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A CRITIQUE OF SCHELER'S EMOTIONAL INTUITIONISM

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ABSTRACT

Axiology or Theory of Value is a branch of Philosophy which has in its own way, elicited profound interest and polemic. This interest in axiology became quite profound in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, Risieri Frondizi makes us to understand that Alexius Von Meinong was not the initiator of this branch of Philosophy as held by some authors. Just like any other branch of Philosophy, axiology is polarized into two dominant Philosophical views, namely: the objectivist view, and the subjectivist view. The objectivists hold the cognition of value to be Independent of both object and subject, as well as having empirical provability. The subjectivist on the other hand, holds value to be dependent on both object and the feelings of the subject concerned. This work attempted a detailed exposition of Max Scheler's axiology. Scheler, it should be noted, is an objectivist; he is of Husserl's phenomenological persuasion or tradition. Scheler's input in axiology is epitomized in his Emotional Intuitionism postulation. This work then, featured an analysed critique of Scheler's position, based on his views as put forward by R. Frondizi in his book *What is value: An introduction to axiology*.

Key Words: emotional institutionalism, axiology, theory of value, phenomenological disposition

INTRODUCTION

Max Scheler was a German born in Munich in 1874 and died in 1923. He was a pupil and disciple of Rudolf Eucken. He was also a student of Edmund Husserl, hence his phenomenological disposition. From Husserl's work, Scheler came to know Franz Brentano's views, especially on intentionality. Scheler was a Professor at the Universities of Jena, Munich and Cologne.

His major writings include: *Concerning the revolution in values* (1919), and *Man's place in nature* (1961). Scheler was portrayed by Frondizi (1972) in the following words: "Perhaps there is no other man in contemporary German philosophy who can be compared to Scheler, by virtue of the force of his ideas and the captivating style of his prose" (p. 72). Though this may sound like a highly personalised

opinion of Frondizi about Scheler, it nevertheless showed the influence and possible contribution of Scheler in the current German philosophical tradition.

OBJECTIVISM

Objectivism is a philosophical position or view which is strongly opposed to subjectivism. It can be seen as an approach to reality according to which philosophical knowledge is incapable of making critical appraisals, drawing partisan conclusions or forming judgments on value. Jones (1975) elucidated this succinctly. According to him,

To say that anything is “objective” is to say that it is real, that it has a public nature independent of us and of our judgments about it. This the question of whether or not values are objective turns on whether or not values are more than private preferences. If they are private preferences, our value judgments are subjective, and there is no more disputing about them than there is about judgments of taste: my good is what I prefer; yours is what you prefer. On the other hand, if values are objective, it follows that when we differ about them, at least one of us is mistaken (p. 425).

EXPOSITION OF SCHELER’S EMOTIONAL INTUITIONISM

Suffice it to note that Max Scheler’s ethics took its departure, as it were, from the Kantian ethical framework. In other words, Scheler’s ethical exposition is more or less a qualified or systematised continuation of Kantian ethics. Scheler’s axiology culminates from his wish to continue and correct Kantian ethics which was based characteristically on rationalist formalism, by rationalist formalism is meant Kant’s belief “that all meaningful moral principles and solutions applicable to different social conditions and life situations can be deduced from a certain abstract and formal absolute principle (categorical imperative)” (Frolov, 1984: p. 148).

This formalistic shortcoming notwithstanding, Scheler still feels that Kant’s ethic is the “most perfect that we possess,” so far. And in this light, Scheler sought to save Kantian ethics from the legitimate accusation of formalism. According to Risieri (1972),

Frondizi, Scheler’s theory repudiates earlier material ethics which were empiricist ethics of goods and ends and reaffirms the apriorist principle established by Kant. This principle is the point of departure in Scheler’s thinking. He points out, however that Kant committed two errors. In the first place, he confused the apriori with the formal: in the second place, he confused the apriori with the rational. Scheler’s ethics therefore aims to correct these two errors by means of a material ethics of values and an emotive apriorism. Such is the synthesis of Scheler’s ethical thinking (p. 77).

Scheler highlighted that Kant in equating the apriori with the formal, and taking all material ethics to be ethics of goods and ends, having inductive, empirical validity was erroneous. That even though Kant renounced all ethics of goods and ends, he nevertheless confused goods and values. Scheler pointed out that goods are valuable “things,” and as such values can’t be extracted from goods. That as the world of goods consist of things, and since things can be destroyed by force of nature or history, therefore if the value of our will depended upon goods, such destruction would affect it. On the idea of goods having empirical, Inductive value, Scheler claims that any principle resting thereon, is condemned to relativism.

That ‘ends’ as such are never good or bad, independent of the values which are to be realized. And such independence allowed Scheler to work out an axiological ethics that is material and *apriori* simultaneously. In order to realize this, Scheler embarked on the task of showing that values are independent of goods and of the contents of ends. By ‘end,’ Scheler means “any content whatsoever -

content of thinking, stating, perceiving - which is given for the purpose of being attained” (Fronzizi, 1972, p. 79).

To this end, Scheler compared values with colours in a bit to evince that in both instances, it is a question of qualities which exist independent of their respective depositaries or carriers. That ‘red’ can be seen as a pure colour in the spectrums without experiencing the need to conceive of it as the covering of a bodily surface, but instead, as an ‘extensive quale’. So, in like manner, value (which to him is devoid of all imagery) which is contained in a carrier, and contributes therewith to the make-up of a “good” is independent of that carrier. According to him, “the presence of the value confers upon the valuable object the nature of the good. In this way, we do not extract beauty from beautiful things; instead, beauty is prior to them” (p. 36).

Furthermore, he distinguished between ends and objectives. An objective is found in the process of desiring and is not determined by any representational act, instead, it is inherent in the tendency itself. He stated that:

Nothing can ever become an end without first having been an objective. The end is based on the objectives which antecede them. We cannot create an end out of nothingness, nor can we ‘propose’ one without a tendency toward something which precedes it (Fronzizi, 1972, p. 81).

So, values are independent of ends, though they cannot do without them; they are however, embedded within the objectives of the tendency as groundwork. Scheler further upholds that all experience concerning “good” and “bad” presupposes a basic as well as previous knowledge as to what “good” and “bad” consist of. To Kant all attempts to derive in inductive style the concept of the good or moral law, from experience must be discarded. Scheler in disagreeing with Kant, opined that empiricism is not in error, as upheld by Kant, because duty cannot be derived from experience, but rather because the essence of values cannot be deduced from reality, of which it is independent.

According to Kant, duty, awareness of ethical law, precede value, but Scheler disagreed, grading values before duty and moral law; denying empirical base to the former. That if they were to have empirical base would invariably depend on goods and ends, and thereby opened to the same criticism aimed at all empiricist ethics by Kant. Scheler’s ethics, as can be seen, is material ethic of values, apriori but not empirical. His whole ethics is therefore based on an axiology; the justifiability of this ethic would necessarily hinge on the accuracy of this axiology.

Scheler also inquired into the nature of value. As already noted, value for him are apriori independent qualities different from their depositaries. In other words, goods are valuable entities. Values as independent qualities do not vary with things. Just as the colour blue does not turn red when a blue object is painted red, so similarly do values remain unaffected by the changes undergone by the object with which they are associated; for instance, my friend’s treachery does not alter the value of friendship. The autonomy of values implies their immutability; Values are changeless. In any case, they are absolute, not conditioned by any act, irrespective of its nature, be it historical, social, biological or purely individual. Rather only our cognition of value is relative, not the value themselves.

Scheler strongly rejected, one after the other, the earlier subjectivist axiological theories. The theory which seeks to equate value with pleasure was rejected including that which sees in value a caused relationship involving pleasurable effect. For Scheler, value is a quality like blue or red, not a relationship, such as equal, different, etc. For such reason, the experiences of value are irreducible to those of relationships. According to Uduigwomen (2016), in his introducing ethics, trendy problems and perspective is of the view that, Locke’s postulation shared partly by Kant, “that value although not properties of things” (p. 45) could very well be forces, powers or dispositions inherent in objects and capable of causing the corresponding conditions in the subjects, is completely discarded by Scheler.

Scheler wrote: “we would have to ask ourselves in vain just where do these ‘forces,’ ‘powers’ and ‘disposition’ resides. The autonomy of value, with respect to their corresponding carriers is basic to Scheler’s axiology. In demonstrating this, he highlighted that:

We are familiar with cases in which the value of a thing is presented to us clearly and evidently, without being confronted by the carriers of that value. Thus, for example an individual may be unpleasant and repulsive in our eyes, or else, pleasant and charming, without our being able to show just what that consists of (Fronzizi, 1972, p. 84).

Scheler also rejected the relativist theory which holds that values have existence in relation to man and his psychic or psycho-physical make-up. He described this theory as absurd, since animals also experience values, such as, that which is pleasant. That it occurs to us that we might ask, if animals do not possess such values, since they possess, just as does man, a concrete psycho-physical constitution.

In a bid to render values completely independent of apprehension, he stated that there are infinite number of values which no person or humanity has as yet known or felt. Put differently, to Scheler neither man nor humanity is essential to the apprehension of values. He claims then to have grasped this truth through “basic intuition.” He nevertheless, rejected the dependence of values upon life, pointing out that if values were dependent upon life, this would exclude the possibility of being able to attribute value to life itself, that is, to say, life in and of itself would be a fact indifferent to value.

Historicist relativism, which asserted the historical relativity of values, is condemned by Scheler, who sees it as an attempt to derive values from historical goods. That it takes value to be product of history and thereby subject to its vicissitudes. Scheler claimed that this error emanates from the non-recognition of the independent nature of values, and the confusing of the real change that goods and standards undergo with variation in values. Axiological subjectivism is thereby discarded.

The axe of Scheler also fell on Axiological Nominalism, which denies meaningful content to words that express values: good, beautiful, honest, etc. These are considered by nominalism as expression of a feeling because we frequently cognize value, independent of the feelings we experience. Hence, we can grasp the existence of a moral value in our enemy. Scheler also rejected Platonism because it denies the independence of value.

In contrast to Hartmann’s postulation, Scheler disbelieved that values should be sought for in the realm of ideal objects, together with numbers and geometric figures. He accepted as true that the concepts of kindness, beauty, pleasure, etc. belong to that realm; pointing out that the moral and with it, the axiological are stunted to the area of meaning. Plato on the other hand, committed the error of placing values in this area because he took-off with a fallacious division of the spirit, namely “reason” and “sensitivity.” Since values cannot be reduced to units of sensation, he grouped them together with numbers and geometric figures, that is, in the realm of reason.

For Scheler, a distinction between the concept of a value and the value itself is imperative. That a small child experiences his mother’s care and kindness without having grasped, nor is he capable of grasping, the idea of the good.

For the purpose of showing the profound meaning of the apprehension of values by mean of sentimental perception, Scheler undertakes a phenomenological description of emotional life, which makes it Possible for him to reveal various levels in the realm of the emotional which are not usually distinguished very clearly.

He also differentiated between “intentional feeling” and “sensitive feeling state.” The later refers to the pure experience of the state, while the former has to do with its apprehension A pain which one suffers is different from a pain which one observes, That in the affective or feeling state there is no intentional

element; when an object is referred to, the reference may be of a causal nature; thus, fire is the object which has caused this pain that I have. The relationship is established by means of thinking,

But in intentional feeling, there is a direct and immediate reference to the object, and this reference is not of intellectual nature, in it, values are revealed to us, values are known by means of the emotional experiences of sentimental perception which is not joined to the object outwardly, or by means of an image.

Obviously, emotional intuition (as opposed to intellectual intuition) not only perceives the presence of value, but also apprehends especially by means of preference, the hierarchy of values. The axiological hierarchy, according to Scheler is determined by five criteria and these criteria, he pointed out, are not separated from the acts of preference. They are namely: duration, divisibility, foundation, depth of satisfaction and relativity.

CRITIQUE OF SCHELER'S EMOTIONAL INTUITIONISM

1. As the beginning of this paper shows, Scheler's ethics took-off from Kants', and he described Kant's as the most perfect that we possess to date. Yet and contradictory too, the essential element, i.e. the rationalist formalism, of this so-called perfect work had to be overcome by Scheler and corrected by others according to him. By this I wonder if we are supposed to take Scheler by his statements.
2. According to Scheler, only our knowledge of values is relative, not the values themselves. However, if our knowledge of values is relative, then Scheler's knowledge that our knowledge is relative is relative too.
3. The underlying principle in Scheler's axiology is the hypothesis that values are independent of the carriers. This is quite contentious. For there seems to be a confusion between the value carrier and the awareness, which is not always clear in the one who grasps the characteristics of the carrier. For instance, the beauty of a statue can depend on the material with which it is made, without however noticing that dependence.
4. Scheler holds that values are revealed to us in the course of sentimental perception in preference, love, hate, etc. If one may ask, going by this, is it not possible for the quality of value perceived to be dependent, influenced, or coloured by one's sentimental disposition since sentimental perception cannot be exactly uniform? That is, what may appear as a high-quality value to A may not be so for B owing to their different sentiments or emotions.
5. The distinction Scheler makes between "relative" and "subjective" states is rather too vague, imprecise and unclear for proper understanding. For example, he says that the fact that a value is "relative" does not make it "subjective." That a bodily object which appears as an hallucination is "relative" to the individual, but it is not subjective in the sense in which a feeling is subjective. Seemingly, further elucidation is needed here.
6. Emotional intuitionism of Scheler from critical diagnosis is nothing more than a subjective cognitive category, no matter Scheler's effort to present it otherwise. Emotional intuitionism states "I know" but not "how I know." Here knowledge therefore becomes "a non-public thing." To that extent it is not acceptable without overhauling.

CONCLUSION

However, Scheler's Emotional Intuitionism may sound, it still has the credit of "fixing standard" when it comes to the philosophical category of values. Scheler's axiological objectivism is well systematized and blended with his absolutism, showing therefore, the unacceptability and unpopularity of relativism in the realm of ethics and axiology.

Be it as it may, axiology and perhaps ethics, cannot be exhaustively treated without at least a consideration of Max Scheler's emotional intuitive postulation in these areas, because it is not completely devoid of some positive philosophical significance.

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