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APPROACHMENTS | PRISTOPANJA

TABLE OF CONTENTS | KAZALO

Max Scheler's Socratesism
An Introduction of a Phenomenological Normative Ethics

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Abstract

Socrates's question is the starting point of all ethics. In his phenomenological value-personalism, Scheler transformed it to the question: "How 'should' 'I' be and live?" Fundamentally, "I" refers to the person, and "should" means the "ideal ought." Ultimately, "I" as the person should engage in self-becoming towards its own ideal *ordo amoris* and ideal value-essence. In this sense, the end-result of Scheler's material ethics of values is precisely a phenomenological normative ethics, which is neither a

normative ethics in the general sense nor an Aristotelian ethics of virtue, but a more essential ethics of person.

Keywords: person, ideal ought, phenomenology, ethics, M. Scheler.

Sokratizem Maxa Schelerja. Vpeljava fenomenološke normativne etike

Povzetek

Sokratovo vprašanje je izhodišče sleherne etike. V svojem vrednostnem personalizmu ga je Scheler transformiral v vprašanje: »Kako 'naj' bi 'jaz' bil in živel?« V temelju se »jaz« nanaša na osebo, medtem ko »naj« pomeni »idealno najstvo«. »Jaz« kot oseba naj bi se navsezadnje predal samo-postajanju na poti proti idealnemu *ordo amoris* in idealnemu vrednostnemu bistvu. Potemtakem je poslednji rezultat Schelerjeve materialne etike vrednot natanko fenomenološka normativna etika, ki ni niti normativna etika v splošnem smislu niti aristotelovska etika vrline, temveč bolj bistvena etika osebe.

Ključne besede: oseba, idealno najstvo, fenomenologija, etika, Scheler.

"Socrates' question, "How should we live?" is the best start point for moral philosophy. It is better than the questions of 'What is our duty?' or 'How may we be good?' or even 'How can we be happy?'" (Williams 2006, 4) In Bernard Williams's view, each of these questions presupposes too much to be answered. This inability contributes to the confusing situation in the contemporary study of moral philosophy or ethics. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates said: "All the same, we must look more closely at the matter, since what is at stake is far from insignificant: it is how one should live one's life." (Plato 1993, 352d)

In his manuscript, Scheler claimed that: "Ultimately ethics is 'a damned bloody affair', and if it can give me no directives concerning *how 'I' 'should' be and live* now in this social and historical context, then what is it?" (Scheler 1973a, xxxi; emphasis added by the author)[1] This self-reflection could be completely taken as Scheler's response to Socrates's question. The unique change from Scheler here is to use the first person "I" in asking Socrates's question, so that the question now is asking: "how 'should' I be and live?" This paper will focus on discussing Scheler's answer to this question, and, on its basis, reveal the potential forms of a phenomenological normative ethics.[2]

143

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1 Cf. the German original: Scheler 1980, 591.
2 Scheler's phenomenological ethics manifests itself, first, as a phenomenology of value and, second, as a phenomenology of person. When viewed in the context of the history of ethical thought, these two parts constitute a style of phenomenological meta-ethics and phenomenological normative ethics, respectively. Specifically, the phenomenological metaethics is concerned with the question "What is good?" and the "foundational question of ethics," i.e., what is the basis for our answer to the question "What is the good?" (cf. Zhang 2021). Phenomenological normative ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with the "Socrates' question," i.e., the question of "how 'I' 'should' be and live," as Scheler transformed it. Scheler's phenomenology of person is the answer to this question, or, rather, the fundamental destination of Scheler's ethics

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I. "Person" and "I" as the form of address

In Scheler's above-mentioned self-reflection, "I" and "should" are both put in the quotation marks, which means that he is reminding readers to pay attention to these two concepts. Let us focus on the "I" first of all and leave the "should" for the next section to discuss. That is to say, the first thing to think about is: What does the transition of "one" in "how should one live" to "I" in "how should I live" mean?

It is a simple question since Scheler's guidance has been clear enough. In the "phenomenological" work *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, Scheler did not give up using the "linguistic" analysis. When discussing the problem of the person, Scheler clearly said:

> The use of the word *person* in *language* already reveals that the form of unity meant by this term has nothing to do with the form of unity of the "consciousness"-object of inner perception or consequently the "ego [*Ich*]" (either the "ego" in opposition to a "thou [*Du*]" or the "ego" in opposition to the "outer world"). (Scheler 1973a, 389.)[3]

Here, Scheler clearly distinguished the *person* from the "ego." In his opinion, the "ego" in any case is merely the object of inner perception, but the *person* can never be objectified. However, we have another question here. Scheler followed up with an example:

> If I say, "*I* perceive myself", the "I" [*Ich*] is the form of address, not the psychic ego of experience. "Myself [*mich*]", however, does not mean "my I"; it does not answer the question of whether I perceive "myself" in an outer or inner fashion. (Scheler 1973a, 390.)[4]

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is a response to the Socrates's question. In that sense, we can propose the notion of "Scheler's Socratesism."

3 Cf. Scheler 1980, 389.
4 Cf. Scheler 1980, 389.

Only if we say "I perceive my ego," does the term *ego* mean the psychic ego of experiences and the object of inner perception.[5]

Putting the difference of these two expressions ("I perceive myself" and "I perceive my ego") aside, the "I" in them, i.e., the "I" as the subject, essentially is the same. It is a linguistic form of address, an "occasional expression," and that basically refers to the *person*. The same as in the expressions, such as "I act," "I go for a walk," etc., the "I" is only a form of address. Only the person could be the executor of acts. We would never say that an "ego" acts or goes for a walk, for only the person can execute acts and unify the execution of acts. Only the person can perceive the ego or my ego.

Scheler's discussion here easily reminds us of related themes in contemporary theory of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*). The study of contemporary theory of self-consciousness starts from examining the traditional "reflection-model" of self-consciousness. The so-called "reflection-model" of self-consciousness means the ego as subject presents itself as an object. However, such the reflection-model is stuck with a "circular dilemma." According to D. Henrich, this circular dilemma is embodied in two fundamental difficulties. Firstly, the theory of reflection discusses self-consciousness via the presenting or knowing of the ego as object by the ego of subject, but the presenting "ego-subject" has been presupposed here. If the "ego-subject" has not been conscious of itself, then how could it be possible for the "ego-subject" to turn back upon itself? Therefore, a typical "circle" appears here: the problem to be solved (i.e., self-consciousness) has been actually presupposed at the beginning of the discussion. Secondly, the theory of reflection presupposes that the ego's cognition of itself is possible only in the way of turning back to itself, and thus it has to presuppose that the "ego-subject," which knows and turns backward, is identical with the known object-ego, or, rather, presupposes the identity of the act of knowing and what is known. Only in this way can one speak of *self*-consciousness (or one's own consciousness). But, in order to be aware of this identity, the "I" must have known in advance how to ascribe (*zuschreiben*) to himself

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5 Cf. Scheler 1980, 95; 389. Cf. also Scheler 1973a, 76–77; 390.

what happens to him. Therefore, this self-consciousness of self-ascription cannot be the result of reflection, but rather the premise of it. Actually, the reflection model of the traditional theory of self-consciousness, and even any theory of self-consciousness, has presupposed this self-ascription from the very beginning, so that it is stuck in the dilemma of "circle" once again.[6]

The above example of "linguistic analysis" in Scheler shows that he actually "*delayed*" or "*restated*" the circular dilemma in the traditional theory of self-consciousness in his own way. For him, traditional self-consciousness does not mean a grasp of an "object I" by a "subject I," but a grasp of "ego," the object of inner perception, by "person." However, he used the expression "my ego" (*mein Ich*) to indicate the object of inner perception, and yet the problem returns: how could this "ego" (*Ich*) be "my" (*mein*)? It is exactly the problem of "self-ascription" in the traditional theory of self-consciousness. Therefore, in this sense, we can say that Scheler merely "delayed" the arising of self-consciousness. From another point of view, however, we can also say that Scheler stated the problem of self-consciousness more clearly. The perception or grasp of "my ego" by the person is actually the grasping of the "object I" by a "subject I" in the traditional sense of self-consciousness. Scheler took it as inner perception, whereby he defined it as the level of "self-cognition" (*Selbsterkenntnis*) as Manfred Frank said. On the other side, in Scheler's view, the stream of personal lived-experience is originally "I-you indifferent," and this differentiation or "self-ascription" takes place in the "vortexes" of the stream of lived-experiences.[7] In other words, the "self-ascription" in itself, or the "self-consciousness" (*Selbstbewußtsein*) in the narrower sense, as Manfred Frank said, is completed right in the stream of personal lived-experiences, a non-objective completion.[8] Simply, the expression, "I perceive my ego" in Scheler includes two

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6 Cf.: Henrich 1966, 193 ff.; Henrich 1982, 62 ff.; Henrich, 1970, 266 ff. For a related discussion, cf. also Zhang 2016.

7 Cf. Scheler 1973c, 240 (English translation: Scheler 1970, 246). For a related discussion, cf. also Zhang 2017.

8 As for the distinction between "self-cognition" (*Selbsterkenntnis*) and "self-consciousness" (*Selbstbewußtsein*), cf. Frank 1991, 6 f.; Frank 2001, 217–242.

levels: non-objective "self-consciousness" and objective "self-cognition," while according to him the "subject" here belongs to the "person."

Now we see that the question of "how should I be and live?" is actually asking: "how should the person be and live?" In other words, the possible answer Scheler would give to Socrates's question is: one should live as a person. What does it mean to live as person? To resolve this problem, we have to make clear what is the person in a moral sense. F. Hammer expressed this question very appropriately as the "individual person's self-ingathering (*Sammlung*)."[9] "Ingathering" refers to "a concentrated being-in-oneself, or 'living deeply in oneself'. In such a state our total psychic life, including our past, is grasped as *one* and is effective as *one*." (Scheler 1973a, 420)[10] Through such ingathering, each experienced life is "present" and "effective" in some way, so we are not empty, but entirely "full" and "abundant" here. Such a "self-ingathering" refers to the expansion of a phenomenology of "having oneself" (*Sichselbsthaben*) (Scheler 1973a, 420),[11] or "self-identification" (*Selbstidentifizierung*) as Scheler talked about elsewhere: in the execution of acts, a "self-identification" is taking place at the same time, that is, one attributes or "self-ascribes" this execution of acts to an "executor of acts" (person). It is this "executor of acts" living in each of his acts who permeates every act with his peculiar character. In each present execution of acts, there remains "lived life" made possible by retention. Although the person is not the "lived life," he lies in each of his present execution of acts and ascribes this "lived life" to himself. Therefore, "self-ingathering" or "self-identification" basically means that, with present acting, the person himself "partakes of" or "participates in" the "halo" (including retention and protention)[12] of this execution of acts, in and through which he lives.[13] Of course, in *Formalism in Ethics and*

147

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9 Cf. Hammer, 1972, 226–248. Undoubtedly, "ingatheredness" is an extremely important concept in Scheler's person theory. Other researchers have noticed that as well (for instance, M. Gabel, H. Leonardy, etc.).

10 Cf. Scheler 1980, 417.

11 Cf. Scheler 1973a, 420; Scheler 1980, 417.

12 Here, the author uses Husserl's concepts of his phenomenological analysis of inner consciousness of time.

13 Cf. Scheler 1973c. 219 f.; Scheler 1970, 224–225. Cf. also Scheler 1980, 384 f.;

Non-Formal Ethics of Value, this "ingathering" is discussed more in the context of the "self," but later, in *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, "self-ingathering" is used to discuss the person.

Generally, "self," "self-consciousness," or "self-feeling" (*Selbstgefühl*) is in Scheler applied in two ways: on the one hand, they are tied closely to "egoness;"[14] on the other hand, the concept of person itself must be discussed more fundamentally. It is in the latter sense that Scheler said: "let us call this act 'ingathering' and let us call, collectively, its goal, 'concentration on one's own self', or the consciousness of the spiritual act-center of itself, 'self-consciousness'" (Scheler 2009, 29).[15] Since the so-called "spiritual act-center" refers to the person, it is clear that what Scheler talked about here is the self-ingathering or self-consciousness of person.

In this sense, the person in a moral sense has the same basic character and function as the self-preserving and self-becoming dynamic subjectivity in D. Henrich. The living process of the so-called "conscious life" in Henrich is presented as a continuous act of self-preservation.[16] Subjectivity would by no means be a static entity that is in opposition to the object, but is present as the activity of "conscious life."[17] "Person" essentially means a non-objectifying subjectivity, which does not stay in the traditional subject-object model, an uncircumventable (*unhintergehbar*) subjectivity as the unity of the execution of specific acts. Thus, the person as person in itself is a "self-ingathering" "halo," but not a single and static point. "Man" or "I" as the "person" "should" be and live in the form of a "halo," but not a "point."

148

Scheler 1973a, 385–386.

14 In this sense, Scheler said: "The word *person* cannot be applied to every case wherein we *assume* something like animation, egoness, or even consciousness of the existence and value of ego (self-consciousness or consciousness of self-value)." (Scheler 1973a, 476; cf. Scheler 1980, 469) What Scheler refused here, is the "self-consciousness," which is tied to "egoness," or, more specifically, he was against founding the person itself on the ego. For a more detailed discussion about this problem, cf. Zhang 2011, 265–284.

15 Cf. the German original: Scheler 1976, 34.

16 Cf. Henrich 1996, 121–126.

17 Cf. Henrich 1999; Henrich 2006, 183–210; Henrich 2007, 49–81.

II. "Ought" as "ideal ought"

What does "should" or "ought" (*soll*) mean? How can "ought" be "ought"? Why should "I" as the "person" follow the "ought" to live? In Socrates's question, the term "should" does not mean the "ought" (*sollen*) of duty or the imperatives of the later moral philosophy.[18] Socrates's question only concerns the "good life" or the so-called "life worth living," so that it eventually refers to one's own essential life attitude, not the questions of "what to do" or "how to evaluate," etc., in the context of some specific time or location.

The "ought" is intentionally placed in quotation marks in Scheler's self-reflection, by which he wanted to show that "ought" should not be understood as the "ought" in the sense of the norms of acts, which is the normal understanding in modern moral philosophy. Actually, Scheler clearly distinguished two types of "ought" (or "should" in ordinary writing), i.e., the ideal ought (*ideales Sollen*) and the normative ought (*normatives Sollen*). At the very beginning of *Formalism*—chapter 4, section 2: "Value and the Ought"—, Scheler confirmed the founding relation between these two types of "ought": "this second type of ought is dependent on the former," (Scheler 1973a, 203)[19] i.e., the normative ought is founded on the ideal ought. Next, Scheler claimed the relation between the ideal ought as the foundation of normative ought and values. This is a unilateral relation of foundation: "every *ought has its foundation in values*, but values are *not* founded in the ideal ought" (Scheler 1973a, 206).[20] Thus, the relation of "values," "ideal ought," and "normative ought" is very clear: every "ought" (including "ideal ought" and "normative ought") has its foundation in values, and "normative ought" is founded on "ideal ought." But how can such a founding relation be possible?

Every "ought" has its foundation in values, because only values ought or ought not to be.[21] In other words, ought refers to *ought-to-be* (*Seinsollen*) of something, and only values can be the "subjects" of *ought-to-be*, which in Scheler's point of view is a law that can be grasped by phenomenological

149

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18 Cf. Williams 2006, 5 f.; Wolf 1996, 11.
19 Cf. Scheler 1980, 211.
20 Cf. Scheler 1980, 214.
21 Cf. Scheler 1980, 100; Scheler 1973a, 82.

insight. Even if we say "you ought to do so," it means this "do so" ought to be. The "do so" ought to be done, just because it may have a "value of the act." No matter who gives the order that "you ought to do so," it can be given meaningfully right because of a "value of the act" in itself.

According to Scheler's two formal axioms, i.e., "anything of positive value ought to be, and anything of negative value ought not to be" (Scheler 1973a, 206),[22] only if "do so" has a positive value, can it be a real "ought-to-be," otherwise it is a "deception" (*Täuschung*), no matter what causes this "deception," such as wrong desire or external power, etc.

Ideal "ought" means the ought-to-be of something that ideally ought to be. Ideal "ought" is founded on values and only values ought or ought not to be. Then, eventually, the so-called ideal "ought" is nothing more than the ought-to-be of something of values that ideally ought to be. More specifically, something of positive values that ideally ought to be ought to be, and something of negative values that ought not to be ought not to be. Moreover, there is an essential prescription that is already clearly present in the expression of "ought," i.e., something that ought to be is factually not existent (real), so it "ought" to be. Then, the above positive proposition can be transformed further into: something of positive values that does not exist, but ideally ought to be ought to be. This proposition actually expresses another meaning, i.e., what presently exists is the opposite of something of positive value that ideally ought to be. It is called a "negatively critical" character of an ought proposition by Scheler.[23] That is to say, although an ought proposition can be expressed as a positive statement, it actually refers to the "exclusion" of negative values, the opposite of positive values. In other words, "ought" initially means an "exclusion" of negative values.

The "formal" analysis, here, gives us three theoretical results. (1) Scheler's "normative" ethics starting with the ideal "ought" is not directed to any existing values at hand, but only to the values that ought to be, but are not yet. (2) The "directed" as such means an "exclusion" of the opposite of the values that ought to be, but are not yet, which by no means implies the pursuit of the positive

150

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22 Cf. Scheler 1980, 214.
23 Cf. Scheler 1980, 217; Scheler 1973a, 210.

value itself, as Scheler always thought that: "the *necessary* condition of realization of these values is precisely their being *non-intended* in willing" (Scheler 1973a, 508).[24] (3) The "ought" is essentially the ought-to-be of values; in other words, an ideal "ought" can be an "ought," can be a "measure," or make us feel a certain "binding force" or "normativeness," just because all these are "given" by values: positive values ought to be, and negative values ought not to be.

The so-called normative "ought" refers to the "normative" binding force given by a "command," "prohibition," or "duty," which ought to be such and such, and which generally indicates a willing, pursuit, or an act. It is distinguished from the ideal "ought" first of all, for the latter primarily means an "ought" of "being," while the former is an "ought" of "willing, pursuit, or act of such and such." As in the above example "you ought to do so," in fact, the "ought" of "do-so" eventually depends on the ought-to-be of the ideal "value of act," which exactly shows the founding relation between the "normative" "ought" and the ideal "ought." It is in this sense that Scheler criticized any ethics starting from the "normative" "ought" for having the "tendency of pragmatism" or the "prejudice of pragmatism" (Scheler 1973a, 214; 582).[25] Scheler talked about "pragmatism" in the most general literal meaning, i.e., about the actual use or actual act, etc. Obviously, if "normative ethics" refers to an ethics starting from the "normative" "ought," then undoubtedly Scheler would refuse "normative ethics" in any form.

151

However, there is another possibility, which is also the reason why we add quotation marks on "normative" in "normative" ethics earlier: it refers to a "normative" or "binding" ethics based upon an "ought" (ideal ought, for sure). "Ideal" in "ideal ought" indicates it cannot only be "completely independent of existing natural laws," and thus effective by itself, but "can also be considered valid for men of a nature quite different from ours" (Scheler 1973a, 217).[26] In a word, only by virtue of its self-given essence or essential relation to phenomenological insight, the ideal "ought" is effective in itself, so that the ideal "ought" basically means that it is independent of any real constructs of

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24 Cf. Scheler 1980, 499.
25 Cf. Scheler 1980, 221; 567.
26 Cf. Scheler 1980, 224.

social history, but only based on the "ought-to-be" of the self-given essence or essential relation (value-*a priori*) given in the phenomenological insight. Its "ought *force*" comes from value-*a priori* itself.

Simply put, in Scheler, the "ought" in the question of "how 'ought' I be and live?" means an ideal "ought." It is the foundation of the normative "ought," but at the same time it looks for its own foundation in values. In this regard, Scheler's material ethics of values not only includes phenomenological "meta-ethics" whose main thesis is the phenomenological-existential essence of values, but also includes a phenomenological "normative ethics" whose task is to answer Socrates's question. "Meta-ethics" constitutes the foundation of Scheler's material ethics of values, and "normative ethics" represents the end-result of material ethics of values.

III. Phenomenological normative ethics: value-personalism

What does such a "normative" ethics of the "ideal ought" finally mean? Scheler also designated it as "value-personalism." Its central points can be briefly outlined as follows.

Firstly, with regard to the bearers, moral values as good or evil must be defined as values of the person.[27] The question "what is (morally) good?" does not mean "what is a 'good' act?", but "what is a 'good' person?" Thus, for Scheler, the central question of normative ethics is not "how can one do 'good'?", but "how can one become a 'good' person?" or "how does the person self-become?" In other words, the main task of normative ethics is to answer Socrates's question.

Secondly, what value-personalism advocates, is the autonomy of the person, but not Kantian logonomy (*Logonomie*). Although Scheler absolutely agreed with Kant's criticism on "substance ontology" of the theory of person, wherein the person refers to a substance or a thing with certain faculties or powers (such as reason, etc.), he refused the Kantian way of tightly interconnecting the person with reason, and refused the so-called "rational person" (*Vernunftperson*), for "the being of the person is never exhausted in being a subject of rational acts of

152

27 Cf. Scheler 1980, 49; Scheler 1973a, 28.

a certain lawfulness" (Scheler 1973a, 372).[28] Such a "rational person" is nothing more than a logical subject of rational acts following ideal laws, or "the X of rational activity." Such concretizing of the ideal of the person in a concrete person fundamentally implies a "depersonalization" (*Entpersonalisierung*), thus "logonomy" eventually is not an "autonomy," but an extreme "heteronomy" of the person. The autonomy of the person basically indicates the independence of the person himself, not the obedience to regulations and laws. In the meantime, autonomy is nothing but the presupposition of the moral significance of the person, and the autonomous person is by no means already a good person. Therefore, the individual person is not already completed, but should self-become continuously, or continuously come-to-be towards the good ideal personal value-essence or the ideal *ordo amoris*. Such autonomy of the person at least does not preclude "*the principle of the moral 'solidarity (*Solidarität*) of all persons*'" (Scheler 1973a, 496).[29]

Thirdly, the authentic mode of the personal being is personal becoming (*Personwerden*) or personal salvation (*Heil*). Each "ought" of "to-be" (*Zu-sein*) or "personal self-becoming" (*personales Selbstwerden*) as such is based on insight into objective values, such as insight into a moral good "whose *objective* essence and value-content contain a *reference* to an individual person, and whose ought therefore comes to this person and to him alone as a 'call' (*Ruf*), no matter if this 'call' is addressed to others or not" (Scheler 1973a, 490).[30] The "ought" here surely is not the "normative ought" or the "imperative ought" in Kant, but the "ideal ought." And the so-called "normative meaning of the *ordo amoris*" should be understood in the sense of this "ideal ought" as well.[31] "Normative meaning" does not indicate that the *ordo amoris* itself is a sum of all norms or imperatives, but rather refers to an "ideal ought" of the ideal *ordo amoris*, i.e., the ideal *ordo amoris* with positive values' ought-to-be, and the overthrown *ordo amoris* with negative values' ought-not-to-be. "The objectively correct *ordo amoris* becomes a norm only when it is seen as related to the will (*Wollen*) of man and as commanded to him by a will." (Scheler

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28 Cf. Scheler 1980, 371.
29 Cf. Scheler 1980, 488.
30 Cf. Scheler 1980, 482.
31 Cf. Scheler 1973c, 111; Scheler 1970, 103.

1973b, 98–99)[32] In this sense, the normative meaning of the ideal *ordo amoris* just constitutes the phenomenological "normative" ethics in Scheler.

Fourthly, the personal salvation or personal becoming refers to an authentic "alteration in moral tenor" (*Gesinnungswandel*). "Moral tenor" (*Gesinnung*) as one of the central categories in Scheler's phenomenological ethics is an important component in most ethical systems of German ethicists as well (including Kant). In Scheler, the moral tenor of the person is the foundation of human reason and will, and is the "orientation" of all personal acts (including acts of will), which affects the *beginning* of each act. "An alteration in the basic moral tenor is a moral process; commands (including self-commands, if there were such), educational directives (which do not reach the moral tenor), and advice and counsel cannot determine such an alteration." (Scheler 1973a, 580–581)[33] This alteration basically arises from the "demand of the moment" (*Forderung der Stunde*, Goethe) or "moment" (*Kairos*),[34] which is precisely the essential category of ethics.[35]

Finally, there are two possible elements of alteration in moral tenor: (1) following (*Gefolgschaft*) the personality of a model (*Vorbild*) in love, which involves taking some foreign person as model;[36] (2) the personal self-feeling or self-value-feeling (*Selbstwertfühlen*), which is related to one's own person.[37] In this sense, a person can reveal his ideal *ordo amoris* or individual determination (*Bestimmung*) both through himself and through other persons. Just as Scheler said, the claim that

154

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32 Cf. the German original: Scheler 1957, 347.
33 Cf. Scheler 1980, 566.
34 Cf. Deeken 1974, 113–129.
35 Cf. Scheler 1980, 485; Scheler 1973a, 493.
36 Cf. Scheler 1980 560 ff.; Scheler 1973a, 574 ff. In *Formalism*, Scheler mentions that the alteration of moral tenor is determined by the fidelity of a model "alone" (*nur*) (cf. Scheler 1980, 566; Scheler 1973a, 581). That is to say, in reference to the external aspects (such as commands, educational directives, advices, or counsels), the fidelity of a model alone can achieve the alteration of moral tenor. But this, according to Scheler, by no means refers to the impossibility of existing internal aspects (i.e., personal self-feelings).
37 In Frings' outstanding study of Scheler's problem of the person, he actually emphasized not only the importance of the fidelity of a model, but also the importance of the acts of feelings such as regretting (*Reue*), but he did not distinguish clearly these two different possible moments. Cf. Frings 1969, 81 ff.

"each is necessarily the best judge of his salvation" is absolutely groundless (Scheler 1973a, 491).[38] In the phenomenological sense, these two possible moments of alteration in moral tenors are equally original and equally effective.

Thus, within this framework of Scheler's phenomenological value-personalism, the question "how should I be and live"? can be answered. First of all, the "I" should become the "person" through "self-ingathering," and then be and live as a "person." To be and live as a person means to be or to become oneself by achieving one's personal ideal value-essence (including not only individual personal value-essence, but also the value-essence of the member of a collective person [*Gesamtperson*]), i.e., the "I" as the person should undertake self-responsibility as well as co-responsibility (*Mitverantwortlichkeit*). And the moment of the becoming of this person lies in feeling the values of one's self and in following one's model. Both of these "moments" are correlated with values, or, in other words, both are a call to the "I" from value itself, an "ought force" to the "I"; and the ideal *ordo amoris* itself refers to the ideal personal center or ideal personal value-essence. When we say "I" "should" be and should self-become towards my own ideal *ordo amoris* and ideal value-essence, this denotes an ideal because it is not composed by any fact of social history; it is the "ideal ought" and therefore indicates that its own ideal *ordo amoris* and the ideal value-essence itself "ought to be," but actually are not yet; in the meantime, this implies that, as a matter of fact, this "ideal ought" is directed to the "exclusion" of its opposite. Based on this, we now can understand why Scheler called this becoming the person one ideally is as "personal salvation," which indicates the "exclusion" of the disordering (*Unordnung*) or confusion (*Verwirrung*) of the *ordo amoris*.[39] It is in this "exclusion" that self-salvation becomes possible. It may be realized just when we do not will the "ego's ideal *ordo amoris* or ideal value-essence" in itself. What the "normative" ethics of the "ideal ought" presents, is nothing but that: "the idea of the person of the highest non-formal value is also the highest norm for moral being and comportment" (Scheler 1973a, 572).[40]

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38 Cf. Scheler 1980, 483.
39 Cf. Scheler 1957, 350; Scheler 1973b, 103.
40 Cf. Scheler 1980, 558.

The "normative" ethics of the "ideal ought" eventually speaks of the question of how the "man" or the "person" himself should "be and live." He cannot depart from values, but is concerned more centrally about the self-becoming of person as the "bearer" of values. Based on this, different from Kant's normative ethics, Scheler's phenomenological "normative" ethics concerns the question of how "person" himself should "be and live," not the question of how to do, how to act, or how to will. It is this essential character that generally leads Scheler's ethics closer to Aristotle rather than Kant. Or, in the terms of modern moral philosophy: Scheler's basic position tends to the ethics of the "actor" rather than the ethics of "acts." This by no means implies that Scheler's phenomenological material ethics of values is identical with the Aristotelian ethics of virtue. As a matter of fact, the end-result of Scheler's ethics is neither the Kantian "ethics of duty" nor the Aristotelian "ethics of virtue," but a more fundamental "*third road*": "the ethics of the person." For Scheler, "that which can be called *originally* 'good' and 'evil', i.e., that which bears non-formal values of 'good' and 'evil' prior to and independent of all individual acts, is the '*person*', the being of the person himself" (Scheler 1973a, 28).[41] In this regard, Scheler's phenomenological value-personalism is basically asking how one can become a good person. "Only persons can (originally) be morally good or evil; everything else can be good or evil only *by reference to persons*, no matter how indirect this 'reference' may be." (Scheler 1973a, 85)[42]

In each "reference" (*Hinsehen*), the first thing worth mentioning are the properties of the person, i.e., his virtues and vices. The so-called "virtue" or "vice" basically indicates the direction of a moral "to-be-able-to" (*Können*), and this "to-be-able-to" refers to "being able to realize the areas of the ideal ought which are differentiated by basic value-qualities" (Scheler 1973a, 28).[43] Virtue is fundamentally the immediately experienced "power" (*Mächtigkeit*) to do something that ought to be done. Thus, the concept of virtue springs from the factual situation, in which something that ideally ought to be given is directly given as something that "can" be.[44] But the "virtue" is essentially different

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41 Cf. Scheler 1980, 49.
42 Cf. Scheler 1980, 103.
43 Cf. Scheler 1980, 50.
44 Cf. Scheler 1980, 213; Scheler 1973a, 205.

from "proficiency" (*Tüchtigkeit*) or the ability or instinct to do something or accomplish something. The phenomenological essence of virtue must contain two equally original and immediately given experiences or essential facts: the experience of the ideal "ought" of a content and the experience of the ability to do such a content.[45] In a word, as a property of the person, "virtue" itself is correlated with values, which is an ability to realize the ideal "ought." For example, the virtue of "obedience" contains two equally original and immediate experiences: I am moving towards my ideal value-essence (the experience of the ideal "ought"), and I am able to be such in personal feeling or in the self-value-feeling of "obedience" (the experience of ability).

In these "references," the acts of the person would be in the second place, including the acts of willing and action. The kind of acts as forgiving, commanding, obeying, and promising are often regarded as "good" by us essentially, because they are "personal" acts.[46] Duty or norm is exactly correlated with the acts of the person.

Based on the essential relation of three possible bearers of moral values (the person is immediate, while virtues and acts are mediate), Scheler emphasized specifically the essential relation of the ethics of person, the ethics of virtue, and the ethics of duty: "the theory of virtue precedes the theory of duty" (Scheler 1973a, 28),[47] and the ethics of person precedes the former two. Finally, Scheler's phenomenological "normative" ethics is founded upon the most fundamental ethics of the person.

IV. A brief conclusion

Socrates's question is the starting point of all ethics. In his phenomenological value-personalism, Scheler transformed it to the question: "How 'should' 'I' be and live?" Fundamentally, "I" refers to the person, and "should" means the "ideal ought." Ultimately, "I" as the person should come to be and engage in self-becoming towards its own ideal *ordo amoris* and ideal value-essence. The ethics of the person is an ethics of the person's to-be or self-becoming

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45 Cf. Scheler 1980, 244 f.; Scheler 1973a, 237 f.
46 Cf. Scheler 1980, 50; Scheler 1973a, 29.
47 Cf. Scheler 1980, 50.

towards its own ideal value-essence or ideal *ordo amoris*. In this sense, the end-result of Scheler's material ethics of values is precisely a phenomenological normative ethics, which is neither a normative ethics in general sense nor an Aristotelian ethics of virtue, but a more essential ethics of person. And such a phenomenological "normative" ethics precisely shows Scheler's essential asking and answering of Socrates's question.

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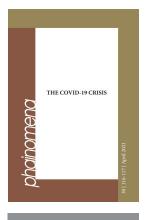
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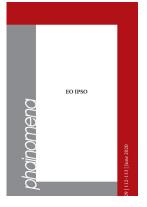*Phainomena* | *30* | *116–117* | *April 2021*

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