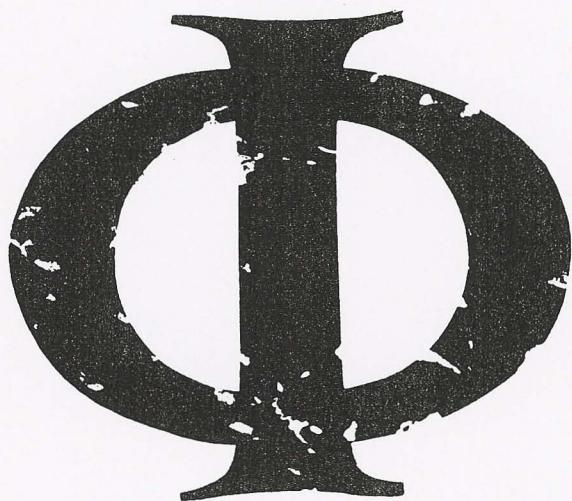


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Reviews

RICHARD E. AQUILA, *Intentionality: A Study of Mental Acts*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977.

EDWARD S. CASEY, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

Both these books were written by philosophers trained in the phenomenological tradition, and both concern issues in the philosophy of mind that have recently received much attention in the analytical tradition. Otherwise they are as different as can be. Aquila's book is a work of insight and powerful argument, very well informed in both traditions and bristling with important and controversial philosophical claims. Casey's book is not. I read Casey's book first, and was almost driven by it into the camp of those analytic philosophers who make it a principle to ignore the phenomenological side of the world. Aquila thereupon turned me around and convinced me that Brentano and Husserl are not just valuable—they are essential authors in the philosophy of mind. Anyone today who wants to write on intentionality, perception, mental imagery, or mental representation, for instance, ought to come to terms with Aquila's book and, through it, with Brentano and Husserl.

I will discuss the books in the order I read them. Casey's ultimate aim, he says, is to "demonstrate that imagination is an autonomous act." I cannot see that anyone who came to understand what Casey means by "autonomous" would care to deny this. He begins by presenting a detailed phenomenological description of imagination. The description is systematic; tables are given that taxonomize the relevant phenomena with regard to such traits as controlledness, spontaneity, self-containedness, self-evidence, indeterminacy, and "pure possibility." And unlike those works in phenomenology that are forever talking about phenomenological method without giving any extended examples of the *epoché* in action, this book is chock-full of cases, descriptions, and what might be called informal phenomenological experiments. The results are not prepossessing.

In 1965, Paul Edwards, in *Mind*, imputed to Paul Tillich a tactic he called "bombastic redescription" of the obvious, and certainly phe-

nomenologists are no strangers to this technique, but what makes Casey's use of it stand out is, ironically, the genuine clarity and lack of professorial pomposity with which he writes. For instance, one of the fruits of his phenomenological labors is this: "The imaginer cannot fail to imagine what, how, and when he wishes, *though his act of imagining cannot by itself make what he imagines exist or cease to exist as empirically real*" (p. 83; italics in the original). One might suppose that at least the unitalicized first clause of this claim was nontrivial, but it gets adjusted on the next page: "the imaginer cannot fail to imagine what, how, and when he wishes to, *even though his efforts may have to be prolonged into the indefinite future in order to succeed*" (italics in the original).

Perhaps I am missing a subtlety in the method, but my understanding has always been that the phenomenologist eschewed speculation or theorizing about the *causes* of experiences in favor of pure description, and the opening pages of Casey's Chapter 1 support this view, but he often permits himself to lapse into theory and to make statements that are apparently intended to be empirical claims about what can and cannot transpire in experience under various (causal?) conditions. Here the absence of discussion of the wealth of recent work in psychology, on eidetic memory, image manipulation, and the like virtually disqualifies the book. Philosophical work is also ignored; Russow's "Some Recent Work on Imagination" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, January, 1978) lists about one hundred articles and books in the analytic tradition published in the last twenty years, but Casey is apparently unfamiliar with much of this literature as well, for he neglects to cite predecessors (e.g., Hannay) and to rebut critics (e.g., Shorter), whose claims bear directly on claims he makes. With all the enthusiasm for mental images in psychology and philosophy today, one would like to think that the phenomenologists would have something to offer, but I do not think that philosophers or psychologists will learn anything important in this book.

Aquila's book, on the other hand, presents an uncompromising and rewarding analysis of the problems faced by theories of intentionality. There are valuable examinations of all the central concepts: propositions and their role in individuating mental states, the nature of intentional objects and other objects—or presumed objects (e.g., sense data and sensa)—of perception or other mental acts, mental contents, possible states of affairs, and more. This is very much a book for philosophers only; it presupposes a willingness to endure complexity and great expository caution in the service of goals that can be motivated only by considerable familiarity with the traditional difficulties. One also has

to take metaphysics seriously—seriously enough to digest Aquila's judicious assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of Frege and Husserl on the ontological status of Meanings; Brentano, Meinong, Findlay, et al., on the distinctions between contents and objects of acts; Meinong, Russell, et al., on Objectives, facts, propositions, and states of affairs.

I found Aquila's observations, clarifications, and objections along the way more valuable in the end than the theses they were ultimately marshaled to support, but only the latter can be informatively summarized. In the first chapter the incoherency of what Aquila calls the "content theory" of awareness—which is discovered in Descartes, Hume, and sense-datum theorists—is revealed, and Brentano's alternative first step is defended: "All awareness is awareness of something which is in no sense contained in that awareness itself, or in the mind which has the awareness" (p. 25). It is the necessity of clinging to this difficult point in the face of the further undeniable thesis, that "at least some awarenesses are awarenesses of objects which do not exist apart from the mind" (p. 25), that generates the problems and attempted solutions examined in the rest of the book. In Chapter 2, Aquila considers whether an adequate description of psychological phenomena must posit a special, irreducible, and unparalleled "intentional" relation to "intentional objects" and whether such objects have a unique ontological status. The answer given is a very qualified and circumspect yes. This chapter can be viewed as applying a process of elimination to overly "strong" ontological positions, thus protecting both the topic and Aquila's own theses from false friends. In Chapter 3, Aquila wants to distinguish perceptual awareness from mere (nonsensuous) judgment, and while he does not rule out a nonrelational account of such judgments (at least *de dicto*), he argues for an ineliminably relational account of perceptual awareness, where the *relata* in object position are universals such as the property green or (in the case of the Necker cube) the property of being a cube facing in direction A. This position is subsequently refined in the concluding Chapter 6 and buttressed by a notion—taken as primitive—of direct apprehension or acquaintance, and while it neatly passes all the tests Aquila uses to flunk rivals, it seems to me at best unappealing, at worst sophistical, for who would have guessed that the *relata* of mental events such as seeings and hearings were universals? The "objects" we remind ourselves of when we set out to understand intentionality are so robustly particular and concrete. But perhaps that is our problem, rather than a condition of its solution. We know well enough that in some cases there just *are not* any particulars with the apparently relevant features where we would

naively insist there had to be: e.g., in the case of afterimages. So perhaps we should be prepared to make do with counterintuitive but logically cohesive theories.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover various aspects of the two territories created by Brentano's dual definition of intentionality, in terms of either direction on an object or relation to a content. First, Aquila explores the doctrines of Meinong, Frege, and Husserl about mental contents and then in Chapter 5 relates the issues raised in Chapter 4 to more recent attempts to explain mental content in terms of linguistic analogies. In particular, the views of Sellars and Chisholm are usefully analyzed from a vantage point seldom occupied by analytic philosophers. Still more recent ventures such as Harman's and Fodor's are not discussed—there are a few well-aimed shots at Vendler in footnotes, and Kaplan's views are considered in a novel discussion of opacity and quantification—but readers familiar with the issues from these works will find in Aquila a broad and substantial platform from which to reassess the current views. Aquila's ultimate defense of a special intentional relation does not convince me, because it rests on what seem to me to be inconclusive objections to Sellars' position (and hence by implication to similar "functionalist" positions), but I grant that he has worked out an alternative well worth taking seriously.

Every chapter contains valuable discussions, but Chapter 1 is in my opinion most important. It should be read by all those in the analytic tradition who tend to suppose that the habits of thought they have inherited from Descartes and the Empiricists are at worst innocuous. The "classic" texts by these authors present a vision of the mind that ought to be viewed as a historical curiosity, but the pride of place we give it (what undergraduate major is unfamiliar with Descartes's clear and distinct ideas, Hume's impressions, Locke's ideas of sensation and reflexion?) helps to perpetuate its undue influence on current thinking, while the equally "classic" correctives to these doctrines, found in Brentano and Husserl, for instance, tend to get lost in the exotic shade of "Continental" philosophy. I suspect the tables ought to be turned; we *ought* to be in the pedagogical position of explaining to our students why, in spite of the fundamental wrongheadedness and obscurity of their views, Hume and Descartes have as much to teach us about the mind as Brentano and Husserl.

I found Aquila's book difficult reading, because of the challenge of the material and the unrelenting succession of arguments, not because of any obscurity or lack of organization. On the contrary, the writing is straightforward and clear, and the book is very cleanly and effectively

composed, with well-marked assumptions, conclusions, summaries, previews, reminder, and examples in just the right places.

The dust jacket says, "Contemporary treatments tend to formulate problems of intentionality primarily in terms of logic and semantics rather than those of metaphysics and phenomenology. Dr. Aquila's effort to coordinate these approaches will make his book useful to students both of analytical philosophy of mind and also of phenomenology." I heartily agree.

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