

Brentano on Phenomenal and Transitive Consciousness, Unconscious Consciousness, and Phenomenal Intentionality*

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Abstract

In *Brentano's Philosophical System: Mind, Being, Value*, Uriah Kriegel argues that Brentano's work forms a "live philosophical program" (p. 14, italics omitted) that contemporary philosophy has much to learn from and that is promising and largely correct. To this end, Kriegel argues that Brentano's notion of consciousness is the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness, that Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality is a grave mistake that can be fairly neatly excised from his overall view, and that Brentano's notion of intentionality is the contemporary notion of phenomenal intentionality. This paper raises some doubts about these claims, suggesting that Brentano's notion of consciousness might more closely align with the contemporary notion of transitive consciousness than with that of phenomenal consciousness, that Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality cannot be so easily excised from his overall view but that it is not such a grave mistake, and that Brentano's notion of intentionality may not be that of phenomenal intentionality but rather that of generic aboutness. I wrap up by considering the extent to which we

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1 Introduction

Uriah Kriegel's *Brentano's Philosophical System: Mind, Being, Value* is a clear, crisp, accessible, and beautifully written elucidation and partial defense of what is arguably the core of Brentano's views. One of Kriegel's central aims in this book is to cast Brentano's work as a "live philosophical program" (p. 14, italics omitted), one that contemporary philosophy has much to learn from—and one that is largely correct. To this end, he presents Brentano's views using largely contemporary terminology, locates them within current debates, fills in some holes in Brentano's arguments, and suggests some friendly amendments. Among Kriegel's most interesting contentions are the claims that Brentano's notion of consciousness is the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness, that Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality is a grave mistake that can be fairly neatly excised from his overall view, and that Brentano's notion of intentionality is the contemporary notion of phenomenal intentionality. This paper takes issues with these claims, suggesting that Brentano's notion of consciousness might more closely align with the contemporary notion of transitive consciousness than with that of phenomenal consciousness, that Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality cannot be so easily excised from his overall view but that it is not such a grave mistake, and that Brentano's notion of intentionality may not be that of phenomenal intentionality but rather that of generic aboutness. I wrap up by considering the extent to which we might agree with Kriegel that Brentano's work forms a live philosophical program that contemporary philosophy has much to learn from.

2 Brentano's notion of consciousness

Kriegel claims that Brentano's notion of consciousness is the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness, the what-it's-like (Nagel 1974) aspect of mental life. In this section, I suggest that while Brentano's notion of consciousness might *refer* to phenomenal consciousness, it is more closely aligned with a different contemporary notion, that of *transitive* consciousness. I follow Kriegel in focusing on Brentano's major work, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (*PES*, 1874).

Let us first get clear on Kriegel's claim. He writes:

Before starting, we should consider whether by 'consciousness' Brentano has in mind the notion that has attracted so much attention in contemporary philosophy of mind, namely, the notion of *phenomenal* consciousness, the what-it-is-like aspect of experience. Obviously, Brentano does not use the *term* 'phenomenal consciousness.' ... Nonetheless, I contend, it is reasonable to suppose that phenomenal consciousness is precisely the phenomenon his discussion targets. (Kriegel 2018: 28, italics in original)

This passage moves between two claims, which might be helpful to tease apart.

Claim 1: Brentano's notion of consciousness is the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness.

Claim 2: Brentano's notion of consciousness picks out the phenomenon of phenomenal consciousness.

Claim 2 concerns the referent of Brentano's use of the term "consciousness," while Claim 1 concerns the way this referent is conceptualized—something like the concept we use to pick it out or its mode of presentation. In order for Claim 2 to be true, the phenomenon that Brentano's discussion concerns must be phenomenal consciousness, though Brentano need not conceptualize

it along contemporary lines. In order for Claim 1 to be true, the very way in which Brentano picks out his target has to involve conceptualizing it along contemporary lines, i.e., as something like the felt, subjective, or “what it’s like” aspect of mental life.

It seems that Kriegel is more squarely interested in defending Claim 1, the claim that Brentano has the notion of phenomenal consciousness in mind, since he continues his discussion by considering two different views of what this notion is:

On one view, the phenomenal notion of consciousness is the pre-theoretic notion familiar to each of us from our personal experience. . . . Another view is that the phenomenal notion of consciousness is a highly technical notion – the notion of something that at least *appears* to be categorically different from physical reality, inducing an appearance of an *explanatory gap*. (Kriegel 2018: 19–20, italics in original)

I agree with Kriegel that the *phenomenon* Brentano targets is that of phenomenal consciousness, though I do not think it is so clear that the notion he employs is the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness. In other words, I think Claim 2 is true while Claim 1 may not be.

First, let us consider Kriegel’s reasons for thinking that Brentano had the notion of phenomenal consciousness in mind. In the above quotation, Kriegel suggests that there are two views of what exactly the notion of phenomenal consciousness is. One view is that it is a “pre-theoretic notion familiar to each of us from our personal experience.” (Kriegel 2018: 19) On this view, for Kriegel, we might assume that “unless an author indicates otherwise, his or her discussion of consciousness probably targets phenomenal consciousness” (Kriegel 2018: 20). Since Brentano “does not indicate otherwise” (Kriegel 2018: 20), if this view of the notion of phenomenal consciousness is correct, we can plausibly conclude that this is the notion Brentano has in mind. The second view is that the notion of

phenomenal consciousness is a “highly technical notion – the notion of something that at least appears to be categorically different from physical reality, inducing an appearance of an *explanatory gap*.” (Kriegel 2018: 20, italics in original) Kriegel claims that since Brentano takes mental and physical phenomena to be “absolutely heterogeneous” (Brentano 1874: 30), then on this view of the notion of phenomenal consciousness, we can conclude that Brentano had the notion of phenomenal consciousness in mind. So, Kriegel concludes, on either view of the notion of phenomenal consciousness, it is plausible that in his discussion of consciousness, Brentano has the notion of phenomenal consciousness in mind.

I agree that these considerations support Claim 1. However, the arguments are not conclusive. It is not out of the question that Brentano has a different notion of consciousness in mind that he nonetheless takes to pick out something familiar in experience that is “absolutely heterogeneous” from the physical. There are certain passages in which Brentano discusses his use of the term consciousness that are particularly suggestive of an alternative way of understanding his notion of consciousness. I will consider these passages and the notion of consciousness they suggest and then return to Kriegel’s arguments for Claim 1.

After overviewing several different ways in which the term “consciousness” has been used in the literature, Brentano writes:

For any given use of the word [“consciousness”], we shall have to decide whether it may not be more harmful than helpful. If we want to emphasize the origin of the term, doubtless we would have to restrict it to cognitive phenomena, either to all or to some of them. But it is obvious that there is rarely any point in doing so, since words often change from their original meaning and no harm is done. It is obviously much more expedient to use this term in such a way as to designate an important class of phenomena, especially when a suitable name for it is lacking and a discernible gap is thereby filled.

For this reason, therefore, I prefer to use it as synonymous

with “mental phenomenon,” or “mental act.” For, in the first place, the constant use of these compound designations would be cumbersome, and furthermore, **the term “consciousness,” since it refers to an object which consciousness is conscious of, seems to be appropriate to characterize mental phenomena precisely in terms of its distinguishing characteristic, i.e., the property of the intentional in-existence of an object, for which we lack a word in common usage.** (Brentano 1874: 78–9, footnotes suppressed, bold added)

In this passage, Brentano states that he uses the term “consciousness” as synonymous with “mental phenomenon” or “mental act” and provides some reasons for this choice. We will return to the reasons shortly. For now, let us focus on the claim that “consciousness” is used synonymously with “mental phenomenon.” This, on its own, does not tell us whether Brentano had the notion of phenomenal consciousness in mind, since he might have taken mental phenomena to be by definition *phenomenally conscious* phenomena. So let us consider what Brentano says of mental phenomena.

One of the key goals of *PES* is to specify the target of psychology. In Chapter 1 of Book I, Brentano suggests that the target of psychology is mental phenomena, that is, that psychology is the study of mental phenomena. He notes that the term “phenomena” is often used to mean mere appearances. “The words ‘phenomenon’ or ‘appearance’ are often used in opposition to ‘things which really and truly exist.’” (Brentano 1874: 6) But, he claims, in the case of the mental, there is no gap between appearance and reality: mental states are just as they appear to be. So he proposes and ultimately endorses an alternative way of understanding the term “mental phenomena” in the claim that psychology is the study of mental phenomena: “mental phenomena” does not pick out mere mental appearances but rather is “completely synonymous with ‘mental states’, ‘mental processes,’ and mental events,’ as inner perception reveals them to us.”

(Brentano 1874: 7, sic) Mental phenomena, understood in this way, are mental states themselves as they are in reality, not *mere* appearances of mental states.

So far, we have seen that, for Brentano, “consciousness” is synonymous with “mental phenomena,” which is synonymous with “mental states.” Brentano wraps up his initial discussion of the target of psychology as follows:

We, therefore, define psychology as the science of mental phenomena, in the sense indicated above. The preceding discussion should be sufficient to clarify the general meaning of this definition. Our subsequent investigation of the difference between mental and physical phenomena will provide whatever further clarification is needed.

(Brentano 1874: 14)

This subsequent investigation is Brentano’s well-known discussion of the mark of the mental in Book II of *PES*, in which he argues that “intentional inexistence”—i.e., intentionality—is the mark of the mental. The discussion begins by picking out the target category of mental phenomena by use of examples:

Every idea or presentation which we acquire either through sense perception or imagination is an example of a mental phenomenon. By presentation I do not mean that which is presented, but rather the act of presentation. Thus, hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, feeling warmth or cold, as well as similar states of imagination are examples of what I mean by this term. I also mean by it the thinking of a general concept, provided such a thing actually does occur. Furthermore, every judgement, every recollection, every expectation, every inference, every conviction or opinion, every doubt, is a mental phenomenon. Also to be included under this term is every emotion: joy, sorrow, fear, hope, courage, despair, anger, love, hate, desire, act of will, intention, astonishment, admiration, contempt, etc. (Brentano 1874: 60, footnote suppressed)

What follows is an investigation into what distinguishes this category of mental phenomena from physical phenomena. While Brentano finds many distinguishing features, he suggests that exhibiting intentional inexistence is the key feature that distinguishes the mental from the physical. In this exercise, Brentano wavers between saying he is providing a definition of mental phenomena and saying that he is providing a criterion of mentality. One way to understand his project is as that of providing what is sometimes called a “real definition” of his target. Thus, he begins with a target in mind, one that is provided by means of examples, and then aims to find the key distinguishing feature of this target. He settles on intentional inexistence as the “feature which best characterizes mental phenomena” (*PFES*, Book II: 75). This criterion provides a clearer notion of mentality than our way of fixing upon it by use of examples, a notion of mentality that picks out the class of mental phenomena by its distinguishing characteristic.¹

Let us return now to Brentano’s claim that the term “consciousness” is well-suited to picking out mental phenomena, understood in the way described above. In the passage cited earlier, Brentano writes that

... the term “consciousness,” since it refers to an object which consciousness is conscious of, seems to be appropriate to characterize mental phenomena precisely in terms of its distinguishing characteristic, i.e., the property of the intentional in-existence of an object, for which we lack a word in common usage. (Brentano 1874: 79)

For Brentano, consciousness, on the pre-theoretic use of the term, implies consciousness *of* something. On this use, “conscious” is a transitive verb, taking a subject and an object. And this is what makes the term particularly useful as a term for mental phenomena. Mental phenomena are not merely features of subjects but rather features of subjects in relation to contents. Thus it is useful to describe them using a term that allows us to name both the subject of the state and its content.²

¹See also Kriegel 2017 for related discussion.

²One might think this is in tension with Kriegel’s claim that Brentano had a non-relational

Further support for the idea that Brentano uses “conscious” as a transitive verb comes from a footnote elucidating the notion of the unconscious. Brentano writes:

We use the term “unconscious” in two ways. First, in an active sense, speaking of a person who is not conscious of a thing; secondly, in a passive sense, speaking of a thing of which we are not conscious. It is in the latter sense that the term “unconscious” is used here.
(Brentano 1874: I, 79, n. ‡)

For Brentano, the notion of an unconscious mental state is that of a mental state of which we are not aware, not that of a mental state that there is nothing it is like to be in. This suggests a transitive use of “consciousness.”

What is the upshot of all this? First, it is doubtful that Brentano has in mind the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness, i.e., it is doubtful that Claim 1 is true. Brentano does not describe consciousness or mental phenomena along the lines of what it is like to be someone, what being in certain states feels like, or other related notions. Second, it seems that the contemporary notion of consciousness that is closest to Brentano’s is that of *transitive consciousness*, the notion of being conscious of something in the sense of being *aware* of it.³ This is the sense operative in claims such as “I am conscious of the red square.” (Of course, what we are conscious of need only be an intentional object, not a real existing object.)

One might suggest that the notion of transitive consciousness is the same notion as that of phenomenal consciousness. I think this is implausible. One reason to think this is that many contemporary theorists maintain that the two notions are not even co-extensive. For instance, some “qualia” theorists maintain that there are phenomenal states that do not involve an awareness of something, such as pains or moods (see, e.g., Block 1996 and Kind 2013), and view of intentionality. I don’t think so. Even if Brentano took intentional features to be intrinsic properties of subjects rather than relations between subjects and distinctly existing contents, it is useful to name a mental state’s content in describing the state.

³See, e.g., Rosenthal 2010 for this use of the term

some higher-order thought theorists maintain that there are states of transitive consciousness that there is nothing it is like to be in because there is no higher-order state directed at them (e.g., Rosenthal 2010). The debates surrounding these claims suggest that the notions of phenomenal consciousness and transitive consciousness are distinct, even if they are *in fact* co-extensive (and even if they a priori or conceptually entail each other).

If all this is right, then Claim 1, the claim that Brentano’s notion of consciousness is that of phenomenal consciousness, is false. What about Claim 2, the claim that Brentano’s notion of consciousness picks out phenomenal consciousness? On many views of consciousness, this claim comes out true.⁴ And given that Brentano recognized no notion of consciousness apart from that of (something like) transitive consciousness, it is likely that he would have accepted this claim. So Claim 2, the claim that Brentano’s discussion of consciousness targets phenomenal consciousness, might well be true—both in fact and on Brentano’s view—even if Claim 1 is not.

Let us briefly return to Kriegel’s arguments for Claim 1. We can agree with Kriegel that Brentano had a pre-theoretic notion in mind, one that points to a phenomenon familiar from everyday experience, though we might maintain that he does not conceptualize it in terms of “what-it’s-likeness” but rather in terms of awareness of a content. We can also agree with Kriegel that Brentano accepts something akin to an explanatory gap between the mental and the physical, but we might understand the gap as holding between physical appearances and mental reality, which is understood as awareness of a content. Thus, though Kriegel’s claims about Brentano’s use of the term are correct, they are compatible with the view that Brentano has a notion of consciousness in mind that is closer to that of transitive consciousness than to that of phenomenal consciousness. And if the considerations adduced above are correct, this may be the best

⁴This claim is very much in line with representationalist treatments of phenomenal consciousness (see, e.g., Harman 1990 and Dretske 1995) and phenomenal intentionality theories of intentionality (see, e.g., Horgan and Tienson 2002, Kriegel 2011, Mendelovici 2018, Mendelovici and Bourget forthcoming).

interpretation.

3 Unconscious consciousness

Despite his largely sympathetic treatment of Brentano's work, there is one thing Kriegel thinks Brentano got dead wrong: "In the whole of Brentano's philosophy, I think there is only one wrong turn that has proven disastrous to his legacy. This is the claim that all mental states are conscious." (Kriegel 2018: 68) Kriegel claims that, luckily, this claim can be excised from Brentano's overall view by rejecting Brentano's dualism, resulting in "a picture that incorporates Brentano's theory of consciousness . . . into a wider outlook which is consistent with minimal physicalism . . . and is hospitable to unconscious mentality." (Kriegel 2018: 46) In this section, I suggest that Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality cannot be so neatly excised from Brentano's overall view. However, I further argue, this is not a problem, since, properly understood, this commitment is not as radical as it might at first appear.

As Kriegel notes, the thesis that there is unconscious consciousness, which Brentano wants to reject, is to be understood as the thesis that we have conscious states that we are not aware of. If we understand consciousness as phenomenal consciousness, it is the thesis that we have phenomenal states that we are unaware of. If we understand consciousness as transitive consciousness, it is the thesis that we have states of being aware of something such that we are not aware of being in those states.

In support of the claim that there is no unconscious consciousness (however it is to be understood), Brentano argues that four arguments in favor of unconscious consciousness fail. Kriegel argues that Brentano "ignores a *fifth* basis for positing unconscious mental states, which basis has been in fact most operative, in both psychological and literary contexts. This is the idea that we must posit unconscious mental states to causally explain . . . certain *behaviors*." (Kriegel 2018: 44, italics in original) Kriegel offers three examples of cases in which he

claims behavior is best explained by appeal to unconscious mental states: (1) a person's negative behavior toward her father might be best explained in part by an unconscious anger toward him, (2) a person's everyday behavior might be best explained by appeal to an unconscious and non-occurrent (i.e., standing) desire to be happy, and (3) a person's judgments on the length of the horizontal lines in a version of the Müller-Lyer illusion in which the arrowheads are drawn too faintly to be consciously perceived might be best explained by appeal to an unconscious perception of the arrowheads (Kriegel 2018: 44–5).

Kriegel (correctly, I think) suggests that Brentano's likely response to these cases would be to claim that the relevant behavior is not best explained by appeal to mental phenomena but rather by appeal to mere physiological phenomena. In the case of (3), the relevant behavioral effects might be caused by “a merely neural representation of the arrowheads, a representation in visual cortex that does not itself qualify as mental.” (Kriegel: 46) Kriegel argues that such a response is unsatisfactory, claiming that the fact that such a representation is neural does not preclude it from being mental and, further, that “given the representation's role in inducing the conscious illusion and shaping the attendant behavior, it rather *merits* qualifying as mental.” (Kriegel 2018: 46, italics in original) Kriegel suggests that Brentano's commitment to substance dualism is the part of his overall view that precludes such “neural representations” from counting as mental: “Since [Brentano] takes physiological and mental phenomena to pertain to different kinds of substance, in classifying the visual representation as neural (hence physical) he considers that he has thereby excluded it from the mental realm.” (Kriegel 2018: 46, footnote suppressed)

Obviously, unconscious mental states are widely accepted in philosophy and the mind-brain sciences, so it does seem that Brentano is on the wrong side of history. But Kriegel suggests that this commitment can be fairly neatly excised from Brentano's overall view: All we have to do is to reject the substance dualism that it rests on. Once we reject substance dualism, we are free to say

that “some mental states can be accurately framed either as perceptions-of- x or as perceptions-of-perceptions-of- x , while others can be accurately framed only as perceptions-of- x . The former are conscious mental states, the latter unconscious mental states. Both may be token-identical with some neurophysiological states.” (Kriegel 2018: 46)

I am not so sure Brentano’s rejection of unconscious mental phenomena can be so easily excised from his overall view. But I am also not sure that it is such a problematic commitment, even by today’s standards. Here is why it cannot be so easily excised: As Kriegel notes, and as we saw in the previous section, Brentano uses the term “mental state” to pick out a natural kind. Now, as Kriegel suggests, if substance dualism is true, then physical neural states would belong to a different natural kind than paradigm mental phenomena, so the term “mental state” would not apply to them. However, this is not the only way in which neural states and mental states might belong to different natural kinds. Indeed, as we have seen, in Brentano’s discussion of the mark of the mental, he argues that the defining feature of mentality is intentionality, which he understands as a state containing an object, understood as a content, within itself. Brentano, presumably, would say that a mere physiological state does not exemplify intentionality. Even if it was caused by or was a “sign” of external items, this would not be enough for it to exhibit intentional inexistence, to have a content within itself. This is clearer given that, as Kriegel convincingly argues, Brentano held the view that intentionality was non-relational. On a non-relational view of intentionality, intentional contents are not distinct existents that we get related to by some representation relation but rather aspects or components of our own intentional states. On this view of intentionality, merely being caused by or being a “sign” of some external item is not sufficient for intentionality. If all this is right, then simply rejecting Brentano’s substance dualism is not enough to count neural states implicated in certain ways in behavior as mental. Much more of Brentano’s overall view would have to be

rejected.

Here is why I don't think it is problematic if we cannot excise Brentano's rejection of unconscious mental states from his overall view: Recall that, for Brentano, the question is whether there is unconscious consciousness. If we understand consciousness as phenomenal consciousness, then the question is whether there are phenomenal states that we are not aware of. If we understand consciousness as transitive consciousness, then the question is whether there are states of being aware of something such that we are not aware of being in those states. While it is not automatically out of the question that there are phenomenal states or states of transitive consciousness of which we are not aware, these are arguably not the kinds of states that we are compelled to posit in order to explain behavior. The cases Kriegel adduces in support of unconscious mental states, cases (1)–(3) above, arguably compel us to posit neural states that are causally related to the world beyond the mind in certain ways (perhaps that “carry information” about the external environment) and that play certain functional (perhaps “inferential” or “computational”) roles. But they do not clearly call for positing unconscious consciousness, either understood as unconscious phenomenal states or unconscious states of transitive consciousness. In other words, they do not clearly call for positing phenomenal states of which we are not aware or states of awareness of which we are not aware.

Here is a possible diagnosis of the overall situation: Brentano mostly uses the term “mental” in a narrow way so as to include only conscious states, understood as either states of phenomenal consciousness or states of transitive consciousness. He thinks this is an appropriate usage, one that carves nature at its joints, and, importantly, one that carves out appropriate disciplinary boundaries for the budding science of psychology. But contemporary discussions use the term “mental” in a broader way so as to include both conscious states and neural and functional states implicated in cognition and behavior that can perspicuously be described in information-processing, computational, or related terms. While

Kriegel is aware of Brentano's narrow usage of the term, Kriegel's discussion appears to sometimes have the broad usage in mind, and this, I would like to suggest, is why he is so keen to excise Brentano's rejection of unconscious "mentality" from his overall view. But, given Brentano's usage of "mental," his claim that there is no unconscious mentality—no phenomenal or transitive consciousness that we are not aware of—is quite reasonable, even today.

There is a nearby claim to Kriegel's, though, that I think is true and significant: Brentano did not foresee the usefulness of informational, computational, and functional notions to psychology and so he did not recognize the category of mentality broadly construed as an interesting category for the purposes of psychology. We might reasonably take this to be a failure, especially considering that Brentano's principal aim in *PES* was to establish the legitimacy of psychology as an independent discipline. However, it is not a failure pertaining to Brentano's claims about consciousness and mentality (in his narrow sense) but rather a (very understandable) shortcoming of his conception of what the budding science of psychology would eventually look like.

4 The mark of the mental

As Kriegel notes, the claim that Brentano is arguably best known for is the claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental. Kriegel argues for the surprising conclusion that we should understand Brentano's claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental as the claim that *phenomenal intentionality* is the mark of the *conscious*. In this section, I suggest that this may be only partly right: the best understanding of Brentano's claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental is that intentionality is the mark of the conscious.

Let us first see how Kriegel arrives at his proposal. Kriegel claims that since we can excise Brentano's rejection of unconscious mentality from his overall view, we should understand his claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental as the claim that intentionality is the mark of the *conscious*. Thus, he recommends

understanding Brentano's claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental, Mark 1, as Mark 2:

Mark 1: Intentionality is the mark of the mental.

Mark 2: Intentionality is the mark of the conscious.

So far, I am in agreement with Kriegel that we should interpret Mark 1 as Mark 2 (though not for the reason Kriegel gives but rather because Brentano's notion of mentality is the narrow notion described in the previous section).

Next, Kriegel claims that the notion of intentionality at play is something along the lines of the contemporary notion of *phenomenal intentionality*, which he elucidates as follows:

Phenomenal intentionality is supposed to be precisely an experiential feature of endogenous directedness at the world. The idea is that our conscious experiences *feel* as though they are directed at something other than themselves. (Kriegel 2018: 51, emphasis in original)

In addition to offering this understanding of the term "phenomenal intentionality", Kriegel anchors his usage of the term in the works of others, such as Loar (1987), Horgan and Tienson (2002), and Kriegel (2013). Of course, the term "phenomenal intentionality" has been used in various ways by these and other authors, but on most uses, phenomenal intentionality is understood as a kind of intentionality that is somehow bound up with phenomenal consciousness, perhaps because it is nothing over and above phenomenal consciousness or in some other way intimately related to it. Understood in this way, phenomenal intentionality is not merely a feeling of intentionality but rather genuine intentionality—genuine "directedness" or "aboutness"—that is identical to, grounded in, or in some other way intimately related to phenomenal consciousness.

If the notion of intentionality at play in Brentano's discussion is indeed the notion of phenomenal intentionality, we arrive at Kriegel's suggestion that Brentano's famous claim that intentionality is the mark of the mental should

be understood as the claim that *phenomenal intentionality* is the mark of the *conscious*:

Mark 3: Phenomenal intentionality is the mark of the conscious.

In support of the claim that Brentano's notion of intentionality is roughly the same as the contemporary notion of phenomenal intentionality, Kriegel points out that Brentano's way of fixing upon the phenomenon of interest is through experience. Kriegel writes:

... the only way to grasp what intentionality *is*, for Brentano, is to experience intentionality for oneself. The various descriptions of intentionality he offers – including the celebrated ‘intentionality passage’ – are intended to help the reader focus her mind on the right phenomenon; but the nature of the phenomenon cannot be appreciated simply by reading those descriptions. It must be experienced directly. (Kriegel 2018: 52)

The idea seems to be that since intentionality is supposed to be a phenomenon that we can notice in our own experience, the very notion of intentionality is that of the experiential directedness of mental states.

This interpretation of Brentano's notion of intentionality as phenomenal intentionality is surprising. Brentano is often credited with introducing the notion of intentionality—that is, of intentionality in a general or generic sense—to contemporary discourse. Indeed, much contemporary discussion of intentionality uses Brentano as an anchor to fix reference on the phenomenon of interest.⁵ If Kriegel is right, then crediting Brentano with this idea is misplaced—what he had in mind was the notion of *phenomenal* intentionality, not intentionality in the generic sense.

I am not sure Kriegel is right. Even though Brentano takes intentionality to be a phenomenon we can notice in experience, this does not commit him to

⁵See, for example, Jacob 2003, O'Madagain 2014, Neander 2017, and Mendelovici 2018.

taking the notion of intentionality to simply be that of experienced intentionality, intentionality in experience, or intentionality that is somehow intimately related to phenomenal consciousness. We notice the phenomenon of intentionality in our experience, but it is not a requirement for what is to count as an instance of this phenomenon that it be connected in a particular way to experience. If this is right, then contemporary discussions of intentionality that appeal to Brentano to anchor their use of the term “intentionality” do not thereby miss the mark.

If the preceding discussion is correct, then Mark 1 should be understood as Mark 2 but not as Mark 3. (All this, of course, is compatible with the claim that Brentano did not believe in any sort of intentionality apart from phenomenal intentionality—indeed, that is part of the import of Mark 2, the claim that intentionality is the mark of the conscious.)

5 Brentano’s live philosophical program

One of the aims of Kriegel’s book is to show that Brentano’s contributions form a philosophical system in that “they offer a unified, structurally symmetric account of the true, the good, and the beautiful.” (Kriegel 2018: 28) These contributions, Kriegel claims, are relevant to contemporary philosophical discussions, including discussions on consciousness, intentionality, and metaphysics. Despite my worries with some of the details of Kriegel’s discussion, I am overall in agreement with these claims. Kriegel beautifully illustrates how a system of views can be discerned from Brentano’s works and how this system contributes many interesting and novel ideas to contemporary debates.

However, one might worry that Kriegel’s construal of Brentano’s significance to current debates is slightly misleading. Brentano’s most famous work, *PES*, was largely focused on a project that might seem quaint to us now: the project of establishing the legitimacy of psychology as a field of inquiry distinct from metaphysics and physiology. Many of the arguments and views discussed above are put forth by Brentano as stepping stones towards this overall goal. Since

the publication of Brentano’s major work, the field of psychology has progressed in ways that Brentano could not have imagined, both autonomously and in relation to philosophy and other mind-brain sciences, resulting in the likes of computational cognitive science, dynamical systems theory, evolutionary psychology, predictive coding, and many other exciting and innovative research programs. Brentano would be proud. As Kriegel notes, Brentano did not see his work as the final word on psychology but rather as a step in the right direction and upon which future work should build, writing: “my own work can be no more than a mere preparation for future, more perfect accomplishments.” (Brentano 1874: xxvi) Brentano’s project of establishing the legitimacy of psychology is no doubt groundbreaking and historically significant, but one might think that its interest for contemporary debates—which now take for granted the legitimacy of psychology—is largely historical. So, while Brentano endorses a philosophical system that is interesting by contemporary lights, one that Kriegel has very clearly and effectively discerned, much of what Brentano might have seen as his most significant contribution, a contribution that frames and motivates his philosophical system, is of less contemporary interest, if only because we have learned his lessons so well.⁶

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