WHAT ARE INTENTIONAL OBJECTS? A CONTROVERSY AMONG EARLY SCOTISTS

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I

Why do such diverse mental phenomena as thinking, remembering, hoping, and wishing have one characteristic feature in common: why are all of them *about* something? One may answer this fundamental question by appealing to a well-known theory that was sketched by F. Brentano in the first volume of his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. "Every mental phenomenon", Brentano said in a famous, oft-quoted passage, "is characterised by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object . . ."[1] By "inexistence" he understood, of course, not a non-existence, but an immanent existence: every mental phenomenon includes an object and is primarily related to this inner object which cannot be identified with or reduced to an extramental object.[2] In making such a claim, Brentano obviously chose an object-theory of intentionality.[3] That is, he tried to explain the feature of intentionality not by claiming that mental phenomena as such are of a unique kind, but by pointing out that the objects to which these phenomena

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[1] Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt. Erster Band* II, 1 (ed. O. Kraus 1973, 124). All translations from German and Latin are mine.

[2] That the inexistence thesis is to be understood in a literal sense, and not just as a *façon de parler*, becomes clear from a footnote appended to the intentionality passage, where Brentano says that Aristotle had already spoken of "this psychical indwelling" (ed. O. Kraus 1973, 125). "Inexistence" obviously means "mental immanence". For a detailed interpretation, see Smith [1996], 41–45, and Richardson [1983].

[3] Note, however, that Brentano's statement is ambiguous. In the famous passage, he speaks not just about "a direction towards an object" but also about a "relation to a content", thus alluding both to an object-theory and to a content-theory. But his reference to an immanent "objectivity" (*Gegenständlichkeit*) clearly speaks in favour of an object-theory. For even if one understands him as saying that intentional acts and states are directed towards a content, one needs to take into account that he ascribes a *Gegenständlichkeit* to the content. On the object-theory, see the classical interpretation provided by Chisholm [1967].

are related are unique. These intentional objects differ from those that normally enter into non-intentional relations.

Such an object-theory certainly has the advantage of assigning a unified class of entities to all mental phenomena. There is no need to specify different types of objects for different types of mental phenomena. Furthermore, this theory successfully explains how a mental phenomenon can be *about* something even when there is no appropriate extramental object. Although there are no chimeras, no golden mountains and no fairies in the extramental world, we can think about chimeras, imagine golden mountains and hope for fairies, because all these items have an "inexistence" in our mental acts and states. Despite these and other advantages, the object-theory raises some serious questions. First of all, one may ask what kind of ontological status the so-called intentional objects have. Given that they exist literally *in* our mental phenomena, it must be some kind of dependent mental existence. But how do they come to have this kind of existence? How can it be that they somehow reside in the mind? Second, one may ask how our mental acts and states are related to these objects. Is this relation supposed to be a basic epistemic relation of "grasping" or "apprehending"? And if so, what enables us to establish such a relation? Are intentional objects just sitting in our mind, so to speak, and waiting to be grasped? Third, and most importantly, one may also ask critical questions about the epistemic relation we have with the extramental world. If our mental phenomena are only related to inner objects, how can we ever establish a relation with objects outside the mind? Brentano's object-theory does not seem to leave room for such a relation. Or if there is such a relation, it can only be an indirect one: our mental acts and states are related to mental objects which, in turn, are causally or otherwise related to extramental objects. That means, however, that we cannot establish an immediate epistemic relation to trees, tables and other ordinary objects in the extramental world. When we think about trees and tables, we think primarily about intentional objects in our mind, and only secondarily—in virtue of a causal relation between these objects and extramental things—do we think about trees and tables in the world.

Brentano himself was among the first to see the drawbacks of the object-theory. In his preface to the 1911 edition of the second volume of the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, he stated emphatically that he did not want to introduce ghostly mental objects that

would hinder our immediate access to the extramental world: "I am no longer of the opinion that a mental relation can have something other than a real thing (*Reales*) as its object".[4] In a normal veridical case, mental phenomena are directed towards real objects in the extramental world. Intentional objects are nothing but these real objects insofar as they are intended by mental acts and states. In a letter written to A. Marty, Brentano made this point very clear, saying: "The act of thinking does not have an 'object of thought' as its object, but a 'thing'. Thus, the act of thinking about a horse does not have 'thought horse', but 'horse' as its immanent object, i.e. as the only object strictly speaking".[5]

In giving such an explanation, Brentano obviously gave up the early object-theory, opting for a new theory which was ontologically more parsimonious. Not only did he reject intentional objects with some kind of mental existence, but he also rejected objects with a special ontological status that would be neither mental nor extramental—objects that would be "indifferent to being" (*ausserseiend*), as Meinong said.[6] Brentano repeatedly emphasised that one cannot explain the intentionality of mental phenomena by invoking some special sort of objects. Instead, one must look at the phenomena themselves and describe their inner structure. That is, one has to shift the attention from the intentional objects to the intending mental acts and states.

In this paper I intend to show that such a shift is to be found not only in Brentano's development. It is also characteristic of some early fourteenth-century debates about intentionality, where we can find a sophisticated version of the object-theory and an equally sophisticated critique of the latter. Since these debates were largely motivated by Duns Scotus's theory of intentionality, I will first briefly

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[4] Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt. Zweiter Band* (ed. O. Kraus 1971, 2).

[5] Letter from March 17, 1905, in: *Wahrheit und Evidenz* (ed. O. Kraus 1974, 88). This passage is also included in *Die Abkehr vom Nichtrealen* (ed. F. Mayer-Hillebrand 1977, 119–120). See also his letter to O. Kraus from September 14, 1909 (reprinted in the introduction to *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt. Erster Band*, ed. O. Kraus 1973, XLIX), where he says that it would be paradoxical to claim that a person promises to marry a mere mental entity but then marries a person of flesh and blood. The act of promising is already directed towards an extramental thing. For a detailed account of Brentano's doctrinal development, see Mayer-Hillebrand's introduction, 6–59.

[6] See A. Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie* (ed. J. M. Werle 1988, 9–13). Brentano explicitly criticizes Meinong in *Die Abkehr vom Nichtrealen* (ed. F. Mayer-Hillebrand 1977, 240 and 259).

examine the main elements of his theory. Then I will turn to the reactions of Jacob of Aesculo and William Alnwick, two of Scotus's students and immediate followers. Finally, I will show how closely their contributions to the debate about intentionality were tied to metaphysical assumptions about the structure of things, both inside and outside the mind.

II

The late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century discussions about intentionality did not only grow out of commentaries on the *De anima* and other philosophical sources, but were also deeply rooted in theological debates about God's knowledge. For all medieval theologians who commented on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* had to address the following question: what exactly did God know before he created the world? If God is omniscient, as every medieval author conceded, he must have known every possible creature. But since the creatures did not have material existence before the creation of the world, God cannot have known them as concrete, materially existing things. Thus, one may be inclined to think that God knew them only insofar as they already had a certain essence. This is exactly the view defended by Henry of Ghent in the late thirteenth century. Henry claimed that God did not know all creatures insofar as they had actual, material existence (*esse existentiae*), but only insofar as they had (and still have) a certain essence (*esse essentiae*).[7]

Scotus reports this view and adduces a number of arguments in order to refute it.[8] If one were to accept this view, he says, one could hardly explain how God could produce anything new in his act of creation. For according to this opinion, all creatures already existed in their essence and were known as such by God. God was only able to bring about some kind of existential alteration or transition, namely the transition from an essential to an actual existence. But he was not capable of creating a completely new thing. Nor

[7] See Henry of Ghent, *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum*, art. 21, q. 4. Scotus reports Henry's view in *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., nn. 4–12 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 273–276).

[8] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., nn. 13–18 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 276–278); *Lectura* I, dist. 36, q.u., nn. 13–22 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 17, 464–467). For an excellent account of Scotus's critical reaction, see Hoffmann [1999], chs. 1–3.

was he able to destroy a thing after its creation. Here again, God was only able to bring about a transition, this time a transition from an actual existence back to a mere essential existence. If one wants to maintain the position that God was and still is able to create a completely new thing, or to destroy it entirely, one cannot claim that all creatures existed in their essence and were known as such by God. One may say only that they were known by God with "intelligible being" (*esse intelligibile*) or "intentional being" (*esse intentionale*). Scotus hastens to add that the same point applies to human cognition. When we come to know things, we do not cognise them in their essence, but insofar as they have "intelligible being" or intelligible existence.[9] Of course, there is a considerable difference between God and humans, because God had (and still has) the power to create everything he knows, whereas we lack such a power. Nevertheless, there is an analogy between divine and human cognition, because for us the primary object of cognition is also a thing with "intelligible being".

What is such a thing supposed to be? Unfortunately, Scotus never gives a clear-cut answer to this question. Given his insistence that it is not a thing with material existence, but only with some kind of intelligible or intentional existence, one may assume that he takes it to be identical with the so-called "intelligible species" (*species intelligibilis*). For he repeatedly points out that there can be no cognition without such a species.[10] The status and the function of this entity in a cognitive process can be explained most easily by means of an example.

Let us assume that someone intends to cognise a stone. In order to gain such a cognition this person, unlike God, must have a sense perception of a particular, material stone. On that basis he or she is able to receive a "phantasm", i.e. some kind of sensory image of that stone. However, by means of the phantasm he is only capable of cognising the particular stone that exhibits a number of particular features in the perceptual situation. That is, all he can cognise is the stone lying in front of him, having a certain size, a certain colour, etc. In order to go beyond this limited cognition, he needs

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[9] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., n. 28 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 281–282); *Lectura* I, dist. 36, q.u., nn. 26–27 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 17, 468–469).

[10] In *Ordinatio* I, dist. 3, pars 3, q. 1 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 3, 201–338) Scotus presents an elaborate defence of the species. For a detailed analysis, see Spruit [1994], 257–266; Perler [1996]; Pasnau [forthcoming].

to abstract from the phantasm and to produce an "intelligible species". This is a cognitive entity that exists exclusively in the intellect and enables the person to cognise the stone simply as a stone without associating it with particular features. By means of this entity the person can have a cognition of a stone when the originally perceived stone is no more present or even when it no longer exists. For the species can be stored in the intellect and remain there even when the material thing that served as the starting point for the cognitive process has ceased to exist.

Now it may seem that the species in the intellect is the primary object of cognition we are looking for. For this entity, existing in the intellect, is certainly not something with material existence, nor, for that matter, is it a mere essence. Thus it would appear to be the object having that special kind of existence which Scotus calls "intelligible" or "intentional" existence. However, such an identification of the primary object of cognition with the species would be mistaken for at least two reasons. First, Scotus emphasises that the species is, ontologically speaking, nothing but an accident of the intellect.[11] And such an accident cannot be shared by several people because each person has his own intellect and, consequently, his own accident. Thus, when several people cognise a stone, each one has his own species of a stone, existing in his own intellect. If this species were the primary object of cognition, one would have to allow that each person has his own object in his own intellect. But that is not the case, as Scotus is quick to point out. Several people who cognise a stone have the *same* object of cognition, not some kind of private object in their individual intellect. Second, the species cannot be identified with the primary object of cognition because it has no more than an instrumental function: it is merely a means or device we need in a cognitive process.[12] For humans cannot simply assimilate or "take in" material things. We need to go through different steps in a cognitive process that starts with sense perception. In the last step, which is purely intellectual, we need an intellectual device. And this is exactly the intelligible species. But it is nothing more

[11] See *In Perihermeneias* I, q. 2 (ed. L. Wadding 1891, 541).

[12] In *Ordinatio* I, dist. 3, pars 3, q. 3, n. 562 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 3, 334) Scotus explicitly says that the species is a "quasi instrumentum" which the intellect needs for its activity. Ibid., q. 1, n. 382 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 3, 232) he also calls it a "ratio formalis intellectionis".

than a cognitive device: it is that *by which* one is able to cognise a thing, not that which is cognised.

As a result of the above considerations, we need to distinguish three types of things in Scotus's theory:

(1) the *thing with material existence* that serves (at least in standard cases) as the starting point for a cognitive process; it is, however, not the primary object of cognition;
(2) the *intelligible species* that exists as an accident in the intellect; it functions as a mere cognitive device and cannot be identified with the primary object of cognition either; it may become the secondary object when someone reflects upon the way he cognises a thing;
(3) the *thing with intelligible existence* which alone is the primary object of cognition.

At first sight, such a threefold division looks promising because it allows us to resolve a number of problems. For instance, one can easily explain why it is possible to cognise something when there is no appropriate thing in the extramental world. One can also successfully explain why several people can refer to one and the same object of cognition even though each of them has his own cognitive device in his intellect. Yet the threefold division of things raises serious questions about the ontological status of the thing with intelligible existence. Scotus simply says that this existence is to be understood as a "diminished" or "objective existence", i.e. as the kind of existence a thing has when it does not exist by itself, but merely as an object of the intellect.[13] But such an explanation obliges one to supply a relational account of the thing with intelligible existence: it has to be considered insofar (and only insofar) as it is related to the intellect. But what exactly is related to the intellect? This crucial question can be answered in at least two ways.

One could argue that the thing related to the intellect is something *in* the intellect in a literal sense: a mental item. Its existence would then amount to an "intentional inexistence" in Brentano's sense, i.e., to a dependent mental existence. But one could object that it would be quite strange to assume that there is, in addition

[13] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., n. 33 and n. 47 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 284 and 289); *Lectura* I, dist. 36, q.u., n. 26 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 17, 468). For a discussion of these passages, see Perler [1994].

to the intelligible species, another cognitive item in the intellect. Why should two distinct entities in the intellect be required for a cognition? Furthermore, one could raise the same objection that has already been made against an identification of the intelligible species with the object of cognition. If the thing with intelligible existence is nothing but an entity in the intellect, then every person has his own entity. And if this entity is the primary object of cognition, every person has his own object of cognition. But this is hardly plausible. For when we say that several people cognise a stone we intend to say that they all have a cognition of one and the same object, not of some sort of private object in their intellect.

In light of these objections, one might be tempted to give a different account of the thing with intelligible existence, saying that it is an entity which is always related to the intellect, but which does not literally exist in the intellect. It is rather some kind of supra-individual entity, having an ontological status in its own right. That is, when several people cognise a stone, it is one and the same supra-individual stone that is present to them. This stone does not become present to them unless they all have intelligible species in their intellect, but it is finally neither the mental species nor the material stone that is present to them, but the supra-individual stone: a third object that belongs to a special realm of entities.

Looking at Scotus's texts, it is hard to say which of these two interpretations of the thing with "intelligible existence" he adheres to. He says somewhat metaphorically that this thing "shines up" (*relucet*) in the species.[14] But what exactly shines up? The passages where he points out that it is a thing *in* the intellect and *produced* by the intellect clearly favour the first interpretation.[15] Those passages, however, where he says that the thing with intelligible existence is primarily present to God's mind and secondarily only present to the human mind, seem to speak in favour of the second interpretation.[16] For what is present both to God and the humans cannot be an entity in this or that individual intellect.

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[14] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 3, pars 3, q. 1, n. 386 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 3, 235).

[15] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., n. 34 and n. 36 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 284–285) where he speaks about an "esse in intellectione" and an "esse deminutum in anima". Ibid., n. 44 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 288) and *Lectura* I, dist. 36, q.u., n. 27 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 17, 469) he uses the term "productio".

[16] See *Ordinatio* I, dist. 36, q.u., nn. 28–29 (ed. Comm. Scotistica, vol. 6, 282). For a detailed list of relevant passages, see Hoffmann [1999], 141–161.

Given the lack of a clear-cut explanation, further analysis is required. If one follows in Scotus's footsteps and takes the thing with intelligible existence to be the object of cognition, one must spell out in more detail what kind of entity it is and how it is related to mental and extramental entities.

III

Scotus's pupils in Oxford and Paris were the first to realise that more work needed to be done. One of the first authors who tackled the unresolved problem of intelligible existence was the Franciscan Jacob of Aesculo (or Ascoli) who taught at the University of Paris around 1310.[17] He discussed the question concerning the primary object of cognition at length, concluding, like Scotus, that this object can be neither a thing with material existence nor a mere essence—it must be a thing with intelligible existence. But Jacob did not confine himself to making this sweeping claim. He argued for it in detail by introducing an ontological distinction.

When we speak about things or beings, Jacob says, we must acknowledge that there are three kinds of being. First, there is real being (*esse reale*), the kind of being all individual things in the extramental world have, but also human intellects and components of the intellect. Second, there is mere conceptual being (*esse rationis*), the kind of being mere figments of the intellect have. Between these two types, there is a third one, namely intentional being (*esse intentionale*), which Jacob describes as follows:

> Intentional being is that which applies to a thing insofar as it is objectively, i.e. as a representation, in another real thing. And since being represented objectively in something applies in the same way to a universal as to an individual, intentional being is not more appropriate for a universal [thing] than for a singular one or the other way round. This intentional being is weaker than the real one, and for that reason it is always founded upon it, though objectively.[18]

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[17] See Glorieux [1934], vol. 2, 236f. On Jacob's activity in Paris, see also Hödl [1988]. An overview of the extensive discussions among Scotus's pupils and contemporaries (e.g., Henry of Harclay, Hervaeus Natalis, Peter Aureol) is provided by Kobusch [1987], part II, and Tachau [1988], part III.

[18] "Zwei Quaestionen" (ed. T. Yokoyama 1967, 44): "Esse vero intentionale est illud quod convenit rei ut habet esse obiective sive repraesentative in aliquo alio

Several points are of interest in this passage. First of all, Jacob makes it clear that an intentional thing (i.e. a thing having "intentional being") is always a dependent thing: it exists in another thing that has real existence. As far as humans are concerned, this means that intentional things exist in the intellect which has, of course, real existence. Thus, intentional things are not objects in a special realm of entities; they do not belong to a Meinongian realm of *Ausserseiendes* or to a Fregean realm of thoughts. Nor are they entities that could be identified with mere figments of the intellect, or with intellectual devices such as the intelligible species. They are rather representational things: they exist in the intellect insofar as a representation of an extramental thing is in the intellect. And in normal veridical cases, they are always "founded" upon extramental things, as Jacob explicitly says. Let me illustrate this point with the example mentioned before. When someone cognises a stone, his primary object of cognition is an intentional stone. This entity has not come into existence *ex nihilo*, nor has it simply been contrived by the intellect. In a normal case (i.e. when cognition is based upon sense perception, without there being any divine intervention) the intentional stone is founded upon an extramental stone. But the two are not identical. Nor is the intentional stone identical with the species of a stone. The species is no more than a cognitive device; it simply makes it possible that there be an intentional stone.

In choosing such an explanation, Jacob is able to deal with a question that was not fully answered by Scotus, namely the question of how the intentional thing is related to the extramental, material thing. According to Jacob's theory, this relation is to be understood as a one-sided dependence: the intentional thing is founded upon the material one and cannot exist without it, whereas the material thing can very well exist without the intentional one.[19] It is exactly this one-sided dependence that distinguishes an intentional thing from

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ente reali. Et quia repraesentari obiective in aliquo indifferenter convenit tam universali quam etiam singulari, ideo esse intentionale non magis appropriat sibi universale quam singulare nec econverso. Et tale esse intentionale est debilius esse reali, et ideo semper fundatur in ipso, licet obiective".

[19] This is valid for human cognition only. In the case of divine cognition, the material thing always presupposes the intentional one, because God cognised the intentional thing *before* he created the material one. Jacob emphasises that "creatura ab aeterno habuit aliquam entitatem distinctam actu a Deo" ("Zwei Quaestionen", ed. T. Yokoyama 1967, 38), namely the status of an intentional thing.

a mere conceptual thing. For a conceptual thing, say a chimera or a golden mountain, is not immediately founded upon a material thing. It is rather the product of a complex cognitive process that involves a mental combining of elements which are not combined in extramental reality.

Jacob is also able to deal with another problem that remained unresolved in Scotus's theory, namely the problem of how the intentional thing is related to the intelligible species. In his view, both exist in the intellect, but they have two different kinds of existence. The intentional thing exists there insofar as a representation is in the intellect, whereas the species is a real component of the intellect. A modern example may help to clarify this crucial point. Let us assume that we have just returned from a trip to Paris where we have taken photographs of the Eiffel Tower. When we are now looking at these photographs, we need to distinguish two things. On the one hand, there are various dye patches on the paper, which may be mat or bright; on the other hand, there is the depicted Eiffel Tower. Both are in some way *in* the photograph, but in two different ways. The dye patches are real components of the photograph; they display a certain chemical structure and can be analysed in a laboratory. The Eiffel Tower, however, is in the photograph insofar as it is depicted or represented there. Of course, such a representation is possible only because there are various dye patches. Nevertheless, these patches, which are of interest only to a photographer who is concerned with the technical quality of the photograph, need to be distinguished from the object that is depicted in the photograph. According to Jacob, the relation between the intelligible species and the intentional thing is to be understood in a similar way. Both are *in* the intellect, but in two different ways. The species is a real component of the intellect. If we could bring the intellect to a laboratory and inspect it (which, of course, we cannot do because the intellect is immaterial), we could analyse the technical quality of the species, so to speak. The intentional thing, however, is in the intellect only insofar as something is depicted or represented in the intellect by means of the species. In Jacob's opinion, it is of crucial importance to distinguish between the representational device and the representation itself, even though these two entities are produced at once. He says:

> . . . as far as we are concerned, one should know that it is by the very same production by which the species of a stone is essentially brought

> about in the possible intellect, not by another production, that the stone with intelligible existence is accidentally brought about.[20]

In making this point, Jacob emphasises that species and intentional thing, though distinct from each other, always accompany each other. Illustrating this point with the photograph example, we may say: when we want to produce a photograph of the Eiffel Tower, we do not first need to produce a piece of paper with various dye patches and then a representation of the Eiffel Tower. Only one step is required. It is in producing a piece of paper with certain dye patches that we produce a representation of the Eiffel Tower. We get two things at once, the representational device *and* the representation. (This is somehow an instance of a principle that is well-known in commercials: "Buy one, get one free!").

Although we get the species and the intentional thing at once, the two need to be clearly distinguished from each other, as well as from the extramental thing. Jacob stresses this point not only when distinguishing different types of things, but also when drawing a list of different types of distinction. He claims that there is not only a real distinction obtaining between two really existing things, and a conceptual distinction obtaining between two figments of the intellect, but also a third type of distinction, the "intentional distinction". He describes it as follows:

> The intentional distinction is that by which some things are distinguished only according to their objective or representational being. [. . .] the intentional distinction is smaller than the real distinction but larger than the conceptual distinction. For some things can be intentionally distinct from each other without having any real distinction.[21]

This is a subtle point that can, again, be illustrated with the photograph example. When we take photographs of the Eiffel Tower in different situations, for instance by night and on a foggy day, we

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[20] "Zwei Quaestionen" (ed. T. Yokoyama 1967, 53): ". . . est sciendum quod in nobis eadem productione numero qua species lapidis producitur per se in intellectu possibili, eadem productione numero et non alia producitur per accidens lapis in esse intelligibili".

[21] "Zwei Quaestionen" (ed. T. Yokoyama 1967, 45): "Distinctio vero intentionalis est illa, qua aliqua distinguuntur solum in esse obiectivo sive repraesentativo. [. . .] distinctio intentionalis est minor distinctione reali et maior distinctione rationis, et quod aliqua possunt esse distincta intentionaliter absque hoc quod habeant aliquam distinctionem realem".

get different representations. Although there is just one Eiffel Tower in reality, all the Eiffel Tower representations are intentionally distinct from each other. This has an important consequence. For when we look at the photographs and say, pointing to one of them, "I think this illuminated iron construction is in Paris", and pointing to another, "I think this strange foggy building is in Paris", we are talking about two intentionally distinct objects that cannot be identified with each other. And the two expressions we use, namely "illuminated iron construction" and "strange foggy building" cannot simply be substituted by each other. Using modern terminology, we may say that these two expressions cannot be substituted *salva veritate*, because they are used in two different intensional contexts. Of course, Jacob does not yet use this terminology, but in pointing out that we always refer to intentionally distinct objects when we talk about that which we cognise, think or believe, he already makes clear—a long time before J. Searle and other modern authors[22]—that there is a tight connection between intentionality and intensionality. In intensional contexts, i.e. in contexts governed by verbs such as "to cognise", "to think" or "to believe", we talk about intentionally distinct objects which cannot be identified with each other, even if they are all founded upon the same real object.

Although Jacob's introduction of intentional things enables him to deal with a host of problems, it also raises some questions. The most serious problem concerns the problem of representationalism. Jacob repeatedly says that the primary object of cognition is the intentional thing and not the extramental material thing. Given that the intentional thing is a mental item, founded upon, but distinct from an extramental item, one may well wonder what kind of epistemic access we have to the extramental world. If we follow Jacob, the answer is clear: the only access we have is an indirect one; the extramental world is always mediated by the world of intentional things. But then how can we be certain that there really is an extramental world, if we never have immediate access to it? How can we be certain that all the intentional things in our intellect are indeed founded upon things in the extramental world, and that they are not simply implanted in our intellect by a capricious God? We are never able to compare the intentional things with things in the extramental

[22] See Searle [1983], 22ff.

world, because we are not able to take a neutral stance. We seem to be imprisoned in the mental world of intentional things.

These sceptical questions and remarks, which are characteristic of early modern authors who reacted to the representational "way of ideas", are never discussed by Jacob. It looks as if he were not aware of a sceptical challenge, perhaps because he does not see a gap between the world of intentional things and the extramental world. In a passage where he explains God's cognition of a stone, he remarks:

> Although the intentional being, which the stone had from eternity, is of a different kind than the being which it has now in actual reality, the stone itself, to which these two ways of being apply, is numerically the same here and there.[23]

Since Jacob assumes that there is an analogy between divine and human cognition, he would presumably say that the stone in my intellect is numerically the same stone that exists in the extramental world. It simply displays two different "ways of being". Unfortunately, Jacob does not give any detailed explanation of this rather enigmatic thesis. How can one and the same thing have two different ways of being? As an Aristotelian, Jacob perhaps means that the stone should be considered as a compound of matter and form and that the form can be both instantiated in the material world and in the intellect. So it is one and the same form that can exist in a material, individuated way in an extramental stone, and in an immaterial, universal way in the intellect. If Jacob is following this line, his position comes quite close to that defended by several thirteenth-century authors (e.g. by Thomas Aquinas) who stressed that there is a formal identity between the thing inside and outside the intellect.[24] However, such an appeal to a theory of formal identity would hardly be compatible with Jacob's insistence that the intentional thing in the intellect needs to be distinguished from the extramental thing. And it would be in conflict with his thesis that the intentional thing is only founded upon the material thing; what is founded upon something else is not identical with that thing.

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[23] "Zwei Quaestionen" (ed. T. Yokoyama 1967, 57): "Licet esse intentionale quod habuit lapis ab aeterno sit alterius rationis ab esse quod habet nunc realiter in effectu, tamen lapis cui convenit utrumque esse est idem numero hic et ibi".

[24] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 85, art. 2, ad 1. For a concise presentation, see Kretzmann [1993], 138–142.

There seems to be a tension in Jacob's theory. On the one hand, he tries to clearly distinguish the realm of intentional things from that of material things, and he intends to show that such a distinction makes it possible for us to cognise an intentional object even in the absence of a corresponding extramental object with actual existence. On the other hand, Jacob tries to avoid the imminent danger of a gap between the two realms by saying that one and the same thing somewhat straddles both the intentional and the extramental realm. But it is not clear how Jacob can reconcile these divergent tendencies in his theory.

IV

One of the first philosophers to see that there is a tension in this theory was William Alnwick, Jacob's contemporary and colleague at the University of Paris, who had also studied with Scotus, and had served as his private secretary.[25] In the first of his extensive *Quaestiones de esse intelligibili* William explicitly refers to Jacob's position and concedes that several arguments can be adduced in favour of this position.[26] But he does not accept it, arguing instead that it would be absurd to introduce intentional things as special entities which are distinct both from mental species and from extramental, material things. According to William, several arguments clearly speak against the existence of such a third kind of entity. Let me mention just two of them.

The first one concerns the production of the so-called intentional things.[27] William points out that the intellect is supposed to produce them on the basis of inputs coming from material things. And the intellect is clearly an entity with real existence. Yet all an entity with real existence can bring about is another thing with real existence; cause and effect must belong to the same ontological order. Thus, all the intellect can produce is a thing with real existence. This thing

[25] On William's biography and his relation to Scotus, see Wanke [1965], 71–78. Unfortunately, Wanke assumes that William's critique was immediately directed against Scotus, without taking into account that his primary target was Jacob of Aesculo, as the editor of the critical edition (see ed. Ledoux 1937, 3, note 3) already pointed out.

[26] *Quaestiones disputatae de esse intelligibili*, q. 1 (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 4–8).

[27] See *Quaestiones*, q. 1, "tertio" (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 10).

is nothing but the intelligible species which, though existing in the intellect, has real existence. It is impossible that the intellect produce another entity, besides the species, that belongs to a special ontological order.

In presenting this argument, William puts his finger on a critical point in Jacob's theory. For Jacob simply assumes that the intellect can produce an entity that has an ontological status proper to it, but he neglects to explain how this should be possible. How can the intellect somehow go beyond its own ontological order and bring about something that does not belong to this order? To illustrate this point with the modern example, we may ask: how is it possible for the photographer, who clearly has real existence, to produce a thing that lacks real existence? All the photographer can produce is a piece of paper with certain dye patches, which also have real existence. And in producing them, he brings about a representation of the Eiffel Tower. But this representation is, ontologically speaking, nothing else than the dye patches arranged in a certain way. It would be unreasonable to assume that the photographer produces at once two types of things, the paper with the dye patches *and* the representation, which are supposed to belong to two different ontological orders. Likewise, it would be unreasonable to assume that the intellect produces two things at once, the species *and* the alleged intentional thing, which are supposed to belong to two different ontological orders. The principle "Buy one, get one free" cannot be applied in this context, because the intellect gets only one entity: the species with real existence.

William adduces still another argument with a similar focus.[28] He states that it is impossible to produce a species without thereby producing a representation of a thing; in bringing about a species, the intellect *necessarily* produces a representation. But if this is so, "to produce a species" means nothing other than "to produce a representation". Consequently, one cannot distinguish the production of a species from the production of a representation, i.e. of an intentional thing.

This argument is not fully convincing at first sight. One could object that it may very well be the case that whenever one thing is produced another thing is also produced, even necessarily, without

[28] See *Quaestiones*, q. 1, "quarto" (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 10–11).

there being an identity between these two things. The second thing may be merely a by-product of the first thing. For instance, whenever wine is produced, marc is also produced as a by-product, but these two items are clearly distinct from each other.

Yet I think that William would not accept such an objection. For the defenders of the theory of intentional things do not simply claim that these things are by-products of the species. They rather say that they are things in their own right: whenever a species is produced, the intentional thing is produced as an additional entity, belonging to a special ontological order. According to William, this is hardly possible. In producing a thing that has real existence one cannot simultaneously produce another thing that has a different kind of existence.

How then is the so-called intentional thing to be understood? William gives a clear answer to this question, saying:

> . . . I show that the representational being is really identical with the representing form, and that being cognised is really identical with the cognition . . .[29]

He then goes on to identify the representational form with the species.[30] Therefore, the representational or intentional thing is nothing else than the species. When someone says "I cognise a stone with intentional existence", all he can mean, according to William, is "I have a species in my intellect which represents a stone". It would be unreasonable to assume that there is another entity in the intellect (or even outside the intellect) in addition to the species.

In giving such an answer, William successfully avoids introducing a third kind of entity. He confines himself to a parsimonious ontology that accepts only entities with real existence. But in identifying the intentional thing, i.e. the primary object of cognition, with the species, he seems to regress to a view prior to Scotus's. For Scotus had already noted that the species is nothing more than a cognitive device: it is that by means of which something is cognised, not that

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[29] *Quaestiones*, q. 1 (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 8): ". . . ostendo quod esse repraesentatum est idem realiter cum forma repraesentante et esse cognitum idem realiter cum cognitione . . ." See also ibid., 15.

[30] *Quaestiones*, q. 1 (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 16): ". . . esse repraesentatum non est alia entitas quam entitas speciei in quadam concretione significata respectu lapidis, et esse intellectum lapidem non est aliud quam intellectio lapidis significata in quadam concretione extrinseca ad lapidem".

which is cognised. It seems as if William were blurring this important distinction. And Scotus had already pointed out that each person has his own species in his individual intellect. Identifying the species with the object of cognition seems tantamount to assigning a different object of cognition to each person.

Although it may be tempting to raise such objections, a closer look at William's position reveals that he does not so easily fall into these traps. For when he speaks about the species or the representational form, he does not intend to refer to a mere cognitive vehicle. He rather wants to speak about the *content* of such a vehicle—a content which can be the same for many different people. That he makes a distinction between the mere vehicle and its content becomes clear from the comparison he draws between the representing form in the intellect and a representing statue.[31] When we look at a statue that represents Caesar, he says, and when we are asked what we cognise, our answer must be: Caesar, insofar as he is represented by the statue. Ontologically speaking, this Caesar-insofar-as-he-is-represented is nothing but the statue, because the real Caesar, a human being of flesh and blood, clearly is not present. However, what we are interested in is not the statue as such, that is the piece of marble. We are interested in its specific content, and this is exactly Caesar-insofar-as-he-is-represented. This is not a distinct thing, but that which is somehow included in the statue or, as William says, that which is "denominated" by the statue. Likewise, when we analyse a species in the intellect, say, the species representing Caesar, we do not want to look at it from an ontological point of view. Seen from *that* point of view, it is nothing but an accident of the intellect. We are much more interested in its specific content, in that which is "denominated" by the species. And this is exactly Caesar-insofar-as-he-is-represented. This is, again, not a distinct thing, but the content of the species, i.e. of an entity with real existence. The species has this content because it has been acquired through a cognitive process that can be traced back to the real Caesar. It is precisely this causal chain, starting with the real Caesar, that fixes the content of the species.

Obviously, William does not simply deny that there are intentional things. He even uses the terminology common among all

[31] See *Quaestiones*, q. 1 (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 15).

Scotists (e.g. "objective being", "diminished being") when talking about them. What he rejects is a certain ontological interpretation of these things. In his opinion, one should not try to explain them by appealing to a special realm of entities that is distinct both from the world of real things and from that of mere conceptual things. One cannot give a correct account of intentional things unless one realises that they are nothing but the content of species in the intellect, and this content cannot be detached from the species themselves. It is somehow an inner aspect of an entity with *real* existence. For that reason, one has to pay special attention to the species when one intends to analyse the object of cognition. One must analyse the cognitive process through which the species has been acquired as well as the internal structure it displays. Only then can one understand what content it has and how this content has been fixed. What is required, according to William, is a shifting of attention: away from a special class of intentional objects towards a real object and its content in the intellect.

V

Having briefly presented and discussed the positions taken by two early Scotists, I shall now return to the starting point of my paper. I said that the early Brentano developed an object-theory of intentionality, i.e. a theory according to which the "directedness" of mental states and acts has to be explained with reference to a special class of intentional objects which cannot be identified with or reduced to extramental objects. In his later works Brentano gave up this account, claiming instead that a theory of intentionality should only appeal to *Realia.* Brentano even went so far as to give up a relational analysis of intentionality, defending instead the view that sentences such as "John is thinking about a horse" or "John is cognising a horse" should only be taken in a "relation-like" (*relativlich*) sense.[32] For these sentences, dealing as they do with an act of thinking or cognising, have the surface grammar form of relational statements, but the act of cognising itself involves no relation to a special entity. That is why the sentences should be rephrased in a non-relational

[32] See *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt. Zweiter Band* (ed. O. Kraus 1971, 133–134).

form, i.e. in the form "John is a horse-thinker" or even in the adverbial form "John is thinking horsely".[33] That is, "thinking about a horse" should be taken as one single act, and "being about a horse" as a specification of this act—a specification that can be expressed (in a somewhat clumsy way) by means of an adverbial phrase. In choosing such an explanation, Brentano not only distanced himself from his early object-theory, but indeed rejected a basic assumption underlying many theories of intentionality, namely that intentionality is a relational phenomenon, and that explaining intentionality requires a detailed analysis of the two relata at stake.

If we now compare this with the early fourteenth-century debates, we can see a similar development.[34] Jacob of Aesculo, who tried to fill in some details in Scotus's theory, also developed an object-theory. He defended the view that mental acts—above all acts of cognising—are intentional because they are related to a special class of entities, and he took these entities to be things that can be identified neither with material things nor with mental vehicles such as the intelligible species. Doing so, he clearly assumed that intentionality has to be understood in relational terms. Giving an account of intentionality requires no more or no less than giving an account of the two relata, namely the act of the intellect and its special object. William Alnwick rejected this assumption, claiming instead that we should avoid any positing of special objects and analyse that which he called the "representational form" in the intellect. In particular, we should analyse the content of such a form. He thereby clearly rejected Jacob's theory, which appealed to a distinct class of mental objects, and replaced the relational model of intentionality by a content model, i.e. by a model which takes intentionality to be an inner feature of mental acts or species—a feature that cannot be contrasted with or detached from the acts and the species in the intellect. For that reason, intentionality cannot be accounted for as a relation between acts or species on the one hand, and special objects (inside

[33] For a detailed exposition, see Chisholm [1967] and Smith & McIntyre [1982], 60.

[34] In pointing out a similarity, I do not want to claim that there was direct influence. Neither in his *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* nor in his *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Philosophie* (on pp. 75–77 he refers to some early Scotists) does Brentano mention Jacob of Aesculo and William Alnwick. Given that their texts were available in a modern edition only in 1937 and 1967, Brentano hardly had any knowledge of them.

or outside the intellect) on the other hand. Instead, intentionality is to be explained with reference to the acts and species themselves. Of course, William did not yet give an adverbial analysis of intentional acts. But I think he could have agreed that a sentence such as "John is thinking about a horse" could be interpreted in the sense of "John is thinking horsely". For what is important here is not a specific object to which John is related, but the way John is thinking—the content or specification of his act of thinking. And this specification can be described by means of an adverbial phrase.

At this point, someone might raise a fundamental objection: what do we gain from such a shifting from an object-theory to a content-theory? It seems as if we were still confronted with the same basic problem. For the main difficulty with the object-theory was that it did not leave room for an immediate access to extramental things. All someone is able to cognise, according to this theory, are his inner mental objects. If we now turn to the content-theory, we seem no better off. For according to this second theory, a person can cognise nothing more than the content of his acts, or of his intelligible species. This is, of course, not a ghostly thing, but something pertaining to the class of *Realia*, as Brentano would have said. Though real, it is nevertheless something real *in the intellect*. So how can we have access to something real outside the intellect? How can we escape from our mental prison and cognise horses of flesh and blood?

At first glance, it seems that such an escape is possible because there is always a causal link between the real thing in the intellect, i.e. the act or the intelligible species, and the real thing outside the intellect. The species does not come into existence *ex nihilo*, as I have already pointed out. It has been abstracted from a "phantasm" which, in turn, is based upon sensory inputs stemming from a thing outside the intellect. Given such a causal chain, we can always escape from our mental prison by going back to the external cause of our intelligible species.

However, such an answer would still give rise to the objection that all we are able to cognise *immediately* is the content of the species in our intellect. Only indirectly, namely by going back to its external cause, are we capable of having an access to things in the material world. So, whether we like it or not, we do not have immediate epistemic access to external things.

Yet I do not think that the early fourteenth-century Scotists would have accepted such a statement. When presenting Jacob's theory, I

pointed out that he insisted on the identity between the intentional thing inside the intellect and the material thing outside it. In William Alnwick's text this insistence is even stronger. At one point he says:

> Therefore, I concede that the actually existing stone and the stone with cognised being are numerically the same, that is, the very same stone that really and simply is in actuality is also in the cognition . . .[35]

When we cognise the content of an intelligible species, there is no gap between something inside the intellect and something else outside it. Nor is there a first, direct cognition of a mental item and a second, indirect cognition of an extramental item. According to William, there is just one item and one cognition. His crucial point is that this single item can have a "double existence" or two ways of being: inside and outside the intellect. In his view, the main goal we pursue in a cognitive process is to establish this "double existence": we gain perfect cognition of a thing when the content of our intelligible species coincides, so to speak, with the thing outside the intellect. Of course, such a claim immediately raises the question of how and why such a coincidence is possible. What kind of inner constitution must a thing have in order to exist both inside and outside the intellect? An answer to this question would require a detailed account of the metaphysical theory of common nature that provided the starting point for the "double existence" thesis. For all Scotists shared the assumption, Avicennian in its origin, that every thing has a common nature that can be instantiated in a universal way inside the mind and in an individuated way outside the mind. The common nature itself is "indifferent" to either way of being.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of the theory of common nature. But I think it is of crucial importance to see that this metaphysical theory gave rise to the "double existence" thesis that was lurking in the background of all discussions among the early Scotists. It was not their goal to develop a representational theory in the early modern sense, i.e. a theory that sets representational items in the mind apart from things outside the mind. Their aim was to show how our mental acts can have a con-

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[35] *Quaestiones*, q. 1 (ed. A. Ledoux 1937, 20): "Concedo igitur quod idem est lapis numero in effectu et in esse cognito, idem lapis qui est realiter et simpliciter in effectu est in cognitione . . ."

tent and how we can grasp this content so that we realise that what is inside our intellect is *identical* with what is outside.

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