

## Self-Sacrificial Behavior and its Explanation in Terms of Max Scheler's Concept of Spirit

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**Abstract** One of the key concepts of the German philosopher Max Scheler (1874–1928) is his concept of spirit. He understands spirit as one of several naturally functioning human mental agencies, such as consciousness, will, memory, etc. That is, he treats the mental agency of spirit in a scientific way and avoids any esoteric or religious connotations that this peculiar term may involve. The nature of human spirit, according to Scheler, is the ability to withstand and deliberately redirect biological imperatives and instinctive drives, up to the point of purposefully throwing away one's own life. The presence of spirit constitutes the essence of the human being that differentiates him qualitatively from all animals. In this article, I argue that it is human spirit that plays the determinative role in causing heroic and self-sacrificial behavior. I also argue that the individual human spirit experiences its inherent development, thus having several rather dissimilar stages and manifestations. I discuss the meaning that the term 'spirit' has in the English and the American philosophical and psychological traditions and the meaning of the corresponding term 'der Geist' in the German traditions. The specific English-language understanding of the term 'spirit', compared to its German counterpart 'der Geist', namely, less scientific and more religious and esoteric and metaphorical for the former, makes it alien and almost unusable in the English and American traditions. The linguistic difference leads to the misunderstanding of some very important ideas brought by the concept of spirit as introduced by Scheler. My purpose is to overcome this discrepancy and omission and to introduce the notion and the concept of spirit, in their scientific understanding, into the arsenal of modern English-language cognitive science, psychology, and philosophy in order to provide for the full explanatory force of the hitherto neglected concept of spirit.

**Keywords** Max Scheler · Spirit · Heroism · Terrorism · Self-sacrificial behavior · Political behavior · Philosophical anthropology · Moral psychology · Evolutionary psychology · Political psychology

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## Max Scheler's Concept of Spirit and its Renewed Significance

From the very beginning of the 1930s until the 2000s, Scheler remained a nearly forgotten or improperly neglected philosopher. As Dennis M. Weiss stated in his 1998 article, “In his 1965 introduction to the thought of Max Scheler, Manfred Frings [the devoted keeper and editor of Scheler’s legacy for many years and his chief translator into English – A.A.], noted that Scheler belonged to a group of European thinkers, which included Heidegger, Husserl, and Nicolai Hartmann, whose message has remained almost unheard of in the United States. Thirty years later little has changed for Scheler” (Weiss, p. 235). The beginning of the revival of interest in Scheler and his concept of spirit is shown, in particular, by (Sandmeyer 2012). There is also some discussion on the nature of spirit in Max Scheler’s sense in (Alyushin 2011).

Some of Scheler’s key ideas, which we deal with in this article, may be presented as follows: 1) the presence in a human being of such mental agency as spirit, 2) the relative detachment of spirit from the bodily instincts and drives, and 3) the spirit’s proneness to disposing of a body for the spirit’s own purposes. The said means that spirit, among its other abilities, may play the determinative role in causing self-sacrificial behavior.

The role of spirit in causing self-sacrificial behavior has not received any special attention in discussions of Scheler’s philosophical anthropology. There is a recent factor, though, that is sure to revive the interest in Scheler’s concept of human spirit. The factor is self-sacrificial, heroic, or suicidal behavior – the names are different, but the essence is much the same – in the struggle against various forms of political oppression. Why people are determinedly killing themselves on a non-random scale for the sake of a political goal and in spite of a mightily strong biological self-preservation instinct – this is the puzzle for the political philosophy, the political psychology, and the strategic policy-making of the beginning of the 21st century. A half-forgotten 80-year-old concept may contribute to an answer and, thus, can demonstrate Scheler’s renewed importance.

An application of Scheler’s idea of existing of the agency of spirit in a human and its ability to purposefully ‘throw away one’s life’ to the explanation of the practice of the political self-sacrificial and suicidal behavior that arose in the late 1990s is a novel element offered by this article.

The first aim of my discussion is to try to better explain some phenomena of political and war behavior and of political and war psychology with the help of the concept of human spirit as explicated by Max Scheler. My desire is to explore the issue of how Scheler’s concept of spirit can contribute to a more adequate understanding of self-sacrificial and heroic behavior in politics and war. As far as my knowledge of the literature is concerned, the formulated task is essentially new, and, I hope, promises to be valuable and heuristic.

The second aim is to look more thoroughly into Scheler’s concept of spirit itself. I wish to explore what place it takes in Scheler’s own set of views and ideas and how his concept of spirit coincides with more traditional, mostly English and American notions that describe human psychology and mentality.

The third aim is to show that the phenomenon of spirit is inherently ambiguous. Scheler noted the ambiguity himself, and it bothered him.

The fourth aim, the means of attainment of which I outline in the conclusion, is to propose how can we avoid the ambiguity of spirit by discerning at least three stages of the spirit's evolutionary development and the levels of its inherent maturity.

In the citation below, I reproduce several key theses from 'The Human Place in the Cosmos' (1928), Scheler's main work that is devoted to his concept of spirit. Let these theses serve as some background for understanding the content of the following section on self-sacrificial behavior. The section after the next one will elaborate on and more thoroughly explore what Scheler meant by spirit and why he considered it to constitute the very nature of a human being, differing him from all animals.

In some places, in square brackets, I - A.A., discuss the original German terms in order to give a clearer understanding of Scheler's thought, and also because the English translation in some cases deviates from Scheler's own, very often delicate and complex meaning.

What, then, is this 'spirit,' this novel and decisive principle? [...] [T]he ultimate determination of a being with spirit – no matter what its psycho-physical makeup – is its existential detachment from organic being, its freedom and detachability [seine existentielle Entbundenheit, Freiheit, Ablösbarkeit] and the detachment of its center of existence from the bondage to, the pressure of, and the organic dependence on 'life' and everything which belongs to life [...] Hence, a being having spirit is not tied anymore to its drives and environment... (Scheler 2009, pp. 26–27). [...] [T]his being – most remarkably – is also able to objectify [gegenständiglich zu halten] its very own physiological and psychic nature and to also objectify its every single vital function. It is for this reason that this being can also be free to commit suicide. [In the last, most important sentence, 'to commit suicide' is too narrow an equivalent given by the translator. The original Scheler's words contain the meaning that is much more complex: Nur darum vermag er auch sein Leben frei von sich zu werfen.] (Scheler 2009, p. 29). The better English translation of this phrase probably would be: 'Only because of that is man in a position to freely throw away his own life as well'.

### **Max Scheler's Concept of Spirit in Explaining Self-Sacrificial Behavior in Politics and War**

Throughout his lifetime, Scheler wrote on politics, on war, and on nationalism; more specifically, he wrote on a war hero as an exemplar among other human exemplars, mostly in the context of the First World War and the traits that the Germans showed in it. However, the theme of a heroic suicide as a way of attaining a political purpose was alien to Scheler's writings. (An author, who has written on the political implications of Scheler's work, although unrelated to self-sacrificial behavior, is Davis (2009); Davis is also the author of the Ph.D. dissertation entitled 'Scheler on becoming a political being' (2006). Scheler paid no attention to this theme, although it might have seemed readily

deducible from his own idea that the spirit is prone to say ‘no’ to that which self-preserving fear tells man to do. He did not write on kamikaze-type behavior at all. No wonder: there were no kamikazes in his time, to say nothing of the ‘islamikaze’, who reproduced and increasingly multiplied the kamikaze-type behavior half a century later.

Emile Durkheim, with his classical study of altruistic suicide, was a predecessor in noting the effect. However, as Steven Stack rightfully states in his article, Durkheim’s ideas do not contribute much to an understanding of political altruistic suicide. Durkheim only studied altruistic suicide in primitive archaic societies and among the military; he did not pay much attention to the individual motivation of a suicidal personality, rather, being interested in the group samples of such behavior (which was natural for him as a sociologist, as opposed to an individual psychologist or political scientist) (Stack 2004, pp. 16–19; Riemer 1998).

Aside from the novelty of the association of formerly unrelated ideas or matters, my study also contributes to filling an explanatory gap that continues to bother modern people. The perplexing puzzle is why men and women, mostly the young, dare to kill themselves for political, nationalistic, and ideological goals, how to cope with this practice, and how to stop it.

As far as contemporary moment is concerned, the effect is predominantly distributed among non-western nations: Palestinians, Arabs, Chechens, Koreans, and Tamils; somewhat earlier, before and during the Second World War, it was also peculiar to the Japanese and the Russians. The hara-kiri practice, as a type of self-punishment for supposed wrongdoings in respect to a feudal lord whom an officer served, took place in Japan; the individual anti-tsarist self-suicidal terror began in the second half of the 19th century in Russia. There is an impression that Westerners and Europeans are not prone to this type of behavior.

Currently, Europeans look at protecting one’s honor at the cost of one’s own life, or at religious self-sacrifice and religious fanaticism, as something strange. However, Socrates’ legendary voluntary death helps remind us that the ancient Europeans were not as unfamiliar with the self-sacrificial type of behavior as modern Europeans are today. What about the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself? This person is not of European origin, but it was he who began the powerful tradition of self-sacrificial behavior for Europeans for the next two millennia! Reducing the facts, the problems, and the genesis of the practice of self-sacrificial suicide only to Islam or to some exotic societies that do not value human life is incorrect indeed.

“In Western societies, under the prevailing tendency to polarize the distinction between Occident and Orient [...] it has gradually been forgotten that back in Western history there was a time when human integrity was much less a bodily matter and the preservation of honor was far more important than the preservation of life” (Takeda 2010, p. 463).

My very general answer to the puzzle of why peoples of different nations at different historical times tended to kill themselves for noble purposes is that this was the human spirit in action. Still, to say ‘spirit in action’ is not at all enough – because the spirit only sometimes, far from always, sets itself in action. In some cases, the agency of the spirit speaks and takes the upper hand, while in other cases this very agency recedes and seems to vanish. Why? To make the situation even more difficult and unpredictable, the activation and deactivation of the spirit happens in one and the same person, either in different external circumstances or in different internal states. Again, why? The

perplexing non-linearity of the spirit's self-manifestation also needs an explanation, which I attempt to give.

Let us consider several model cases (all having their non-fictional prototypes). I consider cases from real life, as well. Case one: a man pours gasoline over himself in a central square and holds a switched lighter within feet of his body. Case two: a soldier sees a triggered hand-grenade and is about to cover it with his own body to save his squad commander and fellow soldiers. Case three: a tiny group of six or seven men and women hold folded banners with condemnation of a harsh totalitarian regime and are about to unfold the banners. Case four: a captured military officer of aristocratic origin is to answer the question of whether he prefers to take the opportunity to tear off all his military regalia himself and join the rebels or be killed by them right away.

I have deliberately proposed the cases of doing harm only to one's own life or well-being but not to the surrounding people as well, which would turn self-sacrifice into terrorism. One should distinguish between self-sacrifice, an inner mental state and limitedly personal act, and terrorism, a personal act with the intended external consequences of doing massive harm to others' lives. An act might be only self-sacrificial or it might be self-sacrificial and terrorist; however, the presence of a terrorist component does not cancel out the presence of a self-sacrificial component. I wish to single out and examine the self-sacrificial component in this article. I recognize that political self-sacrifice is very often accompanied by a terrorist component; nonetheless, I contend that, without understanding self-sacrificial behavior as such, we can hardly understand terrorist behavior, hence my predominant interest in the former (Jayawickreme and Di Stefano 2012). There is a special point regarding a specific dishonesty on behalf of a terrorist. He does not fear death, whereas a regular soldier does. They are in unequal initial positions, which resemble the violation of the rule of not striking beneath the belt or beating one who has fallen to the ground in a fair fight (Battin 2004, p. 31).

Let us return to the model cases and how the events might proceed. Case one: the man makes the irreversible decision and brings the lighter closer to his body; his body is set on fire. The next day, tens of thousands of protesters come out to the square, their former massive indecisiveness triggered by the decisiveness of that one man. Case two: as if instinctively and without hesitation, the soldier jumps on the hand-grenade; the strength of the explosion is absorbed by his body and he is soon dead, with all the others alive. Case three: the group of protesters unfolds its banners; however, only a few occasional passers-by take a wary look at their content. Within a few minutes, the political police arrive, and the protestors receive long prison terms. Case four: the officer declares that military honor is more valuable than life; he refuses to tear off his regalia and is shot by the rebels.

Let us analyze those cases. In all of them, human spirit is present, and the spirit is decisive. Without involving spirit, each of these situations lacks an important link in the explanatory chain; only by introducing spirit does the explanation become coherent and complete.

Before giving my own explanations, I offer a very schematic overview of the causes of self-sacrificial behavior, as they are conventionally understood. The main division in the types of the commonly accepted explanations might be drawn between inner self-motivation and outer indoctrination, to which psychologically and mentally very strong persons and very weak persons correspond.

In the first variant, of the inner self-motivation, very strong ideological convictions or very powerful emotions are thought to be at stake. The individual political consciousness is firmly determined and after some conviction grows ripe and overripe, the conviction turns out to be more important than life itself for the person. The person's political mind, thus, reaches state of fanaticism. The same case can occur with emotion. The emotion of hatred for an oppressive nation or the desire to take revenge for a murdered relative or husband becomes a pathological fixation and brings a woman (perhaps a wife) to blow herself up in a crowded place (Dalton and Asal 2011).

In the second variant, of the outer indoctrination, the individual political consciousness and the emotions are initially weak or absent. The person is empty and friable from the inside; he waits to be shown the way and filled with some ideological content and sense of purpose in life. Such a person is well suited for indoctrination. Moreover, with his mind marred by drugs and his infantile psychology seduced by the expectation of heaven after a sacred death or some other promises, such as the future communist utopia, he becomes a perfect walking bomb. Sometimes, a financial reward for the poor family of a young bomber is said to explain his readiness to die. As with the strong individual political mind that brings a person to the state of self-induced fanaticism, the weak political mind lets itself be induced into a state of fanaticism, too. In both cases, it is fanaticism, mindlessness, and irrationality that are commonly considered the causes of the negation of one's own and of others' lives; mindlessness and irrationality in their aggravated state of being close to insanity, because what sane human being would give up his tangible, real and dear life for intangible phantom myths?

Are people who commit suicide generally stronger or weaker than the norm? The answer is hard to determine unambiguously. Some assert that “[t]he results show that the organizers are endowed with more ego strength compared to the would-be suicides. This finding supports the hypothesis that the latter have a weaker personality structure and that people in this group are more susceptible to suggestions and outside pressure.” One must not forget, however, that the experiment mentioned included only 15 unsuccessful suicide bombers (which means that they did not die), a small basis for making valid conclusions (Merari et al. 2010, p. 97).

I will now make some additions and corrections of my own to the above presented conventional explanations of why people act self-sacrificially and express my opinion on the role of the agency of human spirit in the type of behavior in question.

Let us consider the first of our model cases. When a man brings a lighter to his body, it is his spirit that acts as the agency of decision-making. I wish to stress that mature or ripened political conviction by itself is not enough, and it is not ‘ripeness’ proper that brings the man into action. The state of mind and of psyche is to be translated into action by one more chain link, namely, by the decision. Now, who or what makes the decision to burn oneself? Is this role fulfilled by the person's consciousness – the agency that normally perform the bulk of all decisions in his life? No, it is not. Rather, it is nothing other than spirit that is in a position to make the terminal decision against the basic survival instinct.

Acts of spirit may in a sense resemble the role of *deus ex machina*, which, after hearing all rational arguments in favor of well-being and survival, nevertheless takes its own final and ruling decision, which may crucially oppose all those mundane considerations, throwing them all away as void. From the point of view of the conventional rationality of a mediocre man, the *deus ex machina* decision of spirit may seem weird,

capricious and irrational. However, are the decisions of spirit as irrational as they may seem in the eyes of a common sense egoistic human being? To my mind, the spirit-provoked decisions of a political protester are in most cases not so irrational. The person understands that the majority of people are afraid to come out into the streets, but if they have a sample of heroic action, a trigger, they might or most likely will do so. The hopes and risk-taking of a ‘triggering’ protester in an attempt to raise the mass are rational enough if one bears in mind that this person is acting in this case not out of his narrow egoistic rationality, but rather, from the rationality and logic of collective action (Blomberg et al. 2009).

As to the real-life cases, I wish to mention a touching article on the self-burning of a student that occurred in 1970 as a form of protest against the oppressive regime in South Korea. From 1970 to 2004, 107 protesters died in the act of suicide protests in South Korea. Many left suicide notes that were widely spread (Kim 2008, p. 554). The nationwide refrain of this first self-burning act was ‘Do not let my death be in vain’. The first self-burning of 1970 was far from an irrational act. It produced a mighty wave of protest mobilization that finally brought democracy to South Korea.

Another massive practice of suicidal protest is hunger strikes in Turkish prisons. Over 4 years, starting with the ‘death fasting’ in 1984 in Istanbul as a protest against keeping prisoners in single isolated chambers, it took the death toll of 120 men. “The fundamental dilemma that arises from this opposition is whether it is more important to live for one’s own ‘self’ or to die for the common good of others, thus correcting for perceived injustices by sacrificing one’s individual life for a political cause” (Koçan and Öncü 2006, p. 350).

Let us turn to the second of our model cases. Here, the spirit is also an agency of decision-making. The decision is partly rational and partly instinctive. As to being rational, the soldier understood that a squad is more in need of a commander than a single soldier and that one dead soldier, himself, is a lesser evil than are many dead and wounded soldiers. In what sense is the decision instinctive? Instincts themselves are not solely egoistic; there are altruistic and collectivistic instincts, as well. The presence and influence of altruistic instincts are expressed much more strongly in insects. Mammals, including humans, are far more self-centered (insects evidently having no ‘self’ at all), but mammals and humans retain the historical heritage of some non-egoistic instincts, too. These instincts provide for helping, sharing, and the need to be useful to others (to say nothing of the special maternal instinct). The role of spirit in the model case being considered is that of selecting between two contrarily directed instincts. The spirit suppressed the survival instinct and at the same time promoted the altruistic instinct, which is commonly not manifested but may awaken in situations critical for the collective.

Some authors suppose that the biologically instinctive roots of suicidal desire are present in every man (the analog of the Thanatos drive postulated by Freud). If this appears to be true, self-sacrificial behavior becomes much easier to explain (de Catanzaro 1991; Brown et al. 1999). There is another supposition that heroism (altruism is not in question here) might have evolutionarily arisen as a rational adaptive mechanism out of frequent wars in ancient times (Smirnov et al. 2007).

In the third model case, involving protesters against a totalitarian regime, the spirit is also a decision-maker because the normal, that is, the ego-oriented consciousness could not have made a decision irreversibly hampering one’s social well-being and career.

The decision was much less rational than in the case of self-burning because under a totalitarian regime the protesters had no hopes to be seen, heard or followed at all. Here, the spirit was in a role unmentioned in this article yet. The spirit fought for the right of a person to have a spirit, that is, for itself alone. Spirit insisted on its very existence, purely by demonstrating itself. Man is not a mere animal because no animal has dignity or the slightest sense of it. Only man has dignity. To manifest their human dignity, the protestors undertook this evidently hopeless and doomed act – a protest against a harsh totalitarian regime. Nevertheless, manifesting the presence of the spirit is pleasure and pride in itself.

The spirit gives pleasure and satisfaction by its very action; the spirit gives happiness purely by acting and thereby evincing that it does exist. This quality is the spirit's own very special rationality and logic, which is hard to comprehend for those for whom spirit is not yet a value and a determinative factor. However, spirit tends to turn from a potential and sleepy state into an active state. Being human supposes the possession of spirit anyway. A situation may let your spirit spring out, unpredictably to you yourself, say, as a reaction to a severe humiliation, when your dignity is smashed and needs protection and reconstitution.

With the above in mind, we can add one hitherto missing explanative point to the model case two. Was it not simply that the altruistic instinct supplanted the egoistic instinct, all events happening automatically within the realm of only instincts? What is the place for spirit, then? Even supposing that the altruistic instinct switched on purely automatically, the spirit was nevertheless involved. As argued above, the very nature of spirit is such that it brings pride and pleasure by its very manifestation and by confirming to oneself and others its very existence. The soldier should have been happy and proud to find the spirit within his mental realm and to let it act. He got the chance to act completely in spite of his own prudent and thus boring ego – the manifestation of spirit was a reward in itself.

The fourth model case, where a detained officer places his military and aristocratic honor over his biological survival, is clearly explained by the arguments expressed regarding the third model case. Fighting duels, so widespread among military aristocrats centuries ago, arises from the same motivation. To some, life means only biological life. However, there is social life as well, and in many cases you may attribute more value to social life than to biological existence. Remaining biologically alive but losing your social reputation equals social death. You become a living nothing. This threat was the officer's motivation. A similar situation can be found in jails, where the loss of your social rank renders you subject to anybody and brings you to the very bottom of existence. Both you yourself and others cease to recognize and to respect you as a human, that is, as a being who possesses the agency of spirit and the quality of dignity. You survive biologically, but you die socially in your own eyes and in others' eyes. Hence, the harsh fight against losing 'dignity' in the prisoner's meaning of the term, and the great need of one's firm spirit.

The logic of the situation is such that, if you want your own spirit, honor, dignity, and sacred values to be recognized and respected, do the same in respect to all other men, including your enemies. Scott Atran persistently stresses this basic approach in negotiating with those whom you provisionally call 'terrorists' (mind that they

symmetrically attach the same or a similar label to you). If you wish your own sacred values to be recognized, recognize those of others, too, including those whom you call ‘terrorists’. Make a symbolic gesture of recognition, respect, or excuse in respect of the ‘terrorists’ sacred values – and their spirit may open up to your spirit; by a symbolic gesture, you may gain more than years of fruitless quarrels gave you earlier (Ginges et al. 2011, p. 514; Atran and Axelrod 2008; Atran 2006.)

### More Detailed Explication of Scheler’s Notion of Spirit

In the first part of this section, I am going to examine in more detail Scheler’s understanding of spirit proper. In the second part of the section, I will correlate the notion of spirit (*der Geist*), as used and implicitly understood in the German language and the German academic tradition, with its usage and understanding in the English language and the English and American academic tradition. There is some discrepancy that I want to overcome in order to fully include Scheler and his concept of spirit in global psychology and philosophy.

Here are some more ideas from ‘The Human Place in the Cosmos’ that further explain the nature and the importance of spirit.

It is the magnificent accomplishment of science that the human being, with his accidental place in the cosmos, learns how to reckon with himself and with the whole of his physical and psychic constitution as if he was handling an object [*der Mensch... mit sich selbst... gleich wie mit einem fremden Dinge... zu rechnen lernt*] placed among other objects in causal interconnections (Scheler 2009, p. 33). [...] Insofar as he is a ‘person’, only the human being is able to soar far above his status as a living entity [[*d*]er Mensch... vermag sich über sich – als Lebewesen – empor zu schwingen] and, from a center beyond the spatio-temporal world, make everything the object of his knowledge, including himself. It is in this sense that the human being as spirit is superior to both himself and to the world. Thus he is also open to irony and humor, which always imply the ability to rise above one’s own existence (Scheler 2009, p.33).

Scheler reconsiders the traditional polar oppositions proposed by the earlier philosophy, and says that the deepest existential dualism does in fact exist between spirit and life:

Thus it is not the pairs of human lived body and soul, or the objective body and a soul, or that of brains and soul in humans, that represent some sort of ontological dualism. The antithesis that we find in man, and subjectively experience as such, is one of a much higher and of a much more fundamental order: the antithesis of spirit and life (Scheler 2009, p.57).

The idea of the spirit governing the body is far from new, and Scheler has a long historical tradition behind him. Practically all schools of ancient Eastern religious and philosophical thought included the question of spirit vs. body in their focus, emphasizing the idea that the spirit does in fact govern and should govern the body. Secular

philosophies have also had much to say about the theme throughout the centuries. Plato stressed the dichotomy of the elevated soul and reason vs. the mundane body with its brutal and blind drives; he prescribed attaining command over the body by means of the soul and reason to lead a better human life. Descartes expounded the mind-body problem and declared the presence of the soul to be the exclusive property of a human being, absent from all animals, as though they were only machines.

As far as Scheler's immediate German predecessors in the use of the term 'spirit' are concerned, one should mention Rudolph Eucken (1846–1926), Scheler's mentor at the University of Jena during the early years of his career (Eucken 1909; Eucken 1913). Eucken's central idea has been the contradiction of man's natural life and man's spiritual life. In 'The Human Place in the Cosmos' Scheler did not mention Eucken and his influence at all; yet the influence is nonetheless evident. The spirit vs. life theme, adopted to a lesser or greater extent from Eucken, was left unexplicated in Scheler's writings for nearly 20 years and was only given its clear and sound proclamation in Scheler's last work, published in the last year of his life.

The historical epochs of those two thinkers were essentially different, and this difference was manifested in their approaches to the spirit theme. All of Eucken's main books were written in the period of 1900 to 1914, before the First World War. Their all-penetrating refrain is that modern social life should be and is in fact slowly and with difficulty acquiring more and more authentic Christianity and spirituality.

The presence of spirit, in Scheler's understanding of the term, is distinct from spirituality. 'Spirituality' is a rather vague term denoting the sensitivity or attachment to religious values or, even more broadly, a more elevated state of mind, as opposed to an earthy, materialistic, utilitarian, and egocentric approach to life. Spirit, in Scheler's understanding, is an actually functioning mental entity and agency, one of the working components of the general mental and psychic structure of every human individual. In the quality of being an acting mental agency, spirit may be likened to such agencies as will, consciousness, self-consciousness, or conscience, all of which are agencies with their specific functions in the overall mental 'steering cabin' of a person's behavior.

Some remnants of Eucken's propitious and benign hope for the evolution towards a better life can also be seen in Scheler's 1928 'Cosmos'. Still, Scheler's emphasis is not on how to raise spirituality, morality, and authentic religiosity in modern social life. Rather, Scheler's chief questions are as follows: 'What is the nature of human spirit itself?' and 'How did it happen at all that spirit, having appeared alongside and in addition to the domain of life, started challenging the later?' His treatment of spirit is primarily a scientific reflection on and exploration of the roots of this very phenomenon. Eucken's treatment is a non-reflective acceptance of the existence of spirit as it is and deals only with the derivative issue of how we could raise spirituality in the modern world and escape the brutal 'naturalness' of material life.

Scheler's creative work was meteoric throughout his entire career. Each decade or shorter period was marked by the development of a substantially new set of ideas or the adoption of a different worldview, for example, with his conversion from Judaism to Catholicism and shortly thereafter turning to pantheism, or his involvement with phenomenology, which lasted for a limited time, having then given place to some new philosophical interests. Older works were revisited, supplemented with completely new sections, and provided with improved titles, as was the case for the 'Nature of Sympathy'. Presenting the

concept of spirit was the culmination of this ceaseless creation. The final stage of Scheler's feverish creativity gives an impression of a brightest flash before being fully burnt out. In fact, it was the case.

The problem is that spirit was never thoroughly defined and systematically explored by Scheler. Hence, Scheler's researcher is limited by incompleteness of the original. There exists no Schelerian theory of spirit, at best, a concept. Scheler has been looking forward to start up a new direction in his explorations, that is, philosophical anthropology, that was supposed to be developed into the complete theory of a human being where spirit should had played a central role.

However, what he only managed to do within a year before his sudden death (caused by cardiac arrest) in realizing this just started, although far-going plan, was making a three-hours long oral presentation in 1927, and then, in 1928, only a month before his death in May, to get published - with corrections and additions to his personal read-out notes together with the minutes of that scientific session, of a 60-pages separate brochure. That is all for what we have as a source, not counting some dispersed references, linked to the core concept of spirit only indirectly. Still, even this start-up minimum did reveal a novel and creative idea fully worth being studied and further developed, and be treated as one of the highest accomplishments of this thinker.

The question to be asked now is how the concept of spirit is linked to and embedded in all the previous set of Scheler's ideas. The answer is that practically in no way can it be derived from the previous creations of Scheler's mind. The development of the idea of spirit was essentially new for Scheler. We have to consider Scheler's idea of spirit as having appeared on its own, assuming we bracket out the early influence of Eucken, which was put in the far corner of Scheler's mind and left non-actualized for nearly 20 years.

Scheler's attitude, compared to Eucken's, in particular, is especially attractive due to Scheler's desire to study human spirit in terms of nature and to consider spirit in the comparative rawness of the neighboring evolutionarily engendered agencies of cognition and decision-making, such as consciousness and intellect - that is, to explore the phenomena to the utmost scientifically. Scheler considers the latest experimental data from animal psychology and the studies in cognition of the highest animals. On the one hand, Scheler's scientific and evolutionary oriented attitude positively distinguishes his approach from the consideration of the spirit-matter and the mind-body problems in only philosophical categories, as it was in the preceding tradition of European philosophy. On the other hand, while discussing the topic of spirit, Scheler escapes religiously tainted wishful thinking and its banal complaints against the sway of the technological and material culture.

What is especially enigmatic and intriguing in the situation that Scheler expounds to us is that spirit can only nest in a living body; spirit is fed by the organic vital energy - but at the same time, spirit can, by its own decision and for its own purposes, eliminate that body and hence, as it indirectly turns out, eliminate itself. The intrigue of this dual purposeful self-elimination is the issue absent from the Eastern philosophy of mind-over-body control, the Christian doctrine of the ascetic suppression of fleshly desires, and the classical philosophical teachings that address the mind-body problem, such as those of Plato and Descartes. The puzzle that Scheler has left to us is how could it happen that in the domain of biological vitality, there appeared such entity as spirit, in

whose very nature is the proneness to overcome the vital drives and to defy the demands of biological self-preservation, up to self-sacrificial and suicidal behavior? In what ways might such a ‘self-negator’ be engendered? Is it also a product of biological evolution? No, it is not, Scheler asserts. Spirit only complements life from without, rather than appears from within.

Scheler brings us to his concept of spirit by leading us through several stages of animal psychology and behavior. This is symptomatic for him as basically a philosopher, who should had derived spirit by some kind of philosophical operation of ideas. Scheler does not – he equally strives to treat things scientifically, and the scientific approach takes here the upper hand. He goes through four stages of evolutionary psychology, among which are, in ascending order: ‘general impulsion toward growth and reproduction’ with plants and most primitive animals; instincts; associative memory; and the final border station before becoming a human – ‘the organically bound practical intelligence’, as he calls it (Scheler 2009, p. 21). Scheler describes famous Wolfgang Köhler’s experiments with chimpanzees and makes his conclusion that these animals depicted the genuine intelligent actions with elements of creativity. But what further? – puts he the question. Is the nature of a human formed just by more and more sophisticated state of practical intelligence pushed forward by its evolutionary development and also higher and higher operational creativity in handling of material objects bound to the rise of intelligence? So the border transition from the animal state to a human state is only a quantitative event? No, this is not the case, contends Scheler. A completely new factor appears with humans, constituting their nature and completely absent even among the highest developed animals. Ancient Greeks used the word ‘reason’ for describing the emergent phenomenon of the close nature. Scheler prefers to call this phenomenon spirit.

One of the key features of spirit is that it no more has biological adaptation function. This function is still peculiar to consciousness, which, too, only humans have. However, human consciousness has been evolutionary formed for improved adjustment to biological environment and survival in it. (This is only my interpretation and prolongation to the supposed fifth stage of the evolutionary raw presented by Scheler; Scheler himself does not mention consciousness when discussing spirit). Still, spirit is neither evolutionary prolongation of intellect nor of consciousness. Spirit is a phenomenon of a qualitatively different nature at all.

We will not go into discussion of Scheler’s views concerning the genesis of spirit, because this would require writing another article of the same volume. Our task is focused on another matter and is more limited here. Instead, I try to give my own short working definition of spirit. Spirit is a mental agency engendering or being involved in any activity of a human that is free from or having nothing to do with the biological adaptation demands; moreover, spirit often deliberately acts contrary to these demands out of its own wish. As such, the chief trait of spirit is arbitrariness. Above, I likened its appearing and action to *deus ex machina*, what is in fact close to acting arbitrarily. Such activity is absent among animals: they are never free from biological determinants, even in a kitten play, which is just training for the future hunting. Animals are always concerned and anxious, and rational, as strange as it may seem; they cannot be others, they cannot afford themselves be carefree. Carefree and arbitrary can only let be spirit, respectively only for a human.

In the earlier sections of the article, where the neglect of one's own life has been often mentioned, what is explained, of course, by the very theme chosen for the article, spirit took some macabre, thus, one-sided look. It is true that the brightest manifestation of the phenomenon of spirit is the ability to dispose of one own life, what is a direct opposition to the principle of biological adjustment and instinctive wish to survive and avoid bodily damage. But we just not notice that the most part of modern man activity is engendered by spirit in this or that way. Obsession with sex, withholding from sex, dieting up to severe asceticism, fitness-wellness, drawing, dancing, reading and writing poems, music, traveling, sport all that is directly driven by the agency of spirit or by spirit as actuating mechanism of some other purely human desires. Skeptics would say – behind every item in this list stands some hidden biological demand, as they used to say that there is no altruism in the world – behind all of its manifestations stands only egoism. Let those people dwell in their melancholy, there is no remedy for those who believe in any theory of plot. Spirit's actions might far not always be pure, they may well be accompanied by wish of biological well-being. Still, the pure forms, to my mind, do exist. Let us take such extreme sport as alpinism. What makes a person alone and without safety equipment climb the mountain of a difficult profile and to be happy after conquering it, and then not to boast of his quite personal accomplishment? I have only one answer – it is his spirit in action. Even survival is on the second place – on the first place is fulfilling one's dream and proving one's highest skill in the chosen sphere of realizing one's potential. Let us quite hypothetically imagine: instead of running away to save one's skin, a mouse enters a fight with a cat with an only aim to protect one's dignity and honor, even at the price of inevitable death - does it sound realistic to a minimal extent? Of course, not. Meanwhile, such motivation is far not so rare among humans - quite because they partly live in a spirit's domain, where any biological or pragmatic egoistic motivations lose their force.

Scheler had his own experience with spirit's action, and far not devoid of drama. For Scheler, human life was a battlefield comprised of the blind and mighty instinctive drives and the tiny but persistent spirit, which attempts to put the drives under its own command.

The human being is a creature that, by virtue of its spirit, can take an ascetic attitude toward its fervent and vibrating life – the human being can suppress and repress its own drive impulses... By comparison to animals, who always say 'Yes' to reality – even when they fear and flee – the human being is the 'Naysayer', he is an ascetic of life; he is an eternal protester against all mere reality. (Scheler 2009, p. 39).

The battle between instincts, mostly the sexual instinct in Scheler's case, and spirit was not only an abstract idea to himself but also a problem in his own life. Exploring the phenomena in the detached terms of philosophy and science was accompanied by experiencing the phenomena biographically. An abstract interest in the life vs. spirit problem arose out of or at least was amplified by his subjective personal experience and its impact on his personal life. Scheler was dismissed from teaching for about ten years because of the sexual

allegations initiated by his jealous wife (later, ex-wife, one of three wives, the last wife being very young, in fact, a student). His early death may have been at least partly caused by his living too fast, too intensively, and too vitally driven. His spirit did of course recognize the excessive vitality as an issue hampering his more important goal, philosophical creativity, and attempted to take a firm hold of his vitality, though mostly in vain.

The biography of Scheler written by Wolfhart Henckmann includes the memoirs of people who personally knew Scheler and who stressed the affinity and, at the same time, the striking contradiction between Scheler's external appearance and the inner core of his personality. (The excerpts from Henckmann's book are translated from the German language by me - A.A.)

It is often mentioned in the posthumous memoirs that the late Scheler's philosophy was a true mirror of his own personality. [...] The head... with its wide, fleshy, brutally moving jaws; during the eating to which Scheler gave himself wholeheartedly and without embarrassment, they tucked away unheard qualities of food without any discrimination. However, above his massive and formless animality there shone a pair of eyes of light blue color that slightly popped out of the head; their shining was so impressive and fascinating that people have fallen completely under their charm and from now on have seen only those eyes and forgotten any other details of his physical outward appearance. (Henckmann 1998, pp. 36–37).

Many photographs of Scheler has been made during his last years, some are reproduced in the Henckmann's biographical book on Scheler. The famous German painter Otto Dix has made Scheler's portrait in 1926, what indirectly tells both for the 'philosophical star' status of Scheler at that time, and also for his distinguished looking.

All who knew Scheler by that time noticed the contradiction expressed in the portrait between the lively, straight look of the wide-open eyes, and the heavy jaws – the portrait of the embodied conflict between the spirit and the life drive. Chr. Eckert, the leader of the Köln Research Institute, who had friendly relations with Scheler, has expressed the whole impression in the way that many others also share: 'The man of spirit and the man of life drive in one and the same personality, demonic in some of his movements and traits, and at the same time childishly naive'. [...] The Christians among his (former) friends interpreted Scheler's way of life as the demonically driven self-destruction of his rich spirit. [...] For Moritz Geiger, a friend of Scheler from the days of the Munich group of Phenomenology, the two principles seemed not to lead unavoidably to conflicts. What especially marked Scheler was, according to Geiger, 'that he was so full of life as a very few men, and at the same time was possessed of a spirit like no other' [...] Some accepted the possession by the spiritual, Scheler himself included, as something of a demonic nature, while others took it as something of a genius (Henckmann 1998, pp. 37–38).

Now, I proceed to compare the German-language and the English-language linguistic and academic traditions in their respective use of the words 'der Geist' and 'spirit'.

The difference between them at least partly explains why the penetration of Scheler's concept of spirit into the British and American traditions of philosophy and psychology has so far been hampered.

The word 'spirit' is not alien to the English language, of course. The problem is that it is predominantly used either as a purely religious term ('Holy Spirit') or only metaphorically. For example, let us take the expressions 'brave spirit', or 'the man of strong spirit', or 'put spirit into him'. If we ask the person who used those expressions what he meant here by 'spirit', the answer would most likely be: nothing special, nothing real, they say 'spirit' in all these contexts only metaphorically. The same with academics: they readily accept in their scientific discourse such terms as 'psyche', 'consciousness', 'mind', even 'soul' (later with less desire) but will be perplexed and skeptical when seeing the word 'spirit' in somebody's text and treat the text as though it is only pretending to be scientific. (This is my personal experience with propagating Scheler's concept of spirit). An English-speaking layman or non-religious academic would never firmly state: 'I do understand by 'spirit' an actually existing mental agency or function of our psyche; it is an ontologically real entity and agency nesting in our minds'.

Of course, there is also much religious or metaphorical usage of the word with the root '-geist-' in the German language. As to Scheler, however, contrary to his English-speaking academic counterparts, he admitted that in particular cases (and strictly in those cases), the term 'der Geist' does have its real ontological correlate; in this sense, 'der Geist' really exists as a specific ontological entity and agency.

To introduce the term 'spirit' (der Geist) into his personal scientific lexicon, the German language itself and the German academic tradition facilitated Scheler considerably. Let us take, for example, the conventional notion 'die Geisteswissenschaft'. It is simply an analog of the English 'psychology'. In the named German notion, 'der Geist' already does have a firm stronghold for its further academic usage. As in the English language, where the root 'psyche' in the term 'psychology' invokes no special objections, so in the German language the root 'der Geist' in the term 'die Geisteswissenschaft' invokes no special objections, too. In any case, why should we consider 'psyche' an ontologically more real entity and clearer notion than 'der Geist'? What 'psyche' is, in fact, is no more apparent than what 'spirit' is; both terms are quite vague. The first term is simply more conventional than the later. Let us take another notion of 'die Geisteswissenschaften'. It is simply an analog of the 'Arts and Humanities' set of disciplines in the English language; so 'der Geist' in the German academic tradition has one more stronghold in the notion 'die Geisteswissenschaften'. There are further examples, but I stop at those two.

There is another side of the term 'spirit' in both languages, which suits the task that Scheler set before himself by selecting this very term. Spirit is something that is invisible, although ever present. It is immaterial, although ever acting. Some mysterious aspect is expressed by the term 'spirit' along with its scientific and positivistic aspect, the later aspect present in the German language in much higher proportion than in the English language. This is a correlation of the two aspects that Scheler seems to seek and welcome. Being, for Scheler, quite ontologically real and scientifically acceptable in psychology and cognitive science, spirit, at the same time, contains some enigma in itself, acting as *deus ex machina*. Spirit is real, but still it is somewhat enigmatic – this is what Scheler wants us to feel, and one should admit that he succeeds in this endeavor.

## The Inherent Ambiguity of Spirit

There is a particular contradiction in the nature of human spirit, especially in politics; I consider the contradiction in this section. Left to itself, the spirit strives to be a purely self-supporting and self-sustaining entity. Spirit strives only for freedom; spirit is embodied freedom (metaphorically, as spirit is not a body). By the very definition of its nature, spirit seeks independence from everything and everybody; it relies only on itself; it finds its determinatives only within itself and deliberately evades any type of support. Freedom seeking freedom for the sake of being free and evincing this freedom - that is it.

Meanwhile, my task in this article is far more concrete than purely abstract discussion of self-circling in seeking freedom for the sake of freedom proper. I have set the task to explore how spirit is correlated with self-sacrificial behavior, mostly in politics. If we look at spirit from this point of view, we shall see that spirit-driven acts of a person are almost always linked to and interwoven with some great political task, grand social goal or value for the sake of which the act of the spirit and the related self-sacrificial behavior are undertaken. In politics, the spirit needs a prop - exactly as a twining plant needs a supporting fence to catch hold of and lean upon, without which it stoops and falls. The prop is most often a highest value considered sacred: God, Church, Liberation, Revolution, or Motherland. This is the nature of the inherent ambiguity of spirit: between striving for an unbound freedom, on the one hand, and needing a prop to which to devote oneself, on the other hand.

Man draws strength from the belief system he has attached himself to and from the sense of being a part of something large. This sense is one of the causes of joining a powerful organization, even at the expense of abandoning your cozy philistine habits. Abandoning the older system of belief or life-style does not mean, however, that your spirit becomes freer in the new conditions. The new belief system takes a strong hold over you. After you have found yourself on a new island of belief, you may become the most submissive and obedient of all your new fellows. Still, there are the devoted freedom-seekers, who clearly feel that attaching oneself to any belief system means losing your freedom and making your spirit submissive; however, they are the minority. The majority of people are happy to be provided with something great, valuable, and sacred to which they can apply their strength and from which they can draw strength in return. There is nothing especially bad about being part of a mass, being supported by the mass and supporting the mass. It is the normal way of doing politics, whereas proud individualists often stay full of ideas but practically impotent.

As to the spirit and the ability to dispose voluntarily of your own life, the fact that you have submitted yourself to a military or semi-military system does change the situation of completely belonging only to oneself. Your decision to commit political suicide is so drastic that it is still only in your own hands. Kamikaze flights were voluntary, at least in theory; and nobody can force an islamikaze to commit his act. Logically, if the threat of death is the ultimate threat - what other lever can force you to kill yourself? On the one hand, the decision is finally up to your personal spirit. On the other hand, though, you have submitted yourself to a system as a whole; you no longer belong to yourself; while your spirit seems still to be at your disposal, your personality is no longer at your command. Scheler was fully aware of this paradox.

Below, I present an important section from Scheler's "The Nature of Sympathy," concerning the contradictory role of the spirit in a heroic act facilitated by identification with a larger group. To achieve identification, you have to abandon your personality. Paradoxically, by abandoning your narrow personality, you may affirm your spirit to commit a heroic act. Scheler is torn between the individuality of the spirit, which is the basic principle for him, and man's striving for identification with a mass. Identification - that is, dissolving your personality, for Scheler, is primitive and archaic. Nevertheless, because of the identification with the totem, with the ancestors, and with the tribal leader, one may feel himself stronger because one shares their powers and at the same time abandons one's initially weak and indecisive personality. The contradiction is aggravated for Scheler by his philosophical denial of Schopenhauer's idea that all people are in fact ontologically one; they are not separated into individuals, as it seems to them, but constitute a type of human lump, or clod, which ontologically entails deindividuation and identification with all others.

Scheler speaks of a spirit's loss of independence as something very undesirable. However, is it not the very typical case that, in the political realm, spirit is elevated and upheld by catching itself on, clinging onto, relying on something collectively meaningful, important and inspiring? Spirit left alone and by itself most often wilts, at least as far as politics and mass action are concerned. If spirit loses its link with a mass and with its 'sacred' purpose, then there is nothing for the spirit to be fed with, to orient toward and for which to give away life. By its very nature, spirit is deeply individual, but, at the same time, paradoxically, in politics, it strives to cling to a mass. This evident contradiction deeply bothers Scheler, what is seen from the next fragments.

To attain to identification, man must elevate himself 'heroically' above the body and all its concerns, while becoming *at the same time* 'forgetful', or at least unmindful, of his spiritual individuality; he must abandon his spiritual dignity and allow his instinctive life to look after itself. We might also put it by saying that he has to become something less than a human being having reason and dignity, yet something more than an animal of the kind which lives and has its being only in its physical circumstances (and which would indeed come closer to being a plant instead of an animal, the closer its approximation to this marginal type).

The point is that gregariousness in animals represents an advance towards the human level, whereas man becomes more of an animal by associating himself with the crowd, and more of a man by cultivating his spiritual independence.

Thus everything that tends to promote an absolutely collective existence (a limiting concept) will tend to make the individual *more of a hero, and at the same time more of a clod*, in that it stultifies him as a spiritual personality with an ideal and vision of his own. On the other hand, all consideration of things in the light of his own material interest (i.e. self-love, individual self-respect, and the tendencies to self-preservation and betterment which derive from this), will also have to be purged from his outlook, if he is to immerse himself in the primordial feelings and attitudes of the group. He is simultaneously raised above his physical circumstances *and* despoiled of his spiritual inheritance (Scheler 2011, pp. 35–36).

No wonder that Scheler has acquired a lot of emotional and thinking experience during the First World War. He did not participate in military actions directly. Meanwhile, in 1917–18, he was at the service of caring of the German interned military men in Switzerland and Holland (Henckmann 1998, p. 254), so he should have had much communication with those people, bringing Scheler valuable observations and conclusions concerning the war behavior, as follows, for example:

If there is any one thing within recent experience which serves to confirm these observations, it is the experience of the (First) World War. However, it comes about, and whoever is to blame for it, a war-situation transforms all ‘organic communities’, i.e. groups and individuals having a sense of unity in their collective mode of life, into real entities of a unitary and powerful kind. It glorifies the individual, while largely paralyzing his spiritual independence. It elevates a man above his mundane preoccupation with himself, while deposing and disabling him as a spiritual personality. Revolutionary groups and mass-movements exhibit a similar condition of communal frenzy, in which body and soul go under together in a *single* passionate surge of collective activity (Scheler 2011, p. 36).

To explicate the above described ambiguity of spirit, let us consider, as an example, the case of Russian soldiers during the Second World War who committed massive heroic acts in fighting against Nazi invaders. Over 400 cases in which soldiers used their own bodies to cover the enemies’ defense embrasures so that the opposing fire would not stop the attack of the Russian troops are known. There might be instances of self-forgetful exaltation, deeply effective Stalinist ideological indoctrination, or sometimes even euphoric alcoholic intoxication. However, these feats cannot be reduced to merely this or that facilitating circumstance. It is clear that the people committing self-sacrificial acts were not afraid of death, that their choice to die was individually taken, and that this choice was not dictated by a herd instinct, making them blind followers of others. Their human spirit was at its height. There were also myriad examples of actions performed out of a sense of altruism, of group cohesion and the self-threatening rescue of others. In a word, people acted freely, cohesively, and self-responsively on a massive scale.

The only reservation is in place. Being a soldier, he may not act absolutely of his own will. He may decide to die for a goal he personally considers sacred. However, he has submitted to the political ruler and, in turn, to a direct commander in charge of undertaking the military task. Therefore, in the cases of the heroic Russian soldiers, their spirits were not purely unbound: they were acting in accord with the goals approved by the political rulers and the tasks of their direct commanders.

Such were the heroic years of 1941–1945. What happened to the substantial part of those heroes in the years of 1946–1953? Stalin decided that the soldiers who had seen how well people really live in Western Europe or who might have established contacts or even been recruited by the enemy should be isolated. Therefore, train echelons carrying former heroes, now obedient prisoners, began their endless travel from the West to Siberia, sometimes directly from a Nazi concentration camp to a GULAG forced labor camp. My questions are as follows: where did all those holders of high personal spirit disappear? Why did their neglect of the fear of death vanish? What

happened to their group cohesion? Why were there no acts of group rebellion against the new Stalinist enslavers, given that these very men had been so brave in battle against the former Nazi enslavers? Why, within a year or two, did they change from death-despising brave military men and embodiments of the triumphs of human spirit into a humble herd of slaves and creatures shaking in fear before the smallest boss?

My answer is as follows. Within the Stalinist semi-religious belief system, a great mass of military and home front people upheld and strengthened their human spirit; however, at the same time, their personalities had been purposefully dissolved. After approximately twenty-five years of massive daily Stalinist indoctrination, there no longer remained any firm egos of their own that were able to gather themselves mentally and ideologically from within, irrespective of the adherence to their Stalinist skeleton. After their detainment in Siberia, they became even more disoriented, losing the personalization of who was and is the enemy and the real oppressor. Moreover, many admitted that Stalin was doing right by cutting off the real or potential fifth column after the end of the war. They welcomed their enslavement! Here you are with your noble ‘men of spirit’.

## Conclusion

Should the conclusion be that, due to its inherent ambiguity, shown in the later section, spirit only pretends to be the most advanced entity within the realm of human psychology and mentality? Have we not seen that spirit is no more than an instrument for facilitating the manipulations of man by masses and their leaders? Hence, does not the involvement of spirit, as a matter of fact, lead an individual away from, rather than towards, real freedom?

My hypothesis is that spirit goes through several logically consequent stages in its inherent evolution. It can stop and stagnate at some lower stage, or it can make its way to the higher stages. This idea resembles the Hegelian concept of the evolutionary phenomenology of spirit. The difference is that Hegel mainly addressed the logic of evolutionary sequencing of major spiritual formations in the history of humankind, such as Christianity, etc., while I focus only on individual spirit in its logically consequential development. A spirit may look quite unrecognizable at one particular stage of its evolution compared to its manifestation at some different stage.

I would single out at least three of the stages.

The first and the least advanced stage is when spirit is underpinned by involvement in some political or religious endeavor of huge human masses. At this stage, a person’s own ego and personality dissolves or is pushed aside, and a person is happy to act in a self-sacrificial way for some large and important political or religious goal.

The second stage, which was left almost unmentioned and not studied in this article (the same being true for the third stage), is the intermediate stage in which a spirit is not fully and firmly convinced of its own presence and therefore spends its energy and effort in proving its own existence and potential abilities. This is the adolescence-like stage of the self-seeking and self-proving spirit. The phenomenology of spirit’s existence at this intermediate stage is brightly described by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in the images of some of his heroes, as well as in his famous passage from the ‘Writer’s Diary’ discussed by Albert Camus in the ‘Essay on the Absurd’.

The third and the most advanced stage of the evolutionary development of the individual human spirit is when it becomes aware and convinced of its own existence and does not need for its action any external underpinnings, such as participation in a mass movement with the personal ego having been dissolved or pushed aside. The spirit only acts on its own and out of its own determination. Dostoyevsky mentions this type of spirit that ‘quieted itself’ as well, although not so explicitly as the preceding rebellious and even hooligan stage of spirit, because the quieted spirit tends to be quiet and wise; it looks inside itself and concentrates on itself, instead of acting externally with the purpose of attracting the attention of the others. The spirit in its third stage avoids any involvement in mass movements and recognizes this type of involvement as self-destructive, which is quite the opposite of the spirit’s motivation in its initial stage, where it desperately needs such involvement and strives for it and vanishes without it.

This article was most completely devoted to spirit on its first stage, what logically followed from orientation in my study upon the spirit’s role in political psychology and political behavior of masses. Exploring the two further stages of the development of the human spirit is the task for my future work on the topic of the human spirit.

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