

# HUSSERL AND HEIDEGGER ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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## CHAPTER I

### *Experience and intentionality*

In this chapter, I concern myself with developments in the theory of intentionality from Aristotle to the present. These developments provide the background against which Husserl's and Heidegger's accounts of experience may be understood. My intention is to flesh out competing pulls in the notion of intentionality that provide the basis for fundamental disagreements about the nature and the status of intentionality and the role of intentionality in understanding human experience. The competing pulls inherent in the notion of intentionality are crucial to understanding Husserl's account of intentionality in his *Logical Investigations*<sup>1</sup> and more generally to understanding what is at issue between Husserl and Heidegger when it comes to understanding the fundamental nature of experience.

Both Husserl and Heidegger come to an understanding of experience from the role of intentionality in experience. Husserl makes important modifications in Brentano's account of intentionality which determine the character of his conception of experience. Heidegger later reaches back behind Brentano's appropriation of Aristotle's conception of intentionality and attempts to provide a radically new account of intentionality which undermines the subjectivist tendency implicit in both Brentano's and Husserl's account of experience.

The notion of intentionality has its source in the Aristotelian conception of soul as a source of life and cognition. For Aristotle, the

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, J. N. Findlay trans. (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), *Hua* 19. *Husserliana: Edmund Husserls Gesammelte Werk* is abbreviated as *Hua*. I abbreviate the *Logical Investigations* as *Investigations* and *LU* for ease of citation and I cite it along with other works of Husserl by paragraphs, where available, for ease in moving between the original texts and translations.

soul is a functional unity that is characterized in the case of animals and human beings by a capacity for experience and cognition. This capacity for experience and cognition is, in turn, based on more specific functional subsystems of the functional unity that is the soul. These subsystems are ones that allow the soul (as functional unity of the capacities inherent in a certain body) to relate to individuals in the environment outside of it even when those individuals are not physically present. The capacity for the soul to discriminate physical individuals outside of it when those objects are present and relate to them even when they are absent is based on the fact that its function is governed by an underlying structure or form. It is this form that is then capable of yielding an experience of the physical object without that physical object being physically present in the individual that is having the experience. Such forms in Aristotle are the historical and etymological source of the concept of intentionality.

In Aristotle, experience is not identified with consciousness. This does not mean that Aristotle does not take experience to involve forms of dispositional and occurrent awareness. However, the awareness that an individual has of him- or herself is taken to be a function of the operation of his or her organism (the soul). In the modern period, intentionality has been revived in the context of a theory of consciousness.

The modern theory of intentionality as a theory of consciousness allows for a direct realist reading of the notion that a state of consciousness is directed at an object. In this case, the state of consciousness directly grasps the object that it is directed at. Alternatively, the state of consciousness may be thought to be directed at an object by means of a representation of that object. Such a representation then serves as a psychic intermediary between the state of consciousness and the object at which it is directed. Pulls in these two competing directions have been a hallmark of the notion of intentionality throughout its history, since they antedate the modern notion of consciousness and can be discerned in Aristotle's own conception of intentionality.

In exploring the competing pulls in the notion of intentionality, I look first at the role of intentionality in the contemporary philosophy of mind. Then I explore the historical origins of our conception of intentionality. Then I probe Husserl's critique of both Brentano's immanentist or internalist conception of intentionality as intentional inexistence, as well as his critique of the transcendent or externalist

conception of intentionality. Husserl's argument against the object theory of intentionality in either its internalist or its externalist forms leads him to opt for a theory of intentionality based on acts of consciousness that need have no object at all.

In arguing that acts of consciousness have meaning only in virtue of functional role types that they exemplify, Husserl reappropriates the Aristotelian notion of an intention as a form (species) existing in the mind without the psychological and indeed psychologicistic implications of Brentano's understanding of intentional inexistence. Husserl rejects the idea that the object-directedness of experience is based solely on a functional relation between psychological or eventually of material states. In this respect he can rightly be regarded as an early critic of functionalism in the philosophy of mind. However, he does argue that the kind of object-directedness involved in intentionality must be understood in terms of the differential functional role that words, statements, and types of mental states can play in reasoning and inference. And he wishes ultimately to argue that these roles cannot be understood completely independently of an account of the functioning of the mind.

#### INTENTIONALITY AND NATURALISM

The philosophy of mind now pays increasing attention to the thesis that consciousness, in particular, and human experience, in general, are characterized by intentionality. Philosophers of mind distinguish referential intentionality, the directedness of representations at objects, from content intentionality, the possession by representations such as intentions, perceptions, and beliefs of a distinctive meaning or content, in virtue of which they are able to represent things. In contrast to referential intentionality, content intentionality need not involve a directedness at a specific object. A belief, such as the belief that no one is in the room, has a content even if it has no specific object at which it is directed. By contrast, when an individual fears some thing, a lion for instance, or has a belief of a lion that it is something to be feared, then that person is in a state involving referential intentionality.

The relatively recent rehabilitation of the notion that thoughts exhibit intentionality and that sensations and other qualitative states have a distinctive phenomenal content is due largely to difficulties

encountered by attempts to provide reductive analyses of the mental.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to see how the propositional attitudes of what is often called folk psychology can be reconstructed in purely material terms. Common-sense psychological terms such as “believe,” “feel,” “imagine,” “fear,” “desire,” “think” are crucial to our everyday dealings with one another. They have complex systematic relations to each other which allow us to form interesting generalizations about our experience. These empirical generalizations about psychological states resist formulation in terms of neurophysiological theories. It is difficult to envision how the systematic connections between propositional attitudes could be mirrored in any interesting way in neurophysiological laws.

It is also quite difficult to see how qualitative experiences, such as the experiencing of the color red or the experiencing of pain, can be given a purely physical characterization. Any attempt to characterize such qualitative experiences in terms of their causal and dispositional relations to perceptual inputs and behavioral outputs faces the problem that the existence of such causal functional relations seems to be consistent with the absence of the qualitative experiences in

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most prominent proponent of intentionality in contemporary philosophy of mind has been John R. Searle, *Intentionality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). However, the influence of Roderick Chisholm on the contemporary debate should also not be underestimated. Chisholm, who is also the most distinguished contemporary interpreter of Brentano's philosophy, has countered early behaviorist and particularly functionalist models of the mind with the thesis of the irreducibility of the intentional, see Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 168–185. There is a famous defense by Chisholm of the irreducibility of the intentionality of the mental against Wilfried Sellars's functionalist account of the mind in R. M. Chisholm and Wilfried Sellars, “Intentionality and the Mental,” in H. Feigl, M. Scriven, and G. Maxwell (eds.), *Concepts, Theories, and the Mind-Body Problem* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), pp. 507–539. A more Aristotelian and neo-scholastic approach to intentionality has been defended by P. T. Geach, *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), and, *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972); Elizabeth Anscombe, “The Intentionality of Sensation: A Grammatical Feature,” in R. J. Butler (ed.), *Analytical Philosophy*, second series (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 158–180, idem, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), and Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and the Will* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963). The influence of Wittgenstein encourages Geach, Anscombe, and Kenny to interpret the notion of intentionality in a strikingly anti-internalist fashion as a way in which we relate to objects that are outside of the mind. Their interpretation of intentionality is thus more in harmony with that of Martin Heidegger than it is with Brentano or Husserl, interpreted in a subjectivist way. A more recent application of the synthesis of Aristotle and Wittgenstein to the problem of intentionality may be found in John McDowell, “Intentionality *De Re*,” in E. LePore and R. van Gulick (eds.), *John Searle And His Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 215–226. According to McDowell, thoughts about particular objects are only thinkable if the objects that they are about actually exist.

question. And, what is more, in trying to reduce the first-person experience of pain to causal and dispositional relations that are objective and available to the third-person point of view, we seem to leave out precisely what is distinctive about having the pain.

The recalcitrance of commonsense psychological explanation to explanation in narrowly naturalistic terms has led to two alternative approaches. Reductive materialists have argued that we need to wait for the resources of physical theory to develop further before we will be able to effect a reduction of psychological to physical idiom, but maintain that, in principle, such a reduction is possible. Philosophical behaviorists and eliminative materialists have argued that propositional attitudes do not really exist. Talk in the idiom of folk psychology should ultimately be replaced by a more perspicuous form of scientific discourse rather than reduced to underlying physical structure.<sup>3</sup> We seem to face the choice of believing that a sophisticated reduction of qualitative states and propositional attitudes to physical states may ultimately be possible, or of taking a purely instrumental approach to qualitative states and/or propositional attitudes. In either case, even if one accepts the validity of these points of view, there is some place, at least during the transition period while we are waiting for a more complete neuroscience, for an analysis of the relations between the propositional attitudes and qualitative states that make up folk psychology.

The contemporary difficulties in implementing reductive or eliminative materialism that have encouraged interest in consciousness and intentionality parallel those difficulties in late nineteenth-century naturalistic psychology that led Franz Brentano and Wilhelm Dilthey to develop a descriptive psychology as a companion to a genetic psychology. Descriptive psychology is based on the idea that many objects of psychological investigation can only be understood in first-personal terms. In this respect, such objects are distinct from objects that are fit for explanation in the impersonal terms of

<sup>3</sup> A classic defense of the position that folk psychology must ultimately give way to talk about ourselves in the more perspicuous scientific vocabulary of cognitive science may be found in Stephen Stich, *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science: The Case Against Belief* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983). More recently, in *Deconstructing the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Stich has become critical of the eliminativist conclusion that folk psychological states do not exist, while continuing to maintain that folk psychology will be abandoned by a mature science of the mind/brain. Stich now no longer regards attempts to naturalize intentionality as successful, nor does he think that the naturalization of intentionality is necessary in order to demonstrate that there is such a thing as intentionality.



theoretical physics or even of neurophysiology. Thus, descriptive psychology is to be distinguished from the naturalistic discipline of genetic psychology which, in principle, would ultimately link up to neurophysiology.

Brentano introduces the notion of "intentional inexistence" in 1874 in order to characterize the ability of mental states, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and desires, to direct themselves at objects that do not actually exist.<sup>4</sup> He thinks that the ability of intentional attitudes to direct themselves at objects is the distinguishing mark of the mental and the key to understanding the generalizations involved in folk psychology. He maintains that this ability of the mind to direct itself at objects cannot be accounted for in terms of the causal relations between inputs and outputs in the brain or in terms of dispositions to respond to stimuli. Thus it is not an accident that the most influential aspect in Brentano's notion of intentional existence has been the idea that the mind might have a property of being directed at objects that cannot be reduced to other mental or physical phenomena. This aspect of intentionality, its object-directedness, has rightly almost completely overshadowed another dimension that has often been discerned in Brentano's conception of intentionality. This is the idea that intentional inexistence entails the immanent existence of represented objects in the mind. This idea promises an explanation of how something can be represented even if it does not exist.

#### THE ARISTOTELIAN LEGACY OF INTENTIONALITY

The notion of intentionality derives from the Latin term "intentio" ("intention"). The term "intention" has a prevailing meaning that is specifically practical. The Latin term from which the term "intention" is derived, "intentio," had the prevailing practical meaning until the beginning of the high scholastic period. The source of our term "intention" is, in fact, the scholastic Latin translation "intentio" for the terms "mana" and "maquil" that are used by the medieval philosopher Avicenna (or, more accurately, Ibn Sina) to

<sup>4</sup> Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, L. L. McAlister trans. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 88, and also "The distinction between mental and physical phenomena," in R. M. Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology* (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing, 1960).

refer to (Aristotelian) forms as they exist without matter in the soul.<sup>5</sup> Brentano and philosophers who have been influenced by him turn to the wider usage of intention to refer to the way the soul is directed at entities, while regarding intentions in the more narrow practical sense familiar from ordinary language and the philosophy of action as a special case of this broader meaning of intention. In introducing the idea of the intentional inexistence of an object, Brentano not only refers to scholasticism, and particularly to Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, but also to Aristotle's *De Anima* (*On the Soul*):

Aristotle already speaks of this psychic inhabitation. In his books on the soul he says that what is sensed is in the individual who senses as sensed, sense takes up what is sensed without matter, what is thought is in the thinking understanding . . . Augustine touches on the same fact in his theory of *verbum mentis* and its internal origin. Anselm does so in his well-known ontological argument . . . Thomas Aquinas teaches that what is thought is intentionally in the one thinking, the object of love [is intentionally] in the person loving, what is desired [is intentionally] in the person desiring, and uses this for theological purposes.<sup>6</sup>

The received interpretation of both the Aristotelian and scholastic conception of the forms without matter, or intentions, in terms of which we are able to perceive objects outside of the "soul," is that such forms are not mental intermediaries between the soul and what the soul experiences, but rather the vehicles in terms of which we directly experience the things outside of the soul. But there are passages in Aristotle that seem to support the idea that forms in the soul are the direct objects of experience, rather than forms by means of which we directly experience things. After noting that only the form of the stone exists in the soul, and not the actual stone, Aristotle argues in *De Anima* that even mathematical knowledge involves objects of thought ("noeta") that reside in sensible forms:

<sup>5</sup> The connection between Ibn Sina and the non-specifically practical notion of intentionality has been widely discussed, see Überweg-Geyer, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 2 (1928), 343; "'Intention' and 'Intentionality' in the Scholastics, Brentano, and Husserl," L. McAlister and M. Schättle trans., in L. McAlister (ed.), *The Philosophy of Brentano* (London: Duckworth, 1976), p. 110; William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 229; and also especially William Kneale, "Intentionality and Intensionality," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 42 (1968), 73–90.

<sup>6</sup> Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p. 88n. Brentano develops his interpretation of Aristotle's theory of perception and thought in more detail in his earlier work, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, Rolf George trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 54ff., where he already argues that the object of sense-perception is present in perception as object of perception. Husserl already displays familiarity with both of these works in his first book, *The Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891), *Hua* 12, pp. 66n and 85n.

And for this reason no one could ever learn or understand anything without perceiving, so that even when we engage in theoretical contemplation, we must have some phantasm that we contemplate; for phantasms are like objects of perception except without matter. (432a8ff.)

It is very tempting to interpret such phantasms as mental images. For such phantasms are present according to Aristotle in non-veridical perception, memories, and dreams, in which the thing itself is absent. This might seem to suggest that Aristotle thinks of phantasms as psychic intermediaries that represent objects outside of the soul. However, one need not think of phantasms as mental images, since one can experience an absent object as present without having a mental image of the object in question. If phantasms were mental images, one would expect them to be involved in veridical perception, that is, in the perception of objects that are actually there and present themselves to us as they are. But Aristotle claims that in thought and perception the mind in some sense becomes its objects. He insists that “actual knowledge is identical with its object” (*De Anima*: 431a). He also notes that “within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are *potentially* these objects, the one what is knowable, the other what is sensible. They must be either the things themselves or their forms. The former alternative is of course impossible: it is not the stone which is present in the soul, but its form” (*De Anima*: 431b27ff.). In the case of intellectual objects, an identity of the form in the mind and the object is possible, since the object is itself a form. But in the case of sensible objects such an identity must remain an unactualized possibility, since the object has not only a characteristic form, but one that is instanced in matter.

For Aristotle, there are undeniably vehicles, which he refers to as forms without matter or stuff, by means of which we are able to perceive and also to think things. He compares the way sense receives form without matter to “the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet ring without the iron or gold” (*De Anima*: 424a19–20). However, there is no suggestion that these immaterial forms somehow exist only in the mind or soul or even have objects that exist only in the mind or soul. So there is no reason to think of Aristotle’s view as genuinely supporting a representationalist conception of experience, even if it can be interpreted in that fashion.

Aristotle’s metaphor of form impressing matter like a signet ring

impresses wax has suggested a materialist reading to some according to which the forms that are received by the senses are in fact physical information, while the somewhat more prevalent view has been that these forms are already immaterial in character. Thus the extent to which Aristotle's notion of a form in the soul without matter is itself genuinely immaterial is controversial.<sup>7</sup> According to Richard Sorabji, Arabic writers such as Ibn Sina still interpret the material states caused by the effect of sense objects on our senses as information or as a sign of their causes. This notion of intention is then interpreted by Thomas Aquinas as non-physical information that is physically housed, but does not of necessity involve an awareness of anything. Brentano then finally gives the notion of an intention an irredeemably "Cartesian" interpretation as something necessarily involving mental awareness.

The connection that Brentano draws between the form in intention and consciousness is apparent in his interpretation of Aristotle. Brentano argues that, when Aristotle says that the eye receives a certain color from some other object of sense, he means that the eye becomes aware of the color in question. From Sorabji's perspective, Brentano's interpretation of Aristotle's notion of perceptual form without matter as consciousness's directedness at objects involves serious distortion. Brentano has been defended, however, by Myles Burnyeat. Burnyeat argues plausibly that the effect that a certain object of sense has on an organ is itself for Aristotle a perceiving and thus a form of awareness.<sup>8</sup> Such an awareness seems already to involve a qualitative phenomenal experience of the kind that functionalists try to explain in terms of causal functional relations.

One need not, however, endorse Burnyeat's more robust claim that the relation between matter and form is essential in Aristotle in the case of beings that are essentially alive and sentient. This claim is

<sup>7</sup> Richard Sorabji tells the story of the history of the concept of intentionality as a shift from an initially physical notion to a progressively more mentalistic one, in Richard Sorabji, "From Aristotle to Brentano: The Development of the Concept of Intentionality," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 9 (1991), 227–259, and also his paper "Intentionality and Physiological Processes," in Martha Nussbaum and Amélie Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 195–225. Sorabji interprets Aristotle as a proto-functionalism in the philosophy of mind. Sorabji argues rather contentiously that when Aristotle claims that the sense organ receives form without matter and becomes like the sensed object he means that the inner organ takes on physical sounds, odours, flavors, etc. The eye-jelly turns red, and the nose actually becomes smelly.

<sup>8</sup> Myles Burnyeat, "Is Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible? A Draft," in Martha Nussbaum and Amélie Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, pp. 15–26.

directed against functionalist interpretations of Aristotle such as that defended by Sorabji that require multiple possible physical instantiations of mental states. Yet, even if one does not accept Burnyeat's more robust claim, one need not endorse a functionalist interpretation. It is true that Aristotle's distinction between matter and form (function) anticipates the claim that certain functionalists have made against the identification of physical structure with function proposed by advocates of a materialist identity theory of mind. But seeing that Aristotle distinguishes physical structure and function and then relates function to physical structure hardly constitutes a sufficient reason for ascribing to Aristotle the substantive thesis of functionalism. This is the claim that psychic (mental) states can be individuated into types on the basis of the causal functional relations that they bear to one another and to the inputs and outputs of the system to which they belong.

Turning now to Thomas Aquinas, again the standard reading of Thomas, as Sorabji concedes, assigns to intention a necessary awareness component.<sup>9</sup> Thomas reconstructs Aristotle's theory of perception in the following way:

But the sensible image is not what is perceived, but rather that by which the sense perceives. Therefore the intelligible species is not what is understood, but that by which the intellect understands ... Since the intellect reflects upon itself, by this very reflection it understands both its own understanding and the species by which it understands. And thus the intelligible species is in a secondary sense that which is understood. But that which is understood in a primary sense is the thing of which the intelligible species is the likeness.<sup>10</sup>

Thomas rejects the idea that the objects that we experience are the species or epistemic intermediaries in terms of which we experience external objects. We directly perceive or think objects by means of species (forms), but the objects that we experience are objects external to the soul or mind. However, in a secondary sense, we also have a consciousness of ourselves as perceiving or thinking those objects through species.

<sup>9</sup> The standard reading of Thomas on intentionality may be found defended by Sheldon M. Cohen, "Thomas Aquinas on the Immaterial Reception of Sensible Forms," *Philosophical Review* 91 (1982), 193–209.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1952), 1, 85, 2.

## BRENTANO AND INTENTIONAL INEXISTENCE

Brentano takes over the Aristotelian idea that we have a secondary awareness of ourselves perceiving or thinking whenever we think of or perceive some object, but, like Descartes, he seems to combine this doctrine with the non-Aristotelian idea that real external objects are not themselves characterized by the sensible qualities that we directly perceive in external perception. This leads to what is widely thought to be Brentano's "Cartesian" doctrine of the immanence of the mental.

Punning on the German word for perception, *Wahrnehmen*, Brentano argues that inner perception is the only form of perception that genuinely grasps what is true ("wahr-nimmt"). In inner perception, we immediately experience the objects of our representations, mental phenomena, since those objects are themselves representations. In outer perception, we perceive sensory qualities: colors, sounds, smells, warmth, cold, but these secondary qualities are qualities of physical objects only insofar as those objects are physical phenomena.

This suggests that the existence in the mind of forms (ideas) is based on a form of representational realism in which the forms (ideas) that we know are stand-ins or representatives of the things that we know through them. On the face of it, such representational realism seems alien to the spirit of Aristotle's conception of perception, which is more generally understood as a form of direct realism in which forms serve as the vehicles for perceptual awareness but are not themselves the actual objects of perception.

According to this widely held "Cartesian" interpretation of Brentano's earlier views, in 1904 Brentano then forsakes the idea of intentional inexistence in favor of the idea that we can only represent things, real objects, by which he means the accidents of substances. Brentano now rejects all existence claims concerning non-real entities. He then maintains that only substances and their accidents are real and representable; all other entities are linguistic fictions. This shift to reism has sometimes been referred to as Brentano's Copernican revolution.<sup>11</sup> Brentano's key argument for the primacy of things is that representation or thought is a univocal notion, and,

<sup>11</sup> Oskar Kraus, "Die 'kopernikanische Wendung,' in Brentanos Erkenntnis- und Wertlehre," *Philosophische Hefte* 3 (1929).

since representation is always representation of something, that something must also be univocal:

The expression “to represent” <*vorstellen*> is univocal. To represent is always to represent *something*. Since “to represent” is univocal, the term “something” must also be univocal. But there is no generic concept that can be common both to things and to non-things. Hence if “something” denotes a thing at one time, it cannot denote a non-thing – an impossibility, say – at another time.<sup>12</sup>

One conclusion that one might be tempted to draw from Brentano’s argument is that it is impossible to represent non-existent things at all. This would be a rather implausible return to the position of the pre-socratic philosopher Parmenides. While Brentano thinks that we can represent things, real objects, that do not exist, he thinks that all “irreal” objects, by which he means all objects that are not actual or possible substances, or at least possible or actual accidents of substances, are mere linguistic fictions. Thus, all talk of non-real objects should be eliminable in favor of talk of real things, that is actual or possible things. Brentano’s argument for his nominalistic ontology is not altogether convincing, since it relies on the rather dubious assumption that there is only one sense in which one can represent anything. However, it is significant that the constant in his thought is not the idea that objects of thought must literally exist in the mind, but the idea that thought involves the ability to direct itself at its objects. This is in keeping with the original Aristotelian inspiration of his thought.

Indeed, the Cartesian interpretation of Brentano’s initial conception of the intentional has been challenged by the later Brentano and by other interpreters of his work. Such interpreters argue that Brentano never holds the view that intentional objects literally exist in the mind. Thus Richard Aquila argues that “Brentano never did argue, even during his early period, that whenever somebody thinks about centaurs, there is a centaur which is thought about”; Aquila insists that “the notion of an ‘immanent object’ was not intended by Brentano to suggest that some object is ‘in’ the mind, but only to suggest that it is an *object* for the mind.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Franz Brentano, *The True and the Evident*, R. Chisholm and E. Politzer trans. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Aquila, *Intentionality: A Study of Mental Acts* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), p. 100. The ontological view of the intentional is also challenged by Linda McAlister, “Chisholm and Brentano on Intentionality,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 28

This direct realist interpretation is more in harmony with the Aristotelian views that Brentano thought he was reconstructing. Instead of thinking of intentional inexistence as the literal existence of objects in the mind, it is possible to understand intentional inexistence as a particular kind of relational feature of the mental. On this view, mental phenomena are just the way in which things that are independent of the mind appear to the mind. Unlike the more “Cartesian” interpretation of intentional inexistence, the primary objects of perception are taken to be things that are external to the mental acts in which they are thought; it is only the secondary objects of perception that are internal to the mind: “The primary object of such [mental] acts is transcendent simply because this realization of the form of the object, this mental act, is not itself an object save secondarily, in inner perception.”<sup>14</sup>

The merit of the direct realist interpretation of Brentano over the representational realist interpretation is threefold: it allows one to see how the early Brentano is influenced by Aristotle and, in turn, inspires the Aristotelian direct realism of Husserl, Twardowski, and Meinong; it makes for a greater continuity in Brentano’s own thought; and it conforms to Brentano’s own interpretation of the relation between his earlier and later views. For Brentano later argues that the subjectivist interpretation of his early work is mistaken. He maintains that the term “immanent object” in his earlier writings refers to the fact that there might not be an object in the external world corresponding to the object in question:

But it *was not my opinion that the immanent object* = “*represented object*.” The representation does not have “*represented object*,” but “*the thing*,” therefore for instance, the representation of a horse, not “*represented Horser*,” *but rather* “*horse*” as (immanent, i.e. sole object authentically to be called) object. This object *however is not*. The representer has something as an object, *without it therefore being*.<sup>15</sup>

On the more Aristotelian interpretation, Brentano does not later reject his earlier notion of intentional inexistence, he merely insists more forcefully on the ontological primacy of things relative to

(1978), 328–338, and by Robert Richardson, “Brentano on Intentional Inexistence and the Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 65 (1983), 250–282.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>15</sup> Brentano Letter to Anton Marty, March 17, 1905 in Franz Brentano, *Abkehr vom Nichtrealen* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1966), pp. 119–120.



properties and abstract objects.<sup>16</sup> Still, some account is needed of what it means for something to be a non-existent object. For intentionality seems only to be comprehensible to the extent that one can make sense of the possibility of a kind of quasi-relation between something real and a non-existent object. This raises the question of how one could relate to something that does not exist.

#### NON-EXISTENT OBJECTS IN THE BRENTANO SCHOOL

Brentano's early students, Twardowski, Meinong, and Husserl attempt to provide an answer to how something can be an object without actually existing. In response to this problem, Twardowski develops the object theory of intentionality in 1894, according to which all intentional acts have objects, but these objects may be either internal to or external to consciousness, and either existent or non-existent objects:

The expression "objectless representation" <*Vorstellung*> is such that it contains a contradiction; for there is no representation which does not represent something as an object; there can be no such representation. But there are many representations whose objects do not exist, either because the objects combine contradictory determinations and hence cannot exist, or because they simply do in fact not exist.<sup>17</sup>

Twardowski distinguishes between the act of representing, the content of representation, and the object represented. The content of the representation constitutes the meaning or significance of the representation. The content of the representation is what is immanent to consciousness, while in most cases the object represented is not. Every representation consists of act, content, and object.

Husserl objects to the scheme developed by Twardowski on two separate grounds, one having to do with Twardowski's understanding of the notion of content and the second having to do with his understanding of what it is to be an object. First, Husserl argues that it is a mistake to identify the meaning or significance of a representation with its psychological content:

<sup>16</sup> Brentano regards accidents as the wholes of which the substances to which they belong are parts, see Franz Brentano, *Kategorienlehre*, Alfred Kastil (ed.) (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1933), pp. 151ff.

<sup>17</sup> Kasimir Twardowski, *On the Content and Object of Presentations*, R. Grossman trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 26.

That each significant expression must in its normal function carry along with it, in addition to those changing contents, certain contents that are constant in all cases, without which understanding would not be possible, which could therefore be understood as *the* “content” of the respective representation in a more pregnant sense – all of this I hold to be psychological fiction . . . The content resides in the representation as a real constituent, but the signification does so only functionally.<sup>18</sup>

Husserl argues persuasively that there is just no precisely identical psychological content in the mind of different persons who mean the same thing which would permit identification of meaning with psychological content. From this lack of any identical psychological content in different persons who share the same thought, he infers that meaning or signification is something ideal or abstract, rather than some real content. Of course, thinking of meaning as an abstract psychological content that is instanced in different individuals will not do either. There is not enough that the psychological states of different individuals have in common when those individuals mean the same thing. Husserl proposes instead that the identity of signification (meaning) depends on the way different expressions and psychological states may perform the same functional role in the way those individuals use language and reason.

Against Twardowski’s object theory of intentionality, Husserl maintains that there can be objectless representations, such as “a round square” or “the present King of France.” Twardowski maintains that we can distinguish between the non-existence of an object that is represented by us and its not being represented. Even if the object does not exist, it can still be represented by us. Husserl first argues that it is a consequence of Twardowski’s view that an object of representation actually exists that is genuinely immanent in that representation. At least the object of representation exists as a represented object.<sup>19</sup> But if we are willing to countenance the existence of a round square as an object that is immanent in our representations, then we ought to countenance the existence of contradictory objects.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Husserl, “Critical Discussion of K. Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen. Eine Psychologische Untersuchung* (Vienna 1894),” *Hua* 22, p. 350n. There is an English translation in D. Willard (ed.), *Edmund Husserl: Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994). The Willard translation reproduces the *Hua* pagination in the margins.

<sup>19</sup> The argument in question is to be found in a long unpublished paper “Intentional Objects,” written between 1894 and 1898, but first published in *Hua* 22, pp. 303–348, see esp. p. 352, also in D. Willard (ed.), *Edmund Husserl: Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics*.

In fact, Meinong pursues this line of thought. Meinong argues that representations may have an intentional relation to existent or non-existent objects of different kinds, but that whenever there is an intentional relation there is some kind of object to which one is directed. He contends that one can talk of the being-such (“*Sosein*”) even of contradictory objects. A whole realm of non-existent objects opens up which have what Meinong calls *Sosein*.<sup>20</sup> The object theory of intentionality is for this reason most closely associated with the work of Meinong.

Instead of pursuing the object theory route, Husserl argues that not every representation has an object in the authentic sense. Being an object in the authentic sense is equivalent to being an existing, true object of representation. This is only going to be satisfactory if some account can be provided of how an object can be given in an inauthentic sense. Husserl needs to account for our ability to talk about non-existent objects, such as Zeus. What does it mean to intend to refer to Zeus, in many cases under different descriptions, even though there is no such object? Husserl’s suggestion is that we treat Zeus as if he were an object: “But our judging is then a ‘modified’ one, a judging which seems to be about the represented objects, insofar as we place ourselves on (phantasizing our way into, etc.) the grounds of the existence of the objects, upon which we in truth do not stand at all” (*Hua* 22, p. 317).

The idea that in relating to non-existent object, we are only acting as if we were relating to an object, even applies to logic, and mathematics. In logic and mathematics, we can make conditional claims about objects which may not be true. But then we are only talking as if there were such objects (*Hua* 22, pp. 321–328).

#### FROM INTENTIONAL OBJECT TO FUNCTIONAL ROLE

The idea that non-existent objects are ones to which we merely pretend to refer is not completely satisfying. There seems to be a difference between believing that centaurs exist and pretending to believe that centaurs exist. Fortunately, Husserl has a deeper suggestion for how we might understand reference to objects that do not exist. He suggests that the notion of an intentional object, in the

<sup>20</sup> Alexius Meinong, “The Theory of Objects,” in R. Chisholm (ed.), *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*.

sense of an object that must be represented if an act of consciousness is to have content, should simply drop out in favor of the distinctive inferential role played by the content expressed by a certain act of consciousness:

It is worth considering . . . whether talk of immanent objects of representation and judgment cannot be understood as an inauthentic one, such that in general there is nothing contained in the acts themselves, that there is nothing there in them in the authentic sense of which it could be said that this is the object which the act represents or rather recognizes or rejects; that therefore acts, if they need an existing stuff to be acted on in the way that activities do, cannot have the stuff they need in the objects "at which they are directed"; but that talk of containment and the whole difference between "true" and "intentional" reduces to certain individual features and distinctions in the logical function of representations, i.e. in the forms of possible valid connections, in which the representations can enter, regarded solely with respect to their objective content. ("Intentional Objects" section 4, *Hua* 22, p. 311)

For Husserl, the idea that the intentional object is nothing but a function of the distinctive functional role that a certain way of representing things can play in reasoning and the making of logical inferences is itself the expression of the distinction that he draws between the ideal and the real or psychological content of linguistic and other representations.

The distinction between the ideal and the psychological content of representational acts pushes us from the outset to such a conception. The former points to certain connections of identification in which we grasp the identity of the intention (in some cases with evidence), while the individual representations do not have any psychologically identical constituent in common. We assigned the objective reference of representations from the outset to their ideal content, representations of identically the same meaning can display objective difference, representations of different meaning identity. Here talk of representations that represent the same object was based on nothing other than synthesis in judgment, or rather in cognition. Looking at the matter precisely, the posited connection here is based on the objective content of the referential representational acts, in their essence. ("Intentional Objects" section 4, *Hua* 22, pp. 311–312)

Here we must distinguish three things, (1) the real or psychological content, (2) that aspect of the ideal content that constitutes the meaning of an act, and (3) that aspect of the ideal content that constitutes its intended reference. Unfortunately, the opening section

of "Intentional Objects" in which Husserl develops the idea that intentional directedness of representations is part of their ideal content is no longer fully extant.<sup>21</sup> However, the ideas that he articulates here are an anticipation of the more developed account to be found in the *Investigations*. The intended reference of a representation is determined by the object which it purports to represent. Husserl takes successful reference to involve cognition of the object to which one is intending to refer. The possibility of cognition of a certain object by means of a certain set of representations is, however, determined by the essence of the acts to which they belong, and this, in turn, is the basis for the distinctive functional roles that different acts play in inference:

Thinking, we are always directed at objective connections. But the latter concern the mere function of representations, this does not mean that object and objective connection in representation and judgment lead an idiosyncratic "mental existence." ("Intentional Objects," *Hua* 22, p. 335)

#### INTENTIONAL AND INTENSIONAL OBJECT IN THE "INVESTIGATIONS"

The analysis of the intentional object that Husserl develops in the late 1890s, with its distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic, or merely significative, intentional object, prepares the way for the position that he articulates in the *Investigations* (1901). The authentic intentional object is an object that exists as we take it to be, while the inauthentic intentional object is an object that merely seems to exist because we can meaningfully (significatively) talk about it. Working with these distinctions Husserl argues in the *Investigations* that the intentional object of consciousness is really neither inside nor outside of consciousness. The context is purely intensional:

I present the god Jupiter, that is, I have a certain presentational experience; in my consciousness there occurs a presenting-of-the-god-Jupiter. One may dissect this intentional experience by descriptive analysis in any way one pleases, but one will naturally not find anything like the god Jupiter; the "immanent," "mental" object does not belong therefore to the descriptive (real) constitution of the experience, thus it is not really immanent or mental. Of course, it is also not *extra mentem*, it does not exist at all. But that

<sup>21</sup> A more complete version of the German text of "Intentional Objects" than that to be found in *Husserliana* is now available in *Brentano-Studien* 3 (1990–1), 136–176.

does not affect the fact that the presenting-of-the-god-Jupiter is actual. (*LU* v, section 11).

While the claim that the intentional object is neither inside nor outside of consciousness is initially somewhat mysterious, it can be made sense of by thinking of the intentional object as an adverbial modification of intentional states.<sup>22</sup> Something appears to consciousness even in cases of non-veridical perception and fictional discourse. But in such cases there is no object internal to or external to consciousness and thought to which one is in fact existentially committed. Instead what appears to be an object is merely a way of perceiving, believing, imagining, or thinking. Thus while there is a logical or grammatical object that is intended, there is no actual object, and hence no genuine reference. By contrast, where perception and belief are veridical, they do involve existential commitments to objects (*LU* v, sections 34ff.). In this way, Husserl rejects both the immanentist and the externalist versions of the object account of intentionality.

The act of consciousness creates an intensional context in which the existential generalization from the thought that  $\text{Pa}$  to  $(\exists)x\text{Fx}$  is not in general licit.<sup>23</sup> However, failure of existential generalizability of the kind involved in intensional contexts is not a sufficient condition for intentionality. The statement "Klingons fight wars" is intensional, it fails to support existential generalization, since Klingons do not in fact exist. However it does not necessarily involve intentionality. There is also no reason to think that failure of existential generalizability is a necessary condition of intentionality. Knowledge involves intentionality, and yet on the traditional interpretation of knowledge as justified true belief knowledge supports existential generalization.

Especially in his later career, Husserl makes much of the kind of immunity to reference failure involved in I thoughts. He attributes the highest level of "Evidenz" (support for the truth of a claim) to such thoughts because we cannot even think them without their

<sup>22</sup> The intentional object in the *Logical Investigations* is also given an adverbial interpretation by David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1982), p. 142, and by Barry Smith, *Austrian Philosophy: The Legacy of Franz Brentano* (La Salle: Open Court, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> While Chisholm has attempted to spell out logical criteria that are necessary and sufficient conditions for intentionality, I think it is fair to say that he has not succeeded in doing so. A detailed criticism of his account may be found in L. Jonathan Cohen, "Criteria of Intentionality," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 42 (1968), 123–142.

being true, and thus having an object that exists. Non-extensional occurrence, or intensionality, is also not a logical criterion of intentionality, since there are non-intentional sentences, particularly modal sentences, such that replacing a phrase,  $p$ , with a phrase,  $p_2$ , having the same truth value as  $p$ , in a sentence,  $s$ , will result in a sentence with different truth value than  $s$ . Referential opacity also fails to distinguish intentional from non-intentional sentences, since many non-intentional sentences with modal operators are referentially opaque. It is, however, reasonable to say that intentionality provides some of the most significant examples of intensionality, and referential opacity. In those circumstances, however, in which consciousness actually represents the object as it is, and hence existential generalization is possible, the intentional object of consciousness is simply the external object of consciousness. In those cases, however, in which what is represented by us does not in fact exist, the intentional object is merely an adverbial modification of the act of consciousness through which it is represented.

#### HUSSERL'S BRENTANO CRITIQUE

Working with an immanentist interpretation of Brentano's theory of perception, Husserl accuses Brentano of confusing the real contents of consciousness by means of which an object is presented to us in individual experience with the intended object of those experiences. From the immunity of such contents to error in the presentational immediacy of individual experience, Brentano then falsely infers that inner experiences are the only objects that one can truly perceive ("wahr-nehmen"), where he should have claimed that such contents are not perceived at all in our immediate experience of them (Addition to *LU* VI, section 6). In contrast to Brentano, who maintains that sensations are mental phenomena and are characterized as such by intentional inexistence, Husserl insists that sensations are not intentional, in the sense that they do not have referential or content intentionality, although he regards them as mental states or experiences ("Erlebnisse") with a certain content. As such, sensations have what contemporary philosophers of mind would call "phenomenal content." There is something that it is like to experience a sensation.