

Article

Max Scheler and the Objectivity of Goodness: Towards a Phenomenology of Value

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Abstract: An analogy between goodness and color is often drawn since George Edward Moore to demonstrate the objective validity of goodness, and this way has elicited many responses. German philosopher Max Scheler also frequently analogizes goodness to color. However, his theory of the good distinguishes two approaches to claim for objective validity under the framework of fact and value, and is thus based on value theory: the goods are based on the qualities of values, while what is morally good is based on material value. From the perspective of phenomenology of value, Scheler traces the former approach back to the latter. This paper analytically exposes the reasons, progress, and problems of Scheler's grounding of the objective validity of goodness in value theory, and endeavors to clarify some misunderstandings of Scheler's conception of value in contemporary phenomenological research, as well as to highlight the intrinsic correlation of his phenomenology of value with the good life.

Keywords: Max Scheler; goodness; value; phenomenology



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1. Introduction

With regard to the theory of the good, G. E. Moore makes a very important claim in his *Principia Ethica* (Moore 1993, p. 60). That is, while the good—that which is good—is definable, good itself is indefinable; it is a simple concept, just as the color yellow is indefinable. To equate the quality of the good with other qualities of things is here considered as the “naturalistic fallacy” which opposes to explain the standard of values from the view of the fact. The consideration of the “naturalistic fallacy” further strengthens the distinction between facts and values. Moore's argument has a wide impact, but his analogy between goodness and color was logically challenged, first by Peter Geach (1956, pp. 33–43), and later by Bernard Williams (Williams 1972, pp. 38–47). They both point out that “good” could not be analogous to “color” (such as “yellow”), because “good” functions as an attributive adjective, while “yellow” is a predicative one. So, for example, we can infer from “that's a yellow bird” to “that's a bird and it's yellow”, whereas this is not a valid inference from “He's a good cricketer” to “He's a cricketer and he's good”. This logical objection to Moore further crystallizes the distinction between facts and values. It would be necessary to distinguish goodness as a type of value from the area of facts to avoid the logical error.

On this basis, John Mackie firmly denies the objectivity of goodness as a value at the beginning of his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. He holds a moral skeptic attitude that value only works in the sense of “egocentric” or “indexical” terms, or in the functional words (Mackie 1990, pp. 52–55), and that value (e.g., what is moral good) is only relevant to the context in which it is applied. This position is rejected by John McDowell (1985, pp. 110–29), who argues that the objectivity of values as secondary qualities can still be justified by analogy with color, and that it is precisely from a non-cognitivist standpoint that we could deny the objectivity of moral values.

Generally speaking, it might be a usual *modus operandi* for many philosophers to defend the objectivity of goodness as a value in terms of the analogy between goodness

and color. A similar understanding is found in the phenomenological tradition.¹ Such an analogy often appears in the writings of the German phenomenologist Max Scheler. However, his argument for the objective validity of goodness does not rely on this analogy alone. He is not satisfied with the framework of the dichotomy between values and facts, but bases goodness on his theory of value. At the same time, he endeavors to break through the framework of formal logic to discuss the concept of value, and probes the foundations of goodness as value of the person, distinguishing him from the aforementioned researchers. In this regard, Scheler's theory of the good leads to a phenomenological analysis of value.

However, how could such a theory be articulated in the perspective of phenomenological philosophy and, furthermore, respond to the above controversy over the objectivity of goodness (which is still a question that has not yet been thoroughly explored, but deserves further discussion)? To this end, the purposes of this paper are briefly (1) to elaborate two approaches to his theory of the good; (2) to analyze and explain the causes, progress, and problems of founding the objective validity of goodness on value theory; (3) to reveal and evaluate possible paths for Scheler's theory of the good to understand the problem of the dichotomy between facts and values; and (4) to clarify certain misunderstandings about Scheler's theory of value in contemporary phenomenological research, and to highlight the intrinsic relationship between a phenomenology of value and a good life.

2. Goods

There are two ways in which Scheler explores his theory of the good: one is about goods (*Güter*) related with values of the thing (Scheler 1973a, p. 12; 1980, p. 35); the other is of what is moral good, which is revealed as values of the person. To articulate the former and make it part of the latter could probably be viewed as a well-structured outline of Scheler's ethics, embodying the foundation of phenomenology of values.

As to the above example, "the bird" or "the yellow bird" and "a cricketer" are apparently in the realm of fact, but "a good cricketer" could be elaborated by Scheler's conception of goodness. In his opinion, goods are value-things (*Wertdinge*), which are different from things and thing-values (*Dingwerte*) in the practical sense or the sense of complexes (Scheler 1973a, p. 20). For example, "that bird" is the thing, and "that pretty bird" is the value-thing, i.e., the good. At this point, however, Scheler does not think that there is a thing before there is a value-thing, just as goods are assigned to things. On the contrary, he says that a good as a value-thing presents a unity of things rather than "this" thing; that is to say, "that beautiful bird" does not come from "that bird", because the latter can be "beautiful", "ugly", and so on. The question, then, is where does the unity of the things come from?

A phenomenological fact, as Scheler notes (Scheler 1973a, p. 20), is that goods are not based on things, because a good—a value-thing—can be destroyed, but a thing that represents the same object of reality remains, such as a faded work of art, or "the bird that's no longer pretty". In the same way, a thing can be divided, but a good cannot be divided; it is either destroyed or remains the same. So, what determines it is good (like "pretty")? Scheler believes that it is by the unity of value (Scheler 1973a, p. 22). Goods are completely permeated by values, and values fulfill the position of "thingness" in goods—or rather, values lay the foundation for goods. This founding approach is in terms of the order of self-givenness, which is contrary to what is understood from Husserl.²

However, the real objects that we experience in the natural world are complexes (*Sache*)³ in which the relationship between goodness and thingness is parallel. For Scheler, the complex is related to them, and more importantly functions as their medium; that is, what is given to us in the worldly experience is a thing in the realm of theory and a good in the realm of valuing and willing, while the complex as the valuable thing is neither a pure thing nor a pure good (Scheler 1973a, pp. 22, 60)⁴. The latter two are completely different, but have the same originality of givenness (Scheler 1973a, p. 21), such that they cannot both be reduced to one another in the sphere of complex. In this regard, Scheler's theory of the good is under the framework of the fact–value dichotomy. Therefore, there are no "thing-values" in the sense of complexes. For example, it is impossible for Scheler that there

is “the beauty of that bird” that could be assigned to “that bird” to obtain “that beautiful bird”. As to this, Scheler claims:

There is as little truth in the assumption that in the natural perception of the world, contents of sensations are “first given,” . . . as in the natural view of the world, a pure value-quality is “first” given (for a pure value-quality is given only insofar as it reveals a good as a good of its specific kind, and only with the specific value-nuances which belong to the structure of the good as a whole) (Scheler 1973a, p. 20).

As such, Scheler does not believe that values can be directly experienced in the sense of complexes⁵, but that it is only in the sphere of goods that values of complexes become “real” (Scheler 1973a, p. 21). In other words, it is only after the thingness in the theoretical sphere and goods in valuing and willing are given that the values we perceive in the goods can be given (Scheler 1973a, p. 60). As for the types of goods, Scheler actually divides them into the material goods (i.e., goods of enjoyment, of usefulness), the vital goods in life, and the spiritual goods (e.g., cultural goods), in contrast to which is the value or goodness that belongs to the human person (Scheler 1973a, p. 100). They function as values of complexes that, for Scheler, vary in characteristics, but could only be divided into sensible values and vital values. Then, following Scheler’s conception of goodness, how to explain or analyze the logical errors that P. Geach and B. Williams had pointed out in the logical reasoning of “good” as an adjective? This leads to Scheler’s view of what is morally good.

3. Moral Good

Now we can see that goods in the sense of complexes could make the value as a value-quality “real”, and disclose it as the unity of “thingness”, but the value-quality here is only an ideal object, merely as intended (Scheler 1973a, pp. 20–22). Its content should be given and revealed in the sense of acts (or rather, of intentional feelings) as values of the person.

Generally speaking, Scheler considers human conscious acts in a broad sense to be either spontaneous or receptive, just as thinking or feeling. The former, as an active act, includes rational cognition (such as perception and judgement), willing, desiring, and so forth. However, the latter is involved in the whole emotional life, and functions as a passive act (of course, it is an exception for the act of love). That is to say, an emotional act for Scheler could be given the content of values, so long as it acts as an intentional feeling without any individual willing and consideration, so as to be connected with the essential domain.⁶ Furthermore, all human activities are not chaotic and disorderly, but present as the unity of the essential of all acts—that is, as the value or goodness of the person.

There are different kinds of emotional activities, such as intentional feeling, preferring or placing after, and loving or hating. Through these intentional acts of emotions, the correlates of values—i.e., the concretely content of values of these acts—can be given directly. Scheler here provides a new understanding of the theory of intentionality. It is well known that Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl both regard these emotional activities as non-objectifying acts that need to be founded on objectifying acts, which are presentations (*Vorstellung*) for Brentano and judgements (*Urteilen*) for Husserl.⁷ At this point, Scheler completely reverses the foundation relation, and assumes a stance of “emotional apriorism” through which values are considered as intentional correlates directly given in the emotional life. He reveals the intentional contents of various emotional acts through the phenomenological analysis of emotions (Scheler 1973a, pp. 253–64, 328–44). (1) What is given in an intentional act is the specific material value, whose modes are various, and could be divided into sensible values and vital values (as values of complexes), and spiritual values and religious values (as values of the person). (2) What is given in preferring or placing after is not a single content of material values, but a higher or lower value. Scheler here refuses to consider this kind of act as an act of choice, for the latter is viewed as an act of cognition based on an activity of thinking (but not of feeling). (3)

What is given in loving or hating (as an active, spontaneous act), however, is the hierarchy of value.

So, it is clear that Scheler's above argument for the objectivity of goodness depends on a phenomenological analysis of emotions; thus, he endeavors to go beyond the influences of willings. However, Scheler's second approach to goodness still relies on the willing, and this kind of goodness—i.e., what is morally good—is illustrated in the foundation of his ethics. In a word, what is morally good (or evil) arises in the realization of willing to be intended as positive (or negative) values and higher (or lower) values. Just as Eiichi Shimomissé points out (Shimomissé 1971, p. 97), “moral good” is here given when one's will, as acts of realization of values, intends the positive value and actually realizes it as the higher preferred value. Accordingly, we could analyze the “moral good” in the sphere of values when related with its existence, willing, and action.

Firstly, it should be noted that Scheler sticks to founding ethics on axiology. For this reason, he thinks that it is absurd for Kant to deny the entire field of value in his ethics.⁸ However, as discussed above, the content of values given in the emotional acts is non-existent, and needs to be realized in the real world. It is also what Manfred Frings means when he says that “a value exists only when it realizes itself with a thing, with a state of affairs, or with a person” (Frings 1987, p. xxvii).

Following Franz Brentano (Scheler 1973a, p. 82), Scheler here applies the axiom of value-realization to explain how a value exists. The axiom is that the existence of a positive (negative) value is itself a positive (negative) value, while the non-existence of a negative (positive) value is itself a positive (negative) value (Scheler 1973a, p. 26).

Secondly, there is accordingly an axiom of correlating the value-existence and what is morally good (or evil) in the sphere of willing:

- (1) Good is the value that is attached to the realization of a positive value in the sphere of willing.
- (2) Evil is the value that is attached to the realization of a negative value in the sphere of willing.
- (3) Good is the value that is attached to the realization of a higher (or the highest) value in the sphere of willing.
- (4) Evil is the value that is attached to the realization of a lower (or the lowest) value in the sphere of willing.

In summary, the criterion of “good” (“evil”) thus established consists of the agreement (disagreement) of a value intended in the realization with the value of preference, or in its disagreement (agreement) with the value placed after (Scheler 1973a, p. 27). So, how to understand this criterion?

Here we can see an example from Philip Blosser (Blosser 1987, p. 140). When parents sacrifice their wellbeing for their children, they in fact place their own physical comforts after their children's education, showing a preference that the value of education (i.e., intellectual values) is higher than the value of their own material enjoyment (i.e., vital values). In this case, what is morally good arises in the willing to realize the higher, positive values of education. Moreover, it should be added that in the realization of values, what is morally good can also be shown by the intention of negatively moving towards lower values, i.e., a willing to negate the act of placing “intellectual” values after “material” values, which are lower in the hierarchy of values.

This point could also be illustrated by another example in the story of Jing Ke⁹, which took place during the Qin Dynasty of China. Before Jing Ke stabs the king of Qin, Dan—the prince of the state of Yan—supplies him with all manner of luxuries, and indulges his every wish so as to ensure his cooperation. It is said that when Jing Ke praises the beautiful hand of a girl that is playing musical instruments, Prince Dan cuts the hand off and gives it to Jing Ke. According to the theory of Scheler, through this hand (in the intentional feeling) is here given the aesthetic value, whereas in the willing of Prince Dan it might be realized as the sensible value. Thus, in this case, what is intended—or rather, what he wills (as the sensible value)—is in disagreement with what is preferred (as the aesthetic value) in the

realization of the valuable and, in the moral willing or even the moral action, the value of the person that cut off the hand of a girl is given as morally evil.¹⁰

Finally, although this example shows that moral goodness is closely associated with acts of willing, Scheler thinks that we should not, like Kant, deny the basic role of value in the concept of good, but rather regard acts of willing as the original bearer of goods. For this reason, he believes that, in addition to acts of willing, there are a large number of acts—such as acts of forgiving, commanding, obeying, promising, and so on—that are also bearers of what is morally good (Scheler 1973a, p. 29). What is even more important, however, is to recognize acts of willing in actions of morality.

For this purpose, Scheler deeply analyzes the whole process from the moral willing to the moral action and the formation of moral judgment, specifically presenting a phenomenological description of several levels that perform moral actions (Scheler 1973a, p. 121). These levels show the foundation of material values for moral values. What is morally good is thus not merely a motivation to act morally, but is related to moral behavior and actions. For this reason, he says, a paralyzed person, seeing a person drowning, has a strong will to rescue him, but has no possibility of a “willing-to-do”, and fails to achieve the “will to act”. At this time, however, a person who is not paralyzed and healthy also has the will to rescue, and acts to save the drowning man who is on the verge of death. Thus, the moral will revealed in these two situations has the same moral value, but obviously leads to completely different moral facts.

Thus, we might be faced with the following question: how could the realization of values, moral willing, and moral action be united in the revelation of what is morally good? Scheler here relates it with the values of the person.

4. Moral Good and Values of the Person

Scheler’s ethics is undoubtedly developed against the background of Kant’s philosophy, and the conception of what is morally good is accordingly articulated by contrast with Kant’s conception of what is a good will. However, Scheler thinks that Kant is quite right in rejecting to consider goods as the direct object of willing.¹¹ That is, “the realization of a certain material value is itself never good or evil” (Scheler 1973a, p. 25). In this sense, Scheler agrees with Kant’s deontological critique of empirical teleology, since both hedonism and non-hedonism in fact regard what is morally good as the direct object of willing and, thus, attempt to take empirical facts (e.g., sensual pleasure or happiness) or metaphysical-theological facts (e.g., preservation of the species or God’s command, etc.) as the basis of moral judgements.¹² The fact-based approach to the objectivity of goodness is rejected here from the very beginning. It remains true that Scheler’s theory of the good arises out of a dichotomous framework of value and fact. To this, he says “if the sphere of values is excluded in attempting to establish a common characteristic of, for example, good or evil men, we are theoretically led not only into an epistemological error but also into a moral illusion of the gravest kind” (Scheler 1973a, p. 14). However, Scheler argues that Kant, after correctly criticizing teleology, gives up the entire field of material values, which then leads him to fail to discover the field of material values as the basis of goodness. Of course, this sounds very different from the first approach to Scheler’s theory of the good.¹³ Unlike Kant’s basing of the objectivity of goodness on the will, Scheler founds it on the axiological theory, but we need to further consider the following points:

First of all, it should be noted that for Scheler, material value is not moral value. As mentioned above, moral good or evil is only given in the act of willing. On the contrary, Scheler argues that an intentional emotion or value-ception (*Wertnehmen*)—such as an act of intentional feeling, preferring or placing after, loving, or hating—is not itself morally good or evil (Scheler 1973a, p. 25). In other words, the values given in acts of intentional emotions are non-moral values, while the values given in acts of willing are moral values of the person. Furthermore, rather than arguing for a hierarchy among types of values, Scheler seems not to claim for an order of moral values (good or evil), except to distinguish absolute and relative ones (Scheler 1973a, p. 25). The relative good or evil is the value

embedded in the act of aiming towards realizing the higher or lower value mentioned above, while the absolute good or evil is the value embodied in the act of willing to realize the highest or lowest value. However, an interesting question is whether it follows from this view of Scheler, with regard to absolute evil, that a person's absolute willing to pursue sensible or material values (lowest values) is morally absolutely evil? Perhaps this could be interpreted as follows: If one absolutely or invariably aims towards sensible or material values from the personal unity of one's acting, then one must be diverged from the nature of acting as a spiritual person, and this absolute divergence (disagreement) is revealed as absolutely evil. This is actually an absolute case of the "strong" will. There is also an absolute case of the "weak" will; that is, in the act of willing, the realization of preferred values is not given the possibility of choice. In other words, it is directed to the performance of willing without choice. The moral value entailed in such an act is, in Scheler's view, the purest and most immediate good or the purest evil (Scheler 1973a, pp. 27–28). It is clear here that even in this extreme case Scheler still elaborates what is morally good in the sense of acting and, thus, distinguished definitively from the case of value-things (i.e., goods).

Second, as to the act of willing, we should note that it cannot intend moral values. The latter is revealed in an act of willing the preferred values. According to Scheler, what is morally good "can never be the content of an act of willing. It is located, so to speak, on the back of this act, and this by way of essential necessity; it can therefore never be intended in this act" (Scheler 1973a, p. 27). In other words, moral values can only be given, but not intended. What, then, is moral good? What is its bearer? There may be many bearers of goodness in the realization of willing the preferred values, such as wills, moral actions, and such moral conducts as forgiveness, obedience, promise, and so on. However, in Scheler's view, the original bearer of what is morally good is the person; that is, the aforementioned bearer of what is morally good is still nothing more than the embodiment of an essential unity of conducts, which is the spiritual personality.

Third, from the perspective of bearers, what is morally good or evil is revealed as a value of the person. Here, however, the following problem remains: what is morally good is a value of the person, while Scheler regards the religious value in the hierarchy of values as a value of the person (Scheler 1973a, p. 109), and also distinguishes between spiritual values of the person and spiritual values of things (complexes) (Scheler 1973a, p. 504). In other words, moral values, spiritual values, and religious values are all values of the person. The problem is that the latter two are non-moral values, as mentioned above, so how to explain this contradiction? Obviously, values of the person pertain to the person themselves, without any mediation (Scheler 1973a, p. 100). That is, the person is neither a thing, nor bears the essence of thingness in themselves as goods (value-things) do, but is only concerned in terms of the givenness of the essence of the person. At this point, we need to pay special attention to the essential distinction between the two approaches of Scheler's objectivity of goodness. In the sense of acts, the person is the essence of all acts, including acts of willing, which is only given, but cannot be intended. Precisely for this reason, as Scheler says, the absence of one's volitional intention of their own value could be the basis of their factual value, and values of the person might be the highest of values (Scheler 1973a, p. 507). That is, although the person is the essence of acts of willing, the latter cannot then (in turn) intend its essence (the person). Thus, in this way it could be the basis of other values. From this perspective, Eiichi Shimomissé claims that "the person is the bearer of moral values and the initiator of their actualization" (Shimomissé 1971, p. 117). However, in the sense of complexes, acts of willing play a dominant role in the field of goodness, and spiritual and religious values could be intended, but not fully fulfilled. It is only through acts of value-ception that the person can gradually be freed from their dependence on things, bodies, and circumstances, until the "unintentional willing" of the person is shown, on the basis of which we can make the distinction between spiritual values of the complex, spiritual values of the person, and religious values of the person. In fact, this is the process of phenomenological reduction, through which Scheler gradually excludes the real elements and finally reaches the self-givenness. Of course, this

self-giveness of values of the person, revealed in the field of complexes, is precisely the bearer of various specific moral values. Scheler elaborates the relation of foundation from the order of the self-giveness, and what is given first in the field of the moral willing and acting must be the foundational (i.e., self-given) essence of acts. Moreover, simply because it is independent from the fulfillment of any factual elements, the content that it discloses could be the self-giveness itself. In this regard, its material content can only be manifested, but not intended. Therefore, judgments such as “good”, “evil”, “noble”, and “base” are nothing but symbolic expressions of factual relations of power between volitional acts (Scheler 1973a, pp. 170–71).

In the end, we must return to Scheler’s theory of the good. The following question then arises: is there a connection between the goods and what is morally good? Yes, of course. Although two different ways to argue for the objectivity of goodness are shown—one in the sense of complexes and the other in the sense of acts—they are in fact both built on material values. As Scheler claims, they are still connected with one another in the sense of the material of non-moral values (Scheler 1973a, p. 27), and his connection, of course, is mainly embodied in the founding role of value theory. However, this raises the question of whether Scheler’s theory of the good is just another repetition of the Humean problem of dichotomy between values and facts. This is actually a question that merits further analysis.

5. Towards a Phenomenology of Value

Now we can answer the question raised in the beginning. As a matter of fact, Scheler once in 1914 claims that the basic problem of axiology is “through what provable facts could be fulfilled the meaning of the words such as ‘good,’ ‘evil,’ ‘noble,’ ‘elegant’ etc., which denote moral values?” (Scheler 1971, p. 382). Thus, the problem of logical reasoning issued by Geach and Williams is phenomenologically that of how to be fulfilled with facts.

For Scheler, the realm of things is value-free, and there is no such thing as good or bad. Thus, “that is a yellow bird” is a factual judgement. From this sentence we can infer that “it is a bird, it is yellow”, because through the act of judgment all of the words here can be fulfilled by factual composition. “He is a good cricketer”, however, is a value judgement. It could not follow that “he is a cricketer and he is good”, because the attributive adjective “good” in this case concerns the unity of a specific act, and the act of judging can never and will never be intended as “good” or “evil”, but can only be based on willing, acting, and the person (Scheler 1973a, p. 182). This means that the person cannot be fulfilled by the contents of facts. Thus, can those value-things (goods) be fulfilled by the material contents of facts? For example, can we infer from “that beautiful bird” to “that is a bird and it is beautiful”? In this regard, Scheler argues, just as the names of colors refer to mere properties of corporeal things, so too do the names of values only refer to properties of the thinglike given unities that we call the goods (Scheler 1973a, p. 12). In the natural view of world, the concept of goods related with complexes has a historical and cultural perspective, and we cannot form a unified view of “it is beautiful”. More fundamentally, however, these value-things for Scheler need to be founded on material values; otherwise, they may result in value-deceptions (Scheler 1973a, pp. 14, 27). Hence, even if the given contents of values can fulfill the names and judgements of values in acts of feeling, the intention of the contents of values may still be revealed as different meanings because of the diversity of characteristics of valuing. This causes the above inference to fail.

From the perspective of the phenomenology of values, Scheler actually takes an emotional apriorist stance for the objectivity of goodness. Here, an act of judgment is an actively rational cognition from which the value-cognition is excluded. In this sense, Scheler claims that “A judgment neither ‘makes’ nor ‘structures’ anything” (Scheler 1973a, p. 183), because the essence of judgment or “assessment” occurs only after a given act of will. That is, in the linguistic analysis of the concepts and judgments of values—or broadly speaking, in the sphere of theoretical judgment—it is hard for Scheler to find the basis of goodness, which needs to be traced back to acts of feeling of values. “Both assessments and value-estimations fulfill themselves in the value given in feeling and are only in this

sense evident" (Scheler 1973a, p. 69). At the same time, fulfilment of the meaning of goods must be traced back to the act of value-feeling. In fact, the transformation of Scheler's conception of the good from the perspective of complexes to that of acting is the precise kind of regression that he claims; moral willing and, indeed, moral comportment have their foundation in this value-cognition, with its own a priori content and its own evidence (Scheler 1973a, p. 68). In this way, Scheler's theory of the good can be traced back to the sphere of value-cognition and related with moral actions. In this sense, Scheler asserts that "a moral genius is an 'inventor,' not a discoverer. He neither cognizes nor shows way. He acts and draws people with him. The moral codex is nothing but a compilation of the ends and directions of his willing put together at a later time" (Scheler 1973a, p. 171). As to this, it might be said that Scheler's approach to the objectivity of goodness is fundamentally different from or even at odds with that of Geach and others who explain what is good through logical reasoning.

Of course, there are many detailed problems with Scheler's theory of goods, but the most concentrated and common charge arises from the value theory that underlies it. Within phenomenology alone, considerable controversy focuses on the relationship between values and value bearers, as discussed at the beginning of this paper.

Scheler's point is clear: value does not depend on a value bearer. The value of the object precedes the object as the bearer of value, and a value precedes its object and is the first "messenger" of its particular nature (Scheler 1973a, p. 18). Some contemporary phenomenological researchers might have misunderstandings about this. Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, for example, believes that Scheler's values are independent objects that are separate from both the actual act of grasping them and from the historically and culturally changing bearers of value (Rinofner-Kreidl 2012, pp. 417–28). John Drummond holds a similar view—that values are pure eidetic qualities ontologically distinct from and given independently both of the objects of the goods that serve as their bearers and of any willing or positing activity of the subject (Drummond 2002, p. 9). Of course, Scheler's articulation might be confusing. On the one hand, for example, he claims that the being of values is independent from things, goods, and states of affairs, so we may feel the "beauty" and "elegance" of a poem or a work of art, etc., without knowing which properties of its contents prompt this. A room, or even a sojourn in a room, may be "friendly" or "embarrassing" to us, but we do not know what those bearers of values are. We cannot even distinguish the value of wines based on our knowledge of their composition, their origin, and how they are made (Scheler 1973a, pp. 17–18). On the other hand, he argues that value is only real in goods. It is only through experiencing the kind of goods that the quality of value can be given. Every good represents a small "hierarchy" of values (Scheler 1973a, p. 20).

Here, we would like to refer again to the two approaches to Scheler's theory of the good. In the natural view of world, value-qualities are indeed dependent on our understanding of goods—or rather, as mentioned above, in the sense of complexes we cannot experience value-qualities directly, because they are not real without experiencing goods. However, this does not mean that values depend on bearers of values, or on the experience of goods related with bearers of values. The objectivity of goodness is not based on the real things (bearers of values), but is elaborated by how values are given in view of intentional feelings. It is probably insufficient for the aforementioned phenomenological researchers to understand Scheler's conception of values as resulting from an analysis of phenomenology of complexes based on the relationships between values and their bearers.

However, as mentioned above, there is indeed a contradiction between these two approaches. Thus, how to explain the opposite account of the relationship between goods and values?

In this regard, first of all, we need to expand the range of the phenomenological investigation about Scheler's theory of the good, i.e., to trace it back to the act-object correlation. Therein, Scheler claims, lies the ultimate principle of phenomenology: "There is an interconnection between the essence of an object and the essence of intentional experiencing. This essential interconnection can be grasped in any random case of such

experience”, and “any assertion of the existence of a class of objects requires, on the basis of this essential interconnection, a description of the kind of experience involved” (Scheler 1973a, p. 265). Here, Scheler in fact advocates a phenomenology of correlation between objects and acts, as Wolfhart Henckmann points out (Henckmann 1998, p. 44). It is only in terms of phenomenology of correlation that the analogy between goodness and color can be carried out, and values can be unified with facts. In this way, the phenomenological correlation between the essentiality of acts and the essentiality of objects traces the being of values back to their self-givenness, wherein Scheler claims an order of pure materials, i.e., the so-called material apriorism, as opposed to Kant’s formal apriorism (Henckmann 1987, p. 137). Of course, as mentioned above, Scheler explains the essential correlations with his unique theory of the foundation relation. Unlike Husserl, this foundational relationship is understood in terms of the order of self-givenness. In Scheler’s view, through radical phenomenological reduction, the real elements be might suspended, remaining merely as what is self-given as the final surplus. What is originally given, then, in the order of self-givenness (in terms of the originality, not the causal order of time), is this surplus (Scheler 1986, p. 449), which is self-given, independent of the elements of reality, and yet the basis of them. From this perspective, the value-being elaborated by such a phenomenological residue is self-given in the intending act of emotion, and is independent from any real elements, but functions as the basis of the unity of things and value-things.

Secondly, however, this “self” here is concerned with the spiritual. Thus, it is necessary to illustrate the intentionality of phenomenology within the function of spirit.

For Scheler, in a spiritual act, the a priori material content is characteristically given, wherein it is self-evident that an objective state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) or value-laden affairs (*Wertverhalt*) in its essential thusness (*Sosein*) is itself clear for the spirit (*Geist*)—or rather, “self” presents in the spirit as the correlate of an intentional act” (Scheler 1954, p. 17)¹⁴. The intentional correlation in the function of spirit is viewed as guided by the principle of congruence (*Deckungseinheit*) between contents of thought and contents of intuition. Thus, this principle functions as the basis for the intentional correlation of phenomenology. Scheler regards it as the ultimate and most decisive criterion of knowledge (Scheler 1954, p. 17). It is the very principle of congruence that is revealed through the radical phenomenological reduction: what is self-giving within the spirit is self-given. Therefore, the material content directly intuited in the emotional life could be given the ultimate essential knowledge. Through the self-givenness of spiritual feelings, the material apriorism establishes the ultimate basis of essential knowledge. At the same time, the correlation of the essential to what exists constitutes the starting point of rational cognition which, for instance, is illustrated through the theory of functionalization as follows:

Essential knowledge is functionally transmuted into a law governing the very “employment” of the intellect with regard to contingent facts; under its guidance the intellect conceives, analyses, regards and judges the contingent factual world as “determined” in “accordance” with the principles concerning the cohesion of essences. What before was a thing becomes a form of thinking about things; what was an object of love becomes a form of love, in which a limitless number of objects can now be loved; what was an object of will becomes a form of volition, and so on (Scheler 1960, p. 201).

In this way, the dichotomy between values and facts in Scheler’s framework might result from the functionalization of essential knowledge. The essential knowledge given in the emotional life is realized (functionalized) in the complexes (states of affairs) or the personality, forming the domain distinction between facts and values under the natural view of world. In this sense, the distinction of values and facts can be understood in this process. Therefore, the contradiction between the two approaches of Scheler’s theory of the good stems from the value analyses in different stages of the spiritual function, reflecting the transformation of the acting center from the body to the spirit.

Finally, spiritual feelings as mediators between goods and values should be highlighted. In fact, the spirit being given the a priori material contents is involved with an

intentional characteristic, for the spirit is “the nature of act, intentionality, and fulfillment of meaning” (Scheler 1973a, p. 389). Of course, Scheler views our feelings or emotional lives as possessing different levels and depths of intentionality. Concretely, compared with sensible feelings, vital feelings, and psychic feelings, only spiritual feelings could refer to and grasp the entire sphere of acts, and serve as the basis of ethical life.¹⁵ In this sense, spiritual feelings are considered “to be the correlates of the moral value of our personal being (Scheler 1973a, p. 343). Thus, the aforementioned contradiction between goods and values could be understood here, and it is the very spiritual feeling that is the “source” of willing and the direction of his moral disposition. Scheler regards bliss and despair as the purest types of spiritual feelings. For this reason, he claims that “Only the blissful person can have a good will, and only the despairing person must be evil in his willing and actions” (Scheler 1973a, p. 348).

In so doing, although goods are the basis of the value-qualities, and the latter are only real in the former, goods as value-qualities are results of the functionalization of material values, when generated from the intentional correlation between spiritual personality and the world. The realization of value-qualities in goods is presupposed by the spiritual correlation given in advance. The infinitely spiritual personality given in the emotional life is the foundation of goodness in the finite person in reality. In this way, what one feels is here considered as the basis to connect the spiritual personality with the thingness. Such an intentional connection constitutes the intermediary of the unity of values and facts, providing the basis for the objectivity of goodness in question through the combination of emotional apriorism and material apriorism.

6. Conclusions

In sum, Scheler’s conception of the objectivity of goodness can probably be distinguished at several levels, as follows: (1) The objective validity of the good does not arise from the theoretical value judgment (and its contexts), which is fundamentally different from John Mackie’s conception of what is good. (2) The objective validity of goods as value-things is guided by values and their order of ranks paralleled with the world of facts in the sense of phenomenology of complexes. Along with G. E. Moore and J. McDowell, Scheler insists on a dichotomous framework of values and facts. (3) The objective validity of what is morally good, as the essential unity of human action, is revealed in the person’s willing of material values to be realized, which presupposes the emotional apriorism. (4) In the sense that the essentials of complexes are correlated with those of acts—or rather, in terms of phenomenology of correlation—the objective validity of goodness, delineated by values and their order, is more fundamentally rooted in the so-called material apriorism that functions as the departure point of unity between values and facts.

Scheler’s theory of the good is clearly based on his phenomenological analysis of value. Historically, his conception of value has been subject to many critiques, and has obviously been faced with many difficulties (Hanchuan 2019, pp. 287–89). Nevertheless, in terms of phenomenology of correlation, Scheler does not claim the existence of values independent from or external to the phenomenological experience, stating that “Values must be able to appear in a feeling-consciousness” (Scheler 1973a, p. 265). If understood in terms of the intentional correlate of emotion, value is here not separated from its actions, let alone an independent object. As for the misunderstanding of the relationship between values and their bearers, or their relationships with real elements, it may be associated with how to understand the phenomenological reduction in Scheler’s framework. It might be argued for some researchers that with the phenomenological reduction, the intentional acts of feelings would directly and immediately be given the intuited contents of values, just as Scheler’s previous examples might lead people to believe (Frings 1997, pp. 36, 192; Blosser 1995, p. 34). However, it should be known that “the actual cooperation of intuition and sensory functions” is indispensable in order to reach self-givenness (Scheler 1986, p. 446), although Scheler’s conception of the intentional emotion is to separate it from the rational cognition and eliminate the influence of the real elements on the value-feeling. Thus, to carry out this

reduction requires “the greatest efforts in mediated thinking, comparison, variation, paring away, etc.” (Scheler 1986, p. 445), rather than opening one’s eyes and seeing it. In this sense, values and the real elements in the natural view of world are certainly inseparable.

However, Scheler’s resting of his theory of the good on the phenomenology of value does not mean that the objective validity of goodness thus argued is far from the good life or in conflict with it. In ancient Greek philosophy, the question of what is a good life is combined with the question of what is good itself, and the pursuit of a good life itself entails disvalues and disvaluing, but value theory was not a specialized topic at that time. For this reason, J. Hart has questioned whether the formal logical analysis of value and valuing (e.g., in Husserl) can answer the question of what a good life is when faced with the contingency and absurdity of life, with its ecstasies and abysses (Hart 1997, p. 3). In this regard, Scheler’s alternative offers a way out of this limitation. This lies in the fact that he does not limit the analysis of value in the framework of formal logic, but extends it to the pre-logical ethical life on the basis of material apriorism. His value theory allows for contingency and disvalues, and in so doing intrinsically relates the constituting of the person to a good life. Of course, Scheler does not believe that the good life is a life, as in Aristotle, waiting for the ultimate realization of human potential on the basis of a harmonious culmination of humanity and nature, but rather, as B. Williams says, a life after the collapse of the ethical perspective that they both fitted together (Williams 2006, p. 53). In this sense, Scheler sees human life as a process in which spiritual activity is constantly freed from the bondage of natural causality, and is constantly moving toward spiritual–personal freedom.

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Notes

- ¹ Of course, the objectivity of goodness (or even value) is not always defended in the phenomenological tradition. Broadly speaking, there are roughly three standpoints of value in the phenomenological movement: the value objectivism in Husserl and Scheler, the value subjectivism in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and the value nihilism in Heidegger.
- ² As for this issue, there has been a lot of discussion, such as by Eberhard Avé-Lallemant (1975, pp. 159–78), Manfred Frings (1997, pp. 191–92), and Wolfhart Henckmann (1998, p. 44).
- ³ It should be noted that the German word *Sache* in Manfred Frings’ translation of *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* is here translated as *complex* (Scheler 1973a, p. 22; 1980, p. 44), but in some other places (for example, Scheler 1973a, pp. 138, 442, 480; 1980, pp. 152, 438, 473) as *state of affairs, something, or thing* which is also the translation of German word *Ding*.
- ⁴ Manfred Frings, in his English translation, stresses his translation of the German adjective *material* to *non-formal*, but I replace *non-formal* with the English word *material* in order to effectively express the main idea of this paper.
- ⁵ There are some misunderstandings here; we will return to this topic later.
- ⁶ To elaborate the universal essential sphere through the correction between experienced object and manners of givenness, Husserl once concedes, is his philosophical task of the whole life (Husserl 1970, p. 166). In this regard, Scheler shares the same idea. He considers phenomenology as a research into the problem of “essence” and “existence” (Scheler 1973b, p. 307), and systemically articulates all areas of his phenomenological investigations into three kinds of essential correlations: phenomenology of complexes, phenomenology of acts, and phenomenology of interconnections (Scheler 1973a, pp. 71–72).
- ⁷ Husserl analyzes the relationships of objectifying acts with non-objectifying acts in differing from Brentano’s conception of consciousness (see Husserl 2001, pp. 95–96, 169). However, it is worth noting that Brentano does not directly use the term “objectifying acts”, but that of “presentation”, to characterize the intentionality of consciousness. I appreciate the anonymous reviewers for having reminded me of this point.
- ⁸ Regarding Scheler’s critique of Kant in this point, see Scheler (1973a, p. 24). As to whether Kantian philosophy completely ignores the field of value, this have been defended in many ways, and we will not specifically explore them here.
- ⁹ The excerpted biography of Jing Ke, see Sima Qian (1993, pp. 223–27).

- ¹⁰ Of course, there would be another case if what Prince Dan wills might not be the sensible value, but (for example) the spiritual value: the justice of the state. This would be that Prince Dan and the girl will resolve to save Yan for justice. Then, the sacrifice of the hand would be considered morally good in the value of the persons who try their best to save the state of Yan for the sake of justice.
- ¹¹ At this point, Scheler strongly agrees with what Kant emphasizes in his ethics, and claims that goods or things cannot be presupposed in any philosophical ethics (Scheler 1973a, p. 23). Kant's emphasis might refer to the following sentence: "All practical principles that presuppose an object (matter) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are, without exception, empirical and can furnish no practical laws". (Kant 1996, p. 155).
- ¹² William K. Frankena has mentioned this (see Frankena 1973, p. 98).
- ¹³ From the perspective of phenomenology of complexes, Scheler believes that value-qualities are real only in goods or, rather, that goods presuppose value-qualities. Here, however, what is moral is based on the theory of values. Thus, how to explain this contradiction? We will return to this point later.
- ¹⁴ In the English translation, "*Geist*" is sometimes translated as "mind", but in this paper, without exception, it is translated as "spirit" (see Scheler 1960, pp. 22–23).
- ¹⁵ Scheler also specifically analyzes how to grasp the basis of ethical life under the circumstances of ethical variations and renewal. As to this, love is considered as the basis for ethical variations, value discovery, and value creation; see for example the discussion in (Scheler 1973a, p. 305). This is a more complex issue, and cannot be specifically analyzed further in this paper.

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