

International Workshop

Exploring the Mind

On the Brentanian Tradition and Beyond

Schedule & Abstracts

September 15 (Friday), 2023, 9:30 AM

Organized by Witold Plotka

In Co-operation with Filip Borek, Rafał Lewandowski, and Daniele Nuccilli

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw | Institute of Philosophy

Place: Warsaw | Wóycickiego St. 1/3 | Building no. 23 | Lecture Hall no. 201



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September 15 (Friday), 2023

9:30

Welcome

9:40

Arnaud Dewalque (University of Liège): *What Are Mental Phenomena?*

Abstract: Brentano famously defined psychology as the study of mental phenomena. But what are mental phenomena? In this paper I argue that mental phenomena are mental 'appearances', where an 'appearance' is neither a mere semblance nor some object that appears. Instead, just as physical appearances are *ways things appear to me* (something that is routinely captured in perceptual reports such as 'this cup appears *red* to me'), mental appearances are *ways I appear to myself*, for example as *perceiving a red cup* or *desiring an espresso*. I provide textual evidence for this interpretation before exploring some of its implications for a correct understanding of Brentano's descriptive psychology and intentionality thesis. It follows, among other things, that intentionality is neither a relation nor a monadic property of mental states but rather a specification of the way mentally active subjects appear to themselves.

10:25

Ion Tănăsescu (Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy): *Franz Brentano's Empirical and Descriptive Psychologies: Three Arguments Showing that they are Distinct*

Abstract: There are three basic arguments against regarding Brentano's empirical psychology as one and the same science with his later descriptive psychology. These arguments are as follows:

1. Brentano's empirical psychology is a science of the main characteristics and classes of mental phenomena and of the laws of their succession and coexistence. By contrast, his descriptive psychology is a science of the elements of consciousness and the ways in which they are connected.
2. Brentano's empirical psychology is built upon J.S. Mill's inductive-deductive method. By contrast, his descriptive psychology is built upon what Brentano calls the method of noticing.
3. The criterion of classification of mental phenomena in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is the intentional relation with an immanent object. Accordingly, there are three classes of mental phenomena: presentations, judgments, and phenomena of love and hate. However, the criterion of classification of mental phenomena in his *Descriptive Psychology* is not the intentional relation, but the separability of the mental parts. Accordingly, Brentano works not with three, but only with two classes of mental states: the fundamental acts of sensation and the superposed acts of abstract presentation, judgment, and love or hate.

11:10

Coffee Break

Abstract: Franz Brentano, known mostly for promoting "psychology without a soul", in fact held two views on the mental life: one rooted in his Aristotelian studies and one inspired by the philosophical and psychological currents of the second half of the nineteenth century. These conceptions mark out two important trends in his philosophy of mind. I call them A (Aristotelian) and B (Brentanian). A is rooted in Brentano's Aristotelian writings, scil. The Aristotelica series (*Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* 1862, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom nous poietikos* 1867, *Über den Creatianismus des Aristoteles* 1882, *Aristoteles' Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* 1911, *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung* 1911, *Über Aristoteles* 1986) and in the unpublished parts of his opus magnum – *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. B is rooted in PES published in 1874 and known as Brentano's "official view". In each case Brentano understands the soul differently. In A – as a substratum, a substance accompanied by manifold attributes (mental phenomena). I call this substratum perspective/substratum view. In PES he eliminates this substratum, which sets him alongside such adherents of the bundle theory of the soul as D. Hume, F.A. Lange, W. Wundt, and G.T. Fechner. In the first case, there is a "being in the head". In the second one – "psychology without a soul". What is left after the removal of the substratum is a chain of psychic acts, mental phenomena without an underlying something. Each of these currents makes different assumptions about the ontological status of the soul and God, and from these different conceptions of mental life and its relation to God follow different accounts of immortality.

Kazimierz Twardowski, one of Brentano's most prominent students, was also interested in these issues. In his papers *Contemporary philosophy on immortality of the soul* and *The metaphysics of soul* – both published in 1895 (*Przełom*) – he discusses these two accounts of the soul (substratum soul and substratum-free soul) without an explicit reference to his teacher though. In the first one Twardowski expounds the manifold views of the immortality of the soul and in the second one he gives his own account of the soul's ontological status and of its immortality. Both papers are based on Twardowski's notes for lectures on what he called *Die Unsterblichkeitsfrage*, which he prepared in 1894 when he was obliged to work as a Privatdozent for a year after his habilitation in Vienna (*On the Content and Object of Presentations: A Psychological Investigation*). In choosing immortality as the subject of these lectures he may have been inspired by Franz Brentano's lifelong interest in that matter. Twardowski criticizes the bundle theory of soul and speaks in favor of the substratum account. I will show his methods of coming to these conclusions as well as compare them to what Brentano does. In *The metaphysics of soul* Twardowski tries to refute the bundle theory of the soul by proving its absurdity. He presents an imaginary dialogue between himself conceived as a substratum for mental phenomena and "a group of mental phenomena" – a person-entity who thinks that (s)he is a group of mental phenomena without an underlying subject.

As a result, I wish to present a clear description of these two currents and their implications concerning God and immortality. I also wish to be able to tell the difference between Brentano's and Twardowski's private views and preferences and what they understood as a scholar's duty.

12:15

Guillaume Fréchette (University of Lisbon): *What is Reism, really?*

Abstract: Reism, or what is labeled „Reism“ by Brentano’s students, is the view that we can only represent real things (*Reales*). At least prima facie, the view doesn’t say anything about the nature of the world, but rather about the nature of our thinking. Nevertheless, reism is often understood as a thesis about the nature of the world, in which case it is understood as a variety of nominalism. In this talk, I try to disentangle this question. I argue that the nominalistic understanding of reism is incorrect, and I discuss Brentano’s view on universals, before and after reism, to bring home the point.

13:00

Lunch Break

14:00

Arkadiusz Chrudzimski (Jagiellonian University in Kraków): *TBA*

Abstract: TBA

14:45

Witold Plotka (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw): *Blaustein on How to Describe Mental Phenomena: Analysis of Two Exemplary Cases*

Abstract: The paper explores main components of the methodological device used by Blaustein in his analysis of selected types of mental phenomena. My task is here to determine aims, object and detailed procedures of Blaustein’s method. Blaustein was a student of Twardowski who also had an occasion to study under Husserl in the summer semester of 1925. Blaustein’s doctoral dissertation, defended in 1927, concerned parts of Husserl’s theory of intentionality and it bore the mark of Twardowski’s account of the object and content of presentations. In my paper, I argue against a thesis, popular in the scholarly literature, that Blaustein was a phenomenologist as he studied under Husserl and adopted his method.

By focusing on selected elements of Blaustein’s method, I will analyze the descriptive procedure he adopted in his writings. I will focus mainly on two of his texts: (1) his account of so-called imaginative presentations and (2) his examination of the cinema-goer’s experiences. Blaustein analyzes these phenomena by focusing on concrete mental phenomena which are decomposed by him in a descriptive procedure. Description is supplemented by abstraction which serves one to identify common features of the analyzed phenomena. The ultimate aim of such description is an attempt to determine laws which govern some types of certain phenomena. Different from Husserl, however, Blaustein is skeptical about eidetic claims of such an analysis. For Blaustein, any reference to essences is unjustified as it falls into the *petitio principii* fallacy, and one should analyze concrete phenomena instead.

In conclusion, I will address the question to what extent phenomenology can be regarded as a sort of descriptive psychology. In this vein, I will emphasize main differences between Blaustein’s and Husserl’s account of the mental to verify the thesis that Blaustein can be regarded as a phenomenologist.

15:30

Rafał Lewandowski (University of Gdansk): *A Report on Editing and Translating of the Blaustein-Twardowski Correspondence and a Few Words on Its Content*

Abstract: The purpose of my talk is to provide information about the editorial work I have done over the past year on Blaustein's letters to Twardowski and to briefly present the most important themes of these letters. My work consisted of transcribing the text of the letters from handwriting to Word format, editing the text to make the language more modern, adding footnotes about people and works appearing in the text, and translating the text from Polish to English. After briefly discussing these issues and related problems, I will review the content of the letters. This will give some insight into a relationship between a professor and his student. This kind of relation is quite unusual for today, but it was more common in pre-war Europe. It involved a deep attachment, respect for the authority of the master and a creative dialogue that lasted until the last days of Twardowski's life. The fashionable institution of tutoring today renews to some extent this way of building relationships.

16:00

Coffee Break

16:20

Daniele Nuccilli (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw): *Blaustein and Husserl on Perception and Intentionality*

Abstract: The theory of content of presentations in the perceptual act represents one of the central topics of Blaustein's critical interpretation of Husserlian intentionality that we find in his doctoral dissertation *Husserl's Theory of Act, Content and Object of Presentation* (1928). This topic moreover plays a decisive role in the complex Husserlian theoretical transition from the *Logical Investigations* to his *Ideas* /that took place in the Göttingen years. Starting from some notes taken in Brentano's lectures in 1885 and 1886, Husserl in the Göttingen lectures had taken a "second way" of thinking, parallel to that of the *Logical Investigations*, in which the tracer of analyses was shifted from the main front of expression and meaning to the opposing front of experience and sensible data. In his critique Blaustein regrets that he cannot draw on the material of those lectures. In this paper I will therefore try to highlight some central points of Husserlian thought between the *Logical Investigations* and the *Ideas* /in relation to Blaustein's critique in order to try to understand whether it remains coherent and sharp even in front of those lines of thought from the Göttingen lectures with which he could not actually deal.

17:05

Filip Borek (University of Warsaw, Charles University in Prague): *The Many Faces of Immanence: Blaustein and Husserl's Genetic Account of Sensations*

Abstract: In his 1928 doctoral dissertation on Husserl, Blaustein reconstructs and critically discusses the main concepts of Husserl's phenomenology. One of the objectives of his criticism is Husserl's understanding of sensation or *hylē* as a real (*reell*) component of consciousness. In my paper, I want to recapitulate Blaustein's criticism and confront it with the mature Husserlian account of *hylē* and sensations, especially from the lectures on passive synthesis. I argue that Blaustein's arguments are indeed convincing but only in relation to Husserl's theories of *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas* / (to which Blaustein exclusively refers). They lose, however, their persuasiveness in the light of Husserl's later philosophy, more specifically in the light of his "genetic turn". It is possible to show that in the light of Husserl's late transcendental-genetic concept of consciousness and subjectivity, the thesis about the inclusion of *hylē* in consciousness takes on a meaning that descriptive

psychology—to which Blaustein is exclusively attached—is unable to spell out. In this way, the systematic and historical value, as well as the limits of Blaustein’s criticism will be defined.

17:50

Closing

19:00

Self-sponsoring dinner for participants in **Sofra Restaurant** (Wilcza St. 71)