

DISPOSITIONS, THEIR BASES AND CORRELATES—MEINONG'S ANALYSIS

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This Side of Being and Non-Being

The salt in the cruet in front of me is capable of dissolving in water. And Mary can sing. What makes my assertions true? Is the relevant truth-maker of the same type as the truth-makers of my assertions that the salt is white, that it is solid, that it has a certain mass m , that Mary is a brunette or has a headache?

Meinong gave an answer to these questions in a paper published in 1919, 'Allgemeines zur Lehre der Dispositionen' (General Remarks on the Theory of Dispositions).¹ This is one of Meinong's last pieces of work but the main ideas it contains had been worked out at least twenty years earlier² as his own early papers and work on the topic by his pupils show.³ One example of early use of the theory of dispositions is his argument against Brentano's view that in drawing a conclusion one is aware that there is a perceived relation of causation between premises and conclusions. This view, he suggests, overlooks the role of unconscious dispositional partial causes that are at work when we draw conclusions.⁴ Brentano himself had appealed to the distinction between mental phenomena and dispositions to these in the course of discussing the notion of the unconscious. Philosophers, he writes, 'were for a long time well acquainted with the fact that one can possess a treasure of acquired knowledge without thinking of this knowledge; but these philosophers quite rightly thought of this knowledge as dispositions to certain acts of thinking, and of an acquired character as a disposition to certain affects and activities of the will but not as being itself cognition or consciousness' (Brentano 1973, p. 144). Another example is Meinong's 1894 account of the difference between occurrent emotions and dispositions to emotions.⁵

Although Meinong's work on the theory of objects or ontology has by and large come to be equated with his work on such Baroque entities as non-obtaining states of affairs (*Objektive*), objects that may or may not exist and

incomplete i.e. arbitrary or generic objects, his more spectacular ontological commitments were in fact complemented by a thorough account of the ontology of the most basic, or Romanesque, kinds of spatio-temporal entities, of entities that are this side of being and non-being.

Both his early work on the ontology of measurement⁶ and his paper on dispositions belong under this heading. Indeed, as his more careful commentators have pointed out, Meinong normally only introduces an entity of a Baroque kind when he has thoroughly convinced himself that a more homely ontology is incomplete. His theory of dispositions shows him at work on some of the most ground level problems of ontology. Unfortunately Meinong's account of the properties and dispositions of spatio-temporal entities, like other such accounts by Brentano and his heirs—I am thinking in particular of Husserl's theory of individual properties and of Brentano's theory of space, time and continua⁷—are almost completely unknown. Meinong's theory of dispositions is a quite general theory of the possibilities open to spatio-temporal entities such as things and people, but most of what he has to say concerns the possibilities open to people and it is for the latter that he reserves the term 'dispositions,' as being slightly more neutral than 'ability' (*Vermoegen*) and capability or capacity (*Faehigkeit*).

I shall first set out the main lines of Meinong's account then look at the theories of dependence and possibility on which it is based. Finally I consider some applications of the theory, most of which are at least hinted at by Meinong.

Meinong's Account of Dispositions

When we assert of someone that he has artistic taste we are not, Meinong points out, talking about some particular experience this person has at that time. But nor is what we say totally unconnected with this person's experiences. Rather, we mean that this person has certain experiences under certain conditions. His artistic taste is a 'relatively enduring property.' Is this property, which enables someone to identify more readily than others what is and is not aesthetically valuable, what we would call a disposition of this person? Meinong thinks not. For that which enables me to be or behave in a certain way is not itself what we would call a disposition or capacity. In order to see this it helps to consider properties other than, say, artistic taste, which is 'postulated on the basis of a subject's behaviour' (D 291). We should look at cases where the nature of the property involved is 'directly known.' Someone who is short-sighted behaves in quite characteristic ways because (often) of the anomalous shape of his eye-ball. But this shape of his eye-ball is not any disposition. Rather, Meinong suggests, it is a property on which the disposition we call short-sightedness is based. We might say that a disposition is the property of having a property such as the shape of one's eye-ball.⁸ The property on which

a disposition rests Meinong calls a basis or base (*Grundlage*), the same word Armstrong was to use much later to express a very similar idea.⁹ The manifestations or actualisations of a disposition Meinong labels the “correlates” of that disposition. A correlate of a disposition is either what he calls a psychic experience—a psychological act or state—or a physical experience—a somewhat peculiar term for intentional bodily movements or states.

Dispositions also clearly involve the notion of possibility, in particular the possibility involved in the means-end relation. It is possible to employ this or that means to obtain a given end. Someone who has learnt to play the saxophone has acquired a certain constitution that is the means to the end of playing his instrument. The musician’s constitution is the property underlying the disposition that disposes him to obtain his goals. The reason why we do not say of someone who has been shot accidentally that he had a disposition to be shot is that none of the partial causes (or causal conditions) that contributed to the accident, e.g. his position, stand in the same intimate relation to their effect as does the saxophonist’s constitution to his performances, the means-end relation. Meinong notes that not all dispositions are acquired intentionally and that not all acquired underlying properties are means to conscious goals. But he thinks that the notion of an end or goal can nevertheless be applied to such cases (D 36) provided ends are regarded not as mysterious causes but as the objects of the states of desire through which we are aware of our goals.¹⁰ It is true that our awareness of many means, of the bases underlying our dispositions, is not only often absent but may well depend on the progress of science—as in the case of short-sightedness. But as Meinong points out, we all treat clocks, telephones and cars as means even when we are quite ignorant of the specific properties of these objects that make it possible to tell the time, to talk to strangers and so on. In these cases as in the case of my dispositions to have or produce psychological or behavioral episodes it is the clock, telephone or myself as a whole, in abstraction from the relevant specific properties that is regarded as a means.

Meinong might also have mentioned that the relation between a basis and the manifestations of a disposition are normally irreversible just as are more familiar means-end relations.

There is one important objection to Meinong’s use of the means-end relation in his analysis of dispositions, an objection that applies also to more recent work on the same topic under the heading of dynamic modalities,¹¹ an objection he does not note. His analysis presupposes that the psychological and behavioral episodes that are the actualisations or manifestations of a person’s dispositions are all subject to the will. Now although my movements are subject to my will it seems doubtful whether all my psychological states are subject to my will in the same way. I can choose to indulge in a phantasy about or presentation of Claire but seeing, occurrent belief and indeed desire

are not subject to my will in the same way.¹² I can successfully try to put myself into a position which is such that perception, belief or desire are brought about but these states are not the immediate objects of my will. In honour of Pascal—who thought that belief could be induced by going to Church, saying one's prayers etc.—and Sartre—who thought that love could be induced by bearing flowers to the loved one and going through the motions of a lover—we might call this indirect connexion between the will and certain experiences the French Connexion.

However, if this qualification as well as those of Meinong himself are borne in mind no danger is involved in allowing Meinong his extension of the concept of the means-end relation, an extension that allows him to determine more closely the type of possibility involved in dispositions.

Dependence

Meinong's account of dispositions stands at the intersection of two other much more general theories whose applications extend far beyond the domain of the dispositions and capacities of spatio-temporal objects. The first of these theories is the account of existential dependence that Meinong attempts to set out in his 1899 paper on higher-order objects, that he makes extensive use of in his work on the philosophy of mind and that Husserl presents in a vastly superior form in the third of his *Logical Investigations*. This theory is concerned first and foremost with the properties of the relation of dependence insofar as this links together particulars, dependent and independent. It is thus a theory of what is this side of being and non-being. However, since both Husserl and Meinong thought that such dependence relations obtain only in virtue of relations between ideal entities, and since Meinong often seems to have thought, particularly when reflecting on rather than simply using the theory of dependence, that to be dependent is to be ideal, it is a theory which, if we are not careful, can take us fairly rapidly into the realm of Baroque entities. The second theory is Meinong's account of possibility and its bearers.

If we ask what sort of a property Jim's cheerfulness is we find ourselves all too quickly wondering about very peculiar sorts of properties. If, however, we look at the different moments involved in the manifestation or actualisation of such a disposition we find that these moments involved are all quite homely entities and that the difficult question concerns the way they hang together. The moments or elements already introduced comprise: substances, in particular persons or subjects; enduring states of the latter; dispositional correlates, in particular mental acts and actions. Meinong introduces two further items: the trigger (*Erloeser*) of a disposition and the founder (*Begründer*) of a disposition. A subject's states—e.g. the shape of his eye-ball—belong to the causal conditions required by his manifestations of short-sightedness. But these con-

ditions are normally triggered off by an efficient cause, light must for example penetrate the eye of the short-sighted man if he is to behave short-sightedly. The second item, the founder of a disposition is what causally brings about an enduring basis in a subject and is required, Meinong says, for all dispositions except those that are innate, if there are any. This requires a slight qualification to deal with a well-known problem. Consider two propositions p and q , very different in content, to each of which I am disposed to assent if asked, my beliefs in which were brought about in very different circumstances. It is plausible to say that I am disposed to assent to $p \& q$ even though there was no event that triggered off the state (if there is one?) that underlies my disposition to assent to the conjunction.

Of these moments the first and the last three enjoy a relatively uncontroversial ontological status: they are all unrepeatable particulars. The subject of a disposition because it is a substance; the correlates or manifestations of a disposition, that which sets it off and that which brings it into being because they are temporal episodes, events or processes. Only the basis of a disposition seems to present an ontological puzzle. This puzzle makes itself felt in the peculiar terminological contortions one finds in the writings of contemporary defences of entities in this category. Armstrong describes what Meinong calls the basis of a disposition a 'categorical property' and Mackie an 'occurrent property.' 'Categorical' describes a type of proposition, not a type of property. Meinong's bases present no puzzles because he has available an account of bases according to which these are, like events and processes, dependent particulars, but unlike these in that they are enduring states. Enduring particular states are the main examples that Stout advances of what he calls 'characters,' which have also been called 'particular(ised) properties.'¹³ States, indeed, are static properties, events and processes kinetic properties.

What are the dependence relations linking all the moments involved in the actualisation or manifestation of a disposition? Acquired bases, unlike innate bases, depend unilaterally on a subject. A correlate depends unilaterally on a base. A trigger, though it acts on a base, is bilaterally dependent on a correlate, a founder is bilaterally dependent on a base. (It is arguable that a correlate is only one-sidedly dependent on a base, a base only one-sidedly dependent on a founder, but I shall not pursue this point here since it requires a difficult distinction between the analytic relations between conceptual correlates and synthetic relations). Existential dependence, in its simplest form, obtains when a particular that exists, endures goes on or occurs cannot exist etc. unless some other particular exists etc.¹⁴ Of course, this basic structure can be varied in a number of different ways. Thus both electric conductors and electrolytes have the capacity to conduct electric current. But actualisations or correlates of this disposition are based in each case on materially quite distinct states of

the two particulars: in a conductor the current is carried by electrons, in an electrolyte by ions.

Possibility

We have seen that the analysis of dispositions involves recognizing not only possibility but also the notion of a goal. But how else should we characterize the possibility that is asserted in the claim that Mary can sing? Meinong contrasts the sort of possibility involved here with a different sort of possibility. The contrast he is interested in can be approached, he says, both from the point of view of the theory of means and ends and from that of the theory of possibility. 'The correlation of means to end can be based either on the nature of the means or end, and thus inhere in an enduring fashion in the means, or it can be transitory, as when it is based on a merely accidental constellation' (D 293). A sanatorium, because of its layout and equipment, is destined to serve the purpose of healing the sick. But a burnt match serves only temporarily and exceptionally as a pencil. Similarly, we can distinguish between relatively enduring and relatively transient possibilities. When we say of a ship that it is mobile, of a glass that is fragile we are talking of the former; when we talk of the dangerousness of Tell's arrow for his son only a transient possibility is involved. Meinong considers another example of transient possibilities in order to arrive at a quite general distinction between two sorts of possibilities of which the distinction between transient and enduring possibilities is only a special case. Consider a die of which we can say that the possibility of throwing a six with it is $1/6$. Clearly we cannot assert that this possibility obtains *tout court*. A number of conditions must be satisfied before making such an assertion: a thrower, the fact that the die is sometimes thrown, a suitable surface. These conditions, or 'supplements' as Meinong calls them, are not required by possibilities such as mobility or fragility, possibilities that are properly, or canonically expressed by saying that the ship can move, or that the glass can break (D 295, UMW 225–226). In the latter cases possibility is rooted in those properties of individuals he calls bases, and not normally in 'supplements.'

The distinction between 'suppletory' possibility—the die case—and 'insuppletory' possibility—dispositions of animate and inanimate individuals—rests on Meinong's account of the bearers of possibility, of that which is properly speaking possible, an account set out in his 1915 seven-hundred page opus *Ueber Moeglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*. The primary bearers of possibility are 'Objektive'—just as for Husserl and his early students they are states of affairs—and only derivatively the objects that compose such 'Objektive.' Since many such objects are actual and spatio-temporal and since Meinong tends to be Megarian about these¹⁵ he introduces a type of object that intervenes between actual, spatio-temporal objects and 'Objektive'—incomplete objects.¹⁶

These, rather than complete spatio-temporal objects, are the derivative bearers of possibility. They are exceptions to the Principle of the Excluded Middle, understood ontologically. Something blue, unlike this blue watch, is indeterminate with respect to extension i.e. something extended.¹⁷

Meinong often characterises incomplete objects as being essentially objects of cognition. The propositionally expressed possibility that *N*, who is my friend, will visit me tomorrow corresponds to an 'Objektive' that contains the incomplete object, *N* insofar as I know him, which derivatively has the possibility that primarily attaches to the 'Objektive.' 'Insofar as,' like 'qua,' turns an unrestricted into a restrictive description. (On this idiom, see UMW 227). In such a case Meinong calls the friend insofar as I know him an accessory object by means of which I intend or mean the primary or target object, *N*. Here as elsewhere Meinong attempts to modify the three-way distinction, that is the hallmark of Brentano's heirs, between act or sign-use, content or sense and object in favour of a two-way distinction, *à la* Russell or Moore, between act or sign and (complicated webs of) objects. When, as in this case, the incomplete object is associated with a spatio-temporal object, possibility may also be said to attach to the latter, but at two removes. Such cases illustrate what Meinong calls 'applied possibility' (UMW 227). But now what exactly are the incomplete objects that bear the possibility that a die will turn up a six and that Mary will sing?

In the case of the die the relevant incomplete object just is what we described above as the 'supplements' or complex of conditions that include: that someone throws the die, that a flat surface is available etc. This complex of conditions, often expressed in a clause such as 'insofar as this is a good die' (UMW 226), has neither 'being, nor non-being, but is indeterminate with respect to its being, as is an incomplete object' (D 294). Notice that Meinong mentions only a comparison with incomplete objects and does not actually say here that the relevant complex of conditions is an incomplete object, a claim he makes explicitly at UMW, p. 226. In the case of Mary and her dispositions, where no supplements are necessary—for the true dispositional assertion, rather than for the actualisation of the disposition, Meinong should have added—the incomplete object which is the bearer of her possibilities is an association of determinations of Mary, those determinations which constitute the basis of her disposition to sing.

But why does Meinong think that the incomplete object which is the union of certain properties of Mary's vocal chords and brain, of Sam's eyeballs or of the chemical and physical structures of this lump of salt is any the less complete than Mary, Sam or this lump of salt? There appears to be a contradiction between the claim above that the bases of a disposition are dependent particulars and their status as incomplete objects. Meinong does not raise this question, perhaps because of certain life-long worries about the ontological status

of properties, a problem about which he often changed his mind. The view that bases, like other properties, are dependent particulars which instantiate repeatable properties—Husserl speaks of moments instantiating species—is the view that is held in *Ueber die Erfahrungsgrundlagen des Wissens* (1906); before then and in his tome on possibility and probability he held that properties are not particulars but repeatable entities that somehow become concrete when they become the properties of concrete entities.¹⁸ His accounts of bases and of the bearers of dispositional possibilities can be made to fit both accounts of properties, although the fit is neater if ‘properties’ is regarded as embracing (a) instances of repeatable properties and (b) these properties themselves.

Consider Mary’s ability to sing. Let us assume that her ingrained brain states and the structure of her vocal chords have the status of dependent particulars. Call this complex of particulars *a*. It is on *a* that every act of singing by Mary depends. But the bearer of the possibility that Mary sings is *a* insofar as I know of it, or, if we bear in mind Meinong’s remarks on telephones, Mary insofar as I know of her (or, if not all incomplete objects are cognition-dependent, something *A*). The relation between *a* qua known to me and *a* is instantiation. *a* instantiates *a* qua known to me. Notice that this does not exclude the possibility that *a* also instantiates something *A*. Meinong’s account of dispositions leads him at one point to recognize that his earlier bald claim in his 1915 work on possibility and probability that possibility always attaches primarily to *Objektive* and only derivatively to (in)complete objects needs modifying in order to do justice to the ‘sui generis form of the notion of possibility’ (D 301) described by sentences containing ‘can,’ i.e. to de re possibility.¹⁹ In the case of ‘Mary can sing,’ ‘The glass can break’ the expression of modality does not form a sentence from a sentence. Rather, it operates on the verb (which Meinong would have classed as a type of name) to form a new verb (name). The possibility of singing attaches to Mary just as immediately as it does to the corresponding state of affairs.

The Episodic Nature of Psychological Entities

The sharp distinction between dispositions to mental episodes and these episodes themselves highlights the episodic nature of psychological entities. This is a presupposition of most work by Brentano and his heirs in the philosophy of mind. Thus Brentano stresses that acquired dispositions to have psychic phenomena are connected with real entities but are not any sort of psychological entity.²⁰ Husserl points out in 1894 that

the differences [between] dispositions, unconscious real possibilities, cannot constitute the differences between or in experienced realities, they may have at most the value of causal moments on which the phenomenal differences depend (Husserl 1979, p. 306).

Meinong merely makes explicit in the article on dispositions a point familiar to Brentano's heirs: 'any attempt to make of psychic experiences any sort of enduring determinations fails completely' (D 297). The background to Meinong's claim was the destructive criticism to which Herbart and his followers in the nineteenth century had subjected vague talk about mental capacities. One of Meinong's aims is to bring out the fact that only if a sharp distinction between psychological episodes and dispositions to these is drawn can the category of dispositions and their bases be defended. The episodic nature of the psychological is, however, easily overlooked by philosophers who think that the philosophy of mind is merely the study of the language used to describe and express psychological facts, since the distinctions between episodes, dispositions and the states which are their bases are first and foremost ontological distinctions.

Even if it be conceded that the psychological entities that correspond to most verbs of saying, thinking and doing are episodic, there are at least two candidates for the title of non-episodic psychological entity. First, the self conceived as a psychic substance, an entity that has no place in Meinong's ontology and to which I shall return in the next section. Second, might not the bases of dispositions be psychological entities? Meinong mentions that reasons might be found for putting forward the hypothesis that there are enduring psychological states on which our more familiar psychological episodes depend. But it is certain that if we stay within the limits of descriptive psychology we shall find that we are not aware of any experiences that have the required duration (D 303).²¹

Let us look briefly at the most striking application of the distinction between transient psychological episodes and enduring non-psychological states within the Brentanist tradition. Ehrenfels' wholly naturalistic value theory is built around the distinction between more or less pleasurable experiences and desires, on the one hand, and the corresponding dispositions to have these on the other hand. His extended and very subtle defence of what he calls the law of the relative promotion of happiness (which can be considered as a generalisation of the law of marginal utility) makes use not only of the experience-disposition distinction but also of an ordering relation among the (un)pleasurable experiences which, at a given moment, I could have in view of my dispositions and their bases.

Every act of desiring is conditioned, both in its goal and in its intensity, by the relative promotion of happiness it brings—in the light of the feeling-dispositions of the individual in question—at its time of entry into the consciousness of this individual and during the time it remains therein (Ehrenfels, 1982, p. 245).

Since a relation amongst possible correlates of dispositions cannot be causally effective, every act of desiring, we ought to say, is conditioned by a relation

amongst dispositional bases, a point Ehrenfels comes close to making on one occasion.²²

One way of bringing out the peculiarly transitory nature of whatever is psychological is to specify what might be called the maximum duration of a psychological episode. Roughly speaking this will be the period that a well-trained fakir is capable of remaining in, say, a state of observing a table. Such a state will be bounded by two states of dreamless sleep and is very unlikely to last for longer than two or three days.

Many psychological and psychological-behavioural predicates appear to correspond to long-lasting states, as when we speak of Jim's hate, love or cheerfulness. But appearances are deceptive here, as in the case of predications of secondary quality terms. Insofar as Jim's hate is psychological or indeed behavioural it is as transient if intermittently regular as is the redness of a table. His dispositions to occurrent emotions and their underlying bases endure, although not in the same way, but these are not psychological or behavioural. One natural way of classifying psychological episodes is the three-way classification into punctual events, processes and states: deciding and meaning (like the actions of winning and promising) are (at least phenomenologically) punctual; deliberation and inferring are processes that take time and have parts that are not themselves deliberatings or inferrings; sadness and serenity are states that last for a short period, though they may recur, during each part of which the person in question is sad or serene. Notice that genuinely psychological states are in general much shorter than the non-psychological states that underlie them and other psychological episodes.²³

The thesis that whatever is psychological is episodic seems to conflict with one of the most familiar of psychological phenomena. Jim meets Mary for the first time and is henceforth said to know her, to be acquainted with her. He sees that she is tall and dark and is henceforth said to believe this of her. Again and again psychological episodes leave their mark on us, they seem to give rise to states. But this claim is ambiguous. In order to grasp the ambiguity involved, two distinct types of change should be distinguished. Consider the behavioural episodes of baking a cake and pushing a cart, and the non-behavioural episode which occurs when snow melts. When snow melts it may stay melted, cakes may stay baked but the cart does not stay pushed. Each of the three episodes marks a transition from one state to another but melting and baking are more intimately linked to the states of which they are the beginnings than is the pushing of the cart to its new position. Notice that if one admits into one's ontology the dependent particulars I have called events and processes, and if one accepts that some such particulars are the beginnings of states, and are intimately linked to states, then it becomes very difficult to deny that these (homologous) states are also dependent particulars. I shall not attempt to characterise the nature of this link here, nor shall I defend the

claim that the distinction appealed to here is an ontologically genuine distinction.

Rather, I shall simply rely on what I hope is an apparent analogy between pushing carts and psychological episodes. When Jim meets Mary and sees that she is tall and dark these episodes do not normally give rise to psychological states that are linked to them in the way that baking cakes is related to baked cakes. This is not to claim that Jim's experiences do not mark the beginning of any new state in him. Just as pushing the cart marks the beginning of a new position for the cart so too Jim finds himself in a new state after meeting Mary. But what has changed are his dispositions to have and produce experiences and actions because of the new underlying states he acquires. (I said that normally seeing Mary does not give rise to a psychological state that is intimately linked to it; it could, as when Jim's perception gives rise to a period of observation of Mary).

Perhaps the philosophically most important example of the thesis that psychological episodes normally give rise to states that are not intimately linked to them in the way described is the relation between assertions and epistemic seeings, on the one hand, and belief, on the other hand. The jargon of propositional attitudes hides the fact that the beliefs on which such episodes depend and which such episodes often instigate are not themselves psychological episodes, and so not attitudes, but dispositions, based on real states, to have or produce these.²⁴ In general, then, what is psychological is not only episodic it is such that it does not give rise to a psychological state which is intimately linked to it in the way that melting and staying melted are.

Meinong's account of dispositions may also be invoked to help solve a well-known puzzle about the relation between two types of psychological episode, assertion (or judgement) and perception. Brentano's pupils are well-known for the claim that the three-way distinction between act, content and object applies to all mental episodes and states, and not just to assertions. But neither they nor subsequent philosophers have been very successful in applying the content-object distinction—between the object of my act and the way it is given to me—to perception.²⁵ The two most obvious strategies are (a) to claim that differences in perceptual content just are differences of perspective and (b) to claim that the content or sense of a perception is given by the description I would or could give of the seen object. If one adopts the latter strategy one can then argue in a familiar way from the existence of different descriptions for the same object to a content-object distinction. In this way the content-object distinction for perception profits from the same distinction for linguistic acts. This strategy is unsatisfactory if one is persuaded that perception and assertion are very different types of act. After all, when I see the passing postman I do not name him with the help of the definite description 'the passing postman'. But assimilation of perception to assertion is not the only way of saving this

strategy. It is enough to bear in mind the possibility that one and the same dispositional base (or closely related bases) underlies both my perception and the definite description I could produce of what I have seen.

Meinong himself makes a related point in his tome on *Emotional Presentation*. Perceptions and other acts in which we take the objects of these acts to exist (*Ernstvorstellungen*) leave behind them ‘dispositional traces that make possible and facilitate phantasy presentations [memories and phantasies in the narrower sense of the word] of the same objects (*gegenstandsgleich*)’ (Meinong 1916, p. 28). A similar relation, he adds, obtains between judgements and assumptions, and between emotions and my memories of these.

Basic Continuity vs. Continuity of the Self

Like some other heirs of Brentano, such as Ehrenfels, Stumpf, Witasek and the author of the first edition of the *Logical Investigations*, Meinong not only stressed the episodic nature of psychological entities but seems also to have accepted that there are no psychological entities that are not episodes. Like Mach he seems to have countenanced neither enduring nor transient psychological substances, neither a RES cogitans, nor a res COGITANS. Such a view must of course attempt to account for the notions of personal identity apparently presupposed by such phenomena as obligation, responsibility, shame and regret. Recently the traditional appeals by enemies of the self to memory and bodily continuity have been strengthened by bringing in the notion of a causal link between memories and their objects.²⁶ Some remarks of Meinong indicate an additional obvious way in which we can account for the coherence of ‘my’ experiences.

[T]he most varied intellectual and emotional experiences of one and the same subject, insofar as they occur repeatedly, can be seen to be linked if we presuppose a relatively enduring base on which are built dispositions that are no less enduring. At the same time the enduring dispositional bases between temporally separated experiences of the same subject will help to effect connexions in such a way that the influence of past experiences on future ones need no longer present an insoluble puzzle (D 298).

As Meinong points out, the coherence of ‘my’ ‘practical behaviour’ can be explained in the same way. My actions presuppose wishes and needs and it is the bases underlying my dispositions to have certain needs and wishes that explain the ways my temporally separate actions hang together.

The suggestion, then, is that Meinong’s remarks here can be employed to specify a way in which the unity of ‘my’ mental states and actions can be accounted for without appealing to a self. In addition to the well-known explanations in terms of the relations of veridicality and causal dependence between mental episodes—a perception and a subsequent memory—and in terms of the relation of genidentity between states of a body (or between temporal slices of

such a body) we may appeal to the relation between body-states, in particular brain-states, and the different psychological episodes which ‘actualise’ these, a relation Meinong also describes as that of a causal condition to an effect. Notice that Meinong’s appeal to the *enduring* causal conditions that serve as intermediaries between causes and effects means that his suggestion is distinct from, although a natural complement to, recent attempts to specify the right sort of causal link between *episodes* such as my perception of Barry and my memory of him.

Meinong himself does not explicitly appeal to dispositional bases as an alternative to the self. He merely shows how they serve to explain the unity of ‘my’ experiences and actions. Stumpf, however, does make use of a somewhat more primitive account of dispositions than that of Meinong in the context of his rejection of the self: ‘an ego [...] is a whole of conscious states that hang together and the unconscious dispositions associated with these.’²⁷

Habits and Suggestions

From Hume and Reid to Wittgenstein philosophers have not hesitated to make theoretical use of the notion of a habit. But one often has the impression that the importance accorded this notion is inversely proportional to the amount of clarification it receives. A cursory nod in the direction of the complex phenomenon of association usually suffices. But what, after all, are the ‘customary connexions’ that, according to Hume, are given in inward sensation?²⁸ Meinong’s account of dispositions enables him to give the beginnings of an analysis of two different ways in which dispositions can be formed, via habituation²⁹ and via suggestion.

Whenever we become accustomed or disaccustomed to something the relevant new dispositions (habits) are brought about or founded by experiences (a concept Meinong employs, it should be remembered, in such a way that even actions fall under it) that are correlates i.e. actualisations of the antecedent dispositions (D 306). I may become accustomed to a smell either because of a change in its effect on me or because the (dis)agreeable feeling accompanying it diminishes. Since the sensation remains the same in both cases—a claim the gestalt psychologists were to deny—the change must concern the subject. A certain dispositional constitution of the subject is triggered by this sensation; the correlate of the disposition is the sense-experience or feeling at its original strength. Under the influence of the sensation the first disposition actualised is transformed into a weaker one, which in turn is manifested in a weaker correlate. Habituation is therefore a decrease in a disposition and what decreases the disposition is the experience of its correlate. The change in the first disposition is the foundation of a new disposition and the cause of this foundation is the trigger of the first disposition, the sensation.

Habit formings with this structure always involve fatigue, and there is no experience, no mental state or action, that does not fatigue (D 306).

The typist who gets used to a new type-writer changes his dispositions, too, but in this case the mechanism described above brings about an increase rather than a decrease in a disposition. Once again the correlate of the first disposition and the founder of the new disposition are the same, as are the trigger and cause of the founder. We may regard this second example as a case of the phenomenon of training, but it would be wrong to assume that all cases in which dispositions are strengthened involve training, as all cases of decrease in a disposition involve fatigue. Rather, suggests Meinong, only active experiences (apprehension that something is the case or epistemic seeing, action) but not passive experiences (feelings, presentings) can be trained. (This claim appears to conflict with the thesis already mentioned that only certain experiences, and not apprehension or judgement, are subject to the will. The conflict disappears if one bears in mind that someone can be trained to see that *p* only indirectly, in the sense that he can be trained to put himself in a situation in which he is likely to see that *p*. Here we have an instance of the French Connexion). Training fatigues, but we can recover from this, whereas repetition of passive experiences simply dulls, the strength of the relevant dispositions decreases.

Dispositions formed or founded through the influence of suggestion—a word Reid had used to describe the same phenomena—come about in a number of different ways. One example Meinong gives is of the person who is influenced by the dialect of the area he finds himself in. He actualizes a disposition whose correlates resemble utterances he has heard in the past (D 309) and we can see that a disposition is involved if we contrast this case with that of a baby who hears for the first time and imitates a weeping child.

We saw above that strings of ‘my’ experiences may be said to hang together because they are causally dependent on the same dispositional bases. Meinong’s account of habit-forming episodes, i.e. episodes which not only actualise but also change dispositions can also contribute to an alternative to the self. Relations of genidentity between ‘my’ dispositional bases brought about by such episodes contribute to the continuity of ‘my’ bases.

Dispositional Sentences and Truth Makers

Meinong and Husserl would have found the popular claim that to understand the meaning of a proposition just is to know its truth-conditions unacceptable, at least in its usual general form. This in spite of the fact that they clearly thought the theory of meaning was central to philosophy, and in spite of their grasp of the notion of logical form and of their rudimentary accounts of what a truth-maker is. Unlike many contemporary and later philosophers they were of the opinion that formal semantics and formal ontology—or the general the-

ory of objects—complement one another, but are by no means identical. Not all complexity, they thought, is logical.³⁰

Meinong's account of dispositions provides, I suggest, a good example of a case where the logical form and meaning of a sentence and the form and matter of its truth-maker are, at least in part, quite clearly heterogeneous. What makes 'John can sing' i.e. 'It is possible for John to sing' true? If 'John is short-sighted' means 'It is not the case that it is possible for John to see $a, b, c, d \dots$ at distances $d_1, d_2 \dots$,' what is the truth-maker of 'It is possible for John to see $a, b, c \dots$ at distances $d_1, d_2 \dots$?' I shall not attempt to give a complete answer to this question. But it is clear that if the Meinong-Armstrong account of dispositions is correct the description of the truth-makers of such sentences will contain, in addition, say, to a subjunctive conditional, at least two clauses of the following sorts:

- a clause specifying that the relevant individual has some basis-property;
- a clause specifying the relevant base-property.

Now, as Meinong points out,

since dispositions are mere possibilities they cannot be perceived; perhaps their real bases can be perceived, nevertheless they are not so to speak obvious and often remain unknown for a long time (D 298)

Now the fact that dispositional bases are often unknown is also one reason for not identifying such bases with the dispositions they found (D 291). A more important consequence of this fact is that since the specification of a basis-property cannot be read off from the corresponding attribution of a disposition to a subject someone who grasps the sense of a dispositional sentence will often not be able to describe this property. Must a grasp of the sense of a dispositional sentence involve knowledge that *some* basis property belongs to its truth-conditions? Some philosophers, such as Ryle in his phenomenalist account of dispositions in *The Concept of Mind*, would have given a negative answer to this question. Now that Meinong's alternative to this phenomenalist view is widely accepted perhaps the time has come to pursue his even more radical suggestion that logical and ontological form do not coincide.³¹

Notes

1. Originally published in Meinong (1919), and now in the *Gesamtausgabe*, Volume VII, pp. 287–310. I refer to this paper as D and give the *Gesamtausgabe* pagination.

2. See Höfler's announcement in (1904), p. 79, note, of a forthcoming work by Meinong 'On Causes, Forces and Dispositions' that would be based on discussions with Höfler and Oelzelt-Newin that had extended over many years; see also Höfler (1900), p. 61 note.

3. Cf. Meinong (1889) p. 162f., Oelzelt-Newin (1892), Witasek (1897), Höfler (co-authored with Meinong) (1890), Saxinger (1901), (1902), (1904), (1906). On those dispositions which are the mastery of concepts and knowing how to use a word, see Mally (1919) and the remarkable and influential Martinak (1901).

4. Meinong (1877), now in GA I, 1969, pp. 9, 11f.
5. Meinong (1894), §14, now in GA III, 1968. Ehrenfels (1982) (p. 229) rejects Brentano's account of love and hate as occurrent phenomena in favour of the view that they are dispositions—a point other Austrian philosophers were to return to. Where “love” and “hate” are used to refer to actual phenomena, Ehrenfels suggests, they refer to desires rather than emotions. Cf. Höfler 1897, §59, §65.
6. Meinong (1896). This work Russell absorbed and put to good use; see Russell (1899) and chs. XXI and XXXI of his *Principles of Mathematics*; on Russell and Meinong on measurement see Spaier (1927), especially pp. 138–139, 264–267.
7. See the third of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and Brentano (1976).
8. For a recent appeal to second-order properties in the theory of dispositions see Prior (1985), ch. 7. See also Mumford (1998).
9. Armstrong (1968), pp. 87–88. Armstrong mentions Price's (1953, p. 322) use of “categorical basis”.
10. This idea is worked out in detail in Meinong (1917), now in GA III, 1968, pp. 283–476.
11. Geach (1967), p. 15; Kenny (1975), p. 135.
12. See O'Shaughnessy (1980), Vol. I, ch. 1.
13. See Smith and Mulligan (1982), (1983); Mulligan, Simons and Smith (1984); Campbell (1976).
14. See the papers referred to in the last note.
15. UMW, p. 223, Poser (1972), Chisholm (1982), p. 51.
16. These resemble the arbitrary and generic objects of Fine (1985) and Santambrogio (1987).
17. See UMW, §25. My strange use of nominal terms here reflects the way in which in Meinong's *n*-name theory of judgement the copula is flanked by nominal expressions—on this see Mulligan (1989). Cf. the ontological principle Meinong formulates as ‘every object’ is/not ‘determinate with respect to every object.’ Husserl, too, claimed that there were entities that are exceptions to the Excluded Middle, his species (LU VI, §3).
18. See UMW, p. 169, and Grossman (1974), p. 206.
19. Cf. Hacking (1975). Meinong's qualification is of particular interest in the light of the fact that the view that alethic and deontic modalities attach fundamentally to propositions, a view found in Mally and many other heirs of Brentano, was to become the dominant view.
20. Brentano (1973), ch. III, §6.
21. Cf. also Meinong (1877), p. 52. The best discussion of the physiological or psychological nature of dispositional bases, as of the possible combination of one of these theses with commitment to a self is Broad (1947), ch. X. Cf. also Witasek (1908), p. 64, p. 355 who notes that psychophysical parallelism, unlike an interactionist position, must accept that dispositional bases are psychological; Ehrenfels (1982), p. 51, and Hart (1988), ch. 3.
22. Ehrenfels (1887), p. 580; see also Ehrenfels (1982), p. 51.
23. This three-way classification of psychological episodes is due to Reinach (1911), who I suspect was inspired by Meinong's version of the distinction between active and passive experience. A full-blown account of states, events and processes in general is set out by Ingarden (1964), §§ 28, 29, (1974), §90, whose account of dispositions also resembles that of Meinong in several respects (see Ingarden (1965), §59 (c)). Related three-way classifications are now quite common in linguistics and in the philosophy of language, see e.g. Mourelatos (1978).
24. The first philosopher to stress the distinction between asserting and belief seems to have been Reinach, see Reinach (1984). On his theory see Mulligan (1987). But although Reinach sees that belief is not (or not only) episodic, like assertion, and that assertion depends unilaterally on belief, he argues that belief is a state. Ramsey, Moore and Braithwaite appreciated the dispositional character of belief and their work has been built on by Bennett (1976).
25. See the fifth and sixth of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*; and on these Mulligan (1995).
26. See e.g. Parfit (1986), ch. 11.

27. Stumpf (1939), Vol. I, p. 364. Like Meinong, Stumpf raises and leaves open the question whether these 'residues and dispositions' are psychological, physiological or a mixture of the two.

28. A recent attempt at an analysis of habit is Duggan (1980).

29. Meinong's analysis has much in common with what Husserl says about 'passive syntheses' and 'Vermöglichkeiten.' For a convenient account of Husserl's work, see Holenstein (1972).

30. See the third and fourth of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, and Meinong (1899). For an account of the heterogeneity of logic and ontology that is a bit less cryptic than the pronouncements of Husserl and Meinong, see Mulligan, Simons and Smith (1984). It should be noted that the later Husserl often seems more sympathetic than the earlier Husserl to the idea that logical and ontological form are isomorphic.

31. Ancestors of this paper were read at Manchester in 1983 and in Umea in 1984. I am grateful for helpful remarks by the participants, in particular by Ingvar Johansson and Barry Smith.

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