INTRODUCTION: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL TRADITION AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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Ethics as a philosophical discipline is back in vogue in the English-speaking world. Ever since the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*[1] moral philosophy has undergone a remarkable resurgence. One need only to review job advertisements over the last several years to note how great is the percentage of available positions in philosophy devoted to ethics. Courses in ethics and a concentration on "values" have been revived as centerpieces of liberal education. This development was spurred not only by Rawls and his successors, but by our need to respond to the various ethical issues posed by the technological explosion of the last century. Indeed, we have seen the rise of whole new fields of "applied ethics," such as bioethics and environmental ethics. Against the background of this revival, one of the central aims of this handbook is to show the great fertility of the phenomenological tradition for the study of ethics by collecting a set of papers on the contributions to ethical thought by major phenomenological thinkers. Most of the chapters in the book, therefore, sketch the thought of the major ethical thinkers in previous generations of the phenomenological tradition and direct the reader toward the most relevant primary and secondary materials. Other chapters sketch more recent developments in various parts of the world, and three chapters explore the relations between phenomenology and the dominant normative approaches in contemporary moral philosophy.

A chief contribution of Rawls's work was to shatter the stranglehold of utilitarianism, especially on discussions of public policy, and to create the space for the re-emergence of deontological and virtue approaches to ethics. In the non-English-speaking world, however, phenomenological thinkers had long developed views that challenged utilitarianism and that pointed to new developments in moral philosophy. But few of these thinkers engaged ethical or metaethical theory as it was developed in the "analytic" tradition. The same is true for English-speaking

[1] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

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moral philosophers; they took no notice of developments in phenomenology. Given the radical divide for much of the last century between English-speaking analytic philosophers and German-, French-, and Spanish-speaking phenomenologists, this is no surprise. Another central aim of this work, therefore, is to point to those places where these different moral philosophies can be brought into fruitful relations. Insofar as the book achieves its aims, we hope not only to introduce non-phenomenologists to this rich tradition, but to assist students of phenomenology in preparing for those positions in which they will be asked to teach moral philosophy.

Relating moral philosophy as done in the phenomenological tradition to the ethics done in the analytic tradition is challenging because the two traditions have tended to approach moral philosophy from different perspectives. We should note in this regard that the terms "ethics" and "moral philosophy" can be understood in different senses and in different dimensions. Both the term "ethics" and its cognates and the term "morality" and its cognates are somewhat problematic. They are used in different senses by different authors, both within and without the phenomenological tradition. Some use the term "ethics" in an Aristotelian sense to address the teleological concern with the development of an individual agent's character and the realization of a good life for that agent. The term "morality" and its cognates is, on the other hand, used to refer to actions and the deontological concern with the obligations and norms governing actions.[2] Others use the term "ethics"—as in "utilitarian ethics" or "deontological ethics"—to refer to the rules and principles governing action, reserving the Humean term "moral" to refer to the human being as "born for action,"[3] as a moral agent. The differences in usage, in other words, are mirror images of one another. In this introduction the terms "ethics" and "morality" will be used more or less interchangeably, for it is more important to clarify the different dimensions of ethics and ethical reflection.

The terms "ethics" and "morality" can be thought to operate in three dimensions. The first is that of everyday moral experience. This dimension includes our ordinary decision-making regarding actions affecting both ourselves and others, as well as our reactions to, our attitudes about, and our judgments concerning ourselves and others and the actions we and they commit or omit. These actions, reactions, attitudes, and moral judgments are categorially formed. Persons and actions appear to us as and are judged actually to be good, noble, fine, virtuous, generous, honest, just, patriotic, compassionate, hospitable, friendly, bad, base, evil,

[2] Paul Ricoeur is a good example of a phenomenologist who uses these terms in this manner; cf. his *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 169–71.

[3] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in his *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. P. H. Nidditch, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 5.

wicked, vicious, petty, rancorous, spiteful, inhospitable, mean-spirited, treacherous, traitorous, and so on, precisely because persons decide to undertake actions insofar as those actions are noble or fine, base or wicked, and so forth. There is nothing particularly philosophical about this ordinary moral experience. All of us, no matter how untutored in philosophy, undergo these everyday, ordinary experiences.

The categoriality of first-order experience, however, makes possible a critical reflection both on the actions themselves and on the moral judgments we make about them and their agents. We can reflect on the rightness or wrongness of actions and on the correctness or incorrectness of our appraisals of them and of their agents. This ethical reflection occurs in the second dimension of ethics. It is here that normative questions arise, for we reflect both on the principles by which we determine the rightness or wrongness of actions and on the evidence that attaches to our judgments about actions and their agents. It is in this second dimension and in respect to the principles governing actions that the philosophical discipline of ethics as ordinarily understood in the contemporary world is located. The two dominant moral theories of the 20th century, utilitarianism and deontologism, have been concerned to identify precisely those considerations that allow us to determine the rightness or wrongness of our actions and the moral praiseworthiness or moral blameworthiness of agents.

It is in this second dimension also, but now in respect to the evidence that attaches to our judgments about agents and their actions, that we make yet a further distinction. We can consider evidence in the mediated sense of reason-giving, of appealing to principles and of offering justifying arguments. Such a consideration leads us into questions concerning deontic logic. But we can also consider evidence in the intuitive sense, i.e., in the sense of our direct apprehension of moral goods and of our fulfilled judgments about moral agents and their actions. We can reflect on and criticize the principles themselves to which we have appealed in justifying our actions, the values we have sought to realize in our lives, and the emotions and attitudes that have governed our ethical relationships both to ourselves and with others. This kind of reflection discloses for us the possibilities of either confirming our ethical standpoint or reforming our lives in accordance with principles, values, emotions, and attitudes now reflectively and evidentially recognized to be more adequate in governing our everyday attitudes, actions, and judgments.[4] It is this focus on the agent, her emotions and attitudes, her dispositions to act in certain ways, and her character as a whole and as manifest in her actions that is

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[4] James G. Hart speaks of this "taking stock" of our moral lives and their significance as the "ethical reduction"; cf. his *The Person and the Common Life: Studies in a Husserlian Social Ethics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 26–34.

characteristic of virtue ethics, an approach that in the late 20th century made a comeback in moral philosophy.

The second dimension of ethics points us toward yet a third dimension that completes the turning of our attention to the agent. In this dimension we investigate the nature of moral agency itself. We reflect upon the nature of the everyday moral experience itself, the manner in which we experience moral categories, the nature of the emotions and of evaluative experience, the nature of action, and so forth. In this kind of reflection, we turn properly to moral philosophy in something like the Aristotelian and Humean senses, the investigation of the human as agent. Questions concerning moral epistemology and moral psychology come to the fore. Whereas in the second dimension of ethics we reflect upon what it is to be a *moral* agent, in the third dimension we reflect upon what it is to be a moral *agent*. We see this development not only in Aristotle and Hume but also in Kant, in the impoverished noncognitivist "metaethics" of the early part of the 20th century, and in the phenomenological tradition, where it is developed, as it was in Kant, from a transcendental perspective.

When I speak here of a "transcendental perspective," I mean only that the phenomenological thinkers in question move beyond merely psychological accounts and consider moral phenomena in their relation to a subject of experience that grasps or discloses or fashions the moral significance of things, situations, actions, and agents. I do not intend to imply that all the thinkers in the phenomenological tradition are committed to some form of transcendental idealism—for that is clearly false—or that they all have a sense of an active, functioning subjectivity that brings moral phenomena to awareness. For some phenomenological value theorists, this claim means only that they have a sense of the intentional correlation between value-consciousness and the value as apprehended; for them, consciousness remains largely passive in the apprehension of values whose existence and sense are independent of consciousness. This sense of "transcendental" is, to that degree, merely incipient or "naive" and, at least sometimes, not explicitly acknowledged, or even denied in favor of "realism." For other phenomenologists, the "transcendental perspective" leads to a reflection on the subject's activity in constituting values or to a focus on the correlation between willing and the willed.

The threefold distinction among the dimensions of ethics is the parallel in the moral order to distinctions Husserl makes in the cognitive order among our everyday cognitions, our critical or logical reflection thereon, and our phenomenological reflection. Our everyday cognitions are directed straightforwardly to objects and states of affairs; similarly, our everyday moral experiences are aimed straightforwardly at goods as ends, at actions, and at agents and patients. Critical reflection, on the other hand, is directed toward the veridicality or non-veridicality of appearances and the truth or falsity of judgments. Our attention is

turned to the sense of the object present in our experiencing of it, and we are concerned in this critical attitude to establish the correctness or incorrectness of that sense. This critical attitude can be generalized into what we might call the "logical" attitude wherein we are concerned not only with the truth or falsity of individual propositions, but with the logical correctness or incorrectness of a system of meanings, e.g., an argument or a theory. While this "logical reflection" can be carried out in an abstract matter divorced from the concern with truth, as a rule it serves the interests of our first-order experience, serving to demonstrate the truth of systems of belief. In a similar manner, ethical or moral reflection can be directed to the rightness or wrongness of actions and the virtue or vice of agents. More broadly, however, our ethical reflection can be directed to the whole system of our actions, to our entire life and the moral meaning or significance it has for us. In this sense, both critical and ethical reflection are aimed at the sense or meaningfulness of the things with which they concern themselves. Finally, phenomenological reflection, whether directed to cognitive or moral experiences, is concerned with the acts, the experiences, in which things, situations, actions, and agents disclose themselves in determinate ways. It is concerned, that is, with the subjective achievements in which the meaningfulness of things is disclosed.

Although phenomenological reflection considers the questions of moral epistemology and moral psychology from an implicit or explicit transcendental perspective, its considerations cannot be divorced from the kind of ethical activity and reflection that occurs in the first and second dimensions. Phenomenological reflections are directed precisely to our everyday moral experience and its categorial structures, to our everyday actions as they are categorially structured in their performances, to the judgments and evidence involved in our critical reflections on everyday experience, and to the norms developed in order to guide our everyday actions.

Apart from the various forms of "applied ethics," contemporary ethics focuses on the rival normative positions represented by utilitarianism, deontologism, and, to a lesser extent, virtue ethics. Contemporary utilitarianism after Mill is characterized by the view that the rightness or wrongness of actions is determined by appeal to the greatest happiness principle. Happiness, on this view, is defined as utility or benefit understood in a broad sense to include not only sensory pleasures (as in utilitarianism's earliest form), but also such goods as knowledge, friendship, autonomy, and achievement. The greatest happiness principle requires us to undertake the action that produces the greatest happiness for the collection of persons affected (or likely to be affected) by our action. On this view, reason's role in our evaluations is the "scientific" calculation of the consequences of our actions. Judgments about the worth of the states of affairs an agent seeks to realize in her actions are referred exclusively to feelings of pleasure and pain.

Chapter 1

ARISTOTELIANISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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Aristotle might well be called the first phenomenologist of moral experience. Recall, for example, his careful attention to the "phenomena," to common opinions about happiness or—as a phenomenologist might put it—to happiness and the virtues as commonly understood. Recall too his meticulous, dialectical considerations of these phenomena, considerations reminiscent of imaginative variations and designed to achieve insight into the nature of happiness and the virtues. Recall, even more importantly, his account of moral intentionality—of the unified role of practical wisdom, the emotions, and "perception" in moral experience—and, finally, his distinction between merely voluntary and chosen actions, the former *aimed* at an end (e.g., satisfying hunger), but the latter undertaken *in the light of* an end (e.g., eating low-fat foods for the sake of health). In discussing the relation between Aristotelianism and phenomenology, therefore, we could well and fruitfully explore the various ways in which Aristotle himself and the contemporary advocates of a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics develop phenomenological themes and methodologies in their work.[1]

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[1] I have in mind here, among others, thinkers (and works) such as Alasdair MacIntyre (*After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981]; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988]; and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990]), Martha Nussbaum (*The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986]; "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara, and Henry S. Richardson [New York: Routledge, 1990], 203–52; "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy. Volume XIII. Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue*, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988], 32–53; revised and expanded in "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 242–69), Nancy Sherman (*The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989]; *Making a Necessity of Virtue:*

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I shall not, however, follow this path. Since it is a great strength of phenomenology that it can retrieve classical issues and insights, I shall instead consider the ways in which some phenomenological approaches to moral philosophy manifest such Aristotelian themes as *eudaimonia,* moral intentionality, deliberate action, and the relation between moral action and communal life. However, since phenomenology retrieves classical insights in ways capable of responding to modern criticisms of the classical tradition—thereby preserving what is best from both periods—I shall also examine phenomenology's retrieval of themes arising from modern criticisms of eudaimonistic approaches to ethics, in particular Kantian deontologism's concern with the issue of obligation.

Aristotle's ethics is centered around the notion of the good realized in action. The ultimate good for Aristotle is human happiness, i.e., a flourishing human life, as realized in the exercise of the virtues. The phenomenological tradition, on the other hand, is fundamentally axiological in character. With respect to moral matters, its dominant tendency has been to offer first a theory of value rather than an account of the good life for humans. While the notions of "good" and "value" are no doubt related, the exact nature of this relation must be clarified. In that context, I must confess at the beginning to a dislike for talk about "values," as if values were objects to be discovered as pieces of the furniture of the world. The word "value" is, first of all, a verb. Values are not things in relation to which we appraise other things; rather, things are valued insofar as they are recognized as good (or apparently good) in some respect. It is, as we shall see later, only in the light of valuing things that are similarly good that we achieve an awareness of *the* "value." Hence in the first instance, we should understand phenomenological axiology as a theory of valu*ing* (rather than of values as such).

This point about the language of "values" accounts in part for why my discussion will center itself on the contributions of Husserl rather than on those, say, of Scheler and others like him who think that values are a priori objects grasped independently of and prior to valued things. To put the matter another way, I believe that among the phenomenologists, Husserl most and best embodies Aristotelian themes and tendencies. My aim, however, is not to provide an interpretation of Husserl; that is done elsewhere in this volume. I aim instead to provide, as it were, an "Aristotelian reading" of (a largely Husserlian) phenomenology and thereby to focus our attention on those aspects of the phenomenological tradition that illuminate moral phenomena with an "Aristotelian light."

Aristotle and Kant on Virtue [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]), Sarah Broadie (*Ethics with Aristotle* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991]), and Rosalind Hursthouse (*On Virtue Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999]).

1. VALUING

We turn first, then, to the evaluative experience. Phenomenological axiology is rooted in Brentano's two claims (1) that we apprehend what is valuable in things in "emotive" acts *(Akte der Gemütsbewegung),* a class of acts defined primarily by acts of loving and hating—or, less strongly, liking and disliking—but broadly enough to encompass feelings, desires, and volitions, and (2) that these emotive acts are grounded in "presentations"of the object.[2] We can understand the second claim in terms of what Husserl describes as the "noematic sense" of an object or, as I shall call it, its "objective sense."[3] Husserl's point is that a thing is always encountered in a determinate manner and in a particular kind of act. There are two aspects to this claim. First, the same thing can be experienced in the same determinate manner in acts of different kinds: I can see the green car, remember it, wish for it, and judge it to be green. Second, any single thing can be experienced with different determinations. I experience the car as green, as stylish, as well engineered, as getting good gas mileage, as expensive, and so forth. There is a hermeneutic *as* in experience; I experience X as a, b, c, and so on.[4] The determinate manner *(Weise)* in which the thing is experienced—its objective sense or content—is distinguished from how *(wie)* it is experienced, i.e., as the object of perception, memory, judgment, and the like.

Husserl adapts Brentano's second claim about presentations grounding evaluative acts. For Husserl this claim means that the evaluative experience is founded on the objective sense within the evaluative experience itself. The phenomenological priority of the "mere" presentation or objective sense, while compatible with the temporal priority of a non-evaluative experience, does not

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[2]Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint,* trans. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and L. L. McAlister, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995), 45, 80, 276.

[3]Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie,* ed. Karl Schuhmann, *Husserliana* 3/1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 205; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology,* trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 216–18. First references to volumes of Husserl's *Gesammelte Werke (Husserliana)* will be full references along with references to any English translations. Subsequent references to any volume of *Husserliana* will be noted as "Hua" followed by the volume and page numbers.

[4]This point corresponds to Husserl's identification within the noematic sense of what he calls the "Identical," the "determinable X" that is the "bearer" of "properties" and the "subject of predicates"; cf. Hua 3/1, 297–304 (309–16).

require it. Such non-evaluative experiences are no doubt possible. I might simply notice things in the visual field, attend to their color, register them as trees, grass, or stones, and so forth. Indeed, at one extreme the theoretical sciences pride themselves on their separation from the evaluative and the practical; they pursue a "pure" cognitive truth. The great bulk of our everyday experience, however, is not of this unmixed character.[5] Our everyday encounters with things are governed by interests that lead us to explore and to value things in particular ways, to a determinate degree, and for a variety of purposes.[6] Our ordinary experience, in other words, is permeated by practical and evaluative dimensions. And while I might, for example, daily notice the architectural features of a building and come subsequently to appreciate and value them, I might just as easily, in my first encounter with the building, be "struck" by its beauty. In either case, the same objective sense is present in and underlies the valuing.

Things and circumstances can from the beginning appear to us as good or bad, likable or not, useful or not, pleasurable or not. More specifically, and more importantly for our present reflections, actions and agents can from the beginning appear to us as noble, fine, virtuous, generous, honest, just, patriotic, compassionate, hospitable, friendly, base, evil, wicked, vicious, petty, rancorous, spiteful, inhospitable, mean-spirited, treacherous, traitorous, and so on. Given that the great bulk of our ordinary experience is from the beginning evaluative, we can say that in most cases the founding presentation will in fact be a kernel—the objective sense—within the concrete valuing experience rather than an individuated, temporally prior experience to whose presentation of the thing an affective response, a valuing dimension, is subsequently added. The objective sense presents what Husserl refers to as the "logical" properties of the thing, properties of the sort apprehended in cognition and predicated in simple, unmodalized, categorical propositions.[7] The "logical," purely descriptive properties can be

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[5] In fact, perhaps not even "pure" theoretical inquiry is free of an evaluative dimension, for it makes sense as a project only to the degree that the scientist thinks this pursuit worthy, although the theorizing activity does not itself pursue truths about goods and the valuable properties of things.

[6] Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ding und Raum: Vorlesungen 1907*, ed. Ulrich Claesges, *Husserliana* 16 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 125–38; *Thing and Space: Lectures 1907*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 104–14. Cf. also John J. Drummond, "Object's Optimal Appearances and the Immediate Awareness of Space in Vision," *Man and World* 16 (1983): 182–83.

[7] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, ed. Marly Biemel, *Husserliana* 4 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 10; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the*

presented apart from the valuing of the thing having those properties. The founded or valuing moment could be stripped away such that we no longer experience the thing as valuable. Yet we would still experience it in a different kind of (non-evaluative) act—perception, say—but now as a thing without worth for us.[8]

In summary, then, essential to the founding of evaluative experiences on presentations is, first, that a purely descriptive objective sense belong to the evaluative experience as its core, and second, that the experience of the worth of the thing build itself upon this core so as to form a unity with it.[9] Combining this notion of foundation with Brentano's first claim that emotive acts apprehend what is valuable in things, it follows that the concrete valuing experience has both a founding presentational or "cognitive" moment and a founded "feeling"-moment. A constellation of logical properties belonging to the thing arouses a feeling.[10] The value-property of the thing having those logical properties is the correlate of this feeling tied to cognition or, so to speak, of a "sentiment of the understanding."[11] In other words, the feeling builds itself upon and unites itself with the presentational moment directed to these logical properties such that the overall character of the experience is an affective response to the worth of the thing.[12] Within the concrete valuing experience, the logical properties are the correlates of the presentational or cognitive moments and the value-properties are the correlates specifically of the moment of feeling or emotion.[13]

Since the feeling is the affective response to cognized properties and founded in their presentation, our valuing the thing incorporates an underlying cognitive content. In this unity of cognitive and affective moments, we recognize the thing (with these particular properties) as valuable precisely insofar as it possesses these properties. There is, in other words, something like an abstraction at work in evaluation; we attend—more or less explicitly—only to some features of the thing

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Phenomenology of Constitution, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 12.

[8]Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre 1908–1914,* ed. Ullrich Melle, *Husserliana* 28 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 252.

[9]Husserl explores the concept of foundation at length in *Logische Untersuchungen, Zweiter Band, Erster Teil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis,* ed. Ursula Panzer, *Husserliana* 19/1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 267; *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 1:463). For the specific point that evaluative acts are founded on cognitions, cf. Hua 28, 252.

[10]Hua 4, 12 (14).

[11]Cf. John J. Drummond, "Moral Objectivity: Husserl's Sentiments of the Understanding," *Husserl Studies* 12 (1995): 165–83.

[12]Hua 4, 8–11 (10–13); cf. also Hua 28, 252.

[13]Hua 28, 255–57, 260–62.

Chapter 2

KANTIANISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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Even more than his theoretical works, Immanuel Kant's ethical writings can be said to effect a break with traditions of philosophy going back to the ancient Greeks. In particular, his "Copernican Revolution" in metaphysics, purporting to show that reason is incapable of gaining theoretical knowledge of ultimate reality, rules out the approach to ethics most common in ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophy—one that depends on a metaphysical theory of the good, specifically the human good. In contrast to such "eudaimonistic" 460
theories, Kant provides an alternative conception, often called "deontological," of how reason functions in ethics, one that treats issues of right—of duty, obligation, and law—as amenable to formal or procedural solutions that do not presuppose any metaphysical theory of what material goods are. "Kantianism," then, generally refers to ethical theories that emphasize the need to justify moral and other norms under modern conditions of interest-pluralism—that is, in the absence of agreement over which material values *ought* to be preferred.

To the extent that Kantian theories depend, or seem to depend, on contingent assumptions—scientific assumptions about a disenchanted, deterministic world, perhaps, or historical assumptions about the rise of liberal society—they have drawn criticism from phenomenologically oriented philosophers. Phenomenologists hold that such assumptions must be put out of play, the better to describe ethical phenomena as they give themselves in concrete experience. Thus Max Scheler went so far as to "reverse" Kant's "Copernican Revolution"[1] and to strip practical reason of its critical role. To the Kantian, however, the phenomenological approach to ethics can look like an attempt to rehabilitate a premodern, metaphysically dogmatic conception of the relation between theory and practice. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, whose "discourse ethics" is a recent version of Kantianism, argues that Husserl's approach to ethics cannot do justice to the "norms of a universal legislation derived from practical reason," since he remains dependent upon an

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[1] Philip Blosser, *Scheler's Critique of Kant's Ethics* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 42.

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objectivist "ontology, from which he unconsciously borrows the traditional conception of theory" as contemplation of the "given" order of the cosmos.[2]

A deep rift thus separates phenomenological and Kantian approaches to ethics, and it is no surprise that the early phenomenological response to Kantianism (for instance, in Husserl and Scheler) was almost entirely negative. And when Kantian motifs later began showing up in phenomenological works (as in the late Husserl, then Heidegger and Sartre), this did not stem from any systematic rethinking of the relation between the two philosophical tendencies. Though some recent phenomenological projects (for instance, Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* [1990]) try to do justice to the legitimate claims of both Kantianism and phenomenology, and though recent work in Kantian ethics (for instance, Christine Korsgaard's *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* [1996] and Barbara Herman's *The Practice of Moral Judgment* [1993]) emphasizes a side of Kant that is more congenial to phenomenology, a genuine dialogue has yet to be established.

Husserl claimed that "when abstracted from Kantian 'metaphysics,' Kant's thinking and inquiry moves *de facto* in the framework of the phenomenological attitude,"[3] but while there is some truth to this, the fact remains that far more than "metaphysics" separates Kant's approach to ethics from Husserl's and from most of the phenomenologists who followed him. Even shorn of its most characteristic "metaphysical" assumption—the distinction between phenomena and noumena—Kant's idea that the ethical function of reason is not to cognize material values and goods but to legislate laws of conduct (duties, obligations) stands in marked contrast to the phenomenological view. Phenomenology—especially in Husserl, but arguably far more pervasively—operates with a conception of reason as the intuitive grasp of essences and their necessary interconnections; it tends toward a kind of moral realism as the correlate of a theoretical "science of values." Kantianism, in contrast, rejects the view of ethics as a science and argues for the primacy of *practical* reason. Here moral philosophy is not a matter of attaining a certain kind of ethical knowledge, but of demonstrating the legitimacy of reason's claim to *construct* norms—that is, to make values unconditionally normative (hence moral) by formulating them as laws of the will. Perhaps these two views of reason's role need not conflict, but if rapprochement is to be sought it is first necessary to appreciate something of what motivates their differences. To this task the present

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[2] Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968); *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 305.

[3] Edmund Husserl, "Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie," in his *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Erster Teil: Kritische Ideengeschichte*, ed. Rudolf Boehm, Husserliana 7 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 236; cf. "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy," trans. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl, *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1974): 14.

chapter is devoted, though it makes no claim to being a comprehensive account of Kantianism, much less a thorough summary of its phenomenological reception.

1. Phenomenological Value Theory

In the "Prolegomena" to the *Logical Investigations* (1900), Husserl argued that "each normative, and *a fortiori*, each practical discipline"—hence ethics conceived as an account of what one ought to do—"presupposes one or more theoretical disciplines as its foundations."[4] His reasoning here reveals the deepest rift between a phenomenological and a Kantian approach to ethics. For Husserl, in order to judge that "a soldier should be brave," for example, "I must have some conception of a 'good' soldier," a conception that must be founded "on a general valuation which permits us to value soldiers as good or bad according to these or those properties" (LI, 84). In other words, the normative statement's validity depends upon a non-normative, purely theoretical, account of what a soldier is (a functional definition) that specifies those properties that enable something to fulfill the function (hence be a valuable, "good," soldier). If the theory shows that courage is among those properties, then the normative judgment "A soldier should be brave" is warranted. Husserl defines a "basic norm" as "the normative proposition which demands generally of the objects of a sphere that they should measure up to the constitutive features of the positive value-predicates to the greatest extent possible" and argues that "this role is, e.g., played by the categorical imperative in the group of normative propositions which make up Kant's ethics, as by the principle of the 'greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number' in the Ethics of the Utilitarians" (LI, 85). But in this he misconstrues the fundamental difference between Kant's ethics and utilitarianism, for Kant's categorical imperative is not a "basic norm" in Husserl's sense. It does not presuppose a theoretical account of "the positive value-predicates" of a certain domain of objects that are to be realized by adhering to it (presumably, "a good will"); rather, it expresses the ground of obligation itself — that which, prior to all consideration of whether my will or intention is virtuous (i.e., instances a functionally defined good), gives it the form of *law,* something unconditionally binding.

No doubt this difference is made less perspicuous by Kant's procedure, in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* of presenting the categorical imperative as "analytically" contained in the idea of a "good will," thereby inviting the suspicion that the normativity of reason's law is derived from that idea. However,

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[4]Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen,* vol. 1 [1900], vol. 2 [1901]; *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 87 (hereafter LI).

though Kant introduces the categorical imperative in the context of an account of the "common rational knowledge of morals"—and so, in fact, in the context of a phenomenology of "ordinary moral consciousness"—this is not meant to establish the validity of the categorical imperative, but only to suggest that ordinary moral consciousness is not unfamiliar with the idea of obligation. Where the validity of the categorical imperative is established—in subsequent sections of the *Foundations* and in the *Critique of Practical Reason*—it is not some theoretically determined idea of a "good will" that does the work. On the contrary, the categorical imperative provides the ground for defining what a morally good will is.

Phenomenologists have not been blind to this aspect of Kant's ethics. On the contrary, Kant's claim that pure practical reason is sufficient to define the moral goodness of a will is the target of two fundamental phenomenological criticisms: the first finds Kant's view of reason excessively formalistic, and the second rejects his moral psychology as too thin to recognize the manifold ways in which moral norms arise within the overall nexus of our motivations, desires, valuations, and attitudes. Provide a richer phenomenology of moral experience as the context for a theoretical reflection on the norms implicit in evaluative life generally—so this argument goes—and the question of "unconditional" obligation that Kant places at center stage will evaporate.

Consider, for instance, the concept of a "will which is to be esteemed as good in itself without regard to anything else."[5] Kant's initial point is a descriptive one: we do not judge the worth of the "will"—that is, the volitional intention oriented toward bringing about a certain effect in the world—according to whether that effect is in fact achieved. Normally, however, we do evaluate the will in terms of the goodness of the end it pursues, and this is where Kant raises the crucial question of what gives such a will *moral* worth. Is it the end, or the procedure through which it adopts that end? For Kant, it is the latter. Moral worth does not lie in the will's object or aim, but in the fact that it acts "from duty." Thus my act is not morally good because it aims to bring about some good thing in the world, but because it conforms to a formal law of reason that enjoins that the maxim of the act be universalizable. It is the latter that makes the act into a duty or obligation and provides the authority to override my possibly countervailing "inclinations." Thus the question of whether the end to be brought about through my act is an objectively good one is, from Kant's point of view, irrelevant: it is not the goodness

[5] Immanuel Kant, *Grundlagen der Metaphysik der Sitten* [1785]; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. Lewis White Beck, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 15 (hereafter FMM).

of the end but the will's conformity to the *form of law* that makes it morally normative.

Phenomenological value theory sees these matters quite differently. Though their positions diverge in important ways, both Husserl and Scheler criticize Kant's equation of reason with mere form (the form of law), arguing that no concrete duties can be determined without attending to the content of the act. Where Kant sees all such content as contingent or a posteriori—hence as an unsuitable basis for universal moral norms—the phenomenologists offer a theory of the *material a priori,* i.e., a theory of contents that, as "objective" goods and values, do not need to be brought under the form of law in order to exhibit rationality. Thus where Kant defines the motive of the good will (duty) in terms of its "respect for law"—that is, in terms of its willingness to test its maxim against the form of law (universalizability)—Husserl sees the motive to lie in the material of the desire underlying the will itself. Husserl's version of a categorical imperative—"do the best that is attainable under the circumstances"—is a law that describes the good will, but does not serve as its motive. So also in Scheler there is no specific moral motive, no formal motive of duty, but rather moral values are instantiated when the will brings about or realizes higher, in preference to lower, nonmoral goods. Against Kantian formalism, then, phenomenological value theory defends a material a priori and a *teleological* or "perfectionist" conception of ethics.

These two concepts—material a priori and teleological perfectionism—are closely linked, and arise from phenomenology's reflective, descriptive approach to moral experience. From the phenomenological perspective, Kant's sharp distinction between reason and "sensibility" yields an anemic moral psychology that has disastrous results for ethical theory. By divorcing the supposedly formal law of the will from those material contents that derive from the "faculty of desire" (further reduced to "self-love"), Kant obscures the rich intentional weave of emotive, affective, and volitional life as it is lived. Specifically, Kant lumps all material incentives of the will—all particular objects of my desire—under the heading of "inclination" and argues that they are irrelevant for understanding the moral worth of an action, since no such incentive can give rise to an obligation.

There are several reasons for this. First, Kant argues that only experience can show whether some object or other will stimulate the faculty of desire, will incline me toward choosing it. Since for Kant experience can demonstrate no necessary connection between any object and my feeling toward it, the whole sphere of feeling lacks rationality. Second, to the extent that reason can establish necessary connections between some desired end and certain actions, these connections yield only "hypothetical" imperatives. *If* I desire the end, *then* I "ought" to engage in the actions that, as means, are required to bring it about. Since Kant holds that it is my interest in realizing the end that gives these actions whatever value they have, such hypothetical imperatives could yield universal obligations only if there is a

Chapter 3

UTILITARIANISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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Utilitarianism is a general tendency within ethical theory that may or may not incorporate a significant phenomenological element, depending on how its basic ideas are developed. At its center is the view that moral distinctions are to be defined in terms of the causal role of actions or character traits. In writers such as Richard Cumberland (1631–1718), Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), and J. J. C. Smart, ethical theories of a specifically utilitarian type are developed by a priori analysis, by hypothetical reasoning, or simply by the specifying and application of definitions. Of such theories we shall have little to say here. Other writers, such as David Hume (1711–1776), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), and Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900) advance utilitarian ethical theories that contain essential phenomenological components. It is upon theories of this type that we shall focus. Many essentially utilitarian ethical theorists of the late 20th century, such as Stephen Toulmin, Charles Stevenson, and Richard Hare, actually do engage in what could justifiably be called phenomenological analyses of language and experiences thereof. But they prefer to call what they are doing "logic" or "semantics."

When I say that an ethical theory contains phenomenological components, what I mean is that in the formulation and defense of that theory the *essences* of relevant experiences are presented on the basis of a, presumably, direct and full *acquaintance* thereof. This may be so—and in the history of ethical theory has most often been so—in cases where the one developing the theory does not explicitly acknowledge or does not fully understand that they are conducting "phenomenological" analyses in this precise sense. Nevertheless, an attentive examination of their statements may show that this is what they are doing. Or in many cases, if they are not doing phenomenological analyses, it is unclear what types of investigations and claims are involved in the development of their theory, i.e., what is the precise nature of their claims and of the evidence supporting them. In the case of many utilitarian as well as other types of ethical theorists, the phenomenological component is frequently more obvious from its absence where clearly needed than from its actual presence in the relevant analyses.

Here we shall concentrate mainly on relevant portions of the works of Hume, Mill, and Sidgwick. Because of limitations of space we cannot be systematically or

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critically thorough with their ethical theories as a whole, nor can we deal with alternative interpretations thereof.

1. HUME

Utility is an essential component of David Hume's ethical theory, and he is properly included in any account of utilitarianism. He is, however, not a pure utilitarian, for as we shall see, there are, on his view, moral distinctions that are not based on utility in any way—which is not a subtle point in his theory. And he is not a hedonist in his theory of value, as tends to be the case with later utilitarians. That is, he does not hold that the specific utility involved in virtues and right actions is that of producing pleasure or happiness. On the other hand, he is in practice perhaps the most emphatically "phenomenological" of all the ethical theorists who regard utility as having an essential role in the moral life.

The primary moral distinctions, for Hume, fall between personal qualities or "qualities of mind," such as benevolence, justice, courage, wit, chastity, modesty, etc. These are, he is very clear, internal states. Actions have a moral character only via their association with them. "The external performance," he says, "has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality..." (T, 477–78).[1]

The distinction between the qualities of mind that are virtues and those that are not is an objective one, not dependent on how particular human subjects may think or feel about it, and it is universal, the same for all—at least for all rightly informed and thoughtful people. This is true in spite of the fact that distinctions between virtues and non-virtues are not constituted or conveyed to us by reason or understanding, but by feeling (passion, sentiment). The sentiments that determine moral boundaries are essential parts of human nature, and ultimately derive from "the original fabric and formation of the human mind, which is naturally adapted to receive them" (E, 172),[2] or "from the eternal frame and constitution of animals, <which> is ultimately derived from that Supreme Will, which bestowed on each being its peculiar nature, and arranged the several classes and orders of existence" (E, 294).

Far from fitting into such 20th century classifications as "social subjectivism," "personal subjectivism," or "emotivism," Hume's theory more closely aligns with

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[1]David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) (hereafter T).

[2]David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals,* ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957) (hereafter E).

natural law theories, minus, of course, their emphasis upon the ability of reason to grasp ultimate ends and determine ultimate principles of morality.

Fundamental to Hume's theory is his distinction between reason (understanding), on the one hand, and sentiment (feeling) on the other. This distinction might properly be drawn on a phenomenological basis, but Hume presents it from within a mixture of a priori and descriptive observations. Both reason and sentiment are, of course, essential capacities of the human mind, not accidental ones. Both are, as such, directly inspectable by reflection. We know that they are by directly examining them, and then certain observations and deductions as to what they do and can do may be made as well.

Reason, for Hume, has only two functions: to discover the relations of ideas by comparing ideas to one another, and to infer the existence of matters of fact from given impressions and ideas (T, 463). It deals in truth and falsehood, which requires its ideas to be, not realities, but *of* realities. This much he offers us as description. Passions, volitions and actions, by contrast, are "original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions" (T, 458). This seems, again, to be phenomenological description: presenting the essence of types of experiences from a direct examination of them.

From these essential descriptions of reason and sentiment, Hume then deduces his well-known view that moral distinctions do not originate from reason unaided by *sentiment*. He also distinguishes certain "calm" sentiments that have been mistaken for reason in action (T, 417–18). And in a very abrupt phenomenological appeal, he describes our experience of vice in order to show that vice is no matter of fact, such as might exist apart from human attitudes and be inferred by reason:

> Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, toward this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. (T, 468–69)

Here the nature or essence of an object is clearly to be settled on the basis of a descriptive claim about the experience of it, of where you "find it."

Hume continues on this phenomenological route by comparing vice and virtue to secondary qualities (sounds, colors, heat and cold, etc.), "which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind."

(Misguided phenomenology is still phenomenology!) The appeal to the "breast" and what is found therein is characteristic of the type of quasi-phenomenological work routinely engaged in by British empiricism up through the 19th century.

Having concluded that moral distinctions originate from a natural sentiment, Hume then proceeds to explore which "qualities of mind" are picked out by the moral sentiment as virtues and therefore constitute "Personal Merit." (Of course, there is a companion sentiment of moral aversion that determines the range of vices.) Here, he thinks, one "can never be considerably mistaken in framing the catalogue.... He needs only enter his own breast for a moment" (E, 174), and the topography of virtues and vices among qualities of mind will be clear.

Having in this way got "the catalogue," Hume then tries to determine what it is about the particular mental qualities that evokes moral approbation or disapprobation. The by far greater part of both the *Treatise* Book III and the *Enquiry* is then devoted to reflection on and argument about this particular issue.

The outcome of his supposedly "empirical" survey of the lawlike regularities of the moral life is that a virtue must fall into one of four classes: traits that are useful to others, useful to the one who has them, immediately agreeable to others, or immediately agreeable to the one who has them. A virtue may fall into more than one of these classes, as does benevolence, but it may also fall into only one, as does justice. Thus in Hume's own language, "Personal Merit <virtue> consists altogether in the possession of mental qualities *useful* or *agreeable* to the *person himself* or to *others*." In this manner "the complete delineation or description of merit seems to be performed as naturally as a shadow is cast by the sun, or an image is reflected upon water" (E, 268; cf. 270, 277 and T, 590–91).

Now there can be no doubt that on Hume's view, there are virtues with no touch of utility in their makeup. Cheerfulness is but one instance from "another set of mental qualities, which without any utility or any tendency to farther good, either of the community or of the possessor, diffuse a satisfaction on the beholders, and procure friendship and regard" (E, 250; cf. 263— concerning eloquence, genius, good sense, and sound reasoning, which "have a merit distinct from their usefulness"—and T, 611–13).

One might then well ask what is that unifying principle that allows us to bridge the gap between the four classes and find them all to be cases of, precisely, *virtue*. Here it is that we come upon what must be called a descriptive ultimate in Hume's account: the sentiment of moral approbation itself. Hume's view is that we can and do directly identify and differentiate a peculiar sentiment of being pleased with a mental quality, and that we can find by reflection that a certain group of mental qualities evoke or are objects of (he speaks in both ways) *that* sentiment or feeling. It is a "pleasing" feeling, as aversion to vice is painful. But the mental qualities are not virtues, nor discovered to be virtues, because of the pleasure. Instead, "in feeling that it pleases after such a peculiar manner, we in effect feel that it is

virtuous.... Our approbation is imply'd <involved> in the immediate pleasure they convey to us" (T, 471; cf. 296). The impressions by which moral good and evil are known are accordingly not merely pleasures or pains, but are "*particular* pains or pleasures" (T, 471, Hume's emphasis).

Hume's analysis says very little, however, about precisely *how* the pleasant feeling of moral approbation is distinct from other pleasant feelings. At this as well as other points one is painfully aware of how far Hume is from a carefully elaborated phenomenological viewpoint. His younger contemporary, Adam Smith (1723–1790), criticized Hume's use of utility as a moral concept at all, on the grounds that we should, if Hume were right, give *moral* approbation to anything that is useful, say, a convenient mechanical device or an intellectual technique. "It seems impossible," Smith said, "that the approbation of virtue should be a sentiment of the same kind with that by which we approve of a convenient and well-contrived building; or that we should have no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers."[3]

Hume's response to this type of criticism, though relegated to a footnote, is highly instructive of his actual reliance upon the phenomenological appeal in his ethical theory as a whole. He remarks that "We ought not to imagine, because an inanimate object may be useful as well as a man, that therefore it ought also, according to this system, to merit the appellation of *virtuous*" (E, 213 n.). And why not? "The sentiments, excited by utility, are, in the two cases, very different; and the one is mixed with affection, esteem, approbation, &c., and not the other.... There are a numerous set of passions and sentiments, of which thinking rational beings are, by the original constitution of nature, the only proper objects: and though the very same qualities be transferred to an insensible, inanimate being, they will not excite the same sentiments" (E, 213).

This is an obvious, if somewhat *ad hoc*, effort at a comparative phenomenological analysis. Hume continues on to say that though there is indeed a "species of approbation attending even inanimate objects, when beneficial, yet this sentiment is so weak, and so different from that which is directed to beneficent magistrates or statesmen; that they ought not to be ranked under the same class or appellation." And, finally, a more general phenomenological point: "A very small variation of the object, even where the same qualities are preserved, will destroy a sentiment. Thus, the same beauty, transferred to a different sex excites no amorous passion, where nature is not extremely perverted."

Two significant points emerge from this discussion, and are in fact found throughout Hume's discussions of the moral sentiment and moral distinctions.

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[3]Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* selections in *British Moralists 1650–1800,* vol. 2, ed. D. D. Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 246.

Chapter 4

HANNAH ARENDT: THE CARE OF THE WORLD AND OF THE SELF

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Hannah Arendt was born in 1906 in Kant's city, then called Königsberg, in East Prussia. (For her life, see Elizabeth Young-Bruehl's 1982 biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*). Whereas for her family and many of the five thousand Jews in Königsberg Moses Mendelssohn was the exemplary social and cultural figure, the Social Democrat and Reform Rabbi Hermann Vogelstein was the religious and political leader. Arendt as a little girl had a crush on Vogelstein. After learning of some of the complexities of a secular Jewess marrying a Rabbi, this little girl was led to remark: "I will marry a rabbi with pork." (When older she proclaimed to the rabbi that she no longer believed in God, and he replied, "And who asked you?") In her teens she was fascinated with Kierkegaard and when sixteen she read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Karl Jasper's *Psychology of Worldviews*.

Although she studied with Husserl and Heidegger (who, when she was eighteen, was her lover), Jaspers was her lifetime friend and mentor. "I am sort of a phenomenologist...but, ach, not in Hegel's way, or Husserl's." Like Jaspers she was always suspicious of philosophical schools and movements. In 1929, under Jasper's direction but also somewhat under Heidegger's influence, she completed her dissertation on *St. Augustine's Concept of Love*. In the same year she married the leftist philosopher Günther Stern (Anders) and then later (1940), as a refugee in Paris, the psychiatrist Heinrich Blücher.

The eighteen years in which she was a "stateless person," i.e., from 1933 until her receipt of American citizenship in 1951, decisively shaped her philosophical reflections. Before this time she was involved unofficially in Germany with Jewish underground, Zionist, and Communist causes. This led to her arrest but her lucky release by a Nazi officer ("a charming fellow") who was fascinated by her. The Sterns fled to France where she worked to help Jewish refugees.

Throughout her life she was in conversation with, if not a friend of, many of the leading European and American intellectuals, artists, and poets of the 20th century and her writings were a lightning rod for many of the most controversial

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political-theoretical issues, such as Zionism, totalitarianism, student revolutions, and civil rights. She died in New York, December 4, 1975.

This paper will present Arendt's ethical theory as inseparable from her phenomenology of thinking as well as from her phenomenological ontology of politics. The context and occasional foil of the presentation will primarily be Husserlian phenomenology, wherein being and display to the transcendental ego are the inseparable moments of the philosophical field.

1. Phenomenality and Thinking about What Appears

Let us begin with Arendt's own words:

> In this world which we enter, appearing from a nowhere, and from which we disappear into a nowhere, *Being and Appearing coincide*.... Seeming—the it-seems-to-me, *dokei moi*—is the mode, perhaps the only possible one, in which an appearing world is acknowledged and perceived.... (LM 1, 19, 21)[1]

> For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality. (HC, 50)

With the abolishing of the true world-in-itself beyond appearances, Arendt may say with Nietzsche (and somewhat in the spirit of Husserl) that we do not have the merely apparent one remaining. With the modern destruction of the metaphysical as the unappearing base for what appears, we have an opportunity for a restoration of the coincidence of reality and appearance or being and display. Yet this opportunity is in grave jeopardy because not only has modernity provided us with massive motivation to be uneasy with what appears and to prefer the unconscious, occluded, non-visible cause of what appears, but modernity has also replaced our own seeing for ourselves with the represented and mediated account by experts of what appears.

The efforts by ancient as well as modern scientists and philosophers to seek beyond appearances for the hidden grounds of the appearances is tied to an ancient belief that the hidden causes enjoy a higher rank than what meets the eye, that the surfaces of things are less significant than their hidden depths. But the underlying truth to be dis-closed *(alētheia)* can only be another phenomenon, originally hidden but supposedly of a higher order. The demotion of appearing to mere appearance leads inevitably to violence toward the appearing appearances and an interfering with them while still depending on them. No dissipation of an error or illusion, no

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[1] See the list of abbreviations at the end of the chapter for frequently cited works.

disillusioning or breakup of an appearance, occurs without a new appearing (LM 1, 26).

The fundamental conviction behind the modern temptation to see every view as ideology is that the world we live in is ruled by secret forces; everything is merely appearance and what appears in appearances is not truth but deception; the task of those liberated from ideology is to uncover the secret conspiracy. Nihilism is a progression of this suspicion insofar as it maintains that nothing is as it appears to be and everything can become what I make it.[2] These views are to be contrasted with Arendt's own, which, although skeptical toward metaphysics, resoundingly affirms "common sense's" disclosure of the common world. The Greeks whom Arendt appropriates believed that the criterion of being is appearance, and Machiavelli retrieves something of this when he urges the prince to disdain goodness as something apart from action, e.g., interiority and authenticity, because such a view separates being and appearing. Socrates also fought this tension by joining being and appearing: we are to appear as we are, and the criterion of appearance is how I am (appear) to myself even in the recesses of my soul; self-manifestation owes everything to how I exist in and through my action. Therefore, there is nothing of "mere appearances," there is only being and outright deception.[3]

Who we are for ourselves is inseparably tied to our intersubjective being—even though, as we shall see, there is the radically isolating phenomenon of conscience. The first-person plural dative of manifestation ("to us") is founding for the singular nominative ("I") as well as the singular accusative ("me") and singular dative of manifestation ("to me"). That is, the *cogito* can appear only if it is in the world for us all. The transcendental I, *pace* Husserl, can never suffice to guarantee reality because for Arendt the *ego cogitans* is evident, i.e., for us all, only through its speech, "which presupposes auditors and readers as its recipients" (LM 1, 19–20).

This claim for the radically intersubjective nature of appearing stands in tension with another kind of manifestation, a non-worldly self-awareness, of all my acts in their presencing of the world. I am aware not only of the world, but of my presentation of the world. Consciousness is not primarily an existing among others,

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[2]See the unpublished Course on Totalitarianism, 024122–024124. I wish to thank Professors Thomas Nenon and Lester Embree for permission to use and quote from the microfilm of Hannah Arendt's *Nachlass* in the Archival Repository of The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology at the University of Memphis. I do not pretend to have exhausted the full richness of her *Nachlass;* not only are ethical themes ubiquitous in all her writings, but the illegibility of some of the texts available on the Archival microfilm means that scholars will have to reconstruct original manuscript material. I also want to thank Gregory Desjardins, Ullrich Melle, John Drummond, and Lester Embree for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[3]From the unpublished Lectures on Morality (New School, 1965), 024616.

but rather it is, as Kant put it, an awareness "not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am" (LM 1, 43–45, 74–75; KRV, B157). In another place, Kant perhaps inconsistently provided himself with a basis for the "thing-in-itself": "In the consciousness of myself in the sheer thinking activity I am the thing itself although nothing of myself is thereby given for thought" (KU, B429; LM 1, 42). This awareness that "I am" or "I am I" is unitary (= One) and not yet a question of the moral, willing, or thinking self that is essentially a duality (Two-in-One) because it is self-reflexive.[4]

Just as there is no willing unless the will first wills itself to will, so in thinking I am conscious, *syneidenei,* i.e., I am alone *with* myself and thus not alone as bereft of others and the world. In my straightforward involvement with the world through conscious acts I am on the verge of an explicit reflexivity with myself. Thinking is this explicit being in conversation with myself, which is an absenting of the world, a "stop and think," by which the manifest world is absented from the mind's drift and I am taken up with my way of presencing the world. The worldly manifestation of thinking is absent-mindedness, where someone displays to others obvious disregard for the surrounding appearing world (LM 1, 72).

Thus we are for the most part in the natural attitude, i.e., in the world with others taken up with the things and events of the world. But because there is never a total obliviousness of the self to itself, because it is always on the verge of a full-scale reflexivity as long as the act or activity lasts, we have the fundamental capacity to think. And this is always a withdrawal from the world. In this attitude we are no longer concerned with how we appear to others, but with the meaning of what is. By "meaning" Arendt does not mean primarily the verbal sense of mental acts (as "to mean," "I mean," etc.), nor what is meant in those acts, nor Fregean senses distinct from referents. Rather, "meaning" refers to thinking's "distillations, products of de-sensing, and such distillations are not mere abstract concepts; they were once called essences" (LM 1, 199). This is by no means a commitment to essences as ontological entities, but rather to necessary distinctions (distinctions we all must make) and to what is essential as distinguished from what is adventitious. Because the thinking I moves among these generalizations squeezed out from particulars, it is at home in no place or time; it is a view from nowhere. "Meaning," properly speaking, i.e., thematized as such, only is in the reflective turning to our thoughtful presentations of the world.

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[4]See the unpublished Lecture on "Thinking," 027549–027550. Arendt on some occasions seems to deny that there is anything like a non-reflexive manifestation of consciousness to itself; I have chosen to emphasize some passages where such non-reflexiveness is acknowledged, and which brings her closer to transcendental phenomenology.

Our being in the world in the natural attitude includes a passion for knowing and truth. Truth is what we are compelled to admit by reason of sense perception or by the way our brain is hard-wired, i.e., by way of logic and mathematics (LM 1, 59ff.) These latter are truths rooted in the facts of the natural necessities of intellect. That is, *pace* Husserl, there is no noetic region *(Sinn-Topos)* of logical-mathematical truths that may be entertained as having a validity apart from the facts of the natural make-up of the brain—which Arendt calls here interchangeably "intellect" (LM 1, 59–61).

These assertions are for the phenomenologist surprising, especially given Arendt's procedure of making essential distinctions that highlight the necessary conditions of human life. Her position that "there are no truths beyond and above factual truths" and that thinking in itself, and not employed as an instrument of knowing, is not concerned with truth but with meaning, implies that her own work of meaning-clarification has little or nothing to do with truth. And when it seemingly uncovers logical-essential necessary truths, we must discount these as true and account for these necessities in terms of natural facts of the brain.

For Arendt, thinking is essentially aporetic. It does not come up with permanent results, for the mind has a natural aversion to the settled conclusions from the night before; a fortiori the insights of "wise men" are not wherein it rests. It can be satisfied only through itself thinking through the insights of yesterday and winning them afresh today (LM 1, 88).

Seen from the perspective of the intersubjective public world, the person alone with his or her thoughts is bereft of the world; but the one thinking will say with Cato to the world, "never is a man more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself" (LM 1, 7–8).

The unnatural ("out of order"—LM 1, 78, 211) attitude of thinking has a distinctive quiet inasmuch as it is a withdrawal from the doing and disturbances of the world. This withdrawal may or may not be theory, in the sense of beholding the spectacle. Indeed, Arendt joins ranks with Nietzsche, Heidegger, *et alii* in dismantling metaphysics and philosophy as forms of knowing that provide us with abiding forms and principles that sustain any special claim to wisdom, contemplative enthrallment, or "immortalizing" through *noein* (LM 1, 211–212; BPF, 71–72, 287–288; EU, 432).

2. THINKING, THE PROBLEM OF EVIL, AND ETHICS

The "banality of evil" is a phrase that refers to Arendt's theory that evil deeds, committed on a monstrous scale, as in the Nazi crimes against the Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies, Slavs, and political dissidents, need not be traced back to wickedness, demonic possession, pathology, or even the ideological conviction of the agent; rather, the source of the horrendous evils in question may well lie only

Chapter 5

Simone de Beauvoir: An Existential-Phenomenological Ethics

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1. Background

Thanks to the recent efforts of feminist scholars, Simone de Beauvoir's fame as the lifelong companion of existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre is slowly giving way to a recognition of the originality of her own work as a philosopher, autobiographer, novelist, essayist, editor, and political activist. Her ethics, in particular, has received a great deal of attention, not only because she offers the first formal articulation of an existential ethics in her 1947 book, *Pour une morale de l'ambiguité* (published in English in 1948 as *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and hereafter abbreviated as EA), but also because the moral challenges she discusses there and elsewhere in her works seem as appropriate today as they were half a century ago.

Simone de Beauvoir was born in Paris on January 9, 1908. Aside from summer vacations at her relatives' homes in the French countryside as a young girl, a couple of years spent teaching in lycées outside of Paris after she obtained her *agrégation* in philosophy at the Sorbonne, and her regular travels as an adult, Beauvoir resided in Paris throughout her life and died there on April 14, 1986. As a member of the French Resistance, Beauvoir remained in Paris during the difficult years of the German Occupation, and toward the end of the war, she co-founded and co-edited with Sartre, Camus, Merleau-Ponty, and others the political journal *Les Temps Modernes*.

Beauvoir's best known philosophical work, *Le deuxième sexe* (published in English in 1952 as *The Second Sex* and hereafter referred to as SS), was first published in France by Gallimard in two volumes in 1949. In this book, Beauvoir uses an existential framework to address the question "What does it mean to *be* a woman?" Focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the situation of Western women, her text incorporates insights from a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, sociology, anthropology, and biology.

Given its fame today as a "landmark" feminist text, it is easy to forget that the initial public reception of *The Second Sex* was far from positive. Indeed, the text

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was sharply criticized by the media and by some of Beauvoir's own colleagues for the unconventionality of its subject matter as well as for the brutally frank condemnations Beauvoir offers of such venerated social institutions as marriage and motherhood. American feminists in the 1960s such as Betty Friedan took Beauvoir to task for her repeated assertion that the housewife leads an immanent existence, but these same women were nonetheless strongly influenced by her work, as have been the generations of feminist scholars that followed them.

After the controversy surrounding the publication of *The Second Sex,* Beauvoir decided to stop writing philosophy and turned her attention exclusively to literature. Philosophy, however, was never left behind. Her literary works develop the implications of central existential themes such as intersubjectivity, freedom, responsibility, death, and deception. Interestingly, Sartre claimed that she was the better philosopher of the two of them, while she claimed to prefer Sartre's literature to his philosophy.

In the 1990s, there has been what can legitimately be called a Beauvoir "renaissance." New generations of feminist scholars have been attracted to her work, not merely for its significant historical interest, but also because of her provocative analyses of gender, race, sexuality, and class oppression. Despite her protestations that her ideas were an extension of Sartre's and not original in their own right, recent Beauvoir scholars have shown the ways in which she departs from a Sartrean framework and, in so doing, extends the possibilities of existential-phenomenological thought.

By examining Beauvoir's ethics as it is explicitly presented in her early work and then turning to its nuanced development in her later work, we can best appreciate her sophisticated understanding of the ambiguities that characterize human existence from one moment to the next, ambiguities that nonetheless demand an unambiguous, ethical response.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTERPRETATION

With the recent surge of interest in Beauvoir's oeuvre, it should not surprise us if special attention has been paid to her ethics. After all, concerns about the responsibilities we have to ourselves, to others, and to our shared situation extend throughout her work. Moreover, one of her best-known philosophical texts, *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* seeks to provide a concrete analysis of the ongoing demands of an ethical life. But despite the serious attention Beauvoir gives to the ethical dimensions of human existence—dimensions that cut to the very heart of our being with and for others—the ethics she offers often raises more questions than it answers.

Commentators have provided various readings of Beauvoir's ethics. These readings have appropriately focused not only on *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* but also

on other texts that take up ethical issues, such as *Pyrrhus et Cinéas* (1944) with its discussion of the inevitability of violence and oppression and *The Second Sex* with its focus on the constraints placed upon women's freedom by their existence within, and subjection to, a set of interlocking patriarchal social systems. Yet despite this interest in the ethical implications of her work, there has been relatively little agreement among Beauvoir's commentators about what the central claims of her ethics are, or even about the role women, men, society, and women's own bodies play in an individual's possibilities for living ethically. A point on which there is relative agreement, however, is that for Beauvoir the ethical cannot be restricted to a separate sphere of existence, since ethical issues underlie all of the projects in which we engage. In other words, we cannot view the ethical as coming into play only on some occasions and not others, since it concerns the very manner in which we live our bodies, our relations with others, and our situations. This point of consensus has given rise to alternative readings, however, precisely because the ethical informs and is informed by all of the other key concepts that motivate Beauvoir's work, including transcendence, immanence, choice, commitment, freedom, oppression, consciousness, the body, the Other, and the situation.

One's understanding of the specific moral challenges posed by Beauvoir's conception of the ethical depends, I would argue, upon which aspect of human existence one takes as a starting point for one's analysis. For instance, if one begins from the standpoint of freedom and transcendence, two seemingly essential requirements for ethical existence for Beauvoir as well as for Sartre, then one's emphasis will be placed on how specific individuals can realize what Beauvoir calls "moral freedom." By contrast, if one focuses on the ethical demands placed upon us by the existence of others, then the emphasis will shift from the subjective to the intersubjective domain.

The consequences of emphasizing the subjective dimensions of freedom rather than its intersubjective dimensions (or vice versa) can be quite serious. For if one concentrates too narrowly on those places where Beauvoir describes freedom as the transcendence of the givens of one's own situation, the danger is that her ethics appears to be too solipsistic since the attainment of moral freedom appears to be a purely individual project. On the other hand, if one concentrates too heavily on the passages where she emphatically maintains that one's freedom cannot be achieved unless others are also free, then freedom (and an ethical existence) seems impossible to achieve, since millions of oppressed peoples continue to exist in the world. Rather than privilege one domain at the expense of the other, it is essential to appreciate that for Beauvoir, attaining one's moral freedom is never merely an individual project, but always a social and political project as well. Thus the very project of "willing one's freedom" always occurs within a broader context in which my freedom both enables and is enabled by, constrains and is constrained by, the freedom of others.

To do justice to the ways in which "willing one's freedom" is both an individual and a collective project, let us begin by examining Beauvoir's ethics, first from the standpoint of what she, following Sartre, calls being-for-itself, and then from the standpoint of what both call being-for-others. After examining these two dimensions of her ethics, I will address another of Beauvoir's ethical concerns that has hitherto received relatively little attention, namely, the relationship between morality and deception.

3. Freedom and Facticity

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* Beauvoir repeatedly suggests that the exercise of moral freedom involves an affirmation of our transcendence in the face of the continual constraints offered by others, by the contingencies of the situation, and by the demands of our own bodies. In some of the most famous early passages from this text, the Sartrean tension between the transcendence associated first and foremost with the consciousness of the for-itself and the immanence associated with the materiality of the in-itself is explicitly invoked. "The goal which my freedom aims at," Beauvoir tells us, "is conquering existence across the always inadequate density of being" (EA, 30).

My transcendence only becomes meaningful, for Beauvoir, if it is positively assumed through a concrete engagement with the givens of the situation. The situation therefore provides the content as well as the context for an ethical existence, but my ability to detach myself consciously (through reflection) from my situation in order to evaluate the possibilities it presents to me is absolutely essential to the ethical "justification" of my existence. On this account, the situation provides a necessary obstacle to my freedom. The situation is necessary because it forces me to engage my freedom concretely, which is the only way in which my freedom can become meaningful to myself and to others. It is also an obstacle because my freedom must triumph over the constraints the situation places upon the realization of my projects. As a necessary obstacle, however, there is always a danger that the situation will triumph over me, and that I will fail to transcend it but will instead become mired in its immanence.

Beauvoir herself recognizes this possibility. She describes it as contributing to the constant threat of failure that haunts my existence from one moment to the next. For as Beauvoir makes clear, there are not one but many ways to fail: "one may hesitate to make oneself a lack of being, one may withdraw before existence, or one may falsely assert oneself as being, or assert oneself as nothingness. One may realize his freedom only as an abstract independence, or, on the contrary, reject with despair the distance which separates us from being. All errors are possible since man is a negativity, and they are motivated by the anguish he feels in the face of his freedom. Concretely, men slide incoherently from one attitude to another" (EA, 34).

Undoubtedly, these are all very different kinds of failures, and Beauvoir goes on to discuss them through the examples she provides of the subman, the serious man, the nihilist, and the adventurer. The subman clings to his facticity, thereby failing to recognize and act upon his transcendence, while the serious man's unquestioning acceptance of a set of fixed values absolves him of the need to take responsibility for them. The nihilist responds to the anxiety of his freedom by attempting to *be* nothing (EA, 52). The adventurer comes closest to living ethically because the meaningfulness of his actions flows from the commitments he has made to them, but he operates too solipsistically to be granted ethical standing unless he wills the freedom of others at the same time that he wills his own freedom.

In all these examples, with the exception of the adventurer, the individual's failure to become ethical is directly due to his failure to live the tension between freedom and facticity; instead of affirming this tension as an inescapable feature of human existence, he tries to resolve it by negating his freedom (subman), by negating his facticity (nihilist), or by sacrificing his freedom to a self-created facticity (the serious man). The adventurer alone does justice to both his freedom and his facticity, but he too fails if he does not recognize that his own freedom depends upon his securing the freedom of others.

The failure of the adventurer is qualitatively different from the failures of these others because it highlights the indispensable role the Other plays in determining the ethicality of my existence. Indeed, the limitations of viewing the tension between freedom and facticity as the sole ground for Beauvoir's ethics is revealed especially poignantly at this point in her discussion. Before moving on to discuss the possibilities and failures associated specifically with the Other, however, it is important to take stock of what is at stake in Beauvoir's depiction of ethical existence as seeking to affirm freedom as an "absolute end" over and against the factical demands of the situation.

Precisely because this account is so Sartrean, understanding the ethical primarily as an exercise of transcendence over the immanent aspects of existence exposes Beauvoir to the same criticisms Sartre faced regarding the dualist ontology of *L'être et le néant* (translated into English as *Being and Nothingness* and hereafter abbreviated as BN). Not merely the situation as such, but also the individual's own body is relegated to the sphere of immanence that threatens, if one's will is not strong enough, to lead one to abandon the movement of transcendence. Indeed, the claims Beauvoir makes about women's bodies, for instance, in "The Data of Biology" chapter of *The Second Sex,* frequently relegate their bodies to the status of immanent objects that represent an ongoing threat to their transcendence as this latter is apprehended both by the individual herself and by others.

It is paradoxical, Beauvoir observes, that female members of the species that is the most independent and individualized are also the most enslaved by the