

Politics, Values, and National Socialism



Aurel Kolnai

Graham McAleer, editor

Translations by Francis Dunlop

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Editorial Note

The great majority of the essays in this collection are translated into English for the first time. Only five of the sixteen essays have previously been published in their present form and all are gathered here for the first time in an easily accessible volume. The translations, from Spanish, German, and Hungarian, have been done by Francis Dunlop. Francis has been tireless in translating the work of Kolnai and is responsible for much of Kolnai being easily accessible. This volume is dedicated to him.

Though never assembled in book form by Kolnai, the last entry here, “The Moral Emphasis,” is a statement of the basic themes of moral philosophy and places Kolnai’s own views, concepts, and innovations in systematic order. The essays are presented ordered by date of composition. The exception is the two essays on dignity, which I have placed side by side.

I would like to thank the Kolnai estate and the Kolnai Archive (University of St. Andrews, Scotland) for kindly granting permission to publish the Kolnai works in this book. I would also like to thank Professor John Haldane (University of St. Andrews, Scotland), the literary executor of the Kolnai estate, for his assistance in bringing this project to fruition.



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Introduction to Aurel Kolnai's *Politics, Values, and National Socialism*

Graham McAleer

Pick up a book of contemporary moral philosophy and you will find pages devoted to the major theories of ethics, for example, Kantianism and Utilitarianism, puzzles about the nature of obligation, musings over what exactly motivates us to do moral acts that conflict with our own interests, and difficulties connected with whether rationality or the emotions account for our moral knowledge. This collection of essays concerns a different problem, one seldom addressed. What sort of thinking concludes in moral subversion?

It is the mark of a first-rate theorist not only to fix on a vital topic ignored by others but to offer a framework for adjudicating the matter. The essays collected here confirm that Kolnai is one of the great conservative theorists of the twentieth century. He likely honed in on the problem of subversion on account of what is distinctive in his thinking. Much conservative thought begins with a commitment to a robust conception of human nature. Kolnai, by contrast, is vividly struck by its fragility. Intriguingly, progressivism holds this in common with Kolnai. Yet, whilst progressivism views human nature's malleability as a capacity for hopeful change, Kolnai mostly saw threat. If human nature is easily beguiled, how can one confirm civilizational values that foster personal flourishing? By way of an answer, Kolnai employs a simple method: carefully analyze the leading intellectual positions and thinkers of the day, the dominant social movements, and prevailing moral moods—psychoanalysis, fascism, Heidegger, Schmitt, National Socialism, hatred, and arrogance—and show how they run counter to the value architecture of civilization.

Kolnai's essays presented here date from 1925 to 1970, with twelve of the nineteen essays from 1925 to 1944. Born into a middle-class, liberal

Jewish family in 1900, Aurel Stein changed his last name to Kolnai in his teenage years: in 1926, after converting to Catholicism, he changed his name again to Aurel Thomas Kolnai.¹ A precocious Hungarian youth, Kolnai always had an interest in moral and political matters. At a tender age he bucked convention, supporting the English and French 1914 war effort despite living in Budapest, one of the two Imperial capitals at the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the aftermath of the empire's collapse, and now resident in Vienna, Kolnai watched the rise of fascism in Europe. Few saw as early as did Kolnai the colossal threat posed by National Socialism, and even fewer were able to offer an analysis of the phenomenon with any depth and range. Kolnai's observations found voice in the book that Axel Honneth calls "path-breaking,"² *The War against the West*. A seven-hundred-page survey of the ethical and political writings of the Nazis, written in English and published in London in 1938, *The War against the West* is largely a compilation of Nazi writings organized around themes. Kolnai adds short analyses throughout the book, but he thought the themes he highlighted (e.g., gathering a set of Nazi texts around the theme of the eroticism of military life) gave analytic insight aplenty. This Transaction volume can usefully be read as the philosophical companion of *The War against the West* and is likely the most sustained contemporary philosophical inquiry into the value context of National Socialism extant.

The early essays in this Transaction volume were written in either Hungarian or German and are searching theoretical works pondering the value perversions that gripped central Europe post World War I. They are an index of the times, but their theoretical range ensures their continued importance for anyone interested in the dynamics of moral subversion, value theory, and the analytics of totalitarianism.

The first essay dates to 1925 and concerns Max Scheler's assessment of the theory of appetite in Freud. Freud is famous for the central place he accorded desire in his assessment of psychology. Scheler is widely acknowledged as one of philosophy's greats, but in 1925 his stature was simply enormous; he had not yet been eclipsed by Heidegger, whose thought would come to recast much of European philosophy. Scheler had a profound impact on Kolnai's own thinking, and he is a recurrent figure in the pages here. At the time of this 1925 essay, Kolnai was actually a minor part of Freud's Vienna Circle but on the cusp of detaching himself completely, having all but concluded that Scheler was a better guide in morals and politics.

If, with Aristotle, the human is a political animal, it is crucial to grasp rightly man's animality so as to shape a successful politics. Freud offers

a genetic account of human appetite: History—evolutionary, collective, familial, and personal—matters on this account. An implication is that appetite is viewed as metamorphic. Appetite, concludes Freud, is not simply kinetic but radically liable to shaping. Freud strips down human nature to a few dynamic elements and grants institutions, like the family, enormous formative power. To Freud's focus on history and development, Scheler opposes an eternal order of value to which appetite can respond. To his mind, human appetite cleaves to an eternal order of value, and psychological development happens within a stable framework of a hierarchy of value.

To the Schelerian, we misunderstand the human if, with Freud, we emphasize the history of desire rather than refinements of appetite deferring to a fixed value order. Through painstaking phenomenological analysis, Scheler showed that though there are myriad values, they all fall into one of four broad categories: the holy and personal, culture or the arts and sciences, the vital, and the useful and hedonic. Personal development, civilization, and human action all revolve around this value landscape. In this essay, which Kolnai read to the Vienna Circle, Kolnai wants to modify a basically psychoanalytic or genetic account of desire by the use of Scheler. Naturally, the paper is theoretically unstable. Kolnai seeks a fusion of sorts, but the pull of Scheler is starting to dominate Kolnai's thinking.³ Indeed, Scheler's position becomes central to Kolnai's value analysis of National Socialism, and his general theory about how exactly moral subversion operates.

The topic of "Max Scheler's Critique and Assessment of Freud's Theory of Libido" sets the stage for Kolnai's reflections on the enormous philosophical significance of the next few decades in the West: Fascism will evoke history as the tutor of political desire while Kolnai recommends, again and again, value enrichment as basic to the civilizational project. Nineteenth-century thought, whether one thinks of Hegel, Darwin, or Freud, was dominated by ideas of history and the genesis of things. This domination was partially halted with Husserl's innovation in philosophical method, phenomenology. Scheler and Kolnai are early exponents of phenomenology. Kolnai's description of phenomenology is a handy definition of the method, but it also tells us much about what he saw as the distemper of the times. The description is worth quoting in full:

But the phenomenological method, as its name already implies, approaches things from precisely the opposite direction from the psychoanalytical. . . . Rather than explaining, decyphering, deriving and reducing the phenomena to their common denominator, or establishing the laws of their occurrence and development, it tries to intuit and grasp

their immediate ‘essences’ and to hold fast, through the most appropriate concepts and descriptions, all their varieties, together with their ideal, unvarying, ‘connections of meaning’. In the last analysis, the aim of this method is not to make possible the control and manipulation of the matter being investigated for the sake of healing, but to analyse it for the sake of understanding.

The lineaments of moral subversion, and its antidote, are outlined here. Kolnai’s thought is marked by hostility to reductionism. Fond of Bishop Butler’s “things are what they are,” the phenomenologist’s effort to describe the core of an experience, “for the sake of understanding,” as Kolnai puts it, is no mere epistemological preference: it is basic to right living and good political order. The reduction of things to a “common denominator” strikes at the principle of pluralism, with the constriction of monism favoring the centralization of power: deference to the unique quality of essences preserves their eccentricity and privilege, these being vital both to constitutional government and proper regard of the person. Note also, Kolnai’s worry that soteriology has a subversive edge. Not indifferent to reform and justice, Kolnai was nonetheless anxious that the effort to heal not be achieved at the cost of wholesale transformation.

This point is crucial, and precisely because of one thing Freud gets very right. Kolnai would always remain impressed by Freud’s insight into human malleability. In his 1925 essay, Kolnai criticizes Scheler for thinking that human psychology is stratified in *sui generis* layers. In his 1913 *The Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler explains ethics as the intersection between value hierarchy and a range of emotional levels each with particular moral significance. For example, the most rudimentary emotional level, identification, explains loyalty to a people and place and helps explain the emergence of galvanizing political and religious leaders.⁴ The value hierarchy appears in all Kolnai’s work, but Scheler’s moral psychology does not. This psychology suggests that the human person has a resiliency, and no matter the quality of the value framework, human nature will near enough keep its bearings. Against Scheler’s basic moral confidence, Kolnai clearly favors a sense of moral vulnerability and vigilance against the illusions easily fostered by soteriology. Assuming Freud’s ideas of malleability and delusion, right access to the value frame is more vital than ever; subversion is a more complete threat, and a suspicion of rapid and significant social and institutional change warranted.

Kolnai ultimately rejects Freudianism on account of its reductive propensity, its manipulative soteriology, and its ignorance of value structure. That human life unfolds inside a rigorous value order, Kolnai confirms in many of his own original phenomenological studies. His 1929 study of

disgust is well known,⁵ and had an impact on the thinking of Bataille, for example.⁶ The 1933 essay "High-mindedness" identifies a moral attitude that is aloof from value structure. This essay has the observational deftness of the phenomenologist but might best be viewed as a contribution to an older style of moral analysis. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great formalized Christian moral reflection with the categorization of the seven deadly sins. A description of malformed moral psychological states—wrath, lust, envy, and the like—are deadly in a very real sense for Gregory: untended, these psychological states corrupt our persons, twist our relationships, and poison our actions, oftentimes with horrifying results. Gregory's analysis shaped Western consciousness profoundly, but Kolnai suggests that Gregory's definitive formulation of moral theology requires extension.

Sitting between pride and vanity, *Hochmut* is an eighth contender for a deadly sin. Pride is an overbearing celebration of worldly achievement; as Hume says, pride is essentially about my relationship to things in the world. High-mindedness, argues Kolnai, is a glorying in the self where "I and value are one." This attitude is subversive because it detaches the self from things, and especially, separates the self from the objective realm of values. "Pride may injure, though can just as well quicken; high-mindedness annihilates." Vanity depends on a spectator; it is a moral threat because vanity encourages an abdication of personal identity and responsibility as the hope to find favor with the spectator dominates. Being indifferent to the spectator, *Hochmut* is a reverse-vanity, having "a characteristic *apriorism* of the feeling of self-worth." Reticence before the world is an essential part of a person's self-possession, but high-mindedness is a flight from what "troubles the exquisite crystalline absoluteness of the subject and obliges it to *split*." Subjectivism, pantheism, and evolutionary theory are some of the intellectual positions tinged with high-mindedness, but Kolnai is especially anxious about "collective" high-mindedness and the way group-superiority wallows in "attitudes of isolation and self-exaltation." Such exaltation is extremely volatile, for high-mindedness is a falsification of the true standing of persons, intricately involved with the world. A preoccupation with security and inviolability results, and a horror of surrender takes hold. An appetite for security without deference to values, *Hochmut* is the spiritual condition of totalitarianism.

"High-Mindedness" is the first in a series of articles about the atmosphere of totalitarianism. Written in 1933, "The Total State and Civilization" continues the theme, arguing that totalitarianism is a return to primitivism and as such contradictory. Its advocates are desperately

critical of the turn in the West to commercial civilization. Primitivism is the solution, for at the start of the industrial revolution, the Scottish Whigs, Hume and Smith, argued that commerce is driven by the appetite for vanity and refinement. No renewal of culture can come from the destruction of refinement, insists Kolnai, yet such is the drive to primitivism. Always sympathetic to the Scots, Kolnai argues that the first, and most important, casualty of the attack on refinement is the person. The idea of the person entails a certain distance one from the other, an allowance of eccentricity: the material for the cultivation of personal taste, style, and interests are objects offered by refinement and attained through trade. Refinement enables personal cultivation, but it also facilitates the distance between persons and the state, permitting persons to critically survey state action. Primitivism, by contrast, is a radical identification of persons, the folding of the state into tribalism, and the displacement of the ordinary cares of the world by existential tension.

Advocates of primitivism were appalled by the casual comments of Whigs that a man's hours were never so innocently spent than when trying to make money. Opposing such a shriveled conception of human life with a fresh emphasis on the existential comes at a terrible cost, argues Kolnai. Stripping the human to existential care puts emphasis on security and therewith a concern for the group, worry about the borders ringing the group, and increases the sense that communication across boundaries is a threat. Uniform, in its multiple meanings, becomes all-important.

Many of the National Socialism essays document Kolnai's worry that Catholicism is responding poorly to the rise of fascism. On account of his method being phenomenological, Catholic theology seldom obtrudes into his analyses. However, his interest in the Church does help him explain why National Socialism had such a lure for Catholics, and his observations remain current. In the space of a year, Kolnai wrote essays on Schmitt, Heidegger, and Spann. Why would these thinkers—and Schmitt and Heidegger are thinkers of the first order—prefer primitivism to the refinements of civilization? The idea of the Church itself made them vulnerable, argues Kolnai. In theology, the Church is an institution whose ideal is universal human fellowship obedient to God's love. For the Church, all people are equal in having the same end, and this destiny loosens the bounds with any particular national community.

Though high civilizations preceded Christendom, Kolnai argues that Christianity fatally wounded primitivism and facilitated a civilization that cherished the human person like no other. The idea of the human person having a value beyond the life of the state and community is

nonetheless unstable. The idea of the Church is liable to be diluted to an international equalitarianism, the kind of humanitarianism sponsored by many international organizations today, and at the same time apt to collapse into separatist longings when the purity hoped for proves elusive. One of the most striking features of contemporary theology is its hostility to modernity and bourgeois liberal civilization. Most academic theology today is internationalist and humanitarian, yet, because skeptical of nation, trade and moral absolutes, separatist, localist, puritan. Kolnai warns that anarchistic Christianity is ill-equipped to break the “self-idolization and self-separation of the tribe.”

Though Kolnai accounts for why National Socialism was a lure for Schmitt, Heidegger, and Spann, he is untiring in his savaging of them. Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* is a classic work of the twentieth century, and its stature is well recognized by Kolnai.⁷ His lengthy review is full of perception, but it is Schmitt's famous vision of politics as the expression of a fault line, the distinction between friend and enemy, which naturally holds Kolnai's attention. The power of *The Concept of the Political* rests on its corrective force: before Schmitt, people thought politics concerned questions about how best to live together, but by his definition, politics is not about the art of civilization but rather an assertion of a group's existential worry—it is pure primitivism. Schmitt's innovation is the suggestion that politics is not a matter of domestic order but international threat. Kolnai burrows deep and shows that the logic of Schmitt is the logic of the Church, mangled. On the one hand, politics, for Schmitt, is international affairs, yet on the other, it is driven by parochialism. Adequate only to the reality of foreign affairs is “the unity of conflict”; and politics, stripped of all value properties, only expresses in the starkest manner, a *standpoint*. Politics is not just subjectivism—it is subjectivism purified.⁸ Schmitt is the theoretician of *Hochmut*.

He is not alone. In 1934, Kolnai wrote a short piece, “Heidegger and National Socialism.” It surely stands as one of the earliest contributions to an ongoing debate of whether, and to what degree, Heidegger's thinking is fascistic. Kolnai is in no doubt that Heidegger's horror of the “half-measures of civilization” did not merely drive Heidegger toward the Nazis but that he was the Third Reich's “prophet, visionary and inspiration.” Heidegger aims to document the universal condition of human existence. It would be a mistake to think that identifying this universal condition facilitated global communication and easy access to the ideas of other civilizations, for this condition is a constriction (*Beengtsein*) wrought by pervasive fear of death. Haunted, human life constricts, and

the universal collapses into “shared being,” and this is no more than the “absolutely compulsory community” of those around one. Threat, lived falsely, is the compromise of bourgeois civilization with its “conventional delusions, humbug, concealments,” but squarely faced, threat provokes a stark freedom, the resolve to live with it constantly. With such an ideal, “the barracks become temple, university and procreative laboratory.” With this ideal, existence no longer defers to the person and private life, nor objectively true beliefs, or a manifold of disparate social relations. “Shared being” replaces all of this, a colorless and toneless subjectivism prevails, and civilization gives way to high-mindedness.

At the end of the Heidegger essay, Kolnai wonders: “Will the fear-born dream leave its lying mark on reality for long?” A “uniform night” is descending; how ought Catholics to properly respond? The faults of bourgeois civilization are not total, insists Kolnai: Catholics must defend it, reminding others of the finer aspirations of the culture and treating “unavoidable human weakness with indulgence.” “On Human Equality” and “Othmar Spann’s Theory of Totality” were written within months of one another in 1934. The Spann essay stands as another example of how Catholics ought not to react to the shortcomings of bourgeois civilization, while the former sketches Kolnai’s own response.

Kolnai struggled to secure a permanent academic home his whole life, and in 1934, despite having written a seminal phenomenological analysis of disgust and a book on sexual ethics that still stands, I believe, as the most complete study of the subject, he was working as a journalist in Vienna. Known today as a conservative theorist, in 1934 Kolnai was center-left, and this shows in his equality essay. The essay has two goals: to protect the idea of equality from subversion by National Socialism and to make up a significant shortfall in liberal civilization. The Nazis do not reject equality. Fascist society has stronger motifs of equality than liberal bourgeois society, Kolnai reminds us, but these motifs—the emphasis on uniformity, Germans all equal in their superiority over other peoples, and absolute obligation to the state—cancel out equal rights and the principle of individual freedom these rights serve. National Socialism is evidently a falsification of the value of equality but, Kolnai thinks, it narrows the value rather than misidentifies it entirely. National Socialism is a distortion of solidarity, but it rightly sees that equality and solidarity stand together.

In this essay, Kolnai expresses dismay at the disparities in living standards prevalent throughout liberal civilization: Social equality is necessary, but an inkling of Kolnai’s future conservatism is found in his claim, nonetheless, that equality before the law is “most perfectly applicable”

respecting criminal law. Kolnai departs from liberal orthodoxy when he claims that the heart of equality is not equal rights but solidarity: minimum wage, workers' housing, and community self-government are commitments to a group equality upon which equal rights can then gain individual purchase. In some excellent pages, Kolnai explains how solidarity is the buttress of equality. What Kolnai terms "the moral sovereignty of personal life" is thwarted by serious economic inequalities. Social equality fosters the exercise of life, its opportunities for enrichment, the crafting of a thoughtful life, and moral responsibility: It secures a standing in society yet itself relies on what Kolnai interestingly identifies as "the element of partial equality." The material conditions for the exercise of rights are a prior commitment to a particular social life; a commitment to group equality comes with a geography. Workers' housing, for example, is an investment in a locality, a knot between elements spiritual, personal, and material contiguous and now bonded. This knot, which binds people, also binds concern and resources to a locality: it presupposes an equality peculiar, or partial, to some. Kolnai insists on this because equal rights are the recognition of distinct valid interests, but the implicit abstractness of these rights can literally strip assets of care and wealth from families and communities.

It is perhaps this theme of partial equality that drives Kolnai rightward. It prefigures his critique of humanitarianism—the global ethic of the contemporary left—and is recast in Kolnai's later conservatism as privilege. Though Kolnai is silent on the matter, it is highly likely that "On Human Equality" is Kolnai's commentary on Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Appearing in 1931, and stating essential principles of Catholic social thought, including solidarity, it is also likely that the pope's letter on social philosophy shaped Kolnai's reaction to the well-known Austrian Catholic social theorist, Spann.

Kolnai finds little to admire. He wonders how Austrian Catholics can have fallen for Spann's motley of romanticism, nationalism, and pantheism dressed up in Catholic Aristotelianism. For his target, Kolnai selects Spann's relish for the idea of totality. Like so many today, Spann was appalled by the fragmentation and lack of care for others exhibited by commercial societies. Kolnai also opposes social atomism, and where he proposes, quite profoundly, I believe, the idea of partial equality to secure solidarity, Spann opts for the motif of totality: a rigidly hierarchical vision of human efforts wherein each one performs a role to further the collective good. Put abstractly, solidarity is a function of the part, for Kolnai, the whole, for Spann. Kolnai argues that Christianity has always

avored a social and moral realism wherein the manifold parts and values of communal life are accorded their relative autonomy. By simply turning bourgeois individualism on its head, Spann offers solidarity without remainder. Instead of the Catholic tradition of accommodation and arbitration, Spann births a heaving, lumbering total state wherein the parts obediently function to serve the whole. The mood is totalitarian and has nothing to do with a Christian humility that is inseparably linked with realism. Christian humility acknowledges that there can be no reshaping of the world, only a mutual assistance that defers to independent agents and offers reconciliation rather than rivalry.

Managing to serve up solidarity without humility, Spann, like the far more talented Schmitt and Heidegger, displays an unappetizing high-mindedness. The subjectivism common to these thinkers confirms that something was seriously amiss in Catholic thought and warrants Kolnai's startling declaration at the start of his 1934 "The Abuse of the Vital" that "the great heresy afflicting the Christian West today is National Socialism." If our heretical triad brewed a twisted theology of the Church, the "philosophical content of this heresy," Kolnai claims, is vitalism. The essay is complex.

Returning to the theme of his 1925 article on Freud and Scheler, the essay reveals a new concern about the adequacy of Scheler's value analysis. He now worries that Scheler's thought might itself contribute to subversion. There is an unmistakable tendency within bourgeois culture when making judgments to defer to the values of generic happiness, utility, and whatever is pragmatic. For this reason, Scheler dwelt at length upon the singular importance of vital values, actualized by nobility, family life, combat, and the land. The essay begins topically with Kolnai warning Catholics that the Nazi passion for vitalism is a profound threat. He is mortified that Scheler's valid insights watered down culminate in the disturbing spread of Catholic youth groups: these groups champion the "world of lads and lasses" and oddly ignore that Catholic life is fixed on persons in the family and the broader multigenerational community. More catastrophic is the completely mistaken strategy espoused by some Catholics that common cause with National Socialism will deliver such a shock to the superficiality of bourgeois civilization that a new seriousness will emerge to which Catholicism can appeal. Kolnai cannot hide his contempt for such foolishness and in Churchillian tones demands outright opposition by Catholics to National Socialism.

Rather than worrying about how to save the culture, Catholics ought just to concentrate on grasping what counts as a good act. The essay thus

quickly veers away from the topical and becomes a profound meditation on the idea of value hierarchy. Themes essential to Kolnai's later thought are introduced: the essay is a necessary companion to anyone reading his essays "Practice and Morality" and "The Concept of Hierarchy."⁹ A hierarchy of values undoubtedly exists and impinges upon us, thinks Kolnai, but we build our lives amidst a host of concerns, relationships, institutions, events, hopes, and fantasies. This host is shot through with all manner of value attributes, all of which make varied claims upon us, and some, genuinely moral claims, but our "act consciousness," so to say, is preoccupied with navigating this throng of concern, events, and hopes. To explain, Kolnai gives an example: A man rescues another from drowning. Without a doubt a generous act, but, to the rescuer, the act surely registers *in consciousness* as "getting my neighbor out of danger." It is an act emergent from simple human concern, not value estimation.

A focus on value renewal, whether of vital values or any other domain, provokes a disintegration of human life, isolating into rigidly defined layers what dynamically merge together. A conservative would hereby be as mechanistic as Freud. Kolnai wants to emphasize that overvaluing one dimension of the human is a disservice to other dimensions. A person is "always in himself a representative of the totality of values with varying orders of emphasis," and so value isolation subverts personhood by devaluing ordinary human concerns, where most of human life happens. When Kolnai was writing, contempt for bourgeois values was, as now, strong. Kolnai does not doubt that commercial civilization foreshortens the human spirit, but it facilitates well the ordinary world of human concern. Furthermore, it is not true that bourgeois Whig culture is hostile to the spiritual, but the spiritual is rather, as Kolnai so insightfully puts it, "shamefacedly withheld." Kolnai identifies this stunted piety as a peculiar English and Scottish trait but insists that the effort to elaborate a rational portable order of material goods assumes a genuinely spiritual and moral mood. I believe this section 4 of "The Abuse of the Vital" is a profound insight into Whig civilization and clips the wings of an all too common facile condemnation prevalent among the left and right.

Kolnai's anxiety that ordinary human concern be recognized for its genuine moral bearing takes on real urgency in his 1935 essay "Democracy and Reality." Kolnai addresses a concrete political problem: can dictatorship save a democracy? In the '30s, many European countries faced the issue of whether a democratic republic could exclude large swathes of the voting public who were confirmed fascists. In our own time, comparable issues, ranging from matters in national security to

public finance, have pressed the meaning of democracy. Kolnai's answer to these kinds of dilemmas is dramatic. Always horrified by pretensions to moral purity, Kolnai pours scorn on those democrats who refuse to use violence in defense of democratic order. Should circumstances warrant, a minority dictatorship is far preferable to the entire collapse of the democratic order: "For democratic politics only aims to preserve as much as possible of the constitution, not to preserve it entire until the moment of its impending death." Temporary dictatorship is a delicate matter, obviously, but evidence abounds that there is nothing inherent in the phenomenon to make ossification inevitable. Kolnai even goes so far as to argue that the Austrian fascist dictatorship of 1933–34 forestalled a far worse National Socialist grab for power, albeit only for a time. The crucial point, he thinks, is that sticking to the rules, what he calls "the empty formalism of democracy," must not eliminate "the reality of formal democracy," the everyday interactions of people engaging in life. The negotiations of every day are the soil of democratic political negotiation, just as the play and competition of the day to day are the exercise of free personality that culminates in the self-direction of the democratic state. Crucially, the reality of formal democracy warrants temporary minority dictatorship, for always the police power of the state is underwritten by the in fact always policing function of the citizenry, as the people guard the good order necessary for the daily functioning of civilized life. On a day-to-day basis a people protects itself against totalitarianism and therewith accords a certain limited legitimacy to temporary dictatorship.

Those who insist upon the purity of democratic procedure, because mortified by the idea of violence, radically misunderstand the true fund of democracy. It is the sociality of a people, the values around which cluster their basic daily interactions, and their vigilance, that gives democracy its legitimacy. Like the Scottish Whigs, Kolnai was convinced that social life was rooted in emotional communication. In a set of essays dedicated to the problem of moral subversion, it is unsurprising hate would figure as a topic. Dating to 1935, "An Essay on Hatred" is a long, phenomenological study that concludes in the striking formulation that hatred is the "diabolisation of the object." Typical of his style, Kolnai introduces all manner of qualifications and revised formulations, but he does not waver from this central claim: Hatred toys with Satanism. Contrasting with fear, disgust, and love, hatred aims at the annihilation of its object. What is Satanic in this is that hate aims to strip its object not only of its perceived evil but any good that might run alongside the evil. Aiming at the elimination of a being, hatred becomes closed to value: Values are

highly variegated and messy in how they layer each object. And because closed to value, there is always a vaunting of the self ongoing in hatred and thus, in the language of the old scholastic moral manuals, hatred is “a daughter” of *Hochmut*.

Love not only nestles amid a plurality of objects found lovable, it also “hedges round” those objects, anxious that they be protected and elevated. By contrast, hatred is expansionistic: not curtailed by objects of value, and a stranger to restraint, it lurches into the world. Hatred is not arbitrary though. Fascinatingly, Kolnai suggests hatred “tracks” objects on account of “special points of relation.” His point here is not so much the idea that our hatreds are held passionately but rather that hate springs from “individual secluded objects which are loved like fetishes.” Hatred subverts because in its inception hate separates a person from publicly regarded objects of value and so replaces moral consensus with private objects of regard.

Kolnai does not subscribe to the thesis of Nietzsche and Scheler that humanitarianism is born of resentment and hatred, but, like them, he is skeptical about its ethos. For like hatred, humanitarianism is an ethics of a *narrowed* field of human concerns. An ethic to reduce suffering, humanitarianism is indifferent to whether the means is personal sacrifice, technological innovation, or increased efficiencies in the state’s provision of services. Indifferent because it tends to focus on generic material human needs and little on the fullness of personal development: indeed, in the pursuit of the provision of material welfare it tends to be hostile to the refinements of the human spirit, seeing, for example, the playfulness of fashion and taste as perverse indulgences in the face of need. “The Humanitarian versus the Religious Attitude,” written during the war and published in *The Thomist* in 1944, is a profound analysis of the ethics of our age.

The aforementioned essays were mostly written in the shadow of National Socialism. By 1944 Kolnai is living in the United States (though soon to move to Canada) and not only has his focus shifted to the ethics underlying democratic liberalism but he is also markedly more critical of this ethos than he was in “Democracy and Reality.” Among religions, Catholicism fosters humanitarianism not only because it acknowledges the legitimacy of a secular order but its theological ethics assumes a universalistic, personalistic, and rationalistic base. In this, Catholicism is rather wise, for civilization plus religion and civilization standing alone likely strike the eye as largely the same, concedes Kolnai. This is only at first blush, however. Humanitarianism excludes a deferential upward look

to God and this, as well as changing the motivation for being moral, does twist and misshape the moral order. There are obviously many implications for morals if one believes that the order of values is a manifestation of a divine loving person. The grip of *Hochmut* on the self is weakened, claims of hierarchy contend with those of equality, moral equivocation is replaced by authority, and skepticism gives way to an amplified cognition of values. The religious attitude, Kolnai interestingly contends, softens an otherwise “prim, ice-cold, mutilated” moral sense.

Reflecting on the events, personalities, and ideas that prompted the war, Kolnai expresses the concern that abandonment of the religious attitude has made possible a heady brew of self-idolatry, totalitarianism, and strange pagan imitations of religion. Perhaps this brew is not strictly necessitated by humanitarianism, but it and other concoctions are an inherent danger: the egalitarianism or leveling inside humanitarianism leaves no room for any recognition of intrinsic evils or a graduated emphasis that some values and appetites outrank others. Thus immoralism is a tendency of humanitarianism, for its ethos runs counter to moral cognition as such. This explains the typical reversals one finds in humanitarian ethics: for example, the sympathy to killing, whether blaming others for a killer (“social conditions”) or euthanasia, eugenics, and abortion as humane solutions to social problems.

These malformations take on a creepy hue, for they are typically accompanied by a hypermoralism. Precisely because the refinements and eccentricities of the person do not register with humanitarianism, it has a fascination with formalism, rules, and an unrelenting and comprehensive administration of human life. Administration aims to impeccably deliver satisfaction of human needs, needs all carefully packaged by the regulations of government. Humanitarianism shares much in common with the cramped fetishes of hatred, therefore, only not malevolent but impeccable.

“Contemporary British Philosophy and Its Political Aspects” (1959) was written for a Spanish audience and is an unusual essay. Reading British analytical philosophy, few are likely to see amid the abstraction and technical debate any obvious political import. That Kolnai does this helps explain why he was so drawn to contemporary English philosophy once he had settled in 1955 in England. Noting that Spanish philosophy has typically served conservatism, Kolnai intriguingly claims that English philosophy does so as well. C. S. Peirce argued that English philosophy was principally a continuation of medieval scholasticism, and, interestingly, Kolnai concurs. In a fascinating footnote to the essay he argues that contemporary English philosophy is a return to “authentically British

traditions" and distinguishes it from Cartesian influences (Locke and Hume), the French Encyclopaedists (Mill and Lord Russell), and Hegelianism (Green and Bradley).

The English philosophy he has in mind is ordinary language philosophy. He sharply separates this style of philosophy from earlier analytical philosophy's strident positivism. This latter, he says, is the character of American analytical philosophy, and this national difference remains largely true today. Kolnai rejects the scientism of American positivism for its reductionism, which his whole life he saw as a utopian and totalitarian defamation of ordinary experience. He relishes ordinary language philosophy precisely because it treats the intricacies of language as *sui generis* and is an attitude of deference to everyday life. Linguistic analysis is a defender of religion, and the values of culture and morals, not because, for example, English philosophers are especially religious, but, aversive to the "adulteration of language," they reject causal explanations of the phenomenon as really *something else*.

Kolnai was impressed by the significant continuity between Scheler's thought and G. E. Moore's ethics. A leading voice in the British school of intuitionism, Moore, to Kolnai, represented what was best about linguistic analysis, its contributions to moral philosophy. Sensitive to the contents of experience and reflecting upon the language we use ordinarily when explaining our moral interactions, British ethics, argues Kolnai, expresses a basic conservative gesture, an assent to what is. This is not to exclude possibilities of reform, but the humility implicit in linguistic analysis means that British ethics is anti-utopian, keenly aware that human effort, though noble, is "limited, contingent and always to some degree precarious."

"Human Dignity Today" was also written for a Spanish audience. Along with his later "Dignity," the essay probes one of today's most honored concepts, and Kolnai's skepticism might shock. "Human Dignity Today" and "Dignity" courageously suggest that even the idea of human dignity can serve the ends of subversion unless deftly handled. Indeed, "Human Dignity Today" starts with a striking, disturbing claim. The essay was written around 1960 with the globe, as Kolnai puts it, divided between the West and the "Red world." These two camps are united, however, in a keen regard for "technicism," "materialist utilitarianism and the thematic cult of progress. In this respect, their dominant traits are not very different from those of the former fascist world."

People are sure, says Kolnai, that, with the end of the war and the utter discrediting of Nazi racialism, there is a growing sense of human dignity: a new clarity about the equal dignity of each human being; gains

in releasing human life from “the pressure of extra-human factors”; nations acting as collectivities for the administration of justice and welfare; and the end of colonialism. These senses of dignity can be summed up as the effort to realize “integral self-rule” but they also speak to the “external position” of man, so to say, and ignore “his stature, outlook, cast of mind, morality, and spirituality.”

Kolnai does not deny that gains have been made. However, the attributes of what we might call “inwardness” are today more and more disregarded and yet they clearly touch upon the ideal of human dignity. The drive to equality inherent in the appetite for “integral self-rule” is hostile to the hierarchical institutions that, Kolnai is sure, enrich and inspire the ideal, nobility, spirituality, and refinement. Kolnai also stresses the shocking cost of securing dignity in the contemporary sense, the massive growth in the administrative state. To the contemporary mind, personal superiority is an intolerable idea but administrative tyranny is unthinkingly embraced. The threat to inwardness is compounded by the legitimacy granted commercialism. Not business simply but an ideology of a sacredness attributed to pleasures. Commerce *qua* the sacrality of pleasure might promise escape from “the pressure of extra-human factors,” but it is inevitably a ruination of inwardness.

Kolnai agrees with his contemporaries that human dignity is an original moral value, but he argues that attention to moral perception shows that “dignity precisely does not inhere in man *qua* man, but *qua* divine.” And it is well that it does, for it is only on account of the dignity of man *qua* divine that *both* the external and internal aspects of dignity see growth. The hierarchical institutions that help foster refinement and inwardness are linked immediately or remotely to the roles of king, queen, hero, prophet, and priest, and the like, all of which are of divine or semi-divine origin. These social roles represent and institute the divine in the community, but no less is this true in a secondary sense for those who serve and take direction from these leading social elements. All men are equal in being bearers of the divine image and therewith all absolute social distinction is relativized without being abolished. It is the shared dignity of bearing the divine image that first distinguishes personal dignity from social office.

The dignity of man *qua* man cuts against this social and personal expansiveness and indeed even subverts what it purports to hold dear. The contemporary idea of human dignity has a militant tinge, what Kolnai calls the “idol of realization.” Eager to accomplish human dignity, the contemporary mind defers to concrete governmental administration, but this necessarily poses a challenge to alterity. As we must have no superior,

government must represent *us*, and it must strive to release *us* from want. "Integral self-rule" and release from external material pressures can only be a particular bodily self-realization inevitably concluding in tribalism. Universal dignity subverted, tribalism plus the pursuit of generic utility values of welfare technically accomplished by government, edges the contemporary conception of human dignity toward totalitarianism.

"Dignity" (1969) is a dense and careful study of the phenomenon as it appears in value perception.¹⁰ Dignity evokes a "bowing gesture" that "tranquilizes" those responding to it but, unlike sublimity, our experience of dignity does not "crush" us; rather does it suggest reciprocity. Dignity communicates distance, a calm reserve, and even something like "tempered steel." It has little to do with grace or shapeliness being a moral rather than an aesthetic value, and though it carries a "weight," which suggests it possesses a place in reality, Kolnai rejects any naturalistic assimilation of dignity to quanta of power or the like. Values do not map in any straightforward sense onto reality, and this is even true of our hallowed conception of human dignity. We are confused when we think of human dignity as furniture of the world, not least when the notion ends in talk of human rights: Kolnai thinks the notion better explained as personal dignity, having the character of a quality. This is of a piece with the 1960 article where he laments the loss of dignity as the cultivation of inwardness. In consequence, Kolnai, very much against humanitarianism, thinks dignity susceptible of more or less. Persons can amplify their dignity and can throw it away, as well.

The undignified is all that would collapse distance, confuse boundaries, and challenge individuation. This recalls his seminal work on disgust where he characterized the leering intimacy of disgusting things as a challenge to personal articulation. In line with his sense of dignity as a refinement of personhood, Kolnai conceives of the summit of undignity as the willful disregard of the weightiness of the self. At the summit of un-dignity are not the deadly sins, for our passions' mastery of us touches on the tragic and our appetites of anger and revenge, like Shylock's pound of flesh, even have "something dignified" about them. Among the deadly sins, vanity is a possible exception, for it touches on the meretricious. In passages evocative of Scheler's 1913 treatment of the vain man as a "spiritual vampire," Kolnai thinks of the culmination of un-dignity as "the tout." He describes the tout as someone "coreless," who has abandoned any self-imposed limits to how the world will figure in his life and who instead has surrendered to fusion with the world, pampered by, and fawning over, its more frivolous contents. That the

idea of “the tout” comes to Kolnai’s mind here reminds us of his concern with commercialism in the 1960 dignity essay. In British English, a tout is someone who stands outside a stadium or music event selling tickets at trumped-up prices. Mention of a tout is inseparable from the image of a gaudy man, with an ingratiating manner, hard selling entertainment at prices that falsely indicate the quality of human experience available. The tout is then an agent of the “sacrality of pleasures,” and thus a falsifier of the true hierarchy of values.

If the tout subverts the order of value for money, does the image of “the tout” as the summit of un-dignity also point to a hardening of opinion about commerce? In his vitalism essay of 1934, Kolnai, with carefully stated reservations noted, approved of the regard for business in bourgeois civilization. There, as part of the ordinary life of the social, trade functions as a *soil* for properly moral interactions. The key seems to be that commercialism is an ideology that sacralizes pleasure, and this can be distinguished from developments in business that build civilization, what Hume identified as the role of business in the refinement of the arts and sciences.

The next essay is a critical celebration of G. E. Moore. “The Ghost of the Naturalistic Fallacy” is best thought of as an exorcism.¹¹ Kolnai appears to have been unfazed that he never offered any detailed ontology of the value universals discerned in human action. He seems to have thought sufficient for the purposes of full moral reflection, careful phenomenological description, plus a clear sense of what values are not. In a similar vein, Moore is sensitive to our use of ethical language and very clear that in using this language we are not offering descriptions of vital life, evolution, history, progress, normality, or psychological development, and the like. To suggest that any of these are what we talk about when debating ethics is simple confusion, Moore argues, and Kolnai rather more pointedly insists, subversion.

Kolnai is profoundly attracted to this disciplining character of Moore’s naturalistic fallacy, but he regrets that Moore’s fallacy is almost exclusively linked to his claim that the Good is an objective non-natural property that cannot be discerned through good things: these good things are no more what good is than certain vibrations in light are what yellow is. The Good is then intuited rather than “read off” things furnishing the world that we might say are good. This is not a helpful statement of intuitionism, thinks Kolnai: like Moore, Kolnai defends “ethical anti-naturalism,” but this formulation is the ghost he wants to exorcize.

His basic objection is that such a pure notion of the Good is not a datum of common sense, and thus Moore proffers an “exsanguinated

un-real concept” of goodness. Ex-sanguinated, says Kolnai, for two reasons. Moore has a tendency to seek out logical dispute and to ignore the only commonsensical indication of the good: our sentiments. Our feeling that something is good is “an intuitionist concept of morality or value.” Secondly, ordinary experience knows the good only as justice, kindness, modesty, courage, and even as a good cigar, a good gun dog, and the like. Kolnai concludes: “‘Good’ seems to me to be all the more dependent on descriptive data and far more ‘definable’ than, say, yellow. . . . [It is] present *qua* veracity or purity or benevolence. . . . To identify moral goodness with one such standard moral quality – for example justice or love of one’s neighbour – is one-sided, arbitrary and misleading, but not at all a ‘Naturalistic Fallacy.’”

One of Kolnai’s best essays on ethics, and certainly one of the most significant for understanding how he saw his overall theoretical commitments in relation to other ethical theories, is little known. “A Defense of Intrinsicism against ‘Situation Ethics’” has previously only been found in a volume dedicated to a Christian ethical theory popular in the ‘60s, situation ethics.¹² Few are likely to approach this book, as situation ethics is something of a period piece: Kolnai’s essay certainly transcends the occasion of its writing. The essay is long and includes many useful passages on Kolnai’s attitude to moral theology, virtue theory, legalism, utilitarianism, and subjectivism. The many strands of the essay are part and parcel of what Kolnai refers to as “the impersonal majesty of a normative and objectified Table of Values and Wrongs.”

Kolnai defends “a non-rigoristic intrinsicist” position or a modified version of the theory of intrinsic evils. A staple of moral theology, the theory of intrinsic evils is the claim that there are acts that may never licitly be done, no matter the circumstances and no matter the pragmatic pressures to perform them. That the innocent cannot be intentionally and directly killed is a well-known example. Moral theology is here profound, insists Kolnai, for it is from intrinsicism that ethical life takes its “primordial basis of moral orientation.” It is basic to moral experience that some values be of “intrinsic and unbarterable meaning and validity” forming a “constant standard” of judgment. Values are an “autonomous, impersonal code of objective norms,” universals discerned as qualities inherent in actions that, recalling his essay on dignity, provoke “bowing to the intrinsic evidence of Moral Cognition.” So far, he agrees with the theologians.

However, modification of their axiom is necessary, thinks Kolnai, for “moral laws . . . may in some situations come to be mutually incompatible

in concreto.” It is possible that on some “problem-laden” occasions a choice between lesser evils might be required. The theologians’ axiom offends ancient principle: *Ultra vires nemo obligatur*. In light of this principle, it is an undisputed content of moral consensus, says Kolnai, that persons are not bound should events pass beyond what their powers can tolerate. Kolnai does not amplify the argument and unfortunately he does not give us an example—though his friend David Wiggins, drawing on an event in Monsarrat’s *The Cruel Sea*, does.¹³ However, his point surely is that morality has its origins in our daily, ordinary actions, and “problem-laden” events dramatically removed from the ordinary surely also attenuate the role of morality as such.

Ranging fifty years, these essays Kolnai wrote in a state of worry. This is easy enough to understand with the early essays: Kolnai, being of Jewish origins, was living in Austria, after all. His worry ranges much wider though, for Kolnai thought civilization was in retreat on multiple accounts. Anxious to protect “the surviving islands of Liberal Civilization,” his concern is really one of theory: much of what passes for moral theory is subversive of moral order. All who think that totalitarianism is a permanent threat and who suspect that ideas can quickly get dangerously muddled will find plenty of clarifying ideas in this volume.

Notes

1. For Kolnai’s biography, see Francis Dunlop, *The Life and Thought of Aurel Kolnai* (Ashgate, 2002).
2. Private communication, June 8, 2010.
3. The break with Freud is complete by 1930, when Kolnai publishes what is surely the most complete work of sexual ethics: *Sexual Ethics*, translated by Francis Dunlop (Ashgate, 2005).
4. M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (Transaction, 2008).
5. A. Kolnai, *Disgust* (Open Court, 2003).
6. G. Bataille, *Erotism, Death and Sensuality* (City Lights, 1986).
7. “What Is Politics About? A Note on Carl Schmitt’s *The Concept of the Political*.” *Exploring the World of Human Practice: Readings In and About the Philosophy of Aurel Kolnai*, ed. Zoltán Balázs & Francis Dunlop.
8. Part of what makes Kolnai’s analysis here so trenchant is that in another of Schmitt’s many important works, *Political Romanticism* (Transaction, 2010), Schmitt himself rails against subjectivism, and on Catholic grounds.
9. These seminal essays are found in A. Kolnai, *Ethics, Value and Reality* (London: Transaction, 2008).
10. ‘Dignity’, *Philosophy*, LI, 1976.
11. “The Ghost of the Naturalistic Fallacy,” *Philosophy*, LV, 1980.
12. *Situationism and the New Morality*, ed. R. L. Cunningham (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).
13. D. Wiggins, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality* (Harvard, 2006), pp. 250–58.

1

Max Scheler's Critique and Assessment of Freud's Theory of Libido (1925)

Translator's Note: In his *Twentieth Century Memoirs*, Kolnai comments on his paper thus: 'Max Scheler's *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, which contained among other things the best criticism of the Freudian reduction of all forms of love and affectionate sentiments to "Libido", appeared in 1922, but I read it only in 1924, responding to it with rather lame qualifications in my Vienna-group lecture . . .; my swan-song in the precincts of psycho-analysis'.

1. Max Scheler's discussion of Freud's ontogenesis of love¹ is noteworthy for several reasons. With the exception of Edmund Husserl, its founder, Scheler is today the most important member of the productive and influential 'Phenomenological' school of philosophy. Simply through his application of his master's methodological principles from the sphere of logic to that of ethical, spiritual and psychological questions, he has shown himself to be an original thinker of the first order.² But the phenomenological method, as its name already implies, approaches things from precisely the opposite direction from the psychoanalytical. Its aim is not to found a metapsychology but a pre-psychology, if we ourselves may be permitted to coin a phrase. Rather than explaining, decyphering, deriving and reducing the phenomena to their common denominator, or establishing the laws of their occurrence and development, it tries to intuit and grasp their immediate 'essences' and to hold fast, through the most appropriate concepts and descriptions, all their varieties, together with their ideal, unvarying, 'connections of meaning'.³ In the last analysis, the aim of this method is not to make possible the control and

manipulation of the matter being investigated for the sake of healing, but to analyse it for the sake of understanding. Although the two kinds of research seem to diverge so much as to have absolutely nothing in common, Scheler has received great mental stimulus from Freud's findings and theories, and he has bestowed on them a very painstaking critique, which, though sharp, is free from hatred and any attempt to belittle them. The recognition he affords them on many points must appear doubly remarkable in view of this, and seems even to add to them. His objections could themselves prove fruitful to one or two branches of psychoanalytic research. But they are also calculated to show up certain weaknesses of the approach of phenomenology.

2. Scheler first refers to psychoanalysis in his treatments of 'feeling one with' (identification with the mother in the genesis of male homosexuality) and of 'fellow feeling' (as consequence of, or, according to him, a kind of higher grade of feeling one with). He thinks of the analytic healing process as an example of the dissolution of traditions of feeling. As regards sexual love, he allies himself with Georg Simmel against Schopenhauer and Freud and underlines the homogeneous, *sui generis*, character of this phenomenon, arguing that it is not in the least a mere 'superstructure' of the 'powerful' sex-drive and cannot possibly be a 'compound' of sensuality and spirituality.

3. Following his treatment of other 'naturalistic' theories of the varieties of love, which are mostly only concerned with their phylogenesis, we get a summary of Freud's 'Three lectures on the theory of sexuality'. Scheler here emphasises that their author certainly does not make the 'sex drive' as such the ultimate explanatory principle of the life of feeling, but makes it out to be itself a secondary or developmental product, a *structure*. The perversions are, accordingly, not deviations from the normal, but more or less unusual fixations of sexuality when it casts about in an unfinished state. Man is born a polymorphous pervert, the normal sex drive represents a 'favourable', relatively frequent, chance of development. Besides it and the perversions, it also results in formations which owe their development to the processes of *repression* and *sublimation*. The former makes use of disgust, modesty, aversion to incest; the wish-complexes it relates to reveal themselves, in distorted form, in dreams and neuroses. But sublimation disperses the refined reproductive traces of voluptuous sensations amongst psychic processes of 'higher value', which thus make use of the not directly satisfied libido as

a driving wheel. Here belong all kinds of affective ties, which no longer have any connection with genital sex.

4. Freud's disclosure of childhood sexuality, for which he has come in for so many attacks on the part of the ignorant, receives handsome acknowledgement from Scheler.

This in fact amounts to the discovery of a completely new region of the child's psyche. In any case he is right in his observation that the directions of the 'sex-drive' proper in the period leading up to puberty are preceded by *different* erotically tinged interests in objects, which require to be studied on their own. Freud and his school have also presented ample evidence to show that the 'fixation' of such object-directions (as opposed to their typically successive cessation in normal development) can become especially important in the formation of subsequent sex-life and of life in general. He has thus provided a genetic understanding of a great many forms of mental illness, even many kinds of sexual perversion, for example, which were formerly ascribed without question to an inborn 'disposition' – thus abandoning any attempt to heal the afflicted individuals.

Scheler's next comment, which we believe to be very significant, is more original.

The Freudian method may perhaps one day lead us nearer to a completely new understanding of that peculiar thing which we call a man's 'fate'. 'Fate' is certainly not the same thing as what comes to us in the form of stimulants and emotions from without. Nor is it in any sense consciously chosen. It seems to be a portmanteau-word for everything of which we commonly say 'such and such could only happen to a person like him'. The succession of data, Scheler says, which we feel 'as belonging to our essence, once they have shown themselves'. . . . The fundamental principles of 'fate', in this sense, says Freud, are originally prefigured in the impressions, in his view primarily the *erotic* impressions, of earliest childhood. A more profound view reveals that Freud has thus come near to the idea that is perhaps qualified both to reconcile the hitherto prevailing opposition between 'nativistic' and 'empiristic' views and to replace them with a completely new basic assumption. . . . Every experience down to the simplest sensation has, in accordance with the extent and kind of its operation, a unique and determinate place-value in the formation of the entire life of the individual in the typical development and maturation of mankind.

The mistake of empiricism consisted in the fact that it acknowledged the differential value of the impression only so far as it made its effectiveness dependent on the already present accumulation of experience to which it was added. On the contrary, the unique, special character of every experience acquires

its quite especially pregnant meaning through Freud's insight that a psychic experience . . . is also determined in extent and kind of operation in accordance with the place-value which it has within the total development of a person.

Man therefore unconsciously selects his experience; thus, according to Scheler, Schopenhauer's aphorisms 'on women' are supposed to depend on real observations, but the fact that he arrives at precisely these observations is supposed to be explicable by his negative attitude towards his mother from an early age: '... by the "failure of the normal transference of libido to the mother"', as Freud would put it'.

5. But then Scheler casts doubt on the clarity of the concept of libido. He himself attempts a formulation; starting from the voluptuous sensations which arise in the infant as a result of stimulation of the erogenous zones,⁴ he tries to interpret libido as the striving for the repetition of such sensations. Libido, he says, cannot itself consist in feelings of pleasure, if it is to be treated as a motive. Little can, of course, be done with Jung's concept of libido, which has been distilled into the concept of striving as such. Apart from this, the problem with the psychoanalytic concept of libido is that a striving is directly aimed at more or less definite contents, not to the experience of sensations. These contents may be characterised by the fact that they are *accompanied* by voluptuous sensations, but they must *be present*, though not necessarily in definite images. They are, according to Scheler, 'values of the opposite sex'. He supports this intuition with the remark that even in homosexual intercourse such marks of the opposite sex are artificially constructed. He draws on the analogy of hunger, which is in the same way an essentially *directed* drive. Hence there can be no talk of a mere associative coordination between a merely general striving for voluptuousness and the idea of the other sex, but only of a rhythmically phased 'alignment of a drive already directed *as such* to the opposite sex with a particular object of the opposite sex'.

6. Scheler only partially accepts the psychoanalytical assumption that the amorous preference of young people for opposite sexed members of their immediate family circle over the choice of extra-familial objects represents a regular stage of sexual development. He suggests that this indicates an experimental casting about of the drive, and will not accept that there is a really lasting sexual bond of this kind within the boundaries of normality. It is true that in his discussion of other 'naturalistic' theories of sympathy he also admits that he accepts a selective, place-determining, we might say vehicle-like influence of the drives on the 'higher feelings': the drives, he says, prescribe to each one of us an 'order of urgency', according to which we can really perform some of the spiritual acts 'slumbering' within us and assign them corresponding

objects in the outer world. But at all events the different qualities of love are irreducible to one another and prefigured in the very *structure* of the soul. The Freudian method of trying to make the normal intelligible from the abnormal here leads (applied uncritically) to erroneous results.

7. In what follows Scheler dismisses the objection of those opponents of Freud who cast doubt on the special psychological role ascribed to the sex-drive. He shows very convincingly that there is, for instance, nothing which could be coordinated with the hunger drive (such as 'breadwinner-love') in the sense in which sexual love can be coordinated with the sex-drive. It is, however, true that Scheler can only find a place for the sex-drive, even thus (appraisingly) distinguished, within the so-called 'vital sphere';⁵ the sphere of cultural values and the highest ethical and religious values, or the mental acts directed towards them, have nothing to do with it.

8. Scheler sticks especially tenaciously to the keynote of his critique, that psychological qualities cannot be derived from one another. Apropos of repression he demands to be informed about the repressing power and draws a would-be ironical comparison between Freudian libido and Fichte's 'ego', which also 'sets bounds to itself'. He here accuses Freud of circular argument. As regards sublimation, including the predominance of a particular drive and the creation of substitutes, he launches an attack on the view that surplus libido can prescribe, say, specific talents. It was not the fact that Napoleon had had to put up with much bad luck in his relations with Josephine that produced his military campaigns. Surplus energy can only be *channeled* to already present talents, but this is only possible within fairly narrow limits; for all psychological dispositions have their own specific energy reserves. The idea that the individual strata are connected by a valve of unlimited extensibility⁶ is completely untenable. The alternative: either abandonment of higher development or abandonment of reproduction, is futile if taken absolutely (it is only to some extent valid for a one-sidedly intellectualistic cultural ideal). Were Freud's arithmetic of energy correct, lasting sexual abstinence would necessarily result either in the highest spiritual achievements or the creation of neuroses; this is hardly what experience teaches us.

What we completely miss in Freud is both more precise information on the distinction between a justified and necessary 'control' of libido and the sex-drive, and a 'repression' of the same, which, according to him, represents the major source of mental illness; and, at the same time, some precise information about the different *conditions*