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Comment and Review

A Study of Franz Brentano.

By Antos C. Rancurello. Academic Press,
New York and London, 1968, pp. 178.

Josef L. Dieska

Professor Rancurello of the Psychology Department of the University of Dayton, Ohio, has chosen to present the noted Austrian philosopher and psychologist, Franz Brentano (1838-1917), in a concise historical perspective and against the background of the newly developing empirical and experimental psychology, as it acquired independent status from philosophy and autonomy among the sciences of the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The study is divided into three main sections: (1) *Franz Brentano: A Portrait of His Life, Personality, and Work*; (2) *Overview of Brentano's Standpoint in Psychology*; (3) *Historical Perspective*. *The Annotated Bibliography* is meant to be a helpful, informative review of the available literature in which the reader can acquire a more penetrating knowledge about Brentano's personal career, working methods, and about his philosophical and psychological theories. There can be no doubt about Rancurello's effort to give, in a comparatively brief study, the most complete and exhaustive account of Brentano's significance and position in the history of psychology. The task in itself was a very difficult one because of the complexity of interests and variety of problems to which Brentano devoted his tragic and agitated life.

Formerly a Catholic priest, later married, excommunicated and living for the rest of his life outside the Church, Professor Brentano became an important figure in philosophical and psychological circles mainly after the publication of his first major work in psychology entitled *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint (1874). This monograph was preceded by minor papers and articles. After a pause of several years Brentano's literary productivity was directed, by and large, toward the problems of philosophy; in particular epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Most of these works were published after Brentano's death. A significant contribution to psychology as a newly developing empirical science must be recognized in Brentano's reintroduction of the Aristotelian and Scholastic term "intentionality" into psychological problematics as well as in his insistence on defining psychology as the study of "psychic phenomena." By this Brentano endeavored to preserve the empirical character of psychology and, at the same time, to keep it more distinct from the physiological psychology represented by such experimentalists as W. Wundt, G. E. Muller, and above all by Horwicz and Maudsley. Through the concepts of "inner perception," "inner observation," "primary and secondary consciousness," "primary and secondary object of psychology," Brentano succeeded, at least for his time, in clarifying his concept of psychic phenomena in the sense of the so-called "activistic or acti-psychology" as against the "psychology of

contents." As is well known, Brentano's psychology falls into three classes of psychic processes or activities: (1) Representation, (2) Judgment, (3) Affectivity. As Rancurello correctly points out, each of these classes comprises several psychic phenomena. "Under the concept of representation, he included all psychic acts in which we merely become aware of something, i.e., all acts of pure experiencing, whether it be sensing, or imagining, or thinking." Brentano expresses himself on this point as follows: "We speak of representation whenever something appears to us." The judgment consists in the acceptance of something as true or in rejecting something as false, which situation extends, according to Brentano, beyond strictly understood activity of forming propositions based on the notorious comparing of two or more concepts by our intellect. Brentano extends judgment also to the perception of psychic acts and to memory. The third class of psychic acts is represented by "all the psychic phenomena which are not contained in the first two classes." Such are love and hate, emotions, feelings and will, and, finally, interests. It is worthwhile to point out in this context that Brentano's introduction of "interests" into the study of psychology is among the first attempts of that kind, and it is proper to consider him the anticipator of today's widespread study of interests in the domain of psychology. Brentano, as Rancurello emphasizes frequently, had developed certain ideas long before they became a common standpoint in general psychological research and theory. His keen sense for observation, as well as his wide philosophical background and training in Scholasticism, acquired while studying for the priesthood, made him a psychologist who could not accept any narrow or reductionistic position in psychology. In this personal feature of Brentano's general portrait and psychological profile is also reflected a strong impact upon his students as well as upon the next generation of psychologists and philosophers such as C. Stumpf, T. Lipps, E. Husserl and others. This influence of Brentano's method and theories in psychology is closely followed by Rancurello mainly in the third part of his historical analysis titled *Historical Perspective*. Rancurello traces the impact of Brentano's conception of the "act-psychology" to such outstanding authors as W. James, W. Dillthey, O. Kulpe and the Wurzburg-School, as well as to the notorious Gestalt-or Structural Psychology and to the most recent Phenomenology. The Personalistic Psychology, Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Depth-Psychology (Tiefen-Psychologie) as well as many positions held by the distinguished Catholic psychologists such as J. Frobes, S.J., J. Lindworsky, S.S., A. Gemelli O.F.M., and Moore, have been inspired by Brentano's basic methodological and actionistic views. Leading the reader through the three phases of the psychological development (1) 1825-1875, (2) 1875-1900, (3) 1900-1930, Rancurello brings us to the immediate past and present (1930-present) while showing Brentano's influences and legacy as reflected in contemporary psychological theory and practice.

It is only logical to reaffirm once more that the value of Rancurello's work is high, because it is, aside from E. G. Boring's general treatment of Brentano in his *History of Experimental Psychology* (1929) and a few similar histories of psychology, the most comprehensive treatment of Brentano in the English language. Professor E. G. Boring of Harvard University, who wrote the Foreword to Rancurello's book, has given to

Rancurello's first major work an honorable introduction into the academic and scholarly family of responsible psychologists and authors. It would have been welcome had Rancurello pointed out some of the most recent psychological advancements and improvements in psychological classification, terminology, and interpretations that have enriched our psychological inquiry since Brentano's death. Rancurello, despite the fact that his supporting quotations from Boring are, in the opinion of this reviewer, a bit overdone, has shown his independent thinking while comparing Brentano with others, and his historical perspectives and parallels drawn between various personalities and ideas are by and large correct and acceptable. It would be desirable if, in the future, an analytic monograph on Brentano's psychological theories followed Rancurello's historical study and appraisal. The book is a partial fulfillment of the debt due to Brentano by contemporary psychology which, because of its involvement in often too one-sided experimentation, has almost forgotten one of its most outstanding builders and protagonists.

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