54
ADOLF REINACH

Marco Tedeschini

54.1. A short biographical note
Adolf Bernard Philipp Reinach was born in Mainz on December 23, 1883. Reinach was a leading figure among Husserl’s early pupils who animated the circles of Munich and Göttingen and, together with Alexander Pänzer and Johannes Daubert, was a leading figure of the so-called Phenomenological Realism (Salice 2016). Between 1909 and 1914 he taught in Göttingen alongside Husserl; then, at the outbreak of World War I, he left academia to volunteer for the army. Adolf Reinach was killed in action outside Diksmuide in Flanders, on November 16, 1917. In his short intellectual life, he tackled logic and theory of knowledge, ontology, psychology, theory of law, physics and religious experience through phenomenology. His most important work is On The A Priori Foundations of the Civil Law. In what follows, I will outline an intellectual and philosophical profile of this prominent figure, one of the protagonists of the emerging Phenomenological Movement (Spiegelberg 1982).

54.2. What Reinach’s realistic phenomenology is
As a phenomenologist, Reinach was interested in investigating phenomena, that is, anything that can be the object of our experience as intuitively appears in the latter. He believed that our experience is intentional, i.e., it is directedness toward something. According to Reinach and other phenomenologists – including Husserl – phenomenology aims to clarify the essence of phenomena through the analysis of the experience in which they appear. As Reinach himself states, the concept of essence (Wesen) is “ambiguous” (Vieldeutig) (1989e, 362). However, by this concept Reinach often seems to mean the “so-being” or “Whatness” of something (e.g., Reinach 1989g, see in particular 144).

Although he never called himself nor his phenomenology “realist”, Reinach was regarded as such by his followers – both of his time (Hildebrand 1960, 489–490; Stein 2002, 220; Ingarden 1968, 106–135, see in particular, 113) and of today (Dubois and Smith 2014) – precisely because of this phenomenological quest for essences. However, as Reinach states, the task of clarifying essences is merely “a means” (1989g, 156): in fact, the ultimate goal of phenomenology is to grasp the laws that “hold true of” these essences (Ibid.). Only thus can
this philosophical approach become a rigorous science and give all other sciences their proper foundation (Ibid., 163).

This target was the same as Husserl’s. In fact, even after the transcendental turn, Husserl thought that eidetic sciences should be grounded in phenomenology (Hua III/1, 5–32/153–160). Nevertheless, Reinach refused Husserl’s transcendental reform of phenomenology because, as far as we know, if the method of the phenomenological reduction “were necessary, then the entity in its being and likewise the being itself could not be inquired with the method and […] every ontology would be precluded” (Conrad 1992, 83, translation is mine). Reinach thought that the very being of phenomena would have become lost with this reduction, so he moved away from Husserl. Probably, Reinach understood this method as an actual reduction of phenomena to consciousness, i.e., as the loss of the phenomena’s independence from it – which is exactly what the concept of “essence” should grant them. Indeed, with regard to Ideas I, he critically stated that “according to Husserl phenomenology and the eidetic are to be separated” (Reinach, 1989e, 362, translation is mine) – which is exactly what he could not accept. As Conrad put it, Reinach’s phenomenology was a “phenomenology without reduction” (1992, 83, translation is mine).

54.3. The theory of judgment and the concept of intentionality

Reinach’s theory of judgment constitutes the epistemological framework of his phenomenology. This set of assumptions on epistemology establishes the ground of Reinach’s phenomenological philosophy.

By means of judgment, one seizes and expresses the laws of essence, which, as we have seen, are the ultimate aim of the phenomenologist. In fact, judgment is nothing but “my reply to the unity that appears in front of me in the objective state of affairs” (Reinach 1989f, 463, translation is mine). States of affairs are the correspondent intentional object of judgment. Hence, there are states of affairs that correspond to the laws of essence. I will come back to this point in the next section. Meanwhile, it is necessary to clarify Reinach’s original perspective on judgment.

Within the general definition of judgment just outlined, Reinach distinguishes two kinds: 1) conviction or belief, and 2) assertion (1989b, 331). A belief is a position-taking act – an antepredicative “state of consciousness” (Ibid., 320) – in which the subject posits a state of affairs as certainly being. An assertion is a linguistic act, which is spontaneous, i.e., “made by us” (Ibid.). A belief prescribes four possibilities for a judgment to be such. The subject can assume a certain positive or negative position concerning a certain state of affairs, which in turn can be either positive or negative. Therefore, there can be either the positive conviction (belief) of a positive or negative state of affairs, or the negative conviction (disbelief) of a positive or negative state of affairs (Ibid., 351–354). The positive or negative conviction of a positive state of affairs is formed through the presentation of a positive state of affairs or by “grasping” a “conflict” between a state I believed in and the actual state that is presented and “is evident to us” (Ibid. 351).

However, “if we were to limit ourselves to reading off those states which are given to us by the world of real and ideal objects, then such a thing as a negative state would never be presented to us” (Ibid., 353). In order to “read off” a negative state of affairs (i.e., to grasp it) a subject must firstly grasp a positive state of affairs by virtue of a presentational act (e.g., 3 is greater than 2). Secondly, the subject must refer to a negative state of affairs (e.g., 3 is not smaller than 2). Thirdly, the subject should seize the relation of necessary connection between “the judged negative state – the being-not-smaller-than of the number three” and “the apprehended state – the being greater than” (Ibid.). Accordingly, the two states are “directly bound up” (Ibid.).
If judgment is a “reply” to what appears to the subject, then what is at stake in Reinach’s theory of negative judgment is a realism of the negative. There are negative states of affairs, that is, negative entities that subsist “wholly independently of any conscious subject which may grasp it” (Ibid., 361), just like positive states. Reinach tried to show this phenomenologically in his essay *On the Theory of Negative Judgment* as his first and explicit goal; however, phenomenologists of subsequent generations did not develop this approach and some even criticized it (Ingarden 1965, 299–311; Chrudzimiski 2012).

This view also concerns the second kind of judgment: assertion. The latter is the way through which “states of affairs are adequately grasped; here they achieve expression” (Reinach 1989f, 459, translation is mine). This means that, by mirroring a state of affairs, an assertion articulates it and its elements in the form of “a is P” (Reinach 1989b, 356) through “successive acts of grasping” (Ibid., 355).

Once again, assertions can be either positive or negative. Negative assertions feature an added “function”, i.e., a word without an “objectual correlate” (Ibid., 358): namely, the “negating function” (Ibid., 360) that transforms the assertion “a is P” into “a is not P”. Be it positive or negative, an assertion always rests on a *positive conviction* (Ibid., 355). Indeed, according to Reinach, a subject must believe in what they state. This is only possible through a *belief*. In fact, while on the one hand it is the sole act of judgment that can arise from an evident presentation of its intentional object (Ibid., 343; 352), on the other hand, assertions are not directly based on intuitive acts. This depends on Reinach’s theory of intentionality, which is quite different from Husserl’s.

Reinach agrees with Husserl that the “intentional” character of experience means “that it possesses a ‘directedness toward’ something objectual, and this, in turn, presupposes that something is ‘at hand’ for consciousness” (Ibid., 321). However, Reinach distinguishes two ways of being “at hand” for an object, which correspond to an intuitive and a non-intuitive directedness. The first one is the *presentation* (*Vorstellung*), which is “a bare receptive ‘having’ of the object” (Ibid., 323) that makes the object “‘present’ to us, ‘there’ for us” (Ibid.). The second one is the *meaning* (*Meinen*). This way to be “at hand” of the object is “always linguistically clothed” and essentially concerned with “a spontaneity of directedness and a temporal punctuality” (Ibid.). Between these two ways there is a “fundamental opposition” (Ibid., 325): presenting has many ways of referring to objects (seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, etc.), whereas meaning can just *mean* objects through words. Presentation “presents” or “gives” the object to us (Ibid., 328), while “in the sphere of meaning there is absolutely nothing to hand which is presented” (Ibid.).

Therefore, presentation and meaning cannot be understood respectively as the intuitionally filled and intuitionally empty (or sense-bestowing) acts (Ibid., 326), about which Husserl writes in his *Logical Investigations*. In actual fact, Reinach aims to make some “corrections” (*Korrekturen*) to the latter, which he does in a bid to refuse the very concept of the “synthesis of fulfilment” (Reinach 1989a, 339, translation is mine; Hua XIX, 263; Salice 2012, 231; see section 54.5.). This distinction between an ante-predicative and a predicative intentionality reflects the distinction between conviction and assertion, while also determining the ontological (and even epistemic) dependence of the latter on the former.

To return to the main goal of phenomenology according to Reinach, it is clear that finding the laws of essence is the last step of a process, which starts with intuitive acts (presentations) and ends with an act (assertion) that is formed logically and linguistically. Hence, adequately grasping a state of affairs means completing a process that leads the subject to seize something in and by an assertion. The intermediate step of this process is the conviction, which is rooted in a peculiar intentional act that depends on presentation and actually (i.e., intuitively) gives the state of affairs to the subject. Reinach calls it “knowledge” or “apprehension” (*Erkenntnis*).
54.4. Knowledge and states of affairs

Despite assertion being the only act that adequately grasps and expresses a state of affairs, Reinach did not call Erkenntnis either this act or the entire process leading to assertion. As a phenomenologist, he believed that knowledge in a proper sense could only be an act with an intuitive content. In his essay on Reflection, he speaks of “comprehension” (Verstehen) to name the way in which the acts pertaining to the sphere of meaning grasp objects. Since one has no direct access to phenomenal reality through meaning, if one comprehends, e.g., an a priori law, one has to move from the sphere of thought to the correspondent evident intuition of the meant state of affairs in order to base one’s comprehension on evidence. This is exactly what the “intellectual reflection” (Reinach 1989c, 280–290, translation is mine) does: it brings the subject to grasp with evidence something that was “simply” understood before. Thus, comprehending a state of affairs still does not mean that the state of affairs is evident to us. Equally, the assertion of a state of affairs, which belongs to the sphere of meaning, requires in turn an actual intuition in order to be justified.

In fact, Reinach defines Erkenntnis (knowledge, apprehension) as the experience in which a state of affairs is actually given to us (1989b, 341). On the one hand, knowledge and states of affairs are completely bound to each other. On the other hand, however, this does not mean that states of affairs cannot be grasped without an act of apprehension (e.g., by an act of imagination, or by remembering it). Bringing a state of affairs to mind is not the same as apprehending it, “for it is essential to an act of apprehension that in it the correlate state of affairs is, in the fullest sense, there for us” (Ibid., 344). That is to say, according to Reinach, grasping a state of affairs “with evidence” (Ibid., 375 n. 31; 1989g, 159–160).

The notion of “state of affairs” was very controversial in the School of Brentano during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Smith 1992; Frechette 2014). Many among Brentano’s pupils defined it as the intentional target of judgment in order to distinguish it from that of presentation (i.e., the object). Reinach followed this debate and recalled the theories of Stumpf, Meinong and Husserl.1 Reinach also refers the act of judgment to the Sachverhalt and distinguishes the “objectual formations of the form being P of a” (the state of affairs) from the “objects in the strict sense”, e.g., physical things, tones, numbers or propositions (1989b, 338). Accordingly, states of affairs are then “the so-being of something” (Ibid., 346). As seen above, however, Reinach revised the strict correlation between judgment and state of affairs by introducing a distinction, on the side of intentional experiences, between “judgment” and “knowledge”. He also stated that the act of knowledge is the only act that not only grasps but also actually gives this state of affairs. Since knowledge relies on presentations and states of affairs rely on objects, Reinach argues “quite generally that the entities which are the elements of a state of affairs are perceived, seen, heard, or grasped categorically. And, on the basis of these ‘presentations’ the state of affairs itself is apprehended” (Ibid., 343).

Thus, what the act of knowledge really gives is the “unified multiplicity” or the “synthetic unity of certain elements”, e.g., “the being red of a rose”, (Reinach 1989f, 462) to which the assertion “the rose is red” refers. Reinach calls this synthetic unity “structure” (Gliederung) (Ibid.). What characterizes such structure is its “being”. According to Reinach, “the ‘being’ in the rose is red; the being similar, the being warm, is always what is identical in a state of affairs. However, the factual material can vary case by case” (1989a, 344, translation is mine). Thus, Reinach distinguishes the factual material, which “underlies” and constitutes the state of affairs, from the latter, which is its being in a proper sense. Reinach does not explain the relationship between state of affairs and the underlying objects or its elements, but according to some authors (Smith and Mulligan 1982; Smith 1987) it is a founding relationship (an
existential dependence) in the sense Husserl established in the third *Logical Investigation* (§14). What is certain is that, for Reinach, the being (the state of affairs) has logical properties that objects cannot have: states of affairs “stand in relations of ground and consequent” (Reinach 1989b, 338), “suffer modalities” (*Ibid.*, 339), “may be either positive or negative” (*Ibid.*, 340). Because of these logical features, Reinach believed that states of affairs are the ontological foundations of “traditional logic” (*Ibid.*, 376 n. 40).

States of affairs suffer modalities insofar as they can be necessary, possible, probable, and so on (*Ibid.*, 339). A necessary state of affairs is an a priori one (Reinach 1989g, 158). That is because a priori structures are “forms of states of affairs” (*Ibid.*, 159), and because Reinach defines essential connections “a necessarily-having-to-be-so, and an in-virtue-of-essence-cannot-be-otherwise” (*Ibid.*, 156). Essential connections are not to be identified with essences. Nevertheless, as said at the beginning, Reinach speaks about essences in terms of the so-being of something, that is, in the sense of its “Whatness” (*Ibid.*, 144) and states that essences are to be grasped by an act of “knowing” (*Ibid.*, 157). Thus the concept of essence seems to be conceptually and phenomenologically bound to the concept of a priori state of affairs.

The last characteristic of states of affairs concerns their way of being: “in the case of the rose we speak of existence [Existenz], in the case of the states of affairs based upon the rose we’d better speak of subsistence [Bestand]” (Reinach 1989b, 340). Objects exist, while states of affairs subsist. This different way of being concerns the categorical status of states of affairs, i.e., the fact that the categorially formed multiplicity actually is.

Thus, Reinach’s phenomenological epistemology is grounded on the very intuition of a being that is the intentional correlate of the “being” considered in a strictly logical-grammatical sense.

### 54.5. Husserl revised: Adolf Reinach’s revision of phenomenology

Reinach’s theory of judgment aims to provide the conceptual devices and to show the entities of which phenomenology avails itself in order for (at least) traditional logic to be grounded. This target goes hand in hand with that of grounding phenomenological epistemology, which, from Reinach’s perspective, deals with the meaning of objective knowledge.

These are the same goals as those of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (Hua XIX, 165–180). Husserl established a certain overlap between objective knowledge and the very idea of logic as a theoretical science (Hua XVIII, §§62, 67–69); Reinach did the same by means of the state of affairs. In this sense Husserl and Reinach shared the same idea, according to which knowledge in a proper sense has an ideal (i.e., not factual) content (Hua XIX, §65; Reinach 1989a, 344). However, Husserl recognizes that judgment is the proper instrument to gain knowledge (Hua XIX, §§43–47), whereas Reinach makes this process slightly more complex by distinguishing, within the general process, which makes a subject aware of the “being P of a” (something that one can reasonably call “knowledge”), two acts of judgment and the intentional act of knowledge (in a technical sense; see previous section).

This is a crucial difference. As seen above, Reinach does not make use of Husserl’s phenomenological concept of “fulfillment unity” between the intentions of meaning and presentations, but instead “corrects” his view. Husserl’s solution to the problem of knowledge relies on “fulfillment unity”, which he presents in the *First Logical Investigation* but which he actually develops in the *Sixth Logical Investigation*. Reinach argues against this concept by stating that “inside thought there is no function of fulfillment”, and “sense-bestowing and sense-fulfilling acts” do not fuse or coincide “in fulfillment” (1989a, 339, translation is mine); consequently, Husserl’s way to the phenomenological foundation of logic and elucidation of knowledge did not convince Reinach.
By preventing any fusion between meaning and intuition, Reinach proposes an idea of objective knowledge that gives up subjective synthesis (even if it is a synthesis of intentional experiences). This solution frees a radical phenomenological intuitionism, in which any synthesis of knowledge can only take place on the side of its very object: the state of affairs. Reinach deprives the subject of any capacity for synthetic knowledge, and conceives of the state of affairs as a “synthesis in an objective sense” (1989f, 462, translation is mine) that assertions may express later. Therefore, in Reinach’s perspective, objectual knowledge and objective knowledge coincide.

Thus, Reinach’s radically ante-predicative intuitionism moves away from Husserl’s phenomenology. In fact, he avoids any concept of knowledge in which the subject has an active role or where intentional experiences are supposed to fuse, and he prevents any ambiguity between what is given and what is meant. However, he remains on Husserl’s path insofar as his phenomenological philosophy states that phenomena (be they objects or states of affairs) are independent of consciousness, without this idea implying that the intentional correlate of acts actually exist in the external world. Indeed, as Reinach himself notes, “subsistence is by no means included as an essential moment within the concept of a state of affairs”, just like “existence” with regard to the concept of objects (1989b, 340).

54.6. A phenomenological account of social acts: the paradigm of promising

Despite this epistemological reconstruction, Reinach’s main phenomenological interest mostly lay in ontological material a priori inquiries. Reinach adopted phenomenology with regard to numerous subject matters, while helping increase the thematic scope of phenomenology.

Among the various thematic fields (of study), the field of civil law is undoubtedly the most famous one. Reinach summarized his investigation on a priori law in his work *The A Priori Foundations of the Civil Law*. Here, he set the “a priori theory of right” against any positivist theory of law (Reinach 1989d, 2). According to Reinach, the positivist theories of civil law accept that “all legal propositions and concepts are creations of the lawmaking factors, and it makes no sense to talk about any being of theirs which would be independent of all positive law” (*Ibid.*, 4). Yet, Reinach strives to show that it is “not only false but ultimately meaningless” to think that legal concepts and propositions are created. He claims that there are legal structures and even entities “which have a being of their own just as much as numbers, trees, or houses, that this being is independent of its being grasped by men, that it is in particular independent of all positive law” (*Ibid.*; see next section). These ontological laws constitute the “basic concepts of right” (*Ibid.*, 5). Besides them, Reinach recognizes the existence of laws produced by human needs, economic necessities and moral convictions in a given situation (*Ibid.*, 2), which are actually positive. Positive right can either “deviate” from the a priori laws (*Ibid.*, 5) or incorporate them (*Ibid.*, 6). In any case, it always “presupposes and uses” these laws (*Ibid.*).

Reinach believes that a priori laws also “form the a priori of social intercourse” (*Ibid.*). According to him, the sphere of a priori right governs a much wider part of the human life than positive right. Since Reinach looks for “a first access to” the realm of the a priori theory of right, he deals with “a particular problem”, which is, strictly speaking, a social one: that of promising (*Ibid.*, 8). According to Reinach, promising “is not subject to” positive law (*Ibid.*, 10), but belongs to the class of social acts, which, however, are closely related to the a priori legal sphere.

Social acts are, of course, very similar to Austin’s and Searle’s speech acts, above all because of Reinach’s analysis of promising. According to many (Burkhardt 1986; Crosby 2012; Mulligan 1987; Salice 2016), social acts are descriptively the same as speech acts; their conceptual (a priori and not conventional) framework, however, provides a better philosophical ground toward a
social theory. Others (Laugier 2005; Ambroise 2005) believe that it makes no sense to compare such theories because their conceptual frameworks are incomparable. Regardless of this debate (see Chrudzimski 2015), let us examine social acts as a whole, before dealing with the specific act of promising. First, social acts are intentional and spontaneous, that is, the subject actually does something with them (Reinach 1989d, 18). Second, they need to be directed toward “another person”, or rather, “other-directed”. Third, they “address” the other person (Ibid., 19). As to the constitution of these acts, they have “an inner and an outer side”. Even if the outer side changes (words, gestures, etc.), the inner side – its content – remains identical (Ibid., 20).

The absolutely crucial feature of a social act is its need to be heard and understood by the addressee. In fact, apart from the extreme case of the prayer, which is “a purely interior social act” (Ibid., 21), all social acts are “cast towards another person in order to fasten themselves in his soul” (Ibid., 20). As a result, forgiving is not a social act because it “can unfold entirely within” itself. By contrast, commanding is a social act, since it needs to be “heard” (Ibid.). The same goes for “requesting, warning, questioning, informing, answering, and many other acts” (Ibid., 19–20).

According to Reinach, all these acts are social because they cannot obtain without another person grasping at least their content. This is a matter of “a priori necessity” (Ibid., 22).

Some of these acts need to be grasped as “these acts as such” (Ibid., 21). Promising is one of them: the promisee must be aware that the promisor promised something. This social act opens a “circuit” that will only end with the realization of whatever was “prescribed by the act” (Ibid.), e.g., once “the thing promised is performed” (Ibid., 8). Reinach observes that the circuit produced by promising is a “bond” between the people concerned. This bond consists in the fact that – “strictly simultaneously” (Ibid., 31) – the promisee can “claim” what has been promised to them, while the promisor is “obliged to perform it or to grant it” (Ibid., 8). According to Reinach, claim and obligation are two “legal entities”, which arise following a promise and expire when the promise has been fulfilled, unfolding “an obligatory relationship” (Ibid., 32). What is presupposed “for the coming into being” of both entities “is that the addressee consciously takes the promise in” (Ibid., 31).

However, this relationship “is destined to be dissolved” (Ibid., 32). This can happen in three ways: first of all, by carrying out “the content of the promise”; secondly, the promisee may “waive” the claim so that, as soon as the promisor apprehends it, both obligation and claim dissolve (Ibid.); finally, the promise can be “revoked” by the promisor (Ibid., 33). However, according to Reinach, the revoking party cannot eliminate the claim unilaterally: “The revoking would result in a claim to the waiving, but not in the direct dissolving of the (original) claim” (Ibid.).

### 54.7. The phenomenological theory of law: a new material a priori field

The theory of social acts describes the a priori laws underlying social interaction, thanks to which legal structures and entities (e.g., claims and obligations) may arise in the world. Additionally, Reinach considers the “legal power”, which concerns “the origin of” rights and obligations stemming from “our own action” (Ibid., 66) – e.g., the right of property or the right of waiving. Accordingly, the sources of right are the a priori ways through which legal entities and structures appear in the world. They also constitute the a priori foundations of law. Furthermore, Reinach provides many descriptions of this a priori sphere, which include synthetic statements “in the sense of Kant” (Ibid., 9), that is to say, statements that are not exhausted in the concept of the entity or structure they refer to. As Reinach states, “in the ‘concept’ of claim nothing is ‘contained’ in any possible sense about the fact that the claim dissolves under certain circumstances” (Ibid.).

Reinach believed to have discovered a “new field” of philosophical research (Ibid., 6), because these entities could not be understood either as physical, psychical or, being “temporal” (Ibid.), as ideal. They are divided into rights (e.g., claims) and obligations. According to Reinach, it is...
“certain” that they are not physical; what is controversial is whether they are psychical (Ibid., 9). Against this hypothesis, Reinach argues that such entities can “last for years without changes” and exist even when “the subject has no experience, as in sleep or in the loss of consciousness” (Ibid.). Although they are not psychical entities, they need a person bearing them in order for them to exist (Ibid., 102).

Besides this strict ontological analysis, it should be added that legal entities are “extra-moral phenomena” (Ibid., 51), because they do not refer to “moral value” (Ibid., 52). Reinach states that legal entities can arise and dissolve for “arbitrary” or “free acts of persons”, whereas this is “impossible” in the case of moral entities (Ibid., 13). Finally, legal entities can be “transferred” – that is, one can bear a claim or an obligation that belonged to another individual – while moral ones cannot be transferred (Ibid.).

54.8. Phenomenology of premonitions

In addition to these famous topics, Reinach dealt with some themes that originated directly from his experience of the war. Indeed, between 1916 and 1917, Reinach wrote some fragments, collected under the title Annotations (Aufzeichnungen) concerning religious experience and premonitions. In his fragment On the Phenomenology of Premonitions (Zur Phänomenologie der Ahnungen), he examined the subject of premonition with the aim of showing that it is an actual intentional experience. Reinach’s interest in it grew after witnessing an animated discussion between some soldiers and a deputy sergeant about this topic. The sergeant argued, “There are no premonitions, only rational calculations are possible” (Reinach 1989h, 589; this and all the following translations are mine). Reinach’s purpose was to argue against the sergeant’s “genetic elucidation” of premonitions, which goes as far as denying their very essence and which he nonetheless “recognized” (Ibid., 590).

According to Reinach, premonitions exist, regardless of whether they are true or not. Premonition is an intentional experience concerning knowledge (Wissen) “in a broad sense” (Ibid., 591). In fact, premonitions are knowledge insofar as they allow us to grasp states of affairs that were previously “inaccessible” (Ibid.). These states of affairs are a matter of knowledge, in a way, because they always appear as subsistent “either now or in the future or in general” (Ibid.). Even so, Reinach explicitly sets this meaning of knowledge against the one we encountered earlier (Ibid.; see section 54.4.). Since both knowledge in a proper sense and premonitions are rooted in a conviction, understanding to what extent the two experiences overlap becomes the crucial task of this investigation. Indeed, Reinach planned to show “the fundamental differences of both” (Ibid.). Regrettably, he never managed to.

54.9. First attempts toward a phenomenological description of religious experience

Reinach’s analyses of religious experience are much more complex and detailed than those on premonition. He wrote about religious experience between April 25, 1916 and the day of his death. His interest in religion grew as a consequence of his conversion to Christianity. Unfortunately, his death also left his projects on the phenomenology of religion unfinished and scattered across several Notes (Notizen auf losen Zetteln) (Ibid., 592–605) and in the Religious-philosophical Fragment (Bruchstück einer religionsphilosophischen Ausführung) (Ibid., 605–611), which is his first systematic attempt to examine the phenomenon of the “absolute” (Ibid., 605–610).

In these fragments, Reinach deals with a cluster of problems. Among many considerations on the phenomenological idea of experience, the relationship between ethics and religion, the
issues of time, the existence of God, immortality as well as human and intellectual finitude, it is possible to recognize a clear nucleus focused on “religious experience” as such (Ibid., 592). For Reinach, this intentionally refers to God as an “absolute highness” (Ibid., 607) and is “an absolute upward directedness” (Ibid., 596).

In particular, Reinach stresses the issue of absoluteness, because it allows one to clearly discern what concerns the “religious” and what does not. Indeed, it is impossible for an individual to access God’s “absolute fullness” on their own (Ibid., 608). The possibility to grasp the absolute is actually a “gift”, according to Reinach (Ibid.). In religious experiences one “receives an unearthly content” that is absolute and complete (Ibid.). This content is a matter of absolute feelings, that is to say, feelings that cannot be increased in their intensity (Ibid.). Reinach describes different kinds of such feelings. At first, one finds fundamental feelings such as “being guarded by God”, and “feeling dependent” on Him. Upon these experiences, being “confident” and being “grateful” to God occur as their respectively derived position-takings (Ibid., 599–600).

According to Reinach, religious experience allows for a “living” relationship between “me as a man” and God (Ibid.). Only through that can one become aware of God (and of His existence) and obtain a kind of knowledge that Reinach explicitly calls “religious” (Ibid.).

Note

1 As an example, Reinach 1989b, 373 n. 16 mentions Stumpf 1907; Stumpf 1999; Meinong 1977; Hua XIX.

References


