CHAPTER II

The Phenomenological concept of consciousness

-- the concept of intentionality

and

its relevance for Psychology.
Brentano's concept of intentionality as the fundamental character of mental life:

Brentano, as an exponent of descriptive psychology, comes to reject the value of causal explanation of psychical states and processes. "For according to Brentano any causal study of psychological phenomena was hopeless before the psychologist had sufficiently clarified and described what it was that he wanted to explain." Brentano's psychology is known as act psychology as opposed to the content psychology of the associationists. According to the naturalistic psychologists, our mind is composed of simple discrete elements like the atoms which are the component parts of the physical world. In the so far as for them composition of the physical and that of the mental worlds are the same, they think that the laws applicable to the one are also applicable to the other. Thus there is for them no difference between the two.

But the mind has distinctive characteristics of its own that differentiate it from physical objects. Mind has a unity, it is not composed of simple elements. It is without extension and is not spatial. Further, mental

states are intentional. Because of these unique characteristics it is impossible for us to study the mind causally. We can only describe the characteristics of the mental states and processes. Brentano holds that it is the primary function of the psychologists to describe the characteristics of the psychical states before they attempt to describe them causally and experimentally. Brentano makes a distinction between descriptive psychology and experimental psychology. Experimental psychology is nothing but a causal study of the mental states. But the experimental psychologists are dependent on the descriptive psychologists for the ultimate clarification of their data. The ideals of the experimental psychologists are physics and physiology. They are influenced by the mechanistic outlook. Instead of the activity, it is the content of the mind that interests them most. According to the associationists, mind is composed of simple sensory elements. For Brentano, "Sensations exist, but they themselves are not mental, what is mental is the activity that occurs when a person 'sees' a colour, 'hears' a sound or 'smells' an odour."

2. Flugel, A Hundred Years of Psychology, p. 121.
Thus by disregarding the contribution of 'content psychology' Brentano establishes his act psychology or descriptive psychology. The aim of descriptive psychology is to give an accurate description of all psychical states and processes. The true nature of psychical states is revealed to us through inner perception. Brentano has no faith in introspection. In introspection we look inwards. To examine consciousness introspectively is to distort it. In introspection we regard the psychical states as objects. But conscious states are living and continuous. We cannot grasp them as static physical objects. Therefore, Brentano is concerned not only with sensation, feelings and images but also with all sorts of intentional phenomena such as perceiving, believing, imagining, thinking, judging etc.

In his psychology, Brentano has made a sharp distinction between psychical and physical phenomena. The most distinctive characteristic of psychical phenomena as opposed to the physical is intentionality. He himself never uses the term intentionality.
He rather uses the expression 'intentional inexistence'. He has borrowed this concept from the scholastics of the middle ages. Descartes by his methodological doubt had attained one indubitable truth. It is the truth about the existence of the self or the thinker. "The only psychological reality is I think (imagine, fancy, will etc.)". As a result, we seem to have been left only with a worldless subject which is nothing but a void without any content of psychological value. Descartes himself is bound to find that there cannot be any perceiving, thinking or imagining without that which is perceived, which is thought of, or that which is imagined. Therefore, Brentano thinks that Descartes' 'I think' must be corrected. He corrects it as 'I think of' something. This is his revival of the scholastic concept of intentional inexistence. Brentano holds that consciousness is intentional, which means that every psychological state such as perceiving, thinking, feeling, willing, imagining, believing, hating, loving etc. is directed to some object. Each psychical phenomenon refers to some object in its own way. Thus

3. Ruitenbeek, Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy, p.103
Whenever we perceive, we perceive something; whenever we think, we think about something, whenever we love or hate, our love or hate is directed to something or somebody. Similar is the case with all other psychical states. But the peculiarity of these psychical states is that the objects towards which they are directed may not have a real existence in the external world. They have immanent intentional existence or 'immanent objectivity'. This means that in the case of any psychological act, say, thinking the object (of thought) need not exist like a physical object in the real world; for it has its immanent existence within consciousness. According to a modern interpreter: "From the fact that a certain thing is the object of an intentional act or attitude, one cannot infer either that that thing exists or it does not; from the fact that a proposition is the object of an intentional act or attitude, one cannot infer that the proposition is true or that it is false; everything
that is psychological involves what is thus intentional; but nothing that is physical can similarly "contain its object intentionally within itself." Thus the significance of intentional inexistence is that the objects, towards which our psychical states are directed, are not real in the true sense of the term, but that they are immanent objects that appear to consciousness as correlates of the conscious acts under consideration. But Husserl is not satisfied with this view of intentionality, the view namely, that psychical states are directed not to objects of the real world but to immanent entities. Brentano makes a distinction between the object of the real world and those that are immanent within consciousness. The inevitable result is that there are two kinds of reality while there must be only one. In fact, Husserl holds that the objects of intentional experience are all transcendent to consciousness. Husserl extends the scope of intentional experience beyond the image to the real world. Instead of the

4. Chisholm, Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, p. 4.
object's immanence in consciousness, our consciousness has a directedness towards something wholly beyond it. Brentano himself also gradually comes to abandon the concept of the object's immanence in consciousness; as is evident from his posthumous letter and papers now available in the English translation of R.M. Chisholm and others.

Another objection urged against Brentano's concept of intentionality is that it is too narrow. All psychical phenomena do not come under it. There is a large number of psychical phenomena such as some states of pleasure and pain that do not refer to any object. This criticism is mainly urged by Hamilton against Brentano. Feeling has no intentionality. Our feeling is always the feeling of pleasure and pain which are subjective or mental modifications without any objective basis. Feeling is 'subjectively subjective.' Feeling is blended with its object.

5. Chisholm, Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, p. 51.
But Hamilton's view cannot be wholly accepted. Some of our feelings have intentional reference to their objects. When we find that a person feels joy or sorrow, it is evident that he feels sorrow at something, or he is joyous about something. We usually use such expression as that a thing delights me, that a person hurts me, that an incident pains me. From this it is clear that the feeling of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, love and hate, all equally refer to some objects beyond the subjective states which they are. But there are also some cases of feelings in which the feelings do not refer to an external thing. Thus we feel pleasure in hearing a sweet musical note, our feeling of pleasure does not refer to the musical sound but to our hearing of it. But even here we cannot think that our feeling becomes blended into one with its object. Brentano tackles this problem in a very careful manner. According to him, every feeling refers to object. The only difference is that some of our feelings refer to primary objects while others have secondary references or objects. The primary objects or references are the objects of
the external world beyond consciousness and towards which our consciousness has a directedness, while the secondary objects or references are the psychical states themselves. From this it is clear that while some of our psychical states have primary objects as their references, others such as our feeling of depression, and elatedness refer to secondary object. Therefore, every feeling has objective reference.

Thus Brentano maintained that intentionality of consciousness is the a priori principle of all psychology. Husserl also thinks that the concept of intentionality has a great bearing upon phenomenology. By phenomenology, Husserl in his earlier writings means "the purely, descriptive study of mental phenomena," while the aim of Brentano's descriptive psychology is to describe the significance of mental states. It is thus that Brentano's view of the intentional structure of consciousness has come to play an important part in the field of phenomenology.

6. Cnisholm, Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, p. 17.
There is no doubt according to Husserl that Brentano had discovered a fundamental character of all psychology. Nevertheless, Brentano's theory is full of difficulties. Brentano was still under the influence of naturalistic psychology. Naturalism fails to grasp the peculiar kind of connection, which obtains among the elements of consciousness (states) and which is totally different from the mode of relatedness among natural elements. Conscious states intentionally imply each other. This conception of intentional implication was not found by Brentano.

Further, according to Husserl Brentano has failed to develop the full significance of the concept of intentionality because he was not in possession of the method of phenomenological reduction. That is why, he does not consider the mental state as such. The idea of the pure phenomenological psychology was therefore foreign to him.

Brentano was concerned only with an external classification of intentional experiences. But he
never came to relate different modes of consciousness to the different kinds of objects which are presented through them. Consequently, he was not aware of what Husserl thought to be the teleological function of the different modes of consciousness. Consciousness is not an empty and passive receptivity, it is also a many-sided process of synthesis, but all its synthetic activities are intentionally directed.

Husserl thus came to develop the doctrine of intentionality in a new direction, i.e. through a doctrine of transcendental consciousness to a doctrine of constitutive syntheses.
(ii) Husserl's concept of intentionality of consciousness:

The notion of the intentionality of consciousness has a far reaching influence upon Husserl's philosophy. This notion was surely borrowed by Husserl from Brentano. Brentano, as we have seen, introduced this concept to make a distinction between psychological and physical phenomena. The chief characteristic that differentiates the psychical from the physical is that the psychical phenomena are intentional. But Husserl transformed this conception of Brentano in many respects. Unlike Brentano Husserl never holds that the objects of intentional acts are immanent in consciousness; he rather holds that consciousness is directed to a transcendent object. Secondly, in opposition to Brentano he accepts the existence of non-intentional psychical states.

Like Descartes Husserl thinks that self-consciousness is the first indubitable principle that lies at the basis of all our thinking. But Husserl
finds that Descartes' analysis of the ego cogito is not radical enough. Descartes has overlooked two points - (1) the interconnectedness of the stream of thought and (2) the distinction between the act of thinking and the object of thought. The second problem can be solved, Husserl thinks, by the notion of intentionality. The relationship between consciousness and its object is technically described by Husserl as 'intentionality' which means that all our conscious experiences are necessarily directed towards the object experienced. There is no such thing as thought, fear, fantasy or remembrance as such in isolation from their objects. Every thought is thought of something, every fear is fear of something and so on. Thus all conscious processes have self-transcending reference. But this does not mean that all conscious states are related to some outer object. It may generally be supposed that if consciousness is to know an object, it must come into direct contact with an object. In knowing an object consciousness must go out and
establish a real relationship with the object. But this is not what Husserl means. Consciousness is not spatial and temporal. So it cannot establish a real relationship with the object, yet it is of the object. Husserl says that within consciousness there is directedness which we do not find in any physical object. If consciousness goes out to the real object then there would be no distinction between consciousness and knowledge. The relation between consciousness and knowledge is not a logical relation because consciousness is not a concept. Again, the object towards which consciousness is directed may not have a real existence in the external world; but even in that case consciousness is directed towards it. But being directed towards an object is not itself another mental state; for in that case there would be an infinite regress. The intentional object is not always the apprehended object. This shows that all our acts of consciousness are not knowledge. Husserl holds that we have to distinguish between
the mere object and the full intentional object. This becomes clear in the case of higher conscious acts, like the evaluating ones. In such cases the full intentional object is the mere object together with the valuational predicate. In fact, Husserl thinks that consciousness has a self-transcending reference. Husserl makes a difference between immanent perception and transcendent perception. Immanent perception is that whose intentional object belongs to the same stream of consciousness as the perception itself. In such a case I make my own thinking as the object of my thought. In transcendent perception our consciousness is directed to things outside, or to conscious states of other persons.

In trying to find out the pure consciousness Husserl has rejected the naturalistic attitude. But if the natural world is foreign to consciousness how can the two be interwoven with each other? Our consciousness is interwoven with the natural world in two ways. In the first place, it is somebody's
consciousness. Secondly, it is consciousness of this world. Thus Husserl sought to fill the Cartesian gulf between the subjective mind and the objective world by stating that the object of our consciousness has a phenomenological existence in consciousness. The data upon which our mind works have phenomenological existence within our consciousness. Some parts of these data represent external object. The labelling of this externally oriented stuff in the stream of consciousness as external and objective was called intentionality. Intentionality was an act of declaring the extrinsic significance of certain experiences. When I say that the grass is green, the greenness of grass is a subjective experience; but it is intentional in the sense that it refers to grass that grows, plenty in the external physical world.

Spiegelberg has given four general characteristics of intentionality: - (1) Intention objectifies: This means that the intentional objects are given to us through sense-data which are the integral parts of

the stream of consciousness. The object towards which our consciousness is directed is not immanent within consciousness, but is transcendent. Now the function of intention is to relate the sense data to objects that are not parts of consciousness. (2) Intention identifies: it is the function of intention to relate a number of successive data to the same object. Otherwise, it would be impossible for us to have an identical object. We should get only a stream of successive perceptions which are dissimilar. In fact, "intention supplies the synthetic function by which the various aspects, perspectives, and states of an object are all focussed upon, and integrated into, identical cores." (3) Intention connects: the complete object with all its peculiarities is not revealed to our consciousness as soon as it is directed to the object concerned. When I perceive a thing say, a table, only one aspect of the table is visible to me at a time. I can only perceive its front part that refers to its back and other remote sides that are now invisible to me. All these aspects taken together form its horizon. In fact, the function of intentionality consists in connecting the visible aspect of

a thing to its invisible parts so that the whole object may be perceived at a single glance.

(4) Intention constitutes, according to Husserl, that towards which our consciousness is directed, is not pre-existent but is constituted by our consciousness. We are conscious of the thing as it appears to us and not as it is in itself.

The intentional acts such as the acts of thinking, feeling, willing, loving, hating etc. and the objects towards which they are directed are described by Husserl as the noesis and the noema respectively. Noema means the thing as it appears to my consciousness. The real physical object may undergo a radical change, but the thing considered as the intentional object of my conscious act is free from all such changes. The field of psychological research must be confined to the intentional act and its correlate or noema, i.e. the thing as it appears to, presents itself or is intended through the act. " 'The intentional object' belongs to the
act as its correlate, its sense or meaning. Taken in its full and concrete sense, the term 'intentionality of consciousness' expresses just this correlation or correspondence between acts and their intentional objects'. As the correlate of the act, the 'intentional object' is inseparable from it, so that no description of an act of consciousness is adequate unless allowance is made for its intentional correlate."

Man has to deal with the objects of the world. He establishes a relationship with the objective world through his acts of consciousness. But as consciousness has no spatial qualities and is quite different from the physical objects, it cannot establish a real relationship with the objects of the world. Being influenced by the naturalistic attitude, the psychologists are interested in mundane reality. But if psychology wants to be a true science of mind, it should concentrate its sole attention only on the intended object or the meant reality.

(iii) Gurwitsch's concept of intentionality of consciousness:

The nature of consciousness as revealed by Gurwitsch is radically opposed to that of the traditional psychologists. He has emphasized the intentional structure of our consciousness. According to him, as psychologists we must make enquiry into consciousness. Instead of looking into the physical world, we must turn our attention towards consciousness. By surveying our consciousness what we find is never the sense-data of the traditional psychologists but the acts -- such as the act of perceiving, thanking, judging and so on. "Every such act must be characterised as an act of consciousness of something: that is what is meant by intentionality of consciousness."

The nature of consciousness is such that it is always directed to something, no matter what this something may be some physical object like stone or tree.

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Or it may be some other conscious states such as the feeling of joy or sorrow. The object towards which our consciousness is directed, is described by Husserl as noema, that is, the object as it is meant or intended by me. Consciousness is always of some object. Through the act of consciousness, the object, towards which our consciousness is directed, is presented before us in the manner in which it is intended by us. The object of our consciousness is not the object as it really is, but it is as presented before us through the act under consideration. Whenever I perceive a tree the object of my act of perception is not the tree as it really is; rather it is the tree as it appears before me from a particular standpoint through my particular act of perception. The real tree in the natural world may be destroyed due to natural calamity, that is, it may undergo change and modification but the tree as it is meant by me is free from all such changes. The object as it appears through a specific act of consciousness is called the noema or intentional object. Thus our
consciousness of an object involves two things -- on the one hand, there is the act or the noesis and on the other hand the object or the noema. Gurwitsch thinks that Husserl's noesis and noema doctrine reveals the intrinsic nature of consciousness that every conscious mental state must be conceived as a temporal event with reference to an identical sense or meaning. The same noema may be the object of different acts. Conscious states are in an incessant variation. But the intrinsic nature and unity of those simultaneously given conscious acts would be lost, if they are not conceived with reference to something identical. The nature of conscious acts as simultaneous can be revealed to us only with reference to object which remains identical in the midst of changing conscious states. Consciousness is not merely the acts. On the contrary, it is the awareness of the objects through these acts. Thus it is a correlation between the act and its objects. "Consciousness is not to be mistaken for a mere unidimensional sphere composed of acts, as real psychical events, which co-exist with and succeed one another. Rather, it ought to be considered as a
correlation, or correspondence, or parallelism between the plane of acts, psychical events, noesis
and a second plane which is that of sense" (noemata)

But the correspondence between the act and its object is not one to one; for while each act refers to a noema but the same noema may be the object of different acts. In fact, the correlation is between the act which is temporal with the sense or noema which is atemporal and identical. The noema or the intentional object is the meaning or sense of the intentional act. There is an inseparable relation between the intentional act and its object. The notion of intentionality establishes the objectivating function of consciousness. This objectivating function presents before the subject ideal unities which are identical and to which the subject can give his attention repeatedly through infinite number of acts. "Objectivity is identifiableness, i.e., the possibility of reverting again and again to what, through

the present experienced act, is offered to consciousness and the possibility of so doing whether in the sense or in any other mode of awareness." In fact, the temporality of consciousness according to Husserl has sense only with respect to the identity of the object.

According to Gurwitsch, the psychological investigation must be confined within the sphere of intentional objects and acts. Every psychologist must perform what Husserl calls "Phenomenological-Psychological reduction". He must be a disinterested observer of the psychical states and processes of his subject. He must not raise existential questioning regarding the nature of mundane reality. He should study the mundane reality only as it appears or is experienced by his subject. "The psychologist deals with intential objects," only and exclusively. They, and they alone, are his themes and constitute his field of research. Disclosing mental life, the psychologist finds, at least to begin with, acts of consciousness

and 'intentional objects', which as correlates of the 13 acts, are inseparable from them". Thus psychology, Gurwitsch holds, should confine itself exclusively within the field of the meant reality. If the psychologist deals with something which is not a meant reality, then he must go beyond the domain of psychology.

(iv) William James' concept of intentionality of consciousness :-

William James also accepts the view that intentionality or being directedness to the object is the distinguishing characteristic of all psychical phenomena. James accepts the identifying function of intentional act. According to him, the "principle of constancy in the mind's meanings" is one of the most significant peculiarity of psychical fact. "The same matters can be thought of in successive portions of the mental stream, and same of these portions can know that they mean the same matters which the other portions meant". The mind can always intend, and know when it intends, to think the Same. The backbone of our thinking is the sense of identity.

James holds that all our consciousness states have cognitive reference to some external mental facts. Corresponding to every mental state there is something

15. Ibid p. 459.
that appears to the experiencing subject's mind. This something is the object of our thought. The object of our thought is not the thing as it really exists but as it is experienced by the subject, i.e. as it is meant and intended by him. James' concept of the object of thought reminds us of Husserl's concept of 'noema', that is, the thing as it is intended by the experiencing subject.

But the essential nature of consciousness as revealed by James is that our consciousness is a continuous stream of thought. The things as they are, are discontinuous and discrete; they come and go one after another, while the conscious acts have coherence and they constitute a unbroken stream. In its inner constitution the present conscious act contains reference to the past one. "The transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the thought than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the consciousness as much as the joint is a part of the bamboo" 16.

states is meaningless without temporality. If conscious states are not successive in time, then what should be understood by their identity? No conscious state is primarily confined to the strict present. Every present conscious state is present in the background which comprises both the experiences of the past and the expectancies of the future. Through all our conscious states we are conscious of the object towards which our consciousness is directed and at the same-time we are conscious of the time passing. When we listen to a sweet musical note for a period of time, at each moment we are aware of the fact that it is the same musical note which I have listened a moment ago, which I have been listening all the time and which I expect to listen for some time more. "The 'present phase' of conscious life is pervaded by reminiscences and expectancies: reminiscences of phases which have been present, i.e. which had the temporal character of an 'actual now' but no longer have it, being only retained (retentions)
as 'having just been an actual now', and this in greater or lesser remoteness from what at the time being has the distinguished character of the 'actual now'!

Thus William James has emphasized the continuity and temporality of our consciousness. He has defined consciousness in terms of temporality. Every mental state points to both the past and the future.

"Whatever objects might appear through a mental state, the latter besides being a consciousness of these objects is necessarily an awareness of time passing".
