



GUAIRACÁ REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA

HUSSERL AND BRENTANO ON PRESENTATIONS AND JUDGMENTS¹

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to shed some light on Husserl's draft of a theory of judgment in the 5th Logical Investigation. Since this Investigation seems to stand in an immediate dialogue with Brentano's distinction of "fundamental classes" of psychic phenomena, I proceed by comparing the topics and problematics therein with Brentano's views on the same theme. I start by making a brief review of the brentanian classification focusing on his *dictum* about the priority of presentations. This *dictum* places presentations (*Vorstellungen*) as the grounding phenomena of the other classes of phenomena. Then I move forward to the critique made by Husserl to this *dictum*: Husserl assumes the brentanian premises and shows that they entail a limitation with respect to presentations' ability of reference. Finally, I show Husserl's own solution to maintain the brentanian *dictum*, albeit changing it in a considerable way. This change allows an outline of a theory of judgment that differs very much from Brentano's, since it enables a *propositional* treatment of judgments. It also allows a disambiguation of the concept of presentation, topic which will be treated only briefly at the end of the paper.

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Husserl e Brentano sobre representações e juízos

Resumo: Este artigo tem por objetivo esclarecer o tema referente ao esboço de uma teoria do juízo elaborado por Husserl na 5ª Investigação Lógica. Uma vez que tal investigação parece estar em um diálogo imediato com a distinção de Brentano de “classes fundamentais” de fenômenos psíquicos, procederemos pela comparação dos tópicos e das problemáticas contidas nela com as visões de Brentano sobre o mesmo tema. Começaremos com uma breve revisão da classificação brentaniana e focaremos em seu dictum acerca do primado das representações. Esse dictum coloca as representações (*Vorstellungen*) como os fenômenos fundantes das outras classes de fenômenos. Posteriormente, direcionamo-nos para a crítica feita por Husserl a esse dictum: Husserl assume as premissas brentanianas e mostra que elas conduzem a uma limitação com relação ao poder de referência das representações. Finalmente, mostraremos a própria solução de Husserl para preservar o dictum brentaniano, não obstante o modifique consideravelmente. Essa modificação permitirá um esboço de uma teoria do juízo que difere bastante da de Brentano, uma vez que proporciona um tratamento proposicional dos juízos. Ela também permitirá uma desambiguação do conceito de representação; tópico que será tratado apenas brevemente no final do artigo.

Palavras-chave: Representação. Juízo. intencionalidade.

BRENTANO'S DICTUM ON THE PRIORITY OF PRESENTATIONS

“Nothing distinguishes mental phenomena from physical phenomena more than the fact that something is immanent as an object in them” (PES, p. 197). This extremely important distinctive feature – that something is “immanent as an object” – points out to the *relational* character (or *intentional*) of psychic phenomena: a psychic phenomenon is always directed towards something, it *has* always something objectively. This direction towards the object, however, works differently inasmuch as we deal with phenomena from the sphere of will and sentiment or with phenomena from the doxastic sphere. In order to set out these different modes of relation to the object, Brentano makes his classification of psychic phenomena and gives rise to the following *fundamental classes*: presentations (*Vorstellungen*), judgments, and phenomena of love and hate. This classification differs, according to Brentano, from those made by modern philosophy since Kant, once it understands as *radically different* two classes which so far were

combined into one (presentations and judgments) and combines the other two, which so far were considered to be radically different (judgments and phenomena of love and hate) (PES, p. 200). This separation of the first two fundamental classes – presentations and judgments – and the combination of the other two – judgments and phenomena of love and hate – is expressed in that Brentanian *dictum* that Husserl struggled with in his 5th Logical Investigation: The psychic phenomena are “either presentations or they are based upon presentations” (PES, p. 85).

Let us take a look at this *dictum*. Brentano’s definition of the concept of presentation goes like this: “By presentation I do not mean that which is presented, but rather the act of presentation” (PES, p. 79). He offers us as examples of presentations acts of seeing, hearing, thinking, or reading something. So, if I see something, “a color is presented”; if I hear something, “a sound is presented”; if I imagine something, “an image in fantasy is presented”, when “I hear and understand a word that names something, I have a presentation of what that word designates”, since “the purpose of such words is to evoke presentations” (PES, p. 198).

By judgment, Brentano understands acceptance (as true) or rejection (as false) (PES, p. 198). The essence of judgment has been located by tradition in the connection or the separation of two or more presentations, the most notable one being the predicative connection: a presentation-predicate *inheres* (*inesse*) the presentation-subject. Brentano disputes this view with three theses:

T1- Affirmative and negative existential propositions affirm or deny something from *only one presentation*. For example: “A exists” or “A does not exist” does not mean “A is existent” or “A is non-existent,” where “being” would be considered as an attribute, a presentation-predicate;

T2- All perceptions are judgments (PES, p. 209). Now, “perception is not a conjunction of a concept of the subject and a concept of a predicate, nor does it refer to such a conjunction” (PES, p. 209); Therefore, the essence of the judgment lies not in predication (here we have a “non-conceptualist” view on perception, unlike Kant, who considers intuitions without concepts as blind);

T3- The reducibility of all propositions that express a judgment to existential propositions (PES, p. 218). Brentano’s examples are:

Categorical proposition	Existential proposition
“Some man is sick”	“A sick man exists” or “There is a sick man”
“No stone is living”	“A living stone does not exist” or “There is no living stone”
“All man are mortal”	“An immortal man does not exist”, or “There is no immortal man”
“Some man is not learned”	“An unlearned man exists” or “There is an unlearned man”

This thesis is closely related to T1, for the translation to the existential proposition shows that in the translated proposition the “being” expressing existence replaces the “being” of the copula of the categorical proposition³. Now, bearing in mind that “existence” is not a predicate, we are forced to accept that in the original proposition the predication occurs only *verbally*, and not *essentially*. Thus, Brentano can conclude that “the compounding of several elements, believed to be so essential for the universal and specific nature of judgments, the combination of subject and predicate, of antecedent and consequent, etc., is in fact *nothing but a matter of linguistic expression*” (PES, p. 221, my emphasis).

If the essence of the judgment does not lie, as it is shown by these three theses, in the *content* of the judged state of affairs (which would be complex in judgment and simple in the presentation); and if it also does not lie in the *intensity* with which that state of affairs is judged (which would be more fully in judgment than in presentations)⁴, then the question is, after all, what really differs presentations from judgments. Brentano’s response has already been mentioned above: it is a difference based on the relation of *dependency* between them. Presentations are *founding* phenomena, and every judgment is therefore *based* upon a presentation. A judgment is, in this sense, an act that intends the object in “a twofold way” (PES, p. 202): Firstly as a presentation, secondly as affirmed or denied. The difference lies, therefore, *in the mode of relation to the immanent object*: in the presentation, the object is simply presented; in the judgment, it is affirmed or denied. As an example of this “simple presentation”, Brentano offers the case of someone who asks us if there is any red tree. If I am not acquainted to the vegetative realm and forgetful of the colors of leaves, then I “retain” my judgment, not affirming nor denying that there is a red tree, but still I *understand* the question and therefore I *have* a red tree as a “simple presentation” (PES, p. 154).

This is what allows Brentano to separate into two radically different “fundamental classes” the phenomena which the “modern tradition” held together in one (namely presentations and judgments), and unite the phenomena which this same tradition has kept separated (namely judgments and phenomena from the sphere of love and hate). This last unification is justified by the fact that when I desire, love or hate, I always desire, love or hate something *presented*. Therefore, both judgments and phenomena of sentiment cannot subsist without a presentation as its basal phenomenon.

3. These examples cover all four classes of categorical proposition usually distinguished by the logicians of that time: the particular affirmative, the universal negative, the universal affirmative and the particular negative. It also shows that “universal affirmative” and “particular negative” are no classes at all, since the former is actually a negative judgment about an individual and the latter is not a negation, but an affirmation.

4. This hypothesis is quickly analyzed and refuted by Brentano. Its consequences would lead to consider judgments as “fuller” presentations and presentations as “less full” judgments (PES, p. 204).

HUSSERL ON INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCE (ERLEBNIS)

The analytics of the intentional experience (*Erlebnis*) that Husserl sets out in the 5th Logical Investigation can be read, so I believe, as a direct dialogue with these Brentanian distinctions. Husserl calls Brentano's "fundamental classes" (presentations, judgments and phenomena of love and hate) "act-qualities." As long as a new terminology is employed, we need a justification for its introduction. This justification goes as follows: Husserl sees as very problematic the "priority for presentations" from Brentano's *dictum* (LU II, p. 454). If Brentano is right, that is, if presentations, judgments, and acts of love and hate are distinguished only by their *different modes of relation to the object*, then Husserl argues that it is not possible to differentiate a specific presentation from another one. Uriah Kriegel says that "to produce a classification, or taxonomy, of phenomena in some domain is to order them by genus-species relations", and so "a full classification of mental phenomena would organize them into such a genus-species scheme" (Kriegel, 2017, p. 97). He also says that according to Brentano "this scheme is not merely pragmatic, but must correctly capture natural homogeneity and heterogeneity relations in the phenomena themselves" (Brentano 1973a: 177 apud Kriegel 2017, 97). Following this way of producing a classification, Husserl could argue as follows⁵: to distinguish *blue* from *red*, I start with the genus *color* and goes on to *that specific color*, and then I differentiate *this shade of red* from that *shade of blue*. The same way of reasoning needs also to work analogically in the sphere of acts, and so I differentiate two act-qualities (the genus) pointing to its species – for example, a judgment –, and then I differentiate this judgment from that judgment pointing to its presentational basis. The same goes for two feelings of love (the specific quality) and the presentation beloved (the last specific difference). Now, given that "presentation" is a "mode of relation to the object" as well as a judgment and a feeling, how do we proceed to distinguish between *this specific presentation from that other presentation*? I cannot appeal to a founding act that is beyond presentation, since there is no such act in the Brentanian scheme. It is also not enough to state that they are different or to call for the presented object, since a presentation does not refer to an object "due to its acting on some external, independent object, 'directing' itself to it in some literal sense, or doing something to it or with it, as a hand writes with a pen. It is due to nothing that stays outside of the presentation, but to its own inner peculiarity alone" (LU II, p. 451)⁶. Thus, Husserl needs a new concept, *inherent in the act*, which concerns the

5. The following argument is mine, not Husserl's. Husserl uses several arguments making analogies with the genus-species scheme through the paragraphs §24, §25 and §26 from 5th Investigation. I chose, however, to simplify his reasoning, with a similar argument that I believe grasps his point more directly for our purposes here and is still faithful to his points.

6. This quot is from a passage where Husserl is arguing in favor of a line of thought that he will hereupon put away. Yet it expresses well Husserl's own position on this issue, as he says in the next sentence that "this last

relation (better, the *reference*) to the object. Therefore, if the concept of “fundamental classes” is replaced by that of “quality”, it is only because the “fundamental classes” were *insufficient* to account for the reference to the object. That is how the concept of quality gives rise to a *complementary* concept, this one being the responsible for the reference to the object: the concept of *matter*.

The concepts of quality and matter change completely the classification of Brentano’s psychic phenomena. Such phenomena no longer differentiate themselves in the “mode of relation to the object”, since the reference to the object is now assigned only to *an abstract moment* of the act, and a moment that is just lacking in Brentano’s scheme: the *matter*. In Brentano, there were only *act-qualities*: either a presentation, or a judgment or an act of love and hate. Now, Husserl states that these qualities always come together with a “material support” which is responsible for the “sense” (*Sinn*) of the object.

Together, quality and matter form a totality (and not a mere aggregate) that Husserl calls the “intentional essence” of the acts. With the concept of intentional essence, does Husserl completely depart from Brentano’s *dictum* about the priority of presentations? Would it be the case that, given the *aporia* to which we are led by the lack of an element within the act that concerns the reference to the object, he must reject once and for all the *dictum* and consider it as a “gratuitous assumption” (LU II, p. 454)? The answer is no. Nevertheless, to subscribe the *dictum*, Husserl needs first of all to review the main topic concerning the difference between presentation and judgment and to give his own answer to it.

He begins with considerations about acts of *naming* (*nennen*) and *asserting* (*aussagen*). These acts have their logical counterpart in the distinction between *name* (*Name*) and *assertion* (*Aussage*). So, initially, the question is posed as follows: if we understand “presentation” by “name”, then is it the case that every act is either an *act-quality of presentation* (that is, a name) or *based upon an act-quality of presentation* (that is, founded upon a name)? The answer must be negative, for the simple reason that *there is no such kind of quality defined as “name”*. Nominal acts (*Nominale Akte*) are those directed to a state of affairs in a “single-rayed” act (*Einstrahliger Akt*), while propositional acts (*Propositionale Akte*) are directed to state of affairs in a “many-rayed” act (*Mehrstrahliger Akt*)⁷. The name can be derived from an assertion, for example when I extract from the assertion “That rain has set in at last will delight the farmers” the name “that the rain has set in”, which is the state of affairs posited as the object of the gladness in the complete sentence. There are cases, however, where this derivation is impossible, as in the following one: “The Minister who is

holds on any view” (LU II, p. 451). He also states that any alternative appealing for an element extrinsic to presentation to differentiate them “will only satisfy those who [...] fail to feel the force of the truth that the object is, properly speaking, nothing at all ‘in’ a presentation” (LU II, p. 450).

7. The concepts of *mehrstrahlig* and *einstrahlig* are from *Ideen I*.

now driving up will make the decision”, where we do not find any judgment as the underlying basis of the name “the Minister”. This last example shows us the essential difference between *names* and *assertions*, or, in the logical sense, between *presentations* and *judgments*: it is a difference *within the matter*, and not within the quality. It is a difference based on *the way in which something is aimed at*: in a “single-rayed” manner as in the nominal presentations, or in a “many-rayed” manner as in a propositional judgment. Thus, Husserl is able to conclude, in direct opposition to Brentano, that “naming and asserting do not merely differ grammatically, but ‘in essence’” (LU II, p. 496). Husserl goes along with Bolzano in this issue, stating that “most logicians, among them the profound Bolzano, saw the distinction between names and assertions as one of essence, and a maturer science will support them” (LU II, p. 485).

Husserl takes his reasoning a step further to challenge the priority of “simple presentations” as the foundations of all acts. He does it by considering Brentano’s thesis that “all perceptions are judgments”. The famous example of the waxwork figure is employed for this purpose. I was once a victim of this hoax myself and so I will use my own experience to illustrate it. In a wax museum, I came across a woman holding up a camera and I immediately stood back waiting her to finish her shoot. Then I realized that it was an illusion: it was, in fact, not a real woman, but a waxwork figure. Husserl says that while I was involved in this illusion, it is not like if there is a perception in a “twofold way”: as a “simple presentation” *and* as a judgment of acceptance. Actually, what happens is quite the opposite: firstly, I do not have a “simple presentation”, but a *belief* that it is a woman and not a hoax. Then, the delusion being undone, it remains a “simple presentation” and the *belief* fades away. This modification between “simple presentation” and *belief*, however, is a modification in the *quality*, and not in the *matter* of the act. Therefore, presentations cannot be the foundations of all acts, and especially they are not the founding acts of perceptions, which are also judgments.

This last observation offers us the link for what will be Husserl’s position: not only presentations but presentations *and judgments* are founding acts. Husserl calls these acts *objectifying acts*. Considering their intentional essence we have, through the variation of matter, a nominal or a propositional act; through the variation of quality, an act of positing (*Setzung*, that is, a *belief*) or non-positing (*Setzungslöse*, that is, neutrality, “simple presentation”). Presentation and judgment, therefore, belong together to *the very same qualitative genus*, the *genus of objectifying quality* (*objektivierende Qualität*). Since no quality can be given without matter, this matter will be single-rayed or many-rayed – and it is only *here* where the difference between presentation and judgment can be placed. Regarding their “quality” (or, in brentanian terminology, their “class”) they both belong to the same qualitative genus,

both being “objectifying”⁸. It is on the side of the matter, therefore, where Brentano saw only grammatical differences, that Husserl sees essential ones, but *essential* not in the sense of *intentional essence*, but of *significative essence* (*Bedeutungsmässige Wesen*)⁹.

Thus, the tripartite classification of Brentano becomes again a bipartite one in Husserl’s account: psychic phenomena are no longer divided into presentations, judgments and phenomena of love and hate, but rather in *acts qualitatively uniform* and *acts qualitatively multiform*. The former are acts that carry the qualitative genus “objectifying”; the latter are those who carry the qualitative genus objectifying *plus* another quality from the sphere of will and sentiment. Thus, the brentanian *dictum* gets its husserlian formulation: “Each intentional experience is either an objectifying act or has its basis in such an act” (LU II, p. 514).

TO CONCLUDE, THERE IS ONE MORE POINT I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION.

I have said that, for Brentano, if I hear something, something is presented, if I see something, something is presented, if I imagine something, something is presented, if I read something, something is presented. We have also seen that, in Husserl’s conception, Brentano lacks an element internal to the act that is responsible for the differentiation between these presentations, and, because of that, presentations themselves are unable to refer to the object. Husserl, however, goes further. Not only the “fundamental class” presentation is unable to refer to the object, but it is also unable to determine the *degree of intuitiveness of the object*. In Brentano’s examples, we have both sensitive presentations (the color seen), imagetive presentations (the presented image) and the words read that “evoke presentations”. Concerning *this type of differentiation*, which is also absent in Brentano, Husserl does not direct himself towards the matter of the act, *but he does not direct himself towards the quality either*. Rather, what determines the degree of intuitiveness of the presented object is an element *that is not in the intentional essence of the act*, being neither the matter nor

8. Husserl will say that this genus of objectifying acts is one of the meanings of the word “presentation” (See LU II, p. 521). *Nota bene*: it’s not presentation in this sense that is being distinguished here from judgments. In this sense, presentation would “contain” judgments as a modified counterpart.

9. In the Introduction to the second volume of Logical Investigations, Husserl already mentioned Brentano’s “exaggeration” and “radicalism” concerning the distinctions between the logical and the merely grammatical: “The common knowledge that such distinctions do not always go hand in hand [...] may open the way to a dangerous radicalism. The field of logical forms may be unduly restricted. A wide range of logically significant forms may be cast forth as merely grammatical: only a few may be kept, such as suffice to leave some content to traditional syllogizing. Brentano’s attempted reform of formal logic, valuable as it no doubt still is, plainly suffered from this exaggeration” (LU II, p. 19)

the quality, but the *relation* between matter and its *re-presentative* (*repräsentierende*) *basis*. We need again a new terminology here. In Brentano's own words: "experience shows that equivocation is one of the main obstacles to recognizing distinctions" (PES, p. 84), it is due to a necessity of disambiguation of the concept of presentation (*Vorstellung*) that Husserl coins the concept of *Repräsentation*.

Let us turn ourselves to the example of the wax figure to emphasize the importance of this concept (and thus try to justify its use). After the illusion is undone, the quality is undoubtedly modified: the *belief* becomes a "simple presentation". But this does not mean that it is the quality that *determines* the presentation as an image-presentation rather than a perceptual-presentation. The quality only *accompanies* the intuition of the object, and it does not take any place in its status. The intuitivity is determined by the *form of apprehension* (*Auffassungsform*) which, in *Logical Investigations*, works as follows: If the matter of the act relates itself to its re-presentative content (*repräsentierende Inhalt*) so that it can freely vary and be totally arbitrary and dissimilar to it, then we have a symbolic act. If this variation has its limits in the *similarity* of the re-presentative content and the matter, then we have an imaginative act. If the concept of similarity ceases to operate and what matters now is solely the self-presentation of the thing itself through its re-presentative contents that appear to consciousness, then we have a perceptual act.

CONCLUSION: AN OBJECTUAL AND A PROPOSITIONAL THEORY OF JUDGMENT

Husserl starts with the brentanian classification of psychic phenomena, which he calls "intentional experiences", but considers them insufficient to confer reference to objectivity, whereof his different position regarding the distinction between presentation and judgment, which are now both founding acts. Moreover, the many examples that Brentano offers as "presentations" are strained now through a descriptive sieve that allows Husserl to establish criteria for determining the object as a sign, an image or a perception, and this will play a fundamental role in his analyses concerning the coincidence (*Deckung*) between the symbolic thought and intuition, which is one of the most important topics of the 6th Logical Investigation.

The classical reading of Brentano could of course indicate that *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint* was not concerned with problems about reference towards objectivity. Intentionality is comprehended in a strict immanent sense there, and, because of that, Brentano could not approach differences between presentations, since this would imply dealing with differences between the

presented objects, which means a transgression of the psychological realm. We could reply that Husserl's standpoint was exactly the same as Brentano's, i.e., *immanent*, and it was precisely because Brentano's premises could not allow for an element *internal* to the act responsible for the direction towards the object that Husserl was forced to introduce some new elements in his account of psychic experiences. As Rollinger says, "Husserl finds it impossible for Brentano to account for the fact that one presentation can have an object which is totally different from the other presentation. It will not help, he insists, to say that different presentations can have different objects and to leave it at that, *for the direction towards an object is itself immanent in the act, in this case a presentation*" (Rollinger, 1999, p. 54, my emphasis).

Even if we put aside the dispute concerning the true significance of the "*intentional in-existence*" attribute of psychic phenomena (if it implies or if it does not imply reference and direction towards objectivity), we still have a point of disagreement between the two authors that is related to our central topic, namely the point concerning the limits of the merely *grammatical* and the *logical*. In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* Brentano allows *irrealia* in his ontology; it is only his later theory of evidence, developed in the Vienna years, which made him consider them as linguistic fictions¹⁰. Husserl's point in *Logical Investigations* is indeed very close to these doctrines, which does not seem to agree with Brentano's own account of judgments in that same work. Therefore, it seems that Brentano's theory concerning the reduction of all propositions to existential propositions gives us already the clue for his later understanding of *irrealia* as "linguistic fictions". As for Husserl, "thought" has always the priority over "language". As Rollinger puts it, "though Husserl regards language as central to the concerns of logic, his ultimate concern in the second volume of the *Logical Investigations* is with cognition, which he, like the other Austrian phenomenologists, identifies as something that takes place in consciousness, i.e., as consisting of mind-functions" (Rollinger, 2008, p. 58). Husserl's account of the difference between presentations and judgments in terms of nominal and propositional acts, more than just point to the referential or non-referential character of presentations, enables a theory of judgment which has a *propositional* rather than an *objectual character*, as Brentano's theory has. As Uriah Kriegel admits, Brentano's nonpropositional take on judgment "greatly limits the possibility for informative linguistic representation of judgments and their content" (Kriegel, 2017, p. 109). Therefore, the main merit of Husserl's revision of Brentano's classification of psychic phenomena can be located in his consistence with Brentano's premises and its conciliation with his (Husserl's) own views concerning the "unduly restriction" of the field of logical forms.

10. see *Descriptive Psychology*, 1995, Introduction, xii.

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