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**THE ETHICAL NOTIONS AND RELATIVISM IN CULTURE.
IN THE CONTEXT OF GERMAN MATERIAL ETHICS
OF VALUES**

A variability of culture and its material components is a general and well-known phenomenon in our history. We all know that moral ideas and ethical convictions change during the history. Their evident expression are concrete moral theories and codices, which ever contained some specified ethical notions and terms. These transformations are treated usually as a basic argument, proving the legitimacy of ethical and moral relativism. The aim of this paper is not to demonstrate the whole problem of the relativism, ethics and its notions. It aims rather at analyzing the comprehension of cultural relativism in context of three central ethical notions (value, validity, ought) formulated in main ideas of German material value-ethics, and particularly in theories formulated by Max Scheler (1874–1928), Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950) and Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889–1977). In particular, there are three questions which are foreground in the analyzed problem: (1) an understanding of the moral value, moral validity and moral ought; (2) an understanding of the phenomenon of cultural variability within moral ethos; (3) criticism and refutation of the ethical relativism in the context of distinctions and notions used in writings of those authors. I endeavour, then, by referring to the ideas of German value-ethics, to examine whether it is possible to explain moral changes and plurality in culture, without a moral relativism.

By saying “a moral relativism in culture”, I mean the conception stating that a value, firstly, does not exist independently from human valuing and secondly, that this valuing depends on the human’s decision, will or feeling. What is, then, a value? According to relativists, it is a product of human acts (will, decision, feeling, action, individual and social needs, social opinions and conventions). Thus, there are always people which create the axiological

site of the real world. Without human conscience and activity the world will be lost, of course, its axiological attributes.

That question requires, firstly, to be undertaken in the context of material value-ethics, because it offers the solution which consolidates relativism with moral absolutism. Secondly, it is a perspective which allows us, as I hope, to avoid many of absurdities and antinomies appearing in the post-modernist, subjectivistic and emotivistic theories, however not losing the phenomenon of the historical variability of values and changing human valuations. And thirdly that is a phenomenological conception which offers the largest and most precise understanding of the value in the 20th century.

The first and main argument, that the German material ethics of values gave against ethical relativism is, in my opinion, an idea of the emotional feeling of values (*Wertfühlen, Wertgefühl*).¹ This value-feeling² demonstrates a value primary and indirect. Nobody can create it arbitrarily or eliminate it directly. That is why it is possible to interpret a value-feeling as the first and basic phenomenological argument against relativism. It demonstrates, as “passive” human experience, that value-being and value-hierarchy are objective and independent from the human value-consciousness, will, action or attitudes. There are rather value-feeling and value-preferring, Scheler states in *Formalism in Ethics*, which are always a basis in which the purpose of will is grounded: “Nothing can become a purpose that was not first a goal!”³ Hartmann formulates in his *Ethics* the same opinion: human will is grounded in the value-consciousness, in that human will a value is always given already.⁴

A value-feeling, however, has an emotional nature which causes, naturally, many critiques and reproaches.⁵ Furthermore, a value-feeling is changing in the history and other different cultures or civilisations. Can we, then,

¹ See also: L. Kopciuch, *Krytyka relatywizmu etycznego u Nicolai Hartmanna* (Critique of Ethical Relativism in Nicolai Hartmann), “Edukacja Filozoficzna” 2006, Vol. 41, pp. 157–163.

² About an idea of axiological feeling see e.g.: R. Zaborowski, *Nicolai Hartmann's Approach to Affectivity and Its Relevance for the Current Debate Over Feelings*, in: *The Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann*, ed. R. Poli, C. Scognamiglio, F. Tremblay, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin–Boston 2011, pp. 159–175.

³ See: M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values. A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical personalism*, transl. by M. S. Frings and R. L. Funk, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1973, p. 40.

⁴ See e.g.: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, transl. by S. Coit, with a new introduction by A. A. M. Kinneging, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick–London 2007, pp. 192–194.

⁵ From a different points of view. See e.g.: V. Kraft, *Foundations for a Scientific Analysis of Value*, red. H. L. Mulder, Vienna Circle Collection, Vol. 15, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht–Boston–London 1981.

really found our axiological knowledge on value-emotions? Can we really find some emotions which will have a universal and intersubjective character? And can we really speak about a cognitive role of emotions in general? These questions cause that it becomes necessary, also in material ethics of value, to give some other types of arguments against relativism. And, in my opinion, there are particular notions and distinctions in the structure of values which have this function to realize.

Let us first reconstruct a phenomenological idea of the value in general. There are objectivistic and absolutistic understanding of value which are proposed in the material value-ethics. Scheler notes that moral values are objective and ideal entities and noematas:⁶ they are “irreducible, basic phenomena of emotive intuition”⁷ existing independently on the real world. In Hartmann a value has an ideal being⁸ and is an ideal essence: “The mode of Being peculiar to values is evidently that of an ideal self-existence. The values are originally patterns of an ethical ideal sphere, of a realm with its own structures, its own laws and order. This sphere is connected organically with the theoretical ideal sphere, the logical and the mathematical, as well as with that of pure essences in general”.⁹ In Hildebrand the values are founded in God.¹⁰ A different position was represented only by Hans Reiner, who did not make decisions about a metaphysical position of value at all.¹¹ So if we ignore the differences existing in their ideas, we can say that in Scheler, Hartmann and von Hildebrand a moral value is interpreted as an essence (*Wesenheit*) existing independently from the real

⁶ See also: P. Orlik, *Fenomenologia świadomości aksjologicznej (Max Scheler – Dietrich von Hildebrand)* [The Phenomenology of Axiological Consciousness (Max Scheler – Dietrich von Hildebrand)], Wydawnictwo IF UAM, Poznań 1995, pp. 89–115.

⁷ See: M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, p. 265.

⁸ How is character of this ideality and objectivity of value, ontological or rather only epistemological, is a question, which in this place we can ignore. I analyzed this problem in the other place already. See: L. Kopciuch, *O dyskusjach na temat statusu wartości (z historii materialnej etyki wartości)* [On the Discussions concerning Status of the Value (of the History of the Material Value Ethics)], “Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia” 2010, Vol. V, fasc. 2, pp. 153–164. See also: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 217–219. See also: E. Kelly, *Material Value-Ethics: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann*, “Philosophy Compass” 2008, Nr. 3/1, pp. 5–6; F. Kraenzel, *Nicolai Hartmann’s Doctrine of ideal values*, “Value Inquiry” 1994, Nr. 18, pp. 299–306; A. Kinneging, *Hartmann’s Platonic Ethics*, [in:] *The Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann*, pp. 195–220.

⁹ N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, p. 221.

¹⁰ See: D. von Hildebrand, *Ethik*, 2. Aufl., *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. II, Verlag Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1973, pp. 169–174.

¹¹ See: H. Reiner, *Wertethik nicht mehr aktuell?*, “Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung” 1976, Bd. 30, Heft 1, pp. 93–98; See also: *id.*, *Die Grundlagen der Sittlichkeit. Zweite, durchgesehene und stark erweiterte Auflage von Pflicht und Neigung*, Verlag Anton Hain, Meisenheim am Glan 1974, p. XI.

opinion of real subject. Such general perspective implicates, perforce, a question about the cultural and historical relativism and its legitimacy. To answer this question, it is necessary to give the basic distinction between value itself (*Wert*) and its validity (*Geltung*). It is also necessary to demonstrate, more exactly, a characteristic for phenomenological ethics idea of the human value-feeling.

A distinction between value itself and its validity was clearly formulated by Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann. Scheler holds that for being of the value it does not matter whether a man experiences values.¹² He stress also: "For example, the wretchedness of the world of values belonging to the great masses of our culture and times does not rest on general human subjectivity of values. It rests on other ground, which determine in part man's natural view of the world in general and in part the common views of man our civilisation".¹³ And Nicolai Hartmann notes, that by saying about the so-called "relativity of values" we mean a dependence their validity on the changing historical and cultural situations.¹⁴

A validity¹⁵ (*Geltung*) is not an element of value itself. It is only a moment of the real world, i.e. it appears in the real human axiological consciousness (*Wertbewußtsein*). This way it is possible to think that a value itself, by losing its importance and validity, does not lose its ideal being. The value itself takes its actuality in some particular, concrete real situations only. E.g. a value of freedom takes its current events during the war; value of measure takes its importance only in situation of wastefulness. Hartmann holds that a value, and more exactly its content, is ever related to the concrete real situation. In result, a value takes always its current validity only when adequate type of this situation appears. The variability of situations causes the variability of the validity of value. Thus, a historical

¹² See: M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, p. 266.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁴ See: N. Hartmann, *Das Wertproblem in der Philosophie der Gegenwart*, in: *id.*, *Kleinere Schriften*, Bd. III: *Vom Neukantianismus zur Ontologie*, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1955, p. 330: Ist also die sog. »Relativität der Werte« vielmehr nur die geschichtliche Unbeständigkeit ihres Aktuellseins und der ihm folgenden »Geltung«, so löst sich das Rätsel, warum sie so hartnäckig den Werten selbst nachgesagt wird: das geschieht deswegen, weil man immer die Geltung für die Seinsweise der Werte selbst hielt. Das hat sich als Irrtum erwiesen, und damit fällt die Relativität des Wertvollseins als solche hin". See also: E. Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann*, "Phenomenologica" 203, Springer, Dordrecht–Heidelberg–London–New York 2011, pp. 125–131; L. Kopciuch, *Krytyka relatywizmu etycznego u Nicolaia Hartmanna*, pp. 157–170.

¹⁵ But it is necessary to accent that a term "validity" (*Geltung*) appears in works of Hartmann in several, different meanings (validity as axiological character of the value itself; validity as term near to actually-ought-to-Be; validity as an element of ethos).

relativism of value is only a relativism of the validity, not of the value itself, because Hartmann believes that value takes its importance only in some kinds of situations and in other their types it lose it.¹⁶

Therefore, this way interpreted axiological relativism seems to be only some theoretical misinterpretation and its source is a fact that we do not have a clearly distinction between value itself and its validity. This way we have the first insight into relation between ethical notions and relativism already. This insight, however, becomes distinct only after we explained the structure of the value and its relation to the validity.

There is a distinction between two moment of the value itself, which we have to consider now. Scheler and Hartmann both describe a value as a composition of two main moments. The first one is an exact axiological component (an axiological form of value, value character) and the second one is an only ontological factor (a matter of value). Hartmann notes: “The moral value of trust is not trust itself. The latter is only the material – a specific and generally describable relation between person and person. The value character of trust is not this relation – and not only not the real relation between particular persons, but also not the idea of such a relation altogether”.¹⁷ So that is only a matter¹⁸ of value that corresponds relationally with the concrete type of situation in culture. An exact axiological character of the value does not change. A result of this distinction is the thesis stating that it is possible to explain a variability of human valuing by not accepting a relativism.

The main problem in this conception is only that a relativist does not accept that distinction, because usually he identifies a value with its validity. That is why a basic importance has a distinction between two different kinds of the value-feeling as a primary knowledge about the values. As a phenomenological description demonstrates, this real value-feeling is independent from the human will and its intentional wishes.¹⁹ In this primary and receptive value-feeling a value is ever “self-given”. The subject has here

¹⁶ N. Hartmann, *Vom Wesen sittlicher Forderungen*, in: *id.*, *Kleinere Schriften*, Bd. I: *Abhandlungen zur systematischen Philosophie*, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1955, p. 305: “Es folgt darin dem Aristotelischen Gesetz des Lebensgebietes bzw. der jeweilig aktuellen Lebenslage. Und je nachdem, welches Lebensgebiet unter gegebenen Verhältnissen das vordringliche ist, dessen ihm zugehörige Werte sind auch im Wertbewußtsein der Menschen die vordringlichen und bestimmen den Typus der Moral”.

¹⁷ *Id.*, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, p. 217.

¹⁸ About a phenomenological understanding of term “material” see: E. Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value*, pp. 8–9.

¹⁹ See: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 189–194; M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, pp. 30–45.

only a receptive character and his primary knowledge about value appears in a such receptive acts of the “*Getroffensein*”. If we have a correct understanding of this situation, we can see, at once, that a main relativistic argument (telling that subject “creates” the values) is mistaken. There are no people which create the values. There are rather the values which create the people as a spiritual persons. Therefore, we may also have an unreal value-consciousness, e.g. a consciousness made by axiological illusion or sensual passions.²⁰ Hartmann agrees with Scheler and von Hildebrand in this matter. However, he states clearly that axiological illusion proves implicitly that a value has an ideal and objective existence. Paradoxically, an illusion proves that does exist its object, value itself.

An analogical idea was formulated in writings of von Hildebrand. In his *Ethics*, by analyzing a position represented in the “French sociological school”, he demonstrates an error appearing in the identification of the value and social axiological “conventions”. Its representatives state that the notion “moral value” means only the objectification of the social convictions. As Anatol France says, an act is bad because it is socially convicted, and not inversely.²¹ If an action or attitude are socially approved, then they have, of course, a positive moral value. And if they are socially criticized, they have a negative value. In such conception, the value is indeed, independent from the opinion of individual person but it is always determined by the opinion of the society. There are two possible interpretations of this situation which are rejected by von Hildebrand: (1) the moral values do not exist at all and they are only some “illusions”; (2) the moral values exist only as some “conventions”. But if we want to interpret the value as some “illusions”, von Hildebrand notes, we have to reject a phenomenology and its “necessary intelligible essences” (*notwendige intelligible Wesenheiten*).²² And if we want to interpret the value as only some kinds of “conventions”, we do not understand how, at all, we can criticize the moral “conventions” which are accepted in other communities. Such criticism (e.g. criticism of Nazism) implicates impliedly the existence of objective, or at last independent from the social opinion, values which determine and make possible this criticism. And finally, von Hildebrand states: the theory saying that a value is a product of the social conventions do not need to negate the objective existence of value because this theory, precisely, says only what is considered as a value in the given concrete community.

²⁰ See: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 99–104.

²¹ See: D. von Hildebrand, *Ethik*, p. 117.

²² See: *ibid.*, p. 120, 123.

Returning to the general distinction between a value and its validity, we endeavour now to explain what are the reasons causing change the validity of values. There are two main explanations here:²³

- (1) the objective answer: the objective historical change of the social and political situations which open or close an actuality and validity of the value (that was forth of all the idea of Hartmann);
- (2) the subjective answer: the limitation, errors and illusions appearing in the human value-feeling and value-cognition, e.g. a resentment (Scheler, Hartmann, von Hildebrand), a valuation delusion (Scheler, Hartmann, von Hildebrand), a valuation blindness (Scheler, Hartmann, von Hildebrand), a transference of value attention (Hartmann), a blindness of subsumption (von Hildebrand).²⁴

On the one hand, there are only the different kinds of the validity (*Geltung*) which are dependent on the real world and human value-knowledge. And, on the other hand, there are only values as the ideal essences itself which are independent from the real value-consciousness.

We see, therefore, that terminological distinctions (a value and its validity, a matter and axiological form of the value) permit to explain a variability of historical moral ethos without accepting its relativistic interpretation.

The next question is: what is a structure of the moral ought and what is the relation between ought and changing culture? A distinction between a value itself and its ought, so deeply specific for the German material value-ethics, was formulated in the beginning of this school by Max Scheler in clearly opposition to Kant's formalism.²⁵ This distinction defines, naturally, a main difference between a formal and material ethic in general. In Int

Can we, then, speak about many kind of ought? Rather does only one type of ought exist? It seems, as one can hear usually, that the plurality and

²³ See also: Z. Zwoliński, *Byt i wartość u Nicolaia Hartmanna* [Being and Value in Nicolai Hartmann], PWN, Warszawa 1974, pp. 298–302.

²⁴ See: M. Scheler, *Ressentiment*, ed. by L. A. Coser, transl. by W. W. Holdheim, Schocken, New York 1972 [*Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen*]; N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 226–232; D. von Hildebrand, *Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis. Eine Untersuchung über ethische Strukturprobleme*, dritte durchgesehene Ausgabe, Patris Verlag, Vallendar-Schönstatt 1982; D. von Hildebrand, *Substitute für wahre Sittlichkeit*, in: *id.*, *Idolkult und Gotteskult, Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. VII, Verlag Josef Habel, Regensburg 1974; D. von Hildebrand, *Wahre Sittlichkeit und die Situationsethik*, in: *id.*, *Situationsethik und kleinere Schriften, Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. VIII, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1973, pp. 17–164. See also: P. Orlik, *Fenomenologia świadomości aksjologicznej (Max Scheler – Dietrich von Hildebrand)*, pp. 143–161.

²⁵ See: M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, pp. 5–7, 163–239.

historical change of moral ought prove the legitimacy of moral relativism. That is the question which must be explained now.

There are two kinds of the oughtness, Scheler notes, which we have to distinguish: an ideal ought and an normative ought. The ideal ought is invariable and unreal. It is connected with the value itself and founded on it. Its character is independent on the real situation and its concrete matter. Unlike the ideal ought, the normative oughtness assumes a “bad” human nature. It assumes that people are inclined to act inconsistently with the value. So it has a repressive character and, what is most important, it is related to the concrete real situation. Scheler says: “According to the nature of the ideal ought, one can speak of an ought only when a value is given in its non-being; so, according to its nature, an *imperative* pertains to a posited value to which a conation is related, but not in original intention. When, on the other hand, this is a case, it makes no *sense* to speak of »duty«, »norm« or »imperative«. However, on the basis of what we have said, this implies that an (ideal) *ought-not-to-be* of a conation is a foundation of every imperative proposition. Throughout history, therefore, prescriptions have always preceded prescriptions (e.g. Decalogue)”²⁶

In Hartmann an oughtness in general divides into three kinds: an ideal ought-to-Be (*ideales Seinsollen*), an actual ought-to-Be (*aktuelles Seinsollen*) and a real ought-to-Do (*reales Tunsollen*).²⁷ It is necessary to remind here an opinion formulated by Scheler in “Preface” to the third edition of his *Formalism in Ethics*: “I would like to stress here that I consider Hartmann’s new analyses of »ideal« and »normative« oughtness as valuable refinement of the analyses of »value and ought« in my Formalism”²⁸

Therefore, what is a sense of the distinctions proposed by Hartmann which were so good esteemed by Scheler?

Firstly, Hartmann, like Scheler, speaks about the ideal ought-to-Be. But it is now the moment of the value itself: “There is something absurd in the thought that a value is a thing that ought to be only in so far as its matter is unreal. That a man ought to be honest, straightforward, trust worthy, is something which does not cease to be because somebody actually is so. The man ought to be even as he then is”²⁹ Secondly, he distinguishes the actual ought-to-Be. It appears only when the real situations do not

²⁶ M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, p. 211.

²⁷ See: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 247–270.

²⁸ M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, p. XXVIII (foot-note 10).

²⁹ N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, p. 247.

realize the matter of the value yet. There are two main conditions which it depends on: (1) a value is not realized; (2) there is given a concrete real situation to which this value is related. As we see, this ideal ought-to-Be is most independent from the real world and its variability. But ideal value as an ideal being refers always relationally to reality. Its matter is some model for the real situation and its ought-to-Be is ought to-Be in the real world. Clearly, the dependence on the reality grows larger at the actual ought-to-Be. It presupposes that in reality it does not realize a value which should be realized. Therefore it depends on the existence of the real situation and its matter. Hartmann states that the greatest dependence appears at the real ought-to-Do. There are three conditions on which depends this oughtness: (1) a value is not realized; (2) there is given a concrete real situation to which refers this value; (3) there are some people for whom a realization of value is real possibility in general: "The Ought – and ultimately the value – therefore, of course, determines the real also; not unconditionally, however, and not directly, but only by the roundabout route through the practical subject, through the medium which senses values and is capable of directing events. The real determination, which issues from the moral values, is an indirect, interrupted determination, and on that account is also conditioned by the point of interruption".³⁰

Another example of such detailed distinctions, which lead to the refutation of relativism, one can find in the theory formulated by von Hildebrand (especially in *Moralia*). Firstly, like Scheler and Hartmann, Hildebrand speaks about a general ought-to-Be (*Seinsollen*). Secondly, he distinguishes a moral ought-to-Do. It characterizes only these values which realization depends on the human free will and which are realizable in action at all. Thirdly he distinguishes the oughtness which is meaning as a moral duty or obligation.³¹

How is a precise structure of the distinguished kinds of oughtness and how is their relation to human personality and freedom, are the questions, which in this place we can ignore. However, we have now to ask about detailed relation between oughtness and relativism. Is it really a truth that historical variability of ethos proves that relativism is correct? Hartmann demonstrates that three kinds of oughtness depend, in the different way, on the reality, but they do not prove the relativism. An adequate expression

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³¹ See: D. von Hildebrand, *Moralia. Nachgelassenes Werk, Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. IX, Verlag Josef Habbel, Regensburg 1980, pp. 64–67. See also: Ch. Hillebrand, *Die Wertethik bei Dietrich von Hildebrand*, Dissertation, Zentral-Verlag für Dissertationen Triltsch, Düsseldorf 1959, pp. 9–11.

for this dependence is not “relativism” but “relationism”. There are only ethos, evaluations, actual and real ought, which change in the cultural history of man. In Scheler, only a normative oughtness depends indirectly on the reality and in von Hildebrand, like in Hartmann, only its second and third kind.

Therefore, Scheler and Hartmann von Hildebrand propose the terminological distinctions in ethics, which implicate that ethical relativism is a theoretical fallacy. So it seems to be founded in the incorrect theory and description of value and evaluation because a culture and its historical variability prove the change of valuation only.

So the next general argument against relativism, especially stressed by Hartmann, is a thesis about not-identity between relativism and relationism.³² A general solution here is the same like in all previous distinctions showing a mistake contained in relativism. The detailed analyze demonstrates that a relational reference between value and real world must not be interpreted like relativism. Some relations, Hartmann notes, have an absolute character.³³ There are three kinds of this *relational* reference between value and real world. Firstly, that is a reference of the matter of value to the real situation (it was analysed already). Secondly, a value is always related to the human person as a subject and object of the moral conduct or action. Thirdly, that is a reference of value of goodness to the person which for a moral value is always some goodness. We find here, naturally, an incorrect identification of the moral value and the value of goodness that, indeed, appears always with the moral values but is not identical to them. There are, then, two different values which we have to distinguish: a moral value itself and a secondary, only co-occurring value of goodness. A friendly action is ever an important goodness for the person that is its object and beneficiary. But a moral value (its existence and its level in the hierarchy) is independent from the value of goodness. However, also this value of goodness refers to the person relational only, not relative. No one, Hartmann states, can arbitrary decide what is good for him. An umbrella is such goodness when it rains and the warm shoes when it is cold. In this context it is also necessary to remind a distinction formulated by D. von Hildebrand. He distinguishes three kinds of motivating objects: (1) the subjective satisfying objects; (2) the objective goodness for the person; (3) the values them-

³² The role of this arguments was stressed by Roman Ingarden. See: R. Ingarden, *Uwagi o względności wartości* [Remarks on Relativity of Values], in: id., *Studia z estetyki*, PWN, Warszawa 1970, p. 210.

³³ See: N. Hartmann, *Moral Phenomena. Volume One of Ethics*, pp. 207–210.

selves.³⁴ I partially agree with Hildebrand because the subjective satisfying objects are given for us in the other experience than objective goodness or moral values. However, as I hold, we should not forget that subjective satisfying objects are usually founded in the objective status of the person and the real world in general.³⁵

Let us now remind the main thesis formulated by Scheler, Hartmann and von Hildebrand. Firstly, a main but, unfortunately, connected with the great difficulties argument against relativism is (and, as I think, it should be) an idea of primary and emotional value-feeling. This idea is founded in the general position represented in material value-ethics and its emotionalism. Secondly, there are distinctions between value itself and its validity and, next, between the different kinds of oughtness, which complete this primer argument. However, there is some paradox in the phenomenological ethics of values, that its argument typically phenomenological seems to be less conclusive than other arguments, which, evidently, do not have a typically phenomenological character and appear in other conceptions too.³⁶ In this context one can understand a historical development of the material value-ethics after Scheler and Hartmann.³⁷

A cultural variability and diversity, so stressed in the contemporary theories of civilisation (e.g. by A. Toynbee, F. Koneczny or, contemporarily, by S. Huntington), proves, indeed, that an axiological universum has a plural and complex character, but it does not prove the ethical relativism. A change of situations generates a change in human value-consciousness and its spectrum only.

Finally, we should also ask a question about the legitimacy of described conceptions. There are, as I hold, the solutions which are partially correct. A value and its value-character are given in the emotional acts of value-feeling. It concerns, however, only the axiological side of value, not its matter (or content). A matter of value can be experienced and recognized in the context of concrete, real, cultural and historical situations. Therefore, comprehension proposed by material value-ethics, partially, needs the critical and modified continuation. It is necessary, firstly, to search a solutions uniting emotionalism and rationalism in the ethics (and in the axiology in

³⁴ See: D. von Hildebrand, *Ethik*, pp. 39–68.

³⁵ See: L. Kopciuch, *Wolność a wartości. Max Scheler – Nicolai Hartmann – Dietrich von Hildebrand – Hans Reiner* [Freedom and Values. Max Scheler–Nicolai Hartmann–Dietrich von Hildebrand–Hans Reiner], Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010, pp. 94–97.

³⁶ See e. g.: K. Twardowski, *O tak zwanych prawdach względnych* [On So-called Relative Truths], Lwów 1934.

³⁷ See e.g. H. Reiner, *Wertethik nicht mehr aktuell?*, pp. 93–98.

general). Secondly, in particular in context of contemporary conflicts and challenges, it is required to look for the value-synthesis which allows to limit the cultural differences in the emotional value-consciousness. But there are only the concrete ethical and axiological investigations in which we can state whether this perspective is realisable at all.

S U M M A R Y

In this paper a relation between moral relativism and selected ethical notions formulated in the German material ethics of values is examined. Firstly, I demonstrate the understanding of structure of value in writings of Scheler, Hartmann and von Hildebrand. Secondly, I endeavour to prove that there are notions of value itself and its validity which allows to criticize the legitimacy of the moral relativism. Thirdly, I analyze a different kinds of the oughtness (an ideal ought, a normative ought, an ideal ought-to-Be, an actual ought-to-Be, a real ought-to-Do). The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that the historical and social relativity of the normative oughtness (also of the actual and real oughtness) does not contradict the invariability of the ideal ought-to-Be.