



**BRENTANO AND
THE PROBLEMS OF
INTENTIONALITY**

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BRENTANO Y LOS PROBLEMAS DE INTENCIONALIDAD

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es llamar la atención sobre una cuestión que debe ser articulada aún en la literatura relativa a la noción brentaniana de inexistencia intencional o intencionalidad. Tal y como explicaré, el corazón de este problema puede ser entendido como una *petitio principii* que se manifiesta en el modelo brentaniano de conocimiento. Este engañoso constructo conceptual implica una interdependencia radical de los elementos del modelo. Por ello, argumentaré que, de ser pasada por alto, esta dificultad esencialmente ontológica nos conduce al tipo de problemas epistemológicos referidos bajo el título convencional de "problema de la intencionalidad".

Palabras clave: Brentano, conciencia, ontología, epistemología.

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to call attention to a problem that has yet to be articulated in the literature surrounding Brentano's notion of intentional inexistence, or, as it is commonly referred, intentionality. As I will explain, the core of this problem can be understood as *petitio principii* manifest in Brentano's model of consciousness, such a fallacious conceptual construct entails a radical interdependence of the elements of the model. I will argue that, when overlooked, this essentially ontological problem leads us to the sorts of epistemological problems that we conventionally refer to as the "problem of intentionality".

Key words: Brentano, consciousness, ontology, epistemology.

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INTRODUCTION

In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) Brentano reintroduces the notion of intentionality in answer to what is sometimes referred to in the contemporary literature as the "hard problem" of consciousness or, simply, the "problem of experience" (See, for example, Chalmers, 1995). In Brentano's own time the problem might have been branded the "problem of introspection", but we must be cautious not to interpret the problem too narrowly so that we can understand that what is referred to is a set of problems generally associated with the scientific credentials of psychology: What is the proper language for explaining what it is like to be conscious? Can states of consciousness be described objectively? And last, but not least, what constitutes an adequate account of the instantiation of consciousness? Intentionality or, rather, the intentional inexistence of the object of consciousness is a key component to Brentano's answer to these questions. It is the analysis of mental phenomena, characterized by the intentional inexistence of an object, that reveals the felt qualities of experience. These problems persist even today, as does the relevance of Brentano's analysis of them, for intentionality has come to represent a set of fundamental problems in contemporary philosophy of mind and has served as a foundational concept in the development of the cognitive sciences.

Contemporary formulations of the problem of intentionality are fundamentally epistemological in nature: Thinkers like Chisholm, Simons, and Caston define the problem as an attempt to grapple with the fact that intentional sentences, or sentences about psychological phenomena, do not involve the same sorts of truth functionality that sentences describing physical phenomena do (Chisholm, 1956; Searle, 1982; Anscombe, 1981; and Caston, 1998). These exemplary scholars demonstrate that the problematic in which contemporary mainstream philosophers situate the problem of intentionality is one in which a physicalist

paradigm is assumed. Ontological considerations are preempted because the project, as defined by the problem, is to render intentional phenomena compatible with a physicalist ontology free of impurities.

The purpose of this paper is to call attention to a problem that has yet to be articulated in the literature surrounding the notion of intentionality. This problem is an essentially ontological problem and it arises out of Brentano's insistence that the necessary condition for consciousness is the intentional inexistence of an object. This stipulation entails a radical interdependence of the elements of Brentano's model of consciousness, and thereby precludes the possibility of an account of the emergence of consciousness in its particularity. This "genetic" problem of intentionality is, I will argue, the problem that must be answered because it represents the ontological basis of the conventional epistemological problems. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the ramifications of the genetic problem of intentionality.

1. THE PROBLEMS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Contemporary with Comte, and later still with Brentano, was a concern for the legitimacy of the various sciences and the criteria according to which a mode of inquiry might truly be called a science. This was Comte's concern when he wrote his *Système de Politique Positive* (1851-54). In the four volumes that comprise the *Positive Polity* (as it has come to be known in English) Comte elaborates upon what he sees as the three phases of the evolution of a science—(1) the theological, (2) the metaphysical, and (3) the positive—and sets out to rank what are, in his opinion, the six fundamental sciences—(i) Mathematics, (ii) Astronomy, (iii) Physics, (iv) Chemistry, (v) Physiology, and (vi) Social Physics (in that order). Comte's precise and elaborate criteria for this ranking and his justification for the exclusivity of this list of so-called "fundamental sciences" are not central to our present concerns.¹ For our purposes, what is relevant is the conspicuous absence in this list of the science of psychology. Comte's claim is that the psychology of his day² has stagnated in the metaphysical phase of its development. This criticism is twofold: Comte is critical of (1) the object and (2) the method of psychology.

1.Comte's system is, in a somewhat Hegelian way, intended to be grand and all-encompassing. It was first transmitted to the English-speaking world in Comte (1896).

2.It is perhaps valuable to note that the prominent psychologists of Comte's day included François-Joseph-Victor Broussais (1772 – 1838), of whom Comte was explicitly critical. However, the study of psychology was largely influenced by British empiricists like Berkeley (1685 – 1753), Hume (1711 – 1776), and James Mill (1773 – 1836). The study of psychology was also heavily influenced by a dominant contingent of German psychologists, including Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776 – 1841) and Ernst Heinrich Weber (1795 – 1878). For a reasonably non-controversial account of the psychology preceding and contemporary with Comte, see Hergenhahn (1986).

In his "Comte and Psychology" (1922)³ Bodenhafer explains Comte's dissatisfaction with any science whose object is not delimited independently of its practitioner. Bodenhafer quotes Comte as saying:

However, some misconceiving in this respect the actual and unalterable direction of the human mind, have endeavored during the last ten years to transplant among us German metaphysics and to found under the name of *psychology* a pretended science completely independent of *Physiology*, superior to it, and exclusively the study of the phenomena termed *moral* (Comte, 1896; Bodenhafer, 1922, 18-19).

This passage, along with his later characterizations of psychology as "the vague and chimerical pursuit" and as the "illusory science of personified abstractions" (Comte, 1896, 646), is revealing. Comte's concern seems to be that the object of psychology is obfuscated by its non-ostensible and therefore abstract nature, that is, it is speculative in so far as it objectifies non-physical entities and, in so doing, indulges in abstractions. The conclusion we are led to, if we follow Comte, is that only ostensible physical objects exhibit the sort of concretization that conditions the possibility of a science proper. For this reason, Comte does not reject the possibility of a psychological science outright. Rather, he promotes a physics of the mental, a science based upon what he perceived to be the potential to analyze mental phenomena solely with regard to their ostensible physical instantiation.⁴

Comte's critique of the methods by which the psychology of his day was practiced is intimately related to his criticisms of its object. Specifically, Comte is critical of introspection, or what he calls "internal observation". Comte argues:

Man can observe what is external to him and also certain functions of his organs, other than the thinking organ. To a certain extent he can even observe himself as regards the passions he feels, because the cerebral organs on which these depend are distinct from the observing organ properly so called. It is, however, evidently impossible for him to observe his own intellectual acts, for the organ observed and the observing organ being in this case identical, by whom could the observation be made? . . . To render this possible the individual would have to divide himself into two persons, one thinking, the other observing the thoughts. Thus man cannot directly observe his intellectual operations; he can only observe his organs

3. There is surprisingly little contemporary literature concerning Comte's influence on psychology. Evidence of this influence exists in the dominance of neural psychology among the experimental and non-therapeutic psychologies, see, for example, Spiegelberg (1965).

4. Such a science he believed to be exemplified by phrenology. The best contemporary example of such a physics of the mental, however, might be neuropsychology of the sort developed by Oliver Zangwill (1913–1987), see Collins (2006).

and their results. ...There is therefore no place for psychology, or the direct study of the soul independently of any external considerations (Comte, 1896, 647; Bodenhafer, 1922, 20).

Here Comte suggests that the speculative and abstract nature of the methodology of psychology entails a certain identity between the object and the observer because of the latent subjectivity involved in the delineation of the object. Interestingly enough, Comte's criticism of the psychological method alludes to, albeit implicitly, an adaptation of the Aristotelian principle of sensation—namely, the identity between the senser and the sensed—that, as we shall see, Brentano later uses to rehabilitate empirical psychology. Comte cites the identity between the perceiver and the perceived as a further deficiency of the object of psychology. Here again we see his underlying concern with the clear differentiation and delimitation of the special object of the given science. In this context, however, the deficiency is a function of the method of introspection.

2. INTENTIONAL INEXISTENCE AS A RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Brentano sets out to rehabilitate the science of psychology, largely in response to these criticisms leveled by Comte. His point of departure is to delineate the domain of psychology, then narrow the focus of the science to a specific object. Psychology, says Brentano, is an empirical science distinguishable from the rest by the private nature of its object:

The natural sciences study the properties and laws of physical bodies, which are the objects of our external perception, psychology is the science which studies the properties and laws of the soul, which we discover within ourselves directly by means of inner perceptio...(Brentano, 1995, 5).

The phrases "external perception" and "inner perception" are here meant to be understood in subtle contrast to Comte's phrase "internal observation". I shall elaborate upon them in the discussion that follows. For now, however, it is sufficient that we understand that, along with metaphysics (the objects of which are the rules that are common to the empirical sciences); the natural sciences (the objects of which are external bodies); and psychology (the objects of which are the "properties and laws of the soul"), these three domains of science exhaust knowledge in its totality.

Having delineated the domain of psychology in this way, Brentano proceeds further to articulate his basic conceptual framework as a further qualification of the proper object of psychology. He proceeds by making the fundamental distinction between physical and mental phenomenon. According to Brentano, "All the data of our consciousness are divided into two great classes—the class of

physical and the class of mental phenomena" (Brentano, 1995, 77). It is important to notice that this distinction is explicitly a distinction between two sorts of "data of our consciousness" that emphasizes the internal nature of both physical and mental phenomena. The facts with respect to the internal quality of both sorts of phenomena are complicated by Brentano's claim that physical phenomena are revealed through external perception. What must be remembered is that physical phenomena include "color, a figure, a landscape which I see, a chord which I hear, warmth, cold, odor which I sense; as well as similar images which appear in the imagination" (Brentano, 1995, 79–80). In other words, physical phenomena are not concrete individual substances (in the Aristotelian sense) as one might surmise from the use of the phrase "external perception". Physical phenomena are to be understood, rather, like Lockean secondary qualities.⁵ That this is indeed the proper construal of physical phenomena is confirmed when, shortly after defining them, he makes reference to Locke's famous experiment in which he submersed his hands, one having been warmed, the other having been cooled, in the same pool of water and experienced it to be simultaneously two different temperatures (Brentano, 1995, 9).

The defining characteristic of mental phenomena is their possession of intentional content, or, rather, an inexistent object:

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 (Brentano, 1995, 88).

As we have already seen, in this passage Brentano identifies the distinguishing characteristic of mental phenomena—namely, their content-fullness. Brentano uses the phrases "intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object", "immanent objectivity", and "includes something as object within itself" to encapsulate the content-fullness of mental phenomena (Brentano, 1995, 88 emphasis added). And again, this is the passage referred to when Brentano is credited with the reintroduction of intentionality to modern philosophy. Although he does not himself use the noun "intentionality" as it is in the contemporary philosophical vernacular, he does employ the adjective term "intentional" from which the noun

5. Locke tells us, Qualities which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but power to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities, i.e. by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colours, sounds, tastes, etc. These I call secondary qualities... For, if sugar produce in us the ideas which we call whiteness and sweetness, we are sure there is a power in sugar to produce those ideas in our minds, or else they could not have been produced by it (2:8:10 emphasis added, and 2:16:2).

form is derived. In Brentano then, intentionality can be understood as the ontic basis of mental contents: the object of any specific mental phenomenon exists in the intention of the psychic event.

Brentano's response to the problems of psychology discussed above becomes more explicit in his extended analysis of mental phenomena: "Every idea or *presentation* which we acquire either through sense perception or imagination is an example of a mental phenomenon" (Brentano, 1995, 78-9 emphasis added). To be clear, the term "presentation" [*Vorstellung*] in the above passage refers not merely to the presence of content in our cognitive activities. The examples of mental phenomena Brentano offers include the hearing of a sound, and the seeing of a color, the suggestion being that the presentation is identical with (i) the content of the presentation, (ii) an awareness of the activity of the sense apparati involved. Brentano adds to this (iii) a certain subjective character. He says that in some the object is presented as *loved*, in others as *hated*, in others as *affirmed*, as *denied*, as *desired*, and so on. The mode of presentation of the mental phenomena is an essential aspect of it and is a function of its intentional character. In what follows, I shall refer to this subjective character as the "meta-character" of psychological states. A thorough understanding of Brentano's notion of "intentional inexistence" requires an appreciation of all three of these aspects: (i) the content, (ii) reflective awareness, and (iii) the meta-character of psychological states.

Brentano's response to Comte's concern with the lack of concretization exhibited by the object of psychology can now be understood as the claim that the psychologically relevant part of experience, in other words, its intentional character, is fixed to, and always given as, concomitant with the presentation of the real physically delimited and external object. Ultimately, we must understand that the variety of our mental phenomena, our thoughts, emotions, desires, and, in short, all of the things we want to talk about when we engage in psychology, is accounted for by the three aspects of mental phenomena identified above.

It is not yet clear how we are to analyze mental phenomena scientifically if not through introspection. Brentano answers this question with what he, with Kant, calls "inner perception" (*innere Wahrnehmung*).⁶ Through inner perception one

6. See Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* Part III, Chapter III in particular. Brentano's notion of inner perception also seems reminiscent of Duns Scotus' notion of intuitive cognition. The sort of cognition that Duns Scotus calls "abstract intuition" is that which results from the cooperation of the human and divine powers of intellect. In his *Quodlibetal Question*, Duns Scotus makes the following comment: To understand better what is involved, it is helpful to distinguish two acts of the intellect at the level of simple apprehension or intellection of a simple object. One is indifferent as to whether the object is existing or not, and also whether it is present in reality or not. We often experience this act in ourselves, for universals and the essences of things we grasp equally well whether they exist extramentally in some subject or not. We also have a *posteriori* proof of this, for scientific knowledge of a conclusion or

engages his or her sense or awareness of his or her own presentations and their essential structure. In other words, inner perception allows one to attend to the concomitant awareness of sensation, presence of content, and the meta-character of the presentations he or she is subject to (Spiegelberg, 1965, 38–39). Inner perception is Brentano's fundamental response to Comte's rejection of introspection. He writes: "Another characteristic which all mental phenomena have in common is the fact that they are only perceived in inner consciousness" (Brentano, 1995, 91). Whereas physical phenomena are seen through external perception, mental phenomena are the object of inner perception. Further,

inner perception possesses another distinguishing characteristic: its immediate, infallible self-evidence... Moreover, inner perception is not merely the only kind of perception which is immediately evident; it is really the only perception [*Wahrnehmung*] in the strict sense of the word (Brentano, 1995, 91).

Brentano's postulation of the noetic superiority of inner perception seems to represent his attempt to come to grips with the Kantian problem concerning our knowledge of things in themselves. An appreciation of this context helps to understand his later, and repeated, statements to the effect that, "the phenomena of so-called external perception cannot be proved true and real..." (Brentano, 1995, 91).

understanding of a principle can be equally present to the intellect whether what they are about is existing or not, or is present or absent (Duns Scotus, 1975, 135–136).

This passage defines what he calls "abstract intellection". This sort of intellection, as is explicit in the passage, deals with "universals and the essences of things" and represents the capacity to grasp and manipulate concepts. Further, as we can understand from Duns Scotus' comments concerning the presence and absence of the object of such intellection, this sort of activity is susceptible to the failures of entailment described by Caston.

On the other hand, if the divine power of intellection is a sufficient condition for cognition, it is possible, as Duns Scotus concludes, to engage in a form of cognition that is not mediated by the human powers of intellection. Duns Scotus writes, "But there is another act of understanding, though we do not experience it in ourselves as certainly, but it is possible. It is knowledge precisely of a present object as present and of an existing object as existing" (Duns Scotus, 1975, 136). This sort of cognition is referred to by Duns Scotus as "intuitive cognition". Pasnau's preliminary exegesis of this sort of cognition yields the following conclusions: that the intellect can (in special cases) operate without being essentially ordered to any intelligible species. He believes that an intelligible object might produce an act of cognition without informing the intellect. In this way, the intellect could have an immediate vision of external objects (Pasnau, 1997). On a less esoteric note, these comments by Duns Scotus bear striking resemblance to those made by Brentano concerning inner perception. It would seem that in Duns Scotus, as in Brentano, there is a sense in which the objects of experience (to use a more general term) appear (in a metaphorical sense) to the subject according to the mode of the subject's experience, in other words, one perceives an object while at the same time he perceives that he is perceiving an object.

For our present purposes, the significance of Brentano's formulation of inner perception is twofold: First, rather than trying to defend the objectivity of introspection or attempting to devise some form of sufficiently objective mode of introspection, Brentano abandons objectivity as a criterion of science altogether in favour of self-evidence and infallibility. Inner perception is, for Brentano, neither objective nor subjective—it is a self-evident, or apodictic, method for conducting psychology scientifically. Second, Brentano's insistence that inner perception is the only true perception posits, like Aristotle before him, an identity of sorts between the subject and the object which obfuscates the ontological status of both. Despite the relative ambiguity with respect to its implicit ontology, the significance of intentional inexistence, or, rather, intentionality, in Brentano's model of consciousness is clear: He employs it to account for the content-fullness of mental phenomena. It is the barer of content and the bridge between the mental and the physical (Spiegelberg, 1965, 39–42; and Smith, 1994, 35).

3. THE CONVENTIONAL PROBLEM OF INTENTIONALITY

Much of the contemporary work addressing the problem of intentionality⁷

7. It would be imprudent of me not to make explicit the distinction that has so far only been implied throughout the present discussions. It is the distinction between practical and "extra-practical" intention made by Herbert Spiegelberg in his, "Intention" and "Intentionality" in the Scholastics, Brentano and Husserl (1981). Spiegelberg tells us that whereas "intention" is commonly understood in the sense of an intention to do something, or a purpose, extra-practical intention denotes "the mere directedness toward the willed [or perceived, or thought about] object" (Spiegelberg, 1981, 4). In another article that I will scrutinize later, Caston defines intentionality, the extra-practical sort, as "that feature of our mental states in virtue of which they can correctly be said to be *of* or *about* something or, more generally, possess content" (Caston, 1998, 250). It is important that I be clear that this sort of intentionality, the extra-practical sort, is that to which I refer when I use the term "intentionality" or any derivative terms.

This distinction is especially important given the influence of certain works in which the two sorts of intentionality are conflated. One such work, Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* (1991), presents an outright rejection of intentionality because, according to the research he cites, the mind's awareness of its object is not fully realized until some time (a matter of mere milliseconds) after it has signaled for the execution of a response. On the other hand, Dennett suggests that one's expressions are dictated by an unknown, and indeed unknowable, number of neurons that perform various interpretive and expressive functions and engage in a competition for supremacy. Further, the criteria by which this competition is judged are wholly context-based and subject to perpetual adaptation. When addressing the problem of just where or what imposes the criteria according to which interpretations of physical stimuli earn ascension into consciousness, according to which competing expressions are chosen for voicing, Dennett writes:

What if the word-demons are, in parallel, the questioners/contestants, and the content-demons are the answerers/judges? Fully fledged and executed communicative intentions—Meanings—could emerge from a quasi-

in mainstream philosophical circles responds to the problems articulated by Chisholm (1916 - 1999) in his 1956 article entitled "Sentences About Believing", or to various expressions of these problems offered in more recent works (Sorabji, 1991; Simons, 2001, 1–22; Caston, 1998; 2001, 23–48; and 2002, 751–815). According to Chisholm, the intentional is that which takes as its object something that does not exist. The capacity to do so, says Chisholm, is what Brentano identifies as the "mark of what is psychological" (Chisholm, 1956, 125). We can already see certain latent ontological concerns surrounding the definition, and function, of intentionality: according to Chisholm intentionality, as the mark of what *is* psychological, is its capacity to take (whatever this taking may involve) as its object something that does not exist, that is, something that, by whatever standard, he is denying the being of. Although Chisholm does not, unlike Brentano, qualify being in any explicit way in this paper, it is clear from the contrast he draws between intentional and non-intentional sentences—non-intentional being those that describe the "merely physical"—that what he means when he says that the "object does not exist" is that it is not physically instantiated. Chisholm, however, is not here concerned with the ontological status of the object.

The explicit purpose of Chisholm's article is to express his dissatisfaction with attempts to "translate" what he calls intentional language into physical language. In critiquing these attempts he seeks to illustrate that intentional language is indeed unavoidable. He begins by formulating three criteria for determining whether a sentence is intentional. A sentence is intentional if (1) "it uses a substantive expression—a name or a description—in such a way that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies either that there is or that there isn't anything to which the

evolutionary process of speech act design that involves the collaboration, partly serial, partly in parallel, of various subsystems none of which is capable on its own of performing—or ordering—a speech act (Dennett, 1991, 239).

On these grounds Dennett rejects intentionality outright, in both the practical and the extra-practical sense.

In this context, however, the phrases "word-demons" and "content-demons", which refer to two specialized varieties of neurons, suggest the essential intentionality, in the extra-practical sense, of their referents. The actual objects of these intentions are irrelevant to the intentional character of these neurons. The intentional nature of neurons in Dennett's analysis resides not in their actually "having" an object (intentionality in the Brentanian sense) but in their being, in a manner of speaking, directed towards such "having" (that is, intentional in the Husserlian object-directedness sense). In being characterized as either "questioners/contestants" or "answerers/judges" the neurons are, at the same time, characterized as *tending* towards *having* a question, or *having* an answer which will, of course, be contentful. Even if that content is not fixed or concretized they remain intentional in their tending. Dennett has not eliminated intentionality; he has conflated the two senses of the terms and rejected them both upon grounds relevant to only one—namely, intentionality in the practical sense. Intentionality in the extra-practical sense remains distributed in various forms throughout his model.

substantival expression truly applies" (Chisholm, 1956, 126). Chisholm offers the following example of such a sentence: "[A] man is thinking of the Dnieper Dam" (Chisholm, 1956, 126). Regardless of the factual existence of the Dnieper Dam, we can understand that the sentence is intentional, according to this criterion, because neither the affirmation nor the denial of the sentence implies anything with respect to the factual existence of the dam. It only speaks to the factual existence of a man who may or may not be thinking of it. A sentence is intentional if (2) its principal verb "takes as its object a phrase containing a subordinate verb", as, for example, in the sentence, "He is contemplating killing himself" (Chisholm, 1956, 126). In this case the sentence is intentional because it includes a subordinate verb ("killing") the facticity of which is irrelevant to the facticity of the primary verb ("contemplating"). A sentence is intentional if (3) it contains an indirect reference to a thing such that "its replacement by a different name (or description) of that thing results in a sentence whose truth-value may differ from that of the original sentence" (Chisholm, 1956, 128). For example, the truth of the sentence "Kramer knows that Harrison is the father of three children" does not entail the truth of the sentence "Kramer knows that Harrison is the father of Sarah, Mary, and Tom". The intentionality of sentences of this sort is considerably less obvious than that of the previous sorts. These sentences are intentional because their individual meanings are dependent upon the substantive value of the descriptions "is the father of three children" and "is the father of Sarah, Mary, and Tom" respectively. In other words, although both descriptions refer to the same object—namely, Harrison—the meanings of the two sentences are distinct and the truth of the one does not imply the truth of the other. For even if Harrison is the father of Sarah, Mary, and Tom he might also be the father of Kramer.

With reference to these criteria for what constitutes an intentional sentence, Chisholm argues that attempts to recast intentional sentences into physical and non-intentional language have been unsuccessful because they require us to "use a vocabulary which we do not need to use when we describe non-psychological, or 'physical', phenomena" (Caston, 1998, 129) and that this vocabulary amounts to a loosely veiled intentional language. For my purposes the attempts at translation that Chisholm critiques and the specifics of his analysis are not important. What is important is that Chisholm's criteria define obstacles inherent in intentional sentences that preclude (or have precluded) their reduction into physicalist terms. Furthermore, it can be observed that all of the criteria identified by Chisholm refer to their specific nuances and their expression of what I have referred to as the "meta-character" of the intentional act.

Recall that the term "meta-character" refers to the subjective character of the intentional act. Specifically, it refers to the judgmental character, the loving, the hating, or the desiring character of the act.

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 (Brentano, 1995, 88).

All of the examples offered by Chisholm as he articulates his criteria build upon the general list offered by Brentano. Chisholm's first example (of the Dnieper Dam) adds the "as thought", his later two examples add the "as contemplated" and "as known" respectively. In fact, Chisholm's criteria can be read as a system of classification of the varieties of meta-character that psychological states might exhibit. Understood as such, Chisholm's analysis of intentional sentences provides us with a deeper understanding of the conventional problem of intentionality and specifically its origin in the meta-character of psychological states. It is precisely this that alludes translation into physicalist language.

In his *Aristotle and the Problem of Intentionality* (1998) Caston characterizes the obstacles identified by Chisholm generally as "failures of common patterns of entailment" (Caston, 1998, 251). What he means by this is that intentional sentences, or sentences about psychological phenomena, do not involve the same sorts of entailment that sentences describing physical phenomena do. One expects certain things to follow from the later sort of sentences that do not follow from the former. According to Caston,

As failures of common patterns of entailment, they [intentional sentences] are at odds with our intuitions about the rest of the world and so in need of explanation. The struggle to find such explanations, I would suggest, constitutes the real problem of intentionality (Caston, 1998, 251).

Caston then proceeds to summarize Chisholm's criteria and to expand upon them with reference to Anscombe and Geach but, as we can already see, Caston is even more explicit about the epistemological essence of the problem as he sees it. The problems Caston enumerates are failures of understanding. He explains that an adequate analysis of intentionality must account for five peculiarities of psychological phenomena: (1) their "failure of existential commitment", (2) their "failure of truth-functionality", (3) their "failure of intersubjectivity of coextensive expressions *salva veritate*", (4) their "failure of the excluded middle", and (5) their "failure of quantifier exportation" (Caston, 1998, 251-2). (1) Represents a restatement of Chisholm's first criterion and, to reiterate, means that neither sentences about psychological, or intentional, phenomena nor their negation imply a commitment to the factual, and by this he means physical, existence of the object. (2) Corresponds to Chisholm's second criterion: neither sentences about intentional phenomena nor their

negations entail the truth or falsity of the object predicate. (3) Corresponds to Chisholm's third criterion: sentences about intentional phenomena do not entail anything with respect to the subject's relation to the object beyond that which is explicitly contained/expressed within the sentence. For example, "Sherlock Holmes knows that Jack Stapleton is a murderer" does not entail that "Sherlock Holmes knows that Jefferson Hope is a murderer", nor does it entail that "Sherlock Holmes knows that Jack Stapleton is the heir to the Baskerville fortune". In other words, Sherlock Holmes' knowledge that Jack Stapleton is a murderer does not entail that Sherlock Holmes has any additional knowledge about Jack Stapleton or about murderers (Doyle, 1902 and 1887). (4) Is similar to (3): for any specific sentence about an intentional phenomenon the sentence will not entail that its object is or is not of a particular sort, for example, "Sherlock Holmes is thinking about Jack Stapleton" does not entail that "Sherlock Holmes is thinking about a man who *is* a murderer" nor does it entail that "Sherlock Holmes is thinking about a man who *is not* a murderer". (5) Is similar to (1): for any specific sentence about an intentional phenomenon that involves the quantification of its object the sentence will not entail the factual existence of its object qualified in that same way, for example, "Sherlock Holmes is thinking about a murderer" does not entail the factual existence of any particular murderer.

According to Caston the explanation of these five peculiarities with respect to the entailment of sentences describing intentional phenomena, compared to that of sentences describing physical phenomena, is the crux of the problem of intentionality. In Caston too, however, the ambiguity with respect to the epistemological entailments of sentences describing intentional phenomena originates in the meta-character of the phenomena. Brentano might observe that, with regard to the previous example, that which ambiguates the epistemic entailment of the sentence is the fact that the murderer referred to in the sentence exists "as thought about". Here again, it is to the meta-character of the act depicted that the conventional problem of intentionality can be traced.

In a more recent description of the problem Simons speaks to the nature of the explanation sought. In his *Prolegomenon to an Adequate Theory of Intentionality (Natural or Otherwise)* (2001) Simons delineates three sets of conditions for an adequate account of intentional phenomena: (1) "Metaphysical Prerequisites", (2) "Internal Constraints: the Systematics Requirement", and (3) "External Constraints: the Integration Requirement" (Simons, 2001, 3). Included under the heading of "Metaphysical Prerequisites" for an adequate account of intentional phenomena are the requirements that: (i) It accommodate the language of folk psychology; (ii) it "adhere to a robust but critical epistemological realism about the world"; and (iii) it "employ an ontology without unbridgeable ontological divides such as that between an eternal and a temporal realm or between spatial body and non-spatial mind" (Simons, 2001, 3-4 and 5-7). The "Internal Constraints: the Systematics

Requirement" include that: (i) the so-called symptoms of intentionality, by which he means the failures of entailment as described by Caston, be accounted for; (ii) the accounts "get the subjective phenomenology of intentionality right" (Simons, 2001, 10–11); and (iii) the concept accounts for the many varieties of intentional phenomenon (Simons, 2001, 11–13). The "External Constraints: the Integration Requirement" include that: (i) The account be compatible with Darwinism and the predominant notions of evolution and natural selection (Simons, 2001, 14–15); (ii) the account be sufficient to yield an explanation of intentionality displayed by social groups (Simons, 2001, 16–17); and (iii) the account be compatible with "well-corroborated natural science" (Simons, 2001, 17–18).

As we can see, 1.iii explicitly denies the adequacy of accounts based in either Platonic/Idealistic or dualistic ontologies and seemingly leaves the door open to an array of alternate ontologies. However, when considered in tandem with 3.i and 3.iii, those requirements that demand compatibility with Darwinism and, more specifically, contemporary formulations of it, as well as the natural sciences, it is clear that only those accounts that are based upon a physicalist ontology will be considered adequate. Given, then, that the problem, as defined by Simons, stipulates that the solution to this problem must be compatible with physicalism, he, in effect, sets aside (or predetermines the response to) any ontological problems that may surface while addressing the problem, and defines the problem as wholly epistemological.

Even from this brief review it is already evident that contemporary mainstream formulations of the problem of intentionality, and concerns for intentionality in general, are fundamentally epistemological in nature. The criteria Chisholm and Simons articulate and the failures that Caston enumerate are criteria for, and failures of, our understanding of intentional phenomena. This may be truer of Caston and Simons than it is for Chisholm. Be that as it may, it is demonstrably the case that the problematic in which contemporary mainstream philosophers situate the problem of intentionality is one in which a physicalist paradigm is assumed. Ontological considerations are preempted because the project, as defined by the problem, is to render intentional phenomena compatible with a physicalist ontology free of impurities. And this physicalist ontology, as we shall see, is demonstrably not the sort of ontology underlying Brentano's *Psychology*. That said, the problem that I seek to illuminate here is a problem of ontological import specifically arising out of the ambiguity of Brentano's own ontological commitments.

THE GENETIC PROBLEM OF INTENTIONALITY

In the *Prior Analytics* II 16 Aristotle tells us that the following is a case of circular reasoning: "if *A* should be proved through *B*, and *B* through *C*, though it was natural that *C* should be proved through *A*; for it turns out that those who reason thus are proving *A* by means of itself" (*Prior Analytics* 65a1-4). This is straightforward enough with respect to argumentation. Reasoning of the form:

$$B \supset A$$

$$C \supset B$$

$$A \supset C$$

Or, rather,

$$A \supset C$$

$$C \supset B$$

$$B \supset A$$

is circular. This fallacy has gone by a number of names, however, formal treatments of the fallacy (Spiegelberg, 1942, 427–456; Woods and Walton, 1975, 107–127; Mitscherling, 1997, Chapter 2) refer to it as the *petitio principii* (the fallacy of petitioning the principle). Such a fallacy, however, is not confined to rhetorical argumentation. Aristotle continues by saying, "This is what those persons do who suppose that they are constructing parallel lines; for they fail to see that they are assuming facts which it is impossible to demonstrate unless parallels exist" (*Prior Analytics* 65a4 – 6). In this elaboration Aristotle shows us how such a fallacy might also be manifest in theoretical constructions (like the model of consciousness Brentano presents in *Psychology*). As Chisholm explains, "But how can a construction be a *petitio principii*? We must remember that in geometry the construction of a figure is equivalent to proving that such figures exist, and depends upon the proof of prior theorems" (Chisholm and Corrado, 1982, 4). This explanation of the *petitio principii* represents Chisholm's summary of the interpretation of these passages from Aristotle that were agreed upon by Brentano and Vailati in their personal correspondence. This is also the sort of problem that can be identified in Brentano's model of consciousness centered upon his postulation of the intentional inexistence of its object.

In the earliest discussions of Brentano's *Psychology*, where the domain of psychology is distinguished from metaphysics on the one hand and the natural sciences on the other, Brentano rejects what we might today call a purely physicalist account of consciousness.⁸ He tells us that,

the facts which the physiologist investigates and those which the psychologist investigates are most intimately correlated, despite their great differences in character. We find physical and mental properties united in one and the same group. Not only may physical states be aroused by physical states and mental states by mental, but it is also the case that physical states have mental consequences and mental states have physical consequences (Brentano, 1995, 6).

This affirmative statement colours everything that follows it and must be taken into account when interpreting later passages. Where Brentano says things like, "sensations are aroused by physical stimuli" (Brentano, 1995, 7) and "it will

8. In other words, one that accounts for consciousness by invoking an exclusively physical substratum. Popular contemporary accounts of this sort are exemplified by Dennett (1991).

definitely be the task of the psychologist to ascertain the first mental phenomena which are aroused by a physical stimulus" (Brentano, 1995, 7), he implies the temporal priority of physical stimuli, whereas later analysis suggests a sort of ontological priority of mental phenomena over the physical. Such priority is further suggested by the portions of text immediately following those cited above, where Brentano states: "We have no right, therefore, to believe that the objects of so-called external perception really exist as they appear to us. Indeed, they demonstrably do not exist outside of us" (Brentano, 1995, 10). It is also suggested in later chapters, as when he states:

We could just as well say that they [*mental phenomena*] are those phenomena which alone possess real existence as well as intentional existence. Knowledge, joy and desire really exist. Color, sound and warmth have only a phenomenal and intentional existence (Brentano, 1995, 92).

This passage is not only a radical departure from Aristotle (See Aristotle's *De Anima* II 6), but it represents a significant ontological commitment that ultimately leads Brentano to commit the *petitio principii*.

This passage, in conjunction with our understanding of physical phenomena as being comparable to Lockean secondary qualities, leaves us with a number of difficult, and perhaps contradictory, postulations all of which involve various modes of existence and those entities that participate in them. Thus far we have been confronted with no less than four modes of being: (i) intentional, (ii) phenomenal, (iii) real, and, by extrapolation, (iv) non-real. As we have just seen, mental phenomena exhibit both real and intentional being. Further, by virtue of their title, we must presume that mental phenomena also exhibit phenomenal being. Physical phenomena, on the other hand, exhibit only intentional and phenomenal being. However, this stipulation is clearly meant to imply that physical phenomena do not exhibit real being and are therefore non-real. To this taxonomy we must add physical stimuli, to which, it would seem, Brentano is compelled (by Anslem's law) to grant real being given their capacity to 'arouse' mental phenomena, which, as we've already noted, are themselves real. The resulting taxonomy is illustrated in table 2.4.1.

Table 2.4.1

Intentional	Phenomenal	Real	Non-Real
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mental Phenomena •Physical Phenomena •Physical Stimuli <i>qua</i> Physical Phenomena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mental Phenomena •Physical Phenomena •Physical Stimuli <i>qua</i> Physical Phenomena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mental Phenomena •Physical Stimuli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Physical Phenomena •Physical Stimuli <i>qua</i> Physical Phenomena

The perfect congruity between the intentional and phenomenal modes of being suggests their synonymy. This taxonomy must be further truncated given

Brentano's career-long rejection of fictitious objects. In his essay "On Genuine and Fictitious Object" Brentano argues, anyone who says that the non-existence of a centaur has being, or who answers the question as to whether a centaur does not exist by saying, "That is so", only wants to say that he denies centaurs in the *modus praesens*, and, consequently, also believes that anyone who denies a centaur judges correctly (Brentano, 1995, 292).

Brentano's point is that he finds it to be non-sensical to attribute some sort of thingliness to that which is non-real. Arguing explicitly against Meinong, he refuses to include negative states of affairs in his ontology.

Qualified in such a way, Brentano's taxonomy is reduced to two modes of being, (i) the intentional and (ii) the real. The two cannot be understood in opposition to each other, especially given that he distinguishes clearly only two classes of objects, (a) the mental and (b) the physical. Further, the mental are said to exhibit both modes of being. The physical are said to exhibit real being given their potential to 'arouse' mental phenomena. Later, however, the physical is said to exhibit only intentional being. And so we are left with the taxonomy illustrated in table 2.4.2.

Table 2.4.2

Intentional/Phenomenal	Real
•Mental Phenomena	•Mental Phenomena
•Physical Phenomena	
•Physical Stimuli <i>qua</i> Physical Phenomena	•Physical Stimuli

These contradictory claims concerning the "physical" suggest very strongly that the term is being used in an equivocal or metaphorical way: In some cases Brentano seems to use the term "physical" to refer to a category of real (in the common sense of the term) external objects, while in others—specifically when he speaks of "physical phenomena"—he uses the term "physical" metaphorically to refer to a sense in which an inner intentional state can be like an external physical thing. Recognizing this equivocation allows us to recognize that the distinction between mental and physical phenomena is indeed an ontological one: it is this distinction that fixes the boundary between the real and the non-real. This is the only charitable way to read Brentano's comments with respect to the efficacy of physical *stimuli* to cause mental phenomena in a manner that is coherent with his comments with respect to the noetic deficiencies of physical *phenomena*. The distinction between mental and physical phenomena does not, however, fix the boundaries of the causal potency of, and between, the now three distinct genres (that is, [1] real physical events/stimuli, [2] real mental phenomena, and [3] non-real physical phenomena).

Brentano's model might now be understood according to the following analogy: Imagine a clear glass beaker full of water. The glass can be understood as analogous to a real mental phenomenon existing in the real world (which, of course, it does). The water, then, can be understood as the intentional content of the mental phenomenon. Of course, looking through the water at an object has the effect of the object appearing in the water. To the extent that the seen object is *in* the water it can be understood as analogous to Brentano's notion of intentional inexistence.

Read with an eye to this ontological connotation we are left with a *petitio principii* of the second sort described above. The problem is this: According to Brentano, certain real physical events are temporally *prior* to, and a necessary condition of, but not sufficient for, the emergence of real mental phenomena. This is because, as Brentano says, consciousness is always consciousness of *something* and that thing is some physical phenomenon that exists only intentionally. The circle is completed when Brentano stipulates that "intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena" (Brentano, 1995, 89). Once we divine the correct serial order of Brentano's various stipulations it is clear that the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of (C) consciousness—understood as being identical with (M_x) mental phenomena and their immanent physical phenomena (P_x)—are some real physical stimulus (S_1) and some real mental phenomenon (M_1) to provide the immanent objectivity—the specific physical phenomenon (P_1)—of which consciousness is conscious. In a more formalized notation these stipulations look like this:

- S1. $(x)(Cx \supset Mx)$
- S2. $(x)(Px \equiv (x)(Mx))$
- S3. $(x)(Cx \equiv (\exists x)(Sx \ \& \ Px))$

We can see from this articulation of the problem that S2 is the stipulation that explicitly closes the loop between S1 and S3 and, from our previous discussions, we can understand that S2 is derived directly from Brentano's claim that, "Every mental phenomenon is characterized by... the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object" (Brentano, 1995, 88). With this in mind the symbolic expression of the interdependency of the various elements of Brentano's model can be simplified and the interdependency made more explicit: We can understand that the emergence of consciousness is conditional upon the presence of its object; the presence of the object is conditioned by its intentional inexistence; further, such an intentional inexistence occurs only in consciousness, or:

- Consciousness \equiv Object
- Object \equiv Intentionality
- Intentionality \equiv Consciousness

In this sense Brentano has assumed the existence of his subject, a fact that is impossible to demonstrate unless its existence is given. In so doing he precludes the possibility of an account of the genesis of consciousness. To be clear, he does not, strictly speaking,

preclude the possibility of genetic psychology as a science that "establish[es] the laws of their [*mental phenomena*] succession" (Brentano, 1995, 45), but the event in which a particular consciousness originates remains inextricable.

We cannot forget Brentano's point of departure—the point with which Brentano indicates the proper domain of psychology—namely, that mental phenomena themselves are immanent to the conscious organism, a real physical object and individual substance. If, we are to reconcile this observation with the claim that "intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena" (Brentano, 1995, 89), according to what sort of being can we account for intentional existence? No properly Brentanian response to this question can be devised without recalling Brentano's own epistemology and specifically his suggestion that the rules and properties common to the domains of both sorts of empirical sciences (those that treat the physical and those that treat the "properties and laws of the soul") are properly pursued under the rubric of metaphysics. Given, then, that the property of intentional inexistence is manifest in both mental phenomena and the physical organism, we can understand that the genetic problem of intentionality is, properly construed, a metaphysical problem. More specifically, it is an ontological problem that requires an ontological answer.

CONCLUSION: THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE GENETIC PROBLEM OF INTENTIONALITY

It would be at least partially redundant for me to elaborate upon the ramifications of the genetic problem of intentionality illustrated above. This is due to the fact that one of its major ramifications is, indeed, the conventional problems elaborated above. When the ontological significance of the distinction between mental and physical phenomena is overlooked—as when we invoke intentionality to address our more immediate epistemological concerns—these ambiguities lead us to the sorts of problems expressed by Chisholm, Anscombe, Caston, *et al.* The intentional character of mental phenomena cannot be accounted for by the presence of any elaborate physical mechanisms, or conglomeration of elaborate mechanisms, so long as the physical substratum is defined by what Caston calls "rules of entailment". The definition, indeed the identification, of the physicalist ontological scheme with a set of entailment rules can be characterized, in the most general of terms, by the Aristotelian language of efficiency and materiality. That such a definition is operative in such treatments of intentionality is suggested by Chisholm's conclusion that intentional sentences cannot be translated into physical language.

Finally, there is in fact an even more general epistemological problem resulting from the genetic problem of intentionality. Brentano's ontological commitment to the primacy of the mental is based, in large part, upon its immediate presence and infallibility (recall the discussion of "inner perception") (Brentano, 1995, 91).

The ontological and epistemological qualifications Brentano places upon that portion of the mental phenomenon that represents the immanent object, in other words, the physical phenomenon, have the effect of rendering the intentional portion of the mental phenomenon the only constituent of Brentano's ontology that is of any noetic value. The intentional character of the mental phenomenon becomes the source, the object, and the substrate of knowledge. Construed as such, intentionality, or, rather, the intentional character of mental phenomena, represents a manifestation of the *petitio principii* fallacy in and of itself.

Brentano's resurrection of the notion of the intentional inexistence of the object of consciousness is, by most accounts, his most influential contribution to modern philosophy. Despite the conventional problems the notion entails and the genetic problem I have endeavored to articulate, the notion remains relevant because it is not, at its core, a conceptual construct. It is an ostensible aspect of mental states that is identified by Brentano through his descriptive exercise. Setting aside Brentano's claims with regard to the infallibility of its substance, discussions concerning the intentional character of consciousness persist today because it represents such an evident and apparently-indubitable aspect of mental states. It is this same apparently indubitable character that impresses upon us the urgency to properly revise our understanding of the ontological foundations of intentionality because, as we have seen, securing these foundations is the only way we can ensure the profitability of future efforts to address the epistemological difficulties it presents.

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