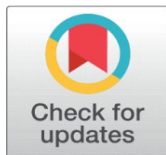
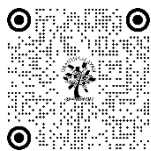


A STUDY ON BRENTANO'S CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY

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ABSTRACT

In his famous book, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Franz Brentano recovers intentionality as an essential foundation of empirical psychology known as descriptive psychology. For him, intentionality is the property of consciousness or mind which is the modern equivalent of the Scholastic term, *intentio* whereby it refers to or intends an object. In the enquiry on Brentano's concept of intentionality, the notion of the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object undoubtedly occupies the central position. The expression, 'inexistence' which is his translation of the medieval Scholastic term, *inesse* meaning 'being-in' or 'indwelling' refers to the inherence of property in a substance, e.g., the manner in which redness resides in the red rose or knowledge resides in the knower. Here, the concept, *in* does not have spatial connotation but it expresses dependence. Thus, the intentional object can be regarded as the real object as thought by the mind but not as a special object with inexistence. He, no doubt, enriches the concept of intentionality by providing a clear-cut criterion for distinguishing thought from non-thought, mind from non-mind, the philosophical from the non-philosophical on the basis of an intelligible distinction between the intentional and non-intentional. In a nutshell, the term intentionality in a philosophical sense indicates an act's being directed at an object. The aim of the paper is to examine Brentano's concept of intentionality as propounded in *'Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint'*.

Keywords: Descriptive Psychology, Intentionality, *Intentio*, Intentional Object, Empirical Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

Franz Brentano reintroduced the topic of intentionality which had fallen into disuse in modern philosophy in his famous book, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. He used it as the basis of the separation of mental phenomena from physical phenomena in his new psychology known as descriptive psychology. 'Phenomena or appearances are, in a certain way, mind-dependent. However, to say that all phenomena are mind – dependent does not mean that all phenomena are mental. So, what, then, are mental phenomena? Brentano's answer to this question is the source of his famous doctrine that 'intentional inexistence' is the distinguishing mark of mental phenomena (Crane, 2017a; p. 43). For him, intentionality signifies the property of consciousness or mind which is the modern equivalent of the Scholastic term, *intentio* whereby it refers to or intends an object. The notion of the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object is undoubtedly the quintessential theme of his concept of intentionality.

'The object of a mental phenomenon is what it is directed on. 'Intentional inexistence' does not have anything to do with the possible or actual non-existence of the object of a mental act, rather it means that the object 'exists in' the mental phenomena itself. Brentano's introduction of the terminology of intentional nonexistence does not appeal to, and nor does it presuppose, any distinction between existent and nonexistent objects of thought' (Crane, 2017b; p. 43). Even though the intentional object is not necessarily a real or existent thing, it is merely that which the mental act is about. In other words, the intentional object is not a special object with inexistence rather it is the real object as thought by the mind.

2. THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY:

'All the data of our consciousness are divided into two great classes- the class of physical and the class of mental phenomena' (Brentano, 1973a; p. 59). Regarding the relation between physical phenomenon and mental phenomenon, Brentano introduced six properties which differentiate mental phenomena from physical phenomena.

- 1) 'Mental phenomena are either presentations or based on presentations;
- 2) Mental phenomena, unlike physical phenomena, are non-intended;
- 3) Mental phenomena intentionally contain or are directed towards objects or contents.
- 4) Mental phenomena are only perceived in inner consciousness;
- 5) Mental phenomena possess actual existence in addition to intentional existence. They are as they appear to be and finally.
- 6) Mental phenomena are presented serially as a unity (in time) while physical phenomena can be presented simultaneously' (Tassone, 2012; pp. 111-112).

For him, the third property is the most important one since mental phenomenon is understood by being intentional in the mind (or consciousness) in contradistinction to the physical phenomenon. 'Brentano's first concern in psychology was to find a characteristic which separates psychological from non-psychological or "physical" phenomena. It was in connection with this attempt that he first developed his celebrated doctrine of intentionality as the decisive constituent of psychological phenomena' (Spiegelberg, 1994; p. 36).

In what is probably the most frequently quoted passage of 'Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint,' Brentano asserts: '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 toward 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 inexistence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves' (Brentano, 1973b; p. 68).

Further analysis shows that four important features of intentional property of mind (or consciousness) are found in the above quotation.

1) Reference to a content

The term, 'content' is used by Brentano and his followers to refer to that which is contained in an act of experiencing such as feeling, perceiving, remembering, thinking, etc., In other words, mental acts are inherently about something i.e., they have a content which they refer to.

2) Direction towards an object

Here, object denotes the extent of the intentional act, e.g., seeing, remembering, judgement, etc. The intentional object is not necessarily a real or existent thing but is merely that which the mental act is about. Thus, direction towards an object connotes the inherent property of the mental acts about something external to themselves. In other words, each mental act is directed towards an object whether that object is real, abstract or imagined thing.

3) Immanent objectivity

For Brentano, immanent objectivity is a new version of the scholastic idea of intentional inexistence of an object. It refers to the notion that the object of an intentional act is immanently present within the act itself. For example, when someone sees something, the object seen is said to 'inexist' within the act of seeing or to have immanent objectivity. In brief, by an immanent objectivity, he means an intended object that is contained within an act of thought. In this sense, an intended object has 'inexistence' existing not externally, but in the mental state by which it is thought as the thought's internal content.

4) The inclusion of an object within itself.

Every mental act is inherently directed towards something whether it is an external object, a concept, a memory, a belief, a judgement or an emotion. For example, the intended object of love is contained immanently in the act of love. When we think about a horse, the mental act of thinking involves the horse as its object.

Regarding the doctrine of the intentional inexistence, 'Brentano's description is quite deliberately stated to apply to phenomena. This might sometimes be just a fancy name for things, but here it is not: Brentano introduces the distinction between physical and mental as one among the data of our consciousness. In his early years, under the influence of Descartes, Brentano was very wary of ascribing us knowledge of the so-called external world. He thought we know of the existence of such a world at best indirectly, by reference. That explains also some of the examples he gives of physical phenomena, which include a sound we hear, and a landscape we see. By the description, each of these examples could denote the things themselves, but here they do not: they denote rather something inherent in our experience: a heard sound, a seen pattern of green, brown, blue, etc. These are physical phenomena: as phenomena, they are experiential or mental. What makes them physical is their simplicity. A sound is just a sound, a pattern is just a pattern. They are not of anything and they have nothing in themselves. Contrast the phenomenon of hearing the sound. It has two aspects: it is a hearing phenomenon (or act, as Brentano also says, meaning something actual, not an action), and it is of the sound (e.g., a musical chord). The sound is (or exists) in the hearing phenomenon as a part, so the phenomenon is complex. Note that Brentano has changed the container: not the soul but the mental phenomenon contains the object or content which is the sound. This retains the intentional inexistence of the mental while dispensing, at least for now, with any need to mention a controversial soul. So, the second point to note is that the 'in' is an 'in' of containment or parthood, a relationship on which Brentano had already commented in his Wurzburg metaphysics lectures' (Simon, 2012; p. 22).

'... Brentano uses the term 'intentional' not as an adjective for "direction toward an object" but as a characteristic of the content of consciousness. As he himself says, he concurs here with the Scholastic usage. 'Intentional' means immanent and stands opposed to real. That Brentano does indeed understand the term 'intentional' in this way is apparent from a footnote in which he says that 'intentional' means the same as 'objective', a term that the Scholastics used more often than 'intentional'. Both terms refer to the mode of being of the object in the knower, which is to be distinguished from the real object outside the mind. But Brentano prefers to avoid the word 'objective' because of the misunderstandings to which it gives rise: in modern philosophy it means exactly the reverse, i.e., really existing. It refers to a real existence outside the mind as opposed to mere subjective appearances. For the Scholastics, by contrast, 'esse objective' means the being in consciousness which the cognitive image or species enjoys' (De Boer, 1978; p. 7).

3. THE INTENTIONAL (OR MENTAL) INEXISTENCE OF AN OBJECT

In the enquiry on the unique features of Brentano's concept of intentionality, the notion of the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object plays a pivotal role. Intentional inexistence is an expression used by Franz Brentano in his book, 'Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint' to describe the mode of being of the intentional object in the act of intending. Here, inexistence as used by Brentano in his translation of the medieval Scholastic term 'in esse' means 'being' in or 'indwelling' that implies the inherence of property in a substance, e.g., the manner in which redness resides in the red rose or knowledge resides in the knower. The notion, 'in' expresses dependence but does not have spatial connotations. The intentional object can be described not as a special object with inexistence but as the real object as thought by the mind.

Thus, the essential feature of every mental phenomenon consists in a relation that is inseparably connected to an object i.e., intentional. It is intentional in the sense that it is a relation to something which is presented as an object. It

makes no sense to have a process of hearing where nothing is heard, judging without something judged, seeing without something seen, and so on.

In the words of Dermot Moran, 'In his initial phase of expressing the relation, Brentano emphasized it was possible to be intentionally related to all kinds of objects, imagined, possible, impossible and so on. Roughly from 1874 to 1904, Brentano frequently expresses intentionality in terms of the intentional inexistence of the object. 'Inexistence (Inexistenz) is, in fact, Brentano's translation of the Latin term *in-esse*, the verb meaning 'to be in', which was used by the Scholastics to characterize the manner in which an accident is said to be in a substance (e.g., knowledge is in a man), and specifically with regard to epistemology, the manner in which a form is in the mind. By 'inexistence', Brentano does seem to intend that the object of an act of consciousness is something immanent in consciousness, whether or not there is also a real object or reality (Realitat) outside of consciousness. Clearly, as a follower of Descartes and Aristotle, Brentano believes there is something in the mind when it thinks and furthermore, what the mind thinks about may or may not have any actual existence outside the mind. It may be a real entity (*ein Reales*) or something 'unreal'. Thus, I can see a dog, or think of a 'golden mountain' or a round square' (Moran, 2000; p. 48).

'The claim that psychological phenomena characteristically refer to an object is likewise a matter of exegesis and dispute among the Brentanists. As this thesis is stated in *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, this intentional reference is also called intentional inexistence. The object of reference is said to exist in the phenomenon which refers to it and is accordingly called immanent object or content' (Rollinger, 1999a; p. 26).

In one important sense, 'by an immanent objectivity, Brentano means an intended object that is contained within an act of thought. In this sense an intended object, if not a reality, exists in or has in-existence, existing not externally but in the psychological state by which it is thought as the thought's internal content. The sense of 'in' in Brentano's phrase, 'intentional in-existence is thus locative rather than negative. It specifies where the intended object of a thought is to be located, rather than qualifies it negatively as nonexistent' (Jacquette, 2004; p. 102).

At the same time, 'Brentano remarks that by 'immanent' he never meant to imply that the object is an entity which is different from the transcendent object (if there is one). He meant only to indicate that the object need not actually exist in order to be the object of an intentional act; intentional existence suffices. For him, the term 'immanent object' means not that the object exists but that it is an object whether or not there is anything which corresponds to it' (McAlister, 2004; pp. 151-152).

Thus, the intentional inexistence of an object has three common features.

- 1) 'It is an immaterial existence in the mind.
- 2) Inexistence (*Einwohnung*) is not a non-existence but rather an existence in the improper (*uneigentlich, nicht-wirklich*) sense.
- 3) Existence in the proper (*eigentlich*) sense has not to be confounded with inexistence; otherwise this would involve a contradiction. At a later point, Brentano states, in agreement with Hamilton, that a subject-object' is essential to mental inexistence' (Baumgartner, 1999; p. 250).

For Brentano, object does represent a very broad category that includes real, ideal, concrete, abstract, individual and general objects. In brief, an intentional act can be directed to an object which may or may not exist e.g.,

- 1) I can believe that I find the true path of God,
- 2) I can hope for an ideal partner,
- 3) I can imagine the concept of a round square and so on.

Further, the notion of the intentional inexistence of an object can be viewed in two different dimensions, 'depending on whether inexistence is taken in the proper or the modified sense. If it is taken in the former sense we may speak of strong immanentism, whereas weak immanentism is the view that the object of an act exists in the act in a modified sense, and properly speaking, does not exist at all' (Rollinger, 1999b; p. 50).

In brief, 'we may, therefore, consider the intentional in-existence of an object to be a general characteristic of mental phenomena which distinguishes this class of phenomena from the class of physical phenomena' (Brentano, 1973c; p. 69).

4. CONCLUSION

What Brentano does in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is to revive the important role of the concept of intentionality in modern philosophy. Even though he did not invent this characteristic feature of mind, yet he contributes a lot to the evolving tradition of the intentional aspect of human thought in general. He no doubt enriches the concept of intentionality by providing a clear-cut criterion for distinguishing thought from non-thought, mind from non-mind, the philosophical from the non-philosophical on the basis of an intelligible distinction between the intentional and non-intentional. 'These days, the problem of intentionality is introduced against the background of a commonsense realism that assumes a realm of ordinary objects that exist independently of our minds, that relations hold between such objects and the science studies these objects' (Crane, 2017c; p. 43). In a nutshell, the term, 'intentionality' in a philosophical sense indicates an act's being directed to an object. But, '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' (Smith, 1994; p. 40). Thus, we know as we experience and live through thought in first person perspective as our different ways of thinking, remembering, judging, love, hate, etc. are always about something and always directed towards an intended object.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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