



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

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John
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Seminar 20

1. Recap: history of the concept of intentionality; Brentano
2. Analytic philosophy and the history of intentionality
3. The significance of Brentano's conception of intentionality

1. Recap: the history of the concept of intentionality

The concept of intentionality can be traced from its origins in Ancient Greek, Islamic and Medieval philosophy

The terminology of intentionality (intentional existence etc.) was abandoned in the Early Modern period

But the subject-matter remained: mental representation, ideas, the mind-world nexus...

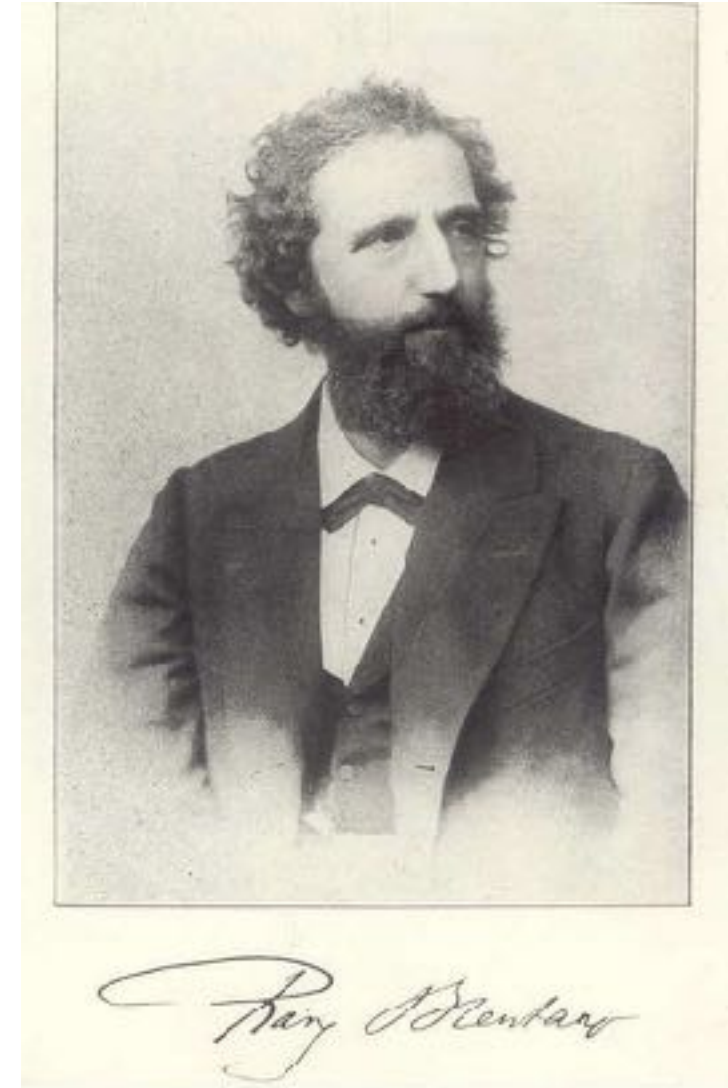
Brentano revived the terminology in 1874

Franz Brentano

1838-1917

Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint
(1874)

§§ on 'The distinction between mental and physical phenomena'



What was Brentano up to?

- (1) Distinguish psychology from physiology and philosophy
- (2) Psychology distinguished not by its methods, but by its subject-matter
- (3) The subject-matter of psychology is not the soul, but *mental phenomena*
- (4) Mental phenomena are distinguished from 'physical' phenomena by their *intentional inexistence* (intentionality)

Intentionality

(1) The 'mind's direction upon its objects' or mental representation

(2) The mark of the mental: all mental phenomena are intentional

‘Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the **intentional** (or mental) **inexistence** of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, **reference to a content, direction towards an object** (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or **immanent objectivity**. Every mental phenomenon **includes something as object within itself**, although they do not all do so in the same way. **In presentation something is presented**, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is **characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena**. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We could, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.’

Terminology

intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object,

reference to a content

direction towards an object

immanent objectivity

Intentional inexistence

This means: the object exists **in** the mental state (mental act/mental phenomena)

It does not mean the 'non-existence' of the object

Uriah Kriegel, 'Intentional inexistence and phenomenal intentionality' *Philosophical Perspectives* 2007

What about the famous non-existence of the object?

“What is characteristic of every mental activity is, as I believe I have shown, the reference to something as an object. In this respect, every mental activity seems to be something relational.... If I take something relative from among the broad class of comparative relations, something larger or smaller for example, then, if the larger thing exists, the smaller one must exist too. If one house is larger than another house, the other house must also exist and have a size.... It is entirely different with mental reference. If someone thinks of something, the one who is thinking must certainly exist, but the object of his thinking need not exist at all.... For this reason, one could doubt whether we are really dealing with something relational here, and not, rather, with something somewhat similar to something relational in a certain respect, which might therefore be called ‘quasi-relational’.” (1911)

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The solution to this puzzle

Brentano changed his mind between 1874 and 1911

Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*

Brentano originally planned a six-volume work.

The first two volumes were published together in 1874:

- (i) Book One, 'Psychology as a Science'
- (ii) Book Two, 'Mental Phenomena in General'.

These form the bulk of what has been passed down to Anglophone readers in the 1973/1995 edition

Brentano's *Psychology* ctd.

Three further volumes were planned on each of the fundamental categories of mental phenomena:

(iii) presentation

(iv) judgement

(v) emotional phenomena of desire, love, hate etc.

And a final volume on (vi) the mind-body relation.

These last four volumes were never published.

Publication of the *Psychology* (1)

In 1911, part of Book Two was published under the title *Von der Klassifikation der psychischen Phänomene* ('On the Classification of Mental Phenomena')

Also included was a substantial appendix, in which Brentano developed some of his ideas and indicated some changes of mind

One change of mind was the move to a more realistic metaphysics

Publication of the *Psychology* (2)

After Brentano's death in 1917, his student Oskar Kraus produced a second edition of the *Psychology* (1924)

This included the appendix from the 1911 book plus some further supplementary essays from Brentano's unpublished writings

The English edition published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1973 was based on Kraus's 1924 edition

The 1995 and 2014 editions are reprints of the 1973 edition

Three kinds of mental phenomena

- (1) Presentation — mere consciousness of things
- (2) Judgement — affirmation or denial
- (3) Emotions (including love and hate)

‘Presentation’

The German word is *Vorstellung*

English translations of Kant typically translate this it as ‘representation’

The standard translation of Gottlob Frege’s 1920 paper, ‘The Thought’ translates *Vorstellung* as ‘idea’

The mark of the mental

‘This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No **physical phenomenon** exhibits anything like it. We could, therefore, define **mental phenomena** by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves’

NB: phenomena!

‘Phenomena’

Brentano distinguishes between ‘that which really and truly exists’ and appearances or phenomena

physical phenomena are ‘signs of something real, which, through its causal activity, produces presentations of them’

So he did think there is an underlying reality behind phenomena, but this cannot be what he calls an ‘object of science’

Objects of science

All that science can ever discover are the appearances of things

These are the 'physical phenomena' like 'light, sound, heat, spatial location and locomotion'

As Brentano puts it, 'what are physical phenomena if not the colours, sounds, heat and cold etc., which manifest themselves in our sensations?'

More details

Tim Crane, 'Brentano on Intentionality' forthcoming in Kriegel (ed.) The Routledge Handbook of Brentano and the Brentano School (forthcoming)

Coming soon at timcrane.com/onlinepapers/

2. Analytic philosophy and the history of intentionality

(1) Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999)

(2) W.V. Quine (1908-2000)

(3) Donald Davidson (1917-2003)

Chisholm

A sentence is intentional if

- (i) It uses a noun phrase without implying that there is anything to which the phrase applies;
- (ii) It contains a propositional clause, but neither it nor its negation imply that the clause is true or false;
- (iii) Substitution of co-referring expressions in the sentence does not preserve its truth-value

See Chisholm, *Perceiving* (1957)

Quine 1

‘the Scholastic word “intentional” was revived by Brentano in connection with the verbs of propositional attitude and related verbs ... — “hunt”, “want” etc.’

W.V. Quine, *Word and Object* (1960)

Quine 2

‘there remains a thesis of Brentano’s, illuminatingly developed of late by Chisholm, that ... there is no breaking out of the intentional vocabulary by explaining its members in other terms’

W.V. Quine, *Word and Object* (1960)

A number of mistakes

(1) Propositional attitudes

(2) 'Hunt'

(3) 'Breaking out of the intentional vocabulary'

Quine 3

‘One may accept the Brentano thesis as showing the indispensability of intentional idioms and the importance of an autonomous science of intention, or showing the baselessness of intentional idioms the emptiness of a science of intention. My attitude, unlike Brentano’s, is the second.’

W.V. Quine, *Word and Object* (1960) p.221

Donald Davidson

A 'test of the mental' according to which the mental's distinguishing feature is that 'it exhibits what Brentano called intentionality':

'we may call those verbs mental that express propositional attitudes like believing, intending, desiring, hoping, knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering, and so on'

'Mental Events' (1970)

‘Propositional attitudes’

The notion of a propositional attitude itself was only introduced into philosophy in a 1904 paper by Bertrand Russell:

‘Belief is a certain attitude towards propositions, which is called knowledge when they are true, error when they are false’

‘Meinong’s theory of complexes and assumptions’ (1904)

(Thirty years after Brentano’s *Psychology*)

Propositional attitudes

Attitudes to propositions, e.g. belief:

Vladimir believes that Brexit will never happen

Vladimir **believes** that Brexit will never happen

Vladimir believes that **Brexit will never happen**

Analytic philosophers on Brentano

Chisholm, Quine and Davidson get it all wrong

Not just a failure of scholarship

- (1) The idea of finding a 'logical' criterion of intentionality
- (2) The association of intentionality with the propositional attitudes

Response: possible links between intensionality and intentionality

- (1) Quine: Not a confusion, but a consequence of 'semantic ascent'
- (2) Chisholm: an attempt to find a purely logical criterion of intentionality
- (3) All reports of intentionality are intensional?

A link between intentionality and intensionality?

Are all sentences (and other contexts) describing intentionality intensional?

Do all intensional sentences describe intentionality?

3. The significance of Brentano's conception of intentionality

Brentano is credited by some contemporary writers as an inspiration for contemporary theories

For example:

Uriah Kriegel, *Mind and Reality in Brentano's Philosophical System* (forthcoming)

Uriah Kriegel, 'Brentano on Judgment as an Objectual Attitude', forthcoming in A. Gzrankowski & M. Montague (eds.), *Non-Propositional Intentionality*

But how plausible is Brentano for us?

(a) Phenomenalism and 'realism'

(b) Relational conception of intentionality

(c) The classification of mental phenomena

Phenomena and reality

Physical phenomena are 'signs of something real, which, through its causal activity, produces presentations of them' (*Psychology* 1874)

Not commonsense realism

‘one will find no coherent interpretation of Brentano’s principle of intentionality so long as one remains within the framework of our usual, commonsensical notions of both the mind and its objects’

Barry Smith, in the *Cambridge Companion to Brentano* (1994)

(b) Relational conception of intentionality

‘If someone thinks of something, the one who is thinking must certainly exist, but the object of his thinking need not exist at all.... For this reason, one could doubt whether we are really dealing with something relational here’

Brentano (1911)

(c) Classification of mental phenomena

Presentation: what is it?

Judgement: is Brentano's conception adequate?

Object vs content (Twardowski, Husserl)

What about the propositional attitudes? States whose content is assessable as true or false

What about the Will? Sensation?



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