

Nicolai Hartmann's Ethics and Contemporary Ethical Discussions

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There is no doubt that Nicolai Hartmann's Ethics belongs to the most important works in Western practical philosophy of the 20th century. There are two main reasons to support such an opinion. On the one hand, Hartmann's ethics contains a theory of objective values. On the other hand, it also offers an important and very broad analysis of human moral freedom. However, I am deeply convinced that it is still possible to ask about the relation between the actual importance of this ethics and its real influence on philosophers in history. This last issue has inspired me to ask very general but basic questions:

1. Did Hartmann's ethics really influence the contemporary debates in the field of theoretical ethics?
2. Who borrowed from his theory and where?
3. Who criticised it and where?
4. What type of answers would be probably given by Hartmann in the context of contemporary discussions between representatives of compatibilism and incompatibilism, externalism and internalism, determinism and indeterminism?
5. Is it at all possible in contemporary debates to use these arguments formulated on the basis of phenomenological philosophy?

In particular, I will consider the following questions:

1. What is the relation between Hartmann's understanding of freedom and his concept of the real world which he finds totally determined?
2. Is his practical philosophy of compatibilistic or incompatibilistic nature?
3. Does the theses about human freedom against values allow to treat Hartmann as a representative of ethical externalism?
4. Should we not reject Hartmann's understanding of responsibility in the light of the arguments given by Harry G. Frankfurt?
5. Would we be right to accept Hartmann's emotionalism in value cognition?
6. Wouldn't it be better to replace it by ethical rationalism which can only build the effective base for discussion, argumentation and axiological pluralism?
7. What would Hartmann say about "arch-angel" and "prole" of Richard M. Hare?

As is well known, Hartmann distinguished two types of history of philosophy. The first one deals with the analysis of genealogy and connections between concepts and their historical changes and cultural and social contexts. The second one analyses the problems themselves, their logic and their own "history." I would say the first type of history has only a factual character. What we really need in philosophy is rather the second type of "history," because it is the only one that makes it possible to see a development in our understanding of being.

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