves and among intensional entities, extensions, and expressions that are to account for various semantic properties of expressions* – e.g. meaningfulness, meaning, synonymy, analyticity, conditions of truth, prospective reference. Specifically, the intensional entity associated with an expression is required to determine the “extension” or referent of the expression, insofar as intensional entities of the relevant class stand in an appropriate many-one relation to extensions of the relevant class.

Very different kinds of entities have been considered intensional, however. Frege’s senses seem very different from Carnap’s intensions: senses are it seems contents of the mind in the sense of something objective that is sharable in different mental acts; while intensions are rather more worldly – predicate-intensions are properties, sentence-intensions are propositions in the sense of something like states of affairs.<sup>56</sup> There is, nonetheless, a close correlation: the Fregean sense of an expression determines in a straightforward way the Carnapian intension of the expression, and vice versa. These correlative classes of entities are entities of different *ontological* kind, yet both kinds are called intensional entities. What they have in common is their *role in semantic theory*. And this suggests a general criterion for being an intensional entity.

Entities of a given class or kind are *intensional* if and only if they afford a semantic theory in which they play a role analogous or isomorphic to the role of senses in a Fregean theory of reference via sense (with, however, let us say, classes of individuals clearly replacing Frege’s “concepts” as referents or extensions of predicates). Then intensional entities of a given class and their relations amongst themselves, expressions, and extensions map onto corresponding senses and their respective semantic relations. Comparing Carnap’s with Frege’s semantics of definite descriptions (expressions of form ‘the  $\phi$ ’), Carnap’s individual concepts expressible by definite descriptions map one-one onto Frege’s senses of such expressions, and the relation between those individual concepts and the individuals they determine maps onto the relation between those individual-senses and the individuals they determine. As indeed must be the case if both classes of entities are to perform the same se-

entities that have been considered intensional, their intensionality does not seem to consist in any common ontological feature. Consider for instance properties and general ideas or concepts, both of which have been considered intensional entities correlated with predicative expressions.

56. Cf. Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry”, in P.F. Strawson (ed.), *Philosophical Logic* (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 20-21, 26-29; Carnap, *op. cit.*, §§ 4, 6.

semantic functions. This criterion for being an intensional entity is a “functional” criterion, not an “ontological” criterion: what determines an entity’s intensionality is not its ontological type but its role in specified semantic theory, or rather the role a semantic theory says it plays in language. Indeed, there are, I expect, no common “intrinsic” characteristics shared by the different kinds of entities that have been called intensional,<sup>57</sup> and therefore there is no general ontological criterion for being an intensional entity.

3. Intensional entities, as we noted earlier, are also used in semantic theory to account for the failure of substitutivity of identity for terms in intentional contexts. Thus Frege proposed that terms in intentional contexts refer to their customary senses. Since the intentional sentences are about intentional phenomena, this suggests a role for *intensional* entities in *intentionality* theory.

Specifically, in intentionality theory, we may hold that an appropriate intensional entity determines which object is (on pre-Meinongian lines) intended in an act of consciousness.<sup>58</sup> Intending the morning star must be distinguished from intending the evening star, so that

(1) Smith conceives the morning star.

may be true while

(3) Smith conceives the evening star.

is false (even though

(2) The morning star is the evening star.

is true). The distinction is not forced by the *objects* intended since the same object is intended in both “acts” (all still on pre-Meinongian lines). But the

57. This criterion could yield results that may be surprising.

On Parsons’ rational reconstruction (op. cit.), Meinongian objects are correlated with sets of properties. What if they were identified with sets of properties – not so radical a leap perhaps? I argue that Meinongian objects are intensional. Then certain sets of properties would be deemed intensional entities. But *sets* – even sets of intensional entities (properties are usually considered intensional) – are not normally thought of as intensional entities.

Such a result is consonant with the spirit of my proposal. The thrust of the proposal is that intensional entities (meanings, say) are theoretical entities assumed for specific explanatory purposes concerning language and (perhaps) mind. What they are is thus whatever our developed theory will say they are. But their “intentionality” – on this view – consists merely in their performing a certain role in language and thought.

A plausible view, I think, is that meanings are structures of thought. If some version of physicalism is true, they are then somehow structures or patterns of brain activity. Are such things intensional? Normally we don’t think of them so. But new theory commonly says new things about old things.

58. Husserl explicitly used senses to determine intention, though as mediators of intention rather than objects of intention (as Frege’s own semantics for intentional sentences *might* suggest). Cf. David W. Smith and Ronald McIntyre, “Intentionality via Intensions”, *The Journal of Philosophy* LXVIII 18, (Sept. 16, 1971).

distinction is assured by associating appropriate distinct *intensional* entities with the two acts and assuming that these determine which objects are intended (here, in fact the same object). The requisite intensional entities here are those expressed, on assumed semantic theory, by ‘the morning star’ and ‘the evening star’. Intuitively, they should reflect the mental or phenomenological contents, the intentional structures, of the acts described.

Depending on the kind of intentionality theory, the intensional entities and their relations to act and object may vary. What must be preserved is their role in the *individuation* of structures (perhaps types) of intention: here an intension, there an intention, and vice versa.

Given this piece of intentionality theory, we can then return to semantic theory to account for the failure of substitutivity in intentional contexts. Details of the account depend on details of the semantics, but substitutivity will hold, generally, only if the intensional entities associated with the interchanged terms – here, ‘the morning star’ and ‘the evening star’ – are the same. For, these intensional entities distinguish intentional structure, and, we want to say intuitively, (3) follows from (1) only if (3) is assured of ascribing to Smith the same intentional structure that (1) does.

It seems that the role of intensional entities in intention is in an important way more basic than their role in semantics. Insofar as language “expresses” intention (“thought”), these entities serve as the meanings of words precisely because words “express” the structures of the intentions with which they are associated.<sup>59</sup>

4. Now, at least some of *Meinong’s* “objects” are intensional by the above criterion, namely, incomplete objects. (Remember that we are limiting our discussion to individual objects.) For, incomplete objects – e.g. The Morning Star and The Evening Star, or their “completed” counterparts – are precisely designed and distinguished in order to distinguish intentions of (complete) objects via specific limited aspects of the objects. And, so, as a Meinongian may push object theory through intentionality theory into semantic theory, Meinong must map onto Frege (or Carnap) in a straightforward way. To a definite description ‘the  $\Phi$ ’ is assigned a Meinongian object The  $\Phi$  (an incomplete object). This object corresponds with the Fregean sense (or Carnapian individual concept) expressed by ‘the  $\Phi$ ’. And its embedment relations with complete objects correspond with the relations between an individual sense (or concept) and the individual(s) it determines (actual and, depending on the theory, perhaps also non-actual). It is just this correspondence in

59. This view of language is what Quine has called the “idea” idea. Husserl offered one of the most detailed and plausible versions of it: cf. Ronald McIntyre and David W. Smith, “Husserl’s Identification of Meaning and Noema”, *The Monist* 59(1975). Meinong held the view too though without distinguishing meaning and reference: cf. Findlay, p. 28.

which consists the intensionality of a class of entities – here, incomplete objects. (For simplicity, we stay with definite descriptions and their intensions.) Further, it is precisely the intensionality of incomplete objects (or completed objects), in the given sense, that allows us to individuate intentions according to objects intended and so to account for failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts.<sup>60</sup>

5. There are other properties typical of intensional entities other than their semantic (and intentional) functions: prominently, their being *abstract*. Here too, surprisingly, Meinongian incomplete objects compare: Findlay at any rate tends to think of incomplete objects as abstract.<sup>61</sup> And recall the fact that incomplete objects have being only “implexively” insofar as they are embedded in complete objects that have being; this suggests a status like that of Aristotelian attributes and kinds, which may perhaps be thought of as abstract.<sup>62</sup> It should be surprising that the morning star as Meinongian object turns out to be abstract. At any rate, intensional entities are, further, objective, or *intersubjectively sharable*; and so too are incomplete objects, insofar as different persons may intend the same ones. Most important, though, is the *intermediary role* of intensional entities. For both Frege and Carnap, intensional entities *mediate linguistic reference*. It would be similar for a Meinongian semanticist: insofar as referring is a species of or presupposes intending, we refer to concrete complete individuals only indirectly by way of referring to incomplete objects.<sup>63</sup> Carnap and Frege (and Husserl), however, were clearer about reference getting so to speak all the way *through* the intensional to the object of reference.

6. Not only are Meinongian incomplete objects similar in these respects to intensional entities in general. They are virtually identical with Carnapian *in-*

60. Findlay too, I take it, felt in Meinong's incomplete objects an affinity for the intensional. He remarks once that incomplete objects have often been called concepts. He compares them once with Aristotle's genera and species “in intension” (p. 164). However, species and kinds, though intensional, are very different from concepts: suffice it to contrast ‘The dog is a noble beast’, which is *about* a kind, with ‘The dog just ate my dinner’, the subject of which *expresses* an individual concept so that the sentence is *about* a particular dog. Anyway, Findlay further notes that “Meinong's distinction between the [incomplete] auxiliary and [complete] ultimate object does much the same work as Frege's distinction between *Sinn* (Sense) and *Bedeutung* (Reference)” (p. 184). And he even suggests, a little vaguely, that “Meinong's round square could be stitched, with complete seamlessness, into the fabric of Carnap's *Meaning and Necessity*” (p. 327).

61. Findlay, pp. 161, 164-165.

62. Cf. Findlay, pp. 164-165.

63. Thus Findlay's note on p. 184 comparing Meinong's use of his auxiliary/ultimate object distinction with Frege's use of his sense/reference distinction.



*dividual concepts*,<sup>64</sup> at least for those respective classes of Meinongian objects and individual-concepts we might associate with definite descriptions. For, each Meinongian incomplete object is a sort of amalgamation of a limited set of *properties* into an individual-like entity, and similarly each Carnapian individual concept is a sort of amalgamation of a limited set of properties into an individual-associated intension.

Indeed the two classes are appropriately correlated one-one, as would be integral to their both being intensional entities: exactly where Carnap must assume distinct individual concepts, Meinong must assume distinct incomplete objects. And their respective relations to concrete (complete) individuals are similar, both many-one: exactly where Carnap must say distinct individual concepts are “equivalent” or determine the same individual, Meinong must assume the corresponding incomplete objects are embedded in the same concrete object.

There is however at least one obvious and significant *difference*: the law of excluded middle fails for Meinongian incomplete objects, but surely not for Carnapian individual concepts. This failure is a consequence of the fact that the only (nuclear) properties a Meinongian object has are those it “includes”. Which turns on *the* basic difference between incomplete objects and individual concepts: a Meinongian object (whether complete or incomplete) *has* the properties it “includes”, where a Carnapian individual concept does not. But, more on that shortly.

7. Now, if *incomplete objects are intensional and therefore abstract, then so ought to be complete objects*. For, the latter differ only in being filled up with (including and therefore having) more and more properties until they are “complete”. True, they include an infinite number of properties, but that difference doesn’t seem to be the difference we might intuitively expect between the extensional (in particular, the physical) and the intensional. Further, if incomplete objects are the *sort* of thing that typically serve as *objects* of consciousness and they are intensional, then so ought complete objects to be intensional, since they too are the sort of thing that would typically serve as objects of consciousness could we only expand our minds to meet them. In short, if *incomplete objects are à sort of individual concepts, then complete objects are just complete individual concepts*. And thus, by parity of type with incomplete objects, complete objects – inter alia, concrete physical – ought for Meinong to be intensional.

The intensionality of physical objects à la Meinong is both surprising and disturbing, at least to me. Let us turn to a critical evaluation of Meinongian objects.

64. Perhaps this is part of what Findlay had in mind in his remark that “Meinong’s round square could be stitched . . . into the fabric of Carnap’s *Meaning and Necessity*” (p. 327).

## VI. A Critique of the Meinongian Way with Objects and Intentionality.

1. Meinongian objects suffer from a number of peculiar characteristics. These are largely motivated by the needs of a Meinongian theory of intentionality. Now, the Meinongian approach to intentionality is not the only one. Indeed, I think that others turn out to be preferable. Insofar, these unpleasant characteristics of Meinongian objects can be avoided, by opting for a theory of intentionality that presupposes either an outright alternative to Meinongian object theory or (though I shan't go into it here) a modified sort of object theory (beginning with possible individuals, circumstances, and worlds after the fashion of recent efforts in the semantics of modalities, and doing without incomplete objects).

2. (i) To begin with, ordinary physical individuals it seems must be intensional on Meinong's lines. But even if we can accept intensionality in incomplete objects, we cannot accept it in these complete objects. To render them so in object theory is probably a mistake in the direction of idealism and contrary to the realistic thrust of a Meinongian view of intentionality.<sup>65</sup> For, even a complete intensional – or intentional – representation of a physical object is not itself identical with the object.

(ii) Incomplete determination is another peculiarity of some Meinong's objects. Immediately in its wake, of course, is the breakdown of the law of excluded middle.

(iii) Further, for Meinong, objects *have* the (nuclear) properties they “include”.<sup>66</sup>

3. In the context of our discussions it is tempting to see this last point as a basic mistake arising directly from a conflation of extension with intension or concept.<sup>67</sup> An individual concept properly construed may in some sense include properties, but these properties *belong* not to the concept but to the individual that falls under it. Thus, it is either false or a category mistake to say that the *concept* “the golden mountain” is golden. Once Meinongian objects (individuals), at least the incomplete ones, are clearly seen as intensional, as they need be for a Meinongian account of intentionality, there is less tendency to *attribute* them the properties they include. Indeed, we might replace them with individual concepts, or with senses. Then the “incompleteness” of some objects is not disturbing: it is incompleteness not of “determination”

65. Cf. Findlay, Chapter I. Meinong clearly separated objects of consciousness from consciousness itself.

66. For a development of such an ontology per se, see Castaneda, op. cit., on “Meinongian predication”.

67. For the historical Meinong, though, it may have arisen, at least in part, directly from the identification we noted earlier of individuals with complexes of properties.

or property-instantiation but of property-“inclusion”, and so no violation of excluded middle is involved. And, since complete Meinongian objects would be replaced by complete individual concepts or by senses, there is no pressure for physical individuals to be intensional, for they are not concepts or senses at all.

However, to fault Meinongian objects in this way is to presuppose an alternative ontology, one that clearly distinguishes the extensional from the intensional and replace, in particular, incomplete objects with individual concepts or senses. Why opt for such an ontology over a Meinongian one? One reason would be that it affords a more plausible and natural, if less straightforward, theory of intentionality. After all, Meinongian object theory was primarily motivated by the needs of intentionality theory.

4. The peculiarities I’ve cited in Meinongian objects all arose directly from a Meinongian account of intentionality. The intensionality of physical and other complete objects was a consequence of the intensionality of incomplete objects. The incompleteness and hence intensionality of incomplete objects directly served to explain two crucial features of intentionality (the intention of complete objects and intention “under” different aspects). And letting objects “include” the properties they have seems to be a basic move toward rendering intention a straightforward relation, as Meinong apparently assumed.

5. Now, I believe the Meinongian approach to intentionality proves unviable. For, it assigns to various objects the wrong roles in intentionality. (Certain incomplete objects – the basic intensional entities Meinong assumes – become the objects of such intentions as contemplating the morning star. And complete objects – the question of their intensionality aside – do not, strictly, get any role at all. But, for many everyday intentions, complete objects should be the objects of intention; while it is the proper role of the appropriate intensional entities not to serve as objects intended but to mediate intention – and so to individuate types or structures of intention.

6. What is *intensional* in an act<sup>68</sup> of consciousness is not its object but its “content” in an objective sense. The *content* of an act, in this sense, is *not* the object intended but that *through* which the object is intended. But there are different senses of ‘content’.

In one sense the content is what Bolzano called an *objective idea*,<sup>69</sup> an idea in the sense that the same idea can be had or shared in different mental events, at different times and/or by different persons; this is apparently what Frege called a *meaning* or *sense*,<sup>70</sup> and Husserl called a *noema* or (more pre-

68. This is not Meinong’s use of the term ‘act’: cf. Findlay, pp. 12, 25-26.

69. Bernard Bolzano, *Theory of Science* (ed. and trans. by Rolf George, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1972; German first published, 1837), pp. 61ff, 304.

70. Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry”, op. cit.

cisely) *noematic meaning*.<sup>71</sup> It is an *abstract* and *intensional* entity that “contains” or determines the “way” the object of consciousness is intended (i.e. “under” what aspect of the object) and thereby determines what object is intended. In a second sense, the content of an act is what Bolzano called a *subjective idea*,<sup>72</sup> a particular event of a person’s having or processing an objective idea; this is what the empiricists called an *idea*, Brentano and others called an idea (or *presentation: Vorstellung*), and Husserl called a *noesis*.<sup>73</sup> It is not itself an abstract, intensional entity; rather it is or is a constituent part of the act or event of consciousness itself and so is a mental entity. Of course, the same objective content may be processed in different subjective contents. But with each content in the subjective sense there is associated a unique content in the objective sense, the objective idea processed in the former. There are different developments as to what precisely the objective content of an act is: is it a property of the act? , an abstract particular associated with the act? , a type or pattern of neural activity in the brain? But on any choice objective contents will be intensional entities according to the criterion discussed earlier-

Importantly, an act of consciousness is directed “*through*” its objective content *toward* its object, in that the act includes as a component a subjective content which determines an objective content which in turn determines the object intended. In that way objective content *mediates* intention. This view of intention has been held by at least Bolzano and Husserl and (probably) Frege.<sup>74</sup>

Of course, an objective content may fail to determine an (unique) existent object; this will account for intentions such as of the present king of France. (At this point, nonexistent objects may or may not be welcomed, depending on further considerations.) Further, different objective contents may determine the same object, and this fact will account for failures of substitutivity in intentional contents.

7. We may also say that “*through*”, i.e. by “*living through*”, the *subjective* content of an experience, a person is directed toward, intends, an object. This Meinong clearly held, but he apparently did not clearly isolate, in addition to the subjective content, the *objective* content of the experience.<sup>75</sup> Thus, for Meinong the work of the intensional is left to the object intended, an incom-

71. Husserl, *Ideas*, §§ 88ff, 128ff. Cf. Smith and McIntyre, op. cit.

72. Bolzano, op. cit., pp. 61ff, 304.

73. Husserl, *Ideas*, §§ 85, 88ff.

74. Bolzano, op. cit., pp. 62f; re Husserl vide Smith and McIntyre, op. cit.; Frege, “The Thought: A Logical Inquiry”, op. cit., pp. 26-29, 34.

75. Cf. Findlay, pp. 9ff.

plete (“completed”) object, and so object and objective content collapse together.

Up to a point, Meinong’s account of intention is similar to the theory described in the last section. The intentional experience includes as a component a content (in the subjective sense) which, presumably, determines the (“completed”) incomplete object intended.<sup>76</sup> That object includes the way (the aspect under which) the associated (i.e. embedding) (say, existing) complete object is indirectly intended, and so it is an intensional entity that mediates the indirect intention of the complete object.

The difference, and the trouble, is that the object that is, strictly, intended is not the concrete complete object itself, but the intermediary, intensional, “completed” incomplete object. Of course, the “completed” incomplete object “aims” toward the complete object. But consciousness never really does attain the complete object: on Meinong’s account, we never really do intend complete objects.<sup>77</sup> This is simply unacceptable. And the root of the difficulty seems to be the location of that which is intensional in consciousness in the object, rather than the objective content, of intention.

One is initially moved toward a Meinongian way with objects by the apparent straightforwardness of a Meinongian way with intention. But as we press onward, the pure Meinongian way seems to lose much of its appeal. An ontology of Meinongian objects as we have seen them is not native to our ordinary conceptual scheme: the things about us are not abstract, intensional creatures. Nor is intention à la Meinong intention as we ordinarily conceive it: everyday things *are* “transcendent”, but we nonetheless do intend them and not intensional shadows of them.

8. Where does this leave us on Meinongian objects and their role in intentionality?

A Meinongian accounts for failures of substitutivity of identity in intentional contexts by assuming incomplete objects to serve as the objects of intention. This account will not do. So incomplete objects are not needed, not at any rate for this purpose (or, for the related purpose of accounting for our intentions of transcendent, complete objects). Some kind of intensional entities will apparently be needed to account for intentionality and thereby for failures of substitutivity in intentional contexts; but they need not be incomplete objects, and they will not serve as the objects normally intended. Finally, without incomplete objects nudging them towards intensionality, concrete complete objects need not be intensional.

However, even if we weed out incomplete objects, perhaps cultivating in-

76. Cf. Findlay, pp. 9, 35-37, 170ff, 177ff.

77. Cf. Findlay, pp. 175ff. I don’t see that anything here answers the charge that intention attains only incomplete (albeit “completed”) and never complete objects.

dividual concepts in their place, we may yet leave much of the Meinongian jungle unmolested, proliferous still with concrete objects that lack being. These may continue to serve as objects of intention and so serve to account for failures of existential generalization in intentional contexts. They are apparently the possible individuals of contemporary semantics for modalities.