1. Intentionality: ‘Aboutness’

According to Brentano, intentionality is the ‘mark of the mental’.

2. In Contemporary Terms

We have various intentional states: hoping, believing, doubting.

Hopes, beliefs and doubts are known as propositional attitudes. They are attitudes (‘mental attitudes’) that we take up concerning a certain proposition.

So, you may hope that it will be warmer tomorrow, I may believe that it will be warmer tomorrow and Frank may doubt that it will be warmer tomorrow.

The attitudes: hoping, believing, doubting.

The proposition: it will be warmer tomorrow.

You, I and Frank can adopt different attitudes toward the same proposition.

Rule of thumb: propositional attitudes are those mental states that are followed (or can be followed) by a ‘that clause’.

All of these states have the same content: it will be warmer tomorrow.

We can say, then, that the content of these particular states is given by a proposition.

3. Historical Background: Brentano

His question: what distinguishes mental from physical phenomena?

Examples of mental phenomena: hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, feeling warmth or cold, imaginings and thinking, judgments, recollections, expectations, inferences, convictions, opinions, doubts, emotions.

Examples of physical phenomena: dogs, cats, tables, chairs, odors, colors.

He canvases a number of possible answers:

One such answer: mental phenomena are the negations of physical phenomena—that is, mental phenomena are non-extended and not spatial.

Brentano rejects this as a ‘mark of the mental’. Why?

A positive criterion: “Every mental phenomena is characterized by...the intentional inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity” (481).

“Intentional inexistence”? What’s that mean?
Consider the following: Johnny believes that all unicorns are green. This belief can be said to truly have an object even though the object it is about does not exist. Call this object an **intentional object**.

(Analogy: I may search for the Fountain of Youth even though there is no such thing as the Fountain of Youth. Still, it can be said that my searching has an object.)

4.
Interesting questions that we might ask about content:
   a. In virtue of what do intentional states have the content that they have?
   b. How do we go about attributing intentional states to others?

We shall turn to these questions next time. Read Dretske and Dennett.