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# Hermann Lotze and Franz Brentano

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**Abstract:** Franz Brentano was not a solitary figure who propounded his philosophy in lonely isolation from other contemporary philosophers in Germany, as some neo-Brentanists have claimed over the last years. The aim of this paper is to correct such misconceptions by establishing that Brentano developed his philosophical psychology while actively engaged in the rich intellectual-historical and academic context of his time – in particular, under the influence of Hermann Lotze. Specifically, Brentano: (i) adopted from Lotze the idea that judgment is not just an association of ideas but an assertion of content; (ii) he also embraced Lotze’s idea that the content of perception is something given; (iii) Brentano notion of intentionality, too, was inherited from Lotze; (iv) as well as the method of descriptive psychology; (v) finally, Lotze and Brentano shook hands admitting that perception and knowledge are intrinsically connected with emotions. At the same time, there were at least two points at which Brentano disagreed with Lotze: (i) he criticised Lotze’s local sign theory of perception as well as Lotze’s atomism. These were clearly constructivist theories inspired by Kant. (ii) Brentano also criticized Lotze’s principle of teleomechanism. It was influenced by the German Idealists.

**Keywords:** Brentano, Descriptive Psychology, Intentionality, Judgment, Lotze

## 1. The Neo-Brentanists

Franz Brentano was not a solitary figure who propounded his philosophy in lonely isolation from other contemporary philosophers in Germany, as some neo-Brentanists have claimed over the last thirty to forty years. The aim in what follows is to correct such misconceptions by establishing that Brentano developed his philosophical psychology while actively engaged in the rich intellectual-historical and academic context of his time – in particular, under the influence of Hermann Lotze.

The misleading image of Brentano as a solitary genius promulgated by the likes of Neo-Brentanists such as Barry Smith is analogous to the picture of Gottlob Frege passed off as historical truth by influential Neo-Fregeans – Michael Dummett, for one. In both cases, we find a distinguished thinker portrayed as the reclusive, solitary man of genius. Thanks, however, to the researches of Hans Sluga, Gottfried Gabriel, and others, we

now know that in the case of Frege it was as an active player in the culture of nineteenth-century German philosophy that he propounded the innovations in symbolic logic for which he is famous. The same holds for Franz Brentano and the introduction of his philosophical psychology, as we shall see presently by probing and assessing the historical, epistolary, and textual evidence.

As opposed to the image of the neo-Brentanists, Brentano in no way saw himself as an intellectually and institutionally isolated thinker, and he certainly never represented himself as such. In his most important work, *Psychology from an empirical Standpoint*, Brentano admitted that “his view, at least from one side or the other, had already begun” to be developed by other authors before him (1874, 4). Moreover, Brentano explicitly refers to John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain, Gustav Theodor Fechner, Hermann von Helmholtz, and above all Hermann Lotze – each a near contemporary of Brentano – as thinkers to whom he owed his greatest intellectual debts (1874, 3).

In fact, Brentano regularly took up and critiqued the doctrines advanced by the philosophers of his time, both German and more widely European. It is not the case, however, as is too often asserted, that he limited contact to empiricists and positivists (such as Auguste Comte). This is clear from the fact, for example, that when he traveled to Great Britain in the spring of 1872 he not only planned to pay a visit to J. S. Mill (the visit didn’t take place because of Mill’s unexpected death) but also met with the leading evolutionary theorist and political liberal of the period, Herbert Spencer. What’s more, beyond being actively engaged with the broad range of the latest philosophical thinking, Brentano was also a serious, lifelong student of scholastic and classical philosophy.

That the roots of Brentano’s “revolution in philosophy” strike more deeply than commonly recognized in the philosophical currents of his day is further evidenced by what he took for granted in his writings. This is most notably seen when spelling out the ways his positions on various topics related to the views of leading nineteenth-century German philosophers whose doctrines were so widely familiar in the literature of the time that he felt it unnecessary to identify them by name. A telling example is Jakob Friedrich Fries, who anticipated Brentano’s rejection of the widely held notion that perception consists in a combination of ideas. Fries also anticipated Brentano by identifying “assertions” with perception, a consequen-

tial epistemological move that Alfred Kastil (1912, 52 f.) first pointed out over a century ago, and one we shall take up in due course (in § 3.1). It was evidently Lotze who was the medium of Fries's influence on Brentano on this head. Such shared thought-determinations and theoretical outlooks attests to how interrelated were the various currents of nineteenth-century German philosophy, multiple lines of influence that enabled Kastil, who edited three volumes of Brentano's writings (1921, 1925, 1933), to trace a variety of similarities between Fries and Brentano, findings he presented in the pages of the neo-Friesian journal *Abhandlungen der Fries'schen Schule*, New Series.

## 2. An overview of the relationship between Lotze and Brentano

Turning directly to the relationship between Lotze and Brentano, one reads in a recent assessment that between the two philosophers, "there was, to be sure, great mutual respect ... as indicated by the fact that Brentano sent two of his pupils, Anton Marty and Carl Stumpf, to study with Lotze, and also by the fact that Lotze played an important role in Brentano's call at the University of Vienna in 1874."<sup>1</sup> Despite the impression that these particulars may convey, however, one hardly finds anything like a symmetry in the relationship between Lotze and Brentano. While Lotze certainly admired the younger man, he regarded him as merely one of an entire cohort of rising figures in German philosophy whose professional advancement he, Lotze, felt merited his advocacy. It is true that Lotze formally endorsed Brentano's effort to secure an appointment as a professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna. However, one should not read too much into this token of support on Lotze's part. Brentano simply met the intellectual criteria that prompted Lotze to support the professional advancement of young philosophers with whom he was personally acquainted. Julius Baumann, Lotze's younger colleague in Göttingen, enumerated Lotze's criteria: "Has the person the knowledge that is to be presupposed in philosophy today, does he also have a command of the scientific methods, and is he deadly serious in his philosophical interests? On the basis of these criteria, he has, for example, recommended Brentano for Vienna." (Baumann 1909, 179)

Lotze's estimate of Brentano was confirmed in person when, in June 1872, Brentano and Carl Stumpf called upon Lotze at his home near Göttingen. The eminent professor's residence was dubbed "The Coffee Grinder" by the students and professional colleagues who gathered there on a regular basis. "Lotze was friendly," Stumpf recalled decades later, "but silent, as so often" (1901, 125).

In sum, it is clear that while Brentano benefited a good deal both intellectually and professionally from his knowledge of and interaction with Lotze, the same could hardly be said for the by-then long established and internationally renowned figure in the German philosophical pantheon of the era. Indeed, twenty-one years Brentano's senior, Lotze saw through to publication the third and final volume of his monumental and widely acclaimed *Mikrokosmos* in 1864, two years before Brentano had even secured his *venia legendi* (the habilitation).

Lotze's influence on Brentano has previously been remarked, if briefly, in the literature. Three decades ago, Ernst Wolfgang Orth identified Trendelenburg and Lotze as Brentano's "teachers." As Orth put it, "Brentano's philosophical significance consists in that he made the strength of this influence paradigmatically clear in the entire spectrum of its aspects" (Orth 1997, 18). It is not surprising that Brentano would have learned much from Trendelenburg, having studied with Trendelenburg in Berlin. Among other evidence of Trendelenburg's influence is Brentano's deep and abiding interest in Aristotle, something reflected in the latter's doctoral dissertation on Aristotle (1862). This was Brentano's first publication and he dedicated it to Trendelenburg.

But there is also no mystery to how Lotze at Göttingen could prove a shaping influence on Brentano during the latter's formative period. The young Brentano read widely and deeply, both in the German thinkers of his age and in ancient, medieval, and modern Western European authors. Hence early on in his philosophical career Brentano found that, despite "some mistakes" (charges of Brentano we consider in the sequel), Lotze was unquestionably, in his view, the most brilliant contemporary German philosopher. "Lotze will always show himself to be the most important thinker that he indisputably is," Brentano would write to his former student and close friend Carl Stumpf on June 6, 1868 (Kaiser-el-Safti 2014, p. 16). Indeed, Brentano came to regard Lotze above his Berlin mentor, Trendelenburg.

It was Stumpf who cultivated the contact between his two philosophical masters, Lotze and Brentano. Stumpf had earned his doctorate under Lotze's supervision in Göttingen in 1868, and received his *venia legendi* under him in 1870. Between 1870 and 1873, Stumpf was a lecturer (*Privatdozent*) at the University of Göttingen, during which years Lotze became for him a "faithful fatherly adviser" (1917, 5). It is not surprising, then, that it was to Lotze that Stumpf dedicated his first book, *Über den psychologischen Ursprung der Raumvorstellung* (1873), a work that would receive high praise by the likes of William James and Bertrand Russell. Indeed, Lotze and his student and soon-to-be colleague were on such close terms that during the summer holidays of 1869, Lotze had considered traveling out to spend time with Stumpf (and Brentano) at Würzburg or in Aschaffenburg (Lotze 2003, 541).

Like Stumpf, Brentano, we've noted, greatly admired Lotze, but his respect went beyond adulation and the promotion of Lotze's thought. In the winter of 1870–71, Brentano initiated a campaign to recruit Lotze for a professorship in philosophy in Würzburg (Kaiser-el-Safti 2014, 28 f., October 29, 1870), an offer Lotze declined. Of genuine import for the history of philosophy, however, is that during that period Brentano steeped himself in Lotze's writings while working on *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano's magnum opus. We find clear evidence of this in a letter to Carl Stumpf dated June 8, 1871:

These days I have read a lot of Lotze, and some passages not without joy and admiration. The *Mikrokosmos*, First Volume, Second Book [*Die Seele*], contains excellent thoughts; especially his argument against the Herbartians is masterly.<sup>2</sup> In fact,

I do not regret the praise given to him at the end of my first lectures [in Würzburg].<sup>3</sup> (Ibid. 48)

That Lotze's early magnum opus was an animating component of Brentano's thinking as *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* took shape is manifest in the passages from *Mikrokosmos* that Brentano quotes at several key points and at greater length than he does the work of any other author.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Relatedness

As Stumpf would ultimately put it, "Lotze's views [agreed] with those of Brentano only very partially." (1919, 102) This is borne out in a missive Stumpf received from Brentano a half century earlier. The purpose of the note, dated November, 1867, was to explain why Brentano had sent him to study with Lotze: because, said Brentano, "[I] couldn't name any other professor of philosophy [other than Lotze] whose teachings I don't consider to be erroneous, and because Lotze is excellent in many ways, in spite of all his failures" (Kaiser-el-Safti 2014, 2).

Notwithstanding the highly qualified cast of the foregoing statements, they are consistent with a demonstrable measure of significant, if limited overlap in the positions of Lotze and Brentano. Just how significant will become clear presently as we trace the following cardinal points of convergence: the content of judgment (§3.1), the content of perception (§3.2), the concept of intentionality (§3.3), the practice of descriptive psychology (§3.4) and the claim that perception is accompanied by judgment (knowledge) and emotion (§3.5). Touching these shared views, it is essential to set the record straight, for a number of influential commentators have unwarrantably given out that it was Brentano who first introduced (or reintroduced) to nineteenth-century German philosophy various of the notions to which, as their writings attest, both he and Lotze subscribed. While it is true that Lotze mooted them in somewhat different form, the credit unquestionably belongs to him for first contributing to German philosophical literature penetrating and systematic treatments of them decades before Brentano.

Beyond the seminal points of convergence just enumerated, Lotze and Brentano advanced similar philosophical programs on at least two additional fronts, one seen in their effort to recast and pursue philosophy as a strict science, and the other in their move to introduce a stepwise or, "piecemeal," approach to the prosecution of systematic philosophy. On both these methodological scores, just as with the five more circumscribed moments of convergence, Brentano followed Lotze's lead.

#### 3.1. Judgment and its content

The concepts of *judgment* and its *content* play a formative role in Lotze's logic and they do so in Brentano's as well. The first to call attention this shared element in Lotze and Brentano was Georg Misch, Wilhelm Dilthey's student (and son-in-law). Misch found that Brentano "agrees with Lotze's later doctrine on the main point that judgment –

and valuejudgment, treated [by him] in parallel – are related to reality through matter-of-factness [*Sachlichkeit*]" (Misch 1912, xvii n.).

Lotze held that judgment is not the result of any "association of ideas," taking issue here not only with the British empiricists Hume and Mill, but also with Johann Friedrich Herbart.<sup>5</sup> Rejecting the philosophical psychology of these thinkers, Lotze argued that judgment is not a reciprocal relation of ideas but is rather the *affirmation* of a reciprocal relation of *objective content*, or of things. Put otherwise, a judgment *asserts a state of affairs*.<sup>6</sup> The content of a judgment manifests, in Lotze's view, the structure of the minimal ontological interrelation that obtains among objects (things).<sup>7</sup> Lotze understood this to be the defining moment of a judgment, what makes a judgment a judgment. The element of affirmation is what differentiates judgments from mere series (complexes) of concepts, and from questions.<sup>8</sup>

Brentano adopted Lotze's conception of the priority of judgment. He reflects that standpoint when declares that, "in judging, to a simple idea, a second, fundamentally different relation of consciousness to the object comes to the fore,"<sup>9</sup> namely that the idea is true.<sup>10</sup> In other words we affirm, or assert, the idea.

Brentano, however, did not espouse Lotze's concept of the "state of affairs" as the content of judgments<sup>11</sup> (although Carl Stumpf, who as we've noted studied first with Brentano and subsequently with Lotze, eventually did so). That said, Brentano expressly rejected the precept of the old Aristotelian logic that judgments put a subject and predicate together as one concept. Here Brentano concurred with Lotze; more precisely, he seconded Lotze's highly consequential insistence that concepts are *functions*, not complexes of subject and predicate.

#### 3.2. The content of perception

Although Lotze criticized Herbart's logic, he adopted his epistemological doctrine that the content of perception is the *given*. Lotze characterized the given as a lived entertainment [*erleben*] of the "content of perception." And he categorially distinguished the content of perception from the content of *judgment*. The given, for Lotze, thus stands opposed, on one hand, to events and facts (which is to say, what *happens*) and, on the other, to judgments, namely to that whose determinate character is a function of *validity*. Unequivocally differentiating in this manner events and facts from judgments, Lotze derives from the ontological difference that sets happenings apart from validities a fundamental metaphysical distinction between *genesis* and *being*, between "happens" and "is."

To appreciate the ground-breaking and highly influential nature of Lotze's non-representational epistemology here, one may turn, for example, to Oskar Kraus, who called attention to the manifest similarities in the epistemologies of Brentano, Johannes Rehmke, and Hans Driesch – all three of whom eschewed the representative (*Abbild*) theory of perception. What's more, like Lotze they each subscribed to the view that we have direct access to the outside world. That the three thinkers hardly exhibit complete agreement, however, is clear respecting, for example, the Lotzean notion of "the content" of per-

ception. Brentano inherited from Lotze this way of conceiving acts of perception as having “content,” whereas Rehmke and Driesch, who evinced little interest in Lotze’s writings, did not.

Among other things, Lotze’s position that the content of perception is “the given” is no less than the origin, still little-recognized, of the classic modern philosophical concept of “sense-data,” which historically has been assumed to be an innovation of Anglophone philosophers. However, it was Lotze’s lectures in metaphysics that inspired Josiah Royce to formulate the notion.<sup>12</sup> A short time later “sense-data” acquired currency in the thought and writings of William James who like his close friend and Harvard colleague, Royce, nurtured the highest respect for Lotze. Ultimately, however, “sense-data” as a foundational epistemological notion was to receive its greatest impetus in the widely influential early work of G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, the founding fathers of analytical philosophy (see Milkov 2001). This lineage of a historically formative twentieth-century epistemological concept is but one of numerous examples of how Lotze’s thought, a catalytic element in Brentano’s development and independent philosophical contributions, proved seminal in currents of philosophical thinking that otherwise have little in common with Brentano.

Brentano introduced a phenomenology that builds upon Lotze’s view that the acts of perception have specific content. What distinguishes Brentano’s position from that of Lotze in this connection is the distinction Brentano draws between inner and outer experience. The phenomena of Brentano’s have their being in our inner experience alone, which he regarded as ontologically discrete from outer experience. Phenomena exist, in other words, only in our mind and not in the external world, our contact with the latter occurring by way of outer experience.

This account of Brentano’s exhibits only a distant kinship to Lotze’s epistemology. Following Kant, Lotze championed the view that we can acquire empirical knowledge only through the idealities that belong to the mentally given, not to material reality. But idealities require matter in order to appear at all. That is why they inhere only in our sensible life, as for instance in empirically keyed feelings of pleasure and displeasure.<sup>13</sup> This explains why we have no a priori idea of *blue*, for example, or of *sweet*.<sup>14</sup> We know qualia exclusively in empirical experience.

### 3.3. Intentionality

A most significant but historically ignored or overlooked fact is that it was Hermann Lotze who laid the groundwork for Brentano’s signature contribution to philosophy: the reintroduction of the notion of intentionality. Recently, Frederick Beiser briefly noted that along with his famed distinction between validity and reality, Lotze had also discriminated between intentionality and existence.<sup>15</sup> Some two decades before Beiser, Ernst Wolfgang Orth published a more detailed analysis of Lotze’s thinking on this head. Orth pointed out that, together with Adolf Trendelenburg, Lotze set the stage for Brentano’s (re)introduction of the notion of intentionality when he

articulated the idea of evolving consciousness in philosophy. Moreover, Orth rightly recognized as “decisive” the “thesis” that Trendelenburg and Lotze defended “the absolute incomparability of mental with physical phenomena<sup>16</sup> and of the primacy of the mental phenomena over the physical” (Orth 1997, 24).

Lotze’s view that mental acts have a content proved a powerful impetus to Brentano’s move to reintroduce the problem of intentionality in the modern philosophical curriculum. The Lotzean influence is apparent in the way Brentano initially presented that concept, not even employing the term “intentionality” as such, but speaking instead of the “reference to a content” (see Poli 1998, 4):

Every mental phenomenon is characterized ... by what we will call ... the relation to a content, the direction toward an object, ... or the immanent objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*]. (1874, 124–5)

By way of concluding this phase of discussion, we may adduce Paul Linke’s remark of well over half a century ago that Gottlob Frege discovered “on his own” (i.e., independently of Brentano) the intentional relation of consciousness – this from the standpoint of “the lived experience [*Erlebnis*] of logical thinking” (1961, p. 55), a theme that held little interest for Brentano. Frege contended namely that the sense of propositions is something that we livingly grasp. *Pace* Linke, though, Frege, like Brentano before him, derived the notion of intentionality from Hermann Lotze. In sum, Brentano and Frege, both former students of Lotze, each co-opted and in his own way further developed Lotze’s originary line of thinking on the content of perception and judgment.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.4. Descriptive psychology

Over a period of decades, Lotze addressed various problems of descriptive psychology, which Brentano and his followers made their special field. To distinguish the character of descriptive psychology in this context is to disclose pivotal yet rarely discussed continuities in the thinking of the two philosophers.

Brentano insisted that we need first to *describe* phenomena before we are in a position to *explain* them, or to pursue genetic psychology in general. It is in this regard that Lotze’s analysis of the content of mind constitutes a form of descriptive psychology.<sup>18</sup> A defining philosophical-historical fact to be aware of relative to Brentano’s most influential contribution to modern thought here is that it was Lotze who introduced the very distinction between genetic and descriptive psychology. As previously noted (in § 3.2), Lotze drew a categorical distinction between *the given*, or what *is*, from what *happens*, i.e., what changes. Correlative with this ontologically pregnant distinction, Lotze introduced and discussed at length the distinction between the character of that which is *genetic* and the nature of *validities*. What descriptive psychology yields are simply validities and not explanatory, *genetic* accounts of psychic phenomena.

Further, and most germane to modern psychology, Lotze employs of the phrase “the soul” throughout his writings as a term of art: “a phenomenological expression

that summarizes a series of phenomena.”<sup>19</sup> He repudiated views of the psyche that define it as an individual or as a substance. To lift a trope derived from Lotze, one made famous by his acolyte William James, “the soul” is, to Lotze’s way of thinking, a “stream of consciousness” constituting nothing but a discrete series of phenomena. Such unity as the soul manifests is no other than a matter of superimposed form. That is why it makes no sense to delimit what “soul” denotes in philosophical psychology to a *single* configuration of psychic phenomena. Hence one properly approaches the variety of psychic phenomena only by taking a strictly *descriptive* route, which is precisely the methodology that Lotze had in mind when he employed the term “*descriptive psychology*.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3.5. Perception, knowledge, and emotions

Brentano found deeply persuasive Lotze’s observation that a feeling of pleasure or displeasure attaches to every idea (*Vorstellung*).<sup>21</sup> It was just this discerning perception that led Lotze to find in the concept of “values” a core principle of epistemology.<sup>22</sup>

An historically seminal if little remarked current of interest sparked by Lotze’s value-epistemology, which he first worked out in his *Mikrokosmos*, is seen in psychoanalytic thinking of the early twentieth century. One of the fathers of psychoanalysis, Sandor Ferenczi, an early member of Freud’s inner circle, declared that “this idea of Lotze’s agrees with ideas of psychoanalysis that were achieved through empirical ways to such an extent that we can consider him ... as a predecessor of Freud.”<sup>23</sup>

Another of Lotze’s epistemological findings that Brentano took as a point of departure for his own investigation is that judgments (i.e., knowledge) accompany mental acts.<sup>24</sup> Lotze for his part maintained that perception – including that which distinguishes cognition in imagining, dreaming, and daydreaming – presents not only a “kaleidoscope” of pictures (*Bilder*).<sup>25</sup> It also manifests “secondary thoughts” (*Nebengedanken*) that connect such of the perceived images as intrinsically belong together.<sup>26</sup> Lotze understood this *nebengedankenliche* relation or synthesis of perceptual *Bilder* to be the process by means of which we acquire knowledge.

## 4. Agreements

Besides the multiple points of convergence that we’ve traced in Lotze and Brentano – a shared constellation of thought-determinations that testifies to Brentano’s profound debt to his senior colleague – there are at least two further, *methodological* aspects of their doctrines that reflect a still deeper meeting of the minds in their most influential work.

### 4.1. Philosophy as a strict science

Lotze and Brentano shared the aim of establishing philosophy as a strict science. Brentano pursued this end in terms of an empirical scientific philosophical psychology: “introspective empiricism,” as it was referred to in the lit-

erature. The exclusive focus of Brentano’s doctrine is inner experience, on which ground it is arguably the only scientific psychology that can also serve as a basal science for aesthetics, logic, pedagogy, ethics, and politics. The latter disciplines all prove mutually consistent, indeed orientationally complementary if approached from the standpoint of Brentano’s introspective empiricism. By contrast, he found that such consistency fails to obtain if one regards them from the stance of metaphysics, which the logical positivists would later dismiss as “pseudoscience.”

Like Frege’s revolutionary advances in logic, Brentano’s novel “empirical psychology” made it possible to fix the basic laws of *his* science with “the same sharpness and precision as the axioms of mathematics” (1874, 67). Brentano conceived his doctrine as “the *science of the future* [...] that would allow a significant influence on practical life” (36). He was convinced, moreover, as was Frege, that there is only one Truth and only a single “realm of truth” (5). That philosophy developed itself as an independent discipline so late historically is something he attributed simply to the fact that the elements of philosophy are signally more complex than the defining moments of the other sciences – including the elements, or “objects,” of such exact sciences as physics and mathematics.

It should be clear by now that, given the evidence, the mutually commensurate innovations of Brentano and Frege are historically and philosophically pivotal outgrowths of Hermann Lotze’s philosophy.<sup>27</sup> Brentano himself perhaps best spelled out what underlies Lotze’s formative influence, namely

the method of his way of doing philosophy, the weight that he places upon experience and observation, the manner in which he uses the results of natural science, the caution and conscientiousness with which he makes his claims. (Kaiser-el-Safti 2014, 2, November 3, 1867)

### 4.2. Lotze and Brentano: similarity of philosophical approach

Most current students of Brentano, indeed of the history of twentieth-century philosophy at large, are either unaware of or have failed to credit the cumulative significance of the evidence developed in the foregoing pages. The import of these historically substantiated reflections is patently clear when one considers in more general terms the striking similarities of approach in the philosophies of Lotze and Brentano. In the century since Brentano’s death, his thought has had a growing impact on major currents of Western philosophy. After decades of unwarranted neglect in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his works ultimately received their due recognition and have inspired generations of phenomenologists and new ontologists. Oddly enough, for many years during Brentano’s lifetime (he died in 1917) philosophical debate centered on the work of his students – Edmund Husserl, Carl Stumpf, Alexius Meinong, Kazimierz Twardowski, and Anton Marty – while virtually ignoring Brentano himself, the founding father of the new philosophical movement. “Brentano puzzle” and the “Brentano

Invisibility” are how later historians of philosophy would refer to the unaccountable marginalization or absence of Brentano’s name in the leading studies of the time.<sup>28</sup>

If anything, such neglect was to prove even more egregious in the case of Lotze, whom John Passmore aptly described as the “most pillaged philosopher” in twentieth-century thought.<sup>29</sup> A factor that must be laid at Lotze’s own feet is at least partially responsible for his long relegation largely to the margins in the literature down our own day. The issue is Lotze’s own attitude toward how he wished his philosophical contributions to be exploited by those who found inspiration in his works. So far as his original ideas and trains of thought have been “pillaged,” this can be seen as consistent with Lotze’s wishes as famously expressed in the Preface to his “greater” *Logic* (1874): “One must regard it [my work] as an open market, on which one quietly leaves the goods of less interest by side” (1989, 4\*). This attitude reflects nothing so much as Lotze’s revolutionary break with the encyclopedic<sup>30</sup> systematicity that, culminating with the classic German Idealists, till his day held sway as the regulative idea of serious philosophical thought.

Lotze struck out metaphysically in a radically new direction by analyzing philosophical problems on a “piece-meal” basis. Consequently, he addressed the aporiai to which he devoted his theoretical energies each on its own grounds and not, as had been the practice of the leading German philosophers, by approaching it on the basis of its formal relation to the solution of other philosophical issues. As Passmore rightly discerned, “it was precisely his lack of system on which his influence depended.”<sup>31</sup>

The same holds true for Franz Brentano. Like Lotze, Brentano

wrote no philosophical system. He discussed certain fundamental problems [of philosophy], just as the scientists contribute to the slowly developing science, by making relatively finite investigations of particular laws.<sup>32</sup>

## 5. Differences between Lotze and Brentano

Despite the highly significant points of convergence with Lotze that we’ve reviewed, Brentano was without question an independent thinker. This notwithstanding the methodological parallels that further evidence to the shaping influence that Lotze’s philosophical work had on the younger man. Brentano’s independence of mind is unmistakable in the explicit criticism that he leveled at Lotze. What must count as among the most hard-hitting examples occurs in the letter previously cited (in n. 3, above), of March 3, 1867:

I am far from approving [Lotze’s] opinions throughout. [He is] too much influenced with Kant’s criticism. ... That he does not know the [philosophy of the] Middle Ages and therefore does not appreciate it, cannot be a surprise to you. It also seems to me that he has very limited knowledge of the ancient philosophy. (Kaiser-el-Safti 2014, 2)

Two of the more specific objections that Brentano raised against Lotze target the latter’s local signs theory of perception and his “atomism.” Brentano dismissed these as constructivist doctrines and hence as, in his view, retro-

gressively Kantian. At any rate, Lotze’s atomism and his doctrine of local signs are in no way descriptive, and on that count they are epistemologically antithetical to Brentano’s “nativist” psychology. Moreover, Brentano’s radical form of “nativism,” according to which mental phenomena are innate, made him leery of Lotze’s advocacy of experimental investigations in psychology. Tellingly, it was precisely on these grounds that Brentano would ultimately find himself at cross purposes with his student Carl Stumpf, who undertook to combine nativist psychology with experimental psychology. Needless to say, Stumpf’s venture left Brentano cold. Be this as it may, Stumpf became a champion of experimental psychology under the influence of the mentor whom he came to revere as his “fatherly advisor,” Lotze.<sup>33</sup>

More generally, Brentano repudiated what he detected as lingering elements of German idealism in Lotze. One such holdover that struck him as particularly unacceptable is Lotze’s principle of “teleomechanism.” Brentano found it exasperating that “in spite of all sciences” Lotze failed “to overcome even the Hegel disease.”<sup>34</sup> He complained, moreover, that while Lotze’s writings commence along promising and compelling lines they often trail off “in a most foggy swindle”; he found it a pity that in Lotze, over and over again, “something [that] begins so sober, ends so drunken and hypnagogically blurred” (ibid.).

Not surprisingly, Brentano also rejected Lotze’s tripartite classification of mental phenomena into imagination, emotional excitement, and striving (will), which he adopted from Kant.<sup>35</sup> This taxonomy Brentano found hopelessly abstract, objecting that not only does it fail to credit the differences between diverse phenomena but in addition, and more fundamentally, it fails to discriminate the different ways the mind refers to its objects. Brentano, for his part, divided mental phenomena into ideas, judgments, and emotions (the phenomena of hate and love).<sup>36</sup>

The foregoing divergences in the philosophical doctrines of Lotze and Brentano were accompanied by differences of a more personal sort. Brentano was a dogmatic thinker, an individual with a defensive cast of mind who was little receptive to criticism, even that offered most temperately by his closest students. Lotze by contrast was exceedingly diffident for a leading German philosopher of his day. Indeed, he was open-minded to a fault and genuinely open to the views of others, including those of his students who boldly criticized his positions from standpoints radically at odds with his own.<sup>37</sup>

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- <sup>4</sup> Brentano’s citation in vol. 1, pp. 209–211, comes from Lotze (1856, 272–3), the extended quote in vol. 2, pp. 16–18, from Lotze (1856, 200–1).
- <sup>5</sup> According to Oskar Kraus, Brentano closely followed Lotze’s criticism of Herbart’s psychology of association of ideas (1974, p. xiii). On Lotze’s critique of Herbart in this particular issue, see Brentano (1874, 113).
- <sup>6</sup> See Milkov (2002) for a discussion of the sense in which we owe to Lotze the very concept of state of affairs.
- <sup>7</sup> Lotze’s “affirmation,” or assertion, is what under Frege’s influence has come to be termed today the “assertoric” character of a judgment.
- <sup>8</sup> As remarked above (cf., § 1), this idea Lotze inherited from Jacob Friedrich Fries.
- <sup>9</sup> See Brentano (1924b, 39).
- <sup>10</sup> The newly conceived role that “judgment” plays in Lotze’s logic went hand in hand with a variation of the context-principle: “It is senseless to assert a single term; only a statement that relates the content of one term to another one can be asserted” (Lotze 1864, 469).
- <sup>11</sup> To be more exact, Brentano claimed, as Frege later did, that the content of a judgment is an object. See on this Chrudzinski (2004).
- <sup>12</sup> In the spring and summer of 1876, Royce took two courses, one in metaphysics and the other in practical philosophy, with Lotze, whom he esteemed “the first in constructivist philosophers now living in Germany.” Cited in Woodward (2015, pp. 427 f.)
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. § 3.5.
- <sup>14</sup> Lotze (1864, 241).
- <sup>15</sup> See Beiser (2016, 87). Regrettably, Beiser does little more than call attention to this key move of Lotze.
- <sup>16</sup> Significantly, the categorical distinction between mental and physical phenomena is a central thesis of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Wittgenstein argued that we must not confuse the way we speak and think about mental subjects with the way we speak and think about physical subjects. Viewed from a historical-philosophical perspective, Wittgenstein’s axiom is clearly a derivative of the kind of philosophical psychology that originated with Brentano and subsequently co-opted and developed along two divergent lines by early analytic philosophy, on one hand, and, on the other, Husserlian phenomenology.
- <sup>17</sup> Brentano discerned in Lotze seven different types of mental references to a content: (i) sensation, (ii) perception, (iii) relating perception, (iv) space intuition (*Anschauung*), (v) time intuition, (vi) emotions, (vii) will (1988, 59 f.).
- <sup>18</sup> On this head, Brentano’s descriptive psychology compares most interestingly with that of Wilhelm Dilthey, upon whose thinking, as was the case with Brentano, Lotze exerted formative influence. See Orth (1995/96).
- <sup>19</sup> See Lotze (1850, 453).
- <sup>20</sup> See Orth (1997, 22).
- <sup>21</sup> Indeed, it is precisely in this connection that Brentano twice adduced the above-cited (cf., § 2) extended passages from Lotze’s *Mikrokosmos* in three consecutive pages in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Brentano (1924b, 93).
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. S. Ferenczi: “Aus der Psychologie von Lotze,” *Imago. Zeitschrift für Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften* 2 (1913, 238–41; here 238).
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. 1874, 195.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Lotze 1843, 72.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Milkov 2002.
- <sup>27</sup> In § 3.3 we shortly discussed the parallel and independent influence of Lotze on Brentano’s and on Frege’s conception of intentionality.
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. Poli 1998, 1.
- <sup>29</sup> See Passmore 1966, 51.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Milkov (2015b).
- <sup>31</sup> See Passmore (1966, 51). This method would be adopted by Bertrand Russell, who referred to it as “piecemeal” philosophy (see Russell 1918, 85). Russell insisted, however, that only by means of such a methodology could philosophy develop as a strict science. For an account of Lotze’s influence on Russell, see Milkov (2008).
- <sup>32</sup> Puglisi (1913, 16–17); cited in Poli (1998, 3f.).
- <sup>33</sup> A fact introduced into the contemporary literature on the topic by the present writer: Milkov (2015a).
- <sup>34</sup> Letter to Stumpf, February 15, 1868 (1989, 7f.).
- <sup>35</sup> 1924b, 22. Brentano mistakenly assumed that Lotze inherited this classification from William Hamilton.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>37</sup> The author presented an earlier draft of this essay in German, on May 20, 2017, in Bautzen, Germany, at the workshop “Denken im Zwiespalt – Zum 200. Geburtstag des Philosophen Rudolph Hermann Lotze.”

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Rollinger 2001, 112. Brentano also sent another of his students, Johannes Wolff, to study with Lotze (cf. Stumpf 1919, 103). Wolff would later become a professor of philosophy at Trier and Freiburg.
- <sup>2</sup> See Brentano (1874, 113).
- <sup>3</sup> At that time, Brentano had encouraged Carl Stumpf, who attended those first lectures, to study with Lotze; cf., the letter dated 1867, below.

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