

Conscious, Mental, Intentional

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The aim of this presentation is to discuss Tim Crane's and Peter Simons' interpretation of Brentano. What I'll be criticizing here is the idea that the philosophical position adopted in *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint* is a particular form of phenomenism, namely what these authors call a "methodological phenomenism." My general thought is that there is a sense in which Brentano's psychology is phenomenist, but that Crane's and Simons' reading is nonetheless misleading. On the one hand, I'll defend the view that what they call "phenomenism" would be better called "phenomenology," and that phenomenology doesn't entail phenomenism. What is more, I'll suggest that Brentano overtly developed his theory of intentionality as a critique of phenomenism. On the other hand, the view I will defend is that Brentano failed to properly account for the difference between mental and physical phenomena, and that this failure *in fact* makes his psychology phenomenist, despite the fact that his ambition was somehow to refute phenomenism.

In the first part of this presentation, I will survey Brentano's reasoning for defining the mental in the 1874 *Psychology*. In the second part, an attempt will be made to point out some intrinsic difficulties of his approach. I will argue that Brentano's theory of intentionality is anti-phenomenist in its pretensions, but phenomenist in fact, due to his final failure to provide a properly empirical criterion of the mental. In the conclusion, I will offer a critical appraisal of Crane's and Simons' interpretation, and consider some possible solutions to the problems addressed in the second part.

1. Intentionality, consciousness, and the mental

As is well known, one of Brentano's central aims in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* was to define psychology. Since he thought that defining a science or a theory first and foremost consists in defining its object, the question of the nature of psychology was for

him identical to the question of what a mental object is. Thus, his aim was first to define what a mental object is, that is, to establish a criterion by which mental objects could be sharply marked off from all others, that is, in Brentano's view, from physical objects. As you also know, Brentano defines the mental through intentionality, in explicit opposition to Alexander Bain's Cartesian definition in terms of non-spatiality (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, 1874, 121-124). Basically, this means that being "mental" is necessarily equivalent to being "intentional" in the sense of "being directed towards something," that is, as I'll say here, to being "representational." (So I'll use here the words "representation" and "representational" not in the Brentanian sense, but as synonymous with "intentional act or state" on the one hand and with "intentionally directed" on the other.)

Being mental is necessarily equivalent to being intentional or representational, so everything that is mental must necessarily be "representational" and everything that is representational must necessarily be mental.

(1) For any x , x is mental $\Leftrightarrow x$ is intentional

From Brentano's perspective, if intentionality is a criterion for whether an object is mental or not, then the terms "mental" and "representational" must be equivalent. Intentionality must be a necessary and sufficient condition for mental objects, otherwise it would not provide such a criterion.

Now, you might object that a sufficient yet not necessary condition would also do the job very well — I mean: the job of providing a criterion for the mental. If, as stated in Proposition (1a), everything that is representational is mental, then intentionality is a "mark of the mental," a distinctive feature which no doubt can serve as a criterion for distinguishing mental phenomena from all others, even though Proposition (1a) doesn't rule out the possibility that a mental object be non-representational and, for this reason, couldn't provide a *comprehensive* criterion of the mental. I have no answer to this objection except to say that Brentano did not reason this way. To be convinced of this, it is enough to re-read the most famous passage on intentionality in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*:

"Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood

here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. (...) This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.” (*Psychologie von empirischen Standpunkt*: 115-116/124-125/88-89.)¹

Clearly, Brentano here defends the view that intentionality allows us to *define* what the mental is. So it is not only that everything that is intentional is mental and that, as he says, “no physical phenomenon exhibits anything like” intentionality. Brentano also claims that “every mental phenomenon is characterized by” intentionality and thus that intentionality is a *necessary* condition for the mental. As you see, Brentano actually asserted both Propositions (1a) and (1b), whose conjunction is equivalent to Proposition (1):

(1a) For any x , x is intentional $\Rightarrow x$ is mental

(1b) For any x , x is mental $\Rightarrow x$ is intentional

I will not discuss this first statement any further now. In fact, I think that Brentano went one step further and that this further step is even more essential. The question now to be raised is, What does it mean for a mental act or state to be intentional? To well understand what this question is about, I think we should first examine the close and essential link Brentano draws between intentionality and consciousness. In my interpretation, it is merely impossible to understand what Brentano’s theory of intentionality is about if we consider it apart from his theory of consciousness.

Following Aristotle’s view in *De Anima* (III, 2, 425 b 12, cited in *Psychology*: 179), Brentano defines consciousness to be some special type of representation, namely a self-representation by which I represent a mental act or state of mine. In this sense, there already is an essential connection between consciousness and intentionality. For Brentano, being conscious necessarily implies being self-representational and hence being representational:

(2a) For any x , x is conscious $\Rightarrow x$ is representational

¹ Original edition 1874, then Meiner edition 1924 (Kraus), then Engl. translation 1995.

A direct consequence of this is that, as far as it is conscious, the intentional act must be its own object, although not, as Brentano says, its “primary” object. Every conscious act directed towards an extra-mental thing represents itself along with the extra-mental thing it represents. For example, the act of hearing a piece of music is both a representation of the piece of music and a self-representation of the hearing itself, which thus is the “secondary” object of the whole intentional act. Here is the relevant passage in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, quite a famous one actually:

“We can say that the sound is the primary object of the act of hearing, and that the act of hearing itself is the secondary object. Temporally they both occur at the same time, but in the nature of the case, the sound is prior. A presentation of the sound without a presentation of the act of hearing would not be inconceivable, at least *prima facie*, but a presentation of the act of hearing without a presentation of the sound would be an obvious contradiction. The act of hearing appears to be directed toward sound in the most proper sense of the term, and because of this it seems to apprehend itself incidentally and as something additional.” (*Psychologie von empirischen Standpunkt*: 167/180/128.)

To put the matter more pointedly: every conscious mental act, although it is as such to be conceived as a *unique* act, must have two distinct objects: its primary object and itself. Being conscious means having a representation of oneself or a self-representation, so everything that is conscious is self-representational and hence representational.

In my opinion, this view already has to face up to serious difficulties. First of all, it may seem unnecessarily paradoxical to assert that the intentional content of a mental act A is *perceived* in A. It would be more natural to say that the subject who perceives this tree does not perceive the content “this tree,” but rather perceives this tree as an object and *lives* a mental act whose intentional content is “of this tree” (“of this tree” in quotation marks). Thus, the subject could no doubt perceive her mental act along with its intentional property “of this tree,” but this perception would not be identical with the act of perceiving this tree. It would be an act of *reflection* upon the act of perceiving this tree. Secondly, Brentano’s contention that every representation must be self-representational is far from obvious. We certainly can conceive of a *conscious* act of imagining Santa Claus that represents absolutely nothing else than Santa Claus. For my part, I’m inclined to think that Brentano’s self-representationalist view corresponds to no empirical evidence. Or perhaps it is a matter of empirical *reflection*, but in this case it is not the act of imagination itself that is self-representational, but (trivially) the reflection upon the act of imagination

Anyway, I will not delve into these difficulties any further here as they are not the focus of this presentation. Three important things ought to be noted here. (1) First — and I’m

grateful to Federico Boccaccini for having called my attention to this point —, it's important to note that the sound is the *primary* object of the act of hearing, that is, as Brentano says, the object the act is directed to “in the most proper sense of the term.” By contrast, the hearing itself is only a *secondary* object in that it is apprehended only “incidentally,” *nebenbei*. This latter word unquestionably comes from Hermann Lotze. The self-representation is an incidental representation, a *Nebengedanke* in Lotze's sense, that is, a representation that accompanies one's representation of an extra-mental primary object. (2) The second point to be noticed is that this Brentano's view may seem puzzling or at least very counterintuitive. For it seems quite natural to assume the following principle: to one single intentional object there can correspond several acts, but to one single act there can correspond only one intentional object. This principle has been defended, for example, by William James in his *Principles of Psychology*, and by Husserl, at least in certain interpretations such as Føllesdal's. (3) Thirdly and finally, Brentano says, in the text I've just quoted, that the notion of a representation without self-representation does not seem self-contradictory. Of course this view — supposing that it is Brentano's definitive view — would amount to denying that representation implies consciousness. However, the text is not clear. Brentano uses the conditional tense and the phrase “at least *prima facie*” (*von vorn herein wenigstens*).

Please keep those three points in mind, because we shall refer back to them later on.

So, what interests us right now is that, for Brentano, being conscious implies being self-representational and hence representational. This being said, we can ask the question whether, conversely, being representational implies being conscious.

(2b) For any x , x is representational $\Rightarrow x$ is conscious

This latter question is thoroughly discussed and answered in the *Psychology*. The answer is to be found a few pages earlier in the same Chapter, where Brentano offers a penetrating critique of the notion of unconscious representation. His argument runs as follows: (i) First, Brentano assumes that being conscious means having a representation of oneself. (ii) Secondly, he asserts a psychological law to the effect that the intensity of the representation is always equal to the intensity of its content. Brentano attributes this law to Weber and Fechner. It states that, for example, the act of perceiving red must be of equal intensity to the red colour being perceived. (iii) Now, he continues, an unconscious

representation may generally be defined to be a representation to which corresponds a self-representation of a zero intensity. (iv) But, according to the law I've just mentioned, the intensity of the representation must be equal to that of the represented. If the self-representation has a null intensity, then its content must also have a null intensity.

Accordingly, the intensity of unconscious beliefs or desires must be zero. (v) But on the other hand, what would be a null intensity representation? That my belief that p has a null intensity, this simply means that I don't believe that p . Likewise, instead of saying that I have a desire of null intensity to buy a pair of Western-style snakeskin boots, it would be more natural to say that I simply have no desire to buy a pair of Western-style snakeskin boots at all. Thus, it seems that all representation must have a non-null intensity. (vi) Since the intensity of a given representation must be equal to that of the representation of this representation, there can exist no representation whose self-representation is of a zero intensity. Therefore, there can exist no unconscious representation.

The outcome of the argument, as you see, is that all representation must be conscious (Proposition 2b). Now, of course, the conjunction of Propositions (2a) and (2b) may be abbreviated by means of Proposition (2), according to which being representational is logically equivalent to being conscious.

(2) For any x , x is representational $\Leftrightarrow x$ is conscious

Now, it is obvious that Proposition (2) can be generalized to all mental phenomena. Indeed, it trivially follows from Propositions (1) and (2) that everything that is mental is conscious and that everything that is conscious is mental. Hence we obtain the proposition (3):

(3) For any x , x is mental $\Leftrightarrow x$ is conscious

In short: "conscious," "mental," and "representational" necessarily have the same extension.

By the way, it is very important to note that most of the relations of equivalence here involved, although in some sense necessary, are not merely logical or analytic, but grounded

in empirical laws such as the law of the intensive equality of the representation and its content, or the law according to which consciousness must be of a representational nature. It is in this way that we should understand Brentano's claim that a representation without self-representation "is not inconceivable," *nicht undenkbar*. Unlike the notion of a self-representation without representation, which Brentano observes is "an obvious contradiction," the notion of a representation without self-representation is surely not conceptually inconsistent, but it is not consistent with the results of psychological research.

2. Infallible self-evidence

Before going on, let's sum up the results so far. Brentano's aim in the 1874 *Psychology* was to provide a criterion of the mental and, what is more, to *define* the mental. His reasoning may be summarized in the following steps. First, an unconscious representation is impossible, so being representational necessarily implies being conscious. Secondly, being conscious necessarily entails being self-representational and thus being representational. Thirdly, every mental phenomenon must necessarily be representational. Fourthly, every representation must necessarily be mental. And finally, it follows from these four propositions that necessarily everything conscious is mental and everything mental is conscious.

What is key here is that, for Brentano, neither consciousness nor mentality are to be conceived of as primitive terms. In fact, both consciousness and mentality are defined through intentionality: on the one hand consciousness means self-representation; on the other, a mental phenomenon is defined to be a phenomenon that represents something. It is in this respect that Brentano's view certainly can be called a "representationalism."

Yet, there is some trouble with this view. Brentano defines what consciousness or the mental is through intentionality. For this reason, it is of utmost importance that consciousness or mentality don't enter into the concept of intentionality, otherwise the definition would be circular. But are we absolutely sure that the concept of intentionality doesn't presuppose the concept of the mental or that of consciousness? In my view, we may in this respect have some doubts as to the validity of Brentano's definition.

Brentano defines the mental by intentionality, and intentionality in terms of the "intentional in-existence" of an intentional object or content. Every mental phenomenon, Brentano says, is by definition "characterized by (...) the intentional or mental inexistence of

an object.” In other words: a mental phenomenon is a phenomenon such that something, a physical phenomenon, is somehow intentionally included in it as its intentional object or content. Now, suppose that you have before you a set of phenomenal data in which you are asked to distinguish between those which are mental from those which are not. How will you proceed? According to Brentano, your criterion must be intentionality. Thus, you will observe that some of the phenomena have a character of intentional in-existence while others somehow “have,” or “contain within them,” these phenomena as their intentional contents. So you’ll call the former “physical” and the latter “mental.” And this whole characterization will of course depend on the notion of intentional in-existence. But what does it mean for a phenomenon to “in-exist intentionally” in another phenomenon? Indeed, it is obviously not sufficient to observe that some phenomena appear in others. Physical phenomena also have parts existing in them, and furthermore there is much within the mental phenomenon that in no way in-exists intentionally in it in the Brentanian sense. Thus, some mental acts contain other acts as their parts: For example, I feel envious in seeing my neighbour at table wearing a splendid pure silk neck-tie with the University logo. Likewise, mental acts have psychological features such as intensity or duration. So how can I tell whether some given phenomenon intentionally in-exists in some other? To this question, which for Brentano we must answer in order to make the difference between mental and physical phenomena, there seems to be only one possible answer at this stage: the phenomena that intentionally in-exist are *not conscious* in the sense in which mental phenomena are conscious! For the moment, I see no other way out. But if this is so, then Brentano appeals to the concept of consciousness or to that of the mental in order to define intentionality — which obviously makes its definition of the mental circular.

Yet, the story is more complex than I’ve suggested so far. In fact, some pages further on in the same Chapter, Brentano proposes a different strategy for defining the mental.² The

² “It could be argued that such a definition is not very meaningful. In fact, it seems much more natural to define the act according to the object, and therefore to state that inner perception, in contrast to every other kind, is the perception of mental phenomena. However, besides the fact that it has a special object, inner perception possesses another distinguishing characteristic: its immediate, infallible self-evidence. Of all the types of knowledge of the objects of experience, inner perception alone possesses this characteristic. Consequently, when we say that mental phenomena are those which are apprehended by means of inner perception, we say that their perception is immediately evident. (...) This definition, too, is an adequate characterization (*genügend charakterisirt*) of mental phenomena. (...) For this reason, the reference to the phenomena which constitute the

mental, he says, can also be defined as what one is conscious of. For sure, since both concepts are necessarily coextensive, this doesn't seem absurd at first. But the question, again, is how to define consciousness without reference to the mental. As Brentano explicitly remarks, such a definition is meaningless if we confine ourselves to defining consciousness as inner perception, that is, as that kind of perception whose object is mental. "However, he continues, besides the fact that it has a special object, inner perception possesses another distinguishing characteristic." (*Psychology*: 118-119/128-129/91.) This distinguishing characteristic is "its immediate, infallible self-evidence." Accordingly, the mental can be defined by the fact that it is conscious. Such a definition is possible provided that consciousness is defined not as that kind of perception whose object is mental, but solely as that kind of perception which is infallibly self-evident.

Brentano's idea is that necessarily all mental phenomena are infallibly self-evident and no physical phenomena are infallibly self-evident. As a result, as stated in Proposition (4) in the slide/handout, the terms "mental" and "infallibly self-evident" are necessarily equivalent, and this relation of equivalence thus can serve as a definition of the mental.

(4) For any x , x is mental $\Leftrightarrow x$ is infallibly self-evident

Brentano clearly explains what he means in the same passage. Physical phenomena, he argues, cannot be directly or indirectly proved to be "true and real" (*Psychology*: 128-129). In other words: they certainly may correspond, and many of them are most likely to correspond to some extra-mental reality, but their reality is not subject to immediate self-evidence or to indirect inference from self-evident data. To sum up: none of the phenomena that cannot be proved to be real are infallibly self-evident, and therefore all infallibly self-evident phenomena can be proved to be real or to correspond to some reality; an item is "infallibly self-evident" if, and only if, it is immediately proved to be real; all and only mental phenomena are infallibly self-evident.

Keeping in mind that for Brentano perception is some form of judgment, we could say, at least to first approximation, that for him inner perception is referentially transparent. More

realm of inner perception serves our purpose satisfactorily." (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*: 118-119/128-129/91.)

accurately, the idea is that something is infallibly self-evident if, and only if, one's perceiving it implies its existing:

(5) For any x , for any y , x is infallibly self-evident to y \Leftrightarrow (y perceives \langle that \rangle x \langle exists $\rangle \Rightarrow x$ exists)

Accordingly, the definition of the mental in terms of infallible self-evidence means that a proposition of the form \langle I perceive that a mental act or state of mine x exists \rangle necessarily implies that x really exists. Of course, this definition works only under the assumption that all mental phenomenon, is, or at least was or can be, perceived or conscious, otherwise there would be mental phenomena that would not be infallibly self-evident in the sense of Proposition (5). It is also worth noticing that perception need not be conceived of as a propositional attitude in order for this to be true — which is why I have enclosed the that-clause within angle brackets in the slide/handout. In fact, Brentano and his followers denied that perception was a propositional attitude, but on the other hand they considered that perception necessarily had a character of existential commitment or position. Hence perceiving is in some sense always perceiving something *as really existent*, but it does not follow from this that perceiving is always perceiving *that* something exists. There is a sense in which non-propositional acts or states may commit us to the existence of their intentional object, just as there is a sense in which non-propositional contents may be said to be referentially opaque or transparent. Peter Simons has in this connection spoken of the “representational opacity” of such mental acts or states, and characterized it as a more general feature of which referential opacity in the usual sense is a special case.

In this sense, we can say that outer perception is representationally opaque while inner perception is not. So the difference between the mental and the physical coincides with the difference between representationally transparent and representationally opaque perception. In Brentano's terms: the phenomenal data of outer perception *can* be real while those of inner perception *must* be real. The former, as he says, have only intentional existence while the latter have both intentional and real existence. In the case of propositional attitudes, real existence could be conceived of as existence outside the that-clause and real existence as existence within the that-clause. So mental phenomena intentionally exist as far as they are

perceived, but they must also really exist as far as they are infallibly self-evident, that is, as far as their being perceived necessarily implies their existence.

An interesting consequence of this is that, if you opt for a realist or disjunctivist approach to perception and define it as being some special type of real relation between the subject and a really existing object, then every perception must be infallibly self-evident in the sense of Proposition (5) but external perception cannot be a perception in the proper sense of the term. It is presumably for this reason that Brentano, already in his *Psychology* of 1874 and again in *Descriptive Psychology*, holds that only inner perception is a perception in the proper sense of the term. As a result, to be mental is also equivalent to being perceived or perceivable in this sense. If perception proper is inner perception and being mental is equivalent to being internally perceivable, then an object is mental if, and only if, it is perceivable in the proper sense of “perception.”

3. Was Brentano a phenomenalist?

I think that this latter definition, not the one in terms of intentional in-existence, is the very heart of Brentano’s philosophy of mind. Or, if you prefer, it might be said that this definition more accurately captures the meaning of the definition in terms of intentionality. Indeed, as said earlier, a difficulty of the latter is that mental phenomena also have mental parts. Now, in reply to this difficulty, we can say that, as opposed to the intentional object, the mental parts are infallibly self-evident.

However, this further approach presents some obvious difficulties. First, the two definitions are not equivalent, for the definition of the mental in terms of infallible self-evidence doesn’t rule out the possibility that something be mental without being intentionally directed towards something that is not infallibly self-evident. Secondly, the definition in terms of infallible self-evidence seems hardly compatible with the Brentanian empiricism. At the very least, it is hard to believe that infallible self-evidence could serve as an empirical criterion for distinguishing mental from physical phenomena. Perhaps you can observe that a given phenomenon is perceived or exists, but it seems that you have no means whatsoever of knowing whether its being perceived implies its existence or not. As Brentano himself rightly stresses, the definition in terms of infallible self-evidence doesn’t rule out the possibility that I perceive a *physical* phenomenon that really exists.

Nonetheless, it may be tempting to say that infallible self-evidence provides a negative criterion of the mental, along with a positive criterion not of the mental, but of non-existing physical phenomena. Indeed, if I encounter a phenomenon that I perceive and that turns out to not exist, then I will be absolutely sure that this phenomenon is not a mental phenomenon, or that it is a physical phenomenon. But even this seems problematic. What is the meaning of “real” or “intentional existence” or “non-existence” for Brentano? The notion of the real existence of a given phenomenon *prima facie* suggests that this phenomenon somehow corresponds to some reality, and indeed Brentano sometimes uses the word *entsprechen*, “to correspond,” in this context (*Psychologie*, Meiner: 129). But the trouble with this interpretation is that it seems natural to suppose that if a phenomenon corresponds to some real thing, for example as a sign of it, then it must somehow be *about* this real thing; it must be a phenomenon *of something*, a phenomenon that has what we call a *content*. However, according to Brentano’s first definition, every phenomenon that has a content, or is about something, is mental. As a consequence, it seems that if we interpret real existence in terms of correspondence, then the notion of a real existence of physical phenomena is self-contradictory — a view which Brentano explicitly rejects in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Yet, we might try to evade the difficulty by interpreting the relation of correspondence as a causal relation — a view nowadays better known as the “Myth of the Given.” Brentano suggests something like this in the Introduction to his *Psychology*. He says that sensations, as physical phenomena, are “signs” which are causally produced by external reality (*Psych.* éd. orig. 24; Engl. transl. 19). But on the other hand, this view is known to be highly problematic, and in any case bears little relation to Brentano’s actual theory of truth.

I will later sketch what I believe to be the right approach to this important problem. Anyway, it seems entirely misleading here to speak of a relation between phenomena and reality. It rather seems that phenomena, for Brentano, are not appearances which may correspond or not to existing reality, but appearances which may really exist or not really exist, that is, exist really or merely intentionally — for they, of course, have intentional existence as they are phenomena. The idea would be that real existence is, first and foremost, a certain *monadic* property of the representational content of mental acts or states. Interestingly enough, such an approach would be consistent with Husserl’s conception of existential judgment as a judgment that attributes existence to an intentional content (Hua 30, REF.). One of its advantages is that it makes possible an unproblematically non-tautological interpretation of existential judgments: Since phenomena may exist as well as not exist,

existential judgments are thus synthetic, non-tautological judgments. Tim Crane is right that, for Brentano, phenomena cannot be existing things; otherwise every existential judgment would be tautological and every act of denying existence to something would be self-contradictory. Phenomena must rather be appearances, intentionally existing contents, which we may *accept* — that is, apprehend as really existing — or *reject* — that is, apprehend as not really existing. This view to some extent echoes Hermann Lotze's claim that judging consists in approving or rejecting a neutral content which is in itself neither positive nor negative. Presentation, in Brentano's view, gives us *neutral* contents, that is, phenomena which exist intentionally, and whose real existence is a matter of judgment, not a matter of presentation. According to Brentano in the *Psychology*, a phenomenon is by definition what is presented.³ As Brentano explicitly says in Book 2, Chapter 1, "being presented" is synonymous with "appearing," that is, with "being a phenomenon." Brentano's self-representationalism thus implies that, from a psychological point of view, both mental and physical items are to be conceived of as phenomena. Note that this doesn't entail that all phenomena must be *perceived*. The subject who imagines Santa Claus certainly perceives, or is conscious of, a mental phenomenon, but of course she doesn't perceive any physical phenomenon.

In my estimation, this account is consistent with Brentano's idea that sensory physical phenomena are signs or causal effects of external reality — although I also think that this latter characterization is irrelevant to our problem. Brentano certainly supports the idea of a causal relation between sensation and external reality. But on the other hand, it seems plain that such relations can have no place in psychology as he conceived it, that is, in a phenomenology. The relevant fact, for Brentano, is that some phenomena appear with the character of real existence, while others don't.

Brentano's thesis on the mental finally boils down to the following two theses: (1) First, what is called "mental" or "physical" are phenomena, and these phenomena are *objects* either of inner or of outer representation; (2) secondly, the criterion for distinguishing inner from outer representation is infallible self-evidence, with the result that the mental is defined as what is necessarily such that it really exists as far as it is perceived. To sum up: We have some phenomena that exist merely intentionally and others that exist both really and

³ *Psychologie*, Meiner, 114: "Wie wir das Wort 'vorstellen' gebrauchen, ist 'vorgestellt werden' so viel wie 'erscheinen'."

intentionally. Among the latter, some phenomena are necessarily or essentially such that they exist both really and intentionally, and these, and only these, are to be called “mental.”

As you see, Brentano’s distinction between the mental and the physical explicitly requires using modal terms. But, once again, this result is highly problematic, for we are searching here for an *empirical* criterion. The difference between the mental and the physical needs to be accessible at most at the level of consciousness or inner perception, at least at the level of “psychical induction.” But there appears to be no sense in which experience in either sense could be said to give access to such modal differences. Thereby I’m not saying that Brentano’s view is false, but that it might be of no use to the empirical psychologist except in the case of nonexistent physical phenomena. Perhaps you can mark off really existing phenomena from the others. Perhaps experience entitles you to say that some given phenomenon really exists, but it will arguably never enable you to decide whether this phenomenon is necessarily such that it really exists or such that it might not really exist as well.

Now, the problem is that, if Brentano fails to provide a criterion of the mental, then his phenomenology plausibly boils down to some form of phenomenalism. Indeed, the Brentanians’ deeper motivation for opposing phenomenalism lies in their intentionalism, namely in the view that there must be, already in immediate experience, a dichotomy of mental and physical phenomena, or, as Husserl says, of real and intentional content. If for Brentano mental and physical items are made of the same phenomenal stuff and he failed to yield a criterion for distinguishing them, that is, to prove immediate experience to be intentional, then his position seems to amount to phenomenalism.

Accordingly, I agree with Tim Crane and Peter Simons that Brentano embraced some form of phenomenalism,⁴ but I understand the term “phenomenalism” differently and hence my interpretation differs from theirs as to the conclusions to be drawn.

According to Crane and Simons, Brentano was both a metaphysical realist and a “methodological phenomenalist.” First, Brentano held that there exists a world beyond phenomena — a world of which phenomena are signs or causal effects. Thus, Brentano was

⁴ P. Simons, ‘Introduction’ to Brentano F., *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Engl. transl. by L. McAlister, Routledge, reprinted with an introduction by Peter Simons, Routledge 1995. T. Crane, Brentano’s concept of intentional inexistence. In: M. Textor (ed.), *The Austrian Contribution to Analytic Philosophy*, Routledge, 2006, p. 20-35.

not a phenomenalist if phenomenism is the view that the world ultimately consists in phenomenal appearances. However, Crane and Simons argue that for Brentano science can only study phenomena, and that this applies to descriptive psychology as well. As a result, Brentano was a phenomenalist in the sense that for him psychology could treat only of phenomena. In Simons' terms: he was a "methodological phenomenalist."

Certainly this interpretation can be accepted to some extent, but my view is that it neglects one important point. The passages Crane and Simons refer to certainly demonstrate that Brentano's descriptive psychology is, basically, a *phenomenology*, as Brentano himself will call it later. But this in no way implies that Brentano's psychology was phenomenalist. Unlike Crane and Simons, I fully agree with Brentano's editor Oskar Kraus that actually the Brentanian theory of intentionality was a polemical attack on the phenomenalist views of philosophers such as Avenarius and Mach. Indeed, what the late nineteenth century psychologists and philosophers understood by the term "phenomenalism" was the so-called "psychophysical identity thesis," namely the thesis that immediate experience is indistinctly mental and physical, indistinctly subject and object, and that the difference between the mental and the physical rather results from secondary conceptual constructions. Now, Brentano's theory of intentionality is, or was intended to be, the exact opposite of this view. What it actually tells us is that, when you analyze your own mental life, the smallest concrete or separable components obtained must necessarily be intentional, that is, contain a physical phenomenon within them. In other words: primary experience already offers a dualistic structure, so the psychophysical identity thesis must be false. This is Brentano's key objection against phenomenism, and this objection is basically the theory of intentionality itself.

So, it may be agreed that Brentano's psychology is phenomenalist, but then it must be phenomenalist in another sense than in Crane's and Simons' interpretation. By contrast, my interpretation runs as follows: First, Brentano's psychology is certainly a phenomenology in that it must confine itself to phenomenal appearances. Secondly, the theory of intentionality can be read as a critique of phenomenism. In this sense, the philosophical program of the *Psychology* was directly opposed to phenomenism. Finally, as I have suggested, there are good reasons for thinking that Brentano failed to find out an empirical criterion of the mental and thus to properly achieve his anti-phenomenalist program. Therefore, *in its actual results*, Brentano's psychology may be regarded, I believe, as phenomenalist. For phenomenology without the psychophysical distinction is not different from phenomenism in the sense I've just mentioned.

To conclude, I'd like to briefly consider some possible solutions to the problems I have outlined. I indeed think that Brentano's followers were conscious of these difficulties and that they developed various solutions to them. These solutions can be grouped into at least three main types.

(1) The first type of solution is perhaps the easiest. It is to claim that what Brentano calls physical phenomena are in fact mental phenomena. This was the approach promoted by Meinong and, concerning sensations, by Husserl in his Fifth *Logical Investigation*. In a sense, it seems that this approach solves the problem, but there is some trouble with it. If the distinction between mental and physical phenomena is maintained, then it merely displaces the problem at hand. If the distinction is not maintained, then we are likely to be pulled into phenomenalist positions, or at least we will risk depriving ourselves from all the benefits of Brentano's theory of intentionality. So I think that Husserl's theory of hylé is to some extent phenomenalist in the sense understood here, but this matter is beyond the scope of this presentation.

(2) Secondly, the Brentanians, including Husserl, set up different methods aimed at reinjecting modalities into sensible experience in opposition to classical empiricism. The method of variation and Husserl's notion of a seeing of essences are clearly among such methods.

(3) The third family of solutions consists in defining intentionality without using modal terms. Such a solution was offered by Roman Ingarden in the tracks of Meinong, and then by Roderick Chisholm. Ingarden proposed a formal-ontological criterion to distinguish intentional objects from others — a formal-ontological criterion which corresponds to what the logicians call the law of the excluded middle: if a given object violates the law of the excluded middle, that is, in Ingarden's terms, if it is "heteronomous," then it is an *intentional* object, a "physical phenomenon" in Brentano's sense. As you know, other such criteria are possible, such as the failure of existential generalization and the failure of substitutivity of identicals.