

## AN IMAGE OF A HIGHER WORLD: ETHICAL RENEWAL IN FRANZ BRENTANO AND EDMUND HUSSERL

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*Although interpreters have long recognized Franz Brentano's powerful impact on his students, the career-long persistence of his hold on Edmund Husserl is still underestimated. Conventional narratives of Husserl's development describe his mentor's pervasive early impact followed by a sharp break from the master's philosophy. My essay challenges this account by arguing that Husserl's shift toward transcendental phenomenology within the domain of ethics marked a reappraisal – even a reinvigoration – of Brentanian premises, rather than an attempt to discard them.*

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In 1919, two years after Franz Brentano's death, his student Edmund Husserl published a memorial in a volume compiled by fellow protégé Oskar Kraus. One of his most moving public testimonies, the "Recollections of Franz Brentano" went far beyond typical student praise for the charismatic lectures of a beloved teacher or fond memories of youthful visits to the master's summer retreat on the Wolfgangsee. Some passages in the encomium broach the reverential, eulogizing the Austrian doyen as a revelation in Husserl's life, "a messenger from a higher world" [*ein Kündler einer überhimmlischen Welt*], whose auratic sway outlasted student-teacher disagreements and survived the pedagogue's infirmity and death. (Husserl 1987a: 305)<sup>1</sup> Brentano's effect, observed Husserl, stemmed not only from

the domain of ideas, but also from his force of personality and the philosophical rigor he embodied. His example is of more than passing interest for an understanding of Husserl's ethical theory, for the controversial Aristotelian served his young disciple as the avatar of a moral ideal: an individual life committed to unstinting rational inquiry. Indeed, it is difficult to read Husserl's reflections on ethical and philosophical responsibility without glimpsing the luminary icon of his mentor.

Although interpreters have long recognized Brentano's powerful impact on students, the career-long persistence of his hold on Husserl is still underestimated<sup>2</sup>. Conventional narratives of Husserl's development describe his professor's pervasive early impact followed by a sharp

<sup>1</sup> Two English translations exist: "Recollections of Franz Brentano" in McCormick and Elliston 1981: 342–48; and "Reminiscences of Franz Brentano," in McAlister 1976: 47–55. Kraus' 1919 volume was entitled *Franz Brentano: Zur Kenntnis seines Lebens und seiner Lehre*.

<sup>2</sup> On Brentano's influence, see Smith 1994; and Albertazzi, Libardi, and Poli 1996. For a summary of debates regarding Brentano's influence on Husserl, see Richard Hudson's Introduction to the "Recollections of Franz Brentano" in McCormick and Elliston 1981: 338–41.

break from the master's philosophy<sup>3</sup>. These accounts acknowledge the foundational role of Brentano's intentionality thesis in determining Husserl's "simultaneous concern for both the objective and the subjective, for our lived experience and that to which this experience is directed." (Patočka 1996: 41)<sup>4</sup>. This genealogy privileges Husserl's development of logic, especially the years surrounding the famous attack on Brentano's psychologism in the *Logical Investigations*. Even after this critique, however, Husserl continued to ally his work with the goal of providing an experiential basis for philosophy and a philosophical basis for science; thus he still saw Brentano as the harbinger of his own phenomenological pursuit. He viewed his prewar phenomenology as correcting and elaborating Brentano's philosophical program, not jettisoning it. However, even for those who accept that Husserl's anti-psychologism marked only a partial break from his teacher, the turn to transcendental egology seemed to complete the task; commentators find precious little Brentano in Husserl's postwar itinerary. In this essay, I will challenge this narrative by arguing that Husserl's shift toward transcendental phenomenology within the domain of ethics marked a reappraisal – even a reinvigoration – of Brentanian premises, rather than an attempt to discard them.

This more filial Husserl appears when one considers facets of his thought beyond the cognitive. From his early lecture courses on ethics delivered before World War I to the renowned exhortation to cultural self-responsibility in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl developed an ethical program that responded to Brentano's call for a philosophical renewal of European societies in crisis. Even among the growing circle of commentators interested in Husserlian ethics,

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, de Boer 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Patočka's volume, first published in Czech during the 1960s, offers an excellent summary of Husserl's logic, which he distinguishes sharply from Brentano's.

however, the debt to Brentano is not always recognized. Ulrich Melle, for example, the most eminent specialist in the subfield, argues that Husserl's moral thought developed along a trajectory similar to the rest of his thought: Launched under Brentano's influence, it shifted to new terrain after the war<sup>5</sup>.

This story, I argue, is half-correct. One focus of Husserl's ethical thought, famously articulated in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, is the theory of intersubjectivity, a theme that Brentano did not moot<sup>6</sup>. Another important strand of Husserlian ethics, however, has received more desultory treatment: the commitment to cultural renewal<sup>7</sup>. This line of thought appeared during the war and in the years immediately following Brentano's death. In its diagnosis of deepening crisis and the call for individual and social renewal through an ethical commitment to rational philosophy, Husserl remained very much Brentano's charge.

### Brentano's Ethics of Theory and Practice

In the opening of his landmark *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, a young Franz Brentano (1838–1917) predicted that psychology would stimulate moral progress to match modernity's technological achievements. "How many evils might be remedied," exclaimed the newly appointed Vienna professor, "by the correct psychological diagnosis, or by knowledge of the laws by which a mental state can

<sup>5</sup> Melle, who edited Husserl's early ethics lectures for the *Husserliana* series, has published several essays, including Melle 1991, Melle 2002, and Melle 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Husserl's examinations of intersubjectivity have been much discussed, especially in literature on his impact in France. Most famous is Theunissen 1986. More recent is Samuel Moyn's excellent *The Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics*. See Moyn 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Exceptions include Paci 1972, Hart 1992, Buckley 1992, Steinbock 1995, and Donohoe 2004. For a recent, related account, see the Husserl chapters of Gasché 2009.

be modified!” (Brentano 1973a: 22 (Brentano 1924: 31)). The promise of ethical renewal justified Brentano’s fledgling descriptive psychology, whose potential benefits he compared to the public health boon of nineteenth-century chemistry and physiology. Not only could “the science of the future” impart practical guidance for individuals facing moral dilemmas; it would also advance principles to aid in resolving political conflict and social disorder (Brentano 1973a: 21, 24–5; (1924: 30–6)). Indeed, psychology’s ethical mandate counted as its greatest prospect. As the study of intrinsic good, ethics “call[ed] everything into consideration,” superseding even natural science, which required “a sufficient quantity of ethical knowledge” to become “truly beneficial.” (Brentano 1973b: 4; (Brentano 1952: 5)) By placing ethics on firm psychological ground, Brentanian philosophy would promote the moral renaissance of modern society.

Brentano’s ethical views were closely tied to his descriptive psychology and its stress on inner evidence<sup>8</sup>. As part of his renowned analysis of intentionality, Brentano explained that the mind apprehended objects in three ways: through the senses as primary presentations; in existential judgments that assessed the validity of presentations; and through acts of interest that attached positive or negative emotional value to perceived objects<sup>9</sup>. Ethics concerned the third of these modes. Brentano based his ethics on the immediate, intuitive apprehension of the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of interest in a perceived object. Like the self-evident judgments that formed the basis of logic, emotions could enjoy absolute clarity. “We know with

immediate evidence,” he wrote, “that certain of our emotive attitudes are correct”<sup>10</sup>. Positive ethical judgments, for example, combined the affirmation of an object’s existence with the keen certainty of its ‘rightness,’ demonstrated in an immediate awareness of “loving correctly” (Brentano 1973b: 38–66 (1952: 42–73)). There was no distinction, he insisted, between evident feelings and the knowledge of them as correct, for “[w]hen something is good in itself, then goodness is tied to its very conception”<sup>11</sup>. The only difficulty came in noticing one’s innate awareness through well-trained inner perception.

Brentano’s popular lecture seminar on ethics, offered regularly at the University of Vienna and published as *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics*, detailed the relation between feelings and cognition<sup>12</sup>. The emotional basis of morality, he conceded, left one to wonder about the stability of ethical insights. Are feelings not notoriously fickle, bound up with tastes that vary from person to person? To avert this doubt, Brentano made two crucial moves: First, he argued that ethics was not based on just any emotions but on a privileged class of exalted feelings that stood out from others for their distinctive authority. Only exalted emotions revealed not just the beloved object, but that which was worthy of love. In mapping the contents of emotional experience, descriptive psychology “reveal[ed] directly the distinguishing characteristic of certain acts of love and preference; thus their existence cannot rightly be denied” (Brentano 1973b: 138 (1952: 154)). These self-evident emotions formed an empirical basis for the extrapolation of

<sup>8</sup> For a fuller discussion of Brentano’s ethics, see my “Franz Brentano’s Ethics of Social Renewal,” forthcoming in *Philosophical Forum* in 2009.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of mental structure according to Brentano, see Smith 1994: 45–51. Accounts of Brentano’s ethics include McAlister 1976, Kastil 1951, Margolius 1929, Eaton 1930, Most 1931, Eaton 1933, and Chisholm 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Brentano, from a letter published in *Die Abkehr von Nichtrealen*, quoted in Chisholm 1986: 49.

<sup>11</sup> Brentano in Scharwath 1967: 76–7.

<sup>12</sup> *Foundation* provides a somewhat unreliable representation of Brentano’s early views because its editors removed textual inconsistencies by incorporating later, significantly altered views. I refer to the volume for general support rather than detailed analysis.

ethical principles and value hierarchies according to a logic of compatibility. Second, and more epistemologically reassuring, Brentano agreed that it was not higher feelings alone but the *cognition* of higher feelings that served to establish ethical dicta. “The principles of ethics, like those of all other sciences, must be cognitions; they cannot be emotions. If feelings play a part in these principles, it is only as the objects of the cognitions. In other words, feelings are the necessary conditions of ethical principles.” (Brentano 1973b: 52 (1952: 56)) Thus, the psychological kernel of Brentano’s ethics was a cognition of a feeling of an object.

In the only ethical tract published during his lifetime, a reprint of his 1889 lecture on “The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong,” Brentano acknowledged difficulties in discriminating evident insight from blind conviction, yet insisted that the distinction was crucial to the legitimacy of his claims<sup>13</sup>.

Many of those blind, instinctive assumptions that arise out of habit are completely uninfected by doubt. Some of them are so firmly rooted that we cannot get rid of them even after we have seen that they have no logical justification. But they are formed under the influence of obscure impulses; they do not have the clarity that is characteristic of the higher form of judgment. If one were to ask, “Why do you really believe that?” it would be impossible to find any rational grounds. Now if one were to raise the same question in connection with a judgment that is immediately evident, here, too, it would be impossible to refer to any grounds. But in this case the clarity of the judgment is such as to enable us to see that the question has no point; indeed the question would be completely

ridiculous. Everyone experiences the difference between these two classes of judgment. As is the case of every other concept, the ultimate explication consists only in a reference to this experience (Brentano 1969: 20 (1921: 21)).

Blind judgments begged questions; a correct insight mooted concern for its status by nullifying doubt with self-evidence. Pre-logical and pre-linguistic, the evidence of inner perception stood as the purest marker of truth and value, as a perceptual being-in-evidence that could not be credibly denied. “Truth speaks,” Brentano declared, “and whoever is of the truth hears its voice” (Brentano 1969: 35 (1921: 33)). The purported ability to distinguish true insight from blind credence allowed psychology to satisfy the epistemological needs of an ethical science.

In its universal aspiration, so crucial to the target of moral renewal, Brentano’s ethics embraced naturalistic anthropological premises. “The laws of logic are rules of judging which are naturally valid,” he wrote. “We are bound to conform to them, because such conformity ensures certainty in our judgments” (Brentano 1969: 9 (1921: 12)). The obligation of the ‘we’ (as opposed to the ‘I’) to comply with the truth of an insight presupposed a logical or perceptual absolute that was global in scope. The same natural imperative explained the universal duty to abide by the ‘ought’ of ethical insight.

Imagine [a] species quite different from ourselves; not only do its members have preferences with respect to sense qualities which are quite different from ourselves; unlike us, they also despise insight and love error for its own sake. So far as the feelings about sense qualities are concerned, we might say that these things are a matter of taste, and ‘*De gustibus non est disputandum*’. But this is not what we would say of the love of error and the hatred of insight. We would say that such love and hatred are basically perverse and that the members of the species in question hate what is indubitably and intrinsically good and love what is indubitably and intrinsically bad.

<sup>13</sup> The lecture was framed as a refutation of the historicist legal scholar Rudolf von Ihering’s 1884 speech *Ueber die Entstehung des Rechtsgefühles* (reissue: Naples, 1986). A leading figure in nineteenth-century legal thought, Ihering argued that man’s sense of justice was a product of history, not an inborn trait. Brentano 1969: 35–6; (Brentano 1921: 33–4.)

As opposed to mere taste, the exalted emotion that underpinned ethical certitude was “natural” for all rational beings, forming a “higher love that is experienced as being correct” (Brentano 1969: 22 (1921: 23)). The global claims of a psychological anthropology allowed Brentano to extract wider norms and practical guidelines from emotional insight. Yet it is crucial to note that for Brentano social rules could not substitute for the auspices of inner perception. Ethics found its ultimate bedrock not in moral strictures but in the perceptually demonstrable insights of psychology (Brentano 1973b: 307–36 (1952: 333–66)). An ethical society, therefore, had to foster an appreciation for inner perception, the ability to recognize evident judgment and correct emotion, and a readiness to acknowledge those who were guided by it. In other words, Brentano presented a psychologically grounded program for cultivating Aristotelian social virtue.

Brentano secured his scholarly reputation partly through occasional public lectures on the history and social relevance of philosophy. His clearest exposition of philosophy’s role in moral renewal came in an 1894 lecture at the Viennese Literary Society, published the following year, which outlined a cyclical history of philosophy characterized by high periods of theoretical efflorescence and scientific rigor – associated with ancient Aristotelianism, medieval Thomism, and modern Cartesianism – followed by three phases of progressive decline – from dogmatism to skepticism to mysticism – before experiencing rebirth in a new philosophical age<sup>14</sup>. In the modern era, German idealism plumbed the nadir of this cycle. Its mystifications not only harmed philosophy; they also had deleterious social effects, manifested in a vacuum of cultural meaning that led to citizen apathy and empty political struggle. Yet Brentano was optimistic. He saw in empirical psychology the midwife

of philosophical rebirth, of a new golden age when philosophy would forsake the phantoms of Kant and Hegel for a renewed commitment to scientific insight. In the face of contemporary philosophical “sickness,” the present age appeared as “a time of universal revolution, or, better said, of a reformation of philosophy from the ground up”<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, philosophy’s practical and ethical engagements were not entirely salutary in Brentano’s analysis. In ancient times, the hardening of theoretical interests into dogma began when philosophy was called on to redress social and political problems. This enlistment required simplifications and popularization that degraded scientific inquiry. “Various circumstances led to the overwhelming and suppression of theoretical interests by practical,” Brentano lamented. “Among the Stoics and Epicureans, ethics had an almost exclusive hold. But the roots of practical disciplines lie in the theoretical, and when these lack nourishment they cannot flourish” (Brentano 1926: 56). Yet, although an overemphasis on practical ethics corrupted scientific inquiry, Brentano insisted that philosophy had a crucial social role. For as philosophy resigned from pure theory in order to confront social needs, it no longer addressed the existential concerns that men required to live a full life. Because of man’s natural desire for knowledge, he insisted, *theoretical* philosophy would always hold widespread appeal and practical urgency. In the modern age, men hungered for philosophy, and idealism did not fill them. Indeed, Brentano foresaw the twentieth

<sup>14</sup> See “Die vier Phasen der Philosophie und ihr augenblicklicher Stand”, in Brentano 1926. See also Werle 1989.

<sup>15</sup> See Brentano, “Was für ein Philosoph manchmal Epoche macht,” in Brentano 1926: 35; and Brentano 1929: 12. In the latter volume, see especially the title essay (an 1893 response to Adolf Exner’s inaugural lecture as University of Vienna rector, and the 1874 lecture “Über die Gründe der Entmutigung auf philosophischem Gebiet.” As Oskar Kraus points out in his introduction to *Die vier Phasen*, the germ of Brentano’s four-phase history can be found in the 1867 history of medieval philosophy that he contributed to Möhler’s church history. For a recent analysis of Brentano’s Catholicism, see Schaefer 2007. On the Exner family, see Coen. 2007.

century as a new philosophical age in which the discipline, inspired by psychological discoveries and a new theoretical rigor, would achieve theoretical-*cum*-practical supremacy (Brentano 1929: 14–19, 25, 45, 48, 91). Paradoxically, then, philosophy found its true *practical* calling in the cultivation of pure theory based on rigorous scientific methods.

Empirical psychology, Brentano averred, marked the upswing. Combining philosophical breadth with methodological exactitude, psychology was “the fundamental condition of human progress in precisely those things which, above all, constitute human dignity.” Without psychological principles, Brentano feared, “the solicitude of the father, as well as that of the political leader, remains an awkward groping,” as exhibited in the regrettable modern drift toward subjectivism and relativism. (Brentano 1973a: 21 (1924: 30)). Modernity was thus two-sided, demonstrating both extreme ethical disorientation and the scientific precision to overcome it. Brentano’s quasi-redemptive psychology promised to make good on the modern potential by guiding a moral reclamation of society.

### Husserl’s Call for Renewal

Brentano’s promise of ethical certainty won a coterie of followers in its time, most notably his star pupil Edmund Husserl. An erstwhile mathematician, Husserl was no doubt drawn to the geometrical clarity and scientific precision of Brentano’s ideas, all the more so because of their charismatic and ardent presentation. If by 1900 Husserl came to reject his mentor’s psychologistic assumptions, he always adhered to the appeal for philosophical clarity and universality.

In the years between the first Logical Investigations and World War I, Husserl strove to elaborate an ethics based on Brentanian premises. He retained his teacher’s fundamental tenets – that moral insights based on feeling could be universalized through cognition; that these insights, like logical judgments, enjoyed

the corroborating evidence of pure perception; and that the chief practical imperative was to choose the best among possible options (Husserl 1988: 90–101)<sup>16</sup>. In this early phase, Husserl’s chief criticism of Brentano’s ethics was that it proffered a theory only in outline – failing, for example, to distinguish noetic (mental) judgment from ontic (object) value. He would cultivate Brentano’s “fruitful seeds” by expounding a scientific apparatus for ethics that would parallel the rational underpinnings of logic (Husserl 1988: 90; Husserl 2004: 15). This endeavor, unpublished during his lifetime but advanced in his Göttingen seminars, led to the elaboration of new subfields and coinages that encompassed the theoretical and practical technicalities of ethical experience: a noetic theory of ethical acts, an axiology of values, an apophantics to link ethical acts with their objects, and a formal moral praxis. More zealously even than his professor, Husserl espoused an ethics that was analogous to scientific logic.

His prewar seminars, however, already exhibited aporia that would point toward later ideas. For one, Husserl’s ethics revealed a tension between the description of moral phenomena and the prescription of proper conduct. Many of his early notes were taken up with detailing the subfields of ethical theory, describing the regions and logics appertaining to moral acts and values. At the same time, however, he embraced Brentano’s categorical imperative to do the best that was possible in each situation. Yet the shift from an abstract description of moral phenomena to the declaration of an imperative ‘ought’ was not smooth, for it lacked a full conceptualization of the contexts within which ethical experience operated<sup>17</sup>. A second tension emerged in the contradictory drives to

<sup>16</sup> See also Ulrich Melle’s helpful introduction to these lectures.

<sup>17</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre reminds us that Husserl’s phenomenological empiricism responded in part to Humean skepticism, including perhaps the stricture against moving from *is* to *ought*. See MacIntyre 2006: 19–49.

universalize and localize. While Husserl's empirical descriptions and categorical imperative were meant to ground a universal science, his guiding moral principle was not formal in the Kantian sense. Instead, Husserl insisted that a concrete imperative – the content of the formal call to do the best that is possible – could only be specified in a particular time and place of action. An imperative took the form of a local universality, of an 'anyone in my circumstances should do as I do.' In this form, Husserl's early ethics already implicated local context in moral acts, an analysis that would progressively deepen until he arrived at the notion of the life-world.

World War I dramatically altered Husserl's project. The war was a personal tragedy for him, taking one son and injuring another, and the postwar years brought him economic hardship and mounting dismay over Germany's social and cultural collapse. "The war," he concluded, in an article for the Japanese journal *Kaizo*, "revealed the falsehood and senselessness of this culture," prompting Husserl to seek anew the purpose behind his philosophical lifework (Husserl 1989: 5)<sup>18</sup>. What emerged in letters, lectures, and essays over the subsequent half decade was a new vision of a philosophy that would spearhead the renewal of modern society by helping men to transcend material differences and sustain transnational ideals<sup>19</sup>. As early as 1917, in three lectures delivered at Freiburg, Husserl declared the wartime crisis "a time of renewal [*Erneuerung*]" (Husserl 1987b: 268)<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See also Husserl's letter, dated September 4, 1919, to the young philosopher Arnold Metzger, introduced and translated by Erazim Kohák for *The Philosophical Forum XXI* (1963), 48–68.

<sup>19</sup> See Husserl's July 8, 1917 letter to Roman Ingarden, in Husserl 1968: 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> See also Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp's "Einleitung" to that volume. For an extended if at times turgid analysis of Fichte's influence on Husserl, see Hart 1992.

These talks marked his most public examination of Fichtean idealism, in which he found a model of philosophy lending significance to social life by revealing a moral world order<sup>21</sup>. If Husserl's interest in Fichte's absolute *Ich* seems uncharacteristic for the sober phenomenologist, it does attest to his growing interest in subjectivity. In the idealist treatment of objects not as natural fact but as subjective achievements (*Tathandlungen* not *Tatsachen*), Husserl found a theory kindred to his own nascent attempts at articulating the experiential origins of natural science in the transcendental ego. And Husserl clearly appreciated Fichte's situation – facing war and possible defeat, yet trying to draw philosophical purpose from Prussian trauma.

Yet idealism denoted more than a historical model for Husserl. His ethics prized the recovery of human ideals as a domain of the life experience, one that allowed men to dedicate themselves to the project of moral rejuvenation by envisioning a world that was not yet. "The human as human has ideals," he maintained. "[I]t is his essence, that he must form an ideal for himself as a personal I and for his whole life, indeed a double, both absolute and relative, and strive toward its possible realization." For both individuals and societies, an ideal stood as a "true' and 'better I'", an "absolute conception" that enabled personal and social striving (Husserl 1989: 35). This assertion of ideals in the face of the empty facticity of modern science was nothing less, in Husserl's view, than the recovery of true humanity. Idealization, then, offered more than simply a goal-setting mechanism; it laid the groundwork for a rationalization of the *Geist*, for the establishment of a pure and universal ethic and an individual absolute ought [*absolute Gesollte*] (Husserl 1989: 33)<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> These lectures were not his earliest examination of Fichte. In 1903 and again during the war, Husserl taught university seminars on *The Vocation of Humanity* and other Fichtean ethical and religious tracts.

<sup>22</sup> See also Gniazdowski 2004.

Although they were not published in Europe during Husserl's lifetime, the five *Kaizo* articles helped to consecrate his postwar ethical turn. The decision to publish on the theme of renewal, a topic prompted by the journal's title, was driven partly by the need to bolster family finances<sup>23</sup>. But the invitation from a Japanese student also afforded Husserl the chance to reflect on the social collapse he perceived around him and to outline a program of cultural renewal that would be led by a rational philosophy determined to recapture its theoretical-cum-practical position as an existential guide. The first article introduced the idea of social renewal through commitment to rational *Wissenschaft* and outlined the goal of establishing ethical norms. The brief second essay, a methodological excursus on the intuition of essences, enlisted Husserlian phenomenology in the service of this wider socio-ethical project. Essays three and four, only the first of which appeared in print, formed the crux of Husserl's discussion. In them, he examined renewal as both an individual and a social process – or, more precisely, as a socio-cultural reformation that depended on the commitment of individual people. The fifth essay closed the prospectus with a macrohistorical survey of human striving toward ethical, life-directing norms. Despite their cursory quality, these essays clearly outline a new phenomenological itinerary, one that culminated a decade later in the *Crisis*, where Husserl insisted that “the humanity of higher human nature or reason requires ... a genuine philosophy”<sup>24</sup>.

The *Kaizo* articles also suggest a new – indeed a renewed – relationship with Brentano's moral program. It is, of course, important to distinguish Husserl's vision of renewal from Brentano's. One difference is immediately apparent: Whereas

Brentano viewed the idealism of Kant, Hegel, and Fichte as an emblem of scientific collapse, Husserl found in it the outlines of a project for philosophical reform. Husserl's familiar diagnosis traced Europe's crisis to the divorce of scientific philosophy from the life-world and its attendant abdication of a role in providing meaning for contemporary life. This conclusion, of course, inverts Brentano's similar complaint that idealist philosophy had abandoned methodological rigor and practical relevance. For Husserl, positivism and naturalism, not Brentano's hated idealism, exemplified the hollow objectivity of modern thought<sup>25</sup>. Brentanian psychologism perpetuated this failure, according to Husserl, even as it provided methodological insights that led toward a new, more rigorous philosophy. In this sense, the transcendental subject of idealism supplied Husserl with a corrective for his Brentanian bequest. Moreover, by the early 1920s, Husserl came to see Brentano's division between theoretical and practical ethics as largely artificial. In the ethics seminars from 1920, revised in 1924, he rejected the programmatic dualism that structured both his teacher's and his own earlier thought. Instead, he argued that theoretical striving was simply a particular practical exertion, a merger that allowed him to develop a more historical understanding of ethics and a contextualized program of accountability distinct from his earlier taxonomic labors (Husserl 2004: 15–19).

Yet we must not overrate either Husserl's debt to idealism or his split from Brentano. Fichtean thought served as an important gateway to transcendental insight, but Husserl moved beyond it as his thinking progressed in the 1920s. (Welton 2000: 307). While he came to share Fichte's view that transcendental subjectivity formed the world-ground, he did not see the subject as sufficient in and of itself<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp, *Einleitung to Husserl 1989: X. The name of the journal, Kaizo, means “renewal” in Japanese. Due to disputes between Husserl and the journal, only three of these articles were ultimately published, the latter two solely in Japanese.*

<sup>24</sup> Husserl 1970: 291 (Husserl 1976: 338).

<sup>25</sup> *Their choice of praiseworthy modern thinkers revealed this difference. As Brentano acclaimed Comte and Mill, so Husserl Fichte and “den größten Idealisten” Husserl 1987b: 267–68.*

<sup>26</sup> *Husserl's stress on intersubjectivity makes this point quite apparent. See also Kockelmans 1994: 329.*

Moreover, his rigorous description of consciousness continued to tie him to Brentano's methodology rather than the speculative flights of idealists. And while he largely abandoned the technical machinery of his early ethical project, he not only retained key facets of Brentano's thought (such as the foundational doctrine of intentionality and the method of inner perception), but he also recaptured his mentor's philosophical ardor by transposing Brentano's history of cyclical decline into an altogether more urgent and universal appeal. The reign of a superficial empiricism, he argued, occasioned a devastating loss of meaning in Western culture. For all its aptitudes, mere technization failed to imbue life with significance, leaving European society adrift in self-doubt. The murderous war and the ensuing chaos, the cultural pessimism of the literati – all of these symptoms registered the wider loss of rational guidance and life-directing norms. And as with Brentano, problem and solution had the same source: philosophy.

For those familiar with the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), one of the surprising features of Husserl's ethical publications in the 1920s is the apparent lack of concern for the phenomenological problem of intersubjectivity – or more properly, the elision of individual and social ethics<sup>27</sup>. In the Kaizo articles, as Donn Welton notes, Husserl took it for granted that the individual exists in social relations rather than presuming the need to ground intersubjectivity through the phenomenology of empathy (Welton 2000: 319). Societies only become truly human, Husserl remarked, “when they have as their bearers true individuals [*wenn sie ihre Träger in echte Einzelmenschen haben*]” (Husserl 1989: 48; see also 4, 20). Five years after the famous Fifth Meditation, intersubjectivity again played a lesser role in the Crisis. Given Husserl's extensive prior lecturing on the theme as well as its adumbration in *Ideas II*, we should

not, of course, interpret his characterization of societies as “personalities of a higher order” as an uninterrogated leap (Husserl 2004: 12–13). Nonetheless, one is left with the impression that Husserl understood intersubjectivity as a technical problem within the wider project of cultural renewal, rather than as the crux of an ethics. In this light, the call for *Erneuerung* is not simply a cul-de-sac of Husserlian moral theory, but reveals instead the central commitment of his late work.

And this socio-ethical nusus has distinct Brentanian overtones. Husserl's project of cultural renewal and theoretical responsibility entailed a new assessment of his teacher's accomplishment. In one regard, of course, as Husserl turned away from scientific axiology, his filial respect grew more qualified. Yet while commentators have noted this distance, it is also true that in abandoning the methodology Husserl approached the spirit of his master's program. Like Brentano, he saw ethics as a key to philosophy's practical relevance, especially in a time of crisis; and he viewed “[t]he renewal of humanity – both as individuals and societies of people [*gemeinschafteten Menschen*] – [as] the highest theme of ethics” (Husserl 1989: 20). In this call, can we not hear echoes of Brentano's moral aspirations, which Husserl encountered as a student in the 1880s? And in Husserl's new philosophical purpose, can we not glimpse the figure of the master committed to scientific rebirth? Even at the end of his life, Husserl remained Brentano's student and saw in his mentor the face of a renewed humanity, an “image from a higher world” (Husserl 1987a: 315).

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## AUKŠTESNIOJO PASAULIO VAIZDINYS: ETINIS ATSINAUJINIMAS PAGAL FRANČĄ BRENTANO IR EDMUNDĄ HUSSERLĮ

Michael Gubser

*Nepaisant to, kad tyrinėtojai seniai pripažino milžinišką F. Brentano įtaką savo studentams, pastarojo idėjų poveikis visai Edmundo Husserlio kūrybai vis dar nėra deramai įvertintas. Bendrai pripažintuose Husserlio idėjų raidos tyrimuose pabrėžiama Brentano įtaka ankstyvajam Husserliui ir staigus atsisiejimas nuo mokytojo filosofijos. Straipsnyje aptariama ši nuomonė, iškeliamas idėja, kad Husserlio perėjimas prie transcendentaliosios fenomenologijos etikos srityje nužymėjo perkainojimą – gal net prikėlė naujam gyvenimui Brentano prielaidas, o ne atmetė jas.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Brentano, Husserlis, etika, atsinaujinimas.

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