

Intentionality and the Logico-Linguistic Commitment: A Critique of Roderick Chisholm

[Intencionalidade e Compromisso Lógico-Linguístico: Uma crítica a Roderick Chisholm]

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyze and criticize Roderick Chisholm's conception of intentionality, which has, historically, served as the point of departure for most accounts of intentionality in analytic philosophy. My goal is to highlight the problematic 'logico-linguistic commitment' presupposed by Chisholm, according to which mental concepts should be interpreted by means of semantic concepts. After addressing Chisholm's differentiation between the ontological thesis (the idea that the intentional object might not exist) and the psychological thesis (the conception that only mental phenomena are intentional), as well as his defining criteria for intentionality (non-existential implication, independency of truth-value, and indirect reference), I focus on the manifold problems presented by his theory. First, the two initial criteria entail a conceptual confusion between the semantic concept of 'intensionality' and the mental concept of 'intentionality'. Second, according to these criteria-and against Chisholm's explicit intention-perception and other cognitive activities should not be considered intentional. Third, there are no grounds for the artificial conflation of intentionality and the concept of 'propositional attitudes'-an equation which is an explicit tenet of the logico-linguistic commitment. In general, I argue that an interpretation of intentionality based on this commitment obscures the true meaning of the concept of intentionality, as it is presented, for instance, by phenomenology.

Keywords: Chisholm. Intentionality. Intensionality. Propositional Attitudes. Logico-linguistic Commitment.

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Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é o de analisar e criticar a concepção de intencionalidade de Roderick Chisholm que, historicamente, serviu como ponto de partida para muitas considerações da intencionalidade dentro da filosofia analítica. Minha meta é esclarecer o problemático "compromisso lógico-linguístico" pressuposto por Chisholm, segundo o qual conceitos mentais devem ser interpretados por meio de conceitos semânticos. Depois de abordar a diferenciação de Chisholm entre a tese ontológica (a ideia de que o objeto intencional pode não existir) e a tese psicológica (a concepção de que somente fenômenos mentais são intencionais) bem como o seu critério de definição para intencionalidade (implicação não-existencial, independência ou valor de verdade e referência indireta), me debrucei sobre os diversos problemas apresentados por sua teoria. Primeiro, os dois critérios iniciais acarretam uma confusão conceitual entre o conceito semântico de "intencionalidade" e o conceito mental de "intencionalidade". Segundo, de acordo com esses critérios - e contra a intenção explícita de Chisholm - percepção e outras atividades cognitivas não devem ser consideradas intencionais. Terceiro, não há fundamentos para a fusão artificial de intencionalidade e o conceito de "atitudes proposicionais" - uma equação que é um princípio explícito do compromisso lógico-linguístico. Em geral, sustento que uma interpretação da intencionalidade baseada nesse compromisso obscurece o verdadeiro significado do conceito de intencionalidade como apresentada, por exemplo, pela fenomenologia.

Palavras-chave: Chisholm. Intencionalidade. Intencionalidade. Atitudes proposicionais. Compromisso lógico-linguístico.

Introduction

Everyone trained in the phenomenological tradition has a strange feeling when starting to read analytic essays on intentionality. The feeling usually takes the form of questions such as: what's going on here? How are these analytic accounts of the concept of intentionality related to what we know about Brentano and Husserl (just to name the leading figures)? In this context, one has the peculiar feeling that as regards the concept of intentionality-to use Michael Dummett's metaphor-the Rhine and the Danube are more separated than we thought. *La raison d'être*

of this article is to try to understand why we are talking about the same concept in such different languages and approaches, which might lead us to think whether we are talking about the same issue. In that sense, the analysis of the concept of intentionality might shed some light regarding the gap between the phenomenological and the analytical traditions.

As is well known, the concept of intentionality has a long history that originated in medieval times. But it was indeed Franz Brentano who reintroduced it in contemporary philosophy in the context of his descriptive psychology as a first-person research into one's

own experiences.¹

Intentionality is nowadays one of the most important concepts in modern analytic philosophy of mind. Independent of various different positions (functionalism, reductionism, etc.), the reference to intentionality is almost an unavoidable field of research in order to present a comprehensive analysis of the mind.² Indeed, it is difficult to find a single definition of this concept that encompasses all the different positions, and just within analytic philosophy. In a general sense, intentionality may be defined as the *aboutness* of the mind, i.e., the mind is constituted by (some) experiences (or states) which are about something, or, in other words, the mind is directed towards something. It might be said that this provisional and classical definition can be accepted by almost every philosopher. Nonetheless, the question posed by this article is whether Chisholm (and, in general, many of the analytic theories of intentionality) remains true to the conceptual framework of the 'original definition', or rather moves far away from it.

The aim of this article is to analyze and criticize the analytic concept of intentionality as it is presented by Roderick Chisholm. I have chosen Chisholm since he is considered the first to introduce the concept of intentionality in the Anglo-Saxon analytic world, which established the basis of interpreting this concept throughout the following decades.³

I first address Chisholm's differentiation between the ontological thesis (the idea that the intentional object might not exist), and the psychological thesis (the conception that only mental or psychological phenomena are intentional and not physical phenomena). I do this as a point of departure, in order to establish the conceptual background upon which intentionality will be examined. Second, I present a formulation of intentional statements, as presented by Chisholm. Third, I analyze his defining criteria for intentionality: non-existential implication, independency of truth-value, and indirect reference. Fourth, I show that the first two criteria harbor a conceptual confusion between the semantic concept of 'inten-

¹For Brentano, Intentionality, as directedness (or aboutness) of the mind, is the mark of every mental phenomenon, i.e., it is not necessarily restricted to linguistic phenomena. For him, there are three kinds of mental or psychological phenomena: presentations (*Vorstellungen*), judgements and emotions. All mental phenomena are either presentations or have a presentation at their basis, i.e., presentations are the most basic and fundamental forms of mental life. This implies that a judgement necessarily presupposes a presentation, but, conversely, a presentation does not necessarily imply a judgement. The general characteristic of all mental phenomena is that they are intentional, i.e., they are directed towards an object (or a state-of-affairs) (BRENTANO, 1874, p.68).

²And, of course, this is only in the frame of analytic philosophy. It is needless to say how important this concept was and still is for the continental-phenomenological tradition.

³Similar remarks could be made about Elisabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach (among others). Nevertheless, I agree with Kim when he says that "it was Chisholm's seminal work in the 1950s and 1960s that introduced the *Problematik* of intentionality into analytic philosophy, making it a central area of research in philosophy of mind and language (...) Our current use of 'intentional' and 'intentionality' derives from, and is continuous with, Chisholm's early work" (KIM, 2003, p.650).

sionality' and the mental concept of 'intentionality'. Fifth, I point out that in spite of Chisholm's explicit intention-perception and other cognitive activities should not be considered intentional, due to the artificial character of the third criterion. Sixth, I bring into account the relation between intentionality and the concept of 'propositional attitudes', in order to show the problematic and artificial conflation of both concepts—an equation which not only has no grounds, but which is also an explicit tenet of the 'logico-linguistic commitment'. In general, I argue that an interpretation of intentionality based on this commitment obscures the true meaning of the concept of intentionality, as it is presented, for instance, by phenomenology.

Based on all these points, I claim that Chisholm's and, in general, many of the analytic accounts of intentionality are based on problematic presuppositions grounded on the assumption of the 'logico-linguistic commitment', namely, the idea that mental concepts must be interpreted by means of logico-linguistic or semantic concepts. In that sense, I will argue that, in spite of Chisholm's explicit intention to avoid philosophical commitments,⁴ he com-

mits himself to this logico-linguistic conception of intentionality, perhaps unaware of the manifold implications of this position. I highlight that this commitment also requires the reduction of the mental concept of intentionality to a linguistic/semantic conception of intentionality, expressed by the very idea of 'propositional attitude' that can be translated or formalized into analyzable language sentences. This fact is best acknowledged by Chisholm's explicit confession of a "linguistic version of Brentano's thesis" (CHISHOLM, 1956, p.147).⁵ That this commitment works as a sort of an underlying metaphysical assumption that conditions many of the analyses in the analytic philosophy of mind will not be argued, but rather presupposed. In this context, I argue that this linguistic interpretation not only does not depict the very phenomenon of intentionality, but it also conceals its true meaning.

In order to show the hidden implications of such a position, i.e. the commitment to a logico-linguistic approach to intentionality and mental life, I pursue the following argumentative strategy: in most cases, I do not focus on the arguments and analyses explicitly outlined by Chisholm, but rather on those

⁴"Let us look for the simplest answer possible. By 'the simplest answer', I mean, not only the answer that is easiest to understand, but also the one that involves *the fewest philosophical commitments*" (CHISHOLM 1981, p.13, emphasis added).

⁵"The 'thesis of intentionality' would now become: the psychological, unlike the non-psychological, can be adequately described only by using *sentences* that are intentional" (CHISHOLM 1964, p.269; emphasis added). "I shall set forth a procedure by means of which we can investigate the '*logic*' or '*grammar*' of some of our intentional concepts and which will enable us to contrast them with other modal concepts" (CHISHOLM, 1966, p.11; emphasis added). For an explicit defense of this linguistic version of intentionality, cf. Harney (1984, p.25 ss).

aspects of his philosophy that implicitly remain 'hidden' in the conceptual background. In other words, I concentrate on the conceptual implications of some of his main explicit insights, in order to put into question the very possibility of Chisholm's (and of many analytic philosopher's) project, namely the translation of intentional experience into an intentional language.

I should also note that my approach is not intended to be a precise historical comparison between Chisholm and Brentano. In other words, I am not interested in proving whether Chisholm's interpretation of Brentano is accurate or not. In any case, the differences between both philosophers results as a corollary of the following arguments, which also shows in which sense Chisholm's thought is more related to Russell's and Frege's⁶ positions than that of Brentano. It shall also note that the article is not an attempt to reconstruct the evolution of Chisholm's concept of intentionality from the 1950s to the 1980s either.⁷

As a second corollary of this article, I shall suggest the idea that this commit-

ment had a massive influence over the analytic conceptions of intentionality.⁸ Indeed, based on the logico-linguistic commitment inaugurated by Chisholm, intentionality became a propositional attitude in which certain intentional verbs such as 'believe', 'ascribe' or 'desire' are related to a proposition. Either for criticizing or for following it, this background conception of intentionality based on the logico-linguistic commitment was shared by almost every analytic philosopher since Quine (1960, p. 220-221) up until more recent works such as those of Fodor (1987, p. X), Dretske (1980, p. 354), Dennett (1987, p.17; p.46), and more recently Byrne (2006), among many others. Even Searle, whose work is an attempt to move away from the logico-linguistic commitment, has certain relapses into this conception of intentionality (1983, p.7). In that sense, it might be said that Chisholm not only 'started a debate that continues to this day' (BYRNE, 2006, p.407), but he also established the conceptual background upon which many of the analytic conceptions of intentionality (naturalistic, functionalistic, etc.)

⁶This is clear from the very outset, as it can be seen throughout Chisholm's first article on intentionality (. CHISHOLM, 1952).

⁷I will mainly concentrate on his early writings on intentionality from the 1950s and 1960s, because I consider them to be the most influential for the following analytic conceptions of intentionality. As it is well known, Chisholm changed his position in several aspects (KIM, 2003, p.650). In 1981 he claims that there is a primacy of the intentional over the linguistic (CHISHOLM, 1981, p.1) and tries thoroughly to take distance from the 'linguistic point of view' in order to attain the 'intentional point of view' (CHISHOLM, 1997, p.3). In any case, I am convinced that his most basic ideas remain unchanged throughout his work, mainly regarding the 'logico-linguistic commitment'.

⁸"It was Chisholm who in his early works during the 1950s introduced the problem of intentionality into the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy" (KIM, 1997, p.361). After Chisholm works, "[f]rom 1970s onward, philosophic attention to intentionality has only increased. There are efforts to explain how intentionality is possible, to naturalize it, to find its place in nature, and to connect it with the causal order" (SANFORD, 1997, p.202), and we shall add: it was indeed Chisholm who inaugurated this new trend.

have been developed up to today. Of course, this historical philosophical issue is just displayed as a corollary and hence will not be addressed since it exceeds the scope of the present article.

1. The ontological and the psychological thesis of intentionality

In a famous article on the concept of intentionality written for the Macmillan Encyclopedia of Philosophy (CHISHOLM, 1967a), Chisholm presents his *linguistic conception* of intentionality. Despite the initial allusion to Brentano's thesis and to Husserl's phenomenology, these original references gradually disappear as soon as he starts with his own analysis of intentionality. In that sense, it is fair to say that he always speaks explicitly about a reformulation of Brentano's thesis (CHISHOLM, 1956, p.125; CHISHOLM, 1957, p.172).

He begins by directly quoting Brentano's well-known 'intentionality-passage' (BRENTANO, 1874, p.68), and arguing that he finds both ontological and psychological theses. The former is about the *nature* of certain objects of thought and of other psychological attitudes, i.e., it asserts that intentional objects do not imply existence. The latter is about the *distinction* between the

psychological (mental) and the physical, i.e., all and only mental phenomena are intentional, namely they refer to an object. Although both theses are supposedly based on Brentano's conception of 'intentional inexistence'⁹, as we shall see, Chisholm considerably changes its meaning through the translation of these psychological phenomena into an intentional language.

In another text, Chisholm says that he considers the psychological thesis to be true, and the ontological thesis, although problematic, not to be obviously false (CHISHOLM, 1967b, p.6). Why is the ontological thesis problematic?

According to Chisholm, the ontological thesis is rooted in the problem caused by Brentano's concept of 'intentional inexistence', which is indeed undeniably problematic. But as we shall see, Chisholm suggestion goes in another direction from the one taken by Brentano: for Chisholm the problem arises with the question about "what is involved in having thoughts, beliefs, desires, purposes or other intentional attitudes, which are directed upon objects that do not exist" (CHISHOLM, 1967a, p.201). I shall point out that in the context of the ontological thesis, Chisholm understands the concept of intentional inexistence in its literal meaning (i.e., the *in*-existence as *negatio* ,

⁹In the 'intentionality passage' (and elsewhere), Brentano defines mental phenomena by their 'intentional inexistence' (he does not usually use the noun 'intentionality'). Most interpreters read this as meaning that the intentional objects of mental phenomena 'exist in the mind', i.e. they are immanent. We shall see this in what follows.

not as *locativus*), namely as that which we might call '(possible) non-existence'. Thus, 'intentional inexistence' amounts to possible non-existence of the object, which means that it does not imply the existence of the object. For example, 'John is thinking of a horse' does not imply at all that the horse exists: "When Brentano said that these attitudes 'intentionally contain an object in themselves', he was referring to the fact that they can be truly said to 'have objects' even though the objects which they can be said to have do not in fact exist" (CHISHOLM, 1957, p.169).

The psychological thesis is related to this idea of intentional inexistence as well, since the necessary relation to an object that may not exist defines the character of mental phenomena. Contrary to this, and according to Chisholm's interpretation, physical phenomena do imply the existence of the object. After the translation into the intentional language, we have the opposition between 'intentional sentences' (i.e., psychological) and 'non-intentional sentences' (i.e., physical) that do imply an object. We might see this characterization by means of a classical example: 'John is thinking of a horse' is an intentional statement which depicts a mental phenomenon, since it contains an object in itself (psychological thesis) and this object may

not exist (ontological thesis), and 'John is riding a horse' is not intentional, because it conveys a physical phenomenon and its object must therefore exist. There is, however, one important conceptual mistake that appears at first sight with this conception: it equates non-intentional languages (sentences about material things, i.e., not mental) with physical phenomena, and this is wrong. Brentano's concept of physical phenomena does not amount to material things. Physical phenomena are above all *phenomena*, i.e., something that appears to the mind, but without being intentional, i.e., without constituting the relation to an object. Brentano's examples¹⁰ clearly show that he is referring to phenomena and not to material things. But we should leave this issue aside in order to follow our argumentative thread.

When Chisholm addresses the psychological thesis of intentionality he begins by acknowledging that intentionality is indeed a psychological or mental concept related to mental phenomena. Despite this characterization as mental or psychological, one can see how the logico-linguistic commitment is already at stake when he stresses the difference between mental and physical phenomena: "Some [Chisholm does not specify whom he is referring here to] now believe that the [psychological]

¹⁰For Brentano, 'physical phenomena' are sensations (*Empfindungen*): colors, sounds, heat and cold, etc. (cf. BRENTANO, 1874, p.61).

thesis can be defended by reference to the language we use in describing psychological phenomena" (CHISHOLM, 1967a, p.203). Independently of what he says next, this quotation indicates the direction taken by Chisholm's project, namely to describe psychological phenomena by means of an analysis of the intentional language. In this context, the reference to certain philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap, whose work actually does not deal at all with the concept of intentionality (with-a-t), is perhaps not fortuitous.

As we shall see, there is more than one problem with this conception and this peculiar translation of Brentano's phenomena into Chisholm's intentional language. But let us start by raising (and answering) the following questions: How does this logic of intentional linguistic statements work? What defines intentionality as such?

2. The formulation of intentional statements

For Chisholm, it is essential to address the "logical characteristics peculiar to intentional statements" (1967a, p.203). That is to say, he not only asserts that intentionality has indeed a logical and grammatical character (and with this he is moving far away from Brentano), but—as he explicitly asserts (1967a, p.203)—he also circumscribes intentionality to *intentional statements*, i.e., not to pre-

sentations or to other kinds of mental experiences, but simply to *sentences*; in Brentano's terms, judgements. In this context, he proposes a criterion for formulating (or even rather formalizing) intentional statements, such as 'John believes that there are men on Mars'. First, he eliminates the 'that' that introduces the relative clause. Second, he puts this relative clause into parentheses. Third, he formalizes the statement as follows: M is the intentional sentence or the 'intentional prefix' ('John believes') and (p) the intentional content ('there are men on Mars') referred by the relative clause (1967a, p.203):

M(p)

M defines the intentionality of the whole sentence: since M is intentional, the relative clause is logically contingent and the existence of the object referred by the clause is therefore not necessarily implied by the intentional sentence. Thus, verbs such as 'believing', 'desiring' or 'questioning' imply intentional (possible non-existent) objects, because the semantic weight relies on M and not on (p). In other words, the existence of that which is referred to by (p) is irrelevant, what matters is the fact that John believes, desires, etc. According to Chisholm, the psychological (intentional) can be distinguished from the non-psychological (non-intentional) by means of the intentional sentences or 'prefixes', and

the intentional verbs define the intentionality of the sentence. Now we shall address some defining criteria for 'intentionality' presented by Chisholm.

3. Defining criteria for intentionality

In his landmark book from 1957, *Perceiving*,¹¹ Chisholm tries to find some criteria to differentiate intentional from non-intentional sentences. We can summarize the criteria as follows: (1) *failure of existential generalization*, i.e., the non-existential implication or existence independence; (2) *truth-value independence*; (3) *failure of the substitutivity of correferential terms*, i.e., indirect reference or opacity of reference (CHISHOLM, 1957, p.170-171).¹² I shall formulate the criteria as follows: the first one defines a sentence as intentional if the content referred to by the relative clause does not necessarily imply existence; e.g. 'John believes that dragons exist'. Chisholm argues that this is the explanation of the Brentanian idea of 'intentional inexistence' of the intentional object. The sentence is intentional independently of the existence of dragons. Thus, as Chisholm points out, intentionality is a 'peculiar sort of relation' since "one can be 'in-

tentionally related' to something which does not exist" (CHISHOLM, 1957, p.170).¹³ The second criteria defines that a sentence is intentional if neither the sentence nor its contradictory imply the truth or falseness of the relative clause; 'John believes that dragons exist' is not dependent on the truth-value of the subordinate sentence, since John might believe that dragons exist, even when it is false that dragons exist. The third criterion defines a sentence as intentional, if the truth-value of the relative clause changes when the name (or description) referred by the relative clause is substituted by another name. I shall concentrate on the two first criteria and come back later to the third one.

As said in the Introduction, for the sake of our argumentative strategy, I shall not focus on the analysis of Chisholm's explicit presentations of these criteria, but rather on their 'hidden' implications. In that sense, one must be careful even with the positions he criticized, since his critical remarks conceal much of his own convictions. Therefore, I concentrate on the problems they imply. As we shall see, in what follows the first and the second criteria, namely, the failure of existential generalization and the failure of

¹¹This book on perception was indeed very influential in the analytic world, mainly for those interested in the concept of intentionality. We cannot address here all the topics presented in this book and will therefore only focus on Chapter 11.

¹²These criteria had already been presented by Chisholm in a former article (cf. Chisholm 1956, 125-129).

¹³In a footnote to this passage, he correctly affirms that "the point of talking about 'intentionality' is not that there is a peculiar type of 'inexistent' object; it is rather that there is a type of psychological phenomenon which is unlike anything purely physical" (Chisholm 1957, 170, note 2; my emphasis).

substitutivity *salva veritate*, coincide with the usual criteria for defining the intentionality (with-an-s) of sentences, or rather for defining intensional contexts, and this conceals several problems.

4. The convergence of intentionality and intensionality

Even though later on Chisholm considers the *failure of existential generalization* (1967a, p.203) to be an unsatisfactory criterion for intentionality, it is important to understand why he takes this criterion into account at all. In other words, our question will be directed towards that which remains concealed in his theoretical background. This criterion refers to the idea that certain sentences fail to the proof of existential generalization of its relative clause, i.e., if the object referred to in the relative clause does not imply its existence. As in the example mentioned above, the sentence 'John is thinking about a horse' is intentional, because it does not imply the existence of the horse. Something similar happens to the second criterion: a sentence is intentional, if the attribution of a truth value to its relative clause (i.e., its intentional content) fails. The sentence 'John believes that unicorns are horses' is intentional, because the truth-value of the relative clause is not relevant to the believe-sentence. The intention-

nal content referred to by the relative clause may be either true or false and this does not change anything about the believe-sentence. On the other hand, 'John is riding a horse' is not intentional, because it implies the existence of the object (or state-of-affairs), and this is either true or false.

But our question here will be not why Chisholm later considers these criteria to be unsatisfactory, but rather why he takes these criteria for intentionality into account at all. This might be specified by two further questions: how are these criteria related to the Brentanian conception of intentionality? Where does all this come from?

The first question cannot be answered directly from Brentano's texts, since Brentano does not address these criteria at all. The only possible connection is with a semantic interpretation of the idea of intentional inexistence. The reasoning shall be developed as follows: Brentano (at least before the so called 'reistic turn' of his work) posits the idea that the intentional object of mental phenomena is inexistent, and this leads him to many conceptual problems. According to Chisholm's theory, the existence-independency (i.e., the failure of the existential generalization) of the object meant by intentional verbs such as 'thinking' (it might also be 'believing', 'desiring', etc.) offers a perfect solution to the problem of inexistence. The question we shall raise again in this context is whether

this has anything to do with Brentano's position. Probably not, but, as already said, it is not the purpose of the present article to dig into a historical comparison between Brentano and Chisholm. In that sense, we might just say that Chisholm finds a problem and presents a solution to it, which is not contained within Brentano's work.

The second question raised above (about where all this comes from) allows a more encompassing understanding of the background of the problem. The very idea of 'failure of existential generalization' is one of the criteria usually used to define intensional (with-an-s) contexts. This leads us back to the Carnapian distinction between intensionality and extensionality. Two further questions shall be raised in this context: Did Carnap mean intentionality (with-a-t) when he spoke about intensionality (with-an-s) or about intensional contexts? Are intentionality and intensionality somehow related?

The first question is more historical and the answer is probably no: Carnap was interested in redefining certain Fregean concepts (those of 'sense' and 'reference') by means of his concepts of 'intension' and 'extension' in the frame of a more complex semantic and modal

theory of reference. Thus, his interests were neither in descriptive psychology nor in mental phenomena. This leads us to the second question: considering the fact that intentionality (with-a-t) is a mental or psychological concept and intensionality (with-an-s) is a semantic one, are there any reasons to believe that both concepts are equivalent in any sense at all?¹⁴ It is indeed very hard to find any kind of connection that does not imply a series of ad hoc artificial arguments.

The difference between intentionality and intensionality was first drawn by James Cornman in 1962 (1962, p.47-49), who claims that 'the class of intentional sentences and the class of intensional sentences are not co-extensive' (1962, p.49). Yet, ever since then, the (unaware?) overlap of these concepts has been a common place in analytic philosophy.¹⁵ Why is this conclusion so important? Because this shows, as we have seen, that there is an ungrounded superposition of different concepts from different traditions (i.e., a psychological one that comes from Brentano, and a logico-semantic one that stems from Frege, Russell and Carnap). Leaving aside all possible historical considerations, it shall be pointed

¹⁴Although the distinction between 'intentionality-with-a-t' and 'intensionality-with-an-s' had already been addressed by Cornman in the 1960s (CORNMAN, 1962), it was, perhaps, John Searle who made this distinction popular in his famous book on intentionality. Despite his warnings regarding a big conceptual confusion between these different concepts, we shall focus on his diagnosis, since for Searle it is "[o]ne of the most pervasive confusions in contemporary [we shall add: analytic] philosophy" (SEARLE, 1983, p.24).

¹⁵This can be seen in many important articles and books: see, for instance Kenny (1963, p.38; p.194), and Urmson / Cohen (1968). And more recently: "Since Chisholm's (1957) seminal analysis of these notions, *intensionality* (with an s) has been standardly taken as the criterion for *intentionality* (with a t)" (KRIEDEL, 2011, p.125).

out that intentionality and intensionality not only have different origins but they also have different conceptual meanings: 1) intentionality is opposed to physicalism (behaviourism), and both concepts refer to two different approaches to mental life; 2) intensionality is opposed to the concept of extensionality, and extensionality and intensionality are semantic concepts which imply different semantic contexts, one related to the reference, the other related to the meaning. Although Cornman addresses the difference between intentionality and intensionality, he did not present the real significance of this difference, namely that they belong to two quite different philosophical traditions and they respond to quite different kinds of theoretical problems and fields: so, in Chisholm's works-without explicitly saying it-converged two different concepts (one psychological and one semantic) into a single theory of intentionality based on the analysis of the intentional languages.¹⁶

But leaving these problems aside, we might still raise in this context two further critical questions: if we take the first and the second criteria for granted, what happens with cognitive acts? Are cognitive verbs (such as 'perceiving', 'knowing', etc.) also intentional?

5. The problem of perceiving and other cognitive activities

According to the first and second criteria presented above, sentences such as 'John sees (or perceives) that the horse is white' are not intentional: cognitive verbs such as 'perceiving', 'seeing' or 'knowing' necessarily imply both the existence of their objects and a truth value. We can see this in the light of an example: 'John knows that Ringo Starr was the drummer of The Beatles' is not intentional according to the first criterion, since the sentence implies the existence of the object meant by the cognitive verb. The same happens with the second criterion: the cognitive verb introduces a truth-value relation of the relative clause that may be evaluated as either true or false. This is indeed an important issue we shall submit to examination, since it is not at all clear why cognitive activities such as 'perception' should be understood as intentional, according to Chisholm's own account. The problem is that, following Brentano, for whom a (direct) perception is an intentional experience through and through, Chisholm did actually consider perception as intentional. Consequently, the refusal of intentionality to cognitive sentences would fail to one

¹⁶It might be said that this synthesis between psychology and semantics is a genial step towards an explanation of central mental phenomena. For Maurita Harney, Chisholm's linguistic reformulation allows to avoid two twin evils: (a) the introduction of a Meinongian ontology, and (b) the postulation of intra-mental entities (HARNEY, 1984, p.30). In a similar manner, Mohanty conveys that Chisholm's thesis 'brings out more clearly the ontological neutrality of the concept of intentionality' (MOHANTY 1972, p.35). Without any doubt, nobody can deny Chisholm's originality. The question is rather whether he was right or not. I hope I can show throughout this paper that he was not.

basic trait of the very idea of intentionality, namely the intentionality of perception.

If we go back to the original source of Chisholm's interpretation, namely to *Perceiving* (CHISHOLM, 1957), we find the explicit assertion of the intentionality of perception. His strategy for asserting the intentionality of cognitive activities relies on the third criterion outlined above (cf. *supra*, § 3). The third criterion asserts the following: a sentence is intentional if the name (or description) contained in the relative clause is replaced by an extensionally equivalent name (or description) and the truth-value of the sentence changes. Chisholm relates this third criterion to Frege's concept of indirect reference.¹⁷ In that sense, 'John knows that Ringo Starr was the drummer of The Beatles' has not the same truth-value as the sentence 'John knows that Richard Starkey was the drummer of The Beatles'. The point is that John might know that the former sentence is true, but not the latter. By means of this peculiar criterion, Chisholm defines the intentionality of cognitive verbs such as 'perceiving', 'knowing', etc. But, why this criterion is accepted as a criterion for intentionality is not clear at all.

According to Chisholm, the third criterion is the defining reason for cognitive activities in order to be considered intentional. Following our argumentative strategy, I shall not address the plausibility of his argument, but rather the implications this criterion has. The main problem of this criterion is its artificiality: there are no grounds upon which we should consider this as a criterion for intentionality, other than the decision to make it a criterion for intentionality. So the question 'why' is just answered by a 'because it's so'. Let us see this in the light of our example: 'Ringo Starr' might be replaced with 'Richard Starkey' and this changes the true value of the sentence, since John might not know that Ringo Starr and Richard Starkey are one and the same person. This criterion merely shows that a sentence is intentional if: (a) it is formed by a cognitive verb (such as 'knowing'), that (b) refers to a certain propositional object¹⁸ by means of the relative clause 'that', and when (c) the name of the object referred to by the propositional clause is substituted by an extensionally equivalent name, (d) this changes the truth value of the sentence. This might be correct, but what does this have to do with intentionality,

¹⁷Indeed, Chisholm explicitly points out this connection between intentionality and Frege's concept of 'indirect reference' (CHISHOLM, 1956, p.128). Maurita Harney acknowledges the fact that this third criterion stems from Frege and not from Brentano (HARNEY, 1984, p.28). Moreover, she even asserts that "Frege is clearly a significant figure in the development of a linguistic version of Brentano's thesis of intentionality" (HARNEY, 1984, p.29). In this context, it shall be also raised the question in which sense it might be said that any of the criteria actually derive from Brentano.

¹⁸As we will see, it must refer to a propositional object in order to apply the third criterion, because otherwise the relative sentence cannot be considered either true or false, since terms are neither true nor false.

i.e., with the aboutness of the mind?

The straightforwardness of the question shows the artificiality of the criterion. The criterion should hence be abandoned, since it is not related to the very idea of intentionality. In this regard, Cornman arrives at a similar conclusion, namely, that "cognitive verbs such as 'know', 'perceive', and 'remember' express mental activities (...) [but] are not intentional" (CORNMAN, 1962, p.51). So, his conclusion coincides with our previously anticipated idea that cognitive verbs cannot be considered, of course, according to Chisholm's own criteria, intentional at all.

It seems that Chisholm, who intended to be an actual follower of Brentano's philosophy, finds himself in the face of a dilemma. On the one hand, he presents his philosophy by means of a series of rigorous linguistic-semantic criteria that attempt to define the intentional field. This leads him to the complicated position of justifying how, according to these criteria, cognitive activities can be considered intentional. Moreover, he formulates the third criterion, which brings no solution to the problems, and this conclusion leaves cognitive verbs out of the field of intentionality. On the other hand, as the Brentanian he still believes he is, he is convinced that certain phenomena such as 'perception' must be considered intentional, because they make up the very basis of intentional life (according to Brentano). The dilemma is such that

he either accepts (in a Brentanian vein) that cognitive activities are intentional by means of using an artificial argument ad hoc (i.e., the third criterion), or he simply rejects the possibility of accounting cognitive activities as intentional.

As I have been arguing in this paper, the main problem is the very idea of the necessity of a translation of intentional (i.e., mental or psychological) phenomena into an intentional language with the complex logico-grammatical structure of $M(p)$, namely, a sentence with many requirements: certain intentional verbs, relative clauses, propositional objects, etc. My point is not related to the plausibility of these criteria considered in themselves, but rather related to the very idea of the plausibility (and in general the possibility) of a translation into the so called 'intentional language'.

The necessity of a translation leads us to one further fundamental problem we shall address, which lies at the very heart of this account. It is plain that Chisholm attempts to translate cognitive acts (such as 'perceiving', 'knowing', etc.) into *intentional sentences*, because he wants to deal *logico-linguistically* with cognitive acts in order to analyze them. This commitment to a logico-linguistic translation leads Chisholm to consider both the intentional sentences and their relative clauses as *propositional objects*, because if they were not, it would not be possi-

ble to speak about their truth-value at all. Otherwise put, according to this peculiar translation, intentionality is reduced to a proposition or even a sentence (i.e. the *attitude* itself, which has a linguistic structure), which is related to other propositions (the relative clauses): thus, not only the intentional object (or content) becomes a linguistic proposition, but also intentionality itself, as it is presented as an 'intentional sentence' in an approach that clearly reduces mental life to logico-linguistic concepts.¹⁹ As we shall see in what follows, the reasons and arguments for supporting this contention are not only problematic, but they also show the logico-linguistic commitment in its most pure form.

6. Is intentionality a propositional attitude?

When in *Perceiving* (and in many other papers) Chisholm addresses some concepts related to the meaning of perception, such as 'assuming' or 'accepting', he refers explicitly to Brentano's the-

sis of the intentional inexistence of the mental. In spite of his attempt to present Brentano's thesis "more exactly" (CHISHOLM, 1957, p.169), he starts by defining the Brentanian idea of 'intentional inexistence' by using the Russellian concept of 'psychological attitudes', i.e., the attitudes which imply verbs such as 'desiring', 'hoping', 'whishing', 'believing', etc., as we shall see in what follows.²⁰ In his analysis of Brentano's conception of the intentional inexistence, Chisholm continuously refers to the concept of 'attitude' as if it were a Brentanian concept (CHISHOLM, 1967b, p. 4, 7, 11, 15, 20, 22). To assert not only that the intentional content (or object) is propositional, but also that intentionality itself is a proposition, introduces, as we shall see, an important limitation to the scope of the very concept of intentionality. But, what is then a 'propositional attitude'? Where does this concept come from?

Bertrand Russell was, perhaps, the first to introduce this concept in an explicit and systematic manner. In 1918 he states the following:

¹⁹Even Jaegwon Kim, a well-known follower of Chisholm's philosophy, acknowledges this kind of reading: "Chisholm added the crucial further claim that the notion of an 'intentional sentence' can be defined in terms of logico-linguistic concepts alone, without recourse to any mentalistic or intentional, terms (...) the notion of mentality is at bottom a logico-linguistic one (...) Chisholm gave it [i.e. intentionality] a form that was very much in tune with the philosophical temper of the times—a form that positively abetted the application of the newly available philosophical tools of logic and linguistic analysis" (KIM 1997, p.361-362). Furthermore, Kim explicitly accepts that Chisholm's earlier theory of intentionality—which, incidentally, was by far the most overwhelming influencing account of Chisholm's philosophy in analytic philosophy—was based on a "purely logico-linguistic criterion of intentionality", which might perfectly have been taken as a successful attempt of a naturalistic "*reduction* of intentionality to logic and grammar", by concluding that "the attempt to find a purely logico-linguistic criterion of intentionality is essentially a reductionist project" (KIM, 1997, p.365-366).

²⁰In his Intellectual Autobiography, Chisholm explicitly acknowledges the fact that he started reading Brentano (and Meinong) through Bertrand Russell's *The Analysis of Mind* (CHISHOLM, 1997, p. 8, 13;) (SANFORD, 1997, p.201).

What sort of names shall we give to verbs like 'believe' and 'whish' and so forth? I should be inclined to call them 'propositional verbs'. This is merely a suggested name for convenience, because they are verbs which have the *form* of relating and object to a proposition. (...) Of course, you might call them 'attitudes', but I should not like that because it is a psychological term, and although all the instances in our experience are psychological, there is no reason to suppose that all the verbs I am talking of are psychological. (RUSSEL, 1918, p.227, emphasis in original)

As we may see, the reference is to certain verbs which are propositional by virtue of their very own structure, because they relate objects to propositions. The verbs chosen by Russell are those usually considered as distinctive characters of intentional sentences, such as 'believe' and 'whish' (i.e., non-cognitive verbs). Faithful to his logical-analytical interest, Russell decides to avoid the term 'attitude' due to the psychological origin and connotation of the concept. If one considers Russell's early project, it is clear why he prefer not to talk about psychology in this context: he is interested in the analysis of thought, expressed by logico-linguistic structures.

What is then an 'intentional attitude'? It is (a) a sentence, (b) based on certain 'intentional verbs' such as 'thinking', 'believing', 'desiring', etc., and (c) has an intentional reference to a possible non-existent object, which is also a propositional object, expressed by the clause 'that'. For example, an intentional attitude might take the form: 'John believes that the cat is on the roof'.

(a) Intentionality, according to the former characterization, implies a sentence (or in Brentano's terms a judgement), i.e., a sort of proposition based on certain special verbs (intentional verbs). This characterization fails to recognize other intentional modes that might be considered pre-linguistic-or, eventually, if there were such pre-linguistic modes, the logic of the 'intentional attitudes' proposed by Chisholm would demand that they should be translated into intentional judgements. (b) This judgement only applies for certain special verbs called 'intentional' such as 'believing' or 'desiring'. The question is here: why only these verbs? Because they are the ones that refer to (c) relative clauses that do not imply existence. In Chisholm's words, they refer to intentional objects or to 'inexistent objects'. These intentional objects are themselves *propositions*, referred to by the subordinate clause. They can refer to actual or real states of affairs (e.g. 'John believes that there are elephants in Africa'), to possible objects ('John believes that there is life

in other planets') and even to impossible objects ('John believes that unicorns inhabit our planet'). As we have seen above, Chisholm's interpretation of Brentano's concept of 'intentional inexistence' amounts to the idea that existence is irrelevant for the content referred to by intentional verbs.

But the important question remains: In which sense can we speak of intentionality as a propositional attitude (or as an intentional attitude)? As we already pointed out, there are two underlying convictions at the background of this question (and, in general, of this account): the idea that intentionality is a linguistic attitude expressed by means of an intentional sentence, and the idea that the content or the object referred to by this attitude is also a propositional content. I shall show that both theses are inaccurate for describing a phenomenon such as intentionality.

Why is intentionality understood in terms of 'propositional verbs' or of 'propositional attitudes'? We might find a possible answer *in nuce* in the passages of Bertrand Russell quoted above. The reasoning (with its background's supposition) is more or less the following. First, 'believing' is the 'most mental' thing we do, the 'most remote from matter'²¹ or, according to

Chisholm, from physical phenomena. Second, 'believing' is a verb that by its very nature is propositional, i.e., by means of its relational character it introduces a relation with a propositional content.²² Third, and based on what has been said, intentionality, understood through this propositional-attitude-structure logic and based on verbs such as 'believe', makes possible a logico-linguistic analysis, by means of which we exclude all the potential problems introduced by psychological analyses (such as those present in Brentano's works). It might be said that this last point is the motivational background for the transformation of the mental concept of intentionality into a semantic sentence.

In short, Chisholm's model for intentionality is that of a propositional attitude that can be exemplified by the sentence: 'John believes that there are elephants in Africa', or in the form addressed above M(p). If we compare this scheme with Brentano's definition, not only we do realize that this is almost unrelated to his insights, but also and foremost, we can clearly see that Chisholm has taken a completely different path than the one chosen by Brentano and phenomenology. For Brentano, the most basic and elementary

²¹As a matter of fact, for Russell 'believing' is "the most 'mental' thing we do, the thing most remote from what is done by mere matter" 1921, p.139). Based on this statement, we might trace a parallel that would lead us to the opposition between mental phenomena (believe) and physical phenomena (matter), which is precisely the direction taken by Chisholm, as seen above.

²²That at the bottom of this conception underlies a Carnapian interpretation of *belief sentences* is something I want to suggest (CARNAP, 1947, § 13), though I cannot attempt an account of this immense topic here.

form of intentionality is that of a presentation (*Vorstellung*), which underlies every form of judgement (*Urtheil*). Conversely, for Chisholm, intentionality basically amounts to the propositional attitude with its judgemental structure and propositional object. Besides, we might perfectly think (along with Brentano's thought, but also independently of his philosophy) that not every intentional object is propositional,²³ and that there are indeed many intentional attitudes that do not involve any propositions (judgements) at all. Why should my first-person experience be considered 'propositional'? Or, in general, is it possible to authentically depict my first-person experience through these complex propositional structures?

We must be careful with these questions, since there are many possible answers. Chisholm (and a large part of the analytic tradition) assumes the methodological (and even metaphysical) decision of committing themselves to a certain philosophical perspective that reduces reality to that which is analyzable in terms of a logical language. Of course, one *might* do that, or, moreover, one might say that it is *compulsory* to do that, since we cannot address mental phenomena without a proper account of its logico-linguistic structures. Even when there is some

truth behind this position, two things shall be taken into account. First, we will have to explicitly admit the logico-linguistic commitment and its implications. Second, as I have tried to show, we must be aware that this commitment implies that sometimes the medicine is worse than the disease. Otherwise said, sometimes it is too high a price to pay if, due to this commitment, we lose touch with the very phenomena we are trying to describe. In that sense, other possible answers to the previous questions take into consideration, along with Brentano and the phenomenological tradition, that there are basic, pre-linguistic forms of intentionality, such as the mere presentation of something (intentionally) given, which may be presented in a scheme in which logic and language are subordinated to the phenomena and not the other way around.

Final remarks

After a thorough reading of some of Chisholm's main contributions on the issue of intentionality, it is undeniable that he was more interested in presenting his own philosophy than in depicting a faithful interpretation of Brentano's philosophy. In that sense, the

²³Indeed, it is not self-evident that the object referred by intentionality is (or must be) propositional. More recently, voices have been raised within the analytic tradition against this tendency called 'propositionalism' (MONTAGUE, 2007); (CRANE, 2013, Chap. 5.2). The arguments presented by both Montague and Crane are strong and seem to be conclusive. In general, Time Crane presents a conception of intentionality that seems to be completely removed from this linguistic burden.

main problem is not that of an accurate historical interpretation.²⁴

I hope I have successfully showed that Chisholm's account of intentionality introduced several criteria that blur the most authentic and original meaning of this fundamental concept, and inaugurated a tradition of interpretation which is based on the logico-linguistic commitment. As said in the introduction, one of my main concerns is related to the problem that this commitment exercised an enormous influence upon many analytic interpretations of the concept of intentionality, as a general criterion for every possible intentional analysis. Is this a problem? It is, mainly when one evaluates the conceptual implications of such a generalized view: for many analytic accounts, intentionality amounts to propositional attitude, propositional verbs, intensio-nality, etc.²⁵

From the bare descriptive analysis of an immediate experience in a first-person perspective, which is for instance the pre-linguistic presentation of an object to the mind, we jump into

an extremely complex account of sentences based on the logic of propositional attitudes. This kind of procedures not only takes us away from Brentano's precise psychological descriptions, but what is far more important, it takes us away from the very reality we attempt to describe, namely *the aboutness of the mind*. The case of Chisholm is perhaps only an example of how the (sometimes 'unaware') radicalization of a certain philosophy of language-expressed here by the logico-linguistic commitment-might result into philosophical artificiality. But this idea should not be misinterpreted: I do not want to deny the importance of a meticulous and self-conscious philosophy of language that might be (and indeed historically has been) philosophically very productive.²⁶ The problem arises when language stops being the unavoidable tool or the fundamental medium for doing philosophy and reaching the 'things themselves', and starts being an obstacle in order to get to the most constitutive phenomena of our experience.

²⁴According to Marras, the main problems around the traditional (Brentanian) conception of intentionality "have been neglected by contemporary analytic philosophers" (MARRAS, 1972, p.4), and the focus have been rather on "the logical features of the language we use in talking about things of that kind" (5).

²⁵Of course, as said in the Introduction, I speak in general about a certain dominating tendency within analytic philosophy throughout the last decades. There has been notable exceptions to this, such as, for instance, the case of John Searle that, despite certain limitations that we cannot address here, presents a theory of intentionality that moves away of the logic implicit by the logico-linguistic commitment. In more recent years, we shall specially mention the remarkable work of Tim Crane, whose exceptional account of intentionality and its objects brings analytic philosophy closer to phenomenology as perhaps never seen before. Unfortunately, these issues exceed the scope of the present article.

²⁶Chisholm speaks in his first article on intentionality about "a linguistic criterion of intentionality [that] may be *useful* as an instrument for revising language" (CHISHOLM, 1952, p.53, n. 4, emphasis added).

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