



# **NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND**

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



John  
Templeton  
Foundation

[newdirectionsproject.com](http://newdirectionsproject.com)

# Seminar 24

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1. Recap: Intentional objects
2. Object and content
3. Summary of this term's themes

# 1. Recap: Objects of thought

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Intentionality is the directedness of the mind upon its objects

What is an object of thought?

# Intentionality and reference

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Intentionality is not reference

But there is this similarity:

the referents of your words are the things in the world that  
your words concern

the objects of your thought are the things in the world that  
your thoughts are about

# Objects

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What we think about — not what we think

What our beliefs are about — not what we believe

BUT:

what we perceive, desire, want, hope for, imagine, remember, etc.

see A N Prior, *Objects Of Thought* (1971)

# A misleading way to put things

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‘*Transient Truths* provides the first book-length defense of temporalism: the view that the things we assert, believe and perceive are propositions that can change their truth values....’

Cover blurb for Berit Brogaard, *Transient Truths* (2012)

The things we perceive, desire etc.

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Things in the world, not propositions

Propositions play some other role, not the role of the things we perceive or desire

But what we believe are propositions

# Realism vs phenomenalism

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The objects of thought and other attitudes are the things themselves

The objects of thought are not phenomena in Brentano's sense

Nor is the colour I see different from the colour you see, if we are both seeing the same thing



# Variety of objects of thought

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Anything you can think about:

particular things

events

processes

states

properties

relations

etc.

# Objects

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Objects here are ‘objects of...’

Objects of attention, objects of perception, objects of discussion

NOT object as contrasted with property (cf. Frege)

NOT *particular thing*

# Intentional object

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This is not an ontological category in itself!

# A subject for next term

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- (i) We can think about things that do not exist
- (ii) What you think about = the object of your thought or its intentional object

Therefore: some intentional objects do not exist

what does this mean?

## 2. Object and content

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Every object of thought is represented in some way

The way the object is represented in an intentional state of mind is what I call its *intentional content*

# ‘Ways’

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‘Way’ could mean two things:

(1) A **imagines** B vs. A **desires** B

(2) A imagines **B** vs. A imagines **C**, when  $B=C$

The difference in (1) is a difference in what I call MODE

The difference in (2) is a difference in what I call CONTENT

See Searle *Intentionality* ch 1, Crane *Elements of Mind* ch 1

# Content

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My definition does not imply that all intentional content (i.e. all ways in which intentional objects are represented) is propositional

The idea of non-propositional content is conceivable

See Tim Crane, *The Objects of Thought*, Chapter 4

### 3. Summary of this term's themes

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- (i) Physicalism again
- (ii) An alternative ontology: organisms and their capacities; what are mental capacities?
- (iii) Intentionality: the history of a concept
- (iv) Intentionality and intensionality
- (v) Semantics and the psychological
- (vi) Psychologism about the psychological
- (vii) Intentional objects and intentional contents



# Next term

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First seminar 25 January 2pm



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