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***Gottwerdung* and Moral Responsibility
Towards a Revaluation of Max Scheler's Late Metaphysics**

INTRODUCTION

Although Max Scheler (1874-1928) was seen by many of his contemporaries as one of the most important intellectual forces in European philosophy, the interest in Scheler's thought rapidly decreased soon after his death. In general, Scheler's philosophy has received little attention, at least not the attention one would think worthy of a major intellectual force in philosophy. One could refer here to Hans-Georg Gadamer, who, rather sharply, expressed his discontentment with the lack of recognition Scheler's writings receive, even in Germany. "It is almost unbelievable, but when you nowadays ask a young man about it, or even an older one, who is interested in philosophy, he hardly knows who Scheler was."¹

Scheler's later works (1922-1928) especially have been sadly misunderstood and underestimated. In these writings Scheler abandoned Catholicism and developed a panentheistic world view with an utterly original concept of God (*Gottwerdung*) which is hardly compatible with Catholicism. As far as I am concerned, most attempts to explain this metaphysical swing in Scheler's thought and to grasp its essence and significance, seem to have been rather unsuccessful. This can partly be ascribed to the fact that most readers and critics of Scheler were immensely disappointed that Scheler broke with the Catholic Church. For about a decade, Scheler had been the most important German Catholic philosopher. His influence and intellectual authority were such that many people converted to Catholicism after reading his writings.²

One can understand how disappointed many were in Scheler's "metaphysical swing" towards panentheism, and the emotional reactions it provoked severely hindered any objective analysis of Scheler's *Späte Schriften* (*Late Writings*). They were immediately dismissed as inferior to anything he had written before and the reasons for this alleged qualitative decline in Scheler's thought were solely sought in Scheler's private life. Jan Nota for example, one of the experts on Scheler, described Scheler's ideas of this period as cold and methodologically unsatisfactory in comparison with his earlier works, and like many critics, argued that Scheler's turbulent private life and "sexual activities" (Scheler wanted a divorce from his second wife, while the divorce from his first wife had already caused a huge scandal) were to be held responsible for this. This was the *communis opinio* of most readers of Scheler's writings, as is illustrated in Louis De Raeymaeker's comments on Scheler's abandonment of Catholicism, saying Scheler had done so "not because of reasons of a philosophical kind [but that Scheler] felt obliged to adapt his system to his loose life."³

Furthermore, it has always been *bon ton* to describe Scheler as an inconsistent, rather impulsive thinker, who changed his views from one day to the next. His drastic parting from Catholicism was therefore dismissed as an impulse. Dietrich von Hildebrand, Howard Becker,

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Max Scheler: Der Verschwender', in *Max Scheler im Gegenwartsgeschehen der Philosophie*, ed. by Paul Good (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1975), pp. 11-18 (p.11). (Translations in this article are from the author herself.)

² The most well known example of this is of course Edith Stein, who had known Scheler personally, and sketched a beautiful portrait of the man in her diaries.

³ Louis De Raeymaeker, *De filosofie van Scheler* (Mechelen: Het Kompas, 1934), pp. 26-27.

and many others have all attributed Scheler's metaphysical change to "some inadequacy of the man himself."⁴

In any case, it was generally assumed that Scheler did not have good reasons for his metaphysical swing, and that his reasons were not of a philosophical kind. This negative evaluation of Scheler's *Späte Schriften* is not only characteristic of Scheler's Christian contemporaries and critics. Martin Buber critically commented upon Scheler's metaphysical swing as "one of the countless gnostic attempts to strip the mystery from the biblical God,"⁵ and some of the most important contemporary connoisseurs of Scheler's philosophy have criticized these writings in a remarkably sharp way, albeit that their rejection of Scheler's late metaphysics had nothing to do with any moralizing judgments about Scheler's private life. Eugene Kelly, for example, wrote in his praiseworthy *Structure and Diversity* that he has "never forgiven Scheler for this late turn to metaphysics,"⁶ even characterizing this late turn as "ultimately misbegotten."⁷

I will argue in this article that Scheler's last writings are certainly not necessarily less valuable than his earlier works. First, I will try to prove that Scheler's *Späte Schriften* are in remarkable concordance with his earlier writings, at least from the perspective of his ethical views and system, and certainly do not represent such a dramatic rupture as is often put forth by those who have never been able "to forgive" him for his metaphysical swing. The main part of this article will therefore consist of an analysis of the moral implications that are inherent in Scheler's renewing concept of God, as it is obvious that Scheler's concept of *Gottwerdung*, central in his late metaphysics, does not leave morality untouched. I will stress the fact that these moral implications remarkably coincide with the core of Scheler's earlier ethical system, as developed in his magnificent *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik (Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values)*. Furthermore, Scheler's *Späte Schriften* are not only compatible with the essence of his earlier ethics, but there is also a great consistency in them, even though they are often characterized as merely a collection of distinct essays. Scheler's so-called *metanthropology* accords with his political, epistemological and ethical views. It is beyond doubt that the recognition of this internal and overall consistency of Scheler's writings leads to a better comprehension and fuller appreciation of Scheler's latest creative period.

Secondly, and more generally, I will try to explain why Scheler changed his metaphysical views. As I have already indicated, some say this is due to his turbulent private life and sexual activities. It has been said that Scheler's new metaphysical conception in fact mirrors Scheler's own powerlessness in the face of his own sexual urges. I find this criticism rather disrespectful. It does not explain Scheler's swing. Nor does the alleged 'innate philosophical inconsistency' of Scheler explain his profound change of thought.

GOD AND MORALITY: From Ethics to Metaphysics

a) An anthropocentric concept of God

⁴ Peter H. Spaader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 177.

⁵ Martin Buber, 'The Philosophical Anthropology of Max Scheler', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 6 (1945), 307-321 (p. 313).

⁶ Eugene Kelly, *Structure and Diversity: Studies in the Phenomenological Phenomenology of Max Scheler* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), p. 195.

⁷ Kelly, p. 176.

Before I can advance to an analysis of how Scheler's new metaphysical position related to his earlier writings, I will briefly outline the essence of this new position, which Scheler elaborated above all in *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (*The Place of Man in the Cosmos*), which also echoes several other of his later writings. The work starts with a digression on the distinction between the nature of man and that of animals; a digression which is perhaps not very interesting and remains rather speculative. However, bearing in mind that Scheler was often regarded as an inconsistent thinker, it is important to notice how this digression in fact reflects Scheler's everlasting interest in defining the nature and place of man, and that it not only relates to his anthropological, but also, as I shall further demonstrate, to his metaphysical and ethical views.

Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos becomes more interesting when Scheler relates the distinction he made between two primal principles – a powerless *Geist* (*Spirit*) and a powerful *Trieb* (*Force*) – to the relationship between God and man. According to Scheler, it is not God who *delivers* us from evil, but it is man who has to *deliver* God from the eternal tension between Force and Spirit. Only man – as an acting person (*Aktivvollziehendes Wesen*) – can realize a mutual penetration of these two universal attributes and God is the outcome of this penetration. God is realized by and through man (*Gottwerdung*). God is not, until he is set free by man.

“The primal relationship between man and *Weltgrund* consists in the fact that this *Weltgrund* realizes itself directly in man. The place of this self-realization [...] is man. The human self and the human heart is the place of God's becoming (*Ort der Gottwerdung*).”⁸

Scheler explicitly refutes the idea of man as God's slave or subject. Man is God's *Mitbildner*, His “co-creator” or “co-builder”. That is in short the essence of Scheler's metaphysics and concept of *Gottwerdung*. The main bone of contention for Catholic readers was of course the idea that God is in Himself incomplete as his existence and fulfilment would have to depend on what people do. Johannes Hessen, who wrote a very good introduction to Scheler's thought, has nicely expressed the immense gulf between such a concept of God and that of traditional theisms.

“Every kind of God who is Himself incomplete, and yearns for completion and salvation, is all too human to be a God. It is the model of *Faust* in a macrocosmic expansion. Such a God is not the God of the real religious consciousness.”⁹

b) The origins of the concept of *Gottwerdung*

As I have already said, many displeased Catholic critics and readers of Scheler tried to explain away Scheler's metaphysical swing and his anthropocentric concept of God by a one-sided “psychologizing” of his philosophy, as if nosing in Scheler's private life was the only way to understand his thoughts. This tendency is for example very evident in Nota's interpretation of the powerful *Trieb* and the powerless *Geist* in Scheler's metaphysics as merely a metaphysical reflection of Scheler's inability to resist his own sexual urges. Such “psychologizing” has no doubt contributed to the general devaluation of Scheler's philosophy after his death, as the arguments of philosophers whose world views depend on their own libido, generally do not seem very convincing.

⁸ Max Scheler, ‘Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos’, in: *Späte Schriften*, by Max Scheler (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1976), pp. 7-71 (p. 70.).

⁹ Johannes Hessen, *Max Scheler: Eine kritische Einführung in seine Philosophie* (Essen: Von Chamier, 1948), p. 126.

Of course, it does not show much respect for Scheler as a philosopher to claim that he changed his metaphysics, in such a fundamental way as he did, due to merely personal (and above all sexual) motives. Anyone who takes Scheler seriously as a philosopher, must assume that he must have had good philosophical reasons for abandoning traditional theism by formulating a panentheistic concept of God.

When Scheler first asked Hessen what he thought of his new concept of God, Hessen uttered all sorts of doubts and strongly criticized the concept itself. "However, such consideration could not seriously alter Scheler's belief in his new convictions, as they were too deeply rooted in the depth of his being."¹⁰ A similar idea was also put forth by Peter Spader in his very insightful *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*. Spader argues that Scheler's metaphysical change was in fact the logical consequence of his consistency as a moral philosopher. Change was the necessary result of Scheler's "ethical concerns".

Although Spader correctly argues that Scheler's ethical beliefs caused his metaphysical swing towards panentheism, I do not entirely agree with Spader when he claims that it was more precisely the problem of evil that caused this swing. Spader argues that Scheler's ethical system did not allow him to give an answer to the question of why so much evil resides in the world, without entirely altering his metaphysical position.

"This [problem of evil] is, of course, a problem for any theism, but given Scheler's ethical beliefs in the moral role of the infinite person and the connection between the moral values of the person and the realization of high and low nonmoral values, it was particularly devastating for Scheler's ethics."¹¹

Such a statement seems rather bold: Spader says in fact that Scheler's ethical system in *Der Formalismus* does not allow for an explanation of the problem of evil, without dramatically changing metaphysical positions, as if one could not acknowledge Scheler's value theory as a Roman Catholic; an assumption that has been rejected by many Catholic readers of *Der Formalismus*. At the time this book inspired several German Catholic theologians, such as Tillman (*Die Idee der Nachfolge Christi*) and Schmidt (*Organische Asseze*), and it exerted a great influence on Karol Wojtyla.¹²

I agree with Spader that the foundation of Scheler's new metaphysics is to be sought in Scheler's ethics, but disagree that "the problem of evil" can explain Scheler's metaphysical swing or that it was in any way a substantial cause of its development. Moreover, Scheler never dealt with the problem of evil that extensively and never suggested that the problem of evil caused his metaphysics to change, as Spader admits.¹³

c) The Primacy of Ethics

If one wishes to detect a causal relationship between Scheler's ethical beliefs and his metaphysical shift, it makes sense to take into account the considerations that are central to Scheler's ethics. Yet, it is not easy to determine what those considerations exactly are.

¹⁰ Hessen, p. 127.

¹¹ Spader, p. 187.

¹² Wojtyla argued, in his *Habilitationsschrift* as well as in several short essays, that Scheler's attempt to construct a philosophical *Grundlegung* for a Christian, personalist ethics was not entirely successful, and pointed to some important dissimilarities between Scheler's views on love, *model persons* (like Jesus Christ), and moral obligation on the one hand and Christian ethics and the Gospel on the other. It must be noticed that Wojtyla's interpretation of Scheler is not always entirely correct, although this does not alter the fact that Scheler exerted a great influence on the philosophical development of the man who was to become Pope John Paul II.

¹³ Spader, p. 191.

Scheler's oeuvre is a labyrinth of thoughts, in which one can easily get lost, due to the fact that he wrote so much, and did not always structure his thoughts thoroughly (although he more than once promised to do so).

However, at least three aspects of Scheler's ethics seem to hold a prominent place and are relevant here: the human person, the human (moral) act and human responsibility. It is fair to say that those three themes form the core of his ethical system, not as distinct moral or philosophical phenomena, but as three parts of a close-knit unity.

Der Formalismus offers a hierarchical theory of values. Moral values are realized *on the back of* non-moral values. There is, according to Scheler an objective hierarchy of non-moral values and moral values are realized whenever one chooses to realize a higher non-moral value (for example intellectual development) instead of a lower one (for example pleasure). In this theory, the importance of man, the human person is enormous: man has to create, so to say, the Good. The human person is *the* locus of morality. The human person, defined by Scheler as an acting person, an act-accomplishing being (*aktvollziehendes Wesen*), occupies a central place. The human person is the place where moral values see the light of day. The Good occurs when the human person voluntarily chooses to perform these acts which he assumes are of a higher (non-moral) order than their (non-moral) alternatives.

Moral values always depend on the human person and are thus explicitly defined as *Personwerte*. Scheler's *tour de force* is that he so defines moral values without slipping back into any sort of moral subjectivism. In a study of Karol Wojtyla's ethics, Rocco Buttiglione very nicely expressed the role of the human person in Scheler's thought and its general significance in the history of philosophy.

"The fundamental orientation is toward an ontology of the interior order, at the center of which is the person. The manifestation of the person and of the particular character of personal existence, within which values reveal themselves, is Scheler's great discovery."¹⁴

Scheler formulates an "immanent transcendental" ontology of values, in which transcendence is derived from an objective order of values (moral objectivism), and in which immanence results from the great stress on the human person (I would use the term "moral subjectivism" if that were not so misleading) and the human person as an *acting* person. The latter gives this ethical system and ontology of values an utmost dynamic character. It is, I would like to remark, no coincidence that philosophers like Nikolaj Berdjajev, Karol Wojtyla and Vladimir Jankélévitch, who were all acquainted with Scheler's writings, have formulated a dynamical ethical theory in which a similar emphasis on the human person and act can be found. All these philosophers formulate an ethical theory in which man is confronted with an enormous moral responsibility and autonomy.

Due to the emphasis Scheler puts on the human act in order for morality to exist, this morality has an unmistakable dynamic character. The essence of morality lies in its being performed, which is why it seems correct to describe Scheler's ethical system as a *Philosophie der Tat*; it is an active philosophy which does not neglect the importance of the will (intention), but which stresses the importance of "the human act" in the genesis of moral values. The Good is not, until it is done.

¹⁴ Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), p. 92.

It requires both *Gesinnung* and *Handlung*, the mere act of willing needs to be connected with a concrete willingness and ability to act. A child may be willing that the stars drop from the sky into its own hands, Scheler states, but this pure act of willing does not tell us anything about the active realization of moral values, which requires an actual willingness and ability to perform moral acts (*Tunwollen* and *Tunkönnen*). Essential to the moral development and elevation of man – to the ontological and axiological existence of moral values – is the acting person. “The primary phenomenon, which characterizes all spiritual maturing, is a continuous reference of the will to the sphere of acting (*die Sphäre des Tunlichen*).”¹⁵ The moral and spiritual nature of man depends on the ability to evolve from a mere act of willing to a concrete act of doing good. This is where man can testify to his goodness and virtue, for Scheler defines virtue as the *tatbereite und tatfähige Gesinnung*, again stressing the moral meaning of the human person and his agency.¹⁶

The dynamical concept of morality, as Scheler himself indicated in the preface to the third edition of *Der Formalismus*, led Scheler to rethink his metaphysics. One could indeed wonder to what extent Scheler’s dynamical concept of morality was compatible with a more traditional concept of God as the primary source of moral values and even as the fundamental instigator of man’s moral acts.¹⁷ How does a static concept of an almighty God relate to a dynamical conception of morality in which the human person is the locus of moral values? How does this relate to man’s moral responsibility and autonomy, and Scheler’s aversion to any sort of moral slavery and suppression? Obviously these questions bothered Scheler much, and in *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* he explicitly expressed his rejection of the idea of man as God’s slave or subject. Here we seem to come to the specific point where Scheler implicitly acknowledges how his ethics and new metaphysics meet.

“Man appears in proportion to the structure of society as *a slave of God*, to whom he kneels by means of guile and humble prostration, seeking to move Him by petition and threat or with magic means. [...] All similar ideas must be rejected in the light of our philosophical endeavours relating the relationship between Man and the primal Ground of everything. And we have to reject it therefore, because we do not accept the theistic presupposition of a spiritual, almighty personal God.”¹⁸

In order fully to affirm his ethical views on man’s moral responsibility and autonomy, Scheler used a different kind of metaphysical framework from those offered by traditional theisms. He tried to formulate a metaphysical framework which affirmed his ethical views, and it is consequently no coincidence that indeed many of the earlier writings and ethical views can be found in the renewing and controversial metaphysics of Scheler’s *Späte Schriften*. The anthropological quest for the definition and moral value of the human person is, as it had always been, the driving force of Scheler’s thought, and the Schelerian leitmotifs of love, knowledge, self-realization, and so on, so central in this quest, are still manifestly at the fore after Scheler’s metaphysical swing.

¹⁵ Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik: Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1966), p. 141.

¹⁶ Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik*, p. 144.

¹⁷ Such is for example the view of Karol Wojtyła / John Paul II who insisted that the initiative towards establishing a relationship between God and man, by example in prayer (see for example Vittorio Messori’s *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*), but also in doing good, always comes from God. The pope was certainly influenced in this regard by his analysis of the mysticism of St. John of the Cross, about whom Wojtyła wrote his doctoral thesis.

¹⁸ Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, p. 70.

Furthermore, the dynamical character of morality – so central in Scheler's ethics and in many theories formulated by those who were, to a greater or lesser extent adherents of Scheler's thought – finds its metaphysical equivalence in the concept of *Gottwerdung*. Where the human person – on the basis of Scheler's *Der Formalismus* – used to be responsible "merely" for the realization of the Good, he is now explicitly held responsible for the realization of God. "It is thus through the human person that God becomes."¹⁹

Ever greater stress is thus put on the enormous responsibility and autonomy of man, who is responsible not only for the Good, but also for God's existence. Scheler's thought is always insistent and urges us towards the realization of the Good. Scheler's philosophical struggle is perhaps above all a struggle against nihilism, moral indifference, relativism and passivity, which can all be described as forms of moral slavery (for it is only in doing good that man achieves and realizes his freedom). His ethics is a struggle against these forms of slavery, and it is no surprise that Scheler explicitly dealt with this slavery in *Der Formalismus* in a chapter entitled *The Essence of the Moral Person*, in which he puts emphasis on the significance of the person's moral autonomy and responsibility. Slavery is opposed to the core of Scheler's ethical theory like fire is to water, and lacks precisely those things Scheler calls the essence of the moral person: responsibility, autonomy, *Tunwollen* and *Tunkönnen*.²⁰

Scheler's views on the human *acting* person, his dynamical conception of morality, the Schelerian question of why people are actually motivated to do the Good (a question which is implicitly present in all his main ideas and concepts), and ultimately his concept of *Gottwerdung* relate to this struggle to preserve man's moral autonomy and responsibility. Scheler's ethics is therefore also a struggle against nihilism and moral inertia. He morally rejects man's passivity, apathy and inertia, and this is a salient feature of his entire oeuvre: from the early writings to the *Späte Schriften*. It is for example characteristic of Scheler's theory of resentment and the concept of *Ohnmacht*, which he defines as the cause of value distortions (i.e. resentment), and which he considers to be typified by Fyodor Dostoevsky's *underground man*, who is a victim of his own inertia, and whose inertia leads to his moral downfall. In his theory of resentment Scheler links a lack of interest, participation and action to moral decline, not only the person's individual moral decline but even that of society as a *Gesammperson* (collective person). "Scheler warns of the link between political apathy and the rise of despotism."²¹

Since the person's agency is indispensable in order for moral values to come into existence, inaction itself, which (though not exclusively) can be a consequence of passivity, apathy and inertia, is a severe moral problem. Scheler's theory of resentment, the value theory elaborated in *Der Formalismus* and eventually the concept of *Gottwerdung*, all entail an emphasis on the moral significance of the human person as an *aktivvollziehendes Wesen*. The concept of *Gottwerdung* as such is in line with and undergirds the entire essence of Scheler's ethics. Scheler's metaphysical swing did not entail an abandonment of the earlier ethical beliefs, but on the contrary strongly affirms these beliefs. In a way, one could conclude, that Scheler's oeuvre proves Levinas' right, when he said that the first philosophy is always ethics.

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE SPÄTE SCHRIFTEN

a) On Knowledge

¹⁹ Spader, p. 194.

²⁰ Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik*, pp. 472-475.

²¹ Zachery Davis, 'A Phenomenology of Political Apathy: Scheler on the Origins of Mass Violence', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 42 (2009), 149-169 (p. 152).

Having said this, I would like to conclude this article by emphasizing that Scheler's *Späte Schriften* are not just a collection of distinct essays. It has been said that Scheler had "degenerated" from being a real philosophical system builder (*Der Formalismus* was a voluminous work which did not leave many philosophical disciplines untouched) to a philosopher who could not structure his ideas thoroughly and therefore only continued to write short essays in which the internal consistency was seriously questioned.

If one were to recognize the internal consistency between these *Späte Schriften*, one could probably come to a better evaluation of them. First of all, it is important to realize how Scheler's ethics and renewing metaphysics were closely connected to his epistemological views. According to Scheler, man is the only living creature capable of opposing its own *Trieb*, which allows him to evolve from *Dasein* (the *existence* of things) to *Sosein* (the *essence* of these things). Simply put: man is capable of evolving from mere existence to the true essence of being, owing to the fact that man is the place where *Geist* and *Trieb* meet. The main function of the human Spirit is *Ideierung* and this specific act leads to knowledge. Scheler gives the example of pain. When man experiences pain, he can direct his *Geist* towards something that surpasses mere reality (the pain itself). He can address certain philosophical, metaphysical questions: what is the source of this experience, what is pain, what is the source of the world *überhaupt*, etc.? Why is this world like it is (*Sosein*)? After having experienced reality, man – with his *Geist* – can evolve towards a deeper insight and a higher, ontological form of knowledge.²²

This theory of knowledge is of the utmost importance in the totality of Scheler's image of God and man. Furthermore, Nota has correctly noticed that much of this theory of knowledge could already be found in the early writings, once more an indication that although Scheler rejected any theism in the end, he did not change that much as a philosopher.

The subject that knows has a certain desire to transcend reality, a desire which Scheler more than once described as (an act of) love. It is the love to direct one's *Geist* to the essence of being (*Sosein*); the love to resist or surpass *Trieb* and mere existence. This "love" makes knowledge possible, since it generates an orientation towards the substantial. According to Scheler, there are three types of knowledge, the first of which is called *Herrschaftswissen* (mastery knowledge). This is the kind of knowledge that allows people to control or structure reality: nature, society, history, etc. It is the knowledge of positive sciences, aimed at mastering reality by the use of technology and applied sciences. It is a kind of knowledge which solely focusses on *Dasein*.

A more philosophical kind of knowledge is *Bildungswissen* (cultural knowledge). This type of knowledge allows us to detach ourselves from reality and question the reasons and origins of this reality. It allows us to see through the surface of things to their essences (*Wesensschau*). Whereas *Herrschaftswissen* is aimed at changing reality, *Bildungswissen* causes the human *Geist* to change and develop. This knowledge leads to *Bildung*, *Humanisierung*, *Menschwerdung*, i.e. the moral, cultural and intellectual formation of man as a human person.

The highest form of knowledge is not directed to the development of the human person itself, but to the development of God. *Erlösungswissen* (redemption knowledge) is metaphysical and religious knowledge and obviously relates to Scheler's concept of *Gottwerdung*. When man reaches this kind of knowledge, he can truly call himself *Mitbildner* or *Mitstifter* of God and the world process. Such a man is described by Scheler as a *Total Man* (*Allmensch*) and fulfils

²² Nota, pp. 163-169.

the most beautiful and important of all tasks: the realization of God and the Good through a balanced reconciliation of *Spirit* and *Force*. Thoughts and acts are unified in harmony and this harmony leads to an eternal peace in God.

I would like to add two things here, so that Scheler's views will not be mistaken. Firstly, this eternal peace in God must not be understood as a static end point of history, but rather as a goal without finality (which is also characteristic for the philosophy of Buber, Jankélévitch, Levinas and even for Kant's *Kingdom of Ends*). It is something we ought to strive for and keep striving for. We can never come to a point where we can rest on our laurels, contemplating our lives and history in a self-congratulatory way. Such an interpretation of this eternal peace in God would be completely contradictory to the essence of Scheler's ethics, which is, as previously stated, characterized by an eternal openness and activity. In his brilliant and underestimated essay *Ordo amoris* (which can be seen as an addendum to *Der Formalismus*), Scheler states that the moral essence is only revealed in the moments we perform moral acts. Human love – as the essence of these acts – has always an infinite and incomplete character. It is a *wesensunendliche Prozess* due to the fact that every realization is only temporal. When we linger over what *is*, and fail to see what *should be*, what is still to come and to be done, love does no longer exist (once more one could keep in mind that these thoughts can also be found in the works of Jankélévitch). Love, morality, God and eternal peace all have an active, dynamic character and need to be fulfilled not once, but over and over again.

Secondly, I would like to stress that Scheler's epistemology, ethics and metanthropology do not lead to any kind of "renewed asceticism". Due to the fact that Scheler explicitly stated that one needs to surpass and transcend reality in order to realize the highest form of knowledge, many have interpreted Scheler's epistemology as a plea for ascetism and for a denial of life. Ron Perrin, for example, wrote that Scheler's "conception of the total man concludes in a new asceticism,"²³ adding that Scheler had evolved from an initial vitalism into an extreme sort of intellectualism and spiritualism in which reality is thought away. Scheler's references to Buddhism have also been understood more than once as indications of this "new asceticism". I do wish to stress that such interpretations seem to neglect the dynamic character of Scheler's ethics, and I do not see how Scheler's persistent emphasis on the human person as an acting person, who bears the responsibility to do good, can be compatible with such an asceticism.

To resume, the close relationship between knowledge and morality consists in the fact that Scheler elaborated an hierarchy of knowledge which corresponds with an hierarchy of values: the highest form of knowledge, metaphysical knowledge, is the knowledge that stimulates man towards the fulfilment of the highest and most beautiful of all moral values: *Gottwerdung*, the bringing into being of God.

b) On Politics

Although Scheler perhaps did not write any voluminous studies during the last years of his life, he was still a system builder, whose ethical views related to his metaphysics and epistemological views. Scheler's epistemological views related to his concept of *Gottwerdung*, but so did his metanthropology and ethics. The same can be said of his political views. Scheler expressed these political views in the essay *Der Mensch im Weltalter des Ausgleichs* (*Man in an Era of Adjustment*). Perrin has correctly stressed that this work, in fact

²³ Ron Perrin, *Max Scheler's Concept of the Person: An Ethics of Humanism* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991, pp. 123-124.

resumes the problem of *Spirit* and *Force* and how they can be unified, by man, in politics and society.

There are indeed many characteristics of Scheler's ethics and metaphysics which can also be found in Scheler's political views. First, these views focus entirely on the harmonization of opposing principles and attributes. It is a politics of reconciliation, harmony, and mutual understanding, and in this mirrors his metaphysics, in which the harmonization of *Geist* and *Trieb* occupies a central place. Secondly, the problem of personal and co-responsibility has once again directly and implicitly come to the fore in his political views, indicating that responsibility was not merely a pillar of Scheler's ethical theory, but also crucial in Scheler's views on politics and society. Thirdly, and more importantly, Scheler resumed the idea of a *Total Man*, who has the will, the love, the knowledge, and the motivation to do Good and realize God, in *Der Mensch im Weltalter des Ausgleichs*. His ethical and metaphysical conceptions are thus explicitly present in his political views, and ultimately determine his political goals and ideals.

Scheler's ideal of *Ausgleich* has unmistakable spiritual, philosophical, as well as social and political components, which do depend on one another. Not only do Scheler's philosophical views determine his political views. These political goals in turn are fundamental in Scheler's striving towards a cosmopolitan metaphysics. Hence, Scheler's political ideal of an *Ausgleich* is absorbed into a wider ethical goal. "That this Adjustment may lead to a rise of personal value. This is above all the purpose of all politics."²⁴

CONCLUSION

I have thus far tried to argue on the one hand how Scheler's metaphysical swing is in fact the logical outcome of his earlier ethical views, and on the other hand that Scheler's new metaphysical position was in harmony with the epistemological and political views he held in the last years of his life. I hope that this will not only lead to a better comprehension of Scheler's entire oeuvre, but also to a re-evaluation of Scheler's last writings. Scheler's oeuvre is a labyrinth of thoughts, in which one can easily get lost. An internal harmony between these thoughts and writings is therefore not always easy to find, and has given rise to the popular interpretation of Scheler as an inconsistent thinker who changed ideas too readily to be associated with any definite group of them. This popular critique seems incorrect and certainly unsatisfying when trying to explain the development of Scheler's thought.

Scheler was not an inconsistent philosopher. At the most, he was a precipitate philosopher, who could have used more time to structure his ideas more clearly. In Scheler's thought there is a remarkable ethical consistency: love, moral responsibility, the dynamics of morality (by which I mean, the realization of moral potentiality in an Aristotelian sense), the combination of sociological and phenomenological methods, anthropology and the human person, all dominate Scheler's thought: from the beginning to the end. The fact that Scheler abandoned Catholicism and changed his metaphysical views, is no sign of any inconsistency, but rather the proof of his consistency as a moral philosopher, who wished to define the human person as the locus of an ever moving and developing morality through the human act (man as an *Aktivziehendes Wesen*). This dynamic conception of value required, in the end, a dynamic concept of God (*Gottwerdung*) and that is the path that Scheler was bound, in consistency, to take.

²⁴ Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, p. 152.

Whether one agrees with Scheler's metaphysics or not, the persistent value of Scheler's thought is his critique of any form of moral slavery. Scheler was a convinced advocate of human dignity, autonomy and responsibility. Although his thought has received but little attention and seems to interest only a few people, his words have not lost any significance over the years and seem of great relevance in an era in which this dignity, autonomy and responsibility are curtailed by moral inertia, apathy and passivity. Scheler's concept of God and his concept of man both invite us to acknowledge that we cannot leave undone what has to be done.

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