



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE MIND

research project 2015-2017

 UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



John
Templeton
Foundation

newdirectionsproject.com

New Directions Seminar 2016-17

- Every Wednesday in full term in Michaelmas, Lent and Easter
- Open to part II students, MPhil and PhD students, and any other interested philosopher

Seminar 18

- 1. The story so far: physicalism and consciousness
- 2. Introducing this year's theme: intentionality
- 3. The history of the concept of intentionality

1. The story so far: Physicalism and consciousness

- Physicalism:
- Any minimal physical duplicate of the actual world is a duplicate *simpliciter*
- Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* (1998)
- see also: David Lewis, 'New Work for a Theory of Universals'; Daniel Stoljar, *Physicalism*

The story so far: reductionism

- Two kinds of reduction:
- ONTOLOGICAL REDUCTION: reduction of entities
- EXPLANATORY REDUCTION: reduction of theories

Two approaches to the mind-body question

- (1) Accept the traditional categories in terms of which the debate is formulated: dualism, materialism (physicalism), substance, property etc.
- Take a stand on one of the traditional positions and defend it

Or....

- (2) Critically examine the categories in terms of which the traditional question is posed the hope of pulling the problem apart:
- substance in the Cartesian sense
- ‘property dualism’
- the ‘material’, or matter
- STUFF!
- the ‘physical’
- the ‘mental’?

These categories

- Are they clear?
- Are they empirically acceptable or are they the relics of an outmoded metaphysics and/or science?
- Should we accept any/all of them?

And then...

- What remains of the mind-body question once we have dispensed with (some of) these categories or assumptions?

For example: false contrasts

- What is the alternative to physicalism?
- Immortal souls?
- ‘Mind-stuff’? (‘Ectoplasm’)
- ‘Fairies’!

But why?

- Why should you be committed to any of this just because you deny:
- ‘Any minimal physical duplicate of the actual world is a duplicate *simpliciter*’ ?

This is not physicalism:

- All objects are made of atoms and molecules

The mind-body problem as a dilemma

- First horn: if the mind is not physical, how can it affect the body and the physical world?
- Second horn: if the mind is physical, how can we explain consciousness?

A non-physicalist alternative approach

- Here's my advice:
- Forget about trying to investigate the mind by vague philosophising about physics
- Back to the things themselves!

The things themselves

- The organism/the person/the self
- Its capacities
- The exercises of these capacities
- Some of these capacities are mental

The mind-body question

- How are our mental capacities embodied in our brains, bodies and lives?

Mental capacities

- What makes a capacity mental?
- My answer: intentionality

2. This year's theme introduced: intentionality

- The 'mind's direction upon its objects'
- The 'aboutness' of the mental
- Mental representation (bit more controversial)

Three distinct ideas

- (1) Intention
- (2) Intensionality
- (3) Intentionality

Intention

- The intention to do something
- A decision is the formation of a prior intention
- Not all intentional actions involve a ‘prior intention’ (Searle: ‘intention-in-action’)
- See Kieran Setiya, ‘Intention’ SEP

Intensionality

- A logical/semantic category

Intension and extension

The extension of a term: what the term is true of/applies to/refers to

Extensional sentence: truth and falsehood is determined only by extension

‘Intensional’ = non-extensional

Intensional sentence: truth and falsehood is **not** determined only by extension

(‘intensional/extensional contexts’)

Intensionality

- A psychological category

A link between intentionality and intensionality?

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

3. The history of the concept of intentionality

- A number of different ideas and words:
- ‘intentio’ in Scholastic philosophy
- ‘intension’ in Leibniz and others
- ‘intentional inexistence’ in Brentano

‘Intentio’

The Latin ‘intentio’ literally means *tension* or *stretching*

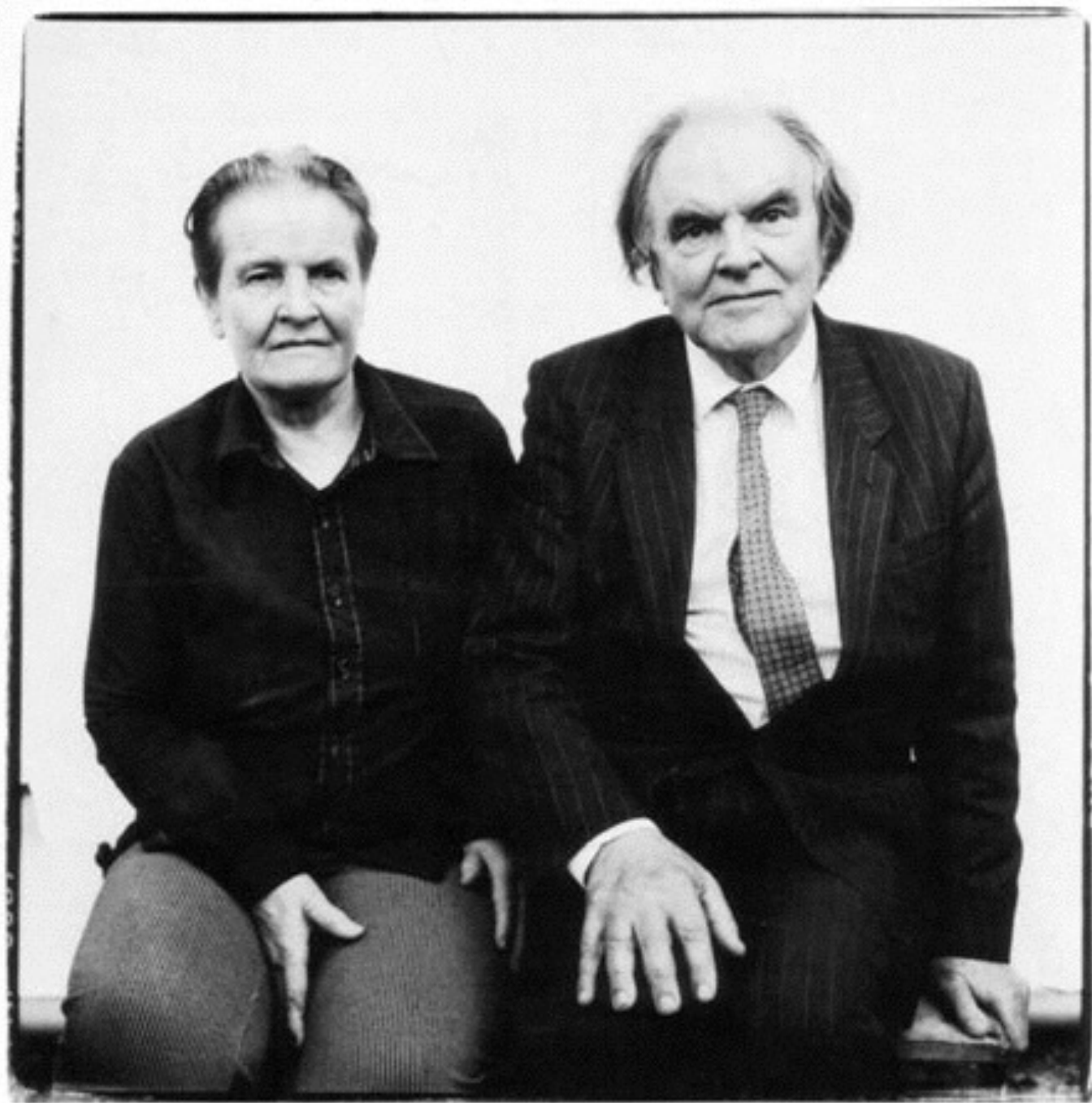
Scholastic philosophers used it as a technical term for a *concept* (plural: ‘intentiones’)

Anscombe and Geach

‘intendere animum in’ derives from ‘intendere arcum in’

to aim (stretch) your bow at.../to aim your mind at...

See Anscombe, ‘The intentionality of sensation’, Geach, ‘Intentional identity’, W. & M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic*



‘An idea of Sir William Hamilton’s’

- ‘He wanted to turn the old logical word “intention” into one that looked more like “extension”. I prefer to keep the older spelling with two t’s’
- G.E.M. Anscombe, ‘The intentionality of sensation’ (1965)
- See also: P.T. Geach, Reference and Generality (1962)
- W. & M. Kneale, The Development of Logic (1962)

Extension: the Port Royal Logic

- The 'Port Royal Logic' (*Logic: or the Art of Thinking* 1662, by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole)
- The distinction between the extension of a term (what the term applies to) and its 'comprehension' (the idea associated with the term)

Leibniz

- When I say Every man is an animal I mean that all the men are included amongst all the animals; but at the same time I mean that the idea of animal is included in the idea of man. 'Animal' comprises more individuals than 'man' does, but 'man' comprises more ideas or more attributes: one has more instances, the other more degrees of reality; one has the greater extension, the other the greater intension.
- Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* Book IV, chapter 17, p.8

Leibniz wrote in French

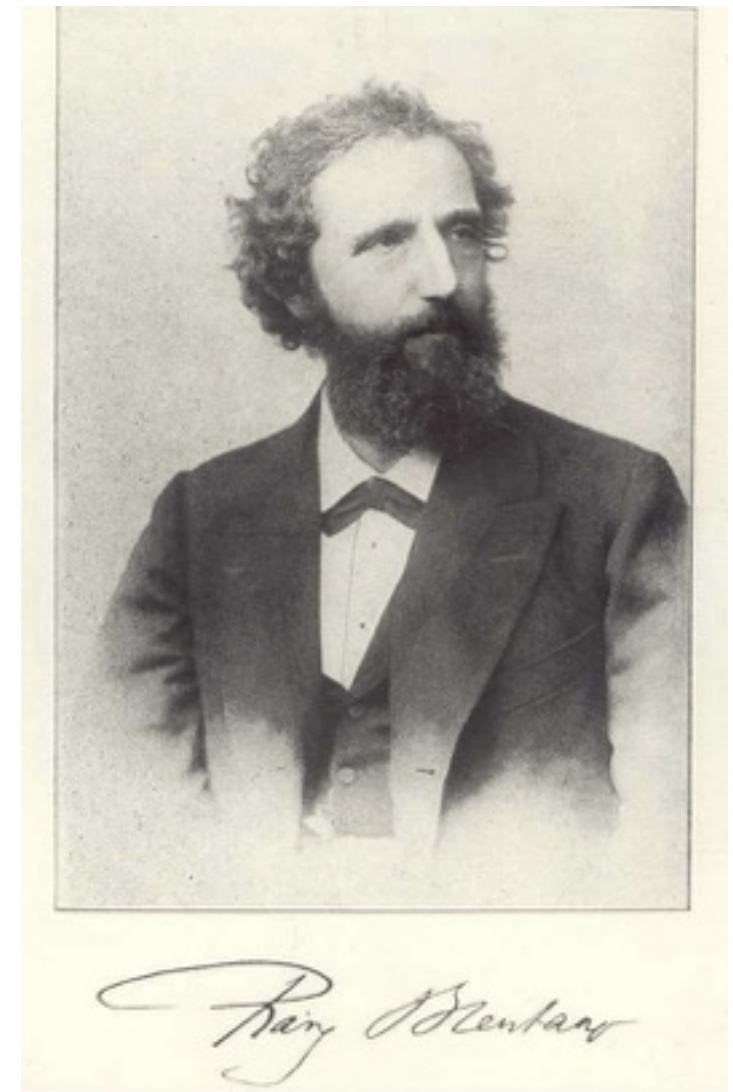
- intension = *intension*

Franz Brentano

1838-1917

Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint
(1874)

The distinction between mental and physical
phenomena



Intentional inexistence

‘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.’

To be continued....

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