

## Naturalizing Intentionality

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Brentano introduced the term "intentionality" into our modern philosophical vocabulary to denote the property which, as he thought, distinguished the mental from all other things. This property is sometimes informally called the "ofness" or "aboutness" of perceptions, thoughts, sentences and so forth. Brentano equated intentionality with the capacity to bear a real relation to something nonexistent, for example, the capacity of a belief to bear a correspondence relation to a nonexistent fact, hence to be false. Similarly, when our intentions are not fulfilled, they seem to bear relations to nonexistent facts. Call this problematic relation "Brentano's relation."

Brentano was surely mistaken, however, in thinking that bearing a relation to something nonexistent marks only the mental. Given any sort of purpose, it might not get fulfilled, hence might exhibit Brentano's relation, and there are many natural purposes, such as the purpose of one's stomach to digest food or the purpose of one's protective eye blink reflex to keep out the sand, that are not mental, nor derived from anything mental. Nor are stomachs and reflexes "of" or "about" anything. A reply might be, I suppose, that natural purposes are "purposes" only in an analogical sense hence "fail to be fulfilled" only in an analogical way. They bear an analogy to things that have been intentionally designed by purposive minds, hence can fail to accomplish the purposes they analogically have. As such they also have only analogical "intentionality". Such a response begs the question, however, for it assumes that natural purposes are not purposes in the full sense exactly because they are not