

Franz Kafka's story *The metamorphosis* in the light of the theory of intentional object in Franz Brentano and Anton Marty*

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ABSTRACT

How does it feel to be a worm? No doubt, it feels Kafkaesque. *The metamorphosis* (1915) is a story of an ordinary man, Gregor Samsa, who wakes up one morning as an *ungebeures Ungeziefer* or 'giant vermin'. Is this only a bodily change, or has his mind been transformed as well? And how do the people around him cope with this transformation? In this paper, I am going to examine these issues by using tools from Franz Brentano's (1838–1917) and Anton Marty's (1847–1914) philosophy of mind and language. Rumour has it that Kafka's stories were not only products of his own troubled soul, but were also profoundly influenced by the work of these two philosophers. In my paper, I will cover the following issues: the influence of Franz Brentano on Anton Marty and of *a fortiori* on Franz Kafka (1883–1924), who was Marty's student in Prague (and in this way, saying something about the School of Brentano); Brentano's and Marty's theory of correct and incorrect emotions, and its traces in Kafka's *The metamorphosis*; Marty's philosophy of language and communication as reflected in Kafka's writings; and Brentano's reism in comparison to Kafka's nominalism, on the basis of Roberto Calasso's interpretation of Kafka.

KEYWORDS

intentionality; theory of emotion; correct emotion; philosophy of mind; philosophy of language; school of Brentano; intersection between literature and philosophy; body; soul

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OUTLINE

I shall start with a short exposition: presenting the setting, the characters, their back stories and how they all ‘met’ Franz Brentano and Anton Marty knew each other very well from Würzburg, where Marty was Brentano’s student; Marty and Kafka met in person during the latter’s lectures in Prague; Kafka and Brentano on the other hand never actually met. How, then, can we call the writer a ‘Brentanist’? This question will be answered in the first part: *Introduction. The school of Brentano?* I shall then move into four sections where I will be concerned with specific philosophical issues that arise from reading Kafka’s *The metamorphosis* (Kafka, 1996)¹. I will be concentrating on *The metamorphosis* in particular as I believe it supplies us with the proper imagery to both find Brentanian and Martian traces in Kafka, and to show how their ideas could have influenced not only philosophers and psychologists but also writers, and thus find their way to the world of the twentieth century cultural topoi.

My paper will consist of the following sections:

- 1) Brentano *via* Marty. What Kafka learned during Marty’s lectures. This section will cover the following issues: the three classes of mental phenomena according to Brentano and Marty, the new definition of psychology as the science of mental phenomena, the intentional in-existence of an object in a mental act, and the paradox of introspection.
- 2) Brentano and Marty on (in)correct emotions. This part will be devoted to the ‘official Brentano’ and his theory of evident judgment and emotion (from *The origin of the knowledge of right and wrong*), the ‘not-so-official Brentano’ (from the unpublished *Logic lectures*) as well as Marty and the truth-makers, *Wertverhalte* and two classes of beings in his ontology.² I will use these tools to depict the transformation not only of Gregor Samsa but of the whole family, and the complex relations between them.
- 3) Marty: language and communication. Here, I will concentrate on the pragmatic and teleological aspect of Marty’s philosophy of language and the communication breakdown of the Samsas.
- 4) Brentano’s reism and Kafka’s alleged nominalism. In the final section I will show how the nominalism ascribed to Kafka by Roberto Calasso in his *K* (Calasso, 2011) can be interpreted in light of Brentano’s reism.

¹ *Die Verwandlung* [The metamorphosis] was first published in 1915.

² I borrow the terms ‘official’ and ‘not official Brentano’, as well as ‘parsimonious and baroque ontology’ from Arkadiusz Chrudzinski (2009).

INTRODUCTION — THE SCHOOL OF BRENTANO?

In the vast body of literature on Franz Brentano the term “school of Brentano” is frequently banded about. This is, however, a somewhat misleading term as although Brentano led an intellectually active life in Vienna, he never managed to found any kind of official school. In actual fact, he was asked to leave the university and become a *Privatdozent*. I would therefore say that the “School of Brentano” falls into the scope of *Irrealia*, to use Marty's terminology: it is neither real nor nonexistent.

The story behind the ‘non-existence’ of the school in question is well known (Smith, 1997; Simons' *Introduction* in: Brentano, 1995) but, nevertheless, I shall rephrase it and enrich it with some conclusions I have drawn from my own research on Brentano's Aristotelian writings and Husserl's student memories.³

Brentano was a professor in Vienna between the years 1874 and 1880 (starting with the first edition of *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*). Previous to that however, he had been living in Würzburg, working as both a professor and a Catholic priest (1864–1873). In the early 1870s, he had engaged in a fierce debate with the Church concerning the infallibility of the Pope (which he had been explicitly against) and — as a consequence — he left both the priesthood and his professorship. He subsequently moved to Vienna, where he continued his career as a layman (although not formally resigning from priesthood until 1879). In 1880 he decided to marry Ida Lieben and this in turn forced him to leave his professorship for the second time as former priests were banned from marrying in Austria at that time (Kamińska, 2014). He therefore remained a *Privatdozent* in Vienna until 1895, a position which made him feel both unhappy and marginalized as he was not allowed to supervise any doctoral or habilitation theses. Nevertheless, he did not resign from teaching as he would regularly invite his students to semi-official gatherings at his home organized with the assistance of his wife, Husserl being one of his frequent and most welcome visitors. Meanwhile in Vienna, the university chair was taken up by Moritz Schlick and the Vienna Circle was founded: the most famous school in Viennese history (Smith, 1994: 20).

His students however were able to obtain posts in universities elsewhere in Austria, and to propagate Brentanian philosophy to the extent that it acquired the status of

³ Aristotelica: *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* ([*On the several senses of being in Aristotle*], 1862), *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom nous poietikos* ([*The psychology of Aristotle*], 1867), *Über den Creatianismus des Aristoteles* ([*On Aristotle's creationism*], 1882), *Aristoteles' Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* ([*Aristotle's theory of the origin of human soul/intellect*], 1911), *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung* ([*Aristotle and his world view*], 1911). There is also a rather considerable Nachlass: *Über Aristoteles* ([*On Aristotle*], 1986) plus numerous manuscripts, and Husserl's memoirs (Husserl, 1919).

a semi-official philosophy of the Empire. Brentano's students included, beside Marty and Ehrenfels, also Freud, Thomas Masaryk (subsequently founder and first president of the erstwhile Czechoslovak Republic), Meinong, Husserl, Stumpf and Twardowski. The most orthodox Brentanists congregated around Marty in Prague, whose circle included also other former students of Brentano, such as Oskar Kraus and Alfred Kastil. The Prague Brentanists took up the task of developing and disseminating Brentano's doctrines with an almost religious fervour. A group of them met regularly in the Café Louvre (now a sex shop⁴) on the Ferdinandstrasse, for 'training' in Brentanian modes of thought and of philosophical discussion and argument. Hugo Bergmann, Emil Utitz and Oskar Pollak, three close schoolfriends of Kafka, were all initiated into this circle, and Bergmann, in his turn, seems to have recruited Kafka himself. There is evidence testifying to the fact that, at least between the years 1903 and 1906, Kafka frequently attended meetings of what was called the 'inner circle of Brentanists' (Smith, 1997: 85).

Ironically, Brentano's misfortune proved to be a blessing for the European philosophy. If things had turned out differently, his teachings would not have had such a wide-ranging audience (see the Graz School, the Lvov-Warsaw School, the Prague School and even the Munich phenomenologists) and Brentanism would not have become the "semi-official philosophy of the Empire", as Smith accurately calls it.

There is also one more line of explanation of the aforementioned 'non-existence', taken from Husserl's memoirs (Husserl, 1919). According to Husserl, Brentano never saw himself as having set up any kind of school (not only in the institutional sense, but — more importantly to him — in the intellectual sense), as there was not one student with whom he felt entirely satisfied — a rather surprising statement given the distinguished and devoted nature of his students. He was — as Husserl puts it — easily offended whenever they would steer away from his original views (indeed, not doing this must have been hard not only in terms of their personal development but also due to Brentano's rather frequent changes of mind). Dale Jacquette (2006) stresses this feature of his character when referring to how much Husserl hurt his master.

In March 1917, when Brentano was dying in Zurich, he felt he was somehow 'childless', with no proper heir to his thought. This must have been largely due to how he understood the relationship between master and student as for Brentano, a genuine emotional commitment together with an intellectual congeniality were required. He strongly believed that he had been chosen as Aristotle's heir and he claimed to be one of his three most faithful students and his third son, along with Eudemos and Theophrastus. What I wish to emphasize by all of this is that — according to Brentano — personal acquaintance was not a necessary premise for any potential heir. At least, it was not as

⁴ Barry Smith wrote this paper in 1997. As far as I am concerned, now (at least from 2012) there is a music shop.

important as the other features listed above. And thus I believe that from the two famous Brentanists who never met their teacher — namely Heidegger and Kafka — Brentano would have chosen Kafka as his pupil, even though it was Heidegger who explicitly considered himself Brentano's heir. In actual fact, I think Heidegger would have deeply offended Brentano — or even have committed patricide! — least of all by his rejection of intentionality. Why would he choose Kafka? We will see below.

The case with Marty is, no doubt, much easier: Brentano and Marty were friends for life and exchanged thousands of letters. Marty is known as the most orthodox student of Brentano and for a good reason.

SECTION 1

I shall concentrate here on Brentano's early immanence intentionality / intentional in-existence thesis. This thesis argues that the intended objects of our thoughts belong to their respective mental acts, they are contained within them. They are in the acts of thought.

Let us take a look at two quotations, one from Dale Jacquette (2006) and one from Kevin Mulligan (2006). The first one describes the nature of the intentional object, and the second one can be used to illustrate what Peter Simons calls Brentano's "methodological phenomenalism".

The sense of 'in' in Brentano's phrase 'intentional' in-existence is thus locative rather than negative. It specifies where the intended object of a thought is to be located, rather than qualifies it negatively as nonexistent (Jacquette, 2006: 102).

External perception does not give us the right to assume that physical phenomena exist (Mulligan, 2006: 71).

These statements outline the main issues of this section. I shall thus look at two important questions that were the subject of Marty's Prague lectures, *Grundfragen der deskriptiven Psychologie*, attended by Kafka from 1902: (a) the distinction between physical and mental phenomena and (b) inner perception and outer perception. Marty, in his early work, was an adherent of the immanentist thesis, *i.e.* he believed that every phenomenon of human mind had an object, and intentionally referred to it.

Let me begin by muddying the waters a little. Max Brod (1884–1968), Kafka's friend, biographer and self-appointed editor, dismissed the idea that Kafka was inspired by philosophy at all. He claimed that "Kafka spoke in images, because he thought in images" (Smith, 1997: 83). Surprisingly, this can actually be seen as good news. After all this 'thinking in images' is not entirely divorced from the theory of intentional objects, is it? I also believe it can be

reconciled with Klaus Wagenbach's opinion that psychology and ethics were very important for Kafka's intellectual and literary formation (Smith, 1997). It also reminds me of Wagenbach's saying that Kafka — as a child — loved going to the cinema (Wagenbach, 2002). I will mention this again in Section 4.

AD (A)

Brentano opens PES by distinguishing between physical and mental phenomena. The latter display the feature of intentionality (although the word 'intentionality' is never explicitly used by Brentano). And it is this feature which fundamentally characterizes all mental phenomena as we learn from the famous 'intentionality quote' which also enumerates their three classes:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, relation to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as a reality), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on (Brentano, 1995: 68).

Jacquette makes an interesting observation here: "He not only identifies intentionality as the distinctive mark of the mental, but makes intentionality the foundation for an empirical scientific philosophy of mind that surpasses anything that had previously been contemplated" (Jacquette, 2006: 100). Thus psychology is, in fact, the basis for philosophy. I would therefore like to take a look at Tim Crane's remark that Brentano changed the definition of psychology into the 'science of mental phenomena' as opposed the more etymologically correct 'science of the soul' (Crane, 2006). It is the second part of this observation that is interesting since what is etymologically correct usually depicts the way we commonly think more adequately. I am aware it may appear somewhat banal to state this but if psychology is commonly understood to refer purely to the soul, it takes a radical change of mind to break away from this idea and to come to terms with the soul's removal (and therefore speak of mental phenomena instead). Likewise Crane also states: "Brentano talks approvingly of Lange's idea of 'psychology without a soul'. What he has in mind here is that psychology can proceed while being indifferent on the question of whether there is a soul: for 'whether or not there are souls, there are mental phenomena'" (Crane, 2006: 28).

It is thus high time to present the first similarity between Brentano, Marty and Kafka. The soul — or rather what used to be the soul in the older paradigm — is usually identified not only with the substantial self in Aristotelian

or Christian/Aristotelian sense, but with our self. We tend to think that we are our souls (no matter what the term designates or whether we are religiously inclined). And it is exactly this problem that kept Kafka awake at night: we do not know ourselves (our 'self'). We only live through the mental phenomena as they appear — although he probably would not have phrased it in such philosophical jargon. And these phenomena are all we have. For Kafka the self is an enigma. And thus Kafka, in his *Diaries*, provides a perfect definition of the former self reformulated in what I call the non-substratum view on the soul: "I am nothing but literature and can and want to be nothing else".⁵ By claiming that mental phenomena are all we have/are, Kafka becomes a partisan of the intentional in-existence thesis. During one of Marty's lectures he became acquainted with this new definition of psychology and it must have appealed to him as it accurately illustrated his own intuitions. Interestingly, when Calasso writes about *The trial* and Joseph K's famous plea to the Court, he stresses that this plea is motivated by a peculiar illusion that literature can somehow fill the gaps in our self-awareness. Maybe, thanks to literature, we can know ourselves better. To translate it into Brentano — Marty terms: we cannot know the self, but somehow we can know the particular mental phenomena.

In this case, as in many other cases, Joseph K. is Kafka's obvious *porte-parole*. Kafka was writing incessantly, night after night, to understand himself and all he achieved can be summarized in the above statement that he was nothing but literature. Calasso concludes that this aforementioned illusion is — needless to say — childish (Calasso, 2011: 191). However, I wish to stress that Kafka not only says that he cannot be anything else, but that he also does not want to be. This may not be very optimistic, I admit, but at least it reveals an acceptance of one's paradoxical fate.

AD (B)

What does this mean that we do not know ourselves? This question becomes even more puzzling if we realize the consequences of the early Brentano — Marty claim that the objects of inner perception exist necessarily (in the sense that we are sure that they exist when they are obtained and not that they somehow exist in and of themselves), whereas the outside world is, at most, probable ('methodological phenomenalism'). Shouldn't our internal world be therefore more familiar to us? The answer is a firm *no*, because there is no such thing as proper introspection. Smith quotes Kafka: "The introspection, understood as observing one's mental states, is like a dog trying to catch its

⁵ In the published parts of PES Brentano resigns from the time-honored account of the soul as a substratum for mental phenomena. From now on the mental phenomena have no underlying substratum. They form a chain/bundle.

tail” (Smith, 1997: 91). I think of this as a sort of freeze-frame as it brings to mind the possibility of pausing in the middle of a film whenever we wish to take a closer look at something that would otherwise be happening too quickly for us to perceive. This freeze-frame is impossible with regards to our mental lives. I cannot stop laughing at a joke to watch myself laughing at it. I cannot hang my despair on a coat rack like a coat if I want to have a look at it or put it on later (if I were a masochist for wanting to relive it, that is). I can only live through these mental states, nothing more.

Brentano’s inner perception must be clearly distinguished from introspection. But then also we are aware of what “is taking place in our mind; we are conscious — obliquely, as it were — of the judgment itself, a certain psychical phenomenon. Similarly, in seeing directly before us the pattern itself, we are conscious, obliquely, of our seeing of the pattern. And it is this oblique consciousness, present in all mental experiences whatsoever, which is what Brentano means by inner perception” (Smith, 1997: 92).

Inner perception is not inner observation, for the latter modifies where it does not destroy its object, says Brentano in 1874. He seems never to have changed his mind on this point (Mulligan, 2006: 73–74).

All this shows, in my opinion, why Gregor Samsa did not just feel like a worm, he simply was a worm. In other words: the worm was his primary object of perception, immanent in his mental act. If he were to engage in the proper observation and watch the beetle under the microscope, he would be in the same position as a human scientist and this would no doubt alter — if not destroy — the scrutinized object. The very first words of *The metamorphosis* are as follows:

As Gregor Samsa awoke from unsettling dreams one morning, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. He lay on his hard armorlike back and when he raised his head a little he saw his vaulted black belly divided into sections by stiff arches from whose height the coverlet had already slipped and was about to slide off completely. His many legs, which were pathetically thin compared to the rest of his bulk, flickered helplessly before his eyes (Kafka, 1996: 7).

It may seem as if I were merely repeating Smith’s thesis about Gregor’s condition but this is not entirely the case. I wholeheartedly accept the view that Gregor in fact was a worm and not that he had a bad day and only felt like one. Nevertheless, I differ regarding the justification of this thesis and especially in regards to the interpretation of *The metamorphosis*’ opening lines. Smith says that the outer world has changed for Gregor: “the external world which is normally taken for granted there has been substituted a quite different world, having peculiar qualities” (Smith, 1997: 91). I, on the other hand, think

that the world has remained exactly the same and all the family members do their best to preserve it. Gregor even tries to go to work despite the fact that he cannot get out of bed. This is because it is Gregor, not the world, that has changed. I agree with Smith that he is separated by the impossibility of communication, but he is not “in the position of dispassionate observer” as Smith puts it. On the contrary, I think he is anything but a dispassionate observer (see Section 3). He is indeed a lone observer but he is well aware that *he* is the main protagonist of the drama and that he is the focal point of this world (even though his role consists in being neglected and humiliated). He is, in fact, very passionate: he wants to communicate and he wants to go back to his world which he sees and misses but cannot enter (given that he is both unable and not allowed). Even the description of the room I will present below shows that the world has not altered. And, interestingly, it is Smith who quotes Kafka's diary entry saying that his knowledge of his room is bigger than his knowledge of himself and that the inner world can only be lived, but not described. The room, on the other hand, can be described (independently of whether the Simonsian ‘methodological phenomenalism’ is in force or not; we can describe what we see before us). I will therefore use the description of Gregor's room as an argument against Smith and thus reinforce my claim that the world has not changed, and Gregor has: both as the intentional object for himself and for the family.

Gregor's bedroom is an essential motif in *The metamorphosis*. Actually, for Gregor, the boundaries of his room are the boundaries of his world. As soon as Gregor learns how to use the multitude of his furry legs, he starts strolling around his room and he strolls incessantly for weeks. “He especially liked hanging from the ceiling; it was entirely different from lying on the floor” — Kafka comments, not without a touch of irony (Kafka, 1996: 29). However, such an exact topography would be impossible with regard to oneself, not to mention one's ‘self’. The reader easily notices that Gregor's room is depicted in more detail than Gregor's internal world. There is the window with its windowpanes overlooking the hospital on Charlotte Street; the sofa he hides under, the coverlet that (at least partially) covers his body whenever he lies on or under the sofa; the door with its lock and its key (the symbolic border of two separate worlds); the carpet used to scratch and clean his back; the heavy, almost immovable bureau; the chair (which his sister manipulates according to Gregor's needs — or rather what she understands his needs to be at the very beginning), as well as two absolutely crucial items, Gregor's *raison d'être*: the desk and the picture of a lady in furs on the wall. The desk is an indispensable item in all Kafka's works⁶: the father has a desk and the head clerk has one from which he reigns over the world — to mention but a few. This indispensability

⁶ See *The trial*, *The castle*, *The judgment*.

is most fully demonstrated when Grete and their mother remove the furniture from Gregor's room. They do it, allegedly, to give him some more free space to stroll, but later on they turn the room into no more than a lumber room. And this is how they stab him in the back for the first time.

SECTION 2

Let me now get to the analysis of some of the emotional issues present in *The metamorphosis* using the tools prepared by Marty and Brentano. These issues will concern not only Gregor, but also the other actors of the drama, *i.e.* *die Familie Samsa* and Gregor's younger sister Grete in particular.

In 1874 he [(Brentano — S.K.) thought not only that whenever a psychological phenomenon occurs a judging and so a presenting occurs, but also that an emotion must occur (Mulligan, 2006: 72).

So, let us first have a look at the presentations and then see what follows. Looking at him, Gregor's parents do not see their son — they see a giant worm with furry legs and an armor-like trunk. Marty claimed that we tend to instinctively think that what we perceive exists, exactly like children do.⁷ It takes higher cognitive activities to separate the intuitive faith and really analyze the particular case: “Rather sensing is an act which contains two mutually inseparable parts, the intuition of the physical phenomenon and assertoric acceptance thereof”.

Let me supplement this with a quotation from Arkadiusz Chrudzimski:

The mental acts from which the concepts of existence and non-existence are distilled are acceptances and rejections which are evident, and as such, as Brentano puts this, are ‘intrinsically characterised as right’. According to Brentano ‘to exist’ thus means roughly ‘to be an object of a possible right acceptance’ and ‘not to exist’ means correlatively ‘to be an object of a possible right rejection’ [...]. Marty also accepts this analysis (Chrudzimski, 2013: 15).

The parents judge correctly that what they see is a worm and, consequently, when an emotion in relation to it occurs, then it is the emotion of hate. The reverse is also true: Gregor has a presentation of his parents and correctly judges that what he sees are his parents. He too has a *Gemütsbewegung*, only in his case this is a phenomenon of love — his love for them being unconditional (which I will expand on below). In both cases the emotions are correct. I do not wish to say that hatred itself is correct (at this point it would be better to

⁷ This is taken from Mulligan (2006), from an 1895 lecture by Marty quoted by Kraus: “Towards a Phenomenognoy of Time Consciousness”.

steer away from objective values) but that the emotions occur as a consequence of the presentations and judgments, so their emotional correctness is 'forced' by the correctness of the judgment *i.e.* a worm is something worth hating.

OTHER ONTOLOGICAL MODELS

From Mulligan (2006: 72–74) we learned what Brentano thought in 1874: that the object of presentation, judgment and emotion is the same thing — only the cognitive/mental modi alter. But we must also remember that he changed his mind many times, as well as of the fact that Marty was not always 'faithful' to his master. I shall thus consider some of the other ontological variants and see whether my study of the Samsas can work according to these different ontological models as well.

I believe that my interpretation so far works in a similar way to Brentano's early notion of 'parsimonious ontology' as Chrudzimski puts it, as well as in his later, less official, and more robust view of accepting transcendent entities which is closer to Marty's conviction that there must be something in the world (*i.e.* a truth-maker for emotions = *Wertverhalt*) that makes a thing — to use Chrudzimski's words again — easier or harder to love or hate and that evidence is not sufficient to constitute a correct judgment or — for that matter — emotion. If we steer away from early Brentano's immanentism and move to Marty's ontology consisting of real (*Realia*) and non real entities (*Irrealia*), then we will see that Gregor (even as a vermin) falls into the first category. We should treat him as a substance in the good old Aristotelian sense, as he can introduce causal change in the real world, he came into being at particular moment in time and he will definitely pass away at another (the three conditions of being a substance are thus fulfilled). This is, at least, what I consider to be the case. However, if someone wanted to treat Gregor more like a propositional content (that is: to rate him among the existent but not real beings [*Irrealia*]), then my interpretation would hold as well. Non-real things aren't in any sense weaker for Marty, but they cannot be engaged in any causal nexus in any proper sense. Instead, they supervene the causality of real entities. Nevertheless, even as a non real being, Gregor can still be an intentional object about which one can make judgments that will, in turn, induce a *Wertverhalt*, *i.e.* a truth-maker for emotions. The difference lies in the fact that Marty claimed there were some objective values in the world. Let me quote Chrudzimski again: "The official Brentano insisted on the objective soundness of ethics and introduced emotional evidence as a primitive concept. Marty introduced mind independent states of values in the role of truth-makers for our emotions" (Chrudzimski, 2009: 183).

To *The metamorphosis*, the seed-bed of the whole tragedy, I dare say, is due to a lack of communication between the family members. They see nothing

else but this giant worm and (wrongly) assume that the worm does not understand them. I will say more on communication below.

Now, let us take a look at Gregor's younger sister, whose attitude demonstrates significant differences when compared with that of her parents (who are rather consistent in their negative view which has a lot to do with reducing Gregor to the role he plays in the family (see below); one can say that the mother is 'half-way' between her former motherly feelings and the overwhelming emotion of revulsion, but she soon sides with her husband). The parents reject Gregor as a person and an equal member of their family on the basis of seeing a worm, accepting there being a worm (correct existential judgment) and hating it. Grete, on the other hand, has a *Vorstellung* of a worm, but she judges differently. She rejects the impression, so to speak, because what she wants to see is her beloved brother Gregor. And thus she has the *Gemütsbewegung* of love toward him, despite the fact that what she perceives is, in fact, a worm. If we stick to the view that an emotion is inherited and that it is a natural product of the presentation and judgment, then her love will be incorrect. She thus engages in the higher cognitive activity as suggested by Marty. The *Gemütsbewegung* is thus not directed towards the object of her actual perception but rather towards what she wishes to see, *i.e.* to another object introduced by her mental apparatus. She also thinks that he cannot understand her, but she engages in activities that are meant to make his life easier or at least bearable. She feeds him and compassionately comments on how much he ate and why, and she even tries to adjust the food to his needs (which amounts to giving him the leftovers). She cleans his room regularly, sets the chair by the window to let him enjoy the view and turns the blind eye whenever she thinks he does not want to be seen.

As time passes however, Grete becomes much more similar to her parents in her demeanor (the turning point is the re-arrangement of the room and the 'poster-incident' when Gregor climbs onto the wall to rescue the picture of the lady in furs with his own body and thus scares her mother which, in turn, causes Grete to lose her temper) and her case becomes philosophically clearer (and thus harder for Gregor). As time goes on, what she sees is a worm and nothing/nobody else (she even starts to refer to Gregor as 'it') and upon this a feeling of hatred toward it/him supervenes. We must bear in mind that the intentionality of emotions is "inherited from that of their bases, presentations and, in some cases judgments" (Mulligan, 2006: 81). Brentano later changed his mind on the inheritance of emotions, but giving an adequate account of it would surpass the limits of this paper. For now let us say that the following implication is in force: presentation → judgment → emotion. To make a long story short: if Grete perceives a furry vermin and she has a correct existential judgment "a furry vermin exists", then her hatred is correct and her love was incorrect.

THE ORIGIN OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT AND WRONG — A DIGRESSION

There is one more highly interesting issue in Brentano, rooted in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *i.e.* loving/hating somebody/something for the sake of this person/thing, or for the sake of someone/something else. No doubt his parents loved Gregor (before the vermin-phase) purely for the function he played in their lives (as the family bread-winner and thus a means to an end) and not him himself. Gregor, by contrast, loved them unconditionally. Towards the end of the novella, we see that Grete goes the same way as her parents. Let us take a careful look at the final scene in *The metamorphosis* which is the most terrifying of all:

It occurred almost simultaneously to both Herr and Frau Samsa, while they were conversing and looking at their increasingly vivacious daughter, that despite the recent sorrows that had paled her cheeks, she had blossomed into a pretty and voluptuous young woman. Growing quieter and almost unconsciously communicating through exchanged glances, they thought it was time to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions that at their journey's end their daughter jumped to her feet and stretched her young body (Kafka, 1996: 51/52).

Perhaps this is supposed to be a 'punishment' for the reification she exercised on her brother? After her own metamorphosis (I strongly believe that this title does not refer only to Gregor, because they are all transformed during the narrative) she becomes the cruelest of them all and it is her who suggests getting rid of 'it'.

If they loved Gregor's function or, if love is too strong of a word here, if they had a positive *Gemütsbewegung* toward the bread-winner, they must have judged that there existed a bread-winner as the primary object of their perception, which finally brings us to the root of the matter, *i.e.* the presentation (a backwards analysis). This therefore invites us to probe deeper into the question as to how they perceived him in the first place, before he turned into vermin? Did they perceive *Gregor* = *Gregor* (in Kripke-style) or perhaps *Gregor* = *bread-winner* (in Russell-style)?⁸

SECTION 3

Here I shall try to read *The metamorphosis* in light of Marty's philosophy of language and especially in relation to its pragmatic aspect and teleology. The

⁸ What I have in mind here is Saul Kripke's rigid designator and Bertrand Russell's theory of description.

essence of it is the purposeful manifestation of inner life *via* conventional signs. And this is exactly what is beyond Gregor's reach, as he does not possess the ability to speak, not having proper mouth (or teeth for that matter!). One could argue that this falls outside the scope of Marty's philosophy of language as this is an issue of phonology which he was not concerned with at all. However, it is these physical hindrances which prevent Gregor from acting according to societal convention. He is like a prisoner in his own head, surrounded by myriads of mental acts he cannot verbalize. "Apparently his words were no longer understandable even though they were clear enough to him, clearer than before" (Kafka, 1996: 15). He thus has no access to human conventional signs and we are left wondering what it would be like if he encountered another worm of his kind. For the rest of the Samsas, communication is impossible as they wrongly assume that Gregor does not understand them. Even if communication were possible however, I feel they would be unlikely to want to talk to him — but this is a different story altogether. They are therefore unable (and unwilling) to fulfill the condition of successful communication, namely: that the speech has to influence the mental life of the interlocutor. They somehow influence it, however, by talking behind his back and assuming he does not understand, though this is largely unconsciously done. Grete addresses him only once, when she is very angry, but this is rather an expression of her emotional state than an appeal to him directly. According to Marty, a sentence is meaningful if, and only if, it is understood. And again, we have an absurd situation here: their utterances are understood even though they are unaware of it and Gregor's trials of communication are thwarted at the very beginning, as the sounds he makes are those of an animal. Gregor suffers his greatest defeat when he tries explicitly to engage in communication with them. He tries to approach his sister while she is playing the violin to the three lodgers who cannot appreciate it. "And is he a beast if music moves him so?" — Gregor asks himself. It is also interesting to note that he was not very fond of music before he turned into a worm.

The real communication breakdown comes when Gregor is brutally driven to his room after which he realizes he 'has to go'. We are left unsure as to whether he has heard Grete's remark that if it were Gregor, and not a furry beast, then he would definitely have gone some time ago, or not. Nevertheless, Gregor decides it is time to die. When it is over the father exclaims "Thank God" and they all write letters to their bosses asking for a day off to go for a walk and celebrate their release. They even feel offended when the charwoman comes to tell them that Gregor's remains have been taken care of: she has swept him up, opened the window and let his soul go. It is peculiar to note that she maintains this tradition as if she believed that he still had a soul...

SECTION 4

AFTER *THE IMMANENZKRISIS* — *THE NOMINALIST INTERPRETATION OF KAFKA*

This communication breakdown brings us to the final section that covers the *nomen omen* nominalist interpretation of *The metamorphosis*. When Brentano rejected *Irrealia* he used, so to speak, Ockham's razor to deal with his baroque ontology. He even said — in a letter to Marty (1905) — that he had always (!) believed that what was represented by mental states were in fact the real beings, the Aristotelian substances.

In his book *K*, Calasso argues that Ockham's razor was Kafka's favorite tool. He writes that Kafka always picked only the necessary objects from the surrounding world and referred to them precisely and literally (Calasso, 2011: 9). This is how, according to Calasso, Kafka should be read: literally. To translate it to Brentano's and Marty's philosophical language: all he provided were the presentations or the pictures (bringing us back to Brod's thesis that Kafka spoke in images and to Wagenbach's 'cinema anecdote'). If all we get from Kafka are images of the meticulously chosen objects (however, I would be careful with calling him a nominalist or a reist, because the pictures obviously suggest conceptualism), *i.e.* the presentations, then the judgment and the emotion fall upon the shoulders of the reader, *i.e.* they are not 'inherited' from the presentations. On one hand this gives the reader more freedom of interpretation but, on the other, it makes his work much harder to understand.

CONCLUSION

As a reader, I am personally more inclined towards the interpretation from the sections 1–3 which only goes to show how complicated it is to give and an exhaustive account of this work. Kafka is, indeed, indefinable and thus the desired philosophical interpretation becomes something of a wild goose chase. Needless to say, his literature (or rather he as the literature) can be compared with many other currents of thought from that time, existentialist philosophy being the first to spring to mind. As I stated above, Kafka was a member not only of the Brentano Circle but attended other meetings in search of his *entel-echia*. One of the most important of these meetings took place in Café Arco, situated near the famous Café Louvre where the Brentanists would congregate. If we want to call him a Brentanist (which I hope to have proved plausible), we must bear in mind that of all the possible 'labels' we can ascribe to Kafka, this is but one of many.

What Kafka undoubtedly shares with Brentano, however, is a common feature of intellectual reception. Everybody has 'his or her Kafka' just as everybody

has ‘his or her Brentano’ (Marty, as an ‘orthodox Brentanist’, seems easier to grasp — maybe the ongoing research on Marty’s work will help to ‘emancipate’ him). Besides simply saying what it was about Kafka, therefore, that has made him susceptible to so many varying interpretations, it is worth showing what it was about Brentano that allowed him to influence almost every intellectual current of *fin de siècle* Europe.

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