**Scheler and Husserl redux**

Before we look to our readings of this week, i.e., the concluding division of Scheler's *Formalism* "The Person in Ethical Contexts," I want to return to the theme that I have been pursuing in the last couple of classes. We've seen that Scheler offers a critique of Husserl's phenomenological reduction in his *Formalism*. Whether the concept of monad,¹ which Husserl explicates in the fourth and fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*, is commensurate with or even equivalent to the concept of person as Scheler intends it, there is little question that Scheler believes the phenomenological reduction can offer only an abstraction from the genuine concrete essence of personal being. "No knowledge of the nature of love, for instance, or of the nature of judgment, can bring us one step nearer to the knowledge of how a person A loves or judges person B," Scheler asserts, "nor can a reference to the contents (values, states of affairs) given in each of these acts furnish this knowledge."² "The being of the person is therefore the "foundation" of all essentially different acts."³ We should bear in mind that Scheler remained ignorant of Husserl's explication of the transcendental ego as monad, since the *Meditations* were published after Scheler's death. Thus Scheler's knowledge of Husserl's phenomenology rested predominantly on Husserl's earlier *Ideas* I of 1913 and the *Logical Investigations* of 1900/01. Now in regards to this critique of Husserl, allow me read a brief word by Manfred Frings.

The analysis of the person <in Part II of *Formalism in Ethics*> is also an implicit critique of the fledgling phenomenological movement that began to form around Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the century, and for whom the human sphere of personhood was only secondary to the human ego. In addition, Scheler was also opposed to the contentions Husserl had made in his first major work, *Ideas* I (1913), in which he conceived of human consciousness as pure. The year that his value-ethics was first published, Scheler held that a pure consciousness by itself is a fiction: we have no other experiences of it in our consciousness other than that it is of a person. In sharp contrast to Husserl, therefore, person is "form" of consciousness. Scheler thus foreshadowed Heidegger's analysis of "Dasein" as described in his *Being and Time* (1927), which is also a hidden but strong critique of Husserl emphasis on ego.⁴

It is a bit misleading to assert here, as Frings does, that Husserl conceived human consciousness as pure. The reduction, as we have seen, is precisely the bracketing of the egoic consciousness as human in order to unlock or disclose the essential structures of cognition as such. Nevertheless, Frings central contention remains correct. Scheler finds Husserl's phenomenological egology essentially deficient. The most explicit critique of Husserl's abstractive egology is located in the closing paragraphs of section 6.3.b, though the entire discussion in 6.3 represents his thorough-going critique of the pure ego as such. And this is why we have spent such considerable energy reading this section.

There is, however, a more fundamental point to be made here, I believe, which is essentially related to this critical assessment of Husserl's phenomenology. Recall that the central issue here revolves around the

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¹ "From the ego as identical pole, and as substrate of habitualities, we distinguish the *ego taken in full concreteness* – in that we take, in addition, that without which the ego cannot after all be concrete. (The ego, taken in full concreteness, we propose to call by the Leibnizian name: monad." (Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations*, 67-8.)

² Scheler, *Formalism*, 386.

³ Scheler. *Formalism*, 383.

abstraction from the concrete essence of personal being. For Scheler, this cannot be overlooked. In order to make clear the significance of this personal foundationalism, I want to turn very briefly to the Scheler article with which we started, i.e., "The Nature of Philosophy and the Moral Preconditions of Philosophical Knowledge (1919)." Bear with me, as I wish to read the last two paragraphs of the second section of that essay (page 88-89).

Value-insight has an objective priority over good volition and conduct, for only what is unmistakably willed as good is, if it be also objectively good, perfectly good. But at the same time true value-insight is subjectively dependent on, hence posterior to, objectively good volition and conduct. Furthermore, true value-insight is no more than an attribute of the absolute entity. So we may go on to say that the specific 'emotional' acts through which we come to apprehend values and which are consequently the source of all value-judgments as well as of all norms and decisions of obligations, constitute the unifying factor which is common to our practical conduct and all our theoretical knowing and thinking. But since, within the group of these emotional acts, love and hate, are the most fundamental, embracing and underlying all other kinds (interest, 'feeling of . . .', preference, etc.), they also constitute the common roots of our practical and theoretical behavior; they are the basic acts in which alone our theoretic and our practical life discovers and conserves its ultimate unity. Now it is evident that the doctrine here established differs sharply from all doctrines of a primacy of will or of intellect in our minds, since it asserts a primacy of love and hate not only over all forms of volition but also over all forms of 'representation' and judgment. For, as has elsewhere been shown, it is not in any way feasible to subsume the acts of taking interest, attending or loving and hating under the heads of conation and volition, neither is it tenable to reduce them to mere adjustments of representational content.\(^5\)

Husserl, we should recall, seems in his analyses to give primacy to theoretical or "doxic" consciousness by taking as his paradigm perceptual consciousness.\(^6\) Of course, Husserl is concerned with the total unity of conscious life. Yet his investigations suggest a very different structuring of intentional life than that proposed by Scheler. Just by the use of his examples he seems to assert a primacy of intellect over other aspects of conscious life.

If, in an act of judgment, I decide for the first time in favor of a being and a being-thus, the fleeting act passes; but from now on I am abidingly this ego who is thus and so decided. "I am of this conviction. ... Likewise in the case of decisions of every other kind, value-decisions, volitional decisions. I decide; the act-process distinguishes but the decision persists. <And then later> Though convictions are, in general, only relatively abiding and have their modes of

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\(^6\) It is worthwhile to compare Husserl's account of the fixed and abiding systematicity of intentional consciousness against Scheler's account of the concrete act. See especially §20 "The Peculiar Nature of Intentional Analysis" in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. Where Husserl's analysis centers on explication of the horizontal structure of a pure consciousness, Scheler's will focus his analysis on the distinctiveness inherent in the concrete act of a person. "If we consider only one concrete act of a person, this act contains in itself all possible act-essences, and its objective correlate contains all essential factors of world – e.g., egoness, the individual ego, and all essential constituents of the psychic, as well as the outer world, spatiality, temporality, the phenomenon of the lived body, thingness, effecting, etc. – on the basis of an apriori and lawful structure, valid without exception for all possible persons and all possible acts of all persons. This structure is valid not only for the real world but also for all possible worlds. This correlate also contains an ultimate peculiarity, an original trait, belong only to the 'world' of this person and nobody else. This peculiarity cannot be grasped in terms of essential concepts pertaining to general essences." (Scheler. *Formalism*, 393-4.)
alteration ..., the ego shows, in such alterations, an abiding style with a unity of identity throughout all of them: a personal character. 7

Scheler, although not disagreeing in the essentials of this account, once again argues that Husserl's pure phenomenology lacks the proper foundation in the genuine concrete essence of personal being.

What we call character has nothing to do with the idea of the "person" if we take character to mean enduring dispositions of the will or other "dispositions," e.g., those of the mind, intellect, and memory of a person.... On the contrary, the person, as well as his actions, can be thought of as freely varying, notwithstanding the same dispositions of soul and body and the same situations. 8

What is really fundamentally at issue here is the value-structure at the heart of personal being. Let's look at the bottom of page 503. Notice that this section deals with "the being of the person as self-value in history and community." Specifically he is contrasting here his doctrine of personal value against that put forward by Kant and Nietzsche. But he sees something relevantly similar in their theories to his own discovery concerning ranks of values:

Although values of things [Sachwerte] are higher than values of feeling-states (e.g., the feeling of well-being), values of the person are, as such, higher than values of things, and so for example, spiritual values of the person are higher than spiritual values of things. To whatever degree the absence of the person's volitional intention directed toward his own value remains the basic condition of his factual value, the value of the person remains the highest value of the values, and the glorification of the person, ultimately the person of persons, i.e., God, remains the moral meaning of all moral "order." 9

"There are essences that are given only in one particular individual," he argues. "And for this reason, it makes good sense to speak of an individual essence and also of the individual value essence of a person." 10 Part II of the Formalism is an attempt to explicate the meaning of this concrete singular essence, this highest value of all values, that, itself, is the foundation of all that is.

Therefore, the fact that truth about the world and the absolute world is, in a certain sense, a "personal truth (as the absolute good is a "personal good," ...) is due not to any supposed "relativity" and "subjectivity" or "humanness," of the idea of truth, but to the essential interconnection between person and world. The fact that this is so and not otherwise has its foundation in the essence of Being, not in the essence of the "truth." .... For if person and world are absolute being, and if they are reciprocally related essentially, absolute truth can only be personal. 11

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8 Scheler. Formalism, 484.
9 Scheler. Formalism, 503-04.
10 Scheler. Formalism, 489.
11 Scheler. Formalism, 395.