

Looking Back to See Forward: Overview of Max Scheler's Sociology of Knowledge and Politics

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In our Information Age, when news about events goes viral instantaneously, around the world, democratic governments face a short-term and long-term dilemma unique in history: how to formulate a coherent and consistent foreign policy that protects human rights (long-term goal) while quickly responding to, often emotionally charged, news of violations of those very same human rights (short-term goal). Well, insights from a rarely referred to German philosopher (in modern International Relations Theory at least) may contribute to the current literature in a new way. Nearly 100 years ago, in 1924, Max Scheler published his penultimate work entitled *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*. There, Scheler says that a state's power expansion is actually a boon for the world since it increases collective knowledge by causing smaller surrounding states to form clusters of states that would not have normally associated with each other. Therefore, that mixing develops new knowledge sets (1924, p. 181). In spite of the great technological advances of modern society over the last 100 years, and now with social media quickly transmitting evidence of human rights violations news around the world, we can plainly see the need for human rights to guide state's foreign policy, which should seemingly be universal, but is not. This paper provides an overview of Scheler's sociological theory of knowledge, which divides problems into two categories, "formal" and "material"; and, suggests considering Scheler's observation that the deep-seated modern problem of a disintegrated ordered unity of a *non-technical culture of knowledge* may be the prime factor contributing to the root cause of the misunderstanding of the universality of human rights.

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Universal Human Rights as a Form of "A Priori" Knowledge

Our modern discussion of human rights, as "universal values", as declared in the United Nations Charter in 1948, came decades after Max Scheler's publication of his *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* in 1924. However, Scheler was impacted by the post-World War I efforts to form an international community of nations to avoid greater world wars, through institutions such as the League of Nations. In his book, Scheler suggests that sociologically, states have a "world-image" of themselves *and* want to project that image to others; therefore, they need to sustain it. Also, there is a correlation between the size of the state and its commitment to this "self-image" or "world-image" (1924, p. 157). Where does this perception of "self", this national identity, on the macro-scale come from? In his text, Scheler explains that there is a plethora of sources for such a

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national “self-image” or “world-image”, but at its core, it is a metaphysical question. Why? Well, for Scheler, *values* shape and re-shape your world-view, of “how” you perceive the world *a priori*. In other words, he says, that “*Value*-ception always precedes *perception*” (1924, p. 116). This is relevant to our discussion because, human rights values, from a Schelerian perspective, form one’s global world-view. If a nation or an individual accepts the basis of human rights, for example, the “right to life”, or the “right to liberty”, or the “right to own property”, or the duty to prohibit slavery, or torture, the “right to nationality”, the “right to the freedom of thought”, or the “freedom of conscience”, or the “right to free association and assembly” (in addition to all of the other natural rights and their subsequent natural laws), already, one can see that these basic human rights values are values of modern democratic societies. He continues,

All human knowledge, in so far as man is a “member” of a society in general, is not empirical but “*a priori*” knowledge. The genesis of such knowledge shows that it precedes levels of self-consciousness and consciousness of one’s self-value. There is no “I” without a “we.” The “we” is filled with contents prior to the “I.” (1924, p. 67)

In other words, “personal values” are created and developed in and from a social context long before they become our “personal values”.

If we reflect again on the original question of this research here, “How do *democracies* formulate a foreign policy that respects human rights both domestically and abroad, while rapidly responding to human rights violations globally?” What would Max Scheler say if he was to answer this question himself? We may safely assume that he would go back to the epistemological origins of knowledge itself. Perhaps he would posit that, before calling forth upon the “non-democratic” nations of the world to respect human rights, and to respect their universal applicability, one must realize that only “democratic societies” value universal human rights values *a priori*. Holding “democratic states” accountable for the values that they already claim to hold because of their democratic constitutions begs the question. However, why wouldn’t “democratic” states seek to have other “democratic” states uphold human rights values? Isn’t it possible for “democratic” states to have all of the structures, documents, and instruments of democracy but not behave democratically? The answer is: yes, of course, unfortunately. However, isn’t it also true that “non-democratic” states, authoritarian regimes, tyrannies, and dictatorships (in some cases even monarchies) do not hold themselves to such high universal human rights standards *a priori*? Consequently, it should be expected that “non-democratic” states would not demand of their international non-democratic counterpart states to behave democratically *a priori*. So, it’s particularly humiliating when “non-democratic” nations criticize “democratic” nations for not upholding their own democratic values and human rights values. However, we may conclude that “non-democratic” regimes by design do not value *a priori* universal human rights. From a Schelerian perspective, a *deep* “sociology of knowledge” (which is the social study of how knowledge or information is shared or not shared) would be necessary for even “democratic states” themselves to recognize what sustains their own domestic *values*-ception first, and; only then would a democratic state be able to recognize what *other democratic* states internationally would *perhaps* need to do in order to sustain *theirs*, long before “non-democratic” states would ever consider addressing universal human rights *a posteriori*.

According to Scheler, this self-imposed, or one might say, “*values*-imposed” “mental limit” (as Spanish philosopher Leonardo Polo might put it), is how we perceive the world: all *per*-ception occurs within an *a*

priori social context of values (Instituto De Estudios Filosóficos Leonardo Polo, 2021). Scheler explains,

It also follows from these laws that the “forms” of mental acts, through which knowledge is gained, are always, by necessity, co-conditioned sociologically, i.e. by the structure of society. And because explanation is something relatively novel reduced to something known, and because society is (by way of the above-mentioned principle) always “more known” than anything else, we can expect to be true what a large number of sociological investigations have already shown: the subjective forms of thinking and intuition, as well as the classification of the world into categories, i.e. the classification of knowable things in general, are co-conditioned by the division and classification of the groups (for example, clans) of which a society consists. (1924, p. 73)

Applying this for our purposes, the very *pre-existing* macro-structure of already existing “democratic societies” reinforces their “democratic values” in the subjective thoughts and intuitions of its “group-soul” members, the people. We might call this the “*social history of the knowledge of democratic values*” which in turn provides the deep-rooted value-structure in the democratic nation’s culture and institutions. Or, one might say, from an *Husserlian* phenomenological perspective, this “*social history of the knowledge of democratic values*” ultimately creates a *pre-scientific* phenomenon of a shared knowledge of “common sense” logic of natural rights, natural laws, civil rights and liberties, and democratic values—domestically (Beyer, 2020).

Our investigation into democratic states *values*-ception started with how Scheler began with “Formal Problems” in his book. But, what does he actually mean by “formal problems”? For Scheler, “formal problems” of the sociology of knowledge refer to *ideational problems*; problems inherent from the inception and conception of a value as it is manifested in a behavior in society. Consequently, critical to the development of universal human rights values in a democratic society would be the education and practice of these values in the democratic society itself. Scheler refers to this type of notion as an effort coming from the “top down” level, from what he calls “the group-mind” (1924, p. 70). He purports,

The sociology of knowledge concerns itself primarily with the “mind” of the group. It traces the laws and rhythms through which knowledge filters downward from the top of society (the knowledge of the elite) to find out how knowledge distributes itself in time among groups and social levels and how society regulates such distribution of knowledge, partially through institutions that disseminate it, such as schools and press, and partially through restrictions, such as secrets, indexes, censorship and prohibitions that forbid particular castes, estates or classes to acquire certain kinds of knowledge. (1924, p. 70)

If we read into what Scheler is suggesting, we can see that it is logical that each of these domestic societal institutions, federal departments, for example, in a democracy has a role, and a responsibility, a duty, to uphold within their own institutional behavior, on a microlevel: *democratic values* especially, regarding the “disparate treatment” and the “disparate impact” of outcomes of all groups, especially minorities. At the distribution and regulation level of “knowledge of human rights values”, all groups at all social levels, from schools to the press, including “social media”, would therefore have to commit to a “human rights *values*-ception” first, within their own institutions in addition to governmental institutions. As Scheler mentions, it is also important that those in the discipline of the “sociology of knowledge” understand the laws of the flow of information from forbidden knowledge, secrets, professional and state secrets, censorship and prohibitions of access to knowledge (1924, p. 70). In other words, if there is no *real*, comprehensive study of the distribution and regulation of information flows between the differing sectors of society, and then Scheler says: *There is no sociology of knowledge to be had*. Rather, there are just facts. For Scheler, facts are “sociologically ignorant”. For Scheler, facts are merely

an historical accounting of reality. We can conceive that even in democratic societies, there are elite groups, which we might call “epistemic communities”, whether governmental, corporations, or other social institutions, whose ways are opaque and mysterious, for whatever legitimate or illegitimate reason; they do not openly and democratically share their knowledge of the interplay of knowledge within their own groups. Then, it follows that we can say that this institutional communication failure contributes, on aggregate, to the demise of human rights values nationally. Therefore, if this knowledge gap about internal institutional behavior exists nationally, then it would also seem that this dearth of knowledge would contribute to the misunderstanding of the interplay of domestic institutions one with another nationally. *Authentic* systemic level of understanding of how democratic societies’ domestic institutions communicate and share knowledge to themselves and to others, whether governmental and non-governmental institutions, seems to be a necessary starting point for merely a *national* “sociology of knowledge”. It would seem that “open and democratic societies” would want to share how to improve themselves, for the sake of understanding the *non-technical mores and laws* of even just domestic governmental and non-governmental institutions, even if just for the sake of scholarship, just as scholarship is shared amongst the *scientific communities* of the world, as it has done for thousands of years.

Since the time of Scheler, one might offer the other newer disciplines of “organizational theory”, “game theory”, or “systems theory” as academic tools to assist in the gathering of such sociological knowledge. However, these theories are mainly used in politics, business, and economics which are hardly the whole gamut of human knowledge. For Scheler, there is a serious crisis in the global “sociology of knowledge”. Without a deep understanding of the *non-technical sociological laws* of how all this knowledge “hangs together” and is shared vertically, and horizontally, between all of the vastly different sectors of democratic societies, from government bureaucracies, to the military, to economic and political institutions, down to all of the cultural and religious realms of society, in real-time, simultaneously; then, should there really be any surprise that violations of human rights values occur at a domestic-national level even within “democratic” nations? From a Schelerian perspective, if there is not an ongoing and comprehensive study of the “sociologies of knowledge” between the elite sectors of *all* societies (like in the sciences) globally (not just democratic ones), then can there be any surprise that human rights values are also not valued internationally, among both the people of democratic and non-democratic nations as well?

As mentioned previously, from an epistemological perspective, Scheler is keen to point out that all knowledge is sociological, that all knowledge occurs within a societal context *a priori*, and that that is indubitable. Scheler takes this one step further: Not only is all knowledge social, and that all values *pre-exist*, shape, and form our own self-perception of our values but they also form our knowledge of *social knowledge*. Scheler says that values affect the very limits of knowledge,

But what follows from these laws for the sociology of knowledge? It follows that, first, the sociological nature of all knowledge and of all forms of thinking, intuition, and cognition is indubitable. But it is not the contents of all knowledge, and even less, the validation of such contents that are indubitable; rather, it is the selection of the objects of knowledge on the basis of the prevailing social perspective of interests. (1924, pp. 72, 73)

For our purposes then, in the study of human rights and foreign policy, we can ask, “How is it then possible to instantiate human rights values within ‘the people,’ whom Scheler would call the ‘group-soul’ of society, while the ‘group-mind’ has no systematic way of assessing or measuring its own progress toward such

a universal human rights 'values-ception,' neither domestically nor globally?" Well, from a Schelerian perspective, the danger is that if the "group-mind" fails to even perceive itself as having a duty to uphold human rights values, then how can the "group-mind", which is supposed to represent the "group-soul," then expect the members of the "group-soul" to reciprocate its duty and loyalty to a "human rights values" ignorant and undemocratic elite? It cannot. Scheler points out that this domestic and international disparity of shared knowledge is perhaps the grandest Achilles heal in all of sociology. According to Scheler, the "sociology of knowledge" is *centuries behind* the progress of all of the other disciplines of science and technology. Scheler said this in 1924.

Small States and Democratic Values

Scheler asks the following question: "Who does better in religion and metaphysics, great nations or small nations?" (1924, p. 180) The short answer is: small nations. Apparently, according to Scheler, diversity, or heterogeneity is not an advantage for a nation when it comes to the development of religion and metaphysics. He says,

One thing is certain and has been known for a long time: cultures of knowledge, especially those of positive science, are dependent, to high degrees, upon territories and peoples that possess a plurality of political powers moving back and forth and also represent, in respect to politics, the individualities of peoples and tribes. (1924, p. 181)

In other words, heterogenous societies of large states benefit from science, technology, and political diversity, but in small states, the pace of life is slower; the populations are more homogeneous. Therefore, in small states religious and metaphysical precepts tend to sustain the daily life of the "group soul". He says,

Opposition from religious denominations also increases the freedom of science much as such opposition limits the possibility of unity in metaphysics. The plurality of class-distinctions, the multiplicity of country and city-states, and the back and forth movement of their struggles, are all equally an advantage for the development of the sciences-but not very significant to metaphysics, which requires quieter and broader possibilities to spread through relatively uniform humanity. (1924, p. 181)

Scheler exclaims that in order for religious dogmas and metaphysical precepts to develop and thrive, there needs to be an atmosphere, an environment, a "spirit of quiet" and solitude for the "group-soul" to answer the big existential questions about life on their own first, before looking to the state, or to the "group mind" for such metaphysical thought leadership. Scheler posits that smaller, less developed states, with their homogeneous populations, in their relative isolation, have the opportunity to contemplate the existential and moral priorities of their society, rather than concerning themselves with the grand distractions of the dictates of current global political alignments or the perpetual pursuit of economic development that plagues larger states. This "culture of silence" looms large in small, less developed states and such a culture is difficult to find in larger, more developed states.

In the section of Scheler's book on "Formal Problems", he expounds upon the need for metaphysical knowledge by all populations. He says,

To keep silence over "secrets" is not only here a dictum and norm to be observed with respect to outsiders, as is the case with official, professional and other secrets; rather, it is a part of the method to find knowledge itself. (1924, p. 77)

We can infer then that inhabitants of small states, whom are in close touch with their religious and cultural leaders, will likely experience and more readily seek out the opportunity to share knowledge and to live silence more frequently and more easily come to “a solidarity of opinions and wills...through silent prayer among the members of their community” (1924, p. 77). From a Schelerian perspective, such a societal development of *metaphysical knowledge* at the deepest levels has long been overlooked and under-valued by the larger, global powers, when it comes to instantiating *human rights values* within a society, in order to create the basis for the fundamental norms of human rights. It would seem that if Scheler was living today, he might ask “Which communities would lead a universal human rights values revolution in the international community?” Unquestionably, he would point to the small, *non-aligned states* who could speak and teach from their own domestic experience of *deep* shared knowledge in and amongst their communities. This sentiment parallels what Caroline E. Lombardo pointed out in her article, “The Making of an Agenda for Democratization: A Speechwriter’s View”, as she reflected on former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s deepest concerns about the future of democracy with the smaller, developing countries, who composed the majority of the UN membership. She remembers,

Acting under the joint auspices of the Group of 77 (G77) and the Non-Aligned Movement (“NAM”), these states...traditionally have been the staunches defenders of sovereignty and non-intervention. For years they saw Western pro-democracy positions as a guise for intervention or for attempts to destabilize their regimes. They had answered Western calls for democracy with cries of hypocrisy, given what they regarded as hegemonic, undemocratic behavior by major Western governments in international affairs. (2001, p. 259)

Both Scheler and Boutros-Ghali recognized a certain objectivity of *non-aligned* small states. As mentioned earlier, according to Scheler, these small states have a strong metaphysical and religious sense of identity of their nation *a priori*. Consequently, it’s conceivable that Scheler would suggest that the “group-soul” of small states would be best able to perceive the introduction of the idea of a “foreign” universal human rights values paradigm from their own perspective, and then decide to create some sort of fusion of those foreign human rights values to coincide metaphysically and religiously, with their own *a priori* domestic values. Whereas, according to Scheler, large state parliamentary democracies, because of their heterogeneous populations, are devoid of a true domestic metaphysics and are even unable to suggest adequate sources of existential meaning. Instead, large parliamentary democratic states couple liberal scientific methodologies with economic development, and offer “progress” as a mantra. Whereas, according to Scheler, non-democratic communist states *do* offer a metaphysics. However, there’s a fundamental problem,

Marxism...is nothing but a utopia supported by deceptive arguments, which sets itself up as a necessary development—and in so far as it does contain some truth, is only a significant theory of universal historical development, and as a metaphysics, which it unfortunately is, can only comically affect genuine metaphysics. (1924, p. 180)

What metaphysics do non-democratic Marxist countries offer? According to Scheler, there *are* core beliefs that communist state loyalty offers their people, but Scheler says the state cannot possibly carry them out: (1) neither “salvation” in the next life; nor, (2) “economic prosperity for all of the working class” in this life; (3) nor communism’s genuine success either domestically or internationally (1924, p. 180). Communism’s metaphysics definitively failed the Russian Soviet Union. But, in China, communism’s antiquated non-democratic, atheist, historical, and dialectical-materialist metaphysical structures are still in place, just now

coupled with capitalism and scientific technology at the behest of the state. The Chinese government, with its non-native, *Western* Marxist metaphysics [all the while violating its own peoples' most basic human rights with impunity, such as "the right to life" by its barbaric *genocide* of over 300 million unborn children whose mothers were *forced* to abort their children by the state in order to accomplish its infamous "One-Child Policy" from 1980 to 2015 (which is now widely recognized as a disastrous demographic failure) (Burkitt & Jie, 2015); along, with its concomitant violations of "women's liberty" *by forcing* "over 300 million Chinese women fitted with intrauterine devices modified to be irremovable without surgery, [and] over 100 million sterilizations..." to accomplish the aforesaid policy (Follett, 2020, p. 1); to the internment of Muslim Uyghurs, to the violation of the religious freedoms of the Falun Gong; and, breaking its promise of a "One-China, Two Systems" policy to now an autocratic "One-China, One System" policy—violating the basic human rights of *all* of the citizens of Hong Kong], *still* poses a powerful alternative to the world's large parliamentary democracies and their *weak* advocacy of universal human rights. So, what is the solution? According to Scheler, the long-term solution will come from a "cosmopolitanism of cultures" that both the Western and Eastern cultures offer. Scheler says,

But the novel atmosphere belonging to the "cosmopolitanism of cultures" created by the sociology of knowledge, leads us also to expect changes in the relationship between metaphysics and religion. We expect a new understanding and synthesis—slow as they may be—of the Western, predominantly religious-ecclesiastic mind and the East's predominantly metaphysical and non-ecclesiastic mind, which manifests itself socially in "sages" and provides self-redemption and self-education through technically guided, spontaneous metaphysical cognitions. There are two forms of knowledge that can bring about such mutual understanding between the two greatest cultural units of mankind: on the side of religion, free "religious" speculation and on the side of spontaneous knowledge a living metaphysics based upon psychic techniques and conjoined with positive science as an ordered supplement but simultaneously independent of it. (1924, p. 155)

A key point here is the notion of "free 'religious' speculation". True "religious freedom" is *the* most fundamental of all human rights. According to Scheler, this right to freely speculate, about religion, is key to the promise of the renewal of values in *both* Western civilizations and in Eastern civilizations alike. According to Scheler, because of global power politics, large states, cannot, will not, and do not have the time or freedom to dis-align themselves and "freely speculate" about religion or metaphysics, mainly because of the heterogeneity of their populations, their active involvement in war, and the hustle to create the latest, most innovative technology to support their global power ambitions. Scheler says,

war...has itself given steady and strong stimulation to the positive sciences, because of the need for war technology. On the other hand, war is adverse to the metaphysical mind as well as to religion, for which reason the vast pacifist empires of Asia provide a fertile soil for the development of religious and metaphysical knowledge. (1924, p. 181)

This is an important point: war, super-power struggles, proxy wars, and the political power alignments of large states interferes with the objective and free development of the most fundamental beliefs of the "group-soul"; religious freedom, metaphysical freedom, and the freedom of conscience. Whereas, Scheler suggests that instead, small *non-aligned* states enjoy freedoms large politically powerful states do not; for example, he says:

These homogeneous kingdoms, by contrast, give to human understanding an easier image of eternity, produce a feeling of duration, and make dispositions alive for the ideation of essences of all fortuitous being. They intertwine the mind and the heart much less in the "here-and-now relationships" of things and processes and let come into bold relief much more easily the great essential and constant problems of existence and life—the questions What is "life"? "death"? "youth"? "suffering"? etc., in general—as the life of society itself takes on a relatively constant character. The small states

proper, especially the so-called “neutral” ones, generally have been, when differentiated enough and more sharply in terms of classes, more favorably disposed toward strictly theoretical culture of knowledge, at least in the epochs of great, world imperialist states, than the great, and especially the world, powers. And this is so for two reasons: first, the neutral nations have a more objective relationship to all other nations; they take all the good things in philosophy and science from the greater states so that they avoid much better the dangers of national isolation and myth formation...Second, they are inclined to be more contemplative and theoretical because they are removed from the struggle and hurried tempo of life...Because the small states lack the strong technical stimuli, the abundance of materials, and also the wealth that the great, world powers all have, positive science is relatively less developed among them; but their metaphysical and philosophical sense is proportionally stronger. (1924, p. 181)

Politically, it can be difficult to conceive of disadvantages of “super-power” status in an anarchic global system. However, according to Scheler, small states have a singular super-power advantage themselves: to cultivate a contemplative lifestyle—resulting in a strong domestic identity, with metaphysical and religious answers to the existential questions of life for their populations, which, devastatingly—large states *cannot* provide. These strong values constitute a real advantage of confidence for the small states in the global system, while larger nations struggle, and often fail, to connect with their populations’ desire for answers to the meaning in life and a national identity, making them vulnerable to domestic division from within and without.

As mentioned earlier, similar to Scheler, in his belief that small states have fundamental advantages, from another work of the former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, in his famous treatise, “An Agenda for Democratization”, he said,

The United Nations is, by design and definition, universal and impartial. While democratization is a new force in world affairs and while democracy can and should be assimilated by all cultures and traditions, it is not for the United Nations to offer a model of democratization or democracy or to promote democracy in a specific case. Indeed, to do so could be counter-productive to the process of democratization which, in order to take root and to flourish, must derive from the society itself. Each society must be able to choose the form, pace and character of its democratization process. Imposition of foreign models not only contravenes the Charter principle of non-intervention in internal affairs, it may also generate resentment among both the Government and the public, which may in turn feed internal forces inimical to democratization and to the idea of democracy. (Boutros-Ghali, 1996, p. 4)

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was ever cognizant of the need for the non-aligned, small states to seek and to develop their own version of democracy that would suffice for their people. He knew that the imposition of a foreign “*values-ception*” would not take root in small states because of their inherent deep metaphysical and religious cultural roots. Boutros-Ghali knew that for the small states, non-alignment with the world’s great powers would ensure an authentic process of democratization from the “group-soul”, as opposed to a “top-down”, super-imposed democratization from the “group-mind”, let alone a foreign “group-mind”.

Democracies and the Values of the “Group Soul”

Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, Scheler had a lot to say about democracy. Firstly, Scheler had a wide-ranging view of democracy. Not surprisingly, he praised parliamentary democracy, or democracy “from below” because it can self-correct. He said,

Parliamentary democracy’s tendency towards self-overcoming, therefore, curiously coincides with the self-overcoming, characterized earlier, of apparent and substitute metaphysics of a materialistic and semi-materialistic nature—the mechanical view of nature—through the completely formalized natural sciences. (1924, p. 177)

In other words, similar to the methodology of science, to examine and re-examine a problem, to adjust and self-correct, parliamentary democracies, because of their commitment to science (and also their lack of an adequate metaphysical substitute for science), tend to also “self-correct” and “self-overcome” internal domestic problems. However, Scheler is also critical of democracies because of their tendency toward all kinds of movements, and “class movements” which call for immediate action. These movements, which give rise to new myths for the state, to supplant the ideals of parliamentary democracy, have “caesaristic, dictatorial, anti-parliamentary aims” (1924, p. 176). Scheler is writing this in 1924, after World War I, witnessing the rise of fascism and communism in Europe. However, we can understand that his criticism of democracy one hundred years ago, even today, has relevance with the rise of a variety of extreme movements in democracies around the world. In other words, Scheler is saying that there should be no surprise that parliamentary democracies are unable to galvanize the attention and patriotism of the public because of the multiplicity of world-views available in a democracy. Citizens cope and agree to co-exist in the end, as John Rawls says, by learning to agree to disagree (Wenar, 2021). Scheler says,

Parliamentary democratism encourages, furthermore, the desire for presuppositionless “theories of *Weltanschauung*” without positing a specific one: there is growing, systematic anxiety especially for these that value and posit. From the view of the sociology of knowledge, these two demands are replaced, during the decline of the liberal principle, by the “federation” which presumes itself to be in possession again of absolute truth and establishes, outside the civil and ecclesiastical learning institutions, assertions and dogmas all the more daringly the less it can sustain its basis rationally. Likewise, even in politics such deviations of a fascist or communist nature recruit for themselves armed men outside the standing army. (1924, p. 180)

According to Scheler, within democracies, there are competing “sociologies of knowledge” vying for the attention of the people. What does this mean for our purposes? Well, in other words, modern large-state liberal democracies are repeatedly feigning the promise of an “absolute truth” through “federation” with an abstruse sort of secular-state metaphysics or religion, while weakly competing, in an unending struggle, against the extremist ideologies of fascism and communism.

Conclusion

“Democratic societies” claim to hold themselves to a higher standard of “human rights values” than other “non-democratic” societies values. On a global scale, given that the international system is anarchic, and that democratic societies must create foreign policies that respect human rights, both with regard to other “democratic states” and “non-democratic states”, democracies *should* at least be able to prove to their own citizens that the quality of their life is better, in terms of human rights values, civil liberties, and civil rights. However, such an instantiation of universal human rights values must come “from below”, as Scheler would say, from the “group-soul”. With that said, the “group-soul” itself should manifest and “live-out”, in the *life-world* these values in everyday living *a priori*. Scheler states, “We denote as group-soul the collective subject only of those psychic activities that are not spontaneous but act themselves out, such as forms of expression or other automatic and semi-automatic, psycho-physical activities” (1924, p. 70). The “group-soul” must value universal human rights values as part of its own *modus operandi* in society. Democratic values, universal human rights values, are a perception of one-self and have to be witnessed writ-large, by the people towards others as an everyday “common sense” set of values *a priori* in democratic societies, in order for those values

to ever transpire to the “group-mind”. Scheler describes the “group-soul” as having the capacity to generate “...myth, the artistically, individually unstructured fairy tales, “natural” folk-language, folk-songs, folk-religion, customs, [and] mores...” (1924, p. 70). Universal human rights values must first be lived organically in the sociological structure of a society, in the people themselves first, whereas, Scheler says, for the “group-mind”,

...the state, the law, refined speech, philosophy, art, science and the public opinion of a group rest predominantly on the group-mind. The group-mind, however appears only in personal representatives. It is determined by personal leaders, model persons and in any case by a “small number,” an elite, in its original contents, values, goals and direction. (1924, p. 70)

For Scheler, “The group-mind is the ‘bearer’ of its objects and cultural goods by way of its always new and spontaneous acts. Such objects and cultural goods would fall into nothingness were such acts not always spontaneously acted out anew” (1924, p. 70). The job of group leaders is to institutionalize the “group-soul’s” values for posterity; if the “group-mind” does not do this, the values themselves, according to Scheler, “...would fall into nothingness...” (1924, p. 70). In other words, there is a symbiotic and simultaneous relationship between the “group-soul” and the “group-mind” that reinforces each other’s existence and meaning, “The group-soul works in any group from ‘below’ to ‘above’; the group-mind, from ‘above’ to ‘below’” (1924, p. 70). For the purposes of our discussion, we could say, that if the “group-soul” lives-out the universal human rights values in the *life-world* of a democratic society and the “group-mind” then creates the institutions that perpetuate those values, then, these institutions gain “institutional inertia” which allows them to re-fine and re-define the purpose of their existence for the people as a “*creatio continua*”, as Scheler would say. In turn, this cycle of living those universal human rights values returns and enriches the “group-soul” *ad infinitum* (1924, p. 70).

Universal human rights values are democratic values. From a Schelerian perspective, domestically, any people must themselves first desire for *and* behave in ways that respects and demands that *all persons* of their country are worthy of and dignified by such values, from their fellow citizens to their non-citizens alike; then, they can demand these values of those in power. Then, and only then, can the structure of government coincide with this newfound group “self-perception” of the people and perpetuate it. Then, and only then, can a democratic *government’s* foreign policy even begin to authentically appeal to *other* democratic societies to also respect universal human rights values in their foreign policy, long before even conceiving of obtaining the future promise of “non-democratic” states of respecting such values.

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