

## Material Ethics of Values

(Max Scheler (1874-1928), Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1974), Hans Reiner (1896-1991)

Main works:

Scheler, Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values

Hartmann, Ethics

Dietrich von Hildebrand, Christian Ethics

Hans Reiner, Duty and Inclination. The Fundamentals of Morality Discussed and Redefined with Especial Regard to Kant and Schiller

1. Ethics must be based on values (in opposition to Kant's "formal" ethics)
2. Value must be considered as a basis for oughtness and duty
3. Values are experienced only in emotional presentation – value feeling, sens of values
4. Values are objective and independent on reality
5. Value consciousness is not identical with value itself
6. Material ethics of values is especially linked to phenomenology

### According to Max Scheler:

- There are four kinds of intentional emotions that are basic for human value experience: 1) sense of value; 2) value response (emotional reactions of response); 3) preferring or placing after; 4) acts of love and hate

Scheler: "First, we must distinguish between the intentional *"feeling of something"* and mere *feeling-states*. This distinction in itself does not yet bear on the content given in intentional feelings, i.e., when we regard them as organs for comprehending values. *There is original* emotive intentionality. Perhaps this is most apparent when both a feeling and feeling it occur simultaneously, when a feeling is that toward which feeling is directed. Let us consider a feeling-state that is indubitably sensible, e.g., a sensible pain or state of pleasure, or a state that corresponds to the agreeableness of a food, a scent, or a gentle touch, etc. Given such facts, such feeling-states, the kind and mode of feeling them is by no means yet determined. There are changing facts involved when I "suffer," "endure," "tolerate," or even "enjoy" "pain." What varies here in the functional quality of *feeling* it (which can also vary by degrees) is certainly not the *state of pain*. Nor is this variation to be found in general attention, with its levels of "noticing" "heeding," "noting," "observing," and "viewing." Pain observed is almost the opposite of pain suffered." Scheler, Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values

Scheler: "It is necessary to distinguish emotional functions from the experiences that are based on *"preferring"* and *"placing after."* The latter constitute a *higher* stage in our emotional and intentional life, and *in* them we comprehend the ranks of values, their being higher and lower. "Preferring" and "placing after" are not conative activities like, say, "choosing," which is based on acts of preferring.

Nor is preferring (or placing after) a purely feeling compoment. It constitutes a special class of emotional act experiences. The proof is that we can "choose," strictly speaking, only between actions, whereas we can "prefer" one good to another, good weather to bad, one food to another, etc." Scheler, Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values

- One can "see" (experience) value just as one can see colors ore feel smells; only this kind of knowledge on values is can be a base for axiological theory
- HIERARCHY OF VALUES: values of the holy (disvalues of the unholy); values of the spirit (truth, beauty) [negative values o of their opposites; values of life and the noble (disvalues of the vulgar); values of pleasure (negative values of pain; values of utility (disvalues of the useless)
- It is important that there is no place for moral values is this hierarchy
- We ought to act in such a manner that promotes the higher or positive values:

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"The existence of a positive value is itself a positive value.

The existence of a negative value is itself a negative value.

The non-existence of a positive value is itself a negative value.

The non-existence of a negative value is itself a positive value." Scheler, Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values

### **According to Nicolai Hartmann:**

Value is composed of some "**material**" (**content**) and "**axiological character**" (which says that this content is valuable; friendship is a relation between two persons and it is something valuable also; love is also something valuable, but the special relation we mean as a love is something different

"The content and the valuational character do not coincide. The "material" is only the concrete structure which has the value. The moral worth of trust is not the trust itself. The latter is only the material—a specific relation between person and person, which can be quite generally described. But the value of trust is not this relation, and indeed is not only not an actual relation between particular persons, but is also not the idea of such a relation in general. The "material" is here simply the idea of trust. It is, taken by itself, purely an ontological structure, not axiological; it is the ideal or essential structure of a specially formed relationship." Hartmann, Ethics.

All forms of ought are based on value:

- 1) Ideal ought-to-be  
Every value ought to exist; ought in this sense is not ought-to-do; it is only an ideal or pure ought-to-be; the being of values, as ideal, is indifferent to real being or non-being
- 2) Positive ought-to-be; it occurs where the ideal find itself in opposition to reality, where the self-existent values are unreal; the positive ought-to-be presupposes in a given situation the non-being of what ought to be

- 3) Real ought-to-do; it requires that 2 conditions are met: there is a difference between what exists and what should exist; there is a subject who is able to transform their real situation and make it valuable.

According to **Dietrich von Hildebrand**:

- knowledge on values requires that we adopt some proper attitudes (negative attitudes that exclude value recognition are: pride (or hubris) and concupiscence; the correct form of attitude is an openness to values)

there are three different types of values: general value of being as such; ontological values; qualitative values (moral values, intellectual values, social values...);

- pleasure is not a value at all;

- values are given to us in different forms of emotional feeling but not every feeling is right, it can also contain principal mistakes and illusions: there are three general forms of axiological illusion: a total value-blindness, a partial value-blindness, a subsumption-blindness.

- not everyone is able to sense values; not everyone's capacity to feel values is equally developed