

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

When we look back on the broad conspectus of the ethical ideas and theories that have been studied and pursued by academic philosophers in the English-speaking countries during the present century which now is drawing to a close, we find an overwhelming preoccupation with the views of mainly English-speaking philosophers and thinkers. This has, of course, been duly acknowledged by some thinkers and writers on ethical philosophy sometime even with an apologia, such as for example one finds in the book Twentieth Century Ethics. Hancock in his introduction to this book is clearly conscious of this "limitation" as he remarks, "that, unfortunate as it may be, work in ethical theory in the English-speaking countries in recent times has been done independently of work outside these areas."¹ He hastens to add,

No suggestion is being made that the work of Nicolai Hartmann or Max Scheler, for example, is less important than the work of, say, G.E. Moore or Charles Stevenson. The suggestion is simply that the recent work of English-speaking philosophers in some important sense autonomous and can therefore be treated in a book such as this by itself.²

The above-quoted remarks help us to set the perspective for the present project. That there is a lamentable lack of

1 Hancock, R.N., Twentieth Century Ethics, pp.1-2, Columbia University Press, 1974.

2 Ibid.

due exposure to the tradition outside of what goes on within the English-speaking world, insofar as ethical philosophy is concerned, would be commonly shared by many a present-day scholars even if *sometimes* pricked by the prefatorial remarks, such as, one finds in Hancock's book. A serious attempt, in our view, is called for in order to remedy the situation by investigating another dominant philosophical trend that has been carried out mainly outside the English-speaking world in the West, namely, the phenomenological philosophy. The present work promises to move in this direction.

Phenomenological philosophy as a systematic movement came into focus with the writings of Edmund Husserl. It was more a "movement" than a set of doctrines; and as a movement it occupied itself mainly with philosophical methodology. For Husserl, philosophy as a "rigorous science" can succeed if only if the starting-point is ceased to be free from all presuppositions and is carried out in accordance with an perfected methodology which always must remain conscious of itself. That Husserl was deeply interested in ethical philosophy as well has been widely acclaimed by most phenomenological thinkers. In the words of Marvin Faber who himself a student of Husserl

In the writings published during his life time Husserl showed that he also had in mind the experience and nature of values, and what he stated indicates the direction of his ethical thought. The ethical manuscripts left at his death give a greater indication of his

conception of the phenomenology of values.
Husserl's serious interest in ethics is shown by
the number of times he elected to give lectures and
seminars on that subject.¹

As these manuscripts (both published and unpublished) are not available in India and many of these are yet to be translated into English, we are unable to incorporate Husserl's own views with regard to values in the present project. For that matter, a more daunting task lies ahead of us, to be able to work out and develop a phenomenological framework within which the more concrete issues relating to ethical knowledge may be considered and investigated further. Though the task is difficult, it is not wholly unattainable. For, besides vast store of Husserl's writings (take into consideration only English translation alone) which deal with various aspects of phenomenological philosophy and in which pregnant suggestions and hints with regard to the moral realm are not difficult to come by. There are also at least two important continental thinkers in this tradition, namely, Nicolai Hartmann and Max Scheler. The latter two philosophers have paid exclusive attention to the theory of values, in general, and moral values, in particular, generally within the broad framework of phenomenological thinking. It would therefore be necessary for the present work to sharpen the focus more clearly on the writings of Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann with a view to drawing their insights into the nature of moral values and other related issues.

1 Farber, M., Phenomenology and Existence, pp.185-86
Herper & Row Publishers, New York, 1967.

But for undertaking any systematic investigation, it is sometimes helpful to cast the net wide and far. Such a move would be inspired by the hope that importance may be gleaned from the sources that are not accredited as phenomenological. As thinkers, such as, G.E. Moore who is only too readily assimilated into the English-speaking tradition of analytic or linguistic mainstream provides an important clue to our understanding of the phenomenological idea of the critique of naturalism. As Farber points out,

With no apparent conscious motivation, a writer like G.E. Moore appears to point to an impasse to naturalism in ethics, and to be trying to achieve what idealists in Germany had wanted to accomplish in more elaborate ways.¹

It may be relevant here to mention that Moore himself found his views as worked out in Principia Ethica "closely resembling" those of Frant Brentano and acknowledges this fact in the preface to his book.² This is of some significance because Husserl's own debt to Brentano in developing the notion of intentionality can hardly be lost sight of.

Now, it may be worthwhile to ruminate the idea that values play a central role in practical decision-making in everyday life as well as in all areas of human life, such as,

1 Ibid., p.166.

2 Moore, G.E., Principia Ethica pp.x-xi, Cambridge University Press, 1965.

in economic theory, there are value-decisions of prices or wage etc.; in political theory, conceptions of public welfare cover a vast valuation structure; in aesthetic studies, the reviews of picture, movies and paintings are nothing but the value-studies; in judicial process, the judgements that passed are value-oriented. Needless to say that in the case of d conduct, values are essential by way of norms or standards of evaluation. Thus all areas of human existence not only deals with values but also embody them.

In the context of such a vital role of values in all areas of human existence, philosophers naturally feel the need to have an organised framework of values or valuational principles. Thus from ancient times¹ down to the present era numerous attempts have been made in order to describe the phenomena of values even though from different perspectives and directions.

It would appear to an observer of western intellectual scene that the two tradition of philosophizing, namely, the analytic and phenomenological grew almost in waterlight compartments alongside each other. Moore, at the beginning

1 We are quite aware that the term "value" in the current sense has come to be use only in the 18th century. The Greeks used the term "virtue" (which is not synonymous with "value") corresponding to the modern notion of obligation. In 18th century, Richard Price and Hutcheson have been concerned with understanding the nature of values to give ethics a concrete foundation. I owe this point to Professor Klaus Hartmann, Tuebingen University, Germany with whom I had privilege to discuss this project when I visited Germany in 1990.

of the analytic tradition, makes out a strong case for the need to study and clarify the nature of values and other related issue of ethics "in a 'meta-ethical' rather than a straightforwardly ethical perspective."² For him and other thinkers in this tradition the complexities arise in the moral matters are due to our vague understanding of the moral concepts and language. Naturally, there is an appeal by these philosophers to dispel such complexities by means of conceptual and logico-linguistic analysis of the value-concepts and value-judgements.

Now, the thinkers in the phenomenological tradition, if this be construed in somewhat flexible terms, attempt to give an account of the value-phenomena as such purely in terms of contents of consciousness. The issues raised here related to the domain of values are different from those that the analytic philosopher deals with. Though the writings of Meinong and Brentano may be taken to be the precursor of such approach, a pure phenomenological foundation is seen to begin with the writings of Husserl.

At this stage, we may address the following two quiriess :

(a) In what way is it a challenge for a phenomenological thinker in having to deal with values, in general and moral values, in particular and, (b) how does the phenomenological thinker

1 Findlay, J.N., Axiological Ethics, p.3
Maxmillan & Co.Ltd. 1970.

justifies the legitimacy of applying phenomenological methodology in dealing with matters relating to values. We may first take up (a) as that would facilitate also our task of making clear the issue raised at (b). It may be pointed out that Husserl by his advocacy of the "pure phenomena" or "experience" seems to lay himself open to the charge of following out a methodology which is subjectivistic. In order to bring out the tension that phenomenological thinking suffers we can do no better than to quote Liverziani who brings it out in sharp focus.

But is it not a contradiction of terms to speak of an a priori experience? Would it not be better to conclude quite frankly that even a moral, spiritual, metaphysical, religious or mystical experience, each in its own peculiar manner, is something that comes to us a posteriori? We could do this only once we succeed in ridding ourselves of the prejudice (an inveterate one, unfortunately) that one can only have an experience of the physical, natural, mundane realities. If even values, as Scheler defines them, are de facto realities and possible objects of experience, and are so precisely because they are values, why should it not be possible to qualify the Absolute in an analogous manner? Why should we not speak of an absolute reality, object of an experience, object of an experience of the Absolute?¹

In other words, the charge of subjectivism against phenomenological methodology hangs over it like proverbial Democles' sword and as any wrong move would only hasten its fall. So in dealing with this tangible world and its existence Husserl cautiously carves out the method of bracketing which, according to him, promises

1 Liverziani, F., "Value Ethics and Experience"
A.T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana,
Vol. XVI, p. 275, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983.

to result in eidetic essences. Now, the domain of values is far different and less tangible than the domain of worldly objects and events. This throws a greater burden on the phenomenological thinker or else it would be easy target of attack for subjectivism. Any phenomenological approach to values must, therefore, ensure that in the ultimate analysis the values would emerge as objectively real and eternal. If this caution is not heeded, such an attempt would lapse into mere subjectivism and the critics will be too oblige to slap back this charge on phenomenology.

And now for the legitimacy of the phenomenological method in dealing with values and other related issues. Now, what in the foregoing analysis has been shown to be the weakness of phenomenological method may now be termed as its strength also. For, values and not facts are more easily amenable to the kind of experience that has been advocated by Husserl and his followers. In support of this point, Paolo Valori has this to say :

.... it is in moral philosophy that one perceives better the deficiency in both the positivist thesis already mentioned - the reduction of knowledge to empirical verification - and the logistic position - the reduction of knowledge to tautological judgments. In short, neopositivism's famous "principle of verification" can be clearly recognised as expendable.¹

1 Valori, P., "Phenomenology of Personalistic Morality" Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana, Vol.VI, op.cit., p.82.

Valori further explicates in support of his arguments that what the phenomenological method does is,

to derive ethics not from a metaphysical structure systematised in advance and therefore a priori, but from an authentically verified description of the phenomena of conscience. In a word, it is necessary to begin building the moral edifice from solid ground rather than from the roof. In this perspective the phenomenological method proves very useful as an introduction to a morality existentially lived and at the same time removed from a relativistic and historicist situationism.¹

That Husserl would have wholly supported such a move, Valori maintains, is evidenced from what he has to say in Ideas I and Logical Investigations where Husserl states that "the object (Gegenstand) of phenomenological research can be a thing, an event, a mathematic statement, a being, an 'ought to be' (Sein wie ein Sein Sollen)."²

Thus instead of deriving ethics from a systematised metaphysically a priori structure, phenomenological founding of morality provides us with a ethics derived from an authentically verified description of the phenomena of values. Indeed Valori goes so far as to maintain that

if there is an area in the phenomenological method finds greater realisation of its potential, I might even say, finds its vocation, it is the precisely in the field of morality.³

1 Ibid.

2 Quoted in P.Valori, "Phenomenology of Personalistic Morality" op.cit., p.81.

3 Ibid., p.82.

So our objective in the present dissertation is to consider the ethical views of some phenomenological thinkers who have clearly shown the legitimacy of applying phenomenological method in ethics. Thus, for example, "extensive and splendid works of Max Scheler have demonstrated beyond any possibility of doubt the fruitfulness of the phenomenological method when applied in a creative manner to moral research."¹

So, it may well be justifiably maintained that phenomenological method has a greater relevance in value research. One who has developed the phenomenological insight may be able to understand how this insight is very useful to have the grasp of values. The phenomenological method, if creatively applied, can be a better way to get access to the world of values. For one thing, this method is not concerned with facts but with pure essences. On the other, ethics is not concerned with facts i.e. not with describing the actual conduct of human beings. Rather it is concerned with evaluating the conduct of persons and therefore it is concerned with values themselves. And these values may be pure essences of phenomenological type. Further, the phenomenological method seeks to set aside all metaphysical and naturalistic considerations while describing the experientially pure phenomena. Similarly, the essence of ethics is values which are not the furnitures of the physical world. They are

1 Ibid., p.81.

non-empirical, pure phenomena. Thus it seems clear that the values can be the pure objects of phenomenological research rather than the objects of empirical knowledge. The moral philosophers belonging to phenomenological tradition use the phenomenological insights to understand the problem of values without always adhering to the original meaning given to them by Husserl. But they share some phenomenological ideas which apply to values.

First, we may begin by pointing out the general phenomenological view with regard to values. All phenomenological ethicists are anti-naturalistic, in the sense that they reject ethics based on inductive experience. According to them, values cannot be explained or understood in terms of natural objects (or, that which are valuable). Even Husserl is said to have maintained the same standpoint as he does in his theoretical philosophy. In the words of Shmueli,

Against naturalistic theories Husserl stresses the difference of values from physical or psychological qualities. They have their own general essence, and their validity does not depend on their actualisation in reality which is the domain of the time and space dimensions.¹

Similarly, Hartmann and Scheler, as we shall see, in opposition to naturalism develop their views about values. Further, the

1 Shmueli, E., "The Universal Message of Husserl's Ethics : An Explication of some Ethical Premises in Transcendental Phenomenology", Tymieniecka (ed.), Analecta Husserliana, Vol. XXII, p. 554 D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, 1987.

phenomenologists in general, and Scheler, in particular maintain anti-metaphysical attitude towards ethics. But Hartmann, though he incorporates a handful of phenomenological ideas in his value-ethics, avowedly compares values with Platonic Ideas.

Second, all phenomenological ethicists share the view that values are essences in the phenomenological sense, though they differ with regard to the ontological status of them. While Scheler takes values in the sense of Husserlian "essence", Hartmann, who also calls them "essence", takes them on Platonic lines.

Third, values are a priori as they are not available in the natural world of space-time. They are apriorically given to our feeling; no intervention of senses is required. This has been recognised by both Hartmann and Scheler. Even Husserl is said to have shared this view. In Shmueli's words, "...values themselves are based on an a priori structure."¹ Shmueli further says that "Husserl's problem was finding the a priori concepts and rulings of ethical foundations and evidence for their origin and essentially a priori eidos."²

1 Ibid., p.554.

2 Ibid., p.553.

Fourth, values are ideal objects for all the phenomenological ethicists, though they are not quite unanimous with regard to the meaning of the term "ideal". As Farbar says,

The phenomenological view of values, which is 'eidetic' in its Husserlian form, is developed to operate abstractively with values as ideal objects. It is important to trace those idealities back to their own sources, to the realities of history and natural experience, if they are not to lose their instrumental function, and if they are to conform to the rules of good behavior of ideal objects. They must touch the earth in order to reach the sky, and do so repeatedly if they are to remain in the sky, where they belong.¹

Both Husserl and Scheler seem to share this view. Husserl's view on the matter is brought out by Shmueli as follows :

A value is an ideal construct produced by a theoretical activity which has as its material foundations will and emotions.²

Scheler, as we shall see, borrows the Husserlian sense of "ideal" to describe the value-phenomena as ideal entities like the species "red".

Fifth, for the phenomenologists in general, values are indefinable. As values are phenomena, they cannot be defined.

1 Farbar, M., Phenomenology and Existence, op.cit., p.193.

2 Shmueli, E., "The Universal Message of Husserl's Ethics, An Explication of some Ethical Premises in Transcendental Phenomenology", Tymeineika (ed.), Analecta Husserliana, Vol.XXII, op.cit., p.554.

E.g. "definition of the phenomena, according to Scheler essentially/^{impossible} anyhow..."¹ Thus phenomenologists rejects logico-linguistic analysis of values as they are not concepts. It may, however, be noted that Hartmann also adduces other reasons for the indefinability of values.

Sixth, "the pure phenomenological treatment of values", Farber points out,

proceeds from feelings, desires, and insights as such, manifested in experience by persons as such, all viewed abstractively and 'essentially'. But the structural study of the modes of experience should not lose sight of the ways in which feelings and desires are conditioned in a given cultural system.²

Husserl is said to have subscribe to the same view as Shmueli remarks on his behalf that "no ethics can be conceived without a theory of emotions (Gemütsreich) and desires."³ Hartmann and Scheler also have put emotion rather than intellectual grasp at the centre of value experience. Thus they are opposed to adopt rationalism in apprehending values. For them, values are given a priori to emotional intuition.

1 Spiegelberg, H., Phenomenological Movement, Vol. I. p. 243.

Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971.

2 Farber, M., Phenomenology and Existence, op.cit., p.194.

3 Shmueli, E., "The Universal Message of Husserl's Ethics : An Explication of some Ethical Premises in Transcendental Phenomenology", op.cit., p.554.

Finally, the phenomenological way of thinking regards values as something "material" or as contentful. They are not "formal" as Kant conceives. Scheler and Hartmann criticise Kant's "formalism" and show how formalism brings disastrous results in the domain of ethics. The values are eternal, immutable and absolute and "material" in nature.

As we have already mentioned, Husserl is said to have dealt with ethical problems though in a marginal way. It was Max Scheler (1874-1928) who develops a full-fledged value-ethics which is based on Husserlian phenomenology. His basic phenomenological ideas follow an unorthodox interpretation of Husserl. By setting forth his critique of Kant, he goes on to found an ethics that will not be a formal one (that which prescribes duty for duty's sake), but rather will be material (that is to say, having a content, namely, value with respect to which a duty is finalised), — a system of ethics that will be both material and a priori. Scheler accepts Husserl's fundamental methodological principle to "approach the 'things' themselves" without assumptions and to describe phenomena as they are "given" to consciousness. He attempts to elaborate a phenomenology of feeling in and through which values are apprehended, though this kind of feeling is quite different from the mere feeling-states which are in the nature of "blind" drives. Thus Scheler's value-theory is essentially based on the phenomenological ground.

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On the other hand, Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950) founded his value-ethics on platonic structure of thinking but not without borrowing some important phenomenological insights. His book Ethics is as much a work in the general theory of values as it is in ethics. Like Scheler he too builds up a non-formal ethics. He also shares some of the views of Scheler. For example, Hartmann accepts Scheler's contention that values are given a priori to intuition by means of emotion. He subscribes to Scheler's view that values are eternal, immutable and that only the perceptibility of them differs from society to society. However, Hartmann parts company with Scheler in maintaining the opposite theory that higher values (moral values) are dependent on lower values (goods-values).¹

It is of some significance that both Scheler and Hartmann, more Scheler perhaps than Hartmann, have delved deep into Kant's ethical views as they developed specific and pointed arguments against Kant's formalism. This, in a way, helps them systematize their views in the manner that they do by making out a strong case for an ethics rather, which as opposed to being formalism, seeks to come to grip with the contentful nature of values. For the present project, it is therefore necessary to look at the charges that the two philosophers make

1 Another little known phenomenological ethicist who is said to have made significant contribution to value-ethics and whose works had drawn the attention of Nicolai Hartmann is Hans Reiner (1896-). Please see, R. Gortzen, "Duty and Inclination : The Phenomenological value-ethics of Hans Reiner". The Journal of Value Inquiry, Vol.25, 1991, p.119.

against Kant's ethical views. In Chapter III, an attempt will be made to consider some of these charges. As has often been pointed out by various thinkers, Kant's formalism in ethics marks a watershed in the history of western ethical thinking. The views of Scheler and Hartmann will be of great value insofar as they will help us to understand the phenomenological approach in certain perspective with which most of us are familiar.

Of no less importance is the critique of naturalism that Moore develops in his own writings. It seems to ring a bell when he considers his views in the close proximity with some of the key ideas of phenomenological thinking. As has been earlier pointed out, Moore's own acknowledgement of the similarity of his views with those of Brentano provides sufficient justification for considering his non-naturalism, even though his main objective may have been to give a meta-linguistic turn to the central questions of ethics. In Chapter IV, an attempt is made to look at some aspects of Moore's ethical views.

Hartmann's own substantive views on values in general, and moral values, in particular have two-fold significance. He conceives values as eternal, immutable and ideal along the lines of Platonic tradition. For this, he comes to be dubbed as a

value-platonist.¹ Is he really a Platonist? And if so, how does he come to the phenomenological way of understanding? On the other hand, Hartmann also advocates a kind of value-relativism and so the question arises, how does he reconcile value-relativism with value-absolutism? These two questions will engage us in Chapter V in which some light will be thrown on how and in what sense does Hartmann contribute to the understanding of phenomenological ethics of values.

Max Scheler will naturally be the centre-stage of our study as a thorough-going phenomenological thinker who sets his face formally against any metaphysical turn in keeping with spirit of Husserlian methodology. Scheler, like Hartmann, stands for value-absolutism without, however, looking to Plato for any inspiration in this regard. Scheler too speaks of relativity in "perceiving" values, though meticulously safe-guarding his standpoint of value-absolutism. In Chapter VI, some of these issues will be considered at some length. Scheler and Hartmann provide two different ways of approaching values, though the conclusions they reach are marked by striking similarities.

In the concluding Chapter VII, some general insights will be drawn from the maze of details that will by then be available to us from the various sources.

1 Please see Cadwallader, E.H., Searchlight on Values
The University Press of America, Lanham, 1984.

Now, in order to bring out all these points as we proceed with the project on hand, it may be useful to deal with at some length the various aspects of phenomenological method on the basis of the writings of Husserl which are easily accessible to us. We shall undertake, this in a systematic way in the following Chapter, that is, in Chapter II.

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