THE RELATION OF BRENTANO TO BRITISH PHILOSOPHY

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Brentano's work has had its greatest influence in Austria, Germany, Poland and Italy, but its importance for an understanding of British analytical philosophy is increasingly being recognised.

Brentano visited England in 1872, meeting with Herbert Spencer amongst others; he had a preference for British philosophy, regarding Kant and Hegel as the height of decadence. Despite this, English editions of his work were slow to appear. For a long time the only work to be translated into English was *Our knowledge of right and wrong* (1902). The first English edition of *Psychology from an empirical standpoint* did not appear until 1973. A new edition has recently been prepared (1995).

It could be argued that Brentano's work set the agenda for much twentieth century British philosophy, with regard to method (analysis); topic (reference, intentionality and meaning); and, to some extent, doctrine (the shift from idealism to realism). A key figure in the mediation of this influence was G.F. Stout.

Stout, a pupil of Henry Sidgwick and James Ward in Cambridge, was one of the first in England to respond to Brentano's work. The defence of common sense in both Brentano and Sidgwick particularly attracted him and became a noteworthy feature of Cambridge philosophy. Stout's project in his *Analytic Psychology* (itself a translation of Brentano's 'deskriptiv Psychologie'), published in 1896, was essentially Brentanian: 'to discover the ultimate and irreducible constituents of consciousness in general'. The work also contains frequent references to Brentano's pupils, Stumpf, Ehrenfels and Meinong. Stout refers to Brentano in four places in *Analytic Psychology*:
(1) In Book I, Chapter I, on the division of mental functions. Stout applauds Brentano's principle by which the classification of mental functions may be justified. However, he is at pains to distinguish Brentano's use of 'object' to refer to mental content (alias presentation or representation) from Kant's to refer to its reference, a crucial distinction (see below), which Stout maintained throughout his

philosophical career.

(2) In Chapter V, on the difference between simple apprehension and belief, Stout cites Brentano as having treated the question with admirable care and acuteness in Book 2, Chapter 7 of the *Psychologie*. In the detailed discussion of Brentano's arguments which follows, Stout generally applauds but criticises too, in addition citing *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis*.

(3) In Chapter VI, on feeling and conation, Stout criticises Brentano's treatment of what would now be termed the problem of vagueness in *Psychologie*, even having the audacity to suggest that he may have been misled by the linguistic ambiguity of *Lieben*!

(4) In Book II, Chapter VI, on Relative Suggestion, Stout quotes from *Das Genie*, in the course of criticising Bain's account of musical composition.

Amongst Stout's pupils in Cambridge in the 1890s were G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell. In a variety of ways their philosophy is continuous with his. Russell read Stout's *Analytic Psychology* 'as soon as it came out' (Griffin, 1991) and Moore claims to have read it 'with a good deal of attention' (Moore, 1968). Schaar's (1996) thesis is that Stout was the mediator between the theories of Brentano and Twardowski, and the realism of Moore and Russell. According to her, Stout mentions the distinction between content and object in a footnote in 1892, discussing it further in 1893, where he contrasts 'thought-reference' or objective reference, with content or presentation which determines the direction of thought to an object. Twardowski published his treatment of the distinction in 1894, which led to further elaboration by Stout.

Moore and Russell regarded the content as psychological and hence too subjective to be the meaning of a term. For them, as for Stout, it is the objects of thought and judgment which form the meanings of terms. Moore explicitly defended a form of realism. His purpose in 'The nature of judgment' (1899) was much like Brentano's and Meinong's, to maintain the objectivity and the independence of objects of thought. His starting point was Bradley rather than British empiricism. In this paper he contrasted his notion of concept, which functions as an object of thought, with Bradley's notion of the content of an idea, denying the relevance of content for theories of judgement or meaning. The importance of his 'The refutation of idealism' (1903) to the realist movement can hardly be underestimated.

Russell drew the distinction between content and object sometime in or after 1904, giving an argument from Meinong via Twardowski. According to his theory of denoting (1905), the proposition in which the concept of *a man* occurs as subject is not about that concept, but about an actual man denoted or meant by that concept. (N.B. Russell later changed his mind, reacting against the earlier theories worked out by himself and Moore, rejecting Brentano's defining feature of psychic phenomena as 'pointing to an object', preferring expressions like 'it thinks in me' or 'there is a thought in me'.) Russell also introduced the phrase 'propositional attitudes', which has become the canonical form for representing mental states.

Russell's theory of descriptions was offered as a way of dealing with problems raised by Meinong and Frege, as well as that of intentional objects. According to the theory, the class of names is restricted to expressions that directly designate actually existing individuals - which we directly confront in experience - without depending on the meaning of other terms. Other referring terms were construed as descriptions.

Philosophers who advocated a referential approach, in which the meaning of a term consists primarily in the objects to which it applies, were those responsible for the development of modern symbolic logic (Bechtel, 1988). According to Passmore (1966), Brentano's theory of existential import is very much what Venn was to suggest as the best foundation for symbolic logic. Brentano's logical innovations were introduced to the English reader by J.P.N. Land (1876). In Passmore's view, this note is particularly interesting as foreshadowing the logical discussion of a later day: Land maintains against Brentano that although a universal proposition does not assert the existence of its subject it nonetheless 'presupposes' it.

Referential analyses of language were further developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, particularly in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and the Logical Positivists, represented in England by A.J. Ayer. One of the problems they sought to address was that of non-referring expressions. The later Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers, such as Austin and Grice, challenged the referential approach to language, focussing attention on language use, though recently there has been something of a return to the formal analysis of language and logic.

Brentano's theme of intentionality was taken up by Anscombe (1957, 1965) and other British philosophers (c.f. the symposium on 'Intentionality and intensionality' held under the auspices of the Aristotelian Society in 1968, in which the participants were A.N. Prior, W. Kneale, J.O. Urmson and L.J. Cohen). But here again, there was a shift from the original Brentanian psychological concerns to those of logic and language (c.f. Chisholm's (1957) attempt to provide linguistic criteria, which would make explicit the logical features of intentional sentences).

Acknowledgements

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