

# REFERENCE INTENTIONALITY IS AN INTERNAL RELATION

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## Abstract

In this paper, I will focus on the basic form of intentionality, *reference intentionality*, the property an intentional state has of being 'directed upon' a certain object, its intentional object. I will try to prove that reference intentionality is not only a state - intentional object *relation*, but it also is an *internal*, i.e., a necessary, relation between that state and that object, at least in the sense that the state could not exist if it not were so related to the object.

## Keywords

Cognitive content, Externalism, Intentional object, Internalism, Internal relation, Monadic internalism, Reference intentionality, Relational internalism.

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In this paper, I will focus on the basic form of intentionality, *reference intentionality* (from now on, RI), the property an intentional state has of being 'directed upon' a certain object, its intentional object. I will try to prove that (as Husserl, Wittgenstein and others originally envisaged) RI is not only a state - intentional object *relation*, but it also is an *internal*, i.e., a necessary, relation between that state and that object, at least in the sense that the state could not exist if it not were so related to the object.

The strategy of the paper will be the following. First, I will claim that RI has to be conceived in internal-relational terms, no matter which position one takes on its putative right-hand members, intentional objects. Second, I will claim that this conception fits both ways in which intentional states are nowadays ordinarily conceived, i.e., the externalist and the internalist way. For on the one hand, the best form of externalism, metaphysical externalism, entails a conception of RI as an internal relation. On the other hand, if one is an internalist, she either has to directly stick again to that conception or, insofar as she ontologically is an eliminativist about RI, this ontological position leaves untouched the conception of RI as an internal relation.

I stress that this conception yields an *understanding* of RI. My analysis is indeed meant to be a *metaphysical* scrutiny of RI, that is, an investigation on the nature of such a property, provided that that there is any. As such, therefore, this scrutiny is independent of the further, *ontological*,

question of whether there is such a property as RI.<sup>1</sup> If it turned out that there is no such a thing as RI, this scrutiny will turn out to be a mere investigation in the mere *concept* of RI. As a result, my analysis is compatible with an eliminativist stance on RI, holding that there is no such property. For such a stance precisely is an ontological, not a metaphysical, position on RI.

## 1. The main claims

As I hinted at before, RI is the property an intentional state has of being ‘directed upon’ an object, which is typically called the intentional object of the state: the state is *about* that object. This property has to be distinguished by another similar property an intentional state may possess, namely, *content intentionality* (CI). This is the property an intentional state has of having a content. This content is what makes the state *semantically valuable*, that is, it makes the state true or false – if the state is a belief or a thought – or fulfilled or unfulfilled – if the state is an expectation, a hope, a desire, an intention ...: the mental state is a state *that* something is the case.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, many intentional states having CI also have RI: for instance, Othello’s thinking that Desdemona is unfaithful is a thinking about Desdemona. Yet intentional states may have RI without also having CI: Jago’s hating Othello is not a state that something is the case.<sup>3</sup> This may prompt one to think that RI is more basic than CI. Whether or not this thought is legitimate,<sup>4</sup> from now on I will focus on the first property only.

So described, this property clearly seems to have a *relational* nature; it indeed appears as a relation between the intentional state and the intentional object. I here want not only to take that appearance at face value, but I also want to hold that that relation is an *internal*, i.e., is a relation holding necessarily between its members. Personally, I am interested in holding only that RI is a *one-sided* internal relation, that is, a relation which holds necessarily of its left-hand side member only, the intentional state: a certain intentional state would not exist if it were not so related to its intentional object, if it were not ‘directed upon’, about, a certain intentional object. Yet of course if one defended the necessary character of that relation for its right-hand side member also, the intentional object, the internality of the relation would be simply strengthened: RI would be a *mutual* internal relation.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. RI as an internal relation (I)

To be sure, the first of the above claims, i.e., that RI is a relation, appears immediately controversial. For one may say either that it has a limited scope or that, if it has a general scope, it commits one to problematic entities, nonexistent intentional objects. Moreover, if the relational conception of RI were really problematic, the second claim I have just presented, namely the thesis that RI is an internal relation, would of course be endangered as well. Yet appearances notwithstanding things are not so bad for both theses.

<sup>1</sup> For this distinction between metaphysics and ontology, see e.g. Thomasson (1999), Varzi (2002:226).

<sup>2</sup> For this distinction, cf. also Kim (1996:21).

<sup>3</sup> Granted, this is a controversial thesis; many philosophers militate against it. Cf. e.g. Scarle (1983). Yet there is a growing widespread consensus about it: cf. e.g. Bonomi (1983:96), Simons (1983:81), Crane (2001:31), Priest-Read (2004:430-1).

<sup>4</sup> In order for this to be the case, it should be shown that there are no cases of CI without RI. Yet when one thinks that men are mortal, or that there is a noise outside, only CI appears to be instantiated.

<sup>5</sup> Followers of the early Brentano (1924) would precisely say that the intentional object is also affected for its existence by its being related via RI to its state: it is an *immanent* object. I dislike this position for it entails an implausible, and unnecessary, conception of intentional objects according to which two intentional states cannot share their object.

First of all, one may well admit that RI is relational in cases of veridical states, such as perception or knowledge: in seeing Venus, my state of seeing is about Venus, the existent planet revolving around the Sun.<sup>6</sup> But what about my thought of Vulcan, the nonexistent entity which was erroneously supposed to lie between Mercury and the Sun? Saying that RI does not concern this state sounds tremendously *ad hoc*, for it clearly seems that this thought instantiates RI as well as the previous perception. Yet how can in this latter case RI be relational, since there is no such thing as Vulcan?<sup>7</sup> Theoretically speaking, one would have to admit that RI is a relation both to existent and to nonexistent intentional objects, as Venus and Vulcan respectively are. But even swallowing the idea that there can be relations to nonexistent items, how can one allow for nonexistent intentional objects?

As far as I am concerned, I have no problems with nonexistent intentional objects. For I accept the thesis, traditionally traced back to Brentano, that *intentionalia* may exist as well as not exist.<sup>8</sup> Thus, I acknowledge that RI is a relation between intentional states on the one hand and *intentionalia* on the other (regardless of their existence). To be sure, one may still think that the idea of a relation to nonexistent items is problematic. Yet this problem may well be circumvented once one acknowledges (alongside with the phenomenological tradition) that in order for something to be a relation, its members must obviously be genuine entities, yet it is not necessary to exist in order for something to be a genuine entity.

Yet even if one had problems with allowing for nonexistent *intentionalia*, this would not imply that RI is (apart from limited cases) nonrelational. For it should be anyhow explained what it really goes on when one has a state which is apparently ‘directed upon’ a nonexistent *intentionale*, such as my thought of Vulcan. The natural explanation would be that of saying that I have a state endowed with a Vulcanian content, a content which would allow me to pick out in the outer reality an individual with Vulcanian features if there only were any.<sup>9</sup> Given this epistemological function, this content may be seen as a *cognitive content*: in this way, its existence has been theorized infinitely many times in the literature from Twardowski onwards.<sup>10</sup> As a result, we would have that, instead of being a relation to a nonexistent intentional object, RI would be a relation of the intentional state to a cognitive content: the state *has* that content.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Traditional representationalists would of course disagree with the idea that veridical states are about transcendent existing entities. But first, they could hardly dismiss other similar cases with emotional states, say states of jealousy and love, and second, in claiming *à la* Brentano that veridical states are really about immanent entities (cf. previous footnote), they would not deny RI its relational character.

<sup>7</sup> For this doubt, cf. e.g. Crane (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Brentano (1924:88). Here “to exist” means some first-order property of existence that some objects possess while others lack. To be sure, it is quite likely that, given his immanentism, Brentano did not actually agree with the thesis; cf. on this Crane (1998).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. Crane (2001:chap.1,§8).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Twardowski ([1894]1982); with some modification, this idea passes to Husserl ([1923]1984) and goes down at least to Searle (1983). It is natural to see cognitive content as the mental counterpart – if not as identical with – Frege’s (1892) Sinn of a singular term (which is precisely characterized in cognitive terms, i.e., as a mode of presentation of its referent, if any). Yet cognitive content may also be conceived non-Fregeanly, as a content that does not uniquely determine an object. *Prima facie*, this notion of cognitive content does not seem to coincide with the notion of content featuring content intentionality, *truth-conditional content*. For by itself it does not make a state semantically evaluable. The fact that my hallucination of Nessie is endowed with a Nessian content does not make it possibly true or false, fulfilled or unfulfilled (as Bush’s belief *that* Saddam had nuclear weapons is).

<sup>11</sup> McDowell (1998:482-3) takes what I have here called cognitive content as a generic content, made up exclusively of concepts. Yet Johnston (2004) precisely maintains that concept-like entities are what hallucinations are directed upon, thereby showing how the allegedly nonrelational conception of RI is actually a relational one.

Crane (2001:32) himself has ended up with holding a similar position. Typically, for Crane the left-hand side *relatum* of the intentionality relation is a subject, not a state; that is, RI relates a subject with a content. Yet elsewhere

To be sure, in such a case we would come out with a theory that is less economical than a theory appealing to nonexistent *intentionalia*. For cognitive content would be the *relatum* of RI when nonexistent *intentionalia* are (apparently) at stake. Yet suppose that an intentional state involves an intentional object that exists, as for instance when I see Venus. In order to account for such cases, one is forced to duplicate the RI relation: when the intentional object exists, a state is *about1* that object, yet when it does not exist, the state is *about2* a cognitive content.<sup>12</sup> But economical issues aside, the relational character of RI would not be affected by this way of putting things.

Moreover, the second thesis here defended, that RI is an internal relation, could be preserved as well even if one dispensed with nonexistent *intentionalia*. For a defender of cognitive content will tend to say that a state would not be state it is if it did not have, that is, if it were not *about2*, that cognitive content.<sup>13</sup> Things being that way, I conclude that the problem of nonexistent *intentionalia* does not really endanger the thesis – to put the above claims together – that RI is an internal relation.

### 3. RI is an internal relation (II)

But even if it were shown that the thesis that RI is an internal relation is not endangered by the problem of nonexistent *intentionalia*, is this conception really unavoidable? In what follows, I will try to sketch an argument according to which we are forced to conceive of RI in that way.

In the contemporary philosophy of mind, it has become customary to conceive of intentional states in two alternative manners: either in an *externalist* or in an *internalist* way. All the other positions on such states can be ultimately traced back to either alternative (for instance, if one takes folk-psychology at face value, she would be ranked as an externalist, whereas if one is a functionalist, she will be an internalist as well; joint positions are also possible.) So, I will assume that that intentional states are to be conceived either in an externalist or in an internalist way.

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he precisely says that his account makes intentionality a relation to an intentional content (cf. Crane (2003)). I would like to note that there is no real tension here; for one may well say that a subject is related to a content-like entity iff her intentional state is so related.

To be sure, it must be noted that Crane's position is more complex. For to say that a certain state has a cognitive content is for him not incompatible with saying that the state is about a (nonexistent) intentional object, provided that ascribing a state that object is not seeing that state as being in relation with that object, but it is just a way of individuating that state. Cf. Crane (2001:25-30). In point of fact, I think that, once one speaks of a state as *individuated* via (nonexistent) intentional objects, one must take those objects more seriously. As Martin-Pfcifer put it, if one denies that there are nonexistent intentional objects and yet holds that cognitive contents are differentiated in terms of what they are about, "the problem of the ontological status of intentional objects has been rephrased and not solved" (1986:545). For such an individuation entails that the state precisely is in an internal relation with those objects. As Crane himself (forthcoming) stresses, his sense of "individuation" here is however weaker; it amounts to something like giving an identifying description of a certain intentional state (something that allows to pick out precisely that state).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Haldane (1989:18). Economy does not end here. If by rejecting nonexistent intentionalia one claims that an intentional state has an intentional object only when this object exists, this claim prompts the need for an explanation – how is it that the state is *about* that existent object rather than another one? – as if the intentional object were something that the state has to reach somewhere in the outer world. In order to give that explanation, one is typically prompted to say that an intentional state has an intentional object – is about1 it – in virtue of its having a certain cognitive content – of its being *about2* such a content. (Cf. e.g. Evans (1982).) For – as we saw in the text – that content enables the state to pick out the object, provided there is any (that is, provided that in the outer reality there is an object matching the features inscribed in the content). In a nutshell, in order for the first notion of reference intentionality to be instantiated, it would have to be grounded in the other notion. On the contrary, no such explanation is required if one assumes that an intentional state has *always* an intentional object, regardless of its existence. For in such a case, there is no problem for the state of reaching an object lying in an outer reality. One may rather simply say that the state is directly open to objecthood; the state *eo ipso* has an intentional object, and it is a further question whether this object exists or not.

<sup>13</sup> Crane (forthcoming) precisely says that an intentional state of mind has its content *essentially*

What I now want to show is that, whichever is the correct way of conceive of such states, it does not affect the conception of RI as an internal relation.

Let me start with externalism. Externalism in the philosophy of mind may be taken in at least three possible ways, from the strongest to the weakest: as a *metaphysical* theory, as a *modal* theory, and as an *existential* theory. *Qua* metaphysical theory, it says that intentional states are to be *individuated* in terms of some external entities, the entities they are about. *Qua* modal theory, it says that intentional states *depend* for their own existence on the existence of those external entities; put alternatively, the existence of an intentional state necessarily *suffices* for the existence of the external entities it is about.<sup>14</sup> *Qua* existential theory, it says that the existence of an intentional state factually, and not necessarily, suffices for the existence of a (relevant portion of an) outer reality.<sup>15</sup> More precisely, these positions are the basic ways of conceiving externalism; *nomological* externalism, which appears to be another position, is simply intermediate between modal and existential externalism, for it claims that the existence of an intentional state nomologically suffices for the existence of a (relevant portion of an) outer reality.<sup>16</sup>

Now as far as RI is concerned, defending one or the other externalist position is of the utmost importance. All positions indeed presuppose not only that there is such a thing as RI, but also, and more importantly for my present purposes, that RI is relation between the intentional state and the entity in terms of which it is individuated, or it depends on, or for whose existence it is sufficient. To stay to the above terminology, call this entity the intentional object of the state.<sup>17</sup> Yet if one is either a metaphysical or a modal externalist, RI must be conceived as an internal relation – leave out the object the state is related to via RI, and you are forced to leave out the intentional state as well – whereas, if one is an existential (or even a nomological) externalist, RI turns out to be an *external* relation, i.e., a contingent relation: the existence of neither of its members is affected by the subsistence of the relation.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, externalism allows two conceptions of RI: either as an internal or as an external relation. Yet I will now want to argue that metaphysical externalism is the best form of externalism. As a result we have that, if one wants to be an externalist, it is better for her to conceive of RI as an internal relation. Let's see then this argument, which is the first part of the more general argument for RI as an internal relation.

Up to now, we have only discussed of *natural* externalism, i.e., of the thesis - however further developed - that takes *extramental worldly items* as relevant for a thought. Yet, as everyone knows, natural externalism is flanked by social externalism, i.e., by the thesis - however further developed

<sup>14</sup> This is the thesis of the object-dependence of intentional states originally defended in Evans (1982). It is weaker than the metaphysical theory for it allows an intentional state not to be *constituted* by its objects.

<sup>15</sup> I guess that Crane (forthcoming) would think that, so described, this position is already an internalist position. For he takes the externalist claim that an intentional state entails the existence of something outside in the world as to be already mapped onto what I have called modal externalism. On behalf of Crane's, one might thus say that existential externalism and modal internalism (see later) coincide. If this were intended to deny that existential externalism is a genuine form of externalism, however, my general argument would be simply strengthened; for both metaphysical and modal internalism share the idea that RI is an internal relation. Yet since nomological externalism (see immediately below) is not so strong as modal externalism, it must be anyway recognized that there is a form of externalism – call it existential or otherwise – for which RI is an external relation.

<sup>16</sup> This position can be ascribed e.g. to Fodor (1994).

<sup>17</sup> Typically, this object is taken as an existent entity. Yet it is not impossible both to appeal to externalism and to defend the afore-mentioned idea that *intentionalia* may well exist as well as not exist. One may indeed maintain that a state can both be externally conceived and 'directed upon' a nonexistent *intentionale*, provided that that *intentionale* is a transcendent entity; for instance, a merely possible entity. I take this position to be sketched in Farman (1990); I have defended it in Voltolini (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> Typically, if one agrees on that RI is a relation and moreover she wants to naturalize it, she will espouse the thesis that RI is an external relation.

- that takes *social meanings* as relevant for a thought.<sup>19</sup> Now, it seems to me that both natural and social externalism can be legitimately taken as species of externalism *only if* one endorses the thesis that externalism is a metaphysical doctrine on the individuation conditions of a thought. Whereas natural externalism states that the items the thought is about contribute to its individuation, socio-externalism states that the meanings of the language of the community a subject is embedded in contribute to the individuation of a thought.

Clearly, socio-externalism cannot be a mere thesis either on the necessary existence conditions of a thought or on the contingent existence-entailments of a thought. Definitely, it states more than the latter thesis. If one thinks that there are unicorns, according to socio-externalism this is the thought *that there are unicorns* if one is immersed in our linguistic community, but which turns out to be the thought *that there are shunicorns* if one is immersed in a linguistic community where “unicorn” means *shunicorn*, an animal that is either a unicorn or a hippogryph. To be sure, when socio-externalistically conceived, both the thought that there are unicorns and the thought that there are shunicorns respectively presuppose that there is an (actually different) public language.<sup>20</sup> Yet this does not mean to presuppose that there are certain things – unicorns and shunicorns respectively – outside that thinker. (As maintained by Burge onwards, socio-externalism is a doctrine that attempts at giving the content of *de dicto*, not *de re*, thoughts.) So, existential externalism does not appear to capture socio-externalism. Moreover, socio-externalism also states more than modal externalism, the thesis on the necessary existence conditions of a thought. Clearly, as we have just seen, socio-externalism entails that if there were no such a thing as a certain public meaning, there would not be the thought either. Yet it says more. According to socio-externalism, a subject S’s thinking here and now that he’s got arthritis in his thigh does not merely yield a thought that would not exist if “arthritis” did not mean *arthritis*. For claiming this is compatible with holding that one such state is a thought whose constituents *differ* from the meanings that constitute the linguistic attribution of it, “S thinks that he’s got arthritis in his thigh”. Yet the thesis of socio-externalism is stronger than this. For, according to socio-externalism, the thought in question is precisely a thought that is *constituted* (among other things) by *our* meaning of “arthritis”.

For our present purposes, anyway, it is enough to show that socio-externalism is not an existential doctrine. For this already shows that, insofar as it does not capture socio-externalism, existential externalism is worse than both modal and metaphysical externalism.<sup>21</sup> Since both modal and metaphysical externalism are forced to conceive RI as an internal relation, we are allowed to conclude that if one wants to be an externalist it is better for her to conceive RI as an internal relation.

So far, I have done only the first half of my job; it indeed remains to be proved that even if one is an internalist, it is better for her to conceive RI as an internal relation. So, what if one defends an internalist, not an externalist, conception of intentional states? To begin with, note that also internalism can be presented in at least three possible ways: as a *metaphysical* theory, as a *modal* theory, and as an *existential* theory. *Qua* metaphysical theory, it says that intentional states are to be individuated *not* in terms of entities external to the body (or the mind) of the thinker. *Qua* modal theory, it says that intentional states do *not* depend for their own existence on the existence of the above entities. *Qua* existential theory, it says that the existence of an intentional states does *not* simply suffice for the existence of a (relevant portion of an) outer reality. Now, do not these

<sup>19</sup> Cf. notoriously Burge (1979).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Kim (1996:199).

<sup>21</sup> Granted, one might reject socio-externalism and pursue towards an internalist account of the ‘Burge’-cases. She should however justify why she would not *thoroughly* embrace internalism, that is, also for the ‘Putnam’-cases. In other terms, why concept-involving thoughts are to be conceived internally but *object*-involving thoughts are not?

three different positions at least agree in rejecting a relational conception of RI, hence a fortiori in rejecting a conception of it as an internal relation?

This is not to be taken for granted. For all those forms of internalism are still compatible with a *relational* conception of internalism. That is, a thought internalistically conceived may be either (metaphysically) individuated in terms of, or (modally) depend on, or finally, (existentially) suffice for the existence of, entities which are not external to the body (or the mind) of the thinker but *inner* to it. Typically (but not exclusively), inner objects are for the internalist mere representational elements (words of Mentalese, as some would say) ultimately located in the brain.<sup>22</sup> Now, if one holds relational internalism in any of these three forms, a relational conception of RI is not ruled out at all: RI will be taken to be a relation of the intentional state to an intentional object, this time however conceived as an inner entity.<sup>23</sup> Again, unlike relational existential internalism, both relational metaphysical internalism and relational modal internalism will take RI as an internal relation to inner entities. Moreover, by analogy with what we have seen above with respect to the externalist positions, we have to admit that relational metaphysical internalism is better than both relational modal and especially relational existential internalism. For the best opposition to socio-externalism from a relational internalist position would be to say that intentional states are individuated in terms not of social meanings, but in terms of idiolectal meanings, that is, in terms of inner items. As a result, if one is a relational internalist it will be better for her to again conceive of RI as an internal, rather than as an external, relation.

If what I have just said is correct, it turns out that the only chance for successfully defending a non-relational conception of RI, a fortiori for dismissing the idea of RI as an internal relation, should be to appeal to *monadic* internalism, in again either of its three possible basic forms: metaphysical, modal, or existential. For, one might reason, according to monadic internalism an intentional state is either not individuated in terms, or it does not depend on, or finally it does not suffice for the existence of, any other entity, let alone inner ones. As a result, one might well think that if one is a monadic internalist, she would have to develop a monadic conception of RI as well. In what follows, I will try to show that this idea is incorrect. Either one such internalist actually is a pseudo-monadic internalist, that is, a crypto-relational internalist, hence she must have that RI is again an (internal) relation. Or she is a genuine monadic internalist, but then she will not develop an alternative conception of RI as a monadic property rather than as a relation; she would simply have to be eliminativist about it.

To begin with, one may claim that defending a monadic internalist conception of an intentional state makes one see RI as the property for that state of having a non-relational content, or, as is nowadays often called, a *narrow* content (however further conceived: e.g., as a Kaplanian character, or as a Russellian descriptive content, or as the correlate of that state's conceptual role). Yet as we have seen in the previous Section while speaking of cognitive content (a notion which may now be reversed in that of narrow content), this does not make RI a monadic property of that state, but again a relational property: namely, the relation for that state of having, of being about<sup>2</sup>, that content.<sup>24</sup> As a result, an internalist so appealing to narrow content is a pseudo-monadic internalist, and rather a crypto-relational internalist. Since as we have seen before relational metaphysical internalism is the best form of relational internalism, and relational metaphysical internalism again conceives of RI as an internal relation between the intentional state and a non-

<sup>22</sup> Cf., e.g., Fodor (1982). But see also Chomsky, e.g. (1992).

<sup>23</sup> This is a way to vindicate Brentano's idea that intentional objects are immanent to the states which intend them (cf. fn. 5).

<sup>24</sup> In this perspective, narrow content plays the role nonexistent *intentionalia* were supposed to play; "intentional object" is the label for such a content Fodor himself once uses (cf. (1986:14fn.8)).

outer entity (as narrow content may well be), this appeal to narrow content does not alter the idea that RI is best conceived of as an internal relation.

But wait! will an internalist say. By saying that an intentional state has RI insofar as it has a narrow content, one does not want to appeal to narrow content as a genuine entity; she simply wants to find out a relational way of *describing* the fact that that state has a certain monadic property. No less than when one says that a liquid has 35° C, she does not want to say that the liquid is in a certain relation with a number taken as a genuine entity, but she simply wants to merely describe in relational terms the fact that the liquid has a certain monadic property, namely, a certain temperature. Hence, saying that an intentional state has a certain narrow content is a mere relational *description* of the fact that that state instantiates RI, taken this time as a monadic property.<sup>25</sup>

This internalist reply however prompts the further question of which description ascribing the monadic property in question to an intentional state truly applies to that state. Two suggestions naturally come to one's mind: an adverbialist description or a description assigning that state a certain functional role.<sup>26</sup> Yet, as we will now see, neither proposal fares any better.

To begin with, suppose one describes the fact that I am thinking of Vulcan in adverbialist terms, as the fact that I am thinking Vulcanly. As is well known, this proposal originally traces back to the late Brentano's idea that RI is not a relation but, as he said, a quasi-relation, hence, a monadic property.<sup>27</sup> Now, as Tye has shown, there are at least two ways in order to understand this adverbialist suggestion. Either one takes a phrase like "to think Vulcanly" as an unstructured predicate applying directly to the subject for which "S" stands for in a sentence like "S thinks Vulcanly", so that the correct reading of that sentence is "S thinks-Vulcanly". Or one takes the adverb "Vulcanly" as standing for a function which takes the property expressed by the well-formed formula "x thinks" it modifies onto a new property, the property expressed by "Vulcanly (x thinks)", so that the correct reading of the above sentence is "Vulcanly (S thinks)".<sup>28</sup> Yet, as we will now see, neither way really reinforces the idea that RI is a monadic property.

That this is so as far the first way is concerned is straightforward. For according to that way, insofar as "to think of Vulcan" and, say, "to think of Venus" are utterly distinct predicates – "to-think-Vulcanly" "to-think-Venusly" – standing for utterly different properties. As a result, S's thinking of Vulcan and S's thinking of Venus, two intentional states in which those properties are respectively instantiated, have nothing in common; a fortiori, they share no property like RI *qua* monadic property.

This may well prompt the monadic internalist to defend the second reading of the adverbialist suggestion. In such a case, saying that the relevant adverb stands for a function which takes the property expressed by the relevant well-formed formula it modifies onto a new property is tantamount to saying that the relevant intentional state instantiates precisely a monadic property: S's thinking of Vulcan is an intentional state of thought which is modified in a Vulcanian way, i.e., which has a certain monadic property, whereas S's thinking of Venus is another intentional state

<sup>25</sup> I thank Diego Marconi for having reminded me this point.

<sup>26</sup> One might that there is a further suggestion, namely that the internalist appeals to a 'syntactic' characterization of intentional states. Yet either this appeal leads back to relational internalism (to see a state as related to a syntactically individuated representation playing the role of an inner object: cf. fn. 22) or it reduces to the functionalist suggestion, by assigning the state a syntactic role; hence, it undergoes the destiny of that suggestion.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Brentano (1925:272). The adverbialist reading of the late Brentano's position has been suggested many times since Chisholm (1967).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Tye (1984). The first reading seems what the late Brentano had in mind: cf. Smith-McIntyre (1982:59-60). Tye maintains that sentences like "S thinks Vulcanly" have also another reading, in which one quantifies over events: "( $\exists x$ ) (x = the event of S's thinking Vulcanly)". But if one takes events as property instantiations, there ontologically is no much difference between this reading and the first one.



of thought which is modified in a Venusian way, i.e., which has another monadic property. Well, why cannot these two monadic properties be considered as the species whose genus precisely is RI, taken as a further monadic property? (Notice that we would say something structurally similar if we took properties like *being 'directed upon' Vulcan* and *being 'directed upon' Venus* as two relational properties; we would indeed say that these properties are species whose genus is RI, taken this time as a relation.)

There is however a problem here for the monadic internalist. True enough, the above intentional states respectively instantiate two monadic properties. Yet what proves that those monadic properties have something in common, or better, that they have precisely RI (taken as a monadic property) in common? Intentional states may be modified in further ways: for instance, S may think intensely, or confusedly. Adverbs here precisely mobilize further monadic properties instantiated by the intentional states in question: intensely (S thinks), that is, S thinks in an intense way, or confusedly (S thinks), that is, S thinks in a confuse way. Now, it seems to me that there is no chance to single out the two monadic properties *being modified in a Vulcanian way* and *being modified in a Venusian way* as sharing something that they do not share with *being modified in an intense way* or *being modified in a confused way*. Yet if this is the case, then there is no monadic property of RI which is the common genus of the first two properties. Perhaps one may say that the four above monadic properties share something; yet whatever they share, definitely is not something like RI.

At this point, the monadic internalist may think that this unwelcome result derives from her choosing the adverbialist frame. So, she may be tempted by replacing the adverbialist frame with the other candidate that may naturally be invoked at this point, a functionalist frame. Accordingly, she will say that intentional states like S's thinking of Vulcan and S's thinking of Venus share a similarity in their having a functional role (a causal way of linking their inputs with their outputs), and that this similarity amounts to their sharing RI taken as a monadic property. Yet this move fares no better. For of course also intentional states respectively described as S's thinking intensely or S's thinking confusedly have a functional role; and there is no more similarity in functional role between S's thinking of Vulcan and S's thinking of Venus that may be abstracted as a common genus of the functional roles of these two states than there is between these states and the former two ones. Hence again, there is no monadic property to which RI may be assimilated.<sup>29</sup>

To be sure, the monadic internalist has still something else to say. Normally, internalism on intentional states is advocated for naturalist purposes. Thus, if one wants to defend from this point of view the idea that there is such a thing as RI, she will be disposed to think either that it supervenes on a physical property or that it is identical with it. Yet neither alternative helps the monadic internalist to justify the idea that RI is a monadic property.

First of all, suppose that the two (however described) relevant monadic properties of the two intentional states of S's thinking of Vulcan and S's thinking of Venus, say M and M' for simplicity, supervene on distinct physical monadic properties P and P': the difference between the former properties is matched by the difference between the latter properties. Now, it might be the case that the two latter physical properties were discovered to share a common physical monadic genus  $\pi$ . Yet in such a case not only this genus  $\pi$  would obviously

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<sup>29</sup> In this reasoning, I have conceded that a functionalist account of RI as a monadic property would avoid the drawback the adverbialist account has in its first reading. For Field, however, this is not the case. A functionalist account which claimed that RI is not relational would precisely fall into a theory that is forced to conceive any intentional state like S's thinking of Venus as a primitive, like S's having pain (hence as having nothing in common even with another intentional state like S's thinking of Vulcan). Cf. Field (1981:91-96).

not be RI, which would rather be the common genus of  $M$  and  $M'$  if there were any; but also  $M$  and  $M'$  might still share no such monadic genus. Given such a situation, in what sense would the fact that  $P$  and  $P'$  share a common monadic genus  $\pi$  speak in favour of the fact that RI is a monadic property?

True enough, if the monadic internalist said that RI is, rather than supervenes on, the common physical monadic genus  $\pi$  of  $P$  and  $P'$ , it would trivially follow that RI is a monadic property. Yet what would ground that identity claim? Given the above situation, the monadic internalist would be forced to say that there is no description in *mental* terms of that monadic property which is true of it. Not only, as we have seen before, the *relational* descriptions in a mental vocabulary of RI as a monadic property would be obviously false of it, but so is the case with the *monadic* descriptions of it given in the same vocabulary. For, as we have just seen, if the mental descriptions which one would give of the relevant specific monadic properties  $M$  and  $M'$  of intentional states, i.e., the adverbialist or the functionalist descriptions, were true of those properties, one would be forced to conclude that there is no monadic property of RI, taken as the common genus of such properties. As a result, the internalist should conclude that those descriptions of  $M$  and  $M'$  are false of those properties, hence that the more abstract description built out of those descriptions and intended to pick out their common genus is false of it as well. But if this were the case, what would be the point in saying that the hypothetically discovered physical common genus  $\pi$  is RI, rather than saying that, although intentional states admittedly share  $\pi$ , there is no such a thing as RI? In order for the former alternative to work, there must be facts involving such states, RI, and features of RI turning out of its mental description, that are explained in terms of those states' having  $\pi$ .<sup>30</sup> For, if there were no such fact, the latter, eliminativist, alternative would definitely be more natural. Now, since all mental descriptions of RI are *ex hypothesi* false, it turns out that there is no such fact. Hence, eliminativism rather than reductionism with respect to RI naturally suggests itself.

To see that this is so, consider water first. In order for water to be nothing but H<sub>2</sub>O, the 'water'-facts, such as that if some thing is water then it is transparent, it boils at 100° C, etc., have to be explained by that thing's having a H<sub>2</sub>O-structure. Since this is the case, then a necessary condition is fulfilled for water to be H<sub>2</sub>O.<sup>31</sup> But now take witchcraft. Even if it turned out that whenever humans attributed witchcraft to some individuals, those humans' brains were (physically) obsessed in a way  $W$ , what would be the point of saying that witchcraft really is the property of those individuals' to trigger the (physical) property of those brains' being obsessed in a way  $W$ ?<sup>32</sup> rather than saying that, over and above those brains' being so obsessed, there is no such a property as witchcraft? That triggering those brains' obsession would not explain e.g. the 'witchcraft'-fact that if someone is a witch then she casts a spell on someone else. For simply, given that it is false that an individual casts a spell on someone else, there is no such fact. Bearing this in mind, consider RI. If RI were nothing but  $\pi$ , an intentional state's having  $\pi$  should explain, say, the 'intentionality'-fact that if something has RI then the object it is 'directed upon' is an object that may not exist. Yet no such explanation may obtain. For, given that for a

<sup>30</sup> Crane (2001:54-5) correctly distinguishes between an ontological reduction and an explanatory reduction: the former holds between entities, the latter between theories, and each may subsist without that the other does. This is why I limit myself to saying that the fact that a thing's being  $G$  explains facts about its being  $F$  is a mere necessary condition for these properties to be identical.

<sup>31</sup> Horwich holds something similar when he says (1998:25) that a necessary condition for a property to constitute another is that their coextensiveness explain facts about this latter property.

<sup>32</sup> As is sometimes put by saying that being a witch is nothing but *being a projection of certain human mental deviances*.

monadic internalist it is false that an intentional state ‘directs upon’ an object that may not exist (in that framework, featuring RI as the relational property of being ‘directed upon’ an object that may not exist provides *ex hypothesi* a false description of it), for such an internalist there is no such fact. The same would be as far as any other similar facts about RI are concerned, for, as we have seen, in the monadic internalist framework there is no mental description of RI which is true of it. Hence, what is for the monadic internalist the point of saying that RI is  $\pi$  rather than saying that there is no such a thing?<sup>33</sup>

The morale of these reflections is that, if one wants to be a genuine monadic internalist, it is better for him/her to be eliminativist with respect to RI rather than to try to defend an alternative conception of it as a monadic property. But if this is the case, the upshot we previously got by scrutinizing externalism turns out now to be confirmed: the only really viable conception of RI makes it an internal relation.<sup>34</sup> An alternative way of putting this is that both believers and disbelievers in RI should agree on its *metaphysics*, i.e., on the fact that, if there were such a thing as intentionality, its nature would be that of an internal relation. Where believers and disbelievers in RI divide themselves is precisely on the *ontological* side: the former believe, while the latter disbelieve, that there is such a thing having that very nature. To settle this dispute is however a problem for another paper.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> I take Davidson as having suggested precisely this conclusion. According to Davidson, we describe intentional states as having RI, yet since they are token-identical with physical states, that description is not literally true of them. Cf. Davidson (1980a:4,13-5), (1980b). As a result, we can say that there is no such a property as RI.

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps Davidson would also agree on this. Although he may taken as saying that there is no such a thing as RI (cf. previous footnote), he acknowledges RI (or better, intentionality in general, for he does not distinguish between RI and CI) as a basic feature of an intentional state - notably, as the distinguishing feature of the mental (cf. 1980b:211), and moreover as something we cannot avoid in the description of an intentional state *qua* mental event (see again Davidson (1980a:4,13-5)).

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