
III. THE EFFLORESCENCE OF PHENOMENOLOGY: ITS CLASSICAL REPRESENTATIVES

MAX SCHELER: THE HUMAN PERSON IN ACTION AND IN THE COSMOS

Falsely labeled a student of Edmund Husserl in the past, Max Scheler's significance, and difference from his phenomenological contemporaries, is to be seen in his uncompromising criticism of the phenomenological *method*, of *consciousness as such*, and of the *transcendental ego*. While he did make use on occasion of methods and reductions à la Husserl, his numerous contributions to *ethics*, *metaphysics*, *philosophical anthropology*, *philosophy of religion*, *sociology* and to contemporary political and cultural issues are based on the overwhelming power of phenomenological *intuition*. This is to say that, whereas methods lead to a result once methodological procedures are carried out, the nature of such a result is, as it is in mathematics, already given to some degree as something to be sought and established before an application of a method. In Scheler's phenomenology, there is a phenomenologically intuited, *a priori* meaning-content, i.e., a noematic phenomenon, at the very outset of phenomenological investigations—hence, his copious presentations on human phenomena such as *shame*, *the tragic*, *resentment*, *love*, *sympathy*, *repentance*, *aging and dying*, *model persons*, the moral condition of philosophical knowledge, Asian culture, *et al.* The fabric of intuition bears out at the same time the order of *values* and their ranks as felt in the human heart (*ordo amoris*). With this, broadly speaking, Scheler keeps up an age-old tradition—one neither espoused in his own time, nor today—that *love* precedes knowledge, or knowledge is neither antecedent to, nor constitutive of love and feelings.

Let two of many statements be recorded here that were made right after Scheler's untimely demise:

Ortega y Gasset: "With the death of Scheler Europe lost its greatest mind."

Martin Heidegger: "There is no one amongst serious philosophers in our time who would not be essentially indebted to him. There is no one who could replace the living prospect of philosophy that we lost with his death. This irreplaceableness, however, is the token of his greatness."

Max Scheler was born in Munich, Germany, August 22, 1874. His father was Lutheran, his mother Jewish. He studied medicine and philosophy in Munich and Berlin. He received his doctorate in philosophy in 1897 and his *Habilitationsschrift* was approved in 1899, both at the University of Jena under the direction of R. Eucken. In 1899, he converted to Roman Catholicism, a religious involvement that accompanied him more or less during his first period of philosophical productivity. He taught philosophy at the University of Munich from 1900 to 1906 and became familiar with the fledgling phenomenological movement, of which he, however, remained independent throughout his life. His unusually growing rate of publications won him renown beyond Germany's borders by 1920, the year which roughly marks the end of his first period.

From 1919 on he taught at the University of Cologne until his death in Frankfurt on May 19, 1928. These years more or less cover the second period of his productivity, characterized by research into metaphysics and philosophical anthropology, a field of which he was the initiator. His thought became rapidly known worldwide. Deteriorating health obliged him to cancel invitations to lecture in Japan for two years, Russia, and in the United States.

In what follows, the study of Scheler's philosophy will be divided into two parts: the first period; and the second period. As much as possible, the chronological order of the development of his thought will be observed.

The first period of Scheler's philosophy ranges from 1887 to roughly 1920. The title of his 1897 doctoral Dissertation, *Beiträge zur Feststellung der Beziehungen zwischen den logischen und ethischen Prinzipien*, already points to an issue that would accompany him for the rest of his life: the clarification of the difference between the logic of reason and the logic of the heart or, between thinking, on the one hand, and loving, on the other. His analyses of this difference were treated in more detail in *Toward a Phenomenology and Theory of Feelings of Sympathy and of Love and Hate* (1913), expanded in 1923 as *The Nature of Sympathy*. These analyses were carried over into his monumental ethics of values, entitled, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values. A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism* (1913; printing finished in 1916).

Mention needs to be made of the fact that there are two early works by Scheler that have recently been posthumously published in the German edition of his collected works and whose texts have remained hitherto more or less unknown. They cast light on Scheler's early judicious reasoning about E. Husserl's phenomenology and they cast light as well on the origins of Scheler's later *Metaphysics*.

Concerning the first, Scheler and Husserl met first likely in 1902. In their discussion both realized they had expanded the phenomenological notion of intuition independently of each other. Between 1902 and 1904, Scheler wrote a first volume of a book entitled *Logik*. Upon completing this first volume, he withdrew it from the printer in 1905/6. His reasons for so doing are unclear. In it, however, there is pungent criticism of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900–01). Scheler's main point had been to show Husserl's alleged Platonism in that work.

The second work concerned is a posthumously published lecture that Scheler gave on philosophical *Biology* at the University of Munich in 1908/9. In Section III of this lecture, he already described what was later to become an overriding theme of his *Metaphysics*. The essence of this issue lies in the concept of "fluctuation" (*der Wechsel*) as a principle of the center of the self-activating vital energy in individual and universal life. In both his phenomenology and metaphysics, the principle of fluctuation lies at the origin in life, constituting both *spatialization* and *temporalization* and, secondarily, objective space and objective time in humans. At the bottom of vital energy, temporalization and spatialization are not yet separated from one another. Hence, the foundation of vital energy is also referred to as four-dimensional.

Later, in his second period of productivity, this principle of vital energy would bear the name "*Der Drang*," or "*impulsion*." Since Scheler entertained only loose ties with the phenomenological movement, it appears commendable to list some guidelines that characterize his phenomenology as very distinct from that of Husserlians:

1. Consciousness presupposes a *form* of its existence: this is the *person*.
2. The *ego* is an object of internal perception.
3. Time-consciousness presupposes the self-activity of vital energy ("*Drang*").
4. Methods are secondary. Intuition is primary. It must not contain sensory data.
5. Emotive value-ception (*Wertnehmung*) precedes inner and outer perception and acts of willing and of thinking.

6. *Reality* is constituted in *resistance*.

7. Consciousness is "*becoming*" (*Bewusstseinswerdung*).

While Scheler continued to pursue his philosophical research, it should at this point be mentioned that the outbreak of World War I (1914–1918) caused his interests to take on a new direction. He began to write on national and international political issues. He continued to be concerned with them up to the end of his life. In 1914/15 he wrote a book, entitled, *The Genius of War* (1914/15), that strongly echoed the general German enthusiasm surrounding the outbreak of World War I. The book was replete with antagonism towards the Allies. But he dampened his own enthusiasm in about 1916 when he published another book entitled *The Causes for the Hatred of Germans*. While in later years Scheler discounted his earlier flirtation with Germany's declaration of World War I, at least to the extent that he did not justify it after the war was lost, in his second period he increasingly envisaged the upcoming dangers of a World War II (1939–1945) and in 1927 openly condemned the growing Nazi movement, Marxism in Russia, and Fascism in Italy. Finally, his political writings forecast humanity's future as a "World-Era of Adjustment," i.e., as a gradual convergence among all peoples and cultures in accordance with historical laws based on a historical development stemming from peculiar shifts in human drives.

Now let us continue with a concise synopsis of his major philosophical works of the first period. The main themes of his books on *The Nature of Sympathy* and of his *Formalism in Ethics* are the following.

In Part I of the book on Sympathy, Scheler pointed to four basic types of *feelings* that humans can share with one another. They are; Joint Feelings with others (*Miteinanderfühlen*); Fellow Feeling (*Mitgefühl*); Psychic Contagion (*Gefühlsansteckung*); and Emotional Identification (*Einsgefühl*).

A case of joint feeling is present when a father and a mother are looking at their deceased child. The sorrow is mutual and one and the same in the two persons. A person joining this scene has a fellow feeling with them. Psychic contagion occurs subconsciously, for instance, among people finding themselves in a raging crowd. Their egos are just about extinct. They neither notice, nor care about people being trampled to death near them. This feeling also occurs among animals as in wildly running buffalo herds.

Part II is a detailed analysis of love and hate. It is the first instance in which Scheler shows that love is at the heart of the nature of being human, a position that he held and kept on explaining throughout his life. The bearer of love, the person, partakes in three kinds of

love: spiritual, psychic, and passionate love. His analysis of hate, on the other hand, remains in the background in the book. A detailed explanation of hate is found in one of his most remarkable essays, written in 1914, and entitled *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen*. In Part III of the book, he offers a phenomenological investigation of the pre-givenness of the alter ego, which is likely among the very first, if not the first, thesis presented on this subject and one that remained rather popular throughout the twentieth century.

The first part of the title of Scheler's value-ethics, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* has two antithetical parts. *Formalism in Ethics* refers to all ethics of the past that is based on formal judgments. Scheler mostly uses Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* as an example to show that it is *Non-Formal Ethics* that can do justice to the role of values and the individual person in ethics, a role insufficiently treated, if at all, in formal ethics. Scheler dismissed some presuppositions found in Kant's formal *Critique of Practical Reason* as erroneous by showing that the entire realm of acts of feeling had been misjudged in the past as being nothing but a chaos that according to formalism in ethics has to be ordered by reason. In *Formalism in Ethics*, we are told that this has been a false assessment of feelings made throughout the past. Instead, there is a principle uncovered by Scheler according to which a value is phenomenologically given in acts of feeling and that both an act of feeling and its noema, a value, have an inherent a priori order. Scheler applied Blaise Pascal's (1623–1662) moral theorem that the human heart has reasons of its own—“*Le coeur a ses raisons*”—which do not only differ from logical reasons, but to which rationality can even be blind. While Scheler elaborated more on the priority of feelings and of love, in his 1914 essay entitled “*Ordo Amoris*” one finds references to the *ordo amoris* also in his *Formalism*. Scheler offered a number of demonstrations that, in the order of their phenomenological foundation, feelings precede, as mentioned above, perception, willing, and thinking.

What is the nature of values? First, values as such do not exist unless they occur with or on things. Second, while values exist only in relation to entities, they are nevertheless independent of entities they occur on. That is to say, feeling values is independent of objects perceived or thought. For this reason, Scheler insists, values are analogous to colors. For just as the color green is independent of the cloth, paper or leaves that the color green is on, so also a value is independent of objects that it may belong to. The value of comfort is independent of a chair or a garment felt to be comfortable. Moreover, values are

also analogous to spectral colors hidden behind visible colorations. The five ranks of values form a value-spectrum hidden under a myriad of constantly changing nuances among values felt at any time and under any circumstance whatsoever. The value of justice, as a spectral value is independent of variations or nuances of justice among legal systems or during different historical periods, and it is independent also of any amendment made to a constitution, of different individual cases that justice is applied to in court. The value itself, Scheler emphasizes, is *a priori* “felt” as (1) what it as a value is, and (2) as it is felt with regard to the place that the value of justice has among value ranks. For example, a feeling of justice, or of injustice, is a feeling that is a priori different from the value-rank of vital feelings of health or illness, let alone of a sensible feelings of pleasure or pain. There must exist, then, a phenomenologically intuitable “order” among the five value ranks.

The order of values falls into two groups. Values are either relative to life and a lived body (*Leib*), or they are relative to only personal feelings. Starting with the set of value ranks in their ascending order, i.e., from their lowest to their highest rank, the following ranks are to be distinguished, each rank also dividing into positive and their opposite negative values.

1. Pleasure values, which are those values experienced as “agreeable” or “not agreeable,” comfortable or not comfortable to the lived body. The feeling of these values is localizable on or in the body. They are to a certain extent controllable by the will or by mental techniques, for example. They are more controllable by medical treatment. In all such cases, pleasure values are always potentially manageable.
2. Pragmatic values. These pertain to what is “useful” or “not useful.” These values play a salient role in technology, science, and in everyday life. They, too, are manageable and localizable in things, although to a lesser degree than the pleasure values are.
3. Life Values. Life values span what is “noble” down to what is “common.” They span all living nature including human beings. Feelings of health and sickness, of strength and weakness, of giving birth, aging and oncoming death, the feeling of blood bonds, are cases in point. This rank has one value that applies only to humans. This is the value of the “heroic.”
4. Values of the Mind. These values are values felt only in the human person. While the former values are shared with animals to whatever degree, mental values are felt as being entirely separate from them. Mental values fall into three groups: the value of the cognition

of truth; aesthetic values of beauty; and the value of justice. Mental values are given only to personal feelings and in this they are clearly separate from any feelings in the lived body and of life.

5. The highest value rank is given in a feeling of the "holy." As is the case of all other values, a feeling of the holy does not imply any specific object like a specific deity. The feeling can pertain to any deity as found in the history of religious beliefs, including mythology. The holy can even pertain to what individuals or groups deem to be "absolute," such as a fetish, matter (materialism), or even a complete absence of the holy (atheism). But the value rank of the holy itself, even if only as an absolute, remains inherent in consciousness. There is no consciousness without a "sphere" of the absolute.

Surprisingly enough, the moral values of good and evil are not contained in the ranks of values. This is because good and evil "come up" in personal existence and in a unique way. "Good" appears in an act of "leaning-toward," or in what Scheler calls the emotive "preferring" of a higher value rank over a lower value rank. The good appears during the act of realizing a higher value as given in the *ordo amoris*, rather than a lower one. Evil appears in the opposite cases. Scheler recognized that there are also deceptions in feelings of higher and lower values and he wrote a number of essays on this subject also.

In the history of ethics, Scheler's exposition of good and evil marks the first instance of *good* and *evil* as dynamic values that come up in what in phenomenology is now called "passive constitution." During the act of preferring and realizing a higher value, we do not intend to be good or evil, rather, these values are "on the back" of the realization of a higher value. Scheler refuted the position that one should "will" the good although, admittedly, this can in individual cases also be a good thing to do; but willing good can also be fraught with hidden self-deception, by just wanting to showcase one's goodness to other people.

Scheler's demonstration that each value rank is given in respective acts of their being felt bears on various regions of knowledge: (a) historical, (b) theological, and (c) sociological regions.

(a) Historically, the order of values is reflected in terms of five exemplars of personhood. Like the five value-ranks, their respective person-types are spectral also, i.e., hidden behind countless variations of types and characters of persons. A distinction is made between five "ideal" exemplars of personhood, on the one hand, and variations

of their factually existing model persons, on the other. Ideal exemplars, like values, do not exist as such unless they enter into a function, or "functionalize" themselves with existing variations of them in model persons.

Parallel to the ascending order of the five value ranks, Scheler lists the following ideal exemplars of person: 1. the master of the art of living; 2. the leading mind of civilization; 3. the hero; 4. the genius; and 5. the holy person as the founder of a religion. In practice, no living person can be a pure exemplar, but only a specific one. A genius may be a musical, literary, or scientific genius. Therefore, one can make choices among model persons belonging to any one of the five ranks. This is not the case with the holy person. Geniuses like Beethoven, Raphael, or Shakespeare allow for a choice that one can make among them. However, the holy person as the founder of a religion demands unwavering, unconditional faith: "Either you are with me, or against me." No choice.

While pure *exemplars* belong to the *ideas* of the human mind, and while both ideal exemplars and real model persons exercise a "pull" on us that makes us freely follow them, said ideas of them are not inborn. For it is they, the ideal model persons, who "possess us." In his second period, Scheler would show that by itself the mind is "impotent" to produce anything, including the five exemplars of personhood. Ideas must enter into functions with realizing factors for them to become reality in practice. If they fail to enter into such a function, ideas remain ineffective.

A most engaging aspect of existing model persons is Scheler's axiom of it in *education*. There is nothing on earth that makes a person a good person from the bottom of his or her heart other than freely following his or her good exemplary person. This moral pull coming from an exemplary person to us may have been exercised by parents on their child, by a teacher on students. It may or may not have come from a saintly person, a president, or others whose self-value pulls people toward them not by design but by their heart alone. Hence any formalism in ethics asking one to respond rationally to a Kantian "categorical imperative" fails to address the very heart of the person as an individually unique, irreplaceable value-person (*Wertperson*) and a person's possible moral exemplarity.

(b) The order of the five value ranks has bearings on theology. The upper three ideal exemplars: the hero, the genius, and the holy person—corresponding to the three highest value ranks of life, mind, and of the value of the holy—apply to three perspectives of the Godhead's revelation to humans in that same order: namely God as the Almighty, God as the Omniscient, and as God of Love.

Now the subtitle of Scheler's Value-Ethics, "A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism", may be even more indicative of his intentions in ethics. The new attempt pertains (1) to the explication of the person as the bearer of all values and (2) to the person as a member of different forms of communality.

1. While since Aristotle, human beings have mainly been seen as rational animals and, in addition to the Aristotelian definition, more recently as beings whose essence is their consciousness, ego, or practical reason, Scheler challenged these and other characterizations of human nature. He tried to show that neither reason, consciousness, nor the ego can exist without having the form of "person," and that there is no mind that is not a personal mind. This is why Scheler rejected both a "pure" consciousness and a transcendental ego as "evidential non-sense."

Scheler's contention that "person" is the form of mind or of "spirit," as he preferred to say, hinges on three points: a) the person is shown to exist only in the "execution" of acts. From this follows that the person cannot and must never be treated like a thing. Rather, the (verbal) be-ing of the person (*das Sein der Person*) is existence acted out into "world openness." Yet, in each indivisible moment, this act-being of the person realizes his or her existence by being an embodied person. The lived body and its central vital energy, called impulsion, is one of the factors necessary to realize ideas of the mind. Mind by itself, i.e., without this and other realizing factors, remains impotent.

With this emphasis, Scheler offered a new conceptualization of the traditional but familiar problem of essence and existence. It is through the capacity of *resistance* inherent in the vital energy of impulsion that existence and reality are given to us. On the other hand, the nature and whatness of entities is given through the mind. The person is a continuously self-realizing existence. In this process the person's ideas must "functionalize" with realizing factors of social, cultural, geographic, political and economic conditions at hand. It is only in terms of these conjunctions between mind and such realizing factors that ideas of the mind become workable. If they do not fit these realizing conditions, the ideas remain dormant. Essential characteristics of the form of the mind, the person, are the following:

Each person acts out his or her own existence in his or her "unique" way. No two or more persons can be alike. True, all persons act out the same types of acts, such as thinking, willing, feeling, remembering, expecting, etc. However, each person acts them out with an individual, personal quality. This particular individuality

of the acting out of acts Scheler referred to as the "qualitative direction" of acts by which each person is different from another person.

As form of the mind, the person, is independent of gender, racial affiliation, social standing, religious and cultural association. The form of the mind must not be understood as encompassing the mind or consciousness. Rather, the person is shown to be permeating every act of each individual mind. That is to say, the form is continuously self-becoming in each individually different act like that of loving, thinking, willing, etc. The person also varies in good and bad deeds that carry with them traces of the individual person.

Last not least, the person is value-being (*Wertperson*) whose individual value is irreplaceable and unrepeatable. As the highest value of all values, the person is the "value of values."

The fact of no two persons being alike because of the unique qualitative direction of the acts of each person calls for a clarification of how the permanent order of five value ranks in the person's *ordo amoris* is compatible with individually varying and different persons and the different directions of their acts.

The answer to this question cannot be solved by assuming that there is an underlying transcendental ego. The answer lies in an individual *refraction* of the permanent order of values, a refraction that corresponds to each person's qualitative direction of acts. Such refraction of the order of values is also present in different types of communities and different historical periods.

With this relativity of individual and communal refraction of the ordered values, Scheler was able to preserve the freedom of the individual person, especially that of democracy. Indeed, by abstaining from a categorical imperative, his *Formalism in Ethics* reaches the conclusion that all divisible values of the lower value ranks, such as nutrition and health, "ought" to be equally distributed among humans "on earth," whereas realizations of mental and sacred values remain a matter of the conscience and moral tenor (*Gesinnung*) of the person. "To put it plainly, aristocracy 'in heaven' does not preclude democracy 'on earth'." Before God, therefore, and morally, all persons are unequal. This result of value-ethics stands in stark contrast to ideologies pleading for political and social egalitarianism among persons. Egalitarianism is revealed as an outcome of modern resentment deeply seated in various types of individual ineptitudes, including the inability to face morally qualitative differences among individual persons.

2. There are five different forms of social togetherness among persons. These social forms are "co-original."



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