



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

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



John  
Templeton  
Foundation

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

# Seminar 21

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1. Recap: Brentano and Analytic Philosophy
2. The significance of Brentano's conception of intentionality
3. The propositional attitudes and their semantics

# 1. Recap: Brentano and analytic philosophy

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Brentano's idea of intentionality ('intentional inexistence')

The origins of this idea

Its role in Brentano's philosophy

The persistent misunderstanding of Brentano's views

# For more details

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

[timcrane.com/onlinepapers/](http://timcrane.com/onlinepapers/)

# Chisholm

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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) 'Sentences about Believing' (1955)

## Criterion (i)

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(i) It uses a noun phrase without implying that there is anything to which the phrase applies

Vladimir is thinking about Pegasus

## Criterion (ii)

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(ii) It contains a propositional clause, but neither it nor its negation imply that the clause is true or false

Vladimir believes that Mongolia had the largest empire in the history of the world

## Criterion (iii)

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(iii) Substitution of co-referring expressions in the sentence does not preserve its truth-value

Vladimir believes that Cicero was assassinated

Cicero = Tully

Vladimir believes that Tully was assassinated

(‘Frege’s puzzle’)



# Quine on Brentano's use of 'intentional'

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'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)

# Brentano on kinds of mental phenomena

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Presentation (conscious experience)

Judgement

Emotional phenomena (including love and hate)

# Quine on Brentano's thesis

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‘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)

# Brentano on Brentano's thesis

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‘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’

## Quine 3

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‘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

# The 'irreducibility of the intentional'

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Brentano thought the distinction between mental and physical phenomena is exclusive and exhaustive

He thought there could be an 'autonomous science of the intentional'

# Donald Davidson

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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

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Attitudes to propositions

No attitudes to propositions in Brentano's theory of intentionality

In particular, judgement for Brentano is not a propositional attitude



# Analytic philosophers on Brentano

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Chisholm, Quine and Davidson seem to get it all wrong

# Not just a failure of scholarship

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- (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

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(1) Quine: Not a confusion, but a consequence of 'semantic ascent'

(2) Chisholm: an attempt to find a purely logical criterion of discourse about intentionality

(3) Maybe all reports of intentionality are intensional?

This week's theme

## 2. The significance of Brentano's conception of intentionality

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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 today?

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(a) Phenomenalism and 'realism'

(b) Relational conception of intentionality

(c) The classification of mental phenomena

# Phenomena and reality

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

# Not commonsense realism

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‘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

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‘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

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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?

### **3. The propositional attitudes and their semantics**

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Might there be a connection between the doctrines of Chisholm, Quine and Davidson and the idea of intentionality?

Quine's idea of 'Semantic ascent'

# Semantic ascent

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“The strategy of semantic ascent is that it carries the discussion into a domain where both parties are better agreed on the objects (viz. words) and on the main terms concerning them”

Quine, *Word and Object* (1960)

# An example: causation

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Investigation of causation by investigating language used to describe causation

‘A causes B’ is true iff:

‘A’ names an actual event

‘B’ names an actual event

If ‘A’ had not named an actual event, then ‘B’ would not have named an actual event

Or: If A had not occurred, then B would not have occurred

# Propositional attitude attributions

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Semantic ascent applied to intentionality results in the semantics of propositional attitude attributions.

# ‘Propositional attitudes’

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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)

# Semantics of propositional attitudes (1)

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Compositional semantics

Truth and falsehood of wholes determined by semantic properties of parts

Predication

Function-argument structure

# Semantics of propositional attitudes (2)

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Vladimir believes that Cicero was assassinated

What are the semantic parts?

How is truth determined?



# Relations to propositions

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The semantics of propositional attitudes is the source of the idea that propositional attitudes are relations to propositions

But what is the relationship between:

**Intentional mental state ascriptions**

and

**Propositional attitude ascriptions?**

# Non-propositional intentionality

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Intensional transitive verbs:

Verbs of depiction or representation: imagine, portray, visualize, write (about), belief (in);

Verbs of anticipation: anticipate, expect, fear, foresee, plan;

Verbs of desire: prefer, want, hope (for);

Verbs of evaluation: fear, worship, scorn, respect;

Verbs of requirement: need, require, deserve

See Graeme Forbes, *Attitude Problems* (2005)

# A link between intentionality and intensionality?

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- (1) Are all sentences (and other contexts) describing intentionality intensional?
- (2) Do all intensional sentences describe intentionality?

## (2) Is intensionality a mark of intentionality?

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Quine on the number of planets:

- (i) 9 is necessarily greater than 5
- (ii) The number of planets = 9
- (iii) The number of planets is necessarily greater than 5

Quine, 'Reference and Modality' (1953)



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