

# COMPRENDRE

Archive International pour l'Anthropologie  
la Psychopathologie et la Psychothérapie  
Phénoménologiques

31-34

TIPOGRAFIA VENETA - PADOVA  
2022

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Archive International pour l'Anthropologie,  
la Psychopathologie et la Psychothérapie  
Phénoménologiques

*Rivista fondata nel 1988 da Lorenzo Calvi*

31/34

ORGANO UFFICIALE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA  
PER LA PSICOPATOLOGIA FENOMENOLOGICA

TIPOGRAFIA VENETA – PADOVA  
2022

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ORGANO UFFICIALE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA  
PER LA PSICOPATOLOGIA FENOMENOLOGICA

La rivista COMPRENDRE nasce nel 1988 per iniziativa del Prof. Lorenzo Calvi – libero docente in clinica delle malattie nervose e mentali e in psichiatria, primario neurologo ospedaliero – con l'intento di collegare tra loro i vari esponenti dell'antropologia e della psicopatologia fenomenologiche e di allargare la conoscenza del loro lavoro ad un uditorio più vasto. Dal 2008 (numero 16-17-18) la rivista è anche liberamente disponibile *on-line* ([www.rivistacomprendre.org](http://www.rivistacomprendre.org)).

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# THE “FLOWER OF HAPPINESS”. PHENOMENOLOGY, PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, AND CLINICAL PSYCHIATRY

ROBERTA GUCCINELLI

*Around it grew numberless flowers of varied hue, filling the air  
with the richest perfume. But he saw the blue flower alone [...]*

*Henry of Ofterdingen: A Romance*  
Novalis

## I. HAPPINESS AND THE MEANING OF EXISTENCE

The question of what makes a life meaningful for the one who lives it and judges it is a classic problem that remains at the core of philosophical debate, even capturing the interest of Anglo-American thought in recent years. From an Aristotelian point of view, the good life is described in terms of the exercise of human capacities or the perfection of human excellence; from a hedonistic/Epicurean perspective, it concerns the amount of pleasure experienced; from a Kantian perspective, it is related to achieving the highest good. Although there are differences between the main philosophical approaches to the question, in all cases there is a clear reference to happiness and to the moral life. For those who depart from Kantian deontology, put generally, the question of what a meaningful life consists in hinges on establishing the “final purpose” (*Endzweck*)<sup>1</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> On the connection between “happiness”, “morality”, and “final ends”, and on the different philosophical positions in the contemporary philosophical debate on the meaning of life, see Metz (2013). On happiness and the meaning of life see

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a person must realize in order to have a life that matters. On the Kantian approach, by contrast, the question of the meaning of life is to be answered not by adopting an ethics of goods and purposes but by attending to what the good will, acting from duty, may postulate as the natural end for human beings.

This conceptual background will form the backdrop (although in many ways implicitly and as a contrast) of the following brief investigation into the meaning of an existence such as ours – one that in its very nature is inherently vulnerable. In contrast to past investigations, however, the following will not examine the question either in deontological terms or in those of «any ethics that intends to establish a *purpose* – be it a purpose of the world or one of mankind, one of human aspirations, or a so-called “final purpose” – against which to measure the moral value of the will» (Scheler, 1973a, p. 10)<sup>2</sup>. Instead, the following will examine the question in terms of a *vocational* ethics – a Schelerian-based focus on an objective order of axiological priorities. It will focus on the emotional side of the matter, on happiness, and, assuming the *condition humaine* in all its complexity, on abnormal or apparently abnormal manifestations of this feeling, which continues to play a central role in ethics, psychology/psychopathology and psychiatry. What is *happiness*? Can it make sense of our lives? Or is it rather making *sense of our lives* that we constantly pursue and that makes us happy? Is happiness grounded in the meaningfulness of life (life in its fullest sense), or is the meaningfulness of life grounded in happiness and existence? Or are they both grounded in something else, precisely co-original?

Understanding the connection between these two realities requires clarifying, from a phenomenological point of view, a broader reality – one that takes us beyond the two poles of happiness and the meaning of life exclusively. The life that forms the basis of this broader examination is complex to the extent that it incorporates opposites (e.g. good and evil, health and illness, strength and fragility or suffering) and is characterized by a dynamic transformational perspective: one that transcends adaptive-competitive drives (e.g. comparing oneself to one’s environment, to other members of society, to a destiny, to a character) and is thus inherently interpersonal. Such a perspective is not limited to

Bortolotti (2009). On happiness, from a phenomenological perspective, see Heffernan (2014). On the phenomenology of feelings see Cusinato (2014, pp. 85-131). On emotions see Ben-Ze’ev (2000). On these topics, from a psychological point of view, see Seligman (2011 and 2013).

<sup>2</sup> I have slightly modified the English translation.

a subject that directly aims at the object of its aspirations (happiness, well-being, etc.) or that is sacrificed, in other ways, to the goodness of an abstract will. It is instead extended to possible openings (or closures) of the *personal* individual (or center of acts) *to the world* (or center of objects), which is infinitely rich in experiences to be accomplished yet individualized just as the individual is, constituting her specific correlate. In the singular Schelerian monadology evoked here, every possible world is *one* world, that is to say, a unitary, essential structure bound «to the eidetic and structural relationships that subsist between the essentialities of the *res*» (Scheler, 1973a, p. 393; see also 2013, p. 765)<sup>3</sup>. This world is equally the source of the experiences of the person as a *whole*, who, by inhabiting and forming herself in it, without ever becoming a part of it, in fact “forms” it at the same time: bringing to light the world’s intrinsic unity according to her own personal style, which is unique and irreducible. In other words, every world is «concrete» and *inexhaustible* if and only if it is a *person’s world* (Scheler, 1973a, p. 393). It is thus necessary, contrary to the ethical models mentioned above, to broaden our gaze and to consider those objects in the world that, arriving unexpectedly, nevertheless correspond to the affective preferences of the individual, although they may shake her life deeply – to what, like the “blue flower” of Novalis’s memory, evades our grasp and is not illuminated by the rays of volitional consciousness but which, precisely for this reason, can more or less secretly accompany one’s existence and exert an influence on one’s choices.

Even if meaningfulness and happiness are not grounded in each other, the notion that they must be related in some way – and indeed that the happiness relevant to a life’s meaningfulness comes in various forms, as we will explore in the context of great classics of psychopathology and phenomenological psychiatry (Rümke, Binswanger) – seems intuitive. Indeed, this relation perhaps emerges most clearly in deeply negative experiences, which would seem to offer indirect confirmation of it. Thus, in the unhappiness that tends to despair, in which we sometimes sink apparently without reason, we experience a signal (almost a warning) related to our entire existence, as if existence were suddenly emptied of all meaning. It is not at all evident, however, that the relationship, hints of which we experience at certain moments of life, consists in a direct foundation relationship. It is possible that profound despair does not depend ontologically on the absence of a sense of life; it is not necessarily grounded, that is, in an a priori

<sup>3</sup> I have slightly modified the English translation.

structural order, in an immediate foundation relationship with respect to lack of meaning. It could depend, for example, on the value that the individual attributes to her life, or, from the perspective I will be taking here – a Schelerian one – on the moral and personal value, intrinsic to her own identity, of the individual in question.

There are also certain conditions under which it is possible to speak of an authentic sense of one’s own life. It is possible to be desperate and to view one’s life as meaningless, for example, even when one’s life is viewed as meaningful in the eyes of others. A meaningful life, in turn, does not seem to depend ontologically on one’s happiness; if anything, the two appear to be co-original. A life can certainly be significant for a person even if she is not cheerful or joyful. Cheerfulness, joy and euphoria – as we will see – are certainly not equivalent to “happiness”, however, at least not in the proper sense. The connection to be investigated therefore seems to presuppose the depth and individuation, in the subject who lives it, of the experience of happiness; the meaningfulness of a life does not boil down to a semantic unity or a narrative coherence that is perhaps good for some spectators and capable of indulging, at a peripheral level, the bearer of that life. Nor is it evident that the relationship between happiness, especially deep and lasting happiness, and the meaning of a life is simply causal.

In addition to those mentioned above, there is a further possibility regarding the connection in question, which Scheler’s theory of the stratification of our emotional lives (1973a, pp. 328-344) confirms. According to this theory, not only do the various affective experiences differ in terms of quality and intensity, but they can also be distinguished from each other, and are indeed irreducible to each other, in terms of the depth of their rootedness in the emotional life of the person who feels them. In this paper, I will attempt to defend this idea. The connection between happiness and the meaningfulness of a life, which is precisely to be clarified by drawing on Scheler’s theory, is comprehensible in light of what lies at the foundation of both: an act of personal love in which the agent encounters, without necessarily aiming at her own good, what awakens and gives fullness to her existence. Such an act makes one deeply happy and confirms the feeling that one may have already experienced in silence, without, however, guaranteeing liberation from suffering. Bliss, thus understood, or happiness rooted in the core of a person’s existence, is very different from euphoria, which is instead located in superficial and peripheral areas compared to the center (to the deepest and most central I) of our affective lives.



Profound happiness thus has nothing of the excesses that characterize certain states of excitement or euphoria which manifest themselves, for example, in the manic phases of manic-depressive psychosis. Because of its depth and irreducibility to other emotional experiences, such happiness can be experienced, at the limit, even in conditions of profound mental suffering.

## II. PHENOMENOLOGY AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

In this section, drawing on work by the Dutch psychiatrist Henricus Cornelius Rümke, I wish briefly to evaluate the fruitfulness and limits of the phenomenological method, in particular the Schelerian version, for clinical psychiatric research. The key text in this case is *Zur Phänomenologie und Klinik des Glücksgefühls* (1924), a classic of phenomenological psychopathology which, while much less known than the essay on “*praecoxgefühl*” (Rümke and Neelemann, 1990, pp. 331-341), is absolutely worthy of attention, especially in the face of growing widespread interest (not always supported by adequate conceptual resources) in the topic of happiness. Although I cannot explore them here, the important implications of Rümke’s results and the delicate question of the clinical meaning of happiness are deserving of further attention. The phenomenon of *happiness in/as a psychiatric disorder* (Mayer-Gross, 1914; Bentall, 1992; Anderson, 1938) – which we will only consider in part –, the occurrence of happiness (for example in certain pathological experiences), and typical aspects of abnormal happiness (such as expansion) are topics that must be approached from various perspectives, including historical-philosophical, systematic-theoretical and empirical-experimental points of view. On the epistemological side, and in a scientific environment such as the current one – in which, in the study of psychopathology, the models of cognitive neuroscience, cognitive neuropsychiatry (Broome and Bortolotti, 2009) and positive psychology dominate – this requires the contribution of specific skills. Within the limits of this work, it is sufficient to show, with reference to the object under examination, the philosophical relevance of psychopathology and the possible synergy that can be established between disciplines such as philosophy (of feelings, in our case) and psychiatry when both are addressed primarily to the person understood as a *whole* – even where she appears to be split or eaten up by suffering – rather than to certain states considered in the abstract, such as the pleasant and the unpleasant, or to a complex

*The “flower of happiness”. Phenomenology, psychopathology, and clinical psychiatry* of symptoms and a series of somatic findings to which the person is reducible.

It is precisely the refined description of profound happiness or bliss (*Seligkeit*), which Scheler offers in the context of the theory of the affective life mentioned above, which plays a crucial role in Rümke’s rigorous (and still relevant) study on the phenomenology and clinical-psychiatric aspects of happiness. It is not possible to dwell here on every single problem addressed by Rümke in *Zur Phänomenologie und Klinik des Glücksgefühls*, a systematic work with a clear clinical-psychiatric objective, described in the *Preface* as the goal of characterizing in detail the «syndromes of happiness (*Glückssyndrome*)» (Rümke, 1924, *Vorwort*) observed on a clinical level so as to *understand* them (*verstehen*) by using phenomenological instrumentation. The emphasis on “understanding” evoked here must certainly be read from a Jaspersian perspective, where psychopathology is put into dialogue with philosophy and both find inspiration in Dilthey. As he goes on to underscore later in the same text, Rümke remains faithful to the teachings of Jaspers, to whom he was introduced by the psychiatrist L. Bouman. Rümke trained with Bouman in Amsterdam, and it is because of him that he most likely settled upon the subject of his doctoral thesis (which he discussed in 1923): the happiness syndrome. It should also be recalled that Scheler was in turn introduced to Holland by Anton Grünbaum when the latter worked with Bouman at the Valeriuskliniek in Amsterdam (the psychiatric clinic where Rümke conducted his research on the happiness syndrome) and that at the time the physiologist, anthropologist, and psychologist Frederick Jacobus Johannes Buytendijck, Scheler’s friend, was employed at Valeriuskliniek (Belzen, 1995, pp. 364-365).

In relation to clinical psychiatry, Rümke held Kraepelin’s system in high regard. He believed that the difficulty of arriving at a correct diagnosis was due not so much to the classification system in question but to psychology’s primitive state at the time, as a discipline that could only sketch psychic syndromes in broad brushstrokes (ivi, p. 369). Practicing phenomenology, from his perspective, which differed in part from that of Binswanger, therefore involved (in the first instance) purifying psychology so as to allow the psychiatrist to discern and better describe the relevant symptoms. In *Zur Phänomenologie und Klinik des Glücksgefühls*, Rümke aims to test the value of the phenomenological method for clinical psychiatric research in general. This style of thinking (including the ethical attitude that characterizes it) with respect to *things in themselves* is thus from Rümke’s point of

view primarily in the service of treatment and care. Nevertheless, the study that lies at the center of our interest was explicitly meant to make a «contribution to the knowledge of the feeling of happiness» (Rümke, 1924, *Vorwort*).

For Rümke, the value of phenomenology to psychiatric clinical work consists mainly in putting the clinician in the position of being able to distinguish more precisely state frameworks that, on a superficial level, appear the same. Thus he adopts the phenomenological method «to differentiate and analyze clinically perceived states in which a feeling of happiness has been experienced» (Rümke, 1924, p. 1). This is primarily a question of providing a description that is free, as far as possible, of prejudices regarding the sentiment in question: of following what the patient claims to experience. This is an indispensable prerequisite for anyone who is trying directly to grasp – without the influence of interpretative grids or pre-established knowledge – the intrinsic “fabric” of the phenomenon. But what are the specific traits of the feeling of happiness? Are they those traits that distinguish it essentially from joy, for example, or from a certain emotional calm that seems to be able to coexist with exaltation in ecstasy? Or perhaps those that distinguish it from «intoxication» (*Glücksrausch*) – intoxication being, according to Mayer-Gross, one of the forms in which the feeling of happiness «can be experienced in pathological states» (ivi, p. 11), the other being «excitement» (*Glücksaffekt*) –? What are the traits that distinguish it from the euphoria (or even the excitement) that is sometimes experienced by those suffering mania, for example? Even with regard to happiness, including its possible duration and transience (which brings it closer to sensory pleasure), a certain confusion remains, in Rümke’s opinion. Scheler is thus an exception from this point of view.

### II.1. On being “motivating”

We cannot – as I have said – delve into the details of this study here. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the mode of manifestation of the feeling of happiness, its possible motivation, and the question of its origin in a psychopathological sense, as this allows us to emphasize both one of its possible meanings and the philosophical relevance of psychopathology in this context. To this end, it is necessary to keep in mind, even if only vaguely, the Schelerian concept of a «motiv», the «motivating» (Scheler, 1973a, pp. 247, 343, 344) or practical-axiological reason for a lived experience, which in this case is emotional. Let us say at the outset that something is «motivating»

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(*motivierend*) when it is «experienced as efficacious» (p. 247)<sup>4</sup>, as “attractive” or “repulsive”, without being a mere causal (physical-natural) force. A value, for instance beauty, can constitute a “reason” in this sense; it can be “motivating” for someone, i.e. have a positive or negative value (saliency) that suggests a certain behavior to the subject. The bearer of beauty (for example a landscape), as a unit of value, can then capture our gaze, invite us to pause and to contemplate it:

*Beauty is not “some” experienced efficacy (erlebte Wirksamkeit) of a (value-free) landscape; rather, it is the beauty of the landscape that has an effect (wirkt), and its efficacy is transformed into the variation (Wechsel) of an affective state.*

(*ibidem*)<sup>5</sup>

The feeling (*Fühlen*) of a value «founds the picture or semantic component (Bild-oder Bedeutungskomponente) of a tendency» (p. 344)<sup>6</sup>, or of the “end” (*Ziel*) immanent in it, where the purposes of the will (*Willenszwecke*) are first of all, albeit in a variable way, «represented end contents of tendencies (vorgestellte Zielinhalte von Strebungen)» (p. 39)<sup>7</sup>. As for the behavior it would be appropriate to adopt so as to simplify ordinary life, it is evident that certain objects can become, according to their content, more or less “meaningful” (*bedeutend*) for us: advantageous, totally disadvantageous, dangerous, seductive, etc. The content is then selected from a perception, not unrelated to specific tendential interests, in an adaptive sense, in which the singular function of feeling is exercised<sup>8</sup>. In fact, the human

<sup>4</sup> I have slightly modified the English translation.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>8</sup> Feeling, in fact, is not an inert state for Scheler, not even at a completely primitive level, but is a finalized (end-“determined”) movement. On this point see Scheler (1973a, pp. 257-258). It is a movement that does not turn into an activity coming from the center. It can arise, in fact, from an objective or axiological correlate and consequently move towards the corporeal layers of the ego, or from the ego thus understood towards an objectivity in which it finds intuitive verification. It is precisely in this movement that it does not unfold over time and therefore lacks any project or voluntaristic character; at this precise point, which at the same time is an original opening up to a specific type of object, something «is given (gegeben wird) to me» (Scheler, 2009, p. 258). Like a representation, which has an intentional relationship with its object, feeling has an intentional relationship with its correlate. From this point of view, Scheler can write that

individual remains in the first instance a living being, sensitive, as such, to her own survival, although she is irreducible to this unique tendency. Only picture-contents that are suitable candidates for becoming axiological material support – given that each tendency has a certain value consciousness – can constitute the picture-content of an end, however, where the suitability of a picture content consists in its ability to specify or acquire, in the orientation of the tendency, a proper picture physiognomy, realizing a certain value content. Escaping thoughts in which we are absorbed, for example, we suddenly follow the attraction exerted on us by the scent of a delicious dish. Tending to the dish would otherwise remain unaccomplished (if we were to refrain from following the attraction): it would not translate into an image. There is therefore no end which manifests itself in the course of a tendency, as immanent in it, and which is not primarily endowed with a value component.

The foundational relationships indicated above, together with the embodied reality of the living being in her own environment, and thus with bio-psycho-environmental conditioning, are rather interesting from our perspective. They make instantly understandable, even from a sensorimotor point of view (in accordance, that is, with a precise legality that exists in the context of one's own body life), why in practical life, in exchanges between the individual (*in primis* the organism) and the milieu (*in primis* the natural environment), significant experiential contents are relevant from a vital point of view. With regard to the conformity to living-bodily laws mentioned above, it is sufficient here to remember that our own body plays a crucial, though not exclusive, role in everyday interactions and exchanges, even when it is in a certain sense removed or apparently disappears (see Guccinelli, 2016 and 2019). It is capable of conditioning certain functions of our own sensibility in general (whether or not it brings them to maturity through its own tendencies and respective orientations). Practical life, often in conflict with meaningfulness, primarily seeks to preserve and safeguard itself from the various pitfalls that lurk in everyday life; it is a life that is consumed by our various commitments and is manifested in large part in the acts of tending to and wanting, in more or less pressing needs.

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“feeling” is «a meaningful occurrence (ein sinnvolles [...] Geschehen)» (Scheler, 1973a, p. 258).

### II.1.1. Motivation and happiness, symptoms and signs

What motivates feelings of happiness, and what are the possible concatenations of experience in which they can be inserted, from a practical perspective? This is a question that is posed by both Rümke and Binswanger, albeit with different philosophical references, in their investigations into the happiness syndrome and, in relation to the phenomenon of the flight of ideas, into «festive joy» (Binswanger, 1980, p. 143) in the form of manic existence. Our choice of *leitmotiv* within the contemplated path therefore has an additional advantage: it allows us to grasp the value of the method and the phenomenological attitude, in the Schelerian version proposed here, for clinical-psychiatric research. What aspects of happiness, or what forms in which it is experienced pathologically, allow us to grasp abnormal variations? What does the happiness syndrome consist in? Does the mode of experiencing the happiness involved in this pathological state have a predictive meaning for that state? What is the semiotic value of the happiness syndrome from a clinical-psychiatric perspective? These are the issues that Rümke raises.

In its medical-naturalistic meaning, a symptom is a linear index, a “clue” of “disease”, psychiatric or otherwise, which exists as a disease in the somatic sphere. From a perspective which can still be shared here, one which provides a phenomenological foundation for Griesingerian psychiatry and psychopathology, or rather, «of psychiatry as a human science, and not only as a natural science» (Borgna, 2019, p. 7; Waldenfels, 2019), symptoms do not boil down to a solid structural unity and are more like *signs* (Schneider, 2004a, pp. 100-110; Borgna, 1995, pp. 24-28). By its very nature, a sign refers to one or more meanings, is endowed with sense, and is less univocally determined than a natural kind. It appears as a distinctive, salient, frequently found character. Consequently, it can reveal both a psychic disorder or “disease” that is attributable, in a strictly medical sense, to certain organic processes and a deviation of the psychic being that is not necessarily attributable to an organic lesion, a “disease” or malformation. A syndrome, in the same vein, is a complex of symptoms or signs. As a syndrome, can abnormal (or apparently abnormal) happiness that is nevertheless a form of happiness – neither pleasure, nor the sum of all pleasures, nor ecstasy – have a *prognostic* function with regard to states or courses in a properly psychopathological sense? Our reflection presupposes these kinds of problems, even if we cannot deal with all of them here. These problems are inevitably linked to the human

condition, lived in its fragility and potential, not only to the somatically conditioned nature of psychic functioning.

In order to consider abnormal variations and manifestations in complexes of symptoms or psychopathological signs, I will focus on to the so-called normal phenomenon of happiness, in its possible relation to the life and existence (more or less significant) of its bearer, framing it in a substantially Schelerian phenomenology. We will therefore dwell on the Schelerian theory of emotional experiences in relation to feelings in the proper sense.

### III. "COSMOLOGICAL" HAPPINESS

What I propose, within the limits of this work, is a sketch of an eco-phenomenology of affective experiences, in particular a *cosmos*-phenomenology of happiness. I aim to provide a dynamic-relational model of the experiences in question. The more profound the experience, the more we open ourselves to the world, the less we sink into ourselves. Recollection is not in this case a self-retreat. The deeper and more central the experience, the more *motivated* ("understandable" in the phenomenological lexicon) it will be – the less *caused* (less needing of explanation) – and the more we will be motivated by it. The deeper the lived experience, the deeper in the world (with others, accomplishing certain positive values) our existence and knowledge of our own freedom: the more meaningful our existence.

From this point of view, however, the deepest happiness or bliss constitutes (with despair) an exception that reveals its being, we might say its "transmotivational" nature. The deeper and more central a feeling of happiness, the more it seems to melt away from the intertwining of reasons (not causes), without becoming unmotivated. To the extent that we experience it at all, we experience "eternity" (any fragment of it, the sudden escape from the time of the before and after of the practical life) in the metaphysical feelings or feelings of the personality that, more than any other experiences, reveal the heights and abysses of emotional life: bliss and despair. These are absolute (*absoluti*): in themselves complete, never related to states of things unrelated to the person – in which they find at most a (partial) motivation that makes them different from what they are –, and at the same time free-free, in a certain sense, from the urgencies that characterize practical life and from the limits of mere subjectivity, because each state of the self considered in the abstract (separate from

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the personal whole) appears "as if it were absent" («all ego-states seem to be extinguished» – Scheler, 1973a, p. 343). By taking possession of us, they dissolve (*absolvunt*) our entire existence from the ordinary motivational chain, revealing, however, the same existence with the utmost clarity: its moral heights and baseness. Here it is impossible to escape from the reality of what we feel, from our own value reality, from what is spontaneously offered, «by "pure" grace» (p. 337), beyond any possible sensible reason and merit. Therefore, such feelings and their content escape the control of the will.

### IV. PERSONALITY FEELINGS (*GEISTIGE GEFÜHLE*): THE EXAMPLES OF BLISS AND DESPAIR (*SELIGKEIT, VERZWEIFLUNG*)

Despair on the one hand and bliss (as distinct from all less central, less deeply rooted in the affective life and less stable forms of happiness – as maximum happiness) on the other have the power to reveal the heights and the abysses of our own emotional life and our entire moral existence. They measure our own *closeness* to and *distance* from ourselves, from the good "in itself" "for us", from the "maximum value" (Scheler, 1973a, p. 109; see also pp. 490-491), which can appear in an absolute "object", not needing integration and endowed with the maximum concreteness: inexhaustible. This is a matter of our proximity not to our psycho-physical-social health but to our possible *salvation* or moral *death*. Despair, «whenever all possibilities of escape from this negative sentiment seems to be, as it were, *extinct*» (p. 344), traps the person who experiences it in a moral hell, destroying her existential resources, at least in appearance. In turn, bliss reveals, to anyone who has the ability to grasp it in the gaze and/or behavior of others, the individual's moral style: the person who *carries it* (bliss) *on her own shoulders*, who correspondently and modestly feels her own goodness. Happiness and goodness, however, being silent companions of the person in question, can never be grasped directly by a will or tendency. They can only be grasped indirectly, when the individual realizes, sometimes even surprising herself, values of the same type as those she prefers and above all loves, which also confer *meaning* on her very existence. Precisely in these moments, in accomplishing the act, the person may perhaps avoid missing out on her vocation (*individuelle Bestimmung*): her "good-in-itself". She may perhaps take a position with respect to her own destiny (*Schicksal*), which, diabolically, can conflict with her vocation:

*It is good precisely in the sense of being "independent of my knowledge". For this includes the "good-in-itself". Yet it is the "good-in-itself" for "me" in the sense that there is an experienced reference to me which is contained (descriptively put) in the special non-formal content of this good-in-itself, something that comes from this content and points too "me", something that whispers, "For you". And precisely this content places me in a unique position in the moral cosmos and obliges me with respect to action, deed, and works, etc., which, when I represent them, all call: "I am for you and you are for me".*

(Scheler, 1973a, p. 490; see also 1973b)

### *The core of happiness*

Bliss and despair are feelings in which we implicitly experience our own moral value, or a value that is intrinsic to our identity. In the "object" correlated with bliss, we positively perceive the meaning of a possible life and existence. The «flower of happiness (*die Blume des Glückes*)» (Scheler, 1986, p. 65), bliss, or the deepest happiness that accompanies a good life, blossoms in the act of personal love, the most individualized act, in which the whole of belonging comes to light: love far from any possible state considered in the abstract. A meaningful life and happiness thus understood are grounded in the whole and its own moral value, which is precisely the most evident in "acts" of personal love. The deepest happiness is at the same time, however, the source of that moral value on which it depends, nourishes and supports the person who experiences it. Every act of wanting and tending therefore depends not only on the value nucleus of the person who accomplishes it but on the most central emotional fullness (plenitude), in our case bliss, that the person can experience at the most central level of her being (Scheler, 1973a, p. 348). By permeating the person, bliss cannot constitute an object or depend on other objects or states of affairs. In the happiness that emerges from love we feel, in an instant of *quasi* eternity, so to speak, our salvation – where everything happens and can only happen if we *turn our backs* to our self, to its insatiable search for happiness:

*[...] the core of the happiness of love (Kern des Glückes der Liebe) corresponds precisely to getting lost, turning one's gaze elsewhere than one's self [= turning one's back on one's self (das vom eigenen ich abgewendete Verlorensein)], in the subject of a love capable of*

*The "flower of happiness". Phenomenology, psychopathology, and clinical psychiatry returning the love that awakens it: our own love (an unserer Liebe erwachenden Gegenliebe).<sup>9</sup> (Scheler, 1986, p. 65)*

Similarly, the blue flower of Novalis is intertwined with the vocation (poetry, love) and the innermost sense of the life of the person, and only that person, whom it accompanies across her entire existence. It is the flower that emerges from the ground of «active, free and loving dedication (*Hingabe*) to the world (or to the beloved)» (ibidem):

*But what most attracted his notice, was a tall, light-blue flower, which stood nearest the fountain, and touched it with its broad, glossy leaves. Around it grew numberless flowers of varied hue, filling the air with the richest perfume. But he saw the blue flower alone, and gazed long upon it with inexpressible tenderness. He at length was about to approach it, when it began to move, and change its form. The leaves increased their beauty, adorning the growing stem. The flower bended towards him, and revealed among its leaves a blue, outspread collar, within which hovered a tender face.*

(Novalis, 2010, Chapter I)

### V. THE "NORMAL" FEELING OF THE DEEPEST HAPPINESS: SCHELER AND RÜMKE

Thanks to Jaspers, phenomenology has proved for Rümke «an incredibly suitable means of knowing and making known the psychic event of the healthy and the sick» (Rümke, 1924, p. 1). From an epistemological point of view, it has actually reduced the distance that separated, in the practice of unilaterally somatic psychiatry, certain human beings from others, the "normal" from the "pathological". Such a separation overlooks the common human horizon and dimension and, according to Scheler, the properly personal dimension, which protects, so to speak, even in the most serious cases, the secret of all individual existence (the *blue* flower) – its moral identity – from any merely diagnostic judgment. For a phenomenologist like the author of the *Formalismus*, in fact,

<sup>9</sup> The ego, in other words, is usually so attached to itself, to its tendencies and instincts, that it "avoids" (*abwenden*) getting lost in something else, avoids active and loving dedication or complete openness to another (world or loved one).

[...] the so-called "alterations of character" (Charakterveränderungen) in certain psychic illnesses, as described to us by psychiatry, cannot concern the person. Only the presence of the person outside is abolished. And in serious cases only one thing can be said, that is, the disease has made the person of others invisible to us and that a judgment on her, therefore, is no longer possible [...] Regardless of the cases in which the person seems to become completely invisible due to the serious alterations of character of the agent, in all other cases there is evidence of the fact that those alterations described by psychiatry are completely independent [...] of the moral and spiritual (generally) intentionality orientations of the person».

(Scheler, 1973a, pp. 485-486)<sup>10</sup>

Scheler here describes orientations in which the concrete or entire person is manifested with the greatest evidence, capable of tearing, in certain truly re-generating moments, a life from one's own dispersion and historical partiality, collecting it so that it can appear, even to the gaze of its bearer, in the unity of an individual style. Where nothing has yet to be accomplished, as occurs in full happiness – where everything is already given, just there for a moment, beyond particular, mere sensible reasons – our *raison d'être* is manifested:

*It can even be said that if [...] "something" is [...] capable of being given, we are certainly not yet blissful or in despair. It may well be that a number of other experiences deprive us of these feelings by motivating a nexus of sense (motivierte Sinnverkettung), or that they let them emerge at the end of a series of experiences; but if these feelings are there, they detach themselves in a peculiar manner from these chains of motives (Motivkette) and fulfill, as it were, our entire existence and our "world", to the core of our personal existence [...]. According to the nature of these feelings either they are not experienced at all, or they take possession of the whole of our being. Just as in despair there lies at the core of our personal existence and world an affective "No!" without our "person" becoming a mere object of reflection, so also in "bliss", at the deepest level of the feeling of happiness, there lies an affective "Yes!". Bliss and despair appear to be the correlates of the moral value of our personal being. (Scheler, 1973a, p. 343)<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> I have slightly modified the English translation.

<sup>11</sup> Idem.

Scheler's description of the so-called normal (deepest) happiness, condensed here in a crucial step, is present in Rümke – a step that hints, in the "world" identified and "filled" entirely with happiness (or, in the negative, with desperation), at a wider horizon than that of practical reality, precisely revealing the "transmotivational" nature, such as we have defined it, of the sentiment in question. Rather than being unmotivated or senseless, bliss is "transmotivational". It is in this precise sense of the term that it transcends, in the whole of personal existence, every single *motive* (and the corresponding state of affairs) that could otherwise be experienced in some limited region of the life of the person concerned, where life is an essential correlate of the environment. This also means that, in all its peculiarities, happiness of this type remains understandable in principle. The fact that «bliss in its pregnant sense is present whenever there is no particular state of affairs or values outside or inside us that could *motivate* us feelingly to this fulfillment in bliss» (Scheler, 1973, p. 343) (that is, that could motivate the agent, on the level of feeling, to realize it) does not necessarily imply that bliss must be the object of a physical-causal explanation – if it also manifests itself in "pathological" states.

Regarding the problem of the normality of the feeling of happiness in pathological states, the results that Rümke arrives at in his investigation allow him to draw a more general (for his patients) and interesting conclusion. Abstracting from the cases that lie at the limit or beyond what remains, which from his perspective are empathizable, he can exclude, based specifically on the received comments, the pathology of feeling:

*The whole syndrome – the dominant feeling of happiness, the modification of objective reality, the feeling that everything has a profound meaning, extreme clarity and extreme depth – in itself should not be defined as pathological, if it is empathizable and is experienced at a normal or high level of the act. These states, identical in detail, are also known to healthy life. (Rümke, 1924, p. 62)*

If we assert the rights of subjective experience with the same psychiatrist and we take seriously, as far as possible, the patient's statements, then certain questions and diagnostic doubts which arise clearly in certain border cases are greatly simplified. From a phenomenological point of view, Rümke is entirely right to say that, wherever the relationship of "sense" with previous experiences is lacking, even in so-called "normal" situations, we are in the presence

of endogenous (autocthonous) events: new events, we might say. Moreover, even in situations considered to be completely normal, similar or completely identical feelings of happiness can manifest themselves, as Rümke observes, in clinical cases, in a state the pathology or anomalousness of which is certain. In certain examples of happiness (cited in this regard by the psychiatrist) in which the "pathology" of the subject is excluded, the fact that we can speak of a "syndrome" of happiness does not mean that it involves pathology of feeling.

According to Rümke, in the Schelerian description we can clearly recognize this peculiar way of manifesting deepest happiness: a way that is autocthonous. The Dutch psychiatrist also individualizes this way of manifesting the feeling experienced by a young man afflicted with a strange form of psychosis:

Patient B. *Under the influence of unrequited love, constant restlessness and a feeling of fatigue due to intellectual work, the following condition suddenly began: «One afternoon I was sitting in my room, when I suddenly felt an impulse to get up and look out the window; for a brief moment I saw a white pigeon fly past the window above, standing out against the background of a dark blue air field; I heard the flapping of its wings; it was as if one or two organ tones sounded from high in the air. Overwhelmed, I wanted to sit down, but instead of sitting in my chair I accidentally sat down on the floor next to it. After a while, I asked God not to ask me to testify to this experience and, with it, the existence of God, since this task would have been too difficult for me and I would immediately be considered insane (geisteskrank). It did not occur to me to associate what happened with my mental state (geistigen Zustände); so much did what was perceived seem to me to be true. From that moment on, I was surprised by the beauty of everything around me, especially nature; what splendid lighting and moods; but most of all such great peace, even inner peace (über allem so große Ruhe, auch innerlich); completely confident in myself, aware of myself, even just my walking, my movements, such a beautiful balance, no sense of fatigue. I came to the conclusion that people were beginning to increasingly notice the peculiarity of my personality; that I was becoming more and more known, and that I was drawing the attention of strangers in the street. On a train journey, the train was driven with particular care because I was travelling on it, and on the morning I had to travel, measures*

*The "flower of happiness". Phenomenology, psychopathology, and clinical psychiatry were taken as if I were someone of a high station». This feeling is considered by the patient the highest feeling of happiness and for years has been preserved in his memory as something very precious. (Rümke, 1924, pp. 17-18)*

The whole picture, notes Rümke, is dominated by an autocthonous feeling of happiness, of a certain layer of the affective life that permeates the patient's existence and world. The experience in question gives each possible moment of the picture its own color. It is a happiness of great intensity and depth, and the experience is at times solemn. The latter aspect brings the new state closer, in Jamesian and Schelerian terminology (Scheler, 1973a, pp. 484-485), to a lived experience of conversion (*Bekehrungsgefühl*) – one that is also existential. Furthermore, such happiness is capable of permeating «the whole psychic event» (Rümke, 1924, p. 18). In fact, the Dutch psychiatrist confirms (1924, p. 18), «we move here, to put it with Scheler, in the deeper layers of the "I"». According to Scheler, in such layers of affective life, the genuine feelings of the personality take root.

Moreover, Scheler points out in his description of bliss that in bliss and despair, everything has already been given, including ourselves, on an emotional level. He can say, then, that if something for which we are deeply glad and desperate is not yet given to us and «is [...] capable of being given», we are certainly not yet blessed and desperate. When we really are blessed or desperate, we are completely, wholly blessed or desperate, as if we were to be so forever. Hence the seriousness of the emotional "Yes!" or "No!" which, in one or the other feeling, hides in the heart of our entire personal existence and our world. In bliss, as in despair, a person grasps herself, her own moral value («bliss and despair appear to be the correlates of the moral value of our personal being»), as the «foundation (Fundament)» (Scheler, 1973a, pp. 343-344) or the only possible *reason* or motive for the feeling – for that feeling which completely permeates the individual, in which, *being* and not merely "feeling" happy, she is mirrored. Only a look of love, in a similar moment, can grasp the ideal image of this person (in a Schelerian sense): the image of her value core. This image will be absolutely clear to the extent that happiness is able to flourish on the basis of a love that is capable of nourishing it – a love that awakens the love of others – where the happy person, as in a fragment of eternity, appears to others as included in her own good, in the "good" in herself, "for her", her own moral "salvation".

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