

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF VALUE - EXPERIENCE : SOME REFLECTIONS ON SCHELER AND HARTMANN

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The present paper proposes to address itself to the question as to how we "experience" values. Some continental philosophers, particularly the phenomenologists, draw our attention to the fact that we do possess a cognitive phase in our emotional life which enables us to apprehend values. This cognitive-emotional phase is quite independent of our psycho-physical organisation as well as our rational faculty. In what, follows, an attempt will be made to lay bare the logic of the phenomena of this cognitive emotion vis-a-vis values on the basis of the writings of Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann. In this connection, we shall discuss (i) the historical perspective on the topic, (ii) the status of values, (iii) the nature of cognitive-emotional acts or feeling-*acts* as distinguished from feeling-*States*. And finally, we shall present a phenomenological analysis of value-experience in a systematic manner.

I

The dichotomy between reason and sensibility, rationalism and emotionalism has been playing a dominating role in most of the western philosophies from ancient times down to the present era. According to this dichotomy, reason or rationalism is regarded as something lawful, orderly, logical and as something superior to the sensibility or emotionalism which is considered to be unlawful, disorderly and something having no cognitive capability. Kant's philosophy serves as an eminent example where

the abovementioned dualism is found to be distinctly prevalent. In his theory of knowledge, he speaks of two faculties, namely, "sensibility" by means of which the representations of objects are given to us and "understanding" by which we think or judge. Here "understanding" has got a superior position in the sense that it does not draw its laws "a priori" from Nature but rather prescribes them to it. Hence "understanding makes Nature". The similar trend is quite visible in his ethics. Here he seeks to eradicate the "sensible" as he attempts to build up his theory of ethics on a non-empirical, non-sensible and a *priori* plane which he calls "pure ethics" or "metaphysics of morals". So according to him, it is Reason (and not human emotions) in its practical (moral) use or function that guides our choices i.e., what ought to be done or ought not to be done. Thus Kant denies any significant role of emotions in morality.

Traditionally, in this way, emotional content of the mind, such as, intuition, feeling, love or hate etc. are regarded as disorderly and dependent on the psycho-physical organisation of the person and therefore it occupies a negligible position than our rational faculty. But there are at least some continental philosophers who set their face strongly against the view that everything in the human mind that is non-rational is dependent on man's subjective constitution and therefore cannot be our guide in our practical life. They show, on the contrary, that ethics can very well be based on emotions. That there is lawfulness, orderliness and cognitive capability of emotional life which is irreducible to the lawfulness, orderliness of reason or rationality has been paid due attention by these philosophers.

To begin with, we find that it is Blaise Pascal who with great emphasis on the matter says, "the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know".¹ Or elsewhere he says, "we know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart..."² so, according to Pascal, our emotional life as a whole is not chaotic or disorderly but possesses the capability of knowing truth corresponding to that of our rational faculty. Later on, we see, Franz Brentano, who is regarded as the forerunner of phenomenological movement, recognises the role of emotion in moral knowledge. For him, all mental phenomena including emotional ones, unlike physical phe-

nomena, are characterised by the fact that they are intentional in character. Among these intentional acts at least some such acts which are called acts of loving or acts of hating are capable of evoking a feeling favourably or disfavourably towards things or acts in their value-aspects. For Brentano, to say that an action is good or a thing is beautiful is to say simply that it is 'correctly' loved. Here the direct object of love is *not* the value itself but the goods or actions in which a value arises through the acts of loving.

This conception of Brentano is said to have given birth to both Husserl's and Scheler's view in this regard. For Husserl, "the heart and the will must have their analogous but specific forms of rationality."³ And "the valuable properties of things, according to Husserl, are disclosed by emotions or feelings."⁴ Scheler expresses solidarity with Husserl in this regard and bolsters his personal insight by appealing to the analogous views of Pascal. He has elaborated a theory of feeling in his major ethical work, namely, *Formalism in Ethics and Non - formal Ethics of Values*.⁵ He clearly distinguishes the kind of feeling which enables us to have the apprehension of values from mere psychological states of mind - the latter being non-cognitive in nature. Similarly, Hartmann being avowedly a Platonic thinker incorporates this view in his value - Platonism as is found in his *Ethics*.⁶ He clearly states that values are beheld in the acts of feeling. In the following, we shall dwell on in details on the views of both Scheler and Hartmann.

II

Before we go on to elaborate theory of emotion upheld by Scheler and Hartmann, it may be worthwhile to understand what type of things the values are. We may begin by pointing out that values are not furnitures of the world. They neither reside nor are found in the world. They arise neither with our desires nor with our interest in them. This means that values are not the product of subjectivism and psychologism. They are also different from their carriers. Turning to the positive characterisation of values, we see that both Scheler and Hartmann differ from each other.

Scheler, to begin with, distinguishes values from goods by saying that the former are "value-things" and the latter are "thing-value". He draws an analogy that values share with Colours.⁷ For him, values "exist" the way a pure colour of spectrum exists. Further, values, according to Scheler, are "genuinely objective objects"⁸ quite in the same way for Husserl⁹ colour species is an object given through an intuitive act. Furthermore, for Scheler, "value-qualities... are ideal objects as are qualities of colours and sounds."¹⁰ Moreover, values are subsistent or autonomous being as is clear from his statement : "Rather all norms, imperatives, demands, etc. have their foundation in an autonomous *being*, the being of values".¹¹ It is to be noted that Scheler is said to have not been decisive enough as to the nature of values.¹² His views changed during his philosophical career. But he denies in clear terms any heavenly realm for values like that of platonic ideas in his major ethical work *Formalism*. He states, "In fact, I reject in principle and at the *threshold* of philosophy a heavenly realm of ideas and values that is independent not only with regard to man and human consciousness, but also with regard to the *essence and execution* of living spirit in general".¹³

Hartmann, on the contrary, avowedly maintains a status for values like that of platonic ideas. He clearly states, "in their mode of Being, values are platonic ideas".¹⁴ This implies firstly that Hartmann gives values, unlike that of the objects of spatio-temporal world, the status of ideal being quite in the same way that Plato conceives Ideas as Ideal Being. The ideality of values, for Hartmann, consists in their self-existent character which he defines thus :

"What in the mode of being is not relative to a subject, whatever confronts a thinking subject as independent and immovable, whatever sets in before him a self-subsistent negativity and energy of its own which the subject can grasp or miss but cannot get rid of, that has for him the character of self-existence".¹⁵

This means that values are independent of everything, such as, of the subject who passes the judgement, of the judgement itself, of person's actual conduct, of valuable things. "This timeless independence from the

world, according to Kraenzel, is the meaning of Hartmann's term "ideal being".¹⁶ Secondly, that a notion of "ground" is attached to values like that of Plato's ideas in the sense that "they (values) are that "through which" everything which participates in them is exactly as it is - namely, valuable".¹⁷ Thirdly, that values are *a priori* like Plato's ideas. As Hartmann put it, "indeed, it must be an *a priori* condition".¹⁸

Despite the differences between non-Platonic and Platonic views of Scheler and Hartmann, both of them agree that values are subject to no change or mutation and primarily apprehended through a non-conceptual means, that is, through "emotional sensing" or feeling-acts.

III

Let us now proceed following Scheler and Hartmann to elaborate the nature of the phenomena of the sort of emotion which enables us to "see" values from feeling-states. Let us first take up Scheler. According to him, emotional acts or what we have called feeling-acts are "feeling of something".¹⁹ This means that feeling-acts are intentional in character and that their intentionality is directed towards some "objects" which Scheler calls "genuinely objective objects",²⁰ that is, values. So there is a kind of intentional relatedness between feeling-acts and their objects. This kind of relatedness is *not* mediated by anything else like that of feeling-states which are purely psychological states of mind. In case of feeling-states, there may or may not have objects. If there is any object, the feeling-states are "related" with the former by way of objectifying acts, such as, of sensation, perception, thinking or representation. For example, a psychological state of my mind, say, sadness occurs in me caused by my failure in the examination. Here there is "originally" no connection between sadness of my mind and my failure in the examination. I "relate" my psychological state of sadness with my failure in the examination through objectifying acts of "thinking". But in case of intentional relatedness, as we have pointed out, there is no such mediation and therefore the latter is called by Scheler "original" relatedness. The intentionality of feeling-acts are of *themselves* related to their objects. So Scheler

says, "we do not feel 'about something'; we immediately feel *something*, i.e. a specific value-quality".²¹ Further, feeling-acts, unlike feeling-states, are signifying acts in the sense that they *mean* some object. That is, they are capable of providing us with the knowledge of some objects, that is, values. In the words of Funk,

feeling here reveals objects to me; it's neither a question of their being associated, either mechanically or through some mental act, with what I perceive nor of objects being brought in 'from without' the experience, for feeling goes directly to *its* objects, viz., values.²²

In other words, Scheler calls them "goal-determined movement".²³ That is to say, it is a movement of emotional intentionality to bring some meaning into the focus of consciousness, to grasp a thing or an action in its value-aspect. This intentional feeling presents to us some mundane object or action with some spiritual meaning, that is, values. As Scheler says,

This act plays the *disclosing* role in our value-comprehension and that it is only this act which does so. This act, as it were, a movement in whose execution ever *new* and *higher* values flash out, i.e. values that were wholly unknown to the being **concerned**.²⁴

Furthermore, feeling-acts and its objects i.e. values belong to the one and the same realm, that is, to the immanent realm of moral consciousness. The feeling-acts, therefore, are related through intentionality to the objects of similar nature. The object does not lie outside the realm of cognising consciousness as in the case of feeling-states where the particular psychological state is aroused by outside cause. "The process of value-experience is *immanent* to the emotional consciousness and involves no transcendent object. Therefore, Scheler says "feeling 'originally' intends its *own* kind of objects, namely, values."²⁵

Now for Hartmann. The above analysis of emotional acts is quite acceptable to Hartmann as the latter has quoted the following from the writings of Scheler : "Even the emotional aspects of the mind - feeling, preference, love, hate, volition - possess an aprioristic character which it

does not borrow from thought, and which ethics has to accept quite independently of logic. There is an inborn aprioristic *ordre du or logique du coeur*, as Blaise Pascal happily expressed it".²⁶ This "aprioristic character" is what Hartmann differently put as "primal feeling of values" or "primary consciousness of value".²⁷ This means for him "a primal, immediate capacity to appreciate the valuable".²⁸ It is a kind of immediate apprehension of values. It is a matter of approval or disapproval of some objects, i.e., values. Hence Hartmann further paraphrases Scheler,

Comprehension of ethical reality - whether it consists of goods, human relations or demands for a personal decision - is always, even for the naivest consciousness, transfused with valuations, with preferences in accordance with feeling, with strong tensions for and against. All acts which are related to this fulness of life and which grasp reality are at the same time acts which grasp values and which select according to values. But as such they are never purely cognitive acts; they are acts of feeling - not intellectual but emotional.²⁹

It is for Hartmann as for Scheler these emotional acts are cognitive having directedness towards their objects. As Hartmann says,

The grasping of them, how it may be in other particulars, to just as much an act which goes out to something beyond itself as every other cognitive act....³⁰

Thus Hartmann being avowedly a value-Platonist combines well with it the phenomenological analysis of emotional acts which enables us to apprehend values.

In this way both Scheler and Hartmann have shown adequately that we do possess an ordered and lawful phase in our emotional life which is quite competent to get access to the world of values *without* having to resort to reason.

IV

In order to proceed to further analysis of value-experience, two points

are required to be noted. *First* that phenomenological value-theorists like Husserl, Scheler and Hartmann want to defend ethics as pure discipline as against moral psychologism and empiricism. And they are in favour of providing the ground for justification of a priori validity of values. Moral psychologism is a doctrine which regards values and norms as the product of subjectivism and seeks to make them relative to individual or group. And thereby the values and norms cannot be claimed to have universal validity. As John Drummond says,

To ground ethics in psychology (or similarly, in biology) would reduce moral laws to those empirical laws governing the activities of evaluating and acting rather than the universal and ideal laws governing the relations among the contents, i.e., the meanings, intentionally inherent in evaluative acts. To ground ethics in psychology would thereby undercut the possibility of any unconditional demand, of any adequate notion of obligation. Evaluative terms such as 'good' and 'bad' would refer exclusively to historically and culturally conditioned usages generally applicable only in particular times and cultures. They would have a mere factual validity....³¹

In order to avoid these consequences of ethics, the phenomenological value-ethicists plead for ethical absolutism. According to them, the theoretical part of ethics must be *a priori* science and prescribe universal norms and commandments. So they are for grounding ethics on a level with universal validity. For them, values are absolute and subject to no change or mutation, on the one hand and the primary knowledge of them is not grounded on psychic subjectivity but rather on pure emotional subjectivity, on the other.

Second that perceptual cognition of goods, that is, the object which is valuable is the pre-requisite of primary experience of value. That which is valuable must at first appear to us as a bare thing given to sense and understanding. The physical presence of a valuable object arouse in our mind the sort of emotion which enables us to grasp the value. For example, my table clock, following which I order my day's works, that is, how much time I shall spend in study, how much to doing physical exercise

etc. To appreciate the valuableness of the clock, I must *first* have the knowledge that there is such a thing before me called "clock". The point which we like to make here is that primary consciousness of value is grounded on the perceptual knowledge of the valuable things. In other words, "the experience of the object having value necessarily presupposes the cognitive apprehension of the object and necessarily involves a moment of feeling which builds itself upon the cognitive experience of the object".³²

For the value-theorists in the phenomenological tradition, if this be construed in somewhat flexible terms, values are given, as we have pointed out, through *emotion*. Here the term "emotion", as we have already explained, is not to be taken to mean "blind" drive but rather to mean cognitive feeling-acts. It is purely an "emotional contact"³³ with the object, that is, values. This is, "in itself something unaccommodating, incapable of being disconcerted, a unique entity, a law unto itself, a distinctive orientation of values".³⁴ This distinctive orientation of values is an immediate capacity, to apprehend the values. No mediation such as through concepts, symbols, signs etc. are required in order to become aware of them. One is able to approach directly the "things" (i.e. values) themselves without any kind of previous assumption - be it naturalistic or metaphysical. He enters into an immediate relationship with the value-phenomena themselves. As in the language of Hartmann,

Every moral preference is intuitive, is *immediately* there and is contained in the grasping of a given circumstances (...). It does not first wait for a judgement of the understanding.³⁵

Similarly for Scheler, value are given immediately i.e. *not* in any way *mediated* by symbols, signs, or instructions of any kind".³⁶ This distinctive stress on presuppositionless, direct and immediate understanding of any phenomena is the hallmark of phenomenological approach to knowledge.

According to the phenomenological value-ethicists, the function of "pure" acts are not to be kept restricted to the domain of intellect but must be extended to the domain of emotion which has its *own* kind of objects i.e. values to be cognised. Because the emotional acts are in no way less

"pure" than those of "pure thoughts" as they are totally independent of the psycho-physical structure of the human being like those of "pure thought". The pure acts which belong to our emotional sphere are totally different from feeling-states and they are not blind but cognitive in nature. Both Scheler and Hartmann emphatically demand the apriority of the emotional and severing of false unity that till now has existed between the apriori and the rational.

The phenomenological tradition going back to the writings of Husserl succeeds in evolving and developing a methodology which is mainly oriented towards non-rational mode of cognition. Phenomenological value-theorists, in particular, have occasion to study and send out a message loud and clear that it is only emotion and *not* reason which is vastly superior to grasp the value-phenomena. The rational means of cognition is neither immediate nor direct. For reason cannot function unmediated by concepts, symbols, signs etc. It is always seeking justification in terms of arguments based on deductive and inductive modes. Phenomenological approach, on the contrary, is characterised by a mode of understanding which is both direct and emotional-intuitive and it needs no justification from outside.

It must be noted by way of clarification that the emotional-intuitive acts are not contradictory to rational acts. The claim of phenomenological thinkers is that both rational and emotional mode of cognition are different from each other having their respective autonomous area of themselves. The logic of reason is blind to what we are given through the logic of heart. As Spader points out, "feeling gives us an autonomous intentional access to the values (and their hierarchy) that are the bases of moral decision".³⁷ The emotional access to the domain of values is *not* vague which requires clarification by the reason as the order and laws contained in this experience are exact and evident as those of logic and mathematics. Feeling-acts, therefore, are in no way aided by reason.

As the apprehension of values is an apprehension through emotion, one cannot shrink away from its object in order *not* to have the cognition of it. A valuing subject is *not* free to have or not to have the apprehension

of values. Here he is purely receptive in matters of having the consciousness of value. The subject cannot avoid or escape the appeal of value made upon his "feeling". In the words of Hartmann,

"In this 'beholding' of them the subject is purely receptive; he surrenders himself to them. He sees himself determined by the objects, the self-existent value. But he himself, on his side determines nothing".³⁸

The kind of feeling involved in the apprehension of values as we have pointed out, are intentional in character. In phenomenological terms, intentional feeling-acts are "noesis" and its intentional correlate is "noema". When I perceive a valuable object, my feeling-acts intentionally correlate a value which comes to the fore of consciousness through noetic act of feeling. Indeed, there is a sense of subjectivity which is said to be the "universe of possible sense".³⁹ "Every imaginable sense, every imaginable being, whether the latter is called immanent or transcendent, falls within the domain of transcendental subjectivity, as the subjectivity that constitutes sense and being".⁴⁰ This implies that it is through feeling-acts, the emotional subjectivity, constitutes the meaning or value of goods.

The constitution of sense or value of a thing is a process of *elucidation* of a valuable thing in its value-aspect and *not* an activity of creating values. It is through constitution of sense or value, in our view, the world of multiple things and beings appear to us as valuable. Thus

the constitution of the objective world according to phenomenological epistemology repeats itself in the constitution of values in the phenomenological axiology.⁴¹

In concluding the above discussion as to how we "experience" values, we may summarise the main points as follows : working within the phenomenological framework, both Scheler and Hartmann discover a centre of ethical acts in the full-blooded existential person. These ethical acts are cognitive-emotional acts having directedness towards its objects, that is, values. The feeling-acts reveal the actions or goods in their value-aspect and thereby they become cognitive acts corresponding to the cogni-

tive acts of thought. Thus by the discovery of the emotional a priori and the correlative realm of values which address themselves to men, Scheler and Hartmann establish the foundation of non-formal value-ethics against Kantian formal ethics.

NOTES

- 1 Pascal, B., *Pensees* in *Great Books of the Western World* edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins Vol.33, Section IV, Para 277 p.222.
- 2 *Ibid.*, Para 282, p. 223.
- 3 Melle, U., "Ethics in Husserl" in *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, p. 181 edited by Lester Embree and others, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 1997.
- 4 Drummond, J.J., "Moral Objectivity : Husserl's Sentiments of the Understanding", *Husserl Studies*, p.170 Vol.12, No.2, 1995.
- 5 Scheler, M., *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values* (Henceforth to be mentioned as *Formalism*). Translated by Manfred S.Frings and Roger L.Funk.Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973.
- 6 Hartmann, N., *Ethics*, Translated by Stanton Coit, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1958.
- 7 Scheler, M., *Formalism, op.cit.*, p. 12.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.255.Scheler Further says, "As value-phenomena....values are *true objects* and different from all *states* of feeling". *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 9 Cf. Moosa, I., "A Critical Examination of Scheler's Justification of the existence of Values", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 25, 1991.
- 10 Scheler, M., *Formalism, op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 186-87.

- 12 Scheler's view on the status of values fluctuates throughout his philosophical career and different Scheler-scholars have interpreted his statements with regard to values in different ways. Please see, Moosa, I., "Are Values Independent Entities? Scheler's discussion of the Relation between Values and Persons?" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol.24, No.3, October, 1993.
- 13 Scheler, M., *Formalism*, Preface to the Third Edition, p.xxx. Translated by Manfred S.Frings and Roger L.Funk. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973.
- 14 Hartmann, N., *Ethics*, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- 16 Kraenzel, F., "Nicolai Hartmann's Doctrine of Ideal Values : An Examination". *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No.2, 1994.
- 17 Hartmann, N., *Ethics*, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 19 Scheler, M., *Formalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 22 Funk, P.L., "Thought, Values and Action" Manfred S. Frings (ed.) *Max Scheler (1874-1928), Centennial Essays* p. 50. Martinus Nihoff, The Hague, 1974.
- 23 Scheler, M., *Formalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 257.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- 25(a) It may be noted here that feeling-acts , we have seen, are instrument of having primary knowledge of values. But they (feeling-acts) cannot further be known by some other acts. One can be aware of values, through

feeling but cannot be aware of feeling-act itself while engaged in having the knowledge of values. As Scheler says in this context : "in the execution of feeling, we are not objectively conscious of feeling itself". Scheler, M., *Formalism*, p.259.

26 Hartmann. N., *Ethics*, p. 177.

27 *Ibid.*, p.88.

Hartmann defines primary consciousness of values thus : "The primary consciousness of values is a feeling of value, the primal recognition of a commandment, is a feeling of that which unconditionally ought to be, the expression of which is the commandment", *Ibid.*, p. 177.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 176-77.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

31 Drummond, John J., "Moral Objectivity : Husserl's Sentiments of the Understanding". *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 12, No.2, 1995.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Hartmann, N., *Ethics*, *op.cit.*,p.95.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 176 (my emphasis)

36 Scheler, M., *Formalism*, *op.cit.*,p.50 (my emphasis)

37 Spader, P.H., "The Primacy of the Heart : Scheler's challenge to phenomenology". *Philosophy Today* Vol. 29, No.3/4, Fall 1985.

38 Hartmann, N., *Ethics*, p. 219.

39 Husserl, E., *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 84. Translated by Dorion Cairns Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1960.

40 *Ibid.*

41 Shmucli, E., "The Universal Message of Husserl's Ethics". *Analecta*

Husserliana, Vol. XXII, p. 553. D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1987.

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