INTENSIONAL LOGIC AND BRENTANO’S NON-PROPOSITIONAL THEORY OF JUDGMENT

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The reism Brentano adopted in the later stages of his philosophy led him to reject such entia irrealia as properties, judgmental contents (or states of affairs) and to advocate a non-propositional theory of judgment. While non-propositional theorists may, through certain linguistic maneuvers, eliminate reference and to some extent avoid commitment to propositions, many philosophers believe the non-propositional theorist cannot escape the use of propositions altogether. George Bealer levels such an attack in his book Quality and Concept.¹ Bealer charges that Brentano’s theory, and indeed all non-propositional theories of judgment, are not adequate to the following arguments in the realm of intensional logic:

(I) (1) Whatever \( x \) believes is necessary.
(2) Whatever is necessary is true.

(3) Whatever \( x \) believes is true.

(II) (1) Whatever \( x \) believes is true
(2) \( x \) believes that \( A \).

(3) It is true that \( A \).

and

(III) (1) \( x \) believes that \( A \).

(2) \( x \) believes something.

Expressed in the notation of quantification theory, these arguments become:

(I)  
1. \((y)[B(x,y) \rightarrow Ny]\)
2. \((y)(Ny \rightarrow Ty)\)

3. \((y)[B(x,y) \rightarrow Ty]\)

(II)  
1. \((y)[B(x,y) \rightarrow Ty]\)
2. \(B(x,[A])\)

3. \(T[A]\)

(III)  
1. \(B(x,[A])\)
2. \((Ey)B(x,y)\)

Bealer contends that “on the non-relational/non-propositional theory of judgment there is no credible way even to express the above intuitively valid arguments...”\(^2\) Thus, Bealer rejects Brentano’s approach because, as he sees it, the theory “falters at the earliest possible stage: it collides with logic itself”\(^3\).

I will show that Bealer is mistaken when he claims that Brentano’s non-propositional theory cannot offer an adequate rendering of the first two arguments. While I grant that Brentano cannot provide an adequate translation of the third argument, I do not grant its intuitive validity.

To evaluate Bealer’s challenges, we must first interpret the arguments in accordance with Brentano’s theory.\(^4\) According to Brentano, every judgment is either an affirmation or a negation — an accepting a certain object or a rejecting or denying it. When one judges, one does not stand in relation to a proposition; rather one accepts or rejects some object. A belief that there are A’s is an acceptance or rejection of A’s — in this case an acceptance. “S judges that some A’s are B’s” is translated as “S accepts an A which is a B”. Further, “S judges that some A is not B” becomes “S accepts an A which is not a B”. So we

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.