

## INTRODUCTION

On the 150th anniversary of the birth of Franz Brentano, it is fitting that contemporary philosophers pause and reflect upon the significance of his work and that these reflections turn upon his contributions to *descriptive psychology*. And there is no place more appropriate for these deliberations than here in this great university in Würzburg, for it was here that Brentano wrote the epoch-making *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*.

This work served to re-introduce the concept of intentionality into western philosophy. I will permit myself some general remarks, therefore, about the philosophical importance of intentionality.

Brentano is properly called »the discoverer of intentionality«. But the phrase is somewhat misleading. By Brentano's own account, the existence of intentional phenomena is immediately evident to all of us. We are all acquainted with judging, questioning, doubting, wondering, wishing, hoping, liking, disliking. One can hardly say, therefore, that it was Brentano who first *noticed* the existence of such phenomena. What he discovered was, not intentionality, but certain facts *about* intentionality – certain facts that are of first importance to philosophy and to psychology and that had not been noted by any previous philosopher or psychologist. The significance of these facts, I would add, is not fully appreciated even today.

Intentional phenomena are included among those things that we are directly aware of. When they occur, we know that they occur; and in knowing that they occur, we grasp their essential nature. Consider but one example: We know what *it is* to judge -- to make a judgment. Therefore we know *what* the property of judging is and we know what is logically required if anything is to have such a property. This means that there is an essential feature of judging that everyone is in a position to see.

Judging is a property that can belong only to an *individual substance* (or *individual thing*), just as the property of being a mountain or of being a tree can be exemplified only by individual substances. After all, what entities other than substances *could* exemplify the property of judging? An *event* or a *process* or a *property* couldn't make a judgment, any more than an event or a process or a property could have leaves or bear fruit.

And similarly for such intentional phenomena as desiring, thinking, wishing, hoping and sensing: these properties can be exemplified only by individual sub-

stances. In knowing, as I now do, that the intentional properties of *seeing* and *hearing* are exemplified, I also know, *ipso facto*, that there is an *individual substance* and that that substance sees and hears and judges and thinks.

This fact helps us to understand the well-known Cartesian -- or Augustinian -- proof of the existence of thinking substance. The most familiar way of putting the proof is this: »I know directly and immediately that I am now making a judgment; therefore I know directly and immediately that an *individual substance* exists.« This version of the proof is, of course, an enthymeme; it needs a second premise -- a premise to the effect that anything that judges, anything that makes a judgment, *is* an individual substance. And so the proof is often challenged: how is this implicit second premise to be defended?

Brentano's answer, as I say, is simple. He tells us that we can see the truth of such a premise by reflecting upon the nature of intentionality -- by reflecting upon what goes on when we think and, in our example, when we judge.

It follows, therefore, that Kant was mistaken in saying that one has no awareness of that individual substance which is oneself. How *could* Kant have made such a mistake? How could he have *thought* that we are not directly aware of ourselves? The answer is that he overlooked the nature of intentionality. And this led him to exaggerate the importance of *sensory* content -- or, if you prefer, to exaggerate the importance of the *empirical*. Like most other philosophers of his time, he had assumed that a person has an awareness of a thing only if the person has *empirical* or *sensory* concept of that thing. And from this he concluded that, since we have no empirical or sensory concept of ourselves, we are not *aware* of ourselves.

Kant was right in saying that »our experience of the self is not accompanied by any sensory intuition of the self«. But what he failed to notice was that the same thing can be said of *every* intentional phenomenon. There is no empirical or sensory mark of judging and there is no empirical or sensory mark of wondering or doubting or hoping or questioning. And therefore we may say about judging what Kant said about the self: »Our awareness of judging is not accompanied by any *sensory intuition* of judging.« And so, too, for the other intentional phenomena.

It is true that all our knowledge arises *out of* experience; but it is not true that all our knowledge is *based upon sense-experience*. For our awareness of intentional phenomena need not be sensory -- even if such awareness is always *accompanied* by some sensory experience or other. If Kant's reasoning about the self were sound, it would also imply that there aren't any intentional phenomena -- which is, of course, absurd.

There is *no* sensory intuition of thinking, wondering and judging. But we know what such phenomena are and we know when they occur. And there is no sensory intuition of the I or the self. But we know that there is such a thing and we are aware of it in every one of our intentional acts. The word »empirical« in

*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* refers to *experience*, but it is not to be restricted to *sense* experience.

What is somewhat strange is that, in the period following the writing of the *Psychologie* and even up to the present time, philosophers and psychologists have assumed that we can understand the facts of thinking and of referring *without* making any reference to the self or subject. Some have held that we do not even do our own thinking and referring: they suggest, rather, that there is something inside our body that does our thinking and referring for us. But how could anything do *our* judging, hoping, wishing and desiring for us? To be sure, we think by means of our brains. But this means what it says. *We* think by means of our brains -- just as we see by means of our eyes and hear by means of our ears. But it is *we* who think and refer and see and hear -- not our organs that think and refer and see and hear.

Recent investigations, however, make increasingly clear -- what Brentano had seen all along -- that, even if there could be something inside our bodies that hopes and wishes and desires, the only way we would have understanding of how it *could* hope and wish and desire is to reflect upon ourselves and see what happens when *we* do it.

That is why it is most appropriate that on this occasion and here in Brentano's university, we reflect upon »*Brentanos Deskriptive Psychologie und ihre Aktualität*«. I hope that, when we do this, we will take Brentano himself as our model. More than any other twentieth century philosopher, Franz Brentano has shown us how it is that philosophy *ought* to be done.