

# HUSSERL AND KANT ON *PERSÖNLICHKEIT*\*

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*This paper pursues a Kantian critique of Husserl's theory of moral consciousness as it is found in his lectures on ethics and other shorter pieces on political and moral philosophy from the interwar period. The critique centers on Kant's conception of moral personality (Persönlichkeit), arguing that Husserl fails to appreciate the force of this idea, subsequently leaving himself open to the charge of moral perfectionism. The paper ends with a positive assessment of Husserl's thought, however, arguing that Husserl provides important resources for understanding moral consciousness as a sensibility for the possible, adding an important dimension to approaches in ethics that tend to center exclusively on questions of motivation and principle.*

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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to consider some of the more perplexing and philosophically problematic aspects of Husserl's treatment of moral consciousness in his lectures and writings on ethics from the 1920's.<sup>1</sup> I would like to suggest

that some of Husserl's basic philosophical commitments, embodied in the phenomenological method of eidetic investigation, coupled with his desire to shape phenomenological philosophy into a relevant public voice in the interwar period, conspired to obscure the question of selfhood central to the problem of moral consciousness. On the other hand, I would also like to suggest that in the development of Husserl's thought, from the late 1920's up to the *Crisis*, one can discern a countermovement to this obscurity, and that in the end Husserl offers us a potentially unique and significant perspective for a re-appraisal of the question of moral selfhood.

Kant will play an important role in what follows, as is generally the case with Husserl's own reflections on ethics. In order to circumscribe

<sup>1</sup> Apart from Husserl's *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften* (Husserliana VI, ed. Walter Biemel, Hague 1954), texts we will be considering here are: (1) "Fünf Aufsätze über Erneuerung," three of which were published in the Japanese journal *The Kaizo* in 1923, the German versions of which are published in Husserliana XXVII, *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (1922–1937), ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans-Rainer Sepp. (Dordrecht 1989); (2) "Fichtes Menschheitsideal," three lectures held first in 1917 and twice again in 1918, published in Husserliana XXV, *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (1911–1921), ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans-Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht 1986); and (3) "Einleitung in die Ethik: Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920/1924," Husserliana XXXVII, ed. Henning Peucker (Dordrecht 2004).

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the scope of the question of moral selfhood that is at issue here, let us begin by proposing a reformulation of the classical Kantian question of whether pure reason can be said to be *practical*.

Kant's version, from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, is as follows: "Is pure reason of itself enough to determine the will, or is it only as empirically conditioned that it can be a determining ground of the same?"<sup>2</sup> The question is whether reason has the capacity not only to be the origin, but the sole determining origin of the will. Thus the question is not: can the will be rational – can it follow a rational course of action – but rather: can reason itself emerge in life precisely in the shape of a rational will, from out of its own resources? This formulation, for Kant, immediately gives a central role to the concept of freedom, where "free" means *unconditioned*<sup>3</sup>. Kant's path of reflection in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is thus of an elucidation of the practical faculty of reason as it is manifest in the authority of the moral law, which "in fact" asserts itself as a source of determination independent of any empirical condition, thus "freely." And more, this source asserts itself independently of any insight into the nature of the human, or conception of the essence of the human. This is why, unlike the critique of the theoretical function of reason, the critique of practical reason begins with

principles and ends with concepts, for it is precisely our consciousness of reason as a faculty of principles that serves as the point of departure for the entire project<sup>4</sup>.

We can, in anticipation of Husserl's discussion, reformulate Kant's question in the following way: "Can the will be *inwardly* determined by the rational?"<sup>5</sup> The question is largely the same, but it now indicates a possible path of reflection other than Kant's, one that is not from the beginning committed to the idea that reason must be established as a source independent of empirical conditions in order for it to be accepted as an absolutely determining ground of the will. The result is that an important possibility is left open, one that, I would argue, is important to recognize in any discussion of Husserl's appropriation of Kant's practical philosophy, namely: the possibility that the very "absolute" character of practical reason is something conditioned, in that it can only be meaningfully thematic as a movement within the possibilities of moral life as such, and not as a demand that arises from a source external to the conditions of such a life. This does not need to be taken as a rejection of the role of freedom, but can on the contrary be seen as the point of departure for a different manner of its introduction. For the question: "can the will be inwardly determined by the rational?" can be taken to ask: under what conditions can a will encounter the possibility of its own unconditional (or free) determination as a rational will? The point of

<sup>2</sup> "Hier ist also die erste Frage: ob reine Vernunft zur Bestimmung des Willens für sich allein zulange, oder ob sie nur als empirisch-bedingte ein Bestimmungsgrund desselben sein könne?" Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (KpV), ed. Karl Vorländer (Meiner 1990), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (KrV), A 533 B 561. The passage from KpV we are quoting here continues: "... und wenn wir jetzt Gründe ausfindig machen können zu beweisen, dass diese Eigenschaft [Freiheit – jd] dem menschlichen Willen (und so auch dem Willen aller vernünftigen Wesen) in der Tat zukomme, so wird dadurch nicht allein dargetan, dass reine Vernunft praktisch sein könne, sondern, dass sie allein, und nicht die empirisch beschränkte, unbedingterweise praktisch sei". KpV 16–17.

<sup>4</sup> KpV 17; this seemingly technical detail is arguably decisive, since it suggests that moral reasoning is not primarily a question of the clarification of insight, thus of "conceptualization," but of the adoption of a basis, a *principium*, from which to judge a course of action. To be sure, this is something that is also stressed by Husserl, though in such a way that not only is its *legitimacy* founded in the (conceptual) clarification of the essence of human beings, but also its *potency* 'for us' – where such a 'for us' is emphatically social-communal. Cf. Hua XXVII, 22: 30–36, 24: 34–25:5, and 26: 12–17.

<sup>5</sup> "Inwardly" (*innerlich*) for Husserl in the Kaizo articles is equivalent to "spiritual." See in particular Hua XXVII, 8: 7–16.

departure, in other words, can be understood as the question of the emergence of both freedom and the imperatives of practical reason from within the horizon of human possibility<sup>6</sup>.

Still, the two ways of formulating the question are close enough to at least initially recognize the latter as still distinctly “Kantian.” For even if we stress, with Kant, that freedom is the idea of a source of determination that is in one sense “external” to the causal series, it is nevertheless, if for no other reason than the idea that a cause has its effect, an engagement with this series, which is far from excluding a reflection on the emergence of freedom within the horizon of possibility. Yet I would like to suggest that this reformulation of the question of practical reason could be used to illustrate how Husserl’s attempt to appropriate two basic elements of Kant’s moral philosophy is troubled from the start. The two elements are: (1) the argument that all of human life stands under a categorical imperative<sup>7</sup>, and (2) that all individual persons are subject to a higher order “moral personality,” or what Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason* calls “Persönlichkeit”<sup>8</sup>.

One could perhaps say that, from a Kantian perspective, any coherent answer to the second

formulation of the question would have to presuppose a positive answer to the first, in order to evade even the possibility of finding oneself arguing that an unconditional (“free”) determination of the will is itself conditioned, a logical conundrum that cannot be handled at the level of formality at which Kant desires to operate. Yet for all that, Kant’s affirmation of an autonomy embodied in reason as such is not as univocal as it looks, but it in fact forces an ambiguity in the very notion of rational determination, one that expresses itself precisely in the “formal” character of the categorical imperative. Whatever “formal” means in Kant’s practical philosophy, it is not meant to signify a *cognitive* determination; but it is meant to be intrinsically *intellectual*. It is precisely this ambiguity that would arguably provide the bulwark against the paradox lurking in the second formulation above, by staving off the impression that the moral law owes its validity or force to an insight into the essence or nature of the self subject to the law. The will is unconditionally determined by reason not through its *being cognized*; in an imperative, the will is not being *known*. Yet it is being unmistakably *conceived*. Kant’s strategy is in fact to affirm that all the

<sup>6</sup> Or more precisely, from within the horizon of the historico-social modalities of *belief*. This is the theme of one of the unpublished Kaizo articles, “Formale Typen der Kultur in der Menschheitsentwicklung”, where Husserl pursues the theme of freedom in terms of the re-fashioning of the mode of belief and faith from a naïve, mythical acceptance of established, received belief to the emergence of the questionability of the religious ideal, thus the birth of the individual conscience, to the ultimate emergence of “belief” as the insightful adherence to the evident in scientific culture (Hua XXVII, 59:10-94:12). “Freedom” here is nothing less than the capacity for the renewal of the idea of humanity itself in ever-new and more explicit *decisions* of belief and conviction, a renewal always conditioned qua inner movement of a given historical phase of concrete subjectivity: “Freiheit ist ein Ausdruck für das Vermögen und vor allem für den erworbenen Habitus kritischer Stellungnahme zu dem, was sich, zunächst reflexionslos, als wahr, als wertvoll, als praktisch seinsollend bewusstseinsmässig gibt, und zwar als Grundlage für das daraufhin sich vollziehende freie Entscheiden.” Hua XXVII, 63: 17–22.

<sup>7</sup> Hua XXVII, 36: 1–9.

<sup>8</sup> See KpV 101: “Es ist nichts anderes als die **Persönlichkeit**, d.i. die Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit von dem Mechanismus der ganzen Natur, doch zugleich als ein Vermögen eines Wesens betrachtet, welches eigentümlichen, nämlich von seiner eigenen Vernunft gegebenen reinen praktischen Gesetzen, die Person also als zur Sinnenwelt gehörig ihrer eigenen Persönlichkeit unterworfen ist, sofern sie zugleich zur intelligibelen Welt gehört [...]”; also cf. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, ed. Karl Vorländer (Meiner 1990), 25–28, and *Metaphysik der Sitten*, ed. Karl Vorländer (Meiner 1966) 290–201 fn. The tension at issue can be seen by simply comparing this passage with the following from the Kaizo articles: Hua XXVII, 39: 24–29: “Wir nennen **jedes** (auch das nicht völlig konsequente) Leben der Selbstregierung, gemäss der kategorischen Forderung der ethischen Zweckidee, allgemein und **im weitesten Sinne** ein ethisches Leben; sein Subjekt, als sich selbst zur ethischen Selbstzucht bestimmendes, eine – wieder im **weitesten Sinne** – **ethische Persönlichkeit**.”

movements of rational thought are in place within moral consciousness, but in a manner distinguishable, if not fully distinct, from their functioning in and as understanding – thus the analogy with natural laws; the invocation of the necessary, the universal, and the objective; the move from principles to “postulated objects” that have their force and validity without at the same time being the objects of objective knowledge. The ambiguity is productive, but only if efforts are made to keep these different dimensions of thinking minimally separate, or else the functions of practical reason look very much like the attempt to gain an insight, or evidence with respect to that which can be said to be absolutely true with respect to the nature or being of the will.

One could say that it is just this ambiguity that is allowed to run rampant in Husserl’s articles written for the Japanese journal *The Kaizo* in the early 1920’s. Here, as in the later Vienna Lecture and the Crisis, the practical impact of reason is cast in terms of the orientation of a rational culture on the basis of what can only be a maturation of theoretical insight; though, to be sure, it is not an insight into the nature of things so much as an insight into the necessity of the task of understanding itself. This is where the ambiguity mentioned with Kant begins to weigh in: to be *practical*, reason for Husserl is intimately tied to a *theoretical* self-articulation, yet one that not only functions only to delimit the scope of the rational for life, but is in fact constitutive of its very force. For Husserl, it is *insight* that ultimately gives shape to our humanity<sup>9</sup>. The practical force of the rational, though distinct, is not clearly separated from the theoretical force of evidence; both are intimately part of the same actual existence, operating on the same level as two types of the same species of motivation.

Still, the argument in the *Kaizo* articles is not that an insight into the truth or essence of the will *directly* yields its unconditional determination in fact, as if either the mere concept of the will would determine it *a priori*

as a morally bound subject, or even that eidetic evidence would secure its ideal subjection to the moral law. Thus the ambiguity: a maturation of the theoretical is here not meant as the successful completion of a science, that of pure ethics, but of a form of life, and with that of self-consciousness, one in which a life has shaped itself into a subject (an ethical personality) that stands under the imperative of the moral law or practical reason as such. Thus Husserl’s task in these articles cannot be simply to *apply* the method of eidetic investigation to a reflection on the question of the good, or the eidetic laws that govern moral conduct; yet nor is the idea of a renewal an arbitrary act of self-creation that brings personal and cultural life into accordance with an “ought,” or a moral ideal fixed in advance by rational insight.

Kant, of course, believed himself able to argue for the legitimacy of the moral ideal independently from the empirical conditions of its realization, a gesture that for him defines the very idea of a moral personality as such. The moral personality is something to which the empirical self is subject, and its authority is secured by its autonomy *vis-à-vis* the empirical

<sup>9</sup> See Hua XXVII, 26: 12–25: “So versteht sich das Eigentümliche des **Vernunftstrebens**, als eines Strebens, dem persönlichen Leben hinsichtlich seiner jeweiligen urteilenden, wertenden und praktischen Stellungnahmen die Form der Einsichtigkeit bzw., in angemessender Beziehung auf sie, die der **Rechtmässigkeit** oder **Vernünftigkeit** zu geben. Es ist, korrelativ ausgedrückt, das Streben, das in den entsprechenden Hinsichten “Wahre” – wahres Sein, wahre Urteilsinhalte, wahre oder “echte” Werte und Güter – in der einsichtigen Selbsterfassung herauszustellen, an dem die blossen Meinungen das normierende Mass der Richtigkeit und Unrichtigkeit haben. Dieses aber selbst einsehen zu können und sich davon motivieren zu lassen gehört mit zu den menschlichen Wesensmöglichkeiten. Des weiteren dann auch die Möglichkeit, dass der Mensch sich selbst nach Normen der Vernunft bewerte und praktisch umgestalte.” The result of giving free reign to the ambiguity we ascribed to Kant is more Cartesian than Kantian – the project of the rationalization of my opinions, and the insight into the nature of thought requisite for such a project, opens the way for a restructuring or reshaping of the human frame itself.

determinations of the worldly, heteronomous self. “Personality” for Kant thus stands *apart* from the person, in a manner that marks out a distance thanks to which it can function as a unique origin; it is reason itself functioning as a something that sets itself above the inclinations and concrete purposes belonging to the natural self, as if issuing from a self other than me, yet with which I am nevertheless identified<sup>10</sup>.

For Husserl, however, the “height” of the ought does not address the self thanks to a fundamental division between the self of the sensible and that of the supersensible, but thanks to an orientation accomplished, so to speak, within the empirical self, on its own terms. For the rationally striving self in Husserl, the confrontation with the moral ideal is always already an engagement with an inner possibility of accomplishment, and with that self-formation, a possibility of subjective life that presents itself as an *ideal* (or essential) sense. Thus the second formulation of Kant’s question proposed above. Since Husserl’s point of departure is the theme of the practical realization of the self in light of its own essential possibilities, the result is an inner continuity in the emergence of the rational within the motivational nexus of spiritual existence<sup>11</sup>. In Kant, by contrast, there is not a continuity, but an irruption of the rational, the

result of which is the demarcation of a space within which a uniquely moral existence stakes its claim on life. In Kant’s account, the subject of desire and inclination is interrupted, struck down, even *humiliated* in the face of the moral law<sup>12</sup>. In Husserl, there is no such irruption, or even the promise of one, at least not of the same order; on the contrary, subjection to the moral law can only take the form of an accomplishment of a life engaging its essential possibilities, one that reveals itself to itself as the self-fashioning drive to a life in truth.

The result is that Husserl’s ethical thought is dangerously exposed to a Kantian objection of being, at best, a facile perfectionism, and at worst a moral fanaticism, a criticism that can be fed by a number of passages from Husserl’s writings of this period, especially in the *Kaizo* articles<sup>13</sup>. Even

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the rather Calvinist passages from Kant’s *Metaphysik der Sitten*, 289, where Kant speaks of conscience as an “innerer Gerichtshof”, and following on 290: “Jeder Mensch hat Gewissen und findet sich durch einen inneren Richter beobachtet, bedroht und überhaupt im Respekt (mit Furcht verbundener Achtung) gehalten, und diese über die Gesetze in ihm wachende Gewalt ist nicht etwas, was er sich selbst (willkürlich) **macht**, sondern es ist seinem Wesen einverleibt.” Yet cf. Religion 210, where Kant characterizes the “judge” of conscience thus: “Das Gewissen richtet nicht die Handlungen als Kasus, die unter dem Gesetz stehen; [...] sondern hier richtet die Vernunft sich selbst, ob sie auch wirklich jene Beurteilung der Handlungen mit aller Behutsamkeit (ob sie recht oder unrecht sind) übernommen habe, habe, und stellt dem Menschen wider oder für sich selbst zum Zeugen auf, dass dieses geschehen oder nicht geschehen sei.” For Kant, ethical personality takes the form of a diligent, conscientious reflexivity in the inner self; for Husserl, as we have already seen quoting Hua XXVII, 39: 24–29, it takes the form of a self-disciplined, accomplished life.

<sup>11</sup> Thus Husserl, in commenting on Kant’s practical philosophy, argues in his lectures on ethics: “Aber **dieser ganze Kontrast zwischen Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft**, wobei auf Seiten der Sinnlichkeit die Empfindungssinnlichkeit, die Gefühls- und Trieb Sinnlichkeit steht, auf Seiten der Vernunft die unsinnlichen und Sinnlichkeit allererst formenden Kategorien, ist **grundverkehrt** [...]” Hua XXXVII, 220: 10–14.

<sup>12</sup> This is the origin of respect: “Was nun unserem Eigendünkel in unserem eigenen Urteil Abbruch tut, das demütigt. Also demütigt das moralische Gesetz unvermeidlich jeden Menschen, indem dieser mit demselben den sinnlichen Hang seiner Natur vergleicht. Dasjenige, dessen Vorstellung **als Bestimmungsgrund unseres Willens**, uns in unserem Selbstbewusstsein demütigt, erweckt, sofern es positiv und Bestimmungsgrund ist, für sich **Achtung**.” KpV 87.

<sup>13</sup> The most striking is perhaps at Hua XXVII, 33: 37–34:8: “Der **absolute Limes**, der über alle Endlichkeit hinausliegende Pol, auf den alles echt humane Streben gerichtet ist, ist die **Gottesidee**. Sie selbst ist das “echte und wahre Ich”, das, wie noch zu zeigen sein wird, jeder ethische Mensch in sich trägt, das er unendlich ersehnt und liebt und von dem er sich immerzu unendlich fern weiss. Gegenüber diesem absoluten Vollkommenheitsideal steht das **relative**, das Ideal des vollkommen menschlichen Menschen, des Menschen des “besten” Könnens, des Lebens in jeweils für ihn ‘bestmöglichem’ Gewissen – ein Ideal, das immer noch den Stempel der Unendlichkeit in sich trägt.” The ideal is not an object postulated for the sake of the moral law, as it is in Kant, but rather an ideal objectivity in its own right motivating from within, yet as an unattainable desideratum. Cf. KpV 141.



if one concedes that such passages represent something more philosophically respectable than crass theosophical daydreams, the heart of the Kantian objection nevertheless lies in the conviction that the only legitimate incentive of the ideal lies in respect, and not in any weight of evidence, even one that could be said to actually take possession of a life, whether in the form of a divine possession or a moving idealistic enthusiasm. For Kant, the inner moment of our subjection to the moral law is originary, and must be placed *before* our being moved to dedicate our life to being an artifice for its expression.

At this point it is perhaps instructive to take note of the Hegelian alternative, where the individual moral agent is conceived as the negation of the negation of the universal in the form of what Hegel describes as the pure, though abstract moral personality (the term is again *Persönlichkeit*). The concrete moral subject represents the mediation, within the individual conscience, of the opposition between the particular and the universality of abstract moral personality (the subject of the sphere of right). The establishment of this mediateness results in a mode of personal particularity which does not stand in a brute opposition to the infinity of universal personality, but manifests itself as a standpoint in which this universal is reflected in itself, in an inwardness thanks to which the moral personality has itself as its “object”<sup>14</sup>.

Against Kant, the concrete individual in Hegel is more than a contingent being simply *subjected* to an abstract universality, the latter above to provide incentives only through some

inexplicable influence on the faculty of pleasure and pain. Instead, the subject inwardly reflects its own moral personality; its universality made its own, the perspective of a concrete subject is now identified as an immanent manifestation, thus reality (*Wirklichkeit*), of the universal, without the force of the universal thereby becoming fetishized. This kind of dialectic thus provides a positive answer to the second formulation of the question above, “can reason inwardly determine the will?”, precisely by providing an account of inwardness that does not contradict the universality of the rational, but on the contrary provides for its objective expression.

Nevertheless, this Hegelian alternative in fact preserves an important element from Kant’s account of moral personality, one that should be kept in mind when turning back to Husserl’s own attempt to appropriate the theme of moral personality. Namely, for Hegel, the *opposition or tension* between person and personality remains critical to understanding the perspective of morality, even if the dynamic of this tension (or its logic) is understood very differently. So for example in the chapter in the *Critique of Practical Reason* on the incentives of pure practical reason, Kant seeks to show how practical reason (by this point identified as the moral law) influences sensibility, representing what for Kant is the only possible example of a direct influence of the faculty of reason on the feeling of pleasure and pain. The demand of the moral law thus does not merely outline a path to be followed, but *the very emergence within the subject of this demand* is a uniquely constitutive event. This is a key point: the “moral subject” is not merely the realization of possibility that projects in advance the particular formation of a self; nor is the “empirical person” on whom the demand is to be made simply a subject that chooses, whether morally or not. Even for Kant – or perhaps *especially* for Kant – the possibility of a particular manner of confronting the determining ground that gathers and discriminates among possible principles of action

<sup>14</sup> Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Suhrkamp 1986), §104, esp. 198: “Seine **Persönlichkeit**, als welche der Wille im abstrakten Rechte nur ist, hat derselbe so nunmehr zu seinem **Gegenstande**; die so **für sich** unendliche Subjektivität der Freiheit macht das Prinzip des **moralischen Standpunkts** aus.” And in the Zusatz to §104, p. 202: “Im Recht hat der Wille sein Dasein in einem Äusserlichen; das Weitere ist aber, dass der Wille dasselbe in ihm selbst, in einem Innerlichen habe: er muss für sich selbst, Subjektivität sein und sich sich selbst gegenüber haben.”

is revealed as a uniquely concrete dimension of existence, or a mode of inward self-encounter, wherein one is compelled to take stock of who one “is” as a being responsible for the possibilities of one’s existence. In Kant, this compulsion is given its due in the description of an inward experience of the rupture of self-conceit or contentment, of submission and humiliation, as well as of respect and genuine “moral feeling” that has its ultimate expression in a being that is “accountable”<sup>15</sup>.

Despite all of his criticisms, there is a similar gesture in Hegel: the moral agent is not simply the successful expression of abstract right, or “personality” as such, on the level of the individual; it is also the constitution of self-consciousness as space that reflects a tension, even as it mediates it, between the universality of personality with a particularity that is always potentially other. In neither Kant nor Hegel is this tension a simple, outright conflict: in Kant, it takes the form of a reflection that results in the sublime moment of humility; in Hegel, it is a reflection that results in a dynamic unity that synthesizes the perspectives of particularity and universality within the individual conscience.

If we take this tradition seriously, it indeed makes sense to not only ask whether Husserl lapses into a facile moral perfectionism, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it makes sense to ask to what extent Husserl can explain the nature of the incentives of practical reason. The various discussions of value-intentionality scattered in Husserl’s works, the critique of Kant in §44b of the 1920 lectures on ethics, where Husserl argues that Kant overlooked the poten-

tial for an apprehension of ideal objectivities as determinative of the will – all seem to fall short. For an account of the incentives of pure practical reason for Kant and Hegel requires more than simply a description of a particular species of evidence. The question, even for Husserl, is not simply whether morality can be reduced to a set of practical axiomatic truths, but of grasping the essence of morality as an originary encounter of the self within itself as a being set before a task. To be sure, this necessarily involves the apprehension of a “truth” of oneself, but it is a human truth that does not merely compel, but also creates within the self a unique place for the conduct of a free existence. The truth of oneself in this sense is not simply there to be discovered, an idea of humanity or a “stamp of the infinite” given to us, whether it be as an idea of reason or an intuitive, eidetic insight into the essence of human existence. Instead, the issue at hand is the possibility of a ground thanks to which there emerges, within the subject, a freedom capable of choosing itself *as freedom*, and it is only around the manifestation of such a ground of freedom that the moral subject, in both Kant and Hegel, crystallizes.

Though this criticism can certainly be leveled against Husserl, it is far from being the end of the story. For Husserl’s apparent retreat from this tradition in the end emphasizes, and with that reengages on a different level, something essential to any conception of moral personality, including that of Kant and Hegel – namely, the theme of *self-articulation*. In Kant, “freedom” first has traction in our self-understanding in the form of a theoretical idea of reason, and it is within the scope of this idea that its practical interest is accomplished. However ambiguously, practical reason speaks the language of freedom. This must mean that the incentives of pure practical reason operate, at least in part, in accordance with the meaning such a language of freedom can have for us – a meaning which, presumably, cannot be taken to be indifferent to the manner in which it is articulated. Hegel’s critique of Kant can be seen as in part

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Religion*, 25, where the basis for *Persönlichkeit* is identified as both rationality and the capacity to be held accountable, and which is then elaborated on 27: “Die Anlage für die *Persönlichkeit* ist die Empfänglichkeit der Achtung für das moralische Gesetz *als einer für sich hinreichenden Triebfeder der Willkür*.” The two steps here should not be collapsed—first is the susceptibility for incentives, for the influence of the moral law; the second is personality as “eines vernünftigen und zugleich der *Zurechnung fähigen* Wesens.” (25)

a rejection of what Kant takes this language to be, or what he takes to be the necessary way in which we are to talk about freedom, both in a purely theoretical context and within the space of moral consciousness. More specifically, the debate between Kant and Hegel turns precisely on the sharp division between the finite and the infinite that runs through Kant's philosophy: in Kant, the infinity of freedom encounters the finite subject as a merely thought (noumenal) other, from the start short-circuiting any concrete experience of a movement of identification between the two; for Hegel, this results in the unacceptable notion of a moral subject arbitrarily placed within the horizon of what is ultimately a merely intellectual and abstract challenge to the shape and form of life.

Formulated in this way, the question of the meaning of the idea of *freedom* is thus not only the question of freedom, it is also the question of freedom as *idea*, or of how to understand what is meant when one speaks of "ideas". If the question of incentives is the question of how universality inscribes itself in subjective life, then this must necessarily involve a decision about the possibilities of a discourse about ideas. That is, universality has the place it has, in part, thanks to its articulation; and perhaps we could even argue that one condition of its influence is precisely an unfolding, whether discursive or not, of this articulation within the subject. Moral agency, in other words, not only crystallizes around the manifestation of the ground for freedom, as a bare irruption of the rational constitutive of conscience, but one that must take the form of an *articulateness*, or a *meaningfulness*.

This is in fact Husserl's real starting point, and why his reflections remain relevant to the tradition of moral philosophy represented by Kant and Hegel. His innovation is to in effect argue that the expression of the idea, the articulateness or meaningfulness of the universal, already in itself takes the form of a task, and with that of a particular mode of accountability. The meaningfulness or sense of the universal

cannot be presupposed as a pre-given, coherent horizon of lucidity within which the universal is encountered; it requires the constitution of its own space, its own subjectivity. More, for Husserl this task of meaning, so to speak, is an explicitly *theoretical* task, or in Kantian language, and against Kant, the very problem of meaning points to a sense in which theoretical reason is intrinsically practical. It is not practical in the sense of being determinative of the will, but in the sense of the intrinsic practicality of a consciousness that fashions the horizons of self-elucidation in which reason itself can become *practical*.

Many of the basic elements of such a line of reflection are present in the *Kaizo* articles, though they are obscured by the overarching emphasis on the idea of an inner, teleological drive of a spirit in the grip of the ideal of humanity. This teleology is in fact gradually de-emphasized in Husserl's writings through the 1920's and '30's in favor of a more sophisticated picture of the human engagement with universality, one that finds its perhaps most nuanced formulation in the notion of reflection as *Besinnung* in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and the *Crisis*. The line of thinking behind this picture can be outlined in five theses, which together can be taken as a response to the reformulation of another Kantian question, namely: what needs to be in place, what needs to be presupposed, in order for the unconditionally rational to be motivating, not only *theoretically* (which is the problem of evidence) but *practically* as well?<sup>16</sup>

### ***The theses are the following:***

**Thesis 1:** What is decisive for the practical incentives of reason is not so much the idea of freedom as the *ideality of the idea*. Ideality

<sup>16</sup> In fact, Kant skirts this question as unanswerable: "Denn wie ein Gesetz für sich und unmittelbar Bestimmungsgrund des Willens sein könne (welches doch das Wesentliche aller Moralität ist), das ist ein für die menschliche Vernunft unauf lösliches Problem und mit dem einerlei: wie ein freier Wille möglich sei."



defines the very sense of the rational, that with which we must be in tune, whether theoretically or practically, in order to follow its lead. In Husserl – against Kant – ideality fixes the contours of experience as a dimension of intuitivity itself, thus represents a mode of *given conceptuality* that has a dynamic character, as well as a historicity that is absent from the Kantian *apriori*. Thus in Husserl one speaks of the givenness of the ideal, of the horizon of its encounter, of the different modes of its being-experienced, and not simply of the marks of universality, or of the principles for the appropriate or inappropriate application of the idea, either in theory or practice.

**Thesis 2:** The primordial, originary intention of the idea in its ideality is inarticulate, and it proceeds only thanks to an immanent demand for explication and understanding, a demand that in the most general sense takes the form of a dissatisfaction or disturbance. This is a key, if contentious idea: it is not in its fully articulate glory as a functioning faculty that reason drives us as an incentive, but as an inarticulate, silent dissatisfaction that demands to be given *a voice*. It is responding to this demand, and grasping it as a task for thinking, that represents the basis for what Husserl calls renewal, and is an idea that connects the articles from *The Kaizo* to the problematic of the *Crisis*.

**Thesis 3:** The possibility of a renewal, which inaugurates not only a life in reason but, more importantly, the self-fashioning of a life *for* reason, or for the sake of reason, is actualized in the thinking experience of crisis. Crisis is the dissatisfaction of the original experience of the ideal shaped into a fully self-responsible intellectual personality. The crisis of reason (science) is thus something that is fully expressed only in a thinking response, or the response of those who have accepted the task of speaking for the rational from the basis of the progress of their lives, and thus have accepted the risk of the possible meaninglessness of the rational (or its *inability* to function as an incentive). Recalling, but considerably improving on what

Husserl calls “genuine life” (*echtes Leben*) in the *Kaizo* articles, such a self-responsible intellect is nothing less than a life for which the idea of reason is *both* articulated *and* motivating, thus a combination of the achievement of a life to articulate the rational, and the achievement of the rational to determine the course of a life.

**Thesis 4:** the possibility of securing a “genuine life” from the latent, unexpressed primordially of the rational consists in the formation of an articulate self-consciousness in accordance with the figure of *method*.

**Thesis 5:** A genuine method – that is, a self-conscious formation of articulate rationality – is possible only if reflection takes the form of *phenomenology*, which securely places the attempt at self-elucidation in a transcendental apprehension of the drama of *manifestation*.

The basic idea is that if the horizon of our engagement with the possibility of the rational in general is dynamic, if it is open at all only given a mode of reflection (method) in which its articulateness is at stake (and understood as a task), then the primary issue is the demarcation, and discovery, of the very possibility of something like reason having any weight at all. The conditions for such a reflection lie in what we could call the development of a special kind of sensitivity, one for what we could call the promise of reason – the promise of reason to provide coherence, lucidity, determinateness. Thus before we make our theme the claims of reason, or the demands of freedom, we must first tackle the notion of what it is to make a claim or a demand at all; before we speak for reason, we must reflect on what it means to speak, what is possible with respect to the manifestation of the real and the moral from out of speech.

A sense for such possibilities is not, at least for the Husserl of the *Crisis*, a *given*. It must be developed, more: a kind of inner sense for what it is to encounter the rational, or the idea in its ideality, is necessary in order to be able to orient oneself to such possibilities. What is required, to invoke a concept that Husserl developed late in his philosophical career, is a transcendental

inwardness. *Inwardness does not justify reason*, nor does it provide a critique of practical reason; it provides, instead, the space in which the meaning of such an inquiry finds its place, its potential force – it is, in short, the philosophical space in which the pursuit of the issue at all is *secured*. The sense that such a space cannot be taken as given, represents a deep philosophical chasm that separates Husserl from Kant, and perhaps the 20th century as a whole from the 18th. And it points to the important fact that the approach to such questions at all, whereby one meaningfully poses the question of “pure practical reason,” is by itself a unique and powerful spiritual accomplishment.

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# HUSSERLIS IR KANTAS APIE PERSÖNLICHKEIT

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Straipsnyje kritikuojama Husserlio tarpukario moralinės sąmonės teorijos, suformuluotos etikos paskaitose ir kituose trumpesniuose politinės bei moralės filosofijos tekstuose iš kantiškosios kritikos, perspektyvos. Kritika remiasi Kanto moralinio asmeniškumo (Persönlichkeit) samprata ir teigiama, kad Husserlis deramai neįvertina šios idėjos, kartu leidžia save kaltinti moraliniu perfekcionizmu. Nepaisant to, straipsnio pabaigoje teigiamai įvertinamos Husserlio idėjos ir teigiama, kad Husserlis suformuluoja reikšmingas prielaidas moralinei sąmonei, kaip „jautrumo galimybei“ (sensitivity for the possible), suvokti, taip priduria naują dimensiją prie tokių etikos perspektyvų, kurios susitelkia išimtinai ties motyvacijos ir principų klausimais.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Husserlis, Kantas, moralinė sąmonė, fenomenologija, etika, metodas.

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