



INTRODUCTION

The psychological approach to the theory of value

I have tried to do two things in this book. The first is to set forth Franz Brentano's theory of value within the context of the remarkable philosophical system that he worked out. And the second is to develop in further detail some of his more suggestive insights about the nature of intrinsic value. My concern, for the most part, has been with exposition and clarification and not with criticism.

Much of Brentano's philosophy is based upon psychological considerations. The most important of these, as far as the theory of value is concerned, is his conception of the analogies that hold between intellectual and emotive phenomena.

In Sections 18 through 20 of his 1889 lecture, *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, edited by Oskar Kraus, he set forth what we may call his basic system of classifying psychological phenomena, a system he was later to revise in various ways. Referring to the classification Descartes had set forth in the third of his *Meditations*, Brentano says

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of it that “we may now look upon it as something that has been established.”¹ The following is Descartes’s statement:

... Of my thoughts some are, so to speak, images of the things, and to these alone is the title “idea” properly applied; examples are my thought of a man or of a chimera, of heaven, of an angel, or [even] of God. But other thoughts possess other forms as well. For example in willing, fearing, approving, denying, though I always perceived something as the subject of the action of my mind, yet by this action I always add something else to the idea which I have of that thing; and of the thoughts of this kind some are called volitions or affections and others judgments.²

Descartes here tells us that there are three fundamental classes of psychological phenomena: (1) thinking, or having ideas; (2) judging; and (3) willing or feeling. The second and third presuppose the first; they “always add something else to the idea.” Phenomena of the second type – judging – differ from those of the first and third types in that they are either true or false. Volitions, according to Descartes and Brentano, fall within the third class: Acts of will are a kind of feeling or emotion. In this respect, Descartes and Brentano differ fundamentally from Kant.

The principal respects in which Brentano’s system of 1889 differs from that of Descartes are these: (1) He replaces Descartes’s concept of *truth* by what he believes is the more basic concept of *correctness*; (2) he adds that phenomena of the third sort – emotions and volitions – are like judgments in being either correct or incorrect; and (3) he holds that phenomena of the second and third sorts are alike in being either positive or negative. He refers to phenomena of the second sort as phenomena of *acceptance* and *rejection*

1. *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 15; *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969), p. 17.
2. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, eds., *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 159.

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(compare “believing” and “disbelieving”); and he refers to phenomena of the third sort as the “phenomena of *love* and *hate*.”

Brentano also holds with Descartes that psychological phenomena, as defined, can be objects of immediate certainty. Any act of thinking – any instance of having an idea or of judging or feeling – is an object of *inner perception*, whenever it occurs. It can be *certain* for the thinker that he is thus thinking, judging, or feeling (but Brentano uses *evident* instead of “certain”).³ It is from inner perception that we attain the concept of correctness, which is fundamental to Brentano’s theory of value.

General characteristics of Brentano’s theory

Brentano’s theory is a theory of *intrinsic* value. It is concerned with that which is “good or bad in itself” or “good or bad as an end,” and not with that which is merely “good or bad as a means.” According to Brentano, to say that a thing is intrinsically good is to say that it is correct to love that thing as an end. To say that a thing is intrinsically bad is to say that it is correct to hate the thing as an end. And to say that one thing is *intrinsically better* than another thing is to say that it is correct to prefer the first thing as an end to the second.

The theory is an *objective* theory. It presupposes that our evaluations are like our judgments or beliefs in being either *correct* or *incorrect*. If I judge or believe with respect to a certain man that he is a thief and if you judge or believe that he is not a thief, then at least one of us is wrong: At least one of us has made a judgment that is incorrect.

3. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 101–137. (This work is a translation of the second edition of the *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, first published in 1874. The second edition was prepared by Oskar Kraus after Brentano’s death. It contains the first edition along with supplementary material that Brentano had subsequently prepared. The German version of the second edition was published in two volumes by the Felix Meiner Verlag in Hamburg, volume I in 1971, volume II in 1973.)

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Brentano would say, analogously, that if I love a certain thing in and for itself, and you hate that same thing in and for itself, then, once again, at least one of us is wrong: At least one of us has an emotion that is incorrect.

How would one defend the doctrine that there are correct emotions and incorrect emotions? The answer to this question serves to distinguish Brentano and his followers from the philosophers associated with the Vienna Circle and subsequent logical empiricism.

To understand Brentano's attitude toward the question of the correctness of emotive phenomena, we should consider its analogue in application to intellectual phenomena. What if one were to ask whether there are any *judgments* or *beliefs* that could be said to be correct or incorrect? Brentano was convinced that, if there is a procedure by means of which we can defend the doctrine that there are correct judgments and incorrect judgments, then there is an analogous procedure by means of which we can defend the doctrine that there are correct emotions and incorrect emotions. In setting forth his own view of correct and incorrect judgment, Brentano comes closer than he realizes to falling into a kind of Spinozism.

His theory of intrinsic value is pluralistic. In this respect it contrasts with the theories of Bentham, Mill, and Sidgwick, who had held that pleasure and pleasure alone is intrinsically good. Some pleasure is not intrinsically good, according to Brentano, and some displeasure is not intrinsically bad. Moreover, some things other than pleasure are intrinsically good, and some things other than displeasure are intrinsically bad.

A further feature of Brentano's final view is the emphasis upon what G. E. Moore had called "the principle of organic unities." Moore says correctly in the preface to his *Principia Ethica* that, in the first edition of *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, Brentano "does not recognize but even denies by implication what I have called *the*

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principle of organic unities."⁴ Yet the principle was presupposed by what Brentano had said about "pleasure in the bad" and "displeasure in the bad." Brentano was subsequently to realize this. In his later writings he gives us a wealth of examples of wholes that are such that the intrinsic value of those wholes is a function, not merely of the intrinsic value of their parts, but also of the ways in which these parts are related. Brentano's discussion suggests ways of extending and refining Moore's principle. In the final chapters of this book, I try to develop some of Brentano's suggestions.

Finally, Brentano's theory has a feature that may seem to conflict with what I have called its objectivity. He says that the terms *good*, *bad*, *better*, when used in connection with intrinsic value, are all "syncategorematic." In holding this, Brentano is rejecting the simple theories of value predication that were presupposed by G. E. Moore and Max Scheler: The word "good," they seemed to say, has as its intention a simple quality comparable to yellow or blue. Brentano is also expressing what has been called his "reism" – the doctrine according to which only *individual things* can be objects of thought. He entered this phase of his thinking in 1905; thereafter he repudiated such "nonthings" as abstract objects, propositions, and states of affairs.

Bibliographical remarks

Brentano was born in 1838 and died in 1917. During the last ten years of his life he was blind and devoted himself to dictating his views on philosophy. He hoped that in this way he could put his own philosophy into its final form. He had no interest in preparing these dictations for publication, but expressed the wish that this would be done after his death by his students, Alfred Kastil and Oskar

4. *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. xi (this work was first published in 1903).

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Kraus. The result was that most of the books by Brentano appeared posthumously. Kastil and Kraus did not live to complete this work and it has been continued by others. All of these editions are published by Felix Meiner Verlag in Hamburg. Additional works are in preparation.

Brentano's principal work on ethics and the theory of value is *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1869), a translation of *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*, which was first published in 1889 by Duncker and Humblot in Leipzig. The book consists of a lecture and several appendixes. The lecture was presented before the Wiener Juristischen Gesellschaft in 1889. Baron von Hye, the Obmann of the society, had invited Brentano to defend a point of view that would contrast with the relativistic theory that had been presented by R. von Ihering.

The first edition of Brentano's book was translated into English by Cecil Hague and published as *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (London: Constable, 1902). After Brentano's death, Oskar Kraus prepared a new edition, making use of additional material that Brentano had written or dictated after 1889. Kraus was subsequently to prepare a second and a third edition. References in the present book to the German edition are to the third edition, first published by Felix Meiner Verlag in 1934. The third edition, translated by Roderick M. Chisholm and Elizabeth H. Schneewind, was published in 1969 by Routledge and Kegan Paul as *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*. References to the English edition in the present book are to the 1969 edition.

A second book on ethics by Brentano is *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), edited by Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand and translated by Elizabeth Schneewind. This work is based upon the lecture notes that Brentano had used for his course on practical philosophy, given at the University of Vienna between 1876 to 1879. The German edition is *Grundlegung*

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und Aufbau der Ethik (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1978).

The following studies of Brentano's work on the theory of value are to be recommended: Oskar Kraus, *Die Werttheorien: Geschichte und Kritik* (Brünn: Verlag Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1937); George Katkov, *Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie und Theodizee* (Brünn: Verlag Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1967); and Linda L. McAlister, *The Development of Brentano's Ethics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982).

Among the general works on Brentano's philosophy are these:

(1) Oskar Kraus, *Franz Brentano: Zur Kenntnis seines Lebens und seiner Lehre* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1919);

(2) Alfred Kastil, *Die Philosophie Franz Brentanos*, first published in 1951 by A. Francke, Bern, and now published by the Felix Meiner Verlag in Hamburg;

(3) *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vingtième Année, no. 78 (1966), devoted to essays on Brentano's philosophy;

(4) Linda L. McAlister, *The Philosophy of Brentano* (London: Duckworth, 1976), containing essays on Brentano, including some from Kraus's book and some from the *Revue Internationale*; and

(5) Roderick M. Chisholm and Rudolf Haller, eds., *Die Philosophie Franz Brentanos: Beiträge zur Brentano Konferenz* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1978); this work first appeared in 1978 as vol. v of the *Grazer Philosophische Studien*.

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Individuals

Prior to 1905, Brentano had held that there are two types of entity – *entia realia* and *entia irrealia*. Dogs, red things, squares, unicorns, and mermaids would be *entia realia*; and privations, possibilities, mental entities, concepts, properties, states of affairs, and propositions would be *entia irrealia*.

As the examples suggest, it would not be correct to translate *ens reale* as “real thing” or “actual thing.” Thoughts about unicorns and mermaids, Brentano would say, are thoughts about *entia realia*; but they are not thoughts about actual things. The best translation of *ens reale* is “individual,” and the best translation of *ens irrealia* is “nonindividual.” Other possibilities are “concretum” and “nonconcretum,” respectively, and “thing” and “nonthing.” (If we use “individual” and “thing” interchangeably, as many do, then we should avoid the expression “nonindividual thing.”)

After 1905, Brentano held that, strictly speaking, the only entities that we are capable of thinking of are *individuals*. Thoughts ostensibly directed upon nonindividuals may be

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seen upon analysis to have individuals as their objects. And therefore there can be no reason for believing that there are any nonindividuals, or *entia irrationalia*. This was Brentano's "reism."¹

Brentano says that, whoever contemplates a unicorn or a centaur, contemplates a *thing*. And he is sometimes inclined to put this fact by saying that unicorns and centaurs are such that, if they *were* to exist, then they would be things. But this manner of speaking is actually contrary to Brentano's intention. He does not wish to say that unicorns and centaurs *are* such that, if they were to exist, then they would be things. That would be the doctrine of Meinong, who held that things may have a *Sosein* without having a *Sein*.² We avoid commitment to Meinong's doctrine – or so Brentano believes – if we speak, not about unicorns or centaurs, but about thinkers who have unicorns or centaurs as the objects of their thought. We shouldn't say that *unicorns have horns*; we should say that *to think of a unicorn is to think of something that has a horn*. Brentano's more general point may be put this way: We can think only of *entia realia*; and to think of an *ens reale* is to think of something which, if it existed, would be an individual.

This conception of thought may seem to run counter to the orthodox conception of judgment or belief. For normally judgment or belief is said to be directed upon propositions or states of affairs. But, according to Brentano, every judgment is nonpropositional, involving a relation between a thinker and some individual. The thinker takes

1. The term *reism* was introduced by Tadeusz Kotarbinski in 1929. Like Brentano, Kotarbinski rejected all *entia irrationalia*. But unlike Brentano, Kotarbinski held that every *ens reale* – every individual – is a physical body; and so he called his doctrine "somatism." But, according to Brentano, selves or persons are individual things but not physical bodies. See Tadeusz Kotarbinski, "Franz Brentano as Reist," in Linda L. McAlister, ed., *The Philosophy of Brentano*, pp. 194–203; this article first appeared in French in the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 20 (1966), pp. 459–476.
2. Compare Karel Lambert's book in the present series, *Meinong and the Principle of Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

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an intellectual stand with respect to the individual (which may – or may not – exist).

The general nature of Brentano's theory may be suggested by the following. To believe that *there are A's* is to contemplate an A and accept it; to believe that *there are no A's* is to contemplate an A and reject it; to believe that *some A's are B's* is to contemplate an A that is a B and accept it; to believe that *some A's are not B's* is to contemplate an A that is not a B and accept it; to believe that *all A's are B's* is to contemplate an A that is not a B and reject it; and to believe that *no A's are B's* is to contemplate an A that is a B and reject it.

Brentano's theory of compound judgments presupposes that there are *conjunctiva* and *disjunctiva*. That is to say, Brentano assumes that, if there is an A and if there is a B, then there is that conjunctivum, A-and-B, which is composed of A and B. And he assumes that, if there is an A, then there is that disjunctivum, A-or-B. He is now able to distinguish further types of judgment. To believe that *there is an A and there is a B* is to accept A-and-B's. To believe that *there is an A or there is a B* is to accept A-or-B's. To believe that *there are neither A's nor B's* is to reject A-and-B's. And to believe that *either there are no A's or there are no B's* is to reject A-and-B's. Making use of the concept of *part*, Brentano can extend his nonpropositional theory to still other types of compound judgment.³ (We will consider his theory of modal judgments below.)

Brentano's conception of thought may seem absurd to some, especially to those who believe, with Frege, that there is an irreducible distinction between concept and object. Such a person may say: "Don't our simplest beliefs relate individuals to properties or concepts? If I conclude, for example, that some dogs are brown, then I am relating

3. I have set forth Brentano's account in greater detail in *Brentano and Meinong Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), pp. 17–36 (this work is vol. III of *Studien zur Oesterreichischen Philosophie*, ed. Rudolf Haller).