
Anton Marty (1847–1914), born in Switzerland in a Catholic family, was one of the older members of the Brentano school. He is well known for providing a philosophy of language for the phenomenological movement with the voluminous Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie, published in 1908. Rollinger’s book provides an analysis of this work (1–130), and a translation of some of Marty’s less well known works (131–350): a book based upon his dissertation on the origin of language (1875); two extensive reviews, of William James’ Principles of Psychology, and of Meinong’s Über Annahmen; and the inaugural address Marty held in Prague in 1896.

The term ‘allgemeine Grammatik’ (‘universal grammar’) in the title of Marty’s work on philosophy of language refers to a scientific ideal language (“die wissenschaftliche Idealsprache”). This ideal language is “a system of signs based upon the exact analysis of our psychical processes and their contents which is modeled as much as possible according to their composition from the relatively simplest elements.” (Sprachphilosophie, 27). Marty speaks not only of a ‘universal grammar’, but also of a ‘philosophical grammar’, just as Russell does in the opening sentence of chapter 4 of The Principles of Mathematics. Marty’s ideal language is not made with a logicist aim, as we know it from the work of Frege and Russell. It rather takes psychology to be the most important science for providing the data. The primary function of language is a communicative one. Signs are primarily signs of psychological acts (175), and only in a derived sense signs of external objects, according to Marty. And the primary intention in deliberate speaking is to evoke certain mental acts in the hearer.

Marty distinguishes between autosemantic and synsemantic expressions. Statements (‘Aussage’), emotives (‘interesse-heischende Ausdrücke’) and presentational suggestives, which include names, are autosemantic expressions, because they have meaning independently of other expressions, and manifest mental occurrences of the speaker (82). ‘Exists’, or ‘existence’, is a synsemantic expression. It is a sign that must be added to a (general) name in order to obtain a declarative sentence that manifests an act of judgement (127). Particles such as ‘if’ and ‘but’, are also synsemantic terms: they do not have meaning in isolation, and they certainly are not signs of subjective states and feelings, as William James takes them to be (281).

Marty follows Brentano in his reform of logic, and in the idea that the logical analysis of a sentence should be distinguished from its linguistic analysis. Whereas traditional logic and linguistics take the subject-predicate structure to be essential to each sentence, for Brentano and Marty, the two basic forms of judgement can be expressed as ‘A exists’ and ‘A does not exist’. This analysis does not take existence as a predicate. A basic judgemental act is either an affirmation of $A$ or a rejection of $A$, where both judgements are based upon a presentation of $A$. The content of the affirmation of $A$ is the existence of $A$, and the content of the rejection of $A$ is the non-existence of $A$. The concepts of existence and non-existence can be obtained only by reflection upon the act of judgement, and are not given prior to the concept of judgement (264). Brentano is hesitant in acknowledging a role for these contents of judgement. For Marty they play an important philosophical role, though, not as bearers of truth and falsity, as one might expect, but as a kind of truth-maker. For Marty, judgemental contents are non-real entities: they cannot enter into relations of causality, but they play an important role as meanings of declarative sentences and as truth-makers, as Rollinger says (96, note 48). Or, as Marty puts it: if there are no $A$, then the content the non-being of $A$ is a fact (‘Tatsache’). And the truth of our judgement that there are no $A$ is
objectively grounded ('objektiv begründet') by such a fact (Sprachphilosophie, 295). Judgemental contents are not dependent upon an act of judgement. Still, we can conceive of the content only by reflecting upon an act of judgement. And we can speak of the existence of the content the being of A only by reflecting upon a correct affirmation of the being of A. Are there, according to Marty, judgemental contents for incorrect judgements? On the one hand, Marty says that we can speak of a content for each judgement (Sprachphilosophie, 293). On the other hand, in a proper sense, only the correct judgement has a content, in the sense that the content exists (Sprachphilosophie, 294 and 427). As Kevin Mulligan puts it, according to Marty, propositions show what would be the case were they true (Kevin Mulligan (ed.), Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics. The Philosophy and Theory of Language of Anton Marty. Dordrecht: Kluwer 1990, 16ff). Do judgemental contents exist in time? If tigers exist, the being of tigers exists, too. If tigers no longer exist, the being of tigers likewise no longer exists. According to Rollinger, Marty’s contents are “in principle non-temporal” (92). At the same time, he says that they belong to the temporal order together with real things and events (100). How can contents be both non-temporal, non-causal, and belong to the temporal order as well? I guess, the problem arises because, for Marty, as for Brentano, the truth of a judgement is not an atemporal characteristic. Here it is a pity that Rollinger does not discuss Edgar Morscher’s paper ‘Judgement-Contents’ (in: Mulligan 1990, 181–196). Marty’s contents are not to be identified with Russell’s propositions in the Principles of Mathematics. For Russell, propositions or complexes have being, whether they are true or false, and the object judged about is part of the complex judged, whether that object exists or not. For Marty, A cannot be called a ‘part’ of the content the being of A in any proper sense of the term (Sprachphilosophie, 294).

A comparison between early phenomenology and early analytic philosophy is fascinating. They seem to have a similar background, building upon the empiricist tradition, reacting against idealism, and phenomenology has also had a direct influence on early analytic philosophy, through G. F. Stout, and because Russell and Moore read the works of Brentano, Meinong and other members of the Brentano school. This similarity is not to be overstated, though. Historical research of the last decades has shown that idealism shaped both Frege’s and Russell’s theories, which means that their theories are far less empirically oriented. And especially Marty takes philosophy of language to be a branch of the science of language, and considers philosophy to be a psychologically oriented discipline (242 and 248). Rollinger points to an important difference between Marty’s philosophy of language and analytic philosophy. Marty’s work is more empirically oriented: the truths that are first obtained are empirical, psychological facts of the matter. Thereupon, we are able to arrive at a priori truths, for example, that a judgement cannot be given without an underlying presentation.

In 1898, Marty was accused of psychologism by the Neo-Kantian Adickes. Marty defends his position against this attack by arguing that, according to him, (1) the laws of logic and ethics are not psychological laws; (2) the evidence that pertains to judgements, which gives us a criterion of truth, is not to be identified with a feeling; evidence is a guarantee for truth; contradictory judgements cannot both be evident; (3) truth and evidence are not coextensive; truth is the broader notion; and (4) one needs to make a distinction between the evidence of certain judgements, which is a fact of our psychological experience, and the content of our knowledge, which is generally not psychological (Sprachphilosophie, 6–18).

Marty calls it a psychological fact that some of our judgements are characterized by immediate evidence. At the same time, he explains evidence as a guarantee of truth, and distinguishes evidence from a mere feeling, just as Brentano did. But, if evidence is taken to be a psychological fact, it cannot be a guarantee of truth. Marty cannot have it both ways. Like Brentano, he adheres to a Cartesian account of the immediate evidence of the inner perception of our mental acts and states. This means that the epistemic facts—that one’s judgement is evident—that simply be provided by psychology, and that