

# THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REALISM OF JAMES'S THEORY OF VALUE

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*In this essay, I claim that Scheler's affective intentionality could be interpreted as underlying James's thought experiment outlined in Section II of his "The Moral Philosopher and Moral Life." In so doing, I advance the claim that James's value ontology could be described as a type of phenomenological realism, and that this interpretation of his value ontology through Scheler is the best way to make sense of James's metaphysical commitments of value. In the last part of this essay, I show how these insights have opened up future questions I will pose between phenomenology and pragmatism while also grounding those insights in the famous Rosenthal and Wilshire debate.*



While William James may talk indirectly about values in other places, Section II of “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” is the only place in his work where James directly and explicitly discusses his metaphysics of value. In this paper, I give that section a phenomenological interpretation. For James, the metaphysical question inquires into the meaning of the terms “good,” “bad,” and “obligation,” and he works out their meaning in a proposed thought experiment. There are four formulations of his overall thought experiment, and each part continually modifies the previous formulation. As such, I will argue the following thesis: Each version of James’s thought experiment reveals the necessity of affective intentionality and the subsequent intersubjectivity involved in value-experience at root in James as it is in Max Scheler.

At the very outset, I want to acknowledge one overall difficulty. Despite Scheler’s criticism of pragmatism in his *Erkenntnis und Arbeit*,<sup>1</sup> this essay acknowledges Scheler’s harsh treatment of pragmatism while at the same time finding that both are more compatible than his criticism might allow with respect to James’s “The Moral Philosopher and Moral Life.”<sup>2</sup>

This essay is organized in the following way: the first four sections outline the unfolding phenomenological description in every formulation of James’s thought experiment. In the first section I maintain that the natural attitude is found wanting. The second section introduces evidence for affective intentionality, and the third section introduces the problem of value conflict and the intersubjectivity of value-experience. Section four discusses how a possible way to reconcile value conflict lies in attempting to act on the true purpose of values and feeling: God. The fifth section, “Phenomenological Realism,” contains a summary of the paper’s overall ambition. In the final section, I provide some thoughts on the relationship between pragmatism and phenomenology that have animated and inspired the discussion I have here engineered between James and Scheler. In doing so, I offer thoughts about their relationship to sketch out future questions I wish to pose between pragmatism and phenomenology.

**FIRST FORMULATION**

In the first formulation, James imagines a world with no God or interested spectator. We only need to imagine a physical world explainable by physical facts. Such a material and physical worldview cannot accommodate value, as values are realized-and-felt in consciousness. Let's look at the text more closely on this point: "Neither moral relations nor the moral law can swing *in vacuo*. Their only habitat can be a mind that feels them; and no world composed of merely physical facts can possibly be a world to which ethical propositions apply" (James 1956a, 190). In other words, the "interested spectator," together with the "mind which feels them," give rise to value. A world devoid of feeling could never have value in it. "Physical facts simply *are* or are *not*; and neither when present or absent, can they be supposed to make demands" (ibid.). An explanation of values necessitates the first-personal order of experience that *feels* them, and a world of physical facts rest only on attributing causal relations between objects. For James, the mind is a flux of sensation and feeling that *constitutes* how we experience the world. In constituting the world as felt objects, the natural attitude falls short. First, the natural attitude is not exhaustive of the variety of things we can experience. Second, the subjective acts of experience we live through as persons cannot be reduced to the same level of explanation within the natural attitude. Therefore, James considers both the subjective and objective features of experience as constitutive elements of the overall experience, or what he will later call "radical empiricism."

In this first section, the transition is made from the incompleteness of the natural attitude to showing that the first-personal level of experience is a necessary dimension for experiencing value.

**SECOND FORMULATION**

In the previous formulation, James imagined a world with no mind, but only the bare physical world. Invoking a similar critique of the natural attitude, he, like Edmund Husserl, thinks the subjective order of experience is a necessary part in relation to the

physical world to arrive at the existence of value. As Husserl will put it in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, every conscious act takes a direct object: “We engross ourselves in the *essence of the consciousness of something* in which we are conscious of the factual existence of material things, animate organisms, human beings, the factual existence of technical and literary works and so forth” (Husserl 1983, 67). For him, the realization of values can only be brought about by a consciousness involved (or engrossed) in their relation. James puts his point succinctly, “Goodness, badness, and obligation must be *realized* somewhere in order to really exist.” (James 1956a, 145). As such, James adds into the thought experiment in this second formulation the addition of one sentient mind, which exhibits intentionality.

With the addition of a sentient mind, there is the possibility of good and evil to exist, but only because the mind possesses intentionality. For James, the mind is a teleological mechanism, as demonstrated throughout his work, but for now a passage from “Reflex Action and Theism” will suffice: “...the mind as essentially teleological mechanism. I mean by this that the conceiving or theorizing faculty functions *exclusively for the sake of ends* that do not exist at all in the world of impressions we receive by way of our senses but are set by our emotional and practical subjectivity altogether”<sup>3</sup> (James 1956b, 117).

In the above passage, the order of affective intentionality is added to the thought experiment along with the sentient mind, and in this way James establishes why we can make sense of the ends “set by our emotional and practical subjectivity.” Our emotional and practical subjectivity must be intentional *in the phenomenological sense* to bring about a relation in which the felt contents of experience can be experienced at all. The term “teleological” simply reflects the constitutive nature of the intentional relation since the assigned object becomes the value-correlate of a feeling consciousness. James offers further evidence for this view: “Moral relations now have their *status*, in that being’s consciousness...for he is the sole creator of values in that universe” (James 1956a, 190).

In this statement, James hints at the “status,” and James should be understood as meaning the “ontological status” of values. Values have their ontological reality in affective intentionality.

Many commentators read more into the term “create.” For instance, Michael Slater takes this as evidence that James supports a moral anti-realism about value,<sup>4</sup> yet creation denotes that feeling is necessary to experience people, things, actions, and purposes *as* valuable. Contrary to Slater, a phenomenological interpretation supports an opposing realism and can better explain James’s original efforts (as well as align with later texts). James states that “good and bad, the comparative ones better and worse must be *realized* in order to be real”<sup>5</sup> (James 1956a, 193). This realization and the emergence of feelings into experience finds company with Scheler’s phenomenology of value, and possesses the same commitment to realism. Let me explain.

Both James and Scheler hold that feelings precede our experience. They are primordially intentional, and so those feelings take an object. In Scheler’s words:

The actual seat of the entire value-a priori (including the moral a priori) is the value-cognition or value-intuition [*Wert-Erschauung*] that comes to the fore in feeling, basically in love and hate, as well as the “moral cognition” [*sittliche Erkenntnis*] of the interconnection of values, that is, their “being higher” and “being lower.” This cognition occurs in *special* functions and acts which are *toto coelo* different from all perception and thinking. These functions and acts supply the only possible *access to* the world of value. It is not only in “inner perception” or observation (in which only the psychic is given), but also *in* felt and lived affair with the *world* (be it psychic, physical, or whatever), *in* preferring and rejecting, *in* loving and hating, i.e., in the course of *performing* such intentional functions and acts, that values and their order flash before us! The a priori

content lies in what is given in these manners.  
(Scheler 1973, 68)

In the above passage, Scheler indicates his central insight: that the reality of values is felt in intentional acts of feeling. They flash before us only within intuitive-contents in self-awareness. These intuitive-contents are experienced by the material furnished *in* experience. The material of experience contains the various modalities of feeling persons experience, and value-intuition is not a mysterious capacity posited as some analytic philosophers rejecting epistemic and moral intuitionism. Instead, value-intuition is the sheer qualitative immediacy of feeling. Unlike an epistemic intuition, the feeling act immediately emerges in a relation to a value-quality of a person, good, or deed. Here, the German word for material is *die Materiale*, and Scheler uses this term instead of the German adjective “*Materiell*,” which indicates a modification to a noun asserting a thing’s materiality. Manfred Frings translated *Materiale* as “non-formal” since it emphasizes substantial content, and can be more readily seen in the common form/content distinction.<sup>6</sup> The inference to realism about experience is derived from taking experience seriously and not regarding the contents of experience as mere constructions of subjectivity, but as non-reductive features of the process of experiencing itself. Instead, these contents of experience are really real and emerge in relation to an object. This co-relational intentional structure *is the same* for everyone because the shared medium of experience consists in affective intentionality, and it is this very shared medium that makes possible experience of the world in terms of its ontological reality. As Bruce Wilshire once put this point, “The concept of ‘independently real’ must be related to primordial intentionality of mind if it is to be intelligible. Not only does this not render a causal explanation of experience impossible, it is necessary for it to be possible” (Wilshire 1977, 53). As such, prior to any conceptualization, the experience of the world is first felt.

My claim is that James arrives at a conception of intentional feeling identical to Scheler’s affective intentionality, and in essence,

this identification also means that those feelings bestow meaning on experienced objects.<sup>7</sup> The textual evidence for this interpretation rests on the constant theme of the teleological mind that appears throughout James's work. In addition, the passages in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" suggest that consciousness is necessary for the reality of values and that feeling plays a central role in his ethics. Moreover, phenomenology meets the same evidential demand of concretion in experience that characterizes James's earlier work, specifically the primordial role played by feeling and sensation. For example, he assigns the concretion of feeling as a physical change in the body with what will later be called the *James-Lange* hypothesis, found in his *Principles of Psychology*. As such, James has not conceived a thought experiment about moral properties and moral anti-realism. Instead, James is identifying how it is that we come to experience the contents of "good," "bad" and "obligation." These moral contents *constitute* and form the affective intentionality underlying primordial feeling-consciousness. In this interpretation, then, "good," "bad" and "obligation" are intentional correlates of the feeling acts that constitute their origin and actual presence in experience. This means that "they are objects of feeling and desire, which have no foothold or anchorage in Being, apart from the existence of actually living minds" (James 1956a, 197).

Like Scheler, James thinks emotional life is *directed* at what we find valuable and that requires a consciousness that is consciousness of them—the very same intentional relation Husserl described. Such thinking follows from James's most phenomenological work, a collection of essays he composed between 1904-1906 and was posthumously published in 1912 under the title *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.<sup>8</sup> In that work, the *relations* of pure experience are equally important just as much as *what is experienced directly*. These relations and the directed end, which we are taking as both the intended object and purpose of action as well as the intended object, are the very basis of his realist account of value. Experience consists in this very concrete sense. This interpretation can be supported from his essay "Does Consciousness Exist?"

Consciousness connotes a kind of external relation, and does not denote a special stuff or way of being. *The peculiarity of our experiences, that they not only are, but are known, which their “conscious” quality is invoked to explain, is better explained by their relation—these relations themselves being experiences—to one another.* (James 2003, 13)

In the passage above, consciousness is not a special substance as Descartes described, and does not exist apart from what and how persons experience the world. Instead, consciousness consists of the very worldly relation and aspects that are deeply felt. These relations are worldly, visceral, and concrete.

Consider again a passage from “Reflex Action and Theism.” In this following passage, the realism is indicated by the fact that contents of experience are *given* beyond simply the subjective interests I impose or bring to experience. Just as the above passage uses “relation,” the term “content” below indicates the objectively real felt content of experience.

The world’s contents are *given* to each of us in an order so foreign to our subjective interests that we can hardly by an effort of the imagination picture to ourselves what it is like. We have to break that order altogether,—and by picking out from it the items which concern us, and connecting them with others far away, which we say “belong” with them, we are able to make out definite threads of sequence and tendency; to foresee particular liabilities and get ready for them; and to enjoy simplicity and harmony in place of what was chaos...The real world as it is given objectively at this moment is the sum total of all its beings and events now. (James 1956b, 118-119)

In both passages, the relational aspect of experience is what is most real. The really real is *given*, especially in the 1881 lecture



“Reflex Action and Theism,” in which James describes our minds are structured in such a way to feel God. What is unique to him, and outstrips the intuitive deliverance of reality in phenomenology, is the conception of experience. As far as James complements phenomenology, he conceives of the relational and real object as intended, and once he has that view of experience as the grounding condition for all experiencing, James pays attention to the various ways in which possible experiencers will experience the world and form habits. So far, so good! By contrast, there is no possible way to delimit descriptions about experience, and even Husserl embraced the ultimate revisionary status of phenomenological description. The pragmatist embraces this about experience and calls for experimentation in how we understand the descriptions made about experience. Therefore, James offers us a freedom to analyze how these contents manifest in the decisions a conscious mind will make when suitably influenced by the possible content’s purpose.

However, such purposes cannot be appropriated for experimentation just yet in the text; that is, until another mind is added to the mix. What is clear about my phenomenological reading is that affective intentionality is indicated by the presence of one consciousness. Yet, value experience does not stop at the feeling intentionality exhibited by one mind. The mind that feels their efficacious reality must be a structure shared in common with another mind.

### **THIRD FORMULATION**

In a world of the solitary thinker, however, there is no “outward obligation.” Outward obligation indicates that another consciousness is needed, and this is the third formulation of the thought experiment. At this point, I want to be clear. I am suggesting that James’s efforts are not directed at describing a thought experiment of how to conceive of value or even meta-ethical commitments. Instead, his efforts in this formulation are aimed at describing how it is that we experience values themselves — that is, how values are intended in feeling on the part of one individual

relating to another, and the language of desire is to be understood through affective intentionality, not through the common agent and desire language of analytic ethicists. As James indicates in the *Will to Believe*, human desire constitutes the reality of values. “The desire for a certain type of truth here brings about that special truth’s existence” (James 1956c, 24). The implicit premise here is that “desire,” in bringing about “a special truth’s existence,” is not an instrumental and subjectivist conception of truth. Instead, affective intentionality opens us up to the insight of experience itself. Phenomenology is not committed to supplanting and replacing the content of experience, neither is James; rather, there exists a pre-philosophical intelligibility of experience. As such, human beings can have insight into that intelligibility. When we add another consciousness we now have the presence of outward obligation directed through feeling, and the beginning of the intersubjective experience of values, but a problem arises with two intentional minds.

First, the two thinkers may ignore the different claims that originate in how each feels about the world. One’s preferences may never conflict with the other’s. In such a world, James thinks an increase in “ethical quality” and value-feeling will commence adding to the complexity of value. If Adam desires never to eat apples and Eve does eat them, then there is no conflict between Adam and Eve, and a “moral dualism” arises about the same object. Given that there is no view outside-viewpoint for both persons, “no single point of view within it from which the values of things can be unequivocally judged” then desiring alone would be explanatorily insufficient about the work we want values to do for us (James 1956a, 192). Desire itself is incapable of adjudication, and this insight *is* the phenomenological point of this section. Without a hierarchy revealed in human feeling and affective intentionality, values would be inert. Adam and Eve would be incapable of taking an objective viewpoint between either their indifferent interests, where practically no objective viewpoint is necessary, or in the case when their desires conflict with the other’s interest. Without value-rankings, there can be no authority or truth to any claim, no decisive

way to adjudicate between competing moral claims. In his essay “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” James understands this limitation very well: “neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer” (James 1983, 149). Here James embraces a modest pluralism about values and desires. The way to solve this conundrum about competing values is to look into the structure of experiencing values.

At this point, James suggests that the direction (and intentionality) of our feelings can help decipher the conflict between the two minds. A “consciousness feels [an action] to be good or thinks it right, we *perceive* on the very threshold that the real superiority and authority” is found in exemplars with insight (James 1956a, 193). Exemplars are people who excel at having insight into experience:

Every now and then, however, some one is born with the right to be original, and his revolutionary thought or action may bear prosperous fruit. He replaces old ‘laws of nature’ by better ones in a certain place, and brings in total condition of things more ideal than would have followed had the rules been kept. (James 1956a, 206)

In this way, an exemplar can come along, reform older ways of thinking and open up a space for us to question the role of our ideals, and how those ideals are conducive to realizing a harmonious life.<sup>9</sup> This questioning happens in someone who can *perceive* in feeling the values opened up through *insight*, and how the consequences of this will concretize in experience. These insights provide fuel for conceptualizing the consequences of how values are felt within experience. As such, James can follow Scheler: values come on the back of desires we have about others, actions, places, and things. Others, actions, places, and things form the object of our feelings, and in feeling them, they offer us insight into perceiving a contextually-mitigated circumstance persons will face.

At this point, James scholars may recoil because of two worries. First, they might object that I am imposing a form of intuitionism on

James that he clearly rejects in the very beginning of “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life.” Insofar as intuition only means the qualitative immediacy of particular contents of experience, James can still be on board with phenomenology, and no such worry presents itself in my interpretation. He is committed to a phenomenological realism. In James’s words, “the immediately experienced conjunctive relations *are as real as anything else*”<sup>10</sup> (James 2003, 48). Second (and even more pressing), these intuitions could be seen as relying upon “an abstract moral ‘nature of things’ existing antecedently to the concrete thinkers (the two minds posited here) themselves with their ideals” (James 1956a, 193). Now, there are two possible readings of *antecedence*. On the one hand, James could mean a temporally prior and mind-independent order of value. If so, then he will not endorse such a position. James’s reaction to a formal metaphysics is well known and would find agreement with Scheler’s rejection of formalist ethics. On the other hand, the other possible understanding of the antecedence is logically prior. The order of values is given in experience and is not abstracted from experience in any sense. Hence, the phenomenological interpretation reads the antecedent-as-logically-prior as making sense of the conjoined experiencing and experienced. The unfolding experience of feeling and the intended value emerge in the material immanence of life itself.

#### FOURTH FORMULATION

What happens next is James’s effort to find something that can have objective authority between the alleged subjectivism in the third formulation and the need for objectivity when other desiring persons are added to the mix. In the last formulation, James starts to experiment with adopting a pragmatic stance towards God. God can occupy the role deficient in the third formulation. “The divine thought would be the model to which we should conform. But the theoretic question would remain, What is the ground of obligation, even here?” (ibid., 194). Even if belief in God is adopted pragmatically, the same metaphysical concerns of value remain.

At the opening of this question, James's efforts cannot be reduced to one particular normative system of ethics. In fact, he emphatically denies that systematicity is possible.

They [anyone disputing questions of good and bad] imagine an abstract moral order in which objective truth resides; and each tries to prove that this pre-existing order is more accurately reflected in his own ideas than in those of his adversary. It is because one disputant is backed by this overarching abstract order that we think the other should submit. (ibid.)

For James, our knowledge of reality is forever incomplete, experienced in piecemeal snippets, and we should cultivate an experimental attitude to the limits of how we experience such snippets in a dynamic world. "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it" (James 1998, 131). Yet, while we cannot be skeptical that we are experiencing at all, we must be modest in how limited any person's experience is. That is why supreme principles of morality, like the categorical imperative or the principle of utility, absolutize the content of moral experience beyond what experience allows in James. Let us take the example of utilitarianism. Part of the appeal of utilitarianism is its capacity to systematically reflect a moral order, even if that moral order is constructed and then projected upon human action, without consulting actual value-experiencing. Codifiability is in the back of the utilitarian's mind. Morality is neatly organized, yet the desired systematicity of utilitarians flies in the face of what James has in mind. This is the origin of his ethical pluralism: "The only possible reason there can be why any phenomenon ought to exist is that such a phenomenon is actually desired. Any desire is imperative to the extent of its amount; it makes itself valid by the fact that it exists at all" (James 1956a, 195).

In the face of such value pluralism, we may or may not adopt a theistic stance, but there is no moral world order to which our judgments – based on desire – could conform without the feelings of the Holy. Here, James introduces hierarchy into feelings and

desire. “That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end” (James 2004, 418). Human beings find certainty in some beliefs out of the expressed need and desire we feel towards life. Thus, when James regards acquiring *harmony* with the *unseen order* as our true end, then he is delimiting which purposes we should be open to in much the same way that Scheler’s value-rankings delimit the purposes we should be open to as well. There are some purposes more appropriate than others; James’s solution to the question of the pluralism of desire resides in the lived-experience of values, the concretion of their effects, and that such claims have forceful appeal (the value-qualities given to us through emotional intuition). Ethics is rooted in our responsiveness to the forceful appeal of claims, even though there is no abstract moral principle that could order all human desire. The fact remains we can have insight into how these values are felt since some purposes are given as higher than other purposes.

### **PHENOMENOLOGICAL REALISM**

The claim of realism derived from a phenomenological description of value-experience comes from a consideration of human life undergirded by an irreducible depth of experience. I have called this position phenomenological realism. Concerning values, phenomenological realism is the thesis that feelings and values are co-extensive entities, and as co-extensive entities feeling and values are ontologically part of the experiencing-process of reality. This irreducibility of experience is so basic that we cannot be skeptical about it. As James will say, experience “leans on nothing.” That’s his claim of humanism, and the humanism he shares with phenomenology consists in describing the elements of experience with an attention to both what is revealed in experience and how such revelations are actively organized.<sup>11</sup> Hence, metaphysics in light of James and Scheler achieves a twofold character. Following the embrace of pragmatism and phenomenology, metaphysics becomes an analysis of the revealed contents of experience (phenomenology) and the conscious choice of how best to organize those contents to enhance our lives (pragmatism). These contents of

experience are ontologically basic such that any theory of values (let alone ethics) is committed to their ontological reality. Beyond that, however, Jamesian pragmatism teaches us to take ownership of those contents for our own purposes. We all make choices as life unfolds, and those choices are underwritten by active, immanent insight into the order of feeling, an order that follows each of us throughout our life. This order of feeling-acts open us, on an individual or collective level, to higher purpose. A society can come to understand and systematize those feelings (what Scheler called an *ethos*) just as much as an individual can, and higher or spiritual feelings can steer us away from lower purposes to realize higher purposes. I have interpreted James's thought experiment as describing *this process*. Let me add one more piece of astonishing similarity between James and Scheler.

The order of the thought experiment consists of different levels of value-description. These levels are:

1. Nature alone embodied the natural attitude that Husserl contrasts against the phenomenological attitude.
2. An individual mind feels values, and values are realized by the mind that feels them. Affective intentionality is introduced at this level of the individual mind.
3. Two minds are introduced and desire is posited as that which highlights our interest, which is what we find valuable for James. Two outcomes are generated:
  - 3a. If the two minds possess indifferent desires, then there is no conflict of values
  - 3b. If the two minds possess different desires about the same object, then there is a conflict of values.
4. James denies an abstract moral order could simply commensurate the two desires that constitute the insight into the valued interest. As such, God is

introduced as the highest possible purpose of our desires and feelings to solve matters of conflict.

Therefore, James introduces the levels of nature, affective intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the unseen order of the Holy which our efforts attempt to harmonize with. Scheler's value-rankings, while not entirely the same, are similar. They move from the basic conception of sensate life all the way to the Holy. The value-rankings are not reducible to each other. At the first level, Scheler describes sensation, a state shared with any living creature as part of *nature*. At the next level, Scheler introduces the vital feeling and vital values. These feelings correlate with the values of strength, nobility, weakness, and fatigue. They are visceral, embodied, and signal the impetus of the environing world. Psychic feelings and spiritual values are those feelings of righteousness, justice, truth, beauty, and their negations. These feelings-acts are wholly intentional and form the basis of intersubjective experience of culture itself. Finally, there are Holy feelings intending the value of the person. These feelings endure more than any other. These feelings lead us to recognize the incredible unique singularity of the person and our ultimate inability to objectify a person, a living being with spiritual potential. In addition, these spiritual feelings are felt more intensely, and these feelings-acts fill out the entire person such that the person cannot be divided: a blissful person can only be wholly blissful. However, the point is not to master the content suggested by Scheler, but to indicate that there is an order of feeling that we come to know in experience that is similar in the order explicated in the first four sections above.

Experience reveals an intelligible order that is governed both by the realization of it in intentional acts, but also how previous individual persons and collective persons have realized those feeling-contents and value-correlates. In this paper, I have tried to explain James as committed to the same phenomenological realism I find in Scheler's writings.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, this effort implies a deep affinity between these two thinkers since the primordial level of



feeling underlies any ontological speculation about the human experience, including value ontology.

### **FUTURE TRAJECTORIES**

While this article has been a defense of a phenomenological realism about values and the affinity of that position shared by James and Scheler, there are a number of possible questions such affinity raises. One reason for the existence of this study stems from the conviction expressed at the end of Bruce Wilshire's response to Sandra Rosenthal. He writes, "Sometimes phenomenologists blur founding and constituting conditions... Pragmatism and phenomenology should be seen as mutually assisting philosophical efforts" (Wilshire 1977, 55). How can such mutual assistance be described between the phenomenological and pragmatic traditions? Where do I see this mutual assistance between James and Scheler? Certainly, James and Scheler have insisted on the primordial role affective intentionality plays in how they construe value-experience. Yet, when I point to the primordially and subsequent ontological consequence of that primordially, have I opened both Scheler and James up to the conflation of founding moments and constituting conditions?

A founding moment is identifying the intentional act that gives rise to all other subsequent experience and noemata-correlates. There can be higher noematic-complexes and strata of experience, and in Husserl feeling acts are founded on epistemic intentional acts. As such, values are higher levels of intentional fulfillment that ultimately depend on epistemic acts. Scheler reverses this priority. For him, the intentional act of love opens us up to being itself, yet the ambiguity between analyses of founding and constituting is never clear in Scheler. And James, while committed to *harmonizing* with the *unseen orders*, only describes the concatenations of pure experience towards the end of his life. Nothing gives rise to experience causally except that experience happens. In some ways, a naturalized view of our mind's teleological capacity can give rise to concepts, and a James scholar could fall back on the *Principles of Psychology* as a naturalized account of subjective life and

experience, at the cost of losing the deeply phenomenological nature of James's overall philosophy. Without phenomenology, Jamesian thought backslides into the same ambiguity, blurring constitutive and founding conditions.

The "mutual assistance" wanted from pragmatism and phenomenology is in the shared resources each offers the other to describe experience. In this way, James's pragmatism is a method to solve and verify the accuracy of phenomenological description. Since phenomenology can only disclose the world as it is experienced, which by itself is the very limit of what can be experienced, phenomenology opens up the very categories that inform later speculation. These speculations are tied to experience, but such speculations might later move beyond that which is given in the noetic-noematic correlation. When that happens, Jamesian thought can help restrain the speculative impetus. Phenomenology always collapses in upon itself when the phenomenologist who is so satisfied with her phenomenological descriptions finds herself then using those very descriptions to propose ontological solutions to metaphysical problems.<sup>13</sup> With tremendous accuracy, Sandra Rosenthal picked up on this worry.

. . . [A] "metaphysics of experience" for the pragmatist is not an analysis of meaning structures or of an existential a priori. Rather it is not about meaning at all, but about that brutally "there" independent reality which enters into the texture of experience and with which we interact via the mode of meaning constitution or meaning bestowal. Thus, what metaphysics in this sense attempts to explore is the implications of the *"felt" level of experience which underlies and makes possible a meaningful world of experience*. Such a metaphysics is not arrived at by the method of descriptive phenomenology must be placed with the context of the pragmatic methodology of experimentalism.<sup>14</sup> (Rosenthal 1974, 174-175; emphasis added)

Rosenthal regarded phenomenology as incapable of providing a way to analyze the content of experience as pragmatism does. Pragmatists can experimentally propose speculations about the “felt” level of experience, and if they stand the test of experience, then those speculations can be retained. For her, this experimentalism arises out of a realism rooted in process, which I also see, albeit differently, in the Scheler-James synthesis argued here in this article. According to Rosenthal, phenomenology cannot explain facts about this process. She takes phenomenology to be Peirce’s firstness, as nothing more than the “qualitative immediacy” or “brute interaction” of an organism relating to its environment (ibid., 176). For Rosenthal, the importance placed by pragmatism on lived experience *is* the very reason pragmatism is meaningful. It has the resources to make sense of the felt level of experience, and she proposes that Peirce can also be read as contributing significantly to a metaphysics of the felt level of the brutal *thereness* of experience. Peirce describes the phaneron and, in doing so, he “works back, as closely as possible within experience, to the level of what is ‘there’ in the immediate interaction of organism and environment...” (ibid.). By using “the ‘felt level’ of appearances as an inroad to the categories of metaphysical explanation,” Peirce can establish a metaphysical realism about “the immediacy of lived experience at its most primitive level” (ibid.). As such, the vital need for a method to test these ontological speculations is shown, and in asking what use an idea could be put to in our lives is the fairest test. This test ensures that the phenomenological description does not move beyond the language of human purpose, and that is what Rosenthal thinks is needed in following Peirce—or any of the pragmatists for that matter.

For Rosenthal, metaphysics can only be about the features of the process of organism and environmental interaction. Metaphysics is a speculative hypothesis which offers an explanation of lived experience by providing a “speculative description” of the features of that process which presents itself in the immediacy of organism-environment interaction, which is “open to” certain meanings, and which is known only through such meanings. The pragmatist as

metaphysician, then, is led ultimately to an explanatory real which enters into all experience, a speculative analysis of what that independent reality must be like to give rise to the felt level of experience and to “answer to” the meanings by which the independently real is known.

Minus the suggestion of a completely “independent reality,” the above passage suggests that the pragmatist is better suited to explain, even in speculation, the felt reality of experience. The components of that process have already been discussed through Peirce’s pragmatism, specifically his description of firstness. Yet, what Rosenthal did not anticipate is that gravitation towards ontology is the natural movement of the phenomenologist. There is only so much to describe in the intentional relation. Though to be fair, describing the co-relational structure of act and objects in itself is difficult to establish when confronted with an entire philosophical tradition obsessed with rendering subjective life in the very way we talk about objects scientifically.

The phenomenologist is capable equally of explaining the immediacy of organism-environment when the phenomenologist embraces the collapse and simultaneous opening up of the proposed categories described in the intentional act and intended object relation. Scheler anticipated the questions of organism-environment interaction. In his *Human Place in the Cosmos*, Scheler proposes a metaphysics of experience that speculatively describes “the features of organism-environment interaction” on a cosmological scale. Human beings are locus, the very ground of being, between the impulses of life and the ineffectual spirit. Spirit can only inspire the living being to suspend the enervating impulses of life-drives and in realizing and acting on spiritual intentional acts, the person realizes spirit into the world. God becomes realized as the ground of being through loving acts, and God only has reality between persons realizing and acting on love. As such, we could test Scheler’s later metaphysics through pragmatism.<sup>15</sup>

The point of introducing Scheler’s later metaphysics, or what could be called a philosophical anthropology, is that Rosenthal is directing pragmatism towards the same end. She wrote without

knowledge of Scheler, and if he is a phenomenologist taking up questions she wants answered, then it is not that phenomenology is found wanting, but phenomenology can move in the direction Rosenthal desires through pragmatic method. Metaphysics is not denounced as much as it is necessary to make sense of the felt level of experience, and Scheler and James provide ample theory and methodological devices to make sense of the felt level of experience. In other words, what Rosenthal uncovered in her objection to phenomenology *is* its own movement towards ontology. Indeed, a pure transcendental phenomenology has little to offer the pragmatist (or myself), and an existential phenomenology is already in motion heading towards its collapse into hermeneutic ontology. However, if we take phenomenology to be the preservation and recovery of the very sources of meaning-constitution and meaning bestowal in which lived experience occurs (that is, intentionality), then phenomenology can assist pragmatism in arriving at a realism about the processes of experience itself. Phenomenology recovers the intentional standpoint of the first-person perspective in which we start to experience the world, and pragmatism can test the limits of those insights.

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## NOTES

1. Zachary Davis is at work on a translation of the same essay forthcoming at Northwestern University Press, *Cognition and Work: A*

*Study Concerning the Value and Limits of the Pragmatist Motifs in the Cognition of the World.*

2. I've already engaged in these interpretive tensions before in a comparative piece between James and Scheler. For more information, see Hackett (2015).

3. This teleological point is well taken and the best explanation of it in recent literature is Steven Levine's response of its neglect in Cheryl Misak's *The American Pragmatists*. See both Levine and Misak's articles in the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2013). One might extend this insight further and show how Misak neglects the entire mechanism of pure experience in James's radical empiricism.

4. See Michael Slater's wonderful book *William James on Ethics and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

5. There exists a long tradition of scholarship about the relationship between James and his relation to phenomenology. For the connections made here, it might do the reader well to acquaint themselves with Charles A Hobbs's "Was William James a Phenomenologist," in *Streams of William James*, vol. 5, issue 4 (Fall 2003): 8-13 and John A. Drabinski's "Radical Empiricism and Phenomenology: Philosophy and the Pure Stuff of Experience" in *Journal of Speculative Thought* vol. 2, no. 3 (1993). Hobbs outlines the overall parallels of the later James that I have found equally prominent in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. However, in recent years, it is only Drabinski and Hobbs that focus on the later James though John Daniel Wild's, *The Radical Empiricism of William James* originally published with Doubleday in 1969 was re-issued (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980). The two preeminent works on James and phenomenology in the late 1960s belonged to both Bruce Wilshire and Hans Lischoten. Both focused on the *Principles of Psychology*. These are: Bruce Wilshire's *William James and Phenomenology: A Study of the 'Principles of Psychology.'* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1968), and published in the same year, Hans Lischoten's *On the Way Toward A Phenomenological Psychology: the Psychology of William James*. In addition, there is James M. Edie's *William James and Phenomenology* (Indiana University Press, 1987). Richard Cobb-Steven's work should also be mentioned, *James and Husserl: The Foundation of Meaning* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), and as far as I can tell, Megan Craig has produced the only extensive monograph in recent years connecting Jamesian themes to non-Husserlian phenomenology, that is,

Levinas. That work is entitled *Levinas and James: Towards a Pragmatic Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

6. I have always wanted to translate *Materiale* with a neologism “contentual” when contrasted with the *Formalismus* Scheler disputes in Kant’s ethics. My refrain owes its gratitude to the numerous conversations about Scheler with Kenneth W. Stickers and Eric Mohr.

7. I am not the first to draw a deep connection to the work of Scheler and James. The most impressive account of this relationship textually consists of two places. First, there are some brief elements of how Scheler encountered pragmatism detailed in Fring’s *The Mind of Max Scheler* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), but most impressively, this connection is made by Kenneth W. Stickers in his Preface to *The Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* trans. M. Frings (London: Routledge, 2012). In the last three years, there is also an article by Rebecca Farinas, “Art and Soul: James and Scheler on Pragmatic Aesthetics” in *Pragmatism Today* vol. 4, no. 1 (2013): 99-109. However, I must caution the reader that there are some serious exegetical defects with Farinas about Scheler’s work that make me wary about the connections she draws between James and Scheler. She considers that Scheler’s value-hierarchy “is based on a formal, abstract a priori, but it is relative to lived experience” (104); she uses the term value-disposition as an origin of the value-hierarchy, and she stresses that Scheler’s axiology is “dependent on democratic, free actions within lived-experience” (ibid.). The first is erroneous since Scheler is resisting the formal apriority of Kantian ethics and immediate immanence of lived-experience reveals the “material a priori.” An argument could be made that if James has a conception of C. I. Lewis’s “operative a priori”, then Scheler’s material a priori may be very similar. Second, the language of “disposition” is too psychological to describe the phenomenological intentional act-center of the person that Scheler is describing. Lastly, the value hierarchy is not dependent on “democratic, free actions within lived experience” since there is nothing democratic about value-cognition. This third claim suffers from serious ambiguity and it is never qualified; I’m afraid these errors and others are only exacerbated since Farinas never develops her interpretation of Scheler by consulting any other texts in Scheler’s corpus other than the essay “Metaphysics and Art.”

8. The most decisively concise statement of James’s radical empiricism rooted in phenomenology is Charles Hobbs’s article mentioned in note 5 above.



9. I will not press the point here, but this later passage is suggestive. Interpreted in the direction I am pushing James, the passage could suggest James's ethics to be compatible with Scheler's ethical personalism.

10. Conjunctive relations are all those conscious relations of particular contents of pure experience, and pure experience is at root the primordial feeling and sensation of reality itself. "Pure experience," James writes a page later, "is *but another name for feeling and sensation*" (James, 2003, emphasis added).

11. While not a comparison between Scheler and James, I develop the case for a humanism based upon James and Husserl. See Hackett (2013b).

12. For more information about my interpretation, see Hackett (2013a).

13. In this way, one can naturally understand the outgrowth of Heideggerian fundamental ontology *qua* Husserlian phenomenology.

14. I italicized a portion of this passage where her words explain Scheler quite well.

15. For more information on my efforts along these lines, see Hackett (2015).