Essay One

Brentano on Descriptive Psychology and the Intentional

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1. According to Edmund Husserl, Brentano's "conversion of the scholastic concept of intentionality into a descriptive root-concept of psychology constitutes a great discovery, apart from which phenomenology could not have come into being at all."¹ It is fitting, therefore, to begin a course of lectures on phenomenology and existentialism with a discussion of what Brentano had to say about descriptive psychology and the intentional. We should remind ourselves, however, that the primary significance of Brentano's philosophy does not lie in the philosophical movements to which it happens to have given rise. This may be said with all due respect to the work of Husserl, Meinong, Twardowski, Marty, and the countless other philosophers who have been influenced by his work. Franz Brentano, as Husserl suggested to Kraus, was a philosopher of the ages and his greatness should not be measured by reference merely to the philosophical movements of our own time.²

² "Brentano ist eine historische Grösse—was keinesfalls heisst ein fur allemal erledigt—eine gewisse Uberzeitlichkeit sollte in der Edition walten." Husserl was speaking of the edition of Brentano's writings which was being prepared by Oskar Kraus and Alfred Kastil. The quotation appears in the Introduction to Brentano's Vom sinnlichen und noetischen Bewusstsein, also referred to as Psychologie, Band Drei, ed. Oskar Kraus (Leipzig: 1928), p. xlviii.
2. Brentano’s doctrine of the intentional, as well as much of the rest of what we would now call his philosophy, was a part of what he called “descriptive psychology.” Brentano’s “descriptive psychology” and Husserl’s “phenomenology” are closely related. Husserl had studied with Brentano in Vienna from 1884 to 1886. Brentano had used “beschreibende Phänomenologie” as an alternative name for descriptive psychology but evidently did not use “Phänomenologie” in this way after 1889.

The relation that descriptive psychology bears to genetic or explanatory psychology, Brentano said, is analogous to the relation that anatomy bears to physiology and to the relation that “geognosy” bears to geology (hence “psychognosy” was still another term that Brentano used for descriptive psychology). Genetic or explanatory psychology is concerned with the causal status of psychological phenomena and hence with the relations that such phenomena bear to physical and chemical processes. It is not an exact science but, like meteorology, must qualify its generalizations with such terms as “on the average” and “for the most part.” But descriptive psychology, Brentano thought, was an exact science.

The descriptive psychologist is concerned with “the totality of ultimate psychological elements”:

All other psychological phenomena are derived from the combinations of these ultimate psychological elements, as the totality of words may be derived from the totality of letters. Completion of this task would provide the basis for a Characteristica universalis of the sort that had been conceived by Leibniz, and before him, by Descartes. Genetic psychology, on the other hand, is concerned with the laws in accordance with which psychological phenomena come into being and pass away. Since these phenomena are undoubtedly dependent upon processes in the nervous system, the conditions of their coming and going are largely physiological; hence the investigation of genetic psychology must be entwined with that of physiology.
The task of descriptive psychology to which this passage refers has been described as being, in part, a matter of taking a "psychological inventory." But it is also possible for descriptive psychology to formulate laws or theorems, and these laws or theorems, like those of mathematics and logic and unlike those of genetic psychology, are exact and apodictic. They hold universally and not merely "for the most part." Examples of such laws are the following, from the theory of evidence (which Brentano regarded as a part of descriptive psychology): Every judgment is either correct or incorrect; if one person makes a correct judgment about a certain object, then no other person can make a similar judgment about the same object without also judging correctly.

But we cannot properly understand Brentano's descriptive psychology unless we have a more detailed example. I shall attempt to summarize, therefore, what Brentano says about the nature of an act of will (das Wollen). I choose this particular example partly because of its intrinsic merit, partly because it provides an introduction to Brentano's doctrine of the intentional, and partly because it may be useful as a means of contrasting Brentano's psychological descriptions with those of subsequent phenomenology.

I refer to the account of willing that is set forth in Brentano's posthumous Grundlegung und Aufbau der Ethik (Bern, 1952), constructed by F. Mayer-Hillebrand from the notebooks that Brentano had used in lecturing on ethics at the University of Vienna from 1876 to 1894. Brentano here describes the way in which an act of will is constituted out of elementary psychological phenomena.

7. Brentano is frequently charged with "psychologism." But if by psychologism we mean the doctrine according to which the laws of logic, evidence, and morality are merely contingent generalizations about the way in which people happen to think or feel, then the charge is not just. Brentano had criticized psychologistic theories of the evident in the first edition (1889) of the Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis (3rd ed.; Leipzig: 1934). Part of this critique is reprinted in The True and the Evident, ed. Oskar Kraus (English edition, ed. Roderick M. Chisholm [London: 1966], pp. 52–9; see also pp. 110–1, and Kraus's Introduction, pp. xx–xxii).
Within the sphere of the intellect, according to Brentano, the elementary phenomena are accepting and rejecting; within the sphere of the emotions they are loving, hating, and preferring. The terms "love" and "hate" should here be construed broadly: We love an object or state of affairs if we take a pro attitude toward that object or state of affairs; and we hate an object or state of affairs if we take an anti attitude toward that object or state of affairs. These phenomena—accepting, rejecting, loving, hating, and preferring—all presuppose and involve still another elementary phenomenon—that of having an idea of a thing (das Vorstellen). But although they do thus involve this further phenomenon, they may still be called elementary, for they are not themselves constituted by combining this further phenomenon with still other elementary phenomena. Being "red," similarly, involves or presupposes being "colored"; but red is not a combination of color and something else. How, then, is an act of will to be constituted out of such phenomena as these?

An act of will is, in part, a wish or want that involves a decision. And a wish or want that involves a decision is, in part, an act of love that involves a preference. What, then, is the difference between an act of love simpliciter and an act of love that involves a preference?

Of two situations, each of which is an object of my love or favorable inclination, I may yet prefer one to the other. For example, my friend's receiving a sudden stroke of good fortune might be something that I prefer as such, taken in itself and as if alone, to a similar stroke of good fortune on the part of a certain man who happens to be a total stranger. Here, then, we have love that involves a preference: I think of an object; I take a pro attitude toward it; and I prefer it to another object.

The good fortune of my friend is something that I prefer as such, taken in itself and as if alone, to the good fortune of the stranger. I may yet decide, however, that the latter rather than the former is the one I want to see realized. I thus arrive at a wish or want that involves a decision when (a) I have considered these two situations in the contexts of what I take to be their
total consequences and then (b) arrive at a preference with respect to these two sets of total consequences. Hence Brentano says that a wish that involves a decision is related to a love or preference that does not involve a decision in the way in which, according to the traditional theological doctrine, the “consequent will” of God is related to his “antecedent will.”

We have, then, the concept of a wish that involves a decision, but we have not yet arrived at the concept of an act of will. Although, as our example may suggest, “coming to a decision does not always involve an act of will, an act of will always involves coming to a decision.” What further differentiates an act of will is the fact that its object is “always something that we ourselves have to bring about. We can will only those things that fall within our power, or, at any rate, those things which are such that we earnestly believe that they fall within our power.”

And now Brentano is prepared to give us his definition of an act of will. “Thus we can define an act of will as a wish or want having these characteristics: it is such that it involves a decision and it has as its object something that we are to bring about ourselves and that we confidently expect will result from the desires that we have. Hence one might say that an act of will is a want or a wish such that we have arrived at it by coming to a decision and such that we believe it can be realized by our own endeavors.”

This complex concept of an act of will, then, contains a multiplicity of elements: love, conviction, preference, and causation.


10. *Ibid*.

The first three of these are psychological and the fourth—that of causation—occurs only as part of the intentional object of the second.

Here, then, we have what seems to me to be a paradigm case of descriptive psychology, as Brentano conceived it.

3. Now we may turn to Brentano's conception of the intentional, beginning with the doctrine of intentional inexistence which he propounded in 1874 and was subsequently to abandon.

In his *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, first published in 1874, Brentano proposed the doctrine of intentional inexistence as a means of distinguishing the mental or psychical from the physical. The familiar passage follows:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the scholastics of the middle ages called the intentional (and also mental) inexistence of an object, and what we would call, although not in entirely unambiguous terms, the reference to a content, a direction upon an object (by which we are not to understand a reality), or an immanent objectivity. Each one includes something as an object within itself, although not always in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love something is loved, in hate something is hated, in desire something is desired, etc. This intentional inexistence is exclusively characteristic of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon manifests anything similar. Consequently, we can define mental phenomena by saying that they are such phenomena as include an object intentionally within themselves.12

We have here an ontological thesis concerning "intentional inexistence," which Brentano was later to abandon, and a psychological thesis, implying that reference to an object is what distinguishes the mental from the physical. Each of these theses seems to me to be important. The ontological thesis seems to me to be problematic and not, as Brentano subsequently thought, to be obviously false. And the psychological thesis seems to me to be true. Let us consider them in order.

We are readily led to the ontological doctrine of intentional inexistence, though not, of course, to the particular terminology that Brentano used, if we ask ourselves what is involved in having thoughts, beliefs, desires, purposes, and other intentional attitudes that are directed upon objects that do not exist. There is a distinction between a man who is thinking about a horse and a man who is thinking about a unicorn. The distinction lies in the objects of their respective thoughts. It does not lie in the fact that where the first man has an object the second man does not, for this is not a fact. There is a distinction between a man who is thinking about a unicorn and a man who is thinking about nothing at all; this distinction lies in the fact that where one man has an object of thought the other man does not. What, then, is the ontological status of the object that the man is intentionally related to when he is thinking about a unicorn?

One is tempted to say that although the man’s thought quite obviously has an object, this object—also quite obviously—cannot be a unicorn. For one might reason as follows: If the man’s thought is directed upon something and if there are no unicorns, then his thought must be directed upon something other than a unicorn. But what could this something possibly be? Moreover, if the man is thinking about something that is not a unicorn, how, then, can we say that he is thinking about a unicorn?

The doctrine of intentional inexistence may seem, at first consideration, to provide us with answers to our questions. It seems to tell us three different things. It tells us, first, that the object of the man’s thought is a unicorn. It tells us, secondly, 13. Compare Plato’s *Theaetetus* 189a–b:

_Soc._ And does not he who thinks, think some one thing?

_Theaet._ Certainly.

_Soc._ And does not he who thinks some one thing, think something which is?

_Theaet._ I agree.

_Soc._ Then he who thinks of that which is not, thinks of nothing?

_Theaet._ Clearly.

_Soc._ And he who thinks of nothing, does not think at all?

_Theaet._ Obviously.

_Soc._ Then no one can think that which is not, either as a self-existent substance or as a predicate of something else?

_Theaet._ Clearly not.
that this unicorn is not an actual unicorn (for there are no actual unicorns). And it tells us, thirdly, that this unicorn has a certain mode of being other than actuality. Whatever has this mode of being—called "intentional inexistence" or "immanent objectivity"—is an entity that is mind-dependent and therefore appropriately called an \textit{ens rationis}, in the traditional sense of this term. The intentionally inexistent unicorn is an entity that is \textit{produced} by the mind or intellect; it comes into being as soon as the man starts to think about a unicorn and it ceases to be as soon as he stops.\footnote{14}

\textit{Are} there, then, certain objects such as intentionally inexistent unicorns which are produced by the mind? In \textit{The True and the Evident}, we find this interesting passage, which was written sometime prior to 1903. Brentano asks us to consider a person whose thought is directed upon a certain object A and, in this case, an A that happens also to be actual:

The concept of this object A, like that of the person who is thinking, is the concept of a thing. We may also say of this thing A that it is an object which is thought about. It is just as true that this A is a contemplated A [\textit{ein gedachtes A}] as it is that this A is an actual A, existing in reality. A can cease to be actual and yet continue to be thought about—so long as the thinking person does in fact think about it. And conversely it can cease to be thought about—if the person stops thinking about it—and yet continue to be actual.

14. This doctrine is at the basis of St. Anselm's ontological argument; for St. Anselm takes it to be self-evident that if God is thought about then God does "exist in the understanding." William of Ockham contrasted the "intentional existence" (he did not use "inexistence") of the object of thought with the "subjective existence" of the thinking itself. "Objective existence" (meaning existence as an object of thought) came to be a synonym for "intentional (in)existence." Thus Descartes contrasted the \textit{formale esse} of actual objects with the \textit{objective in intellectu esse} of objects that are merely thought about. In the present century, the late Professor A. O. Lovejoy of Johns Hopkins appealed to those entities that are objects merely of thought (unicorns, as well as many of the objects of dreams and hallucinations) in order to defend what he called "psychophysical dualism"—the view that there is, in addition to the world of physical things, a world of nonphysical, mental things, "a second world to which could be allocated all experienced objects which do not appear to satisfy the rules of membership in the physical system." See A. O. Lovejoy, \textit{The Revolt against Dualism} (New York: 1930), pp. 28–29.
In contrasting the A which is contemplated or thought about with the A which is actual, are we saying that the contemplated A is itself nothing actual or true? By no means! The contemplated A can be something actual and true without being an actual A. It is an actual contemplated A and therefore—since this comes to the same thing—it is an actual contemplated A [ein wirkliches gedachtes A] which may be contrasted with what is a mere contemplated contemplated A [ein gedachtes gedachtes A]. (One may think that someone is thinking about an A.)

There cannot be anyone who contemplates an A unless there is a contemplated A; and conversely. But we must not infer from this fact that the one who is thinking about the A is identical with the A which he is thinking about. The two concepts are not identical but they are correlative. Neither can correspond to anything in reality unless the other does as well. But only one of these is the concept of a thing—the concept of something which can act and be acted upon. The second is the concept of a being which is only a sort of accompaniment to the first; when the first thing comes into being, and when it ceases to be, then so does the second.15

Brentano took these considerations to show that there are certain entities that are not concrete individual things. For, he says, the situation that he has described involves an actual thinker and an actual contemplated A (just as the situation he refers to parenthetically involves an actual, contemplated contemplated A). The contemplated A and the contemplated contemplated A are entia rationis that are produced by the mind.

According to Brentano's earlier doctrine, then, as soon as a man starts to think about a unicorn there comes into being an actual contemplated unicorn. This actual contemplated unicorn is an ens rationis that depends upon the thinker for its existence and that ceases to be as soon as the man ceases to think about a unicorn.

In the fourteenth century, Walter Burleigh had appealed to a slightly different aspect of the phenomenon of intentionality in order to make out a case for still another type of entity—an en-

15. The True and the Evident, p. 27; the passage appears on page 31 of Wahrheit und Evidenz. Compare also The True and the Evident, p. 64: "There is nothing universal in the things; the so-called universal, as such, is only in the one who is thinking." (Wahrheit und Evidenz, p. 74.)
tity that, like the merely contemplated A, is not a concrete individual thing, but that, unlike the merely contemplated A, exists "outside the mind." It will be useful at this point to recall Burleigh's argument, for, as we shall see, it will throw light upon Brentano's thought and upon the subsequent fate of the doctrine of intentionality. Burleigh argued in this way:

Something about which real promises and contracts are made, such as buying and selling, donations, pledges, etc., exists outside the soul. But contracts are not always made about individual things. Therefore something exists outside the soul that is other than an individual nature. The major is obvious. The proof of the minor is that in the statement "I promise you an ox," something outside the soul is being promised to you, and yet no individual thing is being promised to you because you cannot lay claim to this or that particular ox on the strength of this promise.

Therefore something outside the soul that is other than an individual thing is being promised to you. Since the entities with which Burleigh is here concerned are not produced by the mind and are not in any way dependent upon the mind, they are not properly called "entia rationis." Hence we need a more general term to cover non-things in general, non-things that may or may not be entia rationis. Brentano proposed the expressions "entia non realia," "entia irrealia," or simply "irrealia." For the present, let us restrict ourselves to those irrealia that are also entia rationis and consider some of the difficulties involved in the concept of intentional inexistence.

4. The doctrine of intentional inexistence may seem at least to have this advantage: It provides us with a literal interpretation for the traditional dictum, "Veritas est adaequatio intellectus rei." One could say that an affirmative judgment is true pro-


17. Compare The True and the Evident, pp. 80f.
vided only that the properties of the intentional object are the same as those of the actual object.

But the very statement of this advantage betrays the fact that what the true affirmative judgment is directed upon is the actual object and not the intentional object.

To be sure, our intentional attitudes may be directed upon objects that do not exist. But they may also be directed upon objects that do exist: I may think of a golden mountain, but I may also think about Mt. Monadnock. Diogenes looked for an honest man and perhaps there was none; but there are many dishonest men who are also objects of quests, as the police files will indicate. And these objects are not things having mere intentional inexistence.

And even in those cases where the objects of our intentional attitudes do not exist, our attitudes are not normally directed upon an immanent, intentionally inexisting object. Whether or not there are honest men, Diogenes in his quest was looking for an actual honest man, not for an intentionally inexisting honest man. If the doctrine of intentional inexistence is true, the very fact that Diogenes was looking for an honest man implies that he already had the immanent object; hence it could not be the object of his quest. Thus Brentano was later to say that "what we think about is the object or thing and not the 'object of thought [vorgestelltes Objekt].""\(^\text{18}\)

18. *The True and the Evident*, p. 77. In this passage, Brentano also seems to deny ever having held the doctrine of intentional inexistence, as I have formulated it. Kraus believes, however, that by the time Brentano wrote the passage (March 17, 1905), the older doctrine (which, Kraus believes, Brentano had in fact held) "had become so foreign to him that he questioned whether he had ever enunciated it" (*op. cit.*, p. 154). One might try to reconcile this passage with what seems to have been Brentano's earlier doctrine by taking the earlier doctrine to be this: (1) an actual intentionally inexistent unicorn is *produced* when one thinks about a unicorn; (2) one's thought, however, is not directed upon this actual intentionally inexistent unicorn; and yet (3) it is *in virtue of* the existence of the intentionally inexistent unicorn that one's thought may be said to be directed upon a unicorn. But in this case, what point would there be in supposing that there is the inexistent unicorn? Compare Brentano's further remarks, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–79, and the notes by Oskar Kraus, *ibid.*, pp. 165–70. Compare also Jan Srzednicki, *Franz Brentano's Analysis of Truth* (The Hague: 1965), Chapter II.
The ontological use of the word "intentional," therefore, seems to undermine its psychological use. Intentionally inexistent objects were posited in the attempt to understand intentional reference, but the attempt did not succeed—precisely because the objects so posited were intentionally inexistent. Thus Husserl said, with the later Brentano, that the objects of our "intentional experiences" are never objects that exist merely in the understanding; they are always something "transcendent."\(^{19}\)

There are still other difficulties in the ontological doctrine of intentionally inexistent objects, actual intentionally inexistent objects, as Brentano was later to emphasize. "If there are such objects, in the strict and proper sense of the term are, then, whenever anyone thinks of anything that is contradictory, there comes into being an object that is contradictory."\(^{20}\)

Almost all intentionally inexistent objects, moreover, violate the law of excluded middle. Consider, for example, the promised ox that was the object of our thought a while back. It may have been brown and presumably it had four legs, a head, and a tail. Presumably also it was heavy. But was it such that it weighed 817 pounds, or was it such that it did not weigh 817 pounds? Evidently we must answer both of these questions in the negative. In this case, the actual intentionally inexistent ox was what Meinong called an "incomplete object."\(^{21}\) Whatever the status of such objects in Meinong's realm of Aussersein, Brentano was certain, in his later thoughts, that there are no such objects, whether "in" or "outside" the mind. (This incompleteness of the immanent object would seem to insure disaster for the attempt to construe truth as a relation of correspondence or adequacy holding between the immanent object and the actual object. For, since all actual objects are complete and no immanent objects are complete, no immanent object can be adequate to any actual object.)

And what, finally, of Walter Burleigh's *ens irreale*—the promised ox that is not identical with any individual ox? Brentano, in a letter to Kraus, had considered a slightly different example. You might promise to marry and yet not promise with respect to any particular person, to marry *that* particular person. But what happens if you keep the promise? "It would be paradoxical to the highest degree," Brentano said, "to suppose that you could promise to marry an *ens rationis* and then to keep the promise by marrying an actual, concrete particular."22

But it is much easier to ridicule the doctrine of *entia non realia* than it is to find a way of getting along without them. Let us consider, then, how Brentano himself made out in his subsequent attempts to get along without the ontology of intentionally inexistent objects.

5. Brentano's later thought was what Kotarbinski has called "reistic." The only things that can be said to *be*, in the strict and proper sense of the expression "to be," are particular, individual things. (But Brentano's reism, unlike that of Kotarbinski, is not also a "somatism." For Brentano held that there are concrete individual things that are not material things—for example, human souls and God.) Brentano thus repudiated all *entia rationis* and *entia irrealia.*

Our language contains a multiplicity of terms, purporting to refer to non-things, or *entia irrealia.* Brentano says that such terms are convenient fictions, comparable to such expressions as "negative quantities," "irrational numbers," "imaginary numbers," and the like.23 When we find a true sentence, ostensibly referring to a non-thing, then, according to Brentano, we can "form an equivalent in which the subject and predicate are replaced by expressions referring only to things."24

For example, the sentence "There is a dearth of bread in the larder" may seem to affirm the existence of a *privatium*—that

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22. Quoted by Oskar Kraus in his *Introduction to Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: 1924), p. xlix. Presumably Brentano should have written "*ens irreale*" instead of "*ens rationis.*"


non-thing which is the absence of bread. But actually, according to Brentano, it is concerned with the denial or rejection of a thing: namely bread in the larder. Again, “There is redness” and “Red is a color” may seem to pertain to abstracta and thus, once again, to non-things. But “There is redness,” Brentano says, is just another way of saying “There are red things”; and what “Red is a color” tells us is simply that red things, as such, are colored.25

In a similar way, Brentano attempts to translate away all ostensible reference to propositional objects. Thus, in the second edition of the Psychologie and in The True and the Evident, he defends a non-propositional theory of judgment. Language suggests that judgment involves a relation between a man and a proposition (or content, state of affairs, or objective). We say, “He believes that there are horses,” thus seeming to describe a relation between the believer and that non-thing named by the propositional clause “that there are horses.” But actually, Brentano says, what “He believes that there are horses” tells us is simply that the believer accepts or affirms (anerkennt) horses. And if we say, “He believes that there are no unicorns,” we are simply saying that he rejects or denies (leugnet) unicorns. “He believes that some horses are red” tells us that he accepts red horses, and “He believes that no horses are green” tells us that he rejects green horses. Brentano’s theory becomes complex, after this point.26 But what it is that he is attempting to do is clear throughout: he wishes to translate those true sentences that seem to refer to non-things into sentences that refer only to things. In this way, he thinks, he will eliminate one of the most fundamental sources of error and confusion in philosophy. Philosophers go wrong and fall into confusion “when they take some word to be a name when in fact the word is not a name at all, and then look for the concept which this ostensible name


26. See Psychologie, II, 158–72; part of this passage is translated by D. B. Terrell in Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, ed. by Roderick M. Chisholm, pp. 62–70.
designated.” Brentano’s reism thus led him to revise his original doctrine of the intentional in two ways. First, he gave up the doctrine that our intentional attitudes are sometimes directed upon non-things or entia irrealia. Whatever language we may use for the description of our intentional attitudes—whether we use words ostensibly referring to abstracta, privativa, negativa, whether we use clauses ostensibly referring to propositions or what Meinong called “Objektive”—our attitudes are in fact always directed upon things. Second, Brentano gave up the doctrine that our intentional attitudes, whatever they may be directed upon, do somehow involve actual intentionally in-existent objects.

What, then, is the reistic replacement for the actual intentionally inexistent object?

6. The following passage, dictated in 1914, may be found in the Kategorienlehre (p. 8):

Instead of saying that a person is thinking about a thing, one may also say that there is something which is the object of his thought. But this is not the strict or proper sense of is. For the thinker may in fact deny that there is any such object as the object he is thinking about. Moreover, one can think about what is contradictory, but nothing that is contradictory can possibly be said to be. We said above that roundness cannot be said to be, in the strict and proper sense of the term; that which is round, but not roundness, may be said to be. And so too, in the present case. What there is in the strict and proper sense is not the round thing that is thought about; what there is is the person who is thinking about it. The thing “as object of thought” is a fiction which, in many contexts, is perfectly harmless. But if we do not see that it is a fiction, then we will be led to the most blatant of absurdities. We are not dealing here with a type of being in the strict sense of the term. What we say can be expressed in such a way that we do refer to a being in the strict sense of the term—namely, the thinker who has the thought. And what holds generally for that which is thought about also holds more particularly, for that which is accepted, that which is rejected, that which is loved, that which is hated, that which is hoped for, that which is feared, that which is willed, and so on.

Saying that there *is* an immanent object, then, is just another way of saying that there *is* an actual person who is thinking about that object. "*Es gibt ein Gedachtes*" says no more nor less than "*Es gibt ein Denkendes.*" Hence if we continue to say, as Brentano had said earlier, that there is an *actual* intentionally inexistent unicorn when an actual man is thinking about a unicorn, we are using the first "actual" in its loose and improper sense and the second "actual" in its strict and proper sense. And where Brentano had said earlier that our thought *produces* an entity, he now denies that our thought thus produces any entity at all.

There are four possible views here that are easily confused with each other. There is what I have taken to be Brentano's original view; there is the later reistic view; and then there seem to be two different ways of combining the first two views. Let us consider these possibilities more explicitly.

i. According to what I have taken to be Brentano's view of 1874, when a man thinks about a unicorn there is *produced* an immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn. This immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn is an actual immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn. And therefore it is an entity *in addition to* the man who is thinking.

ii. According to Brentano's later, reistic view, when a man thinks about a unicorn no intentionally inexistent unicorn is produced and therefore the situation involves no actual entity other than the man who is thinking.

iii. Suarez, in his *Metaphysicae Disputationes*, seems to combine these two views in the following way. He seems to suggest that when a man thinks about a unicorn, the act of thought *produces* an immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn; hence we have an element of Brentano's first view. But Suarez adds that the unicorn that is thus *produced* is not an actual immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn and therefore it is not an entity in addition to the thinker himself; hence we have an element of

Brentano’s second view.²⁹ Now if this immanent or intentionally inexistent unicorn is produced, or (to use the terms that Suarez used) if this \textit{ens rationis} that has only “objective being in the mind” had an efficient cause, then, one would think, the entity must be actual. If there \textit{is} production or causation, then there must be that which is caused or produced.³⁰

\textbf{iv.} There is, finally, still another way of combining the first and second views of Brentano; this final view is suggested by one passage in G. E. Moore. We could say (a) that when a man thinks about a unicorn, there is involved an actual intentionally inexistent unicorn; hence we have an element of Brentano’s first view. And then we could add (b) that to say that there is such an actual intentionally inexistent unicorn is to say no more nor less than that the man is thinking about a unicorn.³¹

Do we have, then, a clear alternative to the original doctrine of intentional inexistence?

²⁹. See disputation LIV ("De Ente Rationis"), Section 1. It is quite obvious that Brentano was influenced by this discussion in Suarez; compare the \textit{Psychologie}, II, 272. I am indebted to the late Professor Ralph M. Blake for calling my attention to the importance of this and other discussions in the \textit{Metaphysicae Disputationes}.

³⁰. It should be noted that Suarez is fully aware of the difficulty (which he attributes to one Bernardinus Mirandulus) and that he attempts to resolve it. We could so interpret the view of Suarez that it becomes identical with Brentano’s second view above. Where Brentano had distinguished a strict and proper sense and a loose and improper sense of “is,” we might read into Suarez a distinction between a strict and proper sense and a loose and improper sense of “produce” or “cause.” He could then be interpreted as saying that it is only in the latter sense of “cause” that an \textit{ens rationis} may be said to have an efficient cause.

³¹. “... if it should happen that at the present moment two different people are having an hallucination of a different tame tiger, it will follow there are at the present moment two different imaginary tigers. ... The sentence ‘There are some tame tigers which do not exist’ is, therefore, certainly significant, if it means only that there are some imaginary tigers. ... But what it means is that either some real people have written stories about imaginary tigers, or are having or have recently had hallucinations of tame tigers, or, perhaps, are dreaming or have dreamed of particular tame tigers. If nothing of this sort has happened or is happening to anybody, then there are no imaginary tame tigers.” G. E. Moore, \textit{Philosophical Papers} (London: 1959), p. 120.
7. It seems to me that these alternatives to the doctrine of intentional inexistence involve a serious difficulty, and I am not at all sure that I know how it ought to be treated. The difficulty may be seen if we try to give a positive answer to the question "How are we using the word 'unicorn' when we say, 'John is thinking about a unicorn'?

Brentano in his later view gives the question a negative answer. That is to say, he tells us how we are not using the word "unicorn" when we say, "John is thinking about a unicorn." But he formulates this negative answer affirmatively—in very much the way in which, according to him, "There is a dearth of bread in the larder" expresses a negative belief affirmatively. He tells us that in the sentence "John is thinking about a unicorn," the word "unicorn" is being used syncategorematically or synsemantically. And this may be said to be a negative answer to our question, for to say that a word is being used syncategorematically or synsemantically is to say, negatively, that the word is not being used referentially—that the word is not being used to designate or to refer to an object. Thus our question now becomes, more positively: If the word is not being used to designate or refer to an object, how is it being used?

We may say, as Brentano suggests, that in "John is thinking about a unicorn" the word "unicorn" is being used to contribute to the description of John. But how does it contribute to the description of John? We are not saying, obviously, that John is a unicorn. We are saying that John is thinking about a unicorn, and so one might be tempted to say the word "unicorn" is being used to describe John's thought. But how does the word "unicorn" contribute to the description of John's thought? We are not saying, obviously, that John's thought is a unicorn. We are saying—again, obviously—that the object of John's thought is a unicorn. But, Brentano tells us, statements ostensibly about the object of John's thought are actually statements about John. And so we have completed a kind of circle. For now we can ask, once again: what does this use of "unicorn" tell us about John?

32. See The True and the Evident, p. 68.
One may be tempted to say that the use of "unicorn" in such sentences as "John is thinking about a unicorn" and "John believes that there are unicorns" has no connection at all with what would be its designative or referential use. What we have here, one is tempted to continue, are simply two different predicates of John—predicates that might be written as "thinking-about-a-unicorn" and "believing-that-there-are-unicorns." Better still, the hyphens could be removed, thereby making it clear that the predicates have no more to do with unicorns than they have to do with, say, ink, or with hats, or with corn, or with her, or with any of the other objects whose names happen to be imbedded in our intentional predicates.

That this suggestion will not do, however, is indicated by the fact that "John believes that there are unicorns" (or "John believesthatthereareunicorns") and "All of John's beliefs are true" together imply "There are unicorns"—a mode of inference that would not be valid if "unicorn" functioned here as an equivocal middle term.33

Alonzo Church has suggested that the English sentence "Schliemann sought the site of Troy" tells us that a certain relation obtains between Schliemann and the concept of the site of Troy, suggesting therefore that seeking is a relation between a person and an abstractum. But what relation is asserted to obtain between Schliemann and the concept of the site of Troy? He was not seeking the concept, since he already had it when he set out on his quest. Church says, negatively, that the relation that Schliemann bore to the concept of the site of Troy is "not quite

33. "One may have the feeling that in the sentence 'I expect he is coming' one is using the words 'he is coming' in a different sense from the one they have in the assertion 'He is coming.' But if it were so how could I say that my expectation had been fulfilled? If I wanted to explain the words 'he' and 'is coming,' say by means of ostensive definitions, the same definitions of these words would go for both sentences." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: 1953), p. 130e. The following passage occurs on this same page: "'The report was not so loud as I had expected.'—'Then there was a louder bang in your expectation?' "
like that of having sought," but he does not tell us more positively what it is.  

Rudolf Carnap once suggested that words or other linguistic entities are the objects of our intentional attitudes. "Charles thinks (asserts, believes, wonders about) A," he said, might be translated as "Charles thinks 'A.'" But when we say that Charles wonders whether there are unicorns, we do not mean to say that Charles wonders whether there is the word "unicorn." And when we make the semantic statement, "The word 'unicorn' in English designates unicorn," we cannot replace the last word in our statement with the expression "the word 'unicorn.'"

One way out, if we are to avoid entia irrealia and at the same time do justice to the phenomenon of intentionality, is to follow Meinong’s suggestion: There are certain truths which hold of objects that do not exist. There are no unicorns; yet there are certain truths that hold of unicorns; hence unicorns have certain properties, among them that of being the object, on occasion, of our intentional attitudes. But this suggestion was anathema to Brentano, as it is to most contemporary logicians.

8. Brentano's doctrine of intentional inexistence was proposed as a way of distinguishing mental or psychical phenomena from physical phenomena: mental phenomena are distinguished by the fact that they contain objects immanently within themselves. If we give up the doctrine of intentional inexistence, how are we to make the distinction between the mental and the physical?

36. Israel Scheffler's "inscriptionalism" might be interpreted as saying that linguistic entities constitute the objects of our intentional attitudes. But if we do interpret it in this way, it becomes very difficult to ascertain just what relation is being asserted to hold between a man and an inscription when we say of him that he is thinking, wondering, desiring, loving, and the like. See Israel Scheffler, The Anatomy of Inquiry (New York: 1963), pp. 57ff.
In the *Klassification der psychischen Phänomene*, published in 1911 and included in the second edition of the *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Brentano said that, since every psychical phenomenon involves a relation to something as object, psychical activity may be described as being essentially relational. But psychical relations, he said, are distinguished from other relations in the following way:

In the case of other relations, the Fundament as well as the Terminus must be an actual thing. . . . If one house is larger than another house, then the second house as well as the first house must exist and have a certain size. . . . But this is not at all the case with psychical relations. If a person thinks about something, the thinker must exist but the objects of his thought need not exist at all. Indeed, if the thinker is denying or rejecting something, and if he is right in so doing, then the object of his thinking must not exist. Hence the thinker is the only thing that needs to exist if a psychical relation is to obtain. The Terminus of this so-called relation need not exist in reality. One may well ask, therefore, whether we are dealing with what is really a relation at all. One could say instead that we are dealing with something which is in a certain respect similar to a relation, and which, therefore, we might describe as being something that is "relation-like" [*etwas ‘relativliches’*].38

This passage suggests the possibility of a logical distinction between the mental and the physical. We might say that the language we use in characterizing the mental has certain logical properties that are not shared by the language we use in characterizing the physical. We could say, for example, that in characterizing the mental we must use "intentional terms" and that we do not need to use such terms when we characterize the physical; and we might then attempt to characterize intentional terms logically. The following definition of "intentional sentence," which is suggested by the passage from Brentano above, may be found in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*: A simple categorical statement (for example, "Parsifal sought the Holy Grail") is intentional if it uses a substantival expression (in this instance "the Holy Grail") without implying either that

there is or that there isn't anything to which the expression truly applies.

But this characterization of "intentional sentence," as it stands, is too broad. The following sentences, none of them concerned with what is mental, satisfy the conditions of the criterion: "The site of Troy is not New Zealand"; "That lady has a profile like the profile of Satan"; "It is possible that the Loch Ness monster exists."

We will be more faithful to Brentano's intention if we look for a peculiar characteristic of the expressions we use to designate "intentional relations." And possibly we will find one if we remind ourselves of the type of situation involved in Walter Burleigh's promise: The man promised to deliver an ox, but there was no particular ox that he promised to deliver. Expressions for intentional relations may exhibit a unique type of behavior when they are found in contexts of quantification. An example involving believing will illustrate the point; similar examples may be constructed which will hold of knowing, desiring, doubting, being pleased, being displeased, hoping, fearing, and still other intentional attitudes.

Consider the two formulae

\[(1) \quad (\exists x) (\exists y) (y = a \land xRa)\]
\[(2) \quad (\exists x) (\exists y) (y = a \land xRy)\].

Let us here restrict the values of variables to concrete entities. An expression which may occupy the place of "R" in such formulae could be said to be intentional if there is an individual term that may occupy the place of "a" with the results that (1) does not imply (2); (2) does not imply (1); and no well-formed sentence that is part of (1) is noncontingent.

We find an example of such an intentional expression if we replace "a" by "the next President" and "R" by "believes that the Mayor of New York is." Let us now suppose that Senator Robert Kennedy is the next President and that one of Mayor Lindsay's supporters believes that he, the Mayor of New York, is the next

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President. In this case (1) will be true. But (1) is consistent with the negation of (2). That is to say, affirming (1) is consistent with denying that there is anyone who mistakes Kennedy for the Mayor, i.e., with denying that there is anyone who supposes with respect to Kennedy that the Mayor of New York is he. But let us assume that there is, in fact, a man who mistakes Kennedy for the Mayor (expecting the Mayor on a certain occasion and then seeing the Senator in a conspicuous position, he takes it for granted that the man he sees, *viz.*, the Senator, is the Mayor). In this case (2) will be true. But (2) is consistent with the negation of (1). That is to say, affirming (2) is consistent with denying that there is anyone who believes that the Mayor of New York is the next President.

We might say, then, that a well-formed sentence is intentional if it contains an intentional expression (e.g., "believes that the Mayor of New York is") and in addition to that only individual terms or quantifiers and variables. We could also say that a well-formed sentence is intentional if it is consistent and implies a sentence that is intentional. The psychological thesis of intentionality could then be put by saying, "All intentional sentences pertain to what is psychological."

If I am not mistaken, no expressions designating nonpsychological phenomena have the logical properties that the expression "R" has just been described as having. And if this is so, then we may say with Brentano that what distinguishes the psychological from the physical is "*etwas 'relativliches.'" 40

40. Since the writing of this essay, the following work has appeared: Franz Brentano, *Die Abkehr vom Nichtrealen*, ed. Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand (Bern: 1966). This book is composed of selections, taken from Brentano's correspondence and hitherto unpublished manuscripts, concerning the repudiation of *entia irrealia*. It also contains a useful discussion of Brentano's reism by Professor Mayer-Hillebrand.