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The Originality of Franz Brentano's Description of 'Correct love' and its Aristotelian Nexus

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1. Introduction

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One of Franz Brentano's greatest contributions to twentieth-century philosophy is to have instigated a new research paradigm in the field of affectivity, which applies not only to psychology and anthropology, but also to the foundation of ethics as a whole. Much of contemporary philosophy has been enriched by the recovery of affectivity, its elevation to the level of intelligibility, and an understanding of it as foundational to human existence. Brentano himself was fully aware of his originality, saying: "No one has determined the principles of ethics as, on the basis of new analyses, I have found it necessary to determine them, no one, especially among those who hold that in the foundation of those principles the feelings must find a place, have so radically and completely broken with the subjective view of ethics" (Brentano 1902, ix). This originality did not escape the notice of G.E. Moore either, who wrote: "This is a far better discussion of the most fundamental principles of ethics than any others with which I am acquainted. Brentano himself is fully conscious that he has made a very great advance in the theory of ethics. ... It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of his work" (Moore 1903, 115).

At the same time, Brentano saw himself as part of a long philosophical tradition, specifically the Aristotelian tradition, and rejected any claim to a singular or independent originality (Brentano 1902, viii). Herein, we will

consider Brentano's place on this Aristotelian continuum, uncovering the issues on which he concurs with Aristotle, as well as what ideas he draws out from Aristotle's work. In doing so, we can establish what distinguishes this modern German scholar from his ancient Greek predecessor.

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2. Brentano's concurrence with Aristotle on "correct love"

2.1. *Órexis as the fundamental unit of will and feeling*

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As is well known, to clearly address the study of experiences and mental phenomena, Brentano proposes three fundamental classes for them. He establishes this classification system through a criterion taken from the most essential feature of mental phenomena, namely how they intentionally refer to their objects. The tripartite classification that results from this is as follows: representations, judgments, and that which encompasses the so-called phenomena of love and hate (Brentano 1995, 197-200; 1902, 13-15, 47-50). Such a classification differs from that of Kant, which had been predominant until that time. Kant also proposed three classes that differ insofar as they correspond to cognitive phenomena in general (both images and concepts as judgments), phenomena of appetite (the sensitive appetite or the so-called rational appetite or will), and that which encompasses affective states or feelings. The originality of Brentano's intervention in this regard is twofold: he separates, within the first Kantian class, representations and judgments, and instead brings together the previously separate acts of will and feelings into one class. And to justify his new mental map, Brentano refers to pure and simple internal experience.

Although the main topic here is affective experience, it is important to recognize the reason behind the division between representations and judgments in theoretical experiences as a whole. That is, judgment, unlike representation, contains something peculiar and essentially different, namely "a second intentional relation to the object given in presentation, a relation either of recognition or rejection" (Brentano 1902, 14; 1995, 222). Judgment denotes a different way of referring to objects—a "sanction" or theoretical stance on the part of the subject in light of a represented object. Such a characterization of judgment opens up a rich understanding of the

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act of judging. This is relevant here not only because, for Brentano, this analogy is important and revealing, but also because this same criterion allows us to see acts of the will and feelings as essentially homogeneous under the generic name of, for lack of a broader term, “acts of love and hate, 5 or pleasing and displeasing” (Brentano 1995, 184; 1902, 69). Thus, very different phenomena “...from the simple forms of inclination or disinclination in respect of the mere idea, to joy and sadness arising from conviction and to the most complicated phenomena as to the choice of ends and means” (Brentano 1902, 14) share a new intentional reference other than theoretical acceptance or rejection (as in judgments); indeed, they share a liking or 10 disliking, a love or a hatred, that is, a “sanction” or an affective, emotional, sentimental, practical position-taking. Since an intentional reference is the essential feature of mental phenomena, differences between the respective references’ intrinsic qualities are more fundamental than other differences 15 (which, of course, exist between acts of will and feelings). Thus, this wide and apparently heterogeneous third class finds its justification (Brentano 1995, 235-6, 246-7, 250-1).

Brentano does not deny a fundamental and more radical uniformity of all affective phenomena according to the differences that are found among 20 them, particularly between acts of will and feelings. First, he shows that differences in the latter are not so great when considered in detail:

“There are other phenomena which have an intermediate position between feelings of pleasure and pain, and what is usually called willing or striving. 25 The distance between the two extremes may appear great, but if you take the intermediate states into consideration, if you always compare the phenomena which are adjacent to one another, there is no gap to be found in the entire sequence—the transitions take place very gradually.” (Brentano 1995, 236-7)

30 Secondly, he warns that these differences are only due to differences between representations (for example, sensible or conceptual) and judgments (for example, about the possibility or impossibility of realizing something) that are foundational to phenomena like love and hatred (Brentano 1995, 35 247-9, 256-8; 1973, 172, 201; Chisholm 1986, 22-3).

In particular, Brentano also faces the frequent objection that acts of the will are actually voluntary or free (and therefore moral), while feelings are

not, and that this difference is radical or essential. In response, he contends that both acts of will and feelings result in truly free, voluntary, and moral acts: “There are also free acts among the mental activities which cannot be called acts of will and which are ordinarily called feelings” (Brentano 1995, 254). This reveals a whole world of emotional phenomena that are relevant 5 to moral life and characterized as free in a peculiar way that refers directly to the character of the person who loves or hates (as phenomenological ethics would later develop).

Thus, Brentano recognizes in Aristotle the very same thesis regarding the fundamental unity of acts of love and hate in general: “Aristotle long 10 since included these under the term *órexis*” like Descartes, who “says this class embraces the *voluntates, sive affectus*” (Brentano 1902, 14).

2.2. Correct love: Superior appetite or emotion 15

Brentano’s contribution to this fundamental class of phenomena can be seen in its ability to illuminate a necessary difference that reveals a foundation of moral knowledge, namely the difference between blind feelings and correct feelings. If all phenomena related to love were arbitrary or blind, if 20 all were purely subjective and there were no objectivity in them, we would be obliged to conclude that moral knowledge is exclusively rational. But internal experience suggests that this knowledge does indeed contain an affective element, since the good is attractive and appealing.

Certainly, when examining feelings or emotions unequivocally, arbitrary emotions are present, analogous to judgments—“Our pleasure or 25 displeasure is often quite like blind judgment, only an instinctive or habitual impulse” (Brentano 1902, 18). An empiricist view of affectivity only sees this type of feeling and is blind to need or objectivity, believing that they cannot be the basis for any necessary knowledge and 30 cannot provide any moral criteria. But not all feelings follow this path; nor do all judgments either.

“We have already said that we are endowed by nature with a pleasure for some tastes and an antipathy for others, both of which are purely instinctive. We also naturally take pleasure in clear insight, displeasure in error or 35 ignorance. “All men,” says Aristotle in the beautiful introductory words of

his *Metaphysics* (980a 22), “naturally desire knowledge.” This desire is an example which will serve our purpose. It is a pleasure of that higher form which is analogous to *self-evidence* in the sphere of judgment.” (Brentano 1902, 19)

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For correct or superior emotions, a certain need is experienced that emerges not from the subject that loves or hates, but rather from what is loved or hated. “When I recognize my acts of loving and preferring as correct, I also recognize that it is impossible for anyone to recognize the opposite stand as

10 correct” (Brentano 1973, 135). These phenomena of love and hate are lived as justified, correct, and adequate in terms of their object. In fact, Brentano recommends comparing this with evident judgments in order to capture the peculiarity of correct emotions:

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“But is an act of loving or hating really able to reveal itself to us as correct? Does this constitute a real perceptible difference in such acts? We no longer need be embarrassed by this question. For if we pose it in a manner analogous to the way in which we posed the question whether a true judgment is perceptibly different from a false one, we shall find an analogous answer.”

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(Brentano 1973, 131)

Brentano himself uses this procedure. For instance, when referring to the example of experiencing pleasure in knowledge, he says:

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“In our species it [the experience of pleasure] is universal. Were there another species which, while having different preferences from us in respect of sensible qualities, were opposed to us in loving error for its own sake and hating insight, then assuredly we should not in the latter as in the former case say: that it was a matter of taste, *de gustibus non est disputandum*; rather

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we should here answer decisively that such love and hatred were fundamentally absurd, that such a species hated what was undeniably good, and loved what was undeniably bad in itself.” (Brentano 1902, 19-20; 1973, 132)

In this paragraph, Brentano actually presents a double comparison. He offers

35 a superior emotion in comparison with its opposite (love and hatred towards knowledge) and at the same time with a blind emotion (pleasure from sensations).

Here, too, Brentano sees in Aristotle the same distinction. He notes it in cases of opposition between the two forms of emotions or appetites:

“Aristotle recognizes a right and a wrong kind of desire (*órexis orthé kai ouk orthé*) and that what is desired (*orekton*) is not always the good (*De Anima*, III, 10). In the same way he affirms in respect of pleasure (*hedoné*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that not every pleasure is good; there is a pleasure in the bad, which is itself bad (*Nic. Eth.* X, 2). In his *Metaphysics* he distinguishes between a lower and a higher kind of desire (*epithumia* and *boulésis*); whatever is desired by the higher kind for its own sake is truly good (*Metaph.* 1072a 28). A certain approach to the right view seems already to have been reached here. It is of special interest (a point I have only discovered later) that Aristotle has suggested an analogy between ethical subjectivism and the logical subjectivism of Protagoras, and equally repudiates both (*Metaph.* 1062b16 and 1063a5)”. (Brentano 1902, 82) 5 10 15

And:

“It may happen that, at the same time, one and the same thing is both pleasing and displeasing... Aristotle has said: “It happens that desires enter into conflict with each other. This happens when the reason (*lógos*) and the lower desires (*epithumia*) are in opposition” (*De Anima* III, 10). And again: “Now the lower desires (*epithumia*) gain a victory over the higher, now the higher over the lower, and as” (according to the ancient astronomy) “one celestial sphere the other, so one desire draws off the other with it when the individual has lost the firm rule over himself” (*De Anima* II).” (Brentano 1902, 85-6) 20 25

However, Brentano disagrees with Aristotle about how to know or recognize this difference of emotions, as will be discussed in what follows. 30

3. Discrepancy between Brentano and Aristotle over the knowledge of “correct love” as correct

5 3.1. *Intuitive knowledge of correctness in Brentano*

Regarding the knowledge of correct emotion as correct—as well as correct judgment as correct—Brentano’s originality consists in pointing out its intuitive nature. That is to say, such an emotion’s correctness (or rightness) is recognized directly in itself, in the affective-intentional mode in which it consists. It is an immediate perception that is obvious, especially when comparing different emotions, as in the cases cited above. This perception captures the correct character of an emotion (analogous to evidence of a judgment), which is very different from its simple existence or a certain degree of intensity (just as evidence is very different from an intense degree of conviction). A correct emotion captured as such is precisely a direct and sure sign that its object is worthy of love or hatred, that it is good or bad.

20 “It [being correct] cannot be because of the strength of the impulse, for under certain circumstances our enjoyment of sensual pleasure can be as strong [compared to the desire to know]. It has quite different grounds. In the case of ordinary feelings the violence arises from an instinctive impulse; here, the natural pleasure we take is a more exalted form of love, experienced as being right.” (Brentano 1973, 32)

25 Thus, “[w]e call something good when the love relating to it is right. That which can be loved with a right love, that which is worthy of love, is good in the widest sense of the term” (Brentano 1902, 16).

30 But here Brentano stretches to maintain a curious balance. On the one hand, this correctness is undoubtedly a phenomenal feature of emotion itself; on the other, the correctness of emotion only has meaning and a reason for being on the basis of the loved object. This is why we can say that love and hate are correct according to whether we love the good or hate the bad, or, inversely, incorrect according to whether we love the bad and hate the good. At the same time, in cases of correct behavior, our emotion corresponds to the object and is in harmony with its value (*mit seinem Werte*),

while in cases of incorrect behavior our emotion contradicts the object, disharmonizing with its value (*mit seinem Werte*) (Brentano 1958, 25).

This dependence on the correctness of a correct emotion with respect to its object is obviously not based on the mere existence of an object, but rather on an object's essence, which is represented in some way. As such, Brentano 5 is forced to admit that when accurately examining specific cases, correct emotions do not just bear a resemblance to immediately evident judgments in general; they also resemble in particular those cases in which judgment arises, as it were, from concepts. This is so in cases where representation triggers evident contradiction (for example, when the representation of a 10 round square leads to an obvious negation of such an object). Analogously, as Brentano notes, the love of knowing characterized as correct, for example, arises from the representation of knowing, just as hatred of pain characterized as correct arises from the representation of pain (Brentano 1969, 152).

In this way, correct emotion emerges immediately from concepts, which 15 makes it correct and leads us to know it as such:

“Just as axioms arise from the contemplation of general concepts, are discerned from the concepts (*ex terminis*), acts of interest that are experienced as being correct originate directly in general concepts. When we perceive 20 within ourselves such an act of love, we perceive clearly at a single stroke, without any induction from particular cases, the goodness of the entire class in question.” (Brentano 1973, 136; 1969, 111).

3.2. *Criticism of the knowledge of correct love in Aristotle* 25

In view of the quotations above, the following criticism of Aristotle may come as something of a surprise. Thus, it is worth repeating in its entirety. According to Brentano, it seems that, 30

“Aristotle had fallen into the very obvious temptation of believing that we can know the good as good, independent of the excitation of the emotions (*Metaph.* 1063a 29; *De Anima* III, 9 and 10). (...) Considered in this aspect, the moralist of sentiment, Hume, has here the advantage of him, 35 for Hume rightly urges, how is any one to recognize that anything is to be loved without experience the love? I have said that the temptation

into which Aristotle has fallen appears quite conceivable. It arises from the fact that, along with the experience of an emotion qualified as right there is given at the same time the knowledge that the object itself is good. Thus it may easily happen that the relation is then perverted and

5 the love is thought to follow as a consequence of the knowledge, and recognized as right by reason of its agreement with this its rule.” (Brentano 1902, 82-3).

In addition, in the same passage, Brentano compares Aristotle’s alleged error to that of Descartes: “The cases are essentially analogous; in both cases

10 the distinguishing mark is sought in the special character of the idea which forms the basis of the act rather than in the act itself qualified as right.” Brentano also adds another reason that leads us to affirm in general that the knowledge of the good consists primarily in an immediate

15 judgment of what is considered good. He argues that “just as love and hate may be directed towards single individuals, so also they may be directed to whole classes,” on which he also cites Aristotle (*Rhet.* II, 4) and concludes:

20 “Acts of loving and hating, where in this way there is an underlying general conception, also possess frequently the character of rightness. And so quite naturally along with the experience of this given act of love or hate, the goodness or badness of the entire class becomes manifest at one stroke, and apart from every induction from special cases. (...) It is easy to

25 understand how near the temptation lies, in the case of such knowledge of a general truth without any induction from single cases otherwise demanded in truths of experience, entirely to overlook the preparatory experience of a feeling having the character of rightness, and to regard the universal judgment as an immediate synthetic *a priori* form of knowledge.” (Brentano

30 1902, 86)

Although this criticism certainly seems surprising in light of the previous arguments, it is understandable if we recall an earlier contention, namely that, according to Brentano, it is the emotion itself (like the judgment)

35 that is correct. As such, its correctness must be found and experienced in this very intentional mode, not in any underlying representation, even if it causes such love to be correct. We must distinguish between something’s

reason for being (*ratio essendi*) and something's reason for being known (*ratio cognoscendi*). However, examining Brentano's equilibrium and the relation between *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi* of what is rightly loved (or of what is good) would take us beyond the limits of the current article (Sánchez-Migallón 1996, 152-68). In any case, we cannot settle whether Brentano's criticism of Aristotle is fair without first carefully examining the Greek philosopher's stance. 5

4. The Aristotelian doctrine of "correct love" 10

4.1. Órexis in Aristotle's practical philosophy

We must first clarify the Aristotelian terminology that Brentano evokes, especially the concept of desire or órexis. According to Brentano, Aristotle would maintain that desires and emotions or feelings should be included under the heading of órexis. But is this actually the case? 15

What are the uses and meanings of órexis in Aristotle's practical philosophy? Do any of these uses and meanings correspond to Brentano's view? We know that Brentano defends the autonomy of mental acts related to preference and rejection with respect to acts related to representing and passing judgment. According to him, they are mutually exclusive. The former set seems to play a fundamental role in the origin of moral knowledge. Furthermore, according to the German philosopher, there is evidence from the history of philosophy in support of such a thesis, for example, in Descartes's moral psychology and even in Aristotle's ethics. Here we will only mention Brentano's references to Aristotle, according to which the Greek philosopher explicitly upheld the same distinction with regard to mental acts and coined the term órexis (plural, *orexeis*) to refer to mental acts of preference and rejection. 20 25 30

As a recent interpreter of Aristotelian moral theory notes, "Aristotle does not provide us with a specific worked-out account of desire" (Pearson 2012, 1). Although Aristotle considered it an essential element for elaborating a complete theory of human action, he did not write a single treatise on it. However, there is space to examine several texts of Aristotle which 35

indirectly address desire. Below, we will examine three classifications that are found in different places within the *corpus aristotelicum*.

- a) According to Aristotle, some living beings possess the faculty of *órexis*, through which they are directed to things by perceiving them as *good*. But *órexis* does not exist as such; rather, there are types of *órexis*, namely *epithumia*, *thumos*, and *boulésis*. Each of them is evaluative, that is, they are directed to things according to their *attractiveness*, though each does so in a different manner. Aristotle believes that *órexis* is not exclusive to human beings and that it is also found in living beings that are able to perceive (*aisthesis*). He argues that animal movement is inexplicable without the existence of a capacity that guides and incites it. We could roughly classify the *modalities of desire* according to Aristotle as follows: Desire as *epithumia* implies a search for things that offer pleasure. Desire as *thumos* implies an aspiration toward *restituting* previously suffered pain. Finally, desire as *boulésis* implies the *deliberate* pursuit of a rationally-known good as such (OS 432b4-7). Only the latter, Aristotle argues, properly reveals *the good* to the rational agent capable of *prâxis*: “Aristotle possesses two different notions of ‘good,’ one which includes pleasure (and the object of the *thumos*), and one which does not, but instead picks out the object of *boulésis*. Animals can desire things as good in the broad sense, since in this sense of ‘good’ pleasure counts as a good, but it does not follow that they can desire things as good in the narrow sense, since to do so may require rational capacities they lack” (Pearson 2012, 86).
- b) Aristotle also offers a second typology when speaking of *órexis*, namely the distinction between rational and irrational desires. The former is always preceded by deliberation, while the latter lack anything like deliberation.
- c) Finally, in a few places Aristotle states that there is such a thing as “correct desire,” although this is certainly less prominent than the other two classifications mentioned. In his consideration of practical truth (*aletheia praktiké*) in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he takes up this topic. The context explains the presence of “correct desire” (*órexis orthé*), which does not share the exact same meaning that Brentano assigns to

it when he compares it with his expression “correct love”. For Aristotle, desire can be catalogued as correct (*orthé*) when the acting agent chooses that which is right in connection with “right” reason (*orthos lógos*):

“What affirmation and negation are in thinking, pursuit and avoidance are in desire; so that since moral excellence is a state concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right (*ten orexin orthen*), if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts. Now this kind of intellect and of truth is practical.” (NE 1139a21-6) 5 10

Along with this brief classification of desire (*órexis*), it is helpful to look into Aristotle’s view of desire with respect to emotions and feeling. The vocabulary that he used to refer to the emotional field remained consistent; just as desires are *orexeis*, emotions or feelings are *pathe* (singular *pathos*). *Pathe* are studied as such in the *Rhetoric*, and not in the *Ethics* or *De Anima*, because they are chiefly of interest to rhetoricians or politicians. According to Aristotle, the role of emotion in moral theory is indirect, inasmuch as it becomes of ethical value once it is incorporated into the field of *práxis*. Does Aristotle identify *órexis* with *pathé*? If in both cases the subject takes a position with respect to things that implies a practical and therefore non-theoretical evaluation, then they are at least included under the same set of mental activities. Does Aristotle call those kinds of acts or activities *orexeis*? Not at all. He also writes about *pathe* as something distinct from *orexeis*. Does he approach them from the same perspective, namely from their influence on *práxis*? Yes, because they are elements to consider in a general theory of action (Fortenbaugh 1975). Therefore, for Aristotle, *órexis* does not encompass *pathe*, as Brentano seems to suggest. Yet, it is clear that both elements are vital in genuinely comprehending human action, understood fundamentally as *praxis*, in its multiple dimensions (NE 1105b19-23; Rorty 1980, 1996). 15 20 25 30

In short, the term *órexis* is polysemic for Aristotle. There is no single classification from which to begin; rather, there are several, each of which illuminates some interesting aspects of desire. While Brentano’s interpretation of *órexis* in Aristotle is far from literal, there are nevertheless two more points worth considering in these classifications that relate to Brentano’s exegesis: (1) the term *boulésis* as “rational desire” and its possible connection with the expression “*órexis orthé*” or “correct desire;” and (2) the 35

relationship between *orexeis* and *pathe* as fundamental conditions for understanding human *prâxis*.

5 4.2. “Correct desire” as *boulêsis* and its connection with *prâxis*

We now turn to the function that “correct desire” fulfills in Aristotelian ethics, putting it in connection with other fundamental concepts such as *prâxis* and *proairesis*. Desires can be rational or irrational, but only a rational desire can be “correct” in the sense of properly aspiring to something “good.” As Aristotle argues, both rationality and the desiderative faculty make it possible for a genuine agent of *prâxis* to arise. It is only the confluence of both factors that enables the action (*prâxis*) since it always presupposes, in any case, a deliberate decision or *proairesis*.

15 Aristotle defines *proairesis* as *ôrexis bouletiké*, deliberate desire (*NE* 1113a10, 1139a23, 31). “Deliberate desire” ultimately enables the agent to act because, without it, there is no end to which the agent aspires and that fulfills all her aspirations. The choice does not contain within itself a concrete good to which she aspires, but rather, and above all, a whole or totalizing view of the good life. As Vigo affirms by paraphrasing Aristotle, “[a]gents of *prâxis* are characterized by action; in one way or another, on the basis of a certain representation of the good or accomplished life, however little articulated and deficient said representation may be in many cases” (Vigo 2008, 64).

For “correct desire” to be established, the desire must be “rational” and, therefore, “deliberated” beforehand. Without the intervention of the reasoning part of the soul, there is no genuine appreciation of the good for the agent of *prâxis*. In each case, to be able to judge the (in)adequacy of what a particular desire presents to the agent—to determine whether or not the desire is right—reference must be made to the representation of the good or accomplished life to which one aspired in the first place. Otherwise, there would be no real distinction between the desire for an apparent good and the desire for a real good. If what it refers to is that there are desires that reveal the good in itself and that the correctness of such a desire can be recognized and therefore the “good” can be known, then Aristotle would reply that such a desire must be deliberated, which does not guarantee the correctness of the desire. Rather, correctness happens when the desire is appropriate for a subject that has decided to live a life according to what

is proper to human beings—rationality—and to the habitual and excellent exercise of said function (*NE* I, 7; Gómez Lobo 1999).

Therefore, while Brentano’s much-loved expression “correct desire” does appear in certain places within Aristotle’s corpus, the latter’s use of it has a different connotation. For Brentano, Aristotle was referring to the existence of a logic proper to desire, and the “good” as its object, to judge its correctness or incorrectness. Yet, for Aristotle, such correctness or incorrectness only appears if a certain representation of the good life chosen by deliberate decision functions as a rule. For, as we have seen, there is only correct desire where there is deliberate desire. This deliberate desire finds its genuine expression in deliberate decision or *proairesis* with which the rational agent’s *prâxis* is initiated, so to speak. Until such a deliberate decision is made, it is impossible to fully speak of *prâxis* and, therefore, of right or correct desire.

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4.3. “Correct love” in the Aristotelian theory of *spoudaîos* and *philia*

Finally, we turn to the partial coincidence that Brentano observes when he affirms that Aristotle maintains the importance of “correct love” for knowledge of “the good,” although he later confused its priority with respect to representation. Does Aristotelian ethics contain something like the phenomenon of “correct love”? We have already seen that Brentano’s exegesis on “desire” and, above all, “correct desire” in Aristotle does not allow for a complete identification of both positions; on the contrary. While Brentano’s position clearly identifies the origin of moral knowledge—above all, that of the “good”—in feelings, Aristotle deems necessary (at minimum) the concomitant presence of the rational and deliberative parts of the soul, which is reflected in the expressions “deliberate decision” (or *proairesis*) and “deliberate desire” (or *boulêsis*). However, in some places (*NE* VIII-IX), Aristotle seems to refer to something akin to Brentano’s “correct love,” specifically in the context of *spoudaîos* and *philia*. In fact, the centrality and unity of *spoudaîos*¹ (Schottlaender 1980; Aubenque 1986; Gastaldi 1987; Horn

¹ There is no adequate modern translation for the term “*spoudaîos*” that can capture the meaning given to it in Aristotle’s practical philosophy. A paradigmatic example of this can be seen in the Spanish translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, by Julián Marías and

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2019) and *philia* (Martí Sánchez 2017) in Aristotle's practical philosophy are very revealing.

The *spoudaios*, Aristotle notes, is a standard and measure of "the good" in the proper sense, rather than in a merely apparent sense:

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"If these consequences are unpleasing, are we to say that absolutely and in truth the good is the object of wish, but for each person the apparent good; that that which is in truth an object of wish is an object of wish to the good man (*spoudaios*), while any chance thing may be so to the bad man (...). The good man judges each class of things rightly, and in each the truth appears to him. For each state of character has its own ideas of the noble and the pleasant, and perhaps the good man differs from others most by seeing the truth in each class of things, being as it were the norm and measure of them." (NE 1113a23-33).

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According to this, not only does the good man judge in the correct way theoretically, but he is also in the habit of acting correctly and, in this way, of desiring correctly. Once desire has adapted, that which is appetizing is no longer a mere good; it becomes what is adequate as such. In this way, we might say that it is not that the good man knows "the good" from a representation, but rather that the good appears to him as a part of his ethos or virtuous character. In addition, this goodness of character that provides familiarity with "the good" is best seen in the case of friendship or *philia*, a particular form of love. It is perhaps fitting to see here in Aristotle's text a sort of happy coincidence with Brentano's theory of "correct love."

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In a passage that is rarely cited in commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains what characterizes the "good man" or the "virtuous" (*spoudaios*), and why that makes him a friend in the full or perfect sense of the word. The passage in question runs as follows:

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"Now each of these [characteristics] is true of the good man's (*spoudaios*) relation to himself (...). For [1] his opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same things with all his soul; and therefore [2] he wishes for himself what is

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María Aráujo, where at least five different translations are used for the term, including upright, serious, good, virtuous, and noble. This is why we have chosen to leave the word untranslated in most cases and, when it seemed necessary, to translate it as "virtuous."

good and what seems so; and [3] does it (for it is characteristic of the good man to exert himself for the good); and [4] does so for his own sake (for he does it for the sake of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the man himself); and [5] he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element by virtue of which he thinks. For existence is good 5
to the good man, and each man wishes himself what is good, while no one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else (for that matter, even now God possesses the good); he wishes for this only on condition of being whatever he is; and the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in 10
him. And such a man [6] wishes to live with himself, for he does so with pleasure, since the memories of his past acts are delightful and his hopes for the future are good, and therefore pleasant. [7] His mind is well stored too with subjects of contemplation. And [8] he grieves and rejoices, more than any other, with himself; for the same thing is always painful, and the same 15
thing always pleasant, and not one thing at one time and another at another; [9] he has, so to speak, nothing to regret.” (NE 1166a10-29)

While it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of this passage here, it is important to point out, on the one hand, the correlation that Aristotle 20
establishes between *spoudaios* and his ability to desire “the good” in itself; virtue’s presence eliminates the distance between the “good” in appearance and the “good” in an absolute sense. And, on the other, consistency in “judging the good” implies the acquisition of virtuous character; that is, things always appear to the *spoudaios* as “correctly good” because he desires 25
in the right way. Aristotle says as much elsewhere: “But in all such matters [pleasure and pain] that which appears to the good man (*spoudaios*) is thought to be really so. If this is correct, as seems to be, and excellence and the good man as such are the measure of each thing, those also will be pleasures which appear so to him, and those things pleasant which he 30
enjoys” (NE 1176a15-19); “A good man (*spoudaios*) may make the best even of poverty and disease, and the other ills of life; but he can only attain happiness under the opposite conditions (for this also has been determined in the *Ethics*, that the good man [*spoudaios*] is he for whom, because he is excellent, the things that are absolutely good are good; it is also plain that 35
his use of these goods must be excellent and in the absolute sense good)” (Pol. 1332a19-25). Now, in all these cases, the *spoudaios* is moved not by the

representation of “the good,” but rather because he recognizes “the good” in his passions and desires. Here, Brentano’s interpretation seems accurate and suggestive. In this regard, Wieland notes, “[o]nce he has become accustomed to experiencing the passions in the right way, man can rely, in his
5 decisions of action, on the motivating and regulating force of those passions” (Wieland 1999, 114).

If, as Aristotle states in several places in Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, only good men or *spoudaioi* are capable of true friendship, then he also implies that only when one has a “right or virtuous love” can one know
10 “the good” as such for oneself and for one’s friend. Aristotle offers a definition of this type of friendship in the *Rhetoric*: “We may describe friendly feeling (*philein*) towards anyone as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about. A friend is one who feels this and
15 excites these feelings in return. Those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends” (*Rhet.* 1380b36-81a3). And in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he specifies that: “Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in excellence; for those wish well alike to each other
20 *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and excellence is an enduring thing” (*NE* 1156b7-12).

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5. Conclusion

This discussion certainly does not solve the ambiguity or confusion that Brentano attributes to Aristotle when he states that “the temptation into which Aristotle has fallen appears quite conceivable. It arises from the fact
30 that, *along with the experience of an emotion qualified as right there is given at the same time the knowledge that the object itself is good*. Thus it may easily happen that the relation is then perverted and the love is thought to follow as a consequence of the knowledge, and recognized as right by reason of its agreement with this its rule” (Brentano 1902, 82-3, emphasis added). Indeed,
35 what really establishes the love of the virtuous friend for himself and for his friend? Does knowledge of “the good” make one able to love correctly, or is it rather one’s willingness to correctly love that gives one knowledge of “the

good”? Considering Aristotle’s description of the acquisition of virtuous character, it is clear that a deliberate decision for a good life makes correct love possible. But this character, once established, becomes itself a source of knowledge of the good through the experience of desire and correct love.

Thus, Aristotle’s reflection seems to contain a kind of circularity rather than any sort of confusion. Brentano, for his part, displays a degree of originality and earns the merit of better understanding (not least in Aristotle’s work) the moral importance of affectivity and how it is rooted in the virtuous or good person by emphasizing the fundamental unity of affective experiences and their role in moral knowledge.

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