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THE CURIOUS WHITEHEADIAN PROCLIVITY IN SCHELER'S  
ACCOUNT OF GOD AND PERSONS

*Phenomenological Intuition and the Personal Sphere*

Before explicating the underlying structure of Scheler's panentheism, I wanted to take some time and explain what Scheler's phenomenological method entails and how this phenomenological commitment, though never abandoned in spirit, opened up his initial efforts to characterize religious acts and religious experience more generally. Scheler's phenomenology of religion is the basis from which his process conception of the Divine originated in his later *Human Place in the Cosmos* (1928). Hence, it is a necessary beginning.

Scheler's term for the region of consciousness in which intentional showing and givenness occur is "*die Sphäre*." Throughout this essay, I will call this immanent space of consciousness, the very region of consciousness in which insight is gleaned, the *personal sphere* and I have used this term to refer to the activity of the person in Edgar Sheffield Brightman, too. For Scheler, the phenomenological project is against the Husserlian procedure of bracketing phenomena and letting phenomena show themselves. In this way, Scheler thought that phenomenology was an attitude (*Einstellung*), a standpoint from which one encounters and apprehends an essence given in the immanence of consciousness from start to finish. "Phenomenological experience is at the same time '*immanent*' experience."<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, Husserl regarded it as a method. As Manfred Frings explains that phenomena for Scheler, "are bracketed in intuition, not by it."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, phenomenology is the enlargement and purification of immediate intuition in immanent consciousness. The phenomenologist is, then, working out givenness in immanence of immediate intuition of a phenomenon *in the personal sphere* abstracted and demonstrated "in isolation from everything else."<sup>3</sup> According to Scheler "only what is intuitively in an act of experiencing (even if this essence should point to a content beyond itself)...can belong to it."<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the essences (*Wesenschau*) discerned through immediate

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<sup>1</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism* trans. R. Funk and M. Frings (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 51.

<sup>2</sup> Manfred S. Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 125.

<sup>3</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 50.

<sup>4</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 51.

intuition points to what's real—the very essences that constitute all intentional acts. Let's give an example where this led in Scheler's early efforts.

Scheler's ethical personalism is based on allowing the first initial grasp in intuitive apprehension of a phenomenon we enter into relation in the feeling acts of consciousness. "The actual seat of the entire value-cognition or value-intuition (*Wert-Erschauung*) comes to the fore in feeling [acts], in basically love and hate, as well as the interconnections of values."<sup>5</sup> By contrast, such apprehension and discernment of the structure of being an act in Heidegger would always be mediated by an interpretive horizon. In Scheler, "all non-phenomenological experience is in principle an experience through or by means of symbols and, hence, a mediated experience that never gives things 'themselves'." He continues, "Only phenomenological experience is in principle *non-symbolic* and, hence, able to fulfill *all* possible symbols."<sup>6</sup> For Scheler, material *a priori* ethics is prior to the interpretive lens through which Heidegger limited phenomenology. Scheler puts this contrast of phenomenology more directly,

...phenomenology is neither the name of a new science nor a substitute for the word philosophy; it is the name of an attitude of spiritual seeing in which one can see or experience something which otherwise remains hidden, namely, a realm of facts of a particular kind. I say attitude, not method. A method is a goal-directed procedure for thinking about facts...before they have been fixed by logic, and second, of a procedure of seeing... That which is seen and experienced is given only in the seeing and experiencing of the act itself, in its being acted out; it appears in that act and only in it.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, revealing the essential acts in intuitive apprehension activates and vibrates the personal sphere, the very ground of becoming in the whole person; this vibration of the essence, what Scheler will call its functionalization radiates outward into the very performance of the act. Fulfillment of the essence is, then, the very being-in-an-act that shoots outward bursting forth from the personal sphere. In that way, the whole person is revealed in what we might call life-in-spirit. More aptly put above, phenomenology describes the personal sphere of acts in which persons live out their very being in the execution of those acts.

For Scheler, in keeping with the example of his ethics, values are apprehended before thinking and acting. They are pre-rational and constitute the field of the personal sphere of every person. Thus, the phenomenological intuition distills very clearly the first real intuitive grasp and follows it through describing the fullness and range of these phenomenological structures as they are revealed in the immanence of consciousness in specific types of experience, not just the experience of values.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 51.

<sup>7</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 138.

<sup>8</sup> I am ambivalent about the range of phenomenological experiences on this point. It would be naïve to dismiss his ordered value rankings as just another experience. In some ways, value experience establishes the possibility for all subsequent

Therefore, we are now in a position to understand Scheler could stretch this phenomenological procedure to reveal different immanent structures and contents of experience in religious experience. In the example of his ethics, then, his phenomenological ethics will develop the *ordo amoris* as the very site of the immanent whereas the religious acts will have a different structure altogether, yet even as early as 1913-1916 while writing and publishing different parts of what would become his magnum opus, *Formalism in Ethics*, he comments on how the various ordered rankings of intentional feeling acts and value correlates to those feelings opens up and thematizes the Holy as a specific form of givenness to be investigated. In other words, the reason I started to explicate the phenomenology of ethics in connection to the phenomenology of religious experience is the transition opened up by the givenness of the Holy,

...the act through which we *originally* apprehend the value of the holy is an act of a specific kind of *love*...in essence the act is directed towards persons, or toward something of the *form of a personal being, no matter what* content or what "*conception*" of personhood is implied. The self-value in the sphere of the values of the 'holy' is therefore, by essential necessity, a "*value of the person*."<sup>9</sup>

When one reads Scheler, one may want to note a transition in the 1920s to more metaphysical and sociological concerns rather than phenomenology. In fact, the question "What is the person?" has all the trappings of *the want to provide* a metaphysical answer to not analyzing the personal sphere phenomenologically through description. Despite this transition into his later works, Scheler in my reading never abandons the phenomenological lens from his earlier efforts as we see in the passage above. The very manner in which people live out and fill out the values of the Holy imply a directedness to another person's absolute uniqueness and being, and this is the experiential content of such givenness regardless of the metaphysical conception on hand about that experiential content.

However, we can also start to see the beginning space to speculate about those very conceptions that plague Scheler's attention to more metaphysical matters in the 1920s to which *On the Eternal of Man* addresses being published in 1921. Phenomenology establishes the way into these concerns by describing these various essences revealed in immanent consciousness, carving up the way into concerns in sociology of knowledge, theories of community, and philosophical anthropology yet to come.

#### *Religious Acts in the Personal Sphere*

For Scheler religious acts are a type of intentionality just as intentional feeling acts always relate to a value-quality. Unlike them, however, religious acts do not take objects in the typical world as their correlate. A practical and theoretical consequence is, then, the experience of God and the becoming of

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experiences. This insight turns on just exactly how primordial you think loving and hating feeling acts are to the person.

<sup>9</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 109. Italics belong to Scheler.

that experience in the religious act are the same starting place for inquiring into the Divine. Our metaphysical concepts of God, then, begin in a type of experience/experiencing.

Moving back to the uniqueness of religious acts, one could also interpret that values are a different type of phenomenological givenness just as much as the Divine is for religious acts. I wish to leave aside that issue for the rest of this work. For now, religious acts differ from other types of experiences. As Scheler states, "we will confine ourselves in general to examining the religious act in mere elaborate detail" rather than a complete phenomenological account of religion.<sup>10</sup> These differences consist of three ways.

- In transcending contingent objects in the world, religious acts can unify "all the meanings of entities of the world into one whole."<sup>11</sup> In this way, the objects and aspects of the contingent world recede from view and let the Absolute permeate the field of immanent consciousness. This permeation is a rupture, a break in the continuity of the sensual world of objects. In fact, nothing in the horizon of the perceptual field can provide the sense or meaning discovered in religious acts. Thus, a phenomenology of religious experience must start here with this rupture of the personal sphere sense of contingency and the absolute uniqueness's dearth of contingency.<sup>12</sup>
- Next, in coming from the absolute, an extra-worldly source is now identified with the religious act, and the religious act only finds possible fulfillment in an extra-worldly source (possibly Divine) "which, in the experience of the act excludes the possibility of finite entities having such a function."<sup>13</sup> The world and the ego are not where ideas of the Holy are found even as early as the *Formalism*, Scheler wrote that the "a priori value-idea of the divine has no foundation in the existence of a world and an ego," and instead, Scheler is attempting to show that the idea of the divine phenomenologically does not presuppose any inductive or historical experience.<sup>14</sup> Inductive and historical frameworks may filter such ideas about the Divine, but the values or ideas of the Divine are first given to us in religious acts prior to these inductive and historical frameworks. For this reason, like William James, we must demarcate religious experience as a separate form of experiencing religious acts apart from all other experiences. By comparison, in Scheler's ethics, the highest value of the person is given in the Holy

<sup>10</sup> Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers), 162.

<sup>11</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 130.

<sup>12</sup> This rupture could be the phenomenological origin of Thomas Aquinas's distinction between contingency and necessity.

<sup>13</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 131.

<sup>14</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 293.

values and spiritual feeling act of love. Such a value quality is not reducible to any other value experience despite my often enlarged sense of the term "moral" or "ethics" that include, as it were, Scheler's belief in the absolute value of this person or that person, a givenness that for him always a new value quality quite different than other forms of experience.

- Finally, religious acts are interpreted in their negative implications. According to Frings, religious acts have "no earthly foundation or goal even though they can be empirically motivated."<sup>15</sup> In all honesty, I have some trouble with this claim given my Jamesian commitment to radical empiricism that all concepts have their origin in coordinating action and terminate in particular percepts. But let us for a minute suspend that criticism and continue with Scheler. What this pronouncement entails is that religious acts relate to a something, an ineffable source – in Jamesian terms, the "unseen order" so defined because James regarded much like Scheler the openness to which the content of the Holy could be. For Scheler, however, this participation in the ineffability of the extra-worldly source cuts all the way down into the immanent consciousness. Scheler will operationalize the manner in which the Holy becomes as the Ground of Being, and this account can be found in his last work, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*.

#### *Bridging the Gap between Phenomenology and Philosophical Anthropology*

Bridging the gap between phenomenology and philosophical anthropology is not an easy transition – that is, the adoption of Catholic-based theism during his phenomenological period from about 1913- to the early 1920s. Peter Spader details how many biographers regrettably paint Scheler's psychological life as unstable, and this psychological instability is a welcomed invitation into casting Scheler's thought in light of his life.<sup>16</sup> Spader, like myself, regards this trend as oversimplifying the tensions inherent in Scheler's thought. The details are complicated, so I will only repeat in brief what Spader explains in greater detail.

First, *On the Eternal in Man* details its position as supporting theism as late as Christmas 1922, and the new position against theism is given hints in his *Problems of Sociology of Knowledge* dated 1924. Scheler, Spader argues, never changed his ethics, but changed his metaphysical and religious beliefs.<sup>17</sup> The underlying moral phenomenology of personalist ethics will be the same regardless as to what speculative scaffolding upholds what we

<sup>15</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 131.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 176-181. Particular mention is made of Fr. John Nota's *Max Scheler: The Man and His Work* and John Staude's *Max Scheler: An Intellectual Portrait*.

<sup>17</sup> Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*, 183.

experience. Scheler spoke about this rupture and change of belief from classical theism to his new anthropology in the Third Preface of the *Formalism in Ethics* in 1926. "The ideas in this work remain unaffected by the change in my fundamental metaphysical position." Scheler continues, "For it was never my intention to establish in this work a *foundation* of ethics on the basis of some kind of presupposition concerning the nature and existence and idea and will of God."<sup>18</sup>

Despite Scheler's pronouncement against the fact that metaphysics does not matter for ethics, the unaddressed question that Spader never addresses what happens to the underlying personalistic metaphysics if Scheler moves from a personalist conception of God to a panentheist? Can the new panentheist God still be foundational for value experience even if never Scheler intended at the end of his life. Certainly, there are reasons for why Scheler focused on classical theism in his earlier more Catholic period of his life. In order to answer that, we must go to Scheler's changed position in *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, which is dated right around the time of the Third Preface in the *Formalism in Ethics*.

Regarding Scheler, let us take some brief cues from Eugene Kelly in his Introduction to *The Human Place in the Cosmos*. There are two points worth considering. First, ideation is the act of the mind to hold before itself the nature of all things we encounter in our experience of them, and *The Human Place in the Cosmos* makes exclusive use of the claim of ideation as we will see. Second, Kelly hints that this is the function of phenomenology in terms of what it becomes in this last work focuses on ideation, yet it has no metaphysical import. However, I differ with Kelly on this point since his definition of phenomenology is not concerned with metaphysics, even though there are metaphysical implications from occupying Scheler's phenomenological attitude. For me, phenomenology always breaks into ontology.<sup>19</sup>

According to Kelly, "phenomenology is rather the grasping *in mente*, the cognition, of the meaning-elements we encounter in the world; it requires intuitive reflection upon the meaning-contents of terms in an effort to exhibit their essential relations with each other and their order of foundation."<sup>20</sup> These cognitions are primordial, constitutive, and may well be what other phenomenologists have posited as intentionality. However, as soon as meaning-contents carried by things in the world are posited like the terms that are in his philosophical anthropology: *life, spirit, person*, then there are some taking for granted commitments that go unquestioned in primordial

<sup>18</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, xxxvi.

<sup>19</sup> A phrase uttered by Ken Stikkens in our many conversations during the dissertation writing phase. This perspective remains in all my work. Phenomenology is a way into a metaphysics that preserves the relationality and process of ongoing experience. More novel to my growth in recent years is the additional interpretive claim that phenomenology is a narrow form of process philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead maintains that all actual occasion and entities have experience and while human beings have consciousness as a form of experience, not all experiences are ones in which the involved entities have consciousness.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Kelly, "Introduction" in Max Scheler's *Human Place in the Cosmos* trans. M. Frings (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2009), x.

cognition, notwithstanding the intuition's role in it. In other words, phenomenological neutrality of describing immediate intuition of immanent acts of consciousness is already laden with ontological commitments, so to assert the lack of metaphysical import of phenomenology is ridiculous as it is erroneous.<sup>21</sup>

If you are new to philosophical anthropology, then let us visit, as it were, Scheler's entrance into the question. The term finds its first real usage in Kant, though I find his version tedious. Let me define it in a way that can find synergy in Scheler and help us with our shared experience of the Divine in the personal sphere. *Philosophical anthropology is an attempt to interpret the ontological structure of the human person in terms of the personal sphere and the relationality of the personal sphere with all other forms of beings.* In this way, the personal sphere includes within it that the universe and any science, natural or social we have of the universe and ourselves. With reference to the social sciences, the social sciences assume that human persons are subject to causal laws discoverable by the sciences in the same way that the natural sciences study physical objects.

By contrast, Scheler's philosophical anthropology does not render the human person as just another object subjected to causal laws in any scientific interpretation. Instead, those same scientific views take for granted the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions necessary to interpret the human person as a causal object among many other causal objects in the sciences. When this science-only approach is done, we lose sight of the personal sphere as the originating structure that gives rise to all interpretations of the human person. In phenomenology, this perspective is often called the natural attitude.

The natural attitude is not, as it were, problematic in and of itself. Indeed, all scientific inquiry must project and test hypotheses of the world and its objects as if they are in causal relationship to other objects. More plainly, I accept that at bottom all scientific inquiry must assume methodological naturalism, even if the scientist in question is not an ontological naturalist. Methodological naturalism occupies a standpoint in relation to nature and assumes that all relations are causal and can be experimented upon. Ontological naturalism, by contrast, is committed to the view that the only things that exist are entities in space-time.

Imagining and projecting this causal network of relationships onto everything uncritically obfuscates the manner in which the human being exists in relation to the world, however. For this reason, phenomenologists have always attempted to retrieve some originating original conception of human experience (A Brightmanian might use phrases like the Experient experiencing experience).<sup>22</sup> By purging experience of the natural attitude's all

<sup>21</sup> This implication of phenomenology almost always turning into and breaking into an ontology was the subject of last year's book I published on Scheler's phenomenology of values. See my *Persons and Values in Pragmatic Phenomenology: Explorations in Moral Metaphysics* (Malaga, Spain: Vernon Press, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> I apologize for such a strange phrase in English. The phenomenologist is trying to capture the functional origin of meaning in experience by showing readers the

inclusive third-personal (and therefore impersonal) viewpoint, Scheler describes the relationality of the personal sphere in its active first-personal sense.

Heidegger had his term *Dasein*; Husserl had his transcendental ego; and Scheler has the term *person*. Moreover, even if we were personalist idealists like other personalists like Brightman, a phenomenologically-based personalist idealism is committed to preserving the same sense and meaning of the person as the origin of meaning we find in Scheler's thought. We realize meaning and value into language and action as persons. Scheler makes this exact point when articulating the scope of the two fundamental ways in which persons become in his philosophical anthropology, "living beings are not only objects for outside observers but are also endowed with the mode of *being-for-themselves*, as well as with an *inwardness* through which they also are aware of themselves."<sup>23</sup>

### *Scheler's Three Conceptions of the Persons*

Scheler starts his *Human Place and the Cosmos* with three conceptions of the human person. In each conception, then there may be an element of truth. However, these three interpretive trends only refer to the problem of the person in Europe and European civilization. In this way, we should remain open that there are other interpretive renderings of the person in other philosophical systems the world over (for example like Buddhist interpretations of life as "mind only" or as the natural state of being a spontaneous loving embodied creature). Scheler's clustered categories are not as set and rigid as Scheler's categories pretend. For him, they are irreconcilable and he is accurate that they are in constant tension with each other on a cultural level. These categories of the person are:

- The *Created persons* interpretation is a result of the Jewish-Christian tradition. Scheler does not mention Islam as contributing to this conception of the person even though it is an Abrahamic religion like the other two just mentioned.
- The *Rational persons* interpretation is a result of Scheler painting with a large brush of our Ancient Greek tradition. Let me reproduce the entire passage,

...the human being is what he is through his possession of what is variably called "reason," *logos, phronesis, ratio, mens* – "logos" meaning here the possession of speech as well as the ability to grasp the "what" [the essence] of each and every

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ongoingness of undergoing experience and remaining and sustaining a descriptive vision for the first-personal viewpoint. Maybe that's the better way of putting the same point: ongoingness of undergoing experience. However, the point is made it will involve an operative gerund and turn verbs into nouns to express the phenomenological conception of experience manifesting in time depending upon the type of experience being described.

<sup>23</sup> Max Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos* trans. M. Frings (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 7.

entity. Closely connected with this view is the theory that there is also a reason above the human being that underlies the whole universe and with which the human being alone is in a state of participation.<sup>24</sup>

In this passage, we participate in a rational universe. This ontological participation harmonizes with the larger sense or order and purpose in it. Thus, we can see how and why Scheler may find the participation of persons within purpose meaningful since his phenomenology discerns the ontological relations through which we apprehend our involvement from beginning in an experience all the way through to an experience's end.

- The *Naturalistic persons* interpretation embodies a conception in which the human person "represents a late stage in the evolution of our planet."<sup>25</sup> In this conception, persons are the product of energies and animal abilities we have inherited from our shared ancestral and evolutionary past. This naturalistic person view uncritically arrives at its ontological interpretation of the person from scientific categories up to and including evolutionary theories that define the human being as a toolmaker (*homo faber*) and nothing more.

#### *Geist und Drang*

Before talking about Scheler's conception of the person. I should briefly discuss why it is that we are talking about Scheler's view of the person in philosophical anthropology if we are interested in Scheler's panentheistic conception of God. As Scheler never abandoned his phenomenological methodology that underscored his speculative metaphysics (more specifically panentheism as a form of speculative theism), then we must look to how God is experienced in the person. In other words, in paying attention to how the person becomes with respect to both *Geist* and *Drang*, we can understand Scheler's proposal of panentheism in how the Ground of Being becomes in his *The Human Place and the Cosmos*.

Scheler's solution about persons is more unique. In many of these interpretations of the person, one aspect of the person is played up more than the other as a static nature and part of the person. The Greco-Roman interpretation of rational persons plays up teleology and rationality at the expense of animality emphasized in the naturalistic personal interpretation. Scheler's solution is to synthesize in between these categories, interpreting the biological and psychic realities of human life in terms of their *becoming* as *Drang*, what Frings and Scheler scholarship mostly defines as impulsion, a process of drives that motivate, animate, and underlie the self-motion and instincts of life. Next, Scheler interprets the becoming of sublimating the drives with what he calls *Geist*. Rendered as *spirit*, Scheler states, "almost no other term has been abused in the past as much as this one has, with the result that only a few people can think of a something specific

<sup>24</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 5.

when the term is used.”<sup>26</sup> Scheler interprets the personal sphere as we are self-given to ourselves.<sup>27</sup>

Spirit refers to the very center of acts in the personal sphere. In this mode of self-givenness to ourselves, includes reason, but also the thinking of ideas and primordial intuition. In speaking of this intuition, this is the highest form of personal existence that connects the phenomenological beginnings of Scheler’s work extended now into his philosophical anthropology. Included in his conception are the specific class of volitional and emotive acts like free choice-making, bliss, despair (his two examples of psychic feeling in the *Formalism*), wonder, awe, repentance, love, and kindness.<sup>28</sup> At this level, Scheler thinks we are persons, not just psychic centers of concentrated functionalizing drives, nor are we just animals. *Spirit* becomes defines as “*the existential detachment from organic being.*”<sup>29</sup> In order to understand the relationship between spirit and the drives, I must turn to explicating the drives in Scheler.

What makes Scheler’s contribution to philosophical anthropology is not succumbing to the Cartesianism of many religious interpretations. Unlike Descartes or Christian theology that deny the animality and processes of life, Scheler opened up his philosophical anthropology to an ontology of life. As Spader declared, however, these forces are in opposition. “*Geist* is what allows the human person to ideate; it is opposed to *Drang*, that force which is the essence of life.”<sup>30</sup> In this way, Scheler saw that impulsion as the primary materiality in which the spiritualization of drive occurs. In this way, Scheler offers us the fact that persons become as life-in-spirit, not as opposed as Spader thinks. For this reason, Scheler is offering us a process philosophy of becoming of both God and persons rather than a static metaphysics or what Heidegger may have called a metaphysics of presence.

Manfred Frings describes Scheler’s philosophy overall, including his start in the 1920s to develop a metaphysics and philosophical anthropology. Frings writes, “Scheler’s philosophy is one of becoming, not being.”<sup>31</sup> Becoming is being and entails our relating from our part to the whole. In other words, life is in process in several layers in which impulsion is operative and constantly in process. He divides this operative manifestation of life in several layers. While I do not explain the distinction here, it is also paramount to mention

<sup>26</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> I admit this is my playfulness with Scheler’s attempt at system building. One can interpret two forms of dualism as either a form of interactionism or epiphenomenalism rather than two aspects of self-givenness. Clearly, however, pushing Scheler into process thought and insisting that *Drang* and *Geist* are two aspects in which we are given to ourselves merely articulates the process of our coming into view of ourselves in relation to the larger whole of the cosmos – our coming into being of ourselves in one moment and the recedingness of that moment into another. Since Scheler abandons a straightforward Catholicism for panentheism, such a process oriented view that abides by Whitehead’s call to never divide reality into bifurcated accounts of reality.

<sup>28</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Spader, *Scheler’s Ethical Personalism*, 185.

<sup>31</sup> Manfred Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 263.

that the Spirit and Impulsion distinction tracks and stands in for what became of Scheler's ideal factors and real factors in his philosophy of culture outlined in his *Sociology of Knowledge*. For now, let's take a look at the levels of impulsion described in *The Human Place and the Cosmos*.

The first level of psychic impulsion occurs in plants. Plants, he speculated, have impulsion towards growth and reproduction only. Time lapse photography indicated that plants unfurl their leaves to maximize photosynthesis. Thus, changes in their environment almost require plants to change their entire state of being in relation to the environment. Plants do not correlate their impulsion toward specific objects in the environment, but relate to it as a whole environing world. This lack of specification of related object is the prime ontological difference between animals and plants.

On a different level, animals experience an impulsion that reports back to the many organic states they achieve, including memory. Both plants and animals find their drives in resistance to the world, and this resistance is how the world is given to all forms of becoming life. Animals experience a more activated center of impulsion in the fact that sensation and consciousness experience resistance in the world. It's also in this first level of inwardness of life in which Scheler advances the claim that the most concentrated unity of nature and its becoming is found in the human person.<sup>32</sup>

The second form impulsion in life organizes itself in instinct. Refusing the psychological sciences, Scheler defines instinct only in relationship to the behavior of living beings. Curiously, Scheler claims that "behavior is independent of the physiological kinetic movements that carry it out and, as such, its characteristics are determinable without reference to physical and chemical concepts of stimuli."<sup>33</sup> In this way, Scheler is trying to avoid reductionisms to these primary physical parts and processes from which the natural attitude would characterize these experiences. At the same time, however, the natural facts of the body may constrain how to understand behavior and his efforts may be opening up a space in which a type of dualism is being introduced for human beings given our unique location in the ontology of life.

A more generous reading, however, pays attention that Scheler wanted to advance an interpretation of instinct that respects the fact that "*Instinctive behavior must have a sense of being purposeful for the whole of an organism.*"<sup>34</sup> Thus, the ontology of life respects the entire whole of the organism. Moreover, instinct manifests in relationship to the constancy of habitual rhythms of life. Instincts seem adaptive, more open and less rigid than any metaphor of mechanism that borrow from the imagery of machines to characterize life processes (e.g., the mind as a computer, the body as a "well oiled machine" etc.). For this reason, instincts always serve the species. They do not serve the individual. Instincts are, then, only a way to react to fixed specific structures, not the changing factors occurring in the environment amongst individuals. Still, there is a type of feeling knowledge that is given to organisms at this

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<sup>32</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 12. Italics are mine.

stage. Values are the coming-to-be feltness of resistance, and the beginning stages of value start here when the organism can have instinctive "knowledge of attracting and repelling moments of resistance."<sup>35</sup>

Up to now, drives and instincts are not yet differentiated in lower forms of life than us. In this hierarchical view, then, instincts cannot be reduced to habits, or specific single reflex arcs. Instead, drives are muted and primitive forms of psychic life. In order for drives to emerge from instinct, an organism needs to form more complex associations to have the type of psychic complex necessary for drives to manifest. Drives manifest, then, in animal life when sensations and representations become connected and a drive for gratification seeks them out instead of simply being supplied by the rhythms of life. In this way, intelligence arises coextensively as complex psychic life makes associations to manage and fulfill the energy and discharge of drives.

The third form of impulsion occurs in habitual behavior. For Scheler, this level is beyond plants and only occurs in levels whose previous forms were directed by processes of usefulness. When the movements produced by habit turn out to be successful, the drives are satisfied, and animals tend to fixate on successful patterns rather than unsuccessful actions, and in reference to the *Formalism*, the values of the agreeable and disagreeable occur here from sensible feeling. This ability to form habits comes out of associative memory, and in animals, the laws of association are simply conditioned reflexes of an occurring reflex arc.

The most interesting claim of Scheler in all of this is the complex distribution of associative memory in all forms of animal life. In human beings, associative memory occurs by copying others. Added to the biological dimension of repetition of drive satisfactions produced by imitation is tradition. The fact that we are a historical species and can move beyond memory recollection embodies the highest form of animal life. This moving beyondness indicates for Scheler the dissolution of tradition. Experiencing ourselves in remembering acts toward a past event is already dissolution of lived tradition.<sup>36</sup>

In the fourth conception of psychic life, Scheler describes it as "*organically bound practical intelligence*."<sup>37</sup> In this phrase, we see Scheler's commitment to an ontology of life binding our practical intelligence and their co-penetration and mutual dependency. Our practical intelligence is bound in the service of drives. For Scheler, there are two sides to intelligence. First, there is its practical definition, the how of practical intelligence is simply acting meaningfully without consulting past trials as an organism does in associative memory. Human beings and mice in a lab exhibit acting meaningfully in past trials. Second, the psychic side of intelligence is "a sudden insight into the context of facts and values within the environment."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 16. One might see the origin of sensible feelings and the valuing of the agreeable and disagreeable at this level of instinctive know-how.

<sup>36</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 21. Italics belong to Scheler.

<sup>38</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 22.

At this level in the *Formalism*, we may be at vital feeling anticipating values of health and well-being of the person in the environment. Though implicit, I gather that having access to values comprehended but also the fact that we represent the environment and insight “in an anticipatory fashion” is reminiscent of vital feelings “anticipating the value of possible stimuli and their arrival [vital values as he calls them].”<sup>39</sup>

Let us review at this stage what we have done so far. First, I explicated the relationship between the early efforts of phenomenology of religion, phenomenological methodology, and contrasted those methods with what changed historically in Scheler’s move from classical theism to panentheism in his central text, *The Human Place and the Cosmos*. Next, we focused our efforts on introducing the question of persons as the motivation for opening up speculation concerning Scheler’s philosophical anthropology and later metaphysics in which the personal sphere becomes the locus of where God becomes in us and through us. In this section, then, the life-drive takes becomes the central feature in the entire psycho-physical union of the person, and so it was necessary to explain the becoming of the life-drive in all hierarchical levels of life Scheler outlined before we can explain how these levels of life-drive actively reveal themselves in the becoming of God and persons. Explicating the process of Becoming of God and persons is now the central task of the next section.

#### *The Becoming of God in Spirit*

For Scheler, God becomes in spiritualizing acts, and this becoming is causally inefficacious. As Scheler claimed, “initially, spirit has no energy of its own.”<sup>40</sup> Spirit cannot do anything, but have insight into the fact that there is no overall teleological direction than what spiritual acts persons choose to realize into the world. Instead, persons are world-open to the disclosure of value in spirit, but require the life-drive for it to unfold. As Eugene Kelly puts the point, Scheler posits, “*Drang* as the Ground of Being, Spirit is *Gleichurspüglich* or equal in primordiality to the *Drang*, but entirely without power to cause events.”<sup>41</sup> The drive-energies must already be present to establish the condition of realizing spirit into the world. Since what Scheler calls God here becomes in *Geist*, Scheler is rejecting the Abrahamic God who created life *ex nihilo*.

For this reason, God is powerless to effectuate change without the human person participating to realize God. This ontological participation and cooperation resides in the becoming of lifeforce through which the cosmos is growing and striving. God can only cause persons to see goodness through love. For this reason, I am defining *panentheism* as the enspiriting of life’s energies through the freedom of those beings for which God joins in realizing values. God becomes in all beings capable of being persons.

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<sup>39</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 340.

<sup>40</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 48. Italics belong to Scheler.

<sup>41</sup> Eugene Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 190.

In our brief survey, we saw that Scheler thinks highly of the human being as a being of spirit, but also that what realizes spirit into this world are vital life drives and structures. Spirit is a potential within life's movement, and commentators from Zachary Davis to Peter Spader interpret this twofold possible movement as a type of dualism, yet this dualism is atypical from the rationalist varieties we get in Descartes and Leibniz. Even Scheler described himself as a new type of dualist.<sup>42</sup> Despite this allure of dualism, there are a few factors we should note in coming to terms with Scheler's processual account about persons.

First, persons are always becoming and never complete. There is a dynamism in Scheler's view at the very center of being a person—and what I have called in this work the *personal sphere*. The life-drives become spiritualized, and spirit acts become vitalized and embodied. In this way, persons can tend to the values associated with animal life, or they can become and self-transcend themselves in the openness and freedom inherent in actualizing their spirit potential. The personal sphere contains within it "a monarchic structure of acts of which one act at a time has its steering and directing function and is aimed at that value and that idea with which the person, in any given case, 'identifies.'"<sup>43</sup>

What we value, then has direct bearing on the ontological movement of the personal sphere. Still, there is an ontological law spelled out in the later half of Scheler's notion of spirit that bears on this ontological movement. Concerning spirit's impotence (what I have already called its causally inefficaciousness). On this, Scheler writes, "*From the beginning, what is lowly is powerful, and what is highest is impotent.*"<sup>44</sup> Lower forms of animal life, according to Scheler, are more dependent on their drives and the levels of psychic drives we reviewed in the earlier section.

For Scheler, then, this identification is also the functionalizing and practical aim of metaphysical understanding of the human being. The personal sphere takes on its aspirations from how and why the person understands itself. In the higher formation of value, persons are radically more free than if they identify their base animal natures common to many naturalistic worldviews that have no room for the self-transcendence. Scheler called this being world-open (*Welt-Offenheit*) Persons are thus an inexhaustible reservoir of potential to realize ever higher and newer values apprehended through spirit ideational acts. For Scheler, this potential is acted upon a type of agapic love that causes the person to see a higher valued conception of their own person and a potential higher community.

More to the point, these value conceptions point to no specific way of being in terms of how to participate in higher values, but only that persons ought to realize more love into the world. In apprehending these value essences to

<sup>42</sup> For Zachary Davis's interpretation see his co-written article with Anthony Steinbock "Max Scheler," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/scheler/>>.

<sup>43</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 47. Italics belong to Scheler.

aspire to higher levels of being, the ontological direction of the person runs “from below upward” in the world we live in.<sup>45</sup> In this way, Scheler is much like the Boston Personalist Edgar S. Brightman in thinking that religions are about value experience—maybe better described as value-realization. Brightman articulates this insight with respect to the fact that religion fosters and helps preserve the highest values of truth, beauty, and goodness.<sup>46</sup> For both Scheler and Brightman, religion is a mode of cultural realization and the cultural conceptions, what they embody, have a direct bearing on the range of values that can be experienced.

Scheler maintains that the person is the highest form of this becoming of spirit insofar as the person sublimates the drives of life to spirit. In the passage below, Scheler also mentions the “highest being” as the “Ground of the World.”

...the *highest sublimation* known to us—and becoming human is the most intimate unification of essential regions in the world. For the human being unifies all essential regions in him, and especially that of life. This holds at least for their accidental manifestations, and much less so for their quantities of distribution. The view of the world sketched here makes the conflict between a “teleological” and “mechanical” explanation of reality, which prevailed over many centuries disappear...This train of thought cannot stop short before even the Highest Being, the Ground of the World. For Being, too, that which “is through itself” and upon which everything else is dependent, and insofar as spirit must be assigned to it as one of its attributes, can also not *as* a spiritual Being have any power or strength. Rather, it is the other attribute, the *natura naturans* in the highest Being, that is, the all-powerful “impulsion” charged with infinite images, which is accountable for reality, while the contingent whatness of entities is never univocally determined through essential laws and ideas.<sup>47</sup>

In this passage, again, we see that the forces of spirit and impulsion co-penetrate and manifest with regular interpenetrating and unfolding dynamism. The spirited part is the phenomenological intuition apprehending those value essences, to realize higher forms of life, action, and modes of culture over and against our mere animality. These forces come together in the force-center of the person. They interpenetrate and assist each other in mutual operation and reinforcement since the person is the highest form of organization for these elements. Noticeably, however, Scheler attempts a middle view between a Cartesian or scholastic rationalism of teleological substance metaphysics and a pure reductionistic materialism. Let me explain.

The person is neither entirely a rational substance, nor a physical system of evolutionary forces. Instead, the personal sphere is blended between its

<sup>45</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 47. Italics belong to Scheler.

<sup>46</sup> Edgar S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1940), 102. Brightman also advocates more for monotheism than the openness of Scheler’s philosophical anthropology and personalist ethics.

<sup>47</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 50.

emotive insight and value-essences and the embodied materiality situated and comporting itself within time. In essence, the compromise between rationalistic and materialistic approaches borrows from the earlier conceptions of a felt rationality similar to the Greco-Roman ontological participation view mentioned earlier. The difference between Scheler and the Greco-Roman view is that ontological participation is directed by love not sterile Stoic or Platonic rationality that subordinates emotions to reason.

Moreover, Scheler is attempting to somewhat accommodate viewing the person in an evolutionary world of becoming in the earlier third conception. The direction or steering of a person's development comes from the exercise of the freedom to sublimate higher values for lower values for spirit to motivate and nullify the suspension of drive-life for higher purpose. The purposiveness is, then, inspirational from the ideational and intuition of essences. Thus, there is a region of essences, some region described that the personal sphere navigates within and realizes all at the same time.

For Scheler, this inspirational and alluring force of value givenness in Spirit only nullifies the gathered energies of life. Without the gathered energies of life in our drives, persons could do nothing, and Scheler makes a speculative argument by analogy. Just as spirit is powerless in our personal spheres, the same analogy is also made of God's own personal sphere. According to Scheler, as a person, God as a Being-through-itself relates to the world, and in that relationship again "there is a *primordial tension between spirit and impulsion*."<sup>48</sup> Like James's widest possible experiencer, God has the same structure as a person, and the correlate of the world is that which he must relate to through itself. In this way, God becomes powerless, less causally efficacious than classical theism in which God is established in a Platonic position over that which is created from nothing. Moreover, classical theism establishes an asymmetric dependency between the Creator and the created.

For Scheler, this dependency limits what nature can be whereas in the process conception of Scheler, the becoming of the universe in terms of Spirit and Impulsion is left open. There is a possibility of growth, not directed by any set of ideals or God but on the fact that while God can reveal an ideal to persons, persons must choose to realize that value at the expense of lower possibilities. In this way, both Spirit and Impulsion are equal possibilities to be realized specifically in the convergence of these forces in the human person or God's person. The only dependency is based on the embodied materiality that makes possible the realization of Spirit. In the level of Spirit, the feeling act of love allows for us to feel a person's absolute uniqueness and dignity. The highest values of what Scheler calls Holy values are the highest possible value realization possible.

As I am understanding these elements of givenness in persons, and in the larger scheme of the Ground of Being, Spirit and Impulsion become in the pervasive presence of all that is. In this way, panentheism is God being a person in all-that-is-and-is-yet-to-be, yet these elements of Spirit and Impulsion are not contraries as much as they are ways for the entire all-that-

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<sup>48</sup> Scheler, *The Human Place in Cosmos*, 50.

is-as-a-person-is-and-is-yet-to-be. In other words, reality is becoming in God's Spirit and Impulsion just as easily as it is also a shared co-habitation in the act center of human persons.

In fact, Becoming is this collaboration in us, through us, and us in Spirit and through Spirit that makes up and constitutes reality. Reality becomes in these forces underlying experience and simultaneously as experienced. Spirit and impulsion co-penetrate and interpenetrate, actively unfolding. In some ways, this becoming is passive and in other ways directly experienced as active. For this reason, I find it more appropriate in rejecting this becoming as a type of dualism, but thinking of Spirit and Impulsion in much the same way that process theists have insisted upon a type of dipolar theism.

#### *Thinking of Becoming as Dipolar Theism*

In dipolar theism, God's potential becoming exists in a state of possibility a not yet just like the values called forth in Scheler's spirit. In the other half, life's energies in impulsion and realities materiality has already became and actualized some set of possibilities. Given that Scheler's God is becoming in persons and around us all at the same time, the all-that-is-as-a-person-is-and-is-yet-to-be is an expression that combines the fact that aspects of the panentheistic God are already in time, already coming to be and receding within time and experience.

For this reason, drawing parallels to Alfred North Whitehead's last chapter in *Process and Reality* should constitute future work and engagement with Scheler's writings.<sup>49</sup> I will not attempt such an exhaustive though very much needed analysis. For now, I will simply sketch one way this engagement may look, though more exhaustive treatments should follow upon highlighting this intriguing feature and interpretive direction that Scheler's thinking might take in future scholarship.<sup>50</sup>

In Whitehead, every actual entity, the most atomic unit of the universe whether we are talking tiny puffs of existence or persons all have a physical pole and a mental pole. These aspects are not the actual entities themselves, but merely aspects of them in much the same way I call Spirit and Impulsion ways of self-givenness of persons may tend even though both elements are constantly co-penetrating. Like any other entity, God is an actual entity with a physical pole and a mental pole, which he calls the *consequent nature* and the *primordial nature*. These two aspects of God exist as inseparable parts of God, yet they are unfolding in relationship to each other.

<sup>49</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: Corrected Edition* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 342-351.

<sup>50</sup> The first in the literature to highlight the need for Schelerians to pay attention to Whitehead is Randall Auxier who in the following article does not so much reveal Scheler to be a dipolar theist, but calls for Scheler's account of intentional feeling to correct aspects of Whitehead's thought. Randall Auxier, "Scheler and the Very Existence of the Impersonal" in *Eidos: A Journal for the Philosophy of Culture* vol. 1, no. 3 (2018), p. 75. In ironic fashion, I am calling for the Scheler community to pay attention to Whitehead as a way to correct Scheler's dualism.

The primordial nature is like Scheler's Spirit. It expresses what might be as the set of possibilities in which reality may grow. By contrast, the consequent nature expresses the solid fact of what has been, the materiality and determinateness that comes to shape possibility. Scheler's impulsion, however, is a bit different – it would seem – from Whitehead. For starters, Whitehead's consequent nature refers to the objective immortality of all determination being remembered and its interaction is what limits the pure expression of what is possible in nature, and Impulsion in persons refers to excitation and release of psychic drives of persons. In a limited way, however, Impulsion may indicate the life-processes in Whitehead on which the possibility of Spirit depends.

### *Conclusion*

In this essay, I have traversed aspects of Scheler's later metaphysics and philosophical anthropology. The goal has been to both understand how Scheler's thought changed, what direction it took, and how better to understand the process-based elements of his later metaphysics. As Scheler is mostly remembered because of John Paul II's *habilitationschrift*, Scheler tends to be preserved and read through his tentative commitment to his Catholicism. Phenomenology is a way into values of the Holy and reinforces, as it were, dogmas of Catholic religious theology. This trend is unfortunate and fully in error when the scope of Scheler's life is seen in full.

In addition, I have not read Peter Spader's arguments in full, nor given them the treatment they deserve. Given that his *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (2002) was the second to last scholarly engagement in English on Scheler's ethics apart from Eugene Kelly's *Material Value Ethics: Max Scheler and Nicholai Hartmann* (2011), Spader's arguments, though I see them as wrong, should be met with greater focus and attention. In this paper, I did not have time to review his interpretations of both the reasons for this dualistic interpretation and the problems of *Geist* and *Drang* dualism reading that cut along the lines of interactionism we find in Descartes.

Instead, I have only indicated in spirit with Whitehead that such a philosophy could be read as a type of dipolar monism in which both Spirit and Impulsion are revealed aspects of how persons (both human and God) are revealed to themselves and how and why this realization of self-givenness also constitutes the sense-making of reality. In this way, my reading has bought into Whitehead's warnings against bifurcated accounts of reality – essentially Whitehead's anti-dualism, though I have not made any explicit argument for such an interpretation. I have only offered a speculation.

What Scheler's later metaphysics reveals, however, is the necessity to think beyond the categories of religious and theological orthodoxy. Various dogmas rob us of the cultural and political imaginary to conceive of the Divine beyond tradition. In my country, the United States, Christianity is mobilized under the banner of capitalist ideologies that directly undermine the sacredness of persons. In this way, Christianity is continually weaponized, and while I have many – and at times myself – adhered to

Christian principles of agapic love in Christ's example and drawn to the politics of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I am afraid that liberal and progressive Christianity is never enough, never capable of mobilizing the just actions and reforms needed to constrain the global pandemic of climate change that the United States engenders or the structural violence of income inequality domestically.

We consume the world's energy several times over, and we exploit each other and nature in God's name constantly. Under the mantle of God, the United States launches attacks all over the world in what to many is a religious war despite the many innocent civilians that die in our God obsessed crusade against the abstract noun of "terrorism." Thus, the Christians in the United States largely forget about emptying oneself of kenotic love in order to receive it from another. Thus, I have long since thought that a massive cultural challenge to Christian orthodoxy should come from what I dare to call *speculative theism*.<sup>51</sup>

Just as speculative materialists in Continental philosophy want to reestablish a return to ontologies friendly to objects, so too do I want to undermine orthodoxy of our Abrahamic notions of God. I call upon philosophers to imagine the many different ways that God can be conceived. I call upon philosophers to explore those conceptual systems, retrieving the idealisms, panentheisms, and pantheisms of the past to mine them for what might pragmatically serve and benefit our shared experience as well as to analyze their shortcomings speculating about new forms the Divine may take.

In this way, Scheler's work is paramount as it stands as one of the last examples of speculative theism (alongside Whitehead) that undermines and stretches the concept of Divinity and Nature to oppose directly the tainted concepts of God in Christianity and rekindle new political theologies that incorporate our obligations to each other nationally, internationally and to the one planet we all call home. Nowhere is this work more important than the United States that leads the world in an unsustainable economic system and blinds us to further immoral ends to which many sisters and brothers of our human family are affected by impersonal attitudes of self-interest in economics and military imperialism.

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<sup>51</sup> Professor Angela Roothaan of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has reminded me that my call for speculative theism does not pay attention to the many postmetaphysical approaches to God that can be mined for concepts beyond what I call Abrahamic. These postmetaphysical approaches may be exemplified in analogy such as liberation theology's concern for the poor God.