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F.J. Clemens and Some Aspects of Neo-Scholasticism in the Education of F. Brentano



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Abstract Among the few publications which consider the Scholastic roots of Brentano's thinking, an article by Dieter Münch stands out. In it, he claims that the Aristotelian studies of Brentano and his whole philosophical project are inspired by the German Neo-Scholastic movement. Münch presents the Neo-Scholastic tendency as an ultra-conservative and reactionary program against modernity. Now, such a description makes almost inexplicable the fact that Brentano, who was educated in this context, could have developed a wholly personal and independent philosophy. To approach this framework objectively, I propose to pay attention to F.J. Clemens, a Neo-Scholastic who influenced Brentano's way of thinking. It is true that Clemens puts faith above reason and affirms that any conclusion obtained through the power of reason must be discarded when it contradicts faith. However, this is not an ultramontane innovation but simply the traditional theological point of view. He also argues that St. Thomas should be followed as a guide to orient oneself in the process of rational inquiry. Nevertheless, he doesn't want to understand philosophy as a repetition of Aquinas' claims; on the contrary, he rather proposes an intelligent use of tradition, which allows us to delve deeper into philosophical truth. For this very reason, he does not discard modernity or condemn it altogether. This perspective is also reflected in the early writings of Brentano, where he showed discontinuity from the Neo-Scholastic school of thought.

Keywords Franz Josef Clemens · Franz Brentano · Neo-Scholasticism · Ultramontanism · Catholicism

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