

**KS. DR REMIGIUSZ KRÓL**

## **THE ISSUE OF VALUE ACCORDING TO MAX SCHELER AND NICOLAI HARTMANN**

The most essential work of Max Scheler, vital for the issue of value we are interested in here, is *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und materiale Wertethik*<sup>1</sup>. The problem of a subject and his connection with values is in Scheller's philosophy mainly the problem of the advocate, carrier of the values (*Trager*). Scheler refers here to Kant's considerations, he rejects the possibility of finding out the philosophy of values from the empirical researches. The aim of ethics is not the study of that which is socially recognized as good or bad, but which actually is good or bad. The study of values should be based on phenomenological cognition (*Wesenerkenntnis*). According to Scheler, some other existing values cannot be brought out from a real existence. Cognition of the values is to come about in the feeling, sensation (*Fuhlen*), in preference (*Vorziehen*), putting things below (*Nachsetzen*), and in love and hate. These acts are different to observational and thinking ones.

The world of values is in this philosophy hierarchically structurized and independent, in the sense of existence, from the empirical reality. According to Scheler, the highest modality of value is the value of *sacrum*, and then as follows: spiritual values, vigorous values, utilitarian values, up to hedonistic values included. The variety of basic and

---

<sup>1</sup> See Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und materiale Wertethik*, Bern-Munchen, 1980.

secondary values intersects with this division. The betrayal of the basic value (for example the vigorous value) is even worse evil than the betrayal of higher value, but the fulfillment of the higher value is better good than the fulfillment of lower rank value. While studying the quality of values, Scheler accepts a sequence of axioms which set a relationship of existence to positive and negative values. And so we have: 1. the existence of positive values is actually positive value, 2. the existence of negative value is actually negative value, 3. the non-existence of positive value is negative value, 4. the non-existence of negative value is positive value, indeed. "Then, each and every existence (*Sein*) of something (in a positive sense) – as Scheller writes – is right; each and every existence of something that should not exist, is unfair; each and every non-existence of something right is unfair; each and every non-existence of something that should not exist is right"<sup>2</sup>. The same state of values cannot ever be negative or positive at the same time- that is another example of Scheler's ethical axiology.

The figure of the carrier of the values becomes a part of the significant, aprioritic relations. Scheler gives a few examples of such relations: 1. morally good or bad may only be people, and everything else exists only because of those people; 2. the acts of will and actions are good or bad in this respect only in which their active people are co-grasped; 3. there are no items or events which are morally good or bad; 4. the advocates, carriers of esthetic values are objects; 5. the carrier of ethical values can only be people. "Ethical values generally are, as Scheler writes, first of all those values whose carriers, advocates (originally) can never be given as "objects," since they are, in fact, found on the side of a person (and an act). A person may never be given to us as an "object," as well as each and every act. Thus, if we do objectify a certain person in some way, we do lose sight of the carrier of the moral values"<sup>3</sup>. Being in a heated polemic with Kant's ethical formalism and an accusation that material ethic squanders a person's dignity, Scheler proves that it is only in moral ethics that a man as a person puts on dignity. A person cannot be comprehended as a substance for which the most important power would be the power of mind. A man as a person is a unity of acts of a various nature, among which mind plays one of many roles. Referring to a rich German tradition of priority non-rational spheres (right next to a romantic Dilthey's analysis of moods-*Stimmungen*) Scheler emphasizes the meaning of emotions treated as empirical equipment. Thanks to feelings, emotions we do have the opportunity to get to the sphere of the value. A person, "a directly co-experienced unity of experience" is a document continuity (*kontinuierliche Aktualität*), and is a spiritual being in his/her nature. A man- a person is not determined by values to fulfill them. A man is free and autonomous and that is why there is such an axiological ambiguity on the empirical level. As a carrier (*Trager*), a person is an individual different from other people. According to Scheler, an intimate and social (inter-subjectively accessible) person can be distinguished in each and every man. The absolutely intimate person does not take part in any relations with the other people. The carrier of the moral values can only be the whole concrete intimate-social person. A man who embodies positive values (and a man who is a carrier of those values) can serve as a model for other people (*Vorbild*). That man has an impact

<sup>2</sup> See Max Scheler, *Matrialne a priori w etyce*, translated by J. Filek, in: "Znak," 1967, nb 12(162), p. 1513.

<sup>3</sup> The same, p. 1517.

on some other individuals and stimulates them to a proper (positive in the sense of values) building of their lives. Those models are the basis for creating the norms and socially accepted rules of conduct, and after all, their codification. According to that phenomenologist, moral development happens mainly through those models. The empirical models (personal ones) are examples of ideal models, the pure types of values and aprioritical hierarchy. Scheler distinguishes three such ideal types: a genius, a hero, an artist, a leader spirit, a saint; each of those types presents at least one positive value. It is only the infinite divine being that binds all those “ideal types” into one.

### **Values according to Nicolai Hartmann**

Hartmann approaches the issue of studying individual values in a typically phenomenological way, all in order to reach the essence (*essentia*). This is the only possible way to study values, as according to Hartmann: “Values, as far as the way of existence is concerned, are Platonic ideas. They do belong to that diverse field of existence, which had been discovered by Plato for the first time, and can actually be perceived mentally, but which cannot be seen or grasped. (...) They are all that through which everything that is a part of them, is what it is – namely is valuable. This, however, means in today’s notional language that values are the “essence”<sup>4</sup>. Values are, according to Hartmann, independent of valuable items, are that thanks to which they have the nature of “goods,” meaning through which they are valuable. Values are the condition for the possibilities of the goods. A man has to possess, before the contact with the reality, a kind of measurement of what is good and what is bad, wrong, what is pleasant and unpleasant: “(A man) needs to possess some primeval sense, feeling which he refers to the values of his life and ordains into good and evil”<sup>5</sup>. That precedence is specifically comprehended apriority. Hartmann differentiates theoretical and practical a priori, associating the latter with values. The appearance of values is complex right before the aim is set. According to the philosopher, it is impossible to set an aim not having noticed in it something valuable. “That means, thus, that value is complex, is a condition and that condition is an aprioritic one”<sup>6</sup>. The problem of subjectivity appears in Hartmann’s reflection, similarly to Ingarden, mainly accompanied by the deliberations over responsibility. The philosopher differentiates also the feeling of values and the reality of his own subject: “I do find myself splintered into the empirical “me” and the moral, aprioritic “me”. And it is the empirical “I” that gives way to the aprioritic one, it acknowledges its right to reign; it bears the guilt – which the other burdens it with – as a resting feeling of guilt. It takes the responsibility the other burdens it with, and considers inadvertence to what it does not agree on”. It is here that the aprioriticity of values reveals itself. The moral “me” is built, according to Hartmann, out of the sheer matter of

---

<sup>4</sup> See Hartmann, Nicolai, *O istocie wartości etycznych*, translated by Jacek Filek, in: „Logos i Etos”, 1993, number 2, p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195.

value, from the opportunity value possesses. A moral man sees his own moral-empirical name, his idea as one of his possible “me”. That man tries to live shaping his real, empirical existence, basing himself on that particular idea. Moral self-consciousness of a man, his dignity is based on that notion, postulate, possibility. That a priori inner measure accompanies the great moral activity, every action, operation. “The feeling of value constitutes his personality as a moral one. A moral person, thus, does not exist without that pure a priori of values. (...) It is not the person who constitutes value, but it is value that constitutes a person. The autonomy of a person, for example, assumes the autonomy of values; it is the function of values, though certainly not only of the values”<sup>8</sup>. One of the moments when it comes to the confrontation of the empirical “me” with the moral one is the conscience. According to Hartmann, conscience is one of the key proofs of aprioricity, beyond the empirical value. Conscience is primordial consciousness of value given to all men. It is not within the power of a man to change the feeling of something that already is good or evil, value is not an already known or established thing. A man has to subordinate to that value of something, has to surrender. “A subject cannot change the existence. (...) The subject does not perform the function of defining or giving value, but it is a point of reference to the relation which also belongs to the material value. (...) The subject cannot simply acknowledge his own point of view as something valuable since it is not actually valuable for that subject”<sup>9</sup>. Hartmann analyses very thoroughly all the aspects of the ostensible relativity of value, trying every time to demonstrate that such relativity is sham.

Another very significant work in which Hartmann analyses the issue of subjectivity is the book published seven years after *Ethik*, titled: *Das Problem des geistigen Seins. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (1933). Hartmann refers to Hegl’s philosophy and tries to use those threads of the philosophy which, according to Hartmann, are still vital. The subjectivity (spiritual individual and a person) is included by the thinker into the chain of spirit’s signs (*Geist*). Hartmann differentiates then: 1. “the objective spirit,” meaning the sphere of cultural contents encompassed in speech, knowledge, morality, religion, mores, etc. which do not belong to an individual; 2. “the individual spirit” – a fundamental form of spiritual existence, a man; 3. “the objectified spirit” – all objectifications of “the objective spirit” and the “individual” one, which cover the long-lasting cultural products, the arts, literature, etc. A man is in this sense a kind of consciousness, which, contrary to animals, is able to regard oneself as an particle of the universe, not positioning himself in the center of that universe. Just as for an animal the reality is mainly the surrounding world (*Umwelt*), the same for a man to whom the reality is rather a co-existing world (*Mitwelt*). Hartmann describes the complicated process of learning the reality in which human consciousness becomes, at the end, self-consciousness, it reveals itself as “I”. The individual is not only the cognitive consciousness, but it stays in different relations to the reality. Submitted for desires, worries, working and experiencing an individual is a person, far from Husserl’s transcendental “I”. “An individual, isolated person, as Włodzimierz Galewicz writes, is according to Hartmann, only an abstraction. The real person can only exist in the co-existence and community with other people, in the area of the common surrounding

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, pp. 200-201.

spiritual world. It is in that relation, opposed to the other person, that a human being constitutes himself as “I”<sup>10</sup>. A person constitutes oneself in constant auto-definition, as it is not, according to Hartmann, a solid, substantial human being. The process of shaping the “personality”, of becoming a person is a ceaseless attempt to join the transformation of the own spiritual being. Hartmann does not write about it very explicitly, but it seems that one may make a reference to his *Ethik* and comprehend the constant reasoning of spirit’s transformations in the context of comparing the “real I” to the “I connected with values” he wrote about in *Ethik*. That giving sense to the transformations of one’s own spirit, the constitution of I, would not be a kind of freedom, but it would be conditioned by the unchanging and objective values which demand specific actions, specific way of shaping one’s I.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Galewicz, Włodzimierz, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, in: *Przewodnik po literaturze filozoficznej XX-go wieku*, vol.1, ed B. Skarga, Warsaw, 1994, p. 135.