Nicolai Hartmann's Conception of Free Will in the Context of the Debate Between Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

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Abstract In this article, I analyse the most significant elements of Nicolai Hartmann's conception of free will in the context of compatibilism and incompatibilism. I demonstrate that Hartmann's conception transcends both of these paradigms, since free will seems to combine deterministic and indeterministic elements. As a result, I conclude that Hartmann's conception of reality must contain some indeterministic moments.

Keywords compatibilism; determinism; free will; Hartmann, Nicolai; incompatibilism

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1. Introduction

Nicolai Hartmann's *Ethics* is one of the most important works in twentieth-century Western theoretical ethics. On the one hand, Hartmann proposes an ethical and axiological objectivism consisting in a very detailed description of many different values and many relevant arguments against ethical and axiological relativism. On the other hand, his *Ethics* offers an equally significant fundamental analysis of human moral freedom. This is why the relation between the relevance of this conception of ethics and its lack of significant influence on contemporary philosophy deserves our attention. This is especially true, given that many contemporary ethical positions—even if they are popular and influential—can be considered controversial. Two examples should suffice: John Leslie Mackie says that objective values do not exist at all. Instead, he explains them as the result of an "error" and formulates five main arguments to justify "moral skepticism" (Mackie 1990, 15–49). The general anthropological position presented by contemporary naturalism and the negation or even destruction of personal free will in light of the experiments of Benjamin Libet and John-Dylan Haynes may also be mentioned (Libet 2011). These two examples are typical of the current ethico-axiological zeitgeist, and of its problems. If values were merely social constructs, the nature of this construction would be very difficult to explain without reduction to non-intentional activities. Moreover, and this is more important, if free will were only an illusion, we could not live practically, because decision-making must be "effective" (in Husserl's sense) in practical life.

There are thus many pressing questions that should be asked in the context of the relation between contemporary conceptions (especially those pertaining to ethics, axiology and anthropology) and the philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann.[1] However, I will only deal with two of those here: (i) What is the relation between Hartmann's understanding of freedom and determinism itself (understood as an ontological standpoint)? (ii) Is he a compatibilist or an incompatibilist? I will also consider the following sub-questions: (iii) How does Hartmann understand the relation between

1. For example: Does the thesis about human freedom against values allow Hartmann to be treated as a representative of ethical externalism? Should we not reject his understanding of responsibility in light of the arguments given by Harry Gordon Frankfurt? Would we be right to accept Hartmann's emotionalism in value cognition? Would it not be better to replace emotionalism with ethical rationalism, as only this can provide an effective basis for ethical discussions and argumentation? And, especially, two general questions should be asked: Why has Hartmann's ethics not really influenced contemporary debates in the field of theoretical ethics? Is it at all possible to use his arguments in current debates? I have already explored some of these questions in my works (2010; 2012a; 2022).

freedom and the real world, which he considers to be totally determined?" (iv) Does he propose a new conception of compatibilism? (v) Is his conception of freedom consistent?

All these questions deal no doubt with different aspects of free will or freedom. To recognize how important the problem of freedom is for Hartmann, it is sufficient to remember that his *Ethics* contains over two hundred pages dealing with this topic. Even Max Scheler, whose opinion about free will was totally different, understood the importance of this problem in Hartmann's ethics very clearly when, in the "Preface" to the third edition of his *Formalism in Ethics*, he wrote critically that Hartmann's interest in free will was rather "exaggerated" (Scheler 1973, 31, footnote 12). Moreover, Hartmann himself explicitly states in the "Foreword to the Third Edition" of the *Ethics* (the third edition was published in 1949) that the topic of free will is one of the main ethical problems (Hartmann 1962, X).[2]

These "historical" justifications may be supplemented by arguments grounded in the ontological relation between human beings and values. For Hartmann, value determinism is indirect; to be realized in the real world, values necessitate human acceptance. Values are both strong and weak. They are strong insofar as they play a foundational role in the structure of human teleological activity and they are weak insofar as they determine human will through human acceptance only. Values are relational because their "material" (content) and "Ought" are directed towards the personal world, and moral values are directed especially towards human free will. Hartmann also believes that even if we cannot prove that we really have free will, many moral phenomena indicate that our possession of it is highly probable—such as, for example, our consciousness of self-determination, various forms of responsibility, and the sense of guilt (Hartmann 1932b, 143–79). Harry G. Frankfurt—well known for his criticism of the idea of the plurality of alternatives—also treats free will as a criterion for defining human personhood: a free person is a being who is able to create effective "second-order desires" (Frankfurt 2007, 20–21).

However, before analysing all these questions, certain other remarks are necessary. It is usually helpful to analyse past philosophical concepts in light of current standpoints. Firstly, this procedure seems to be consistent with the idea of progress in philosophical thinking: if we accept the idea of progress (as Hartmann does), a necessary consequence is that we can know more than our predecessors. Secondly, a person's views can be better

2. All "Forewords" are published in the third and fourth edition of *Ethics*. In this article I refer to the fourth edition (1962).

understood from an external perspective when all of the consequences of those views have already unfolded. Thirdly, accepting this procedure, we can also ask about the contemporary relevance of their views. As far as the relation between the philosophy of Hartmann and contemporary ethical discussions is concerned, all these aspects are valid, but the first and second points are the most important. When examining his analyses of conceptions formulated by other philosophers, one can clearly see how he tends to recognize what was really profound and relevant in the theories being analysed, and what was only a product of the times and historical conditions. Hartmann himself explicitly states that cooperation among philosophers is necessary if they hope to solve any problems: "I cannot imagine progress in their consideration without active cooperation between contemporaries."[3] Fourthly, as is well known, Hartmann distinguishes two types of method in the history of philosophy. The first deals with genealogy and the connections between conceptions, as well as their historical changes and cultural and social contexts. The second analyses the problems themselves, their logic, and their own "history." In this article, I will use the second type of method in relation to Hartmann's own philosophy.

2. Hartmann's Conception of Free Will and Determinism

Based on Hartmann's judgments about Kant's ethics, one might be tempted to conclude that the former was a defender of determinism, due to his very positive opinions concerning the relevance of the latter's understanding of determinism in the context of morality. What this means is that if Kant's concept of freedom can be treated as an example of determinism, then Hartmann's theory can as well, especially given the following explicitly held opinions of Hartmann regarding Kant's conception of freedom: (i) that Kant was right in saying that human freedom does not require indeterminism; (ii) that he was right in saying that human freedom is only of a positive nature, not a negative one; (iii) that he was right in saying that human freedom consists in self-determination only (Hartmann 1932b, 53–61).

Hartmann reads Kant as a philosopher who "first advanced on a new road" in thinking about freedom without indeterminism (Hartmann 1953, 127), and who recognized that the real world was fully determined. Everything that exists must belong to one of two worlds: to the world of nature or that of free persons. As a component of nature, a human

3. "Aber ohne die tätige Mitarbeit der Zeitgenossen sehe ich die Möglichkeit nicht, in ihnen weiter vorzudringen" (Hartmann 1962, X). The "Foreword" to the third edition of *Ethics* is not translated in the English translation of *Ethics*.

being is determined by its necessary regularities and laws. As a member of a community of free persons, a human being is dependent on moral duties and the categorical imperative only. To be free means to act on the basis of a sense of duty that is recognized in the categorical imperative. Human freedom is positive and consists in conformity with the moral imperative. This freedom is positive only insofar as the categorical imperative plays the role of a condition effectively present within the human will and determining its direction.

A similar deterministic conclusion may be arrived at from the perspective of Hartmann's material (non-formal) ontology of the real world.[4] Every real stratum consists in a set of categories determining its structure, qualities and relations to other strata. However, according to Hartmann's laws pertaining to such strata, every higher stratum of reality is partly independent of lower ones. Freedom is not only the privilege of a human being; it also appears on each border between two ontological strata (Hartmann 1964, 493–501; 1953, 124).

Each higher stratum is partially free insofar as it is partially self-determined. Three things are worth emphasizing in this regard. Firstly, freedom of the will is a kind of determination; free will means "self-determined will." Secondly, human free will, in general, is essentially based on categorial freedom; this is possible because so-called strata categories are materially independent of lower ones (Hartmann 1953, 125, 133). The specificity of each stratum consists in its categorial self-determination. Thirdly, the basic form of freedom is autonomy; an autonomous will is the will of a subject that determines its own actions. An autonomous will is the core of the self-determination of the subject.

This kind of categorial determinism may be supplemented with modal determinism, and Hartmann's understanding of possibility, actuality and necessity. On the one hand, when trying to explain the nature of all real processes Hartmann refers to the Megarian tradition. And, on the other hand, when criticizing the notion of real possibility understood as a multiplicity of open alternatives, he clearly prefers the solution given by Leibniz and rejects the theory formulated by Aristotle (Hartmann 2013, 234; 1957a, 85–100; 1957b, 252–78). What does "really possible" mean? According to Hartmann, the answer to this question was formulated by Leibniz in his *principium rationis sufficientis*.

4. A detailed description of this is unnecessary, as it is one of the best-known parts of Hartmann's philosophy.

> Leibniz, who first stated this law, gave it the more precise designation "*principium rationis sufficientis*," "principle of sufficient reason." The "sufficiency" in this formulation is, no doubt, pleonastic; because a true reason is, of course, a sufficient one. An insufficient reason would not bring about the consequence. But it is certainly also apparent from Leibniz's formulation that "sufficiency" is essential to the reason (Hartmann 2013, 212).

According to this principle, some event is really possible only if all the conditions required for its occurrence are already met. When they are not met (yet, or not at all), the possibility is not real. In this case, there is only a logical or epistemological possibility consisting in a non-contradiction. This explains the equivalence of the modal categories of possibility, actuality, and necessity in the modal structure of reality (Hartmann 2013, 123–34). What is really possible is also really actual, and what is really actual is really necessary as well.

The principle of sufficient reason holds true for all kinds of being, not just real being; but it also must be considered if one wants to explain the relation between the real past and the real present, and between the real present and the future. What is significant is that, with regard to real being, the principle states that each state which really exists (or will exist in the future) has to be determined by a concrete and complete set of conditions. Hartmann also argues that this is a special type of determination as not every determination is a real determination (Hartmann 2013, 211). Real determination plays out horizontally between events that are concrete, individual, and unfold in time: "Real determination plays out in another dimension, it moves wholly at the level of the concretum. It connects homogeneous components such as the real with the real, and not the real with its principles (or laws). In all strata, it has the form of a nexus" (Hartmann 2013, 211).

A special conception of the connection between freedom and causal determinism may also follow from Hartmann's critical attitude toward universal teleology and teleologism. Hartmann develops this criticism in many works, especially in *Teleologisches Denken*. It is significant that for him, universal and monistic teleologism renders human freedom impossible. If all events were part of an overarching teleological process, each one of them would have to be determined by the overarching end (the purpose); human freedom and autonomy would thus be impossible:

> If the world, from the bottom to the top, were determined teleologically, the highest form of determination would be common to all being. No higher form could rise above it, and the human will would have no determinative superiority

> over subhuman processes. That is to say, it would exhibit no element of superadded autonomy as over against the processes of nature; instead it would be on the same footing with these natural processes. Consequently the autonomy of a higher mode of determination would be impossible for him. The accuracy of this reasoning is further confirmed by the reflection that purposes of the more inclusive teleological processes of the world would, as superior powers, oppose all purposes of man, leaving the latter no scope at all. (Hartmann 1953, 129–30)

One can find the same line of reasoning in one of the religious antinomies that Hartmann describes in the *Ethics*: the antinomy of divine providence. Hartmann remarks that God, understood as an omnipotent providence, would make it impossible for human beings to be free and morally responsible. Divine providence would be a finalistic kind of determination. Its determining power would be infinite and almighty, and human activity would be unable to affect it. The teleological activity of human beings would be impotent against the omnipotence of God (Hartmann 1932b, 266–70). However, according to Hartmann there is also an ontological reason for this hypothetical impotence. He believes that the structure of the teleological nexus is "closed," whereas that of the causal nexus is "open" (Hartmann 1966, 121–26). The causal nexus is "open" insofar as it is superinformable and many other nexuses may be added to it. The final nexus is "closed" insofar as one cannot add to it other final nexuses without transforming its goal into a means for a further end. As a consequence, human teleological determinism cannot be included into universal teleology without loss of the autonomy of human activity: all human purposes would be weaker than the stronger final universal goal, they would all be mere "means" to achieve the final universal end. For Hartmann, human teleologism cannot be synchronized with universal teleologism without contradiction.

Therefore, human freedom is incompatible with a fully teleologically determined world. But this does not mean that it is incompatible with a fully determined world as such. The teleological nexus is only one type of determination; there are other types of determination besides this one. Freedom is not incompatible with the causal nexus if the latter is not interpreted in a monistic way. A pluralistic determinism is rather a necessary condition for freedom: to will and act, we must assume that we ourselves may be considered the source of our own will and the agent of our actions. If we have free will, we are able to posit a goal and realize it in the world using its objective causal regularities.

This deterministic conclusion can also be supported by Hartmann's understanding of axiological determination. Let us repeat: he believes,

in an aporetic manner, that there are both weak and strong values; he also believes that value determinism can be both direct and indirect. Unlike ontological categories, values are considered weak because they influence human activity through human acceptance and agreement only. However, they are also considered strong because they are the only principles that can shape human motivation and activity (a sort of motivation different from all biological inclinations). Without values, we would be "blind"; to know what to do, we have to know what is valuable. The determination of values functions indirectly, since, to influence our actions, values have to be accepted by us. Therefore, according to Hartmann, the human being is "the only being which mediates between the Ought and life" (Hartmann 1932b, 22).

At the same time, this kind of determination is direct in axiological consciousness in the sense that values determine human consciousness irrespective of the human will (Hartmann 1955, 302–3). We can clearly see this kind of determination at work when our value-feeling negates our egoistic inclinations or interests. This is why Hartmann believes, just like Scheler and von Hildebrand, that value-feeling is the only cognitive connection between persons and values (Hartmann 1955, 303; 1965, 553–62). Every form of axiological or ethical thinking (reasoning) is only secondary and has to be based on such a feeling. When explaining the priority of value--feeling, Hartmann writes:

> But this does not mean that it is also an original, explicitly present consciousness of law. . . . Here, as there, a special philosophical method is needed, which discovers these laws and makes their content and their "matter" accessible to consciousness and to the conceptual understanding. Here, as there, such a method is secondary. In ethics it rests upon the primal feeling of value, and can do nothing except draw out from the total emotional phenomenon the aprioristic content which was already within it. (Hartmann 1932a, 178)

The idea of the apriority of value-feeling is deeply typical of German material value ethics. Even if a person is able to transform his or her value-feeling (in self-education, for example, and in axiological or moral development), this feeling itself, in relation to values, is passive and receptive, and reflects only their range and content.[5] The correct or "true" feeling must be determined by values, not by the subject. What the subject

5. According to Hans M. Baumgartner, Hartmann's concept of value-feeling seems to be contradictory; Hartmann seems to interpret it as receptive and non-receptive at the same time (Baumgartner 1962, 129–30).

is able to influence and transform is only its own ability to feel, its own value sensibility. This way of thinking about the passivity and receptivity of value-feeling is no doubt represented by Hartmann as well (as one of main representatives of the material ethics of values):

> The primary emotional consciousness of value, where it exists at all and in so far as it is present, cannot, to one's liking, agree or not agree with the principle, as is the case with disposition and action. It is necessarily in harmony with ethical principle, being nothing but its expression in consciousness; it is the way in which principle modifies consciousness and, in modifying it, is present. (Hartmann1932a, 102)

Consequently, in general terms Hartmann's philosophy of free will is intermeshed with various forms of determinism. These are (i) a "vertical" categorial determinism (between categories and *concretum*), (ii) a modal determinism, (iii) a "horizontal" determinism (between different facts or events), and (iv) an axiological determinism (in human activity and cognition). In this context, it is no wonder that Hartmann writes that "Free will is not undetermined will, but is precisely a will that is determined and chooses determinately" (Hartmann 1932b, 49).

3. Is Hartmann a Compatibilist or an Incompatibilist, and Does He Propose a New Conception of Compatibilism?

Compatibilism and incompatibilism constitute the two main positions in the contemporary debate over free will and determinism (Warfield 2005, 613–30; Kane 2005; Fischer et al. 2007, 1–4). Compatibilists accept three general statements: i) The real world is totally determined; nothing in the real world occurs without a cause; everything that really exists has its source in something else. ii) Human freedom may be interpreted as compatible with universal (common, general) determinism. iii) To achieve such compatibility, it is necessary to redefine "freedom," which must be understood as a form of determination and not as an absence of it. Human freedom must always be of a positive nature, in contrast to so-called "negative freedom," which amounts to an absence of dependence.

Incompatibilists deny the second statement and claim that the two assertions are incompatible (i.e., the positive claim about determinism in the world and the positive assertion about human free will). As a result, this type of incompatibilism is composed of three views: i) that the real world is totally determined; ii) that free will cannot be aligned with universal determinism; iii) that free will is impossible—the belief that we are free

is merely an illusion. However, this is only a simple form of incompatibilism. What is typical of it is that free will is understood as independence, but independence from what? Obviously, independence from every condition external to our will and susceptible of influencing our choices and actions. It does not matter whether these are natural or cultural forces, divine laws, objective moral values, psychological regularities, or logical principles. What matters is that we are always only negatively free in relation to external determining conditions.

Given its negative character, let us call the last form of incompatibilism "negative incompatibilism." There is, however, a more complex form of incompatibilism, which I will henceforth call "positive incompatibilism." Its main thesis is that universal determinism in the world does not exclude human free will at all. A very specific rationalization is often proposed to justify such an opinion. A human being—or human will, at least—is treated as an entity that exists in the world, although, at the same time, he or she is not of that nature. There is a principal dimension in human beings that does not belong to this world and cannot be explained as a part of reality. Something such was presented by Jean-Paul Sartre, who asserted that human existence is "nothingness" because of the lack of a nature possessed by "being" (Sartre 2007, 20–23). There is thus one form of compatibilism, and two forms of incompatibilism (one negative and one positive).[6]

At the very beginning, Hartmann's solution seems to be fully consistent with the main idea of the *general* form of compatibilism. This means that, for Hartmann, free will exists in conformity with determinism. Moreover, free will is itself a form of determination. This interpretation is justified insofar as general compatibilism says nothing about the concrete nature of determination. Thus, it is irrelevant whether one is dealing with the causal or the teleological nexus. If compatibilism is the theory according to which everything is causally determined, then Hartmann's opinion about compatibilism is negative: the real world is of a pluralistic nature and this is why monistic causal determinism is false.[7] If compatibilism is the theory which states that everything is teleologically determined, then Hartmann's conclusion is negative as well, due to the closed nature of the teleological nexus (Hartmann 1966, 123–26).

6. Of course, this classification is very general; its goal is only to distinguish models, or the most general types of thinking about free will and determinism. It is widely acknowledged that there have been multifarious forms of compatibilism and incompatibilism over the course of the history of philosophy.

7. In his analysis, Krzysztof Rojek also examines the relationship between Hartmann's conception of freedom and compatibilism (see: Rojek 2021, 56–58).

The foregoing conclusions demonstrate the specificity and originality of Hartmann's attitude. It is typical of Harinkomtmann that he rejects all forms of monism and that, as a result, he rejects the typical compatibilist question: is free will compatible with a causally determined world? This question is wrong because universal causalism is false. If someone (like, e.g., Leibniz) endeavors to understand universal determinism as a form of teleologism, they are committing the same monistic mistake. However, let us repeat, Hartmann's conception of freedom is consistent with general compatibilism, because universal pluralistic determinism does not exclude the possibility of free will, which is a kind of determination that can be consistent with other types of determination. But in this case, Hartmann does not offer a standard compatibilist conception of free will, because he does not think that the latter consists in some inner agreement or in an attitude of acceptance. Instead, he holds that it is a novel kind of determination. Free will does not consist in internal conformity with what is necessary, but is itself one of the conditions determining what is necessary (Hartmann 2013, 222–24).

This is why Hartmann's explicit view is consistent with general compatibilism. At the same time, his philosophy of freedom can also be, to some extent, interpreted as a form of incompatibilism. To explain such a double interpretation, we must distinguish Hartmann's own words from the consequences that can be inferred from them.[8]

4. Hartmann's Conception of Freedom and of the Real World

Let us now examine Hartmann's standpoint in further detail. There are at least three reasons to consider the theory of the antinomies at this point. Firstly, Hartmann formulates the antinomies of freedom to verify Kant's conception of freedom. The formulation of these is an attempt to correct the latter's mistakes, and especially his opinion that human personal freedom requires conformity with the categorical imperative. Hartmann explicitly claims:

> In the Kantian sense, "reason" is not individual, but is the universal reason in which individuals participate. The "moral law" is the principle of a "transcendental subject," a practical "consciousness in general," not otherwise than the twelve categories are principles of a theoretical "consciousness in general." Hence, transcendental freedom is not at all freedom of the moral person. For he is merely the empirical individual. (Hartmann 1932b, 102–3)

8. Hartmann uses the same method when analysing Kant's theory of freedom.

Hartmann, of course, explicitly voices appreciation for Kant's "dualistic" determinism. However, he tries to develop it and transform it into a deterministic pluralism (Hartmann 1932b, 59–61; 1953, 128). Therefore, one can use the antinomies of freedom as an effective tool to evaluate Hartmann's determinism (and "compatibilism") in relation to freedom. Secondly, these antinomies constitute the core of Hartmann's philosophy of freedom. Thirdly, he himself seems to invite others to conduct such an analysis. The opinion he presented in the preface to the third edition of the *Ethics*—even if explicitly directed at his contemporaries—is significant, and can also be interpreted in a more general way. Hartmann writes there that philosophers must cooperate if they want to explain the problems connected with the second antinomy of freedom.[9]

There are two main antinomies in Hartmann's analysis of Kant's theory of freedom: the antinomy of the Ought and the antinomy of autonomy.[10] The first one expresses the principal problem raised by Kant's conception of freedom as the predicate of a person who acts on the basis of the categorical imperative: in order to show that human will is only free if it is determined by an imperative, one must show, at the same time, that will is not determined by this imperative and that the willing subject can accept or reject it. In order to be free, the will must be "aloof" from the imperative (Hartmann 1932a, 158–160). The condition of aloofness is not allowed by Kant's dualistic philosophy; if the human will is not determined by the categorical imperative, it must be determined by nature. As a consequence, Kant's philosophy of freedom does not demonstrate that our will is free and raises the antinomy of the Ought. Hartmann emphasizes that, already, Fichte "recognized the bearing of the antinomy, which exists

9. "Es sind freilich die schwierigsten Fragen, die sich in diesen Partien zusammendrängen. Aber es sind die alte Grundprobleme der Ethik. Ohne die tätige Mitarbeit der Zeitgenossen sehe ich die Möglichkeit nicht, in ihnen weiter vorzudringen" (Hartmann 1962, X).

10. Hartmann formulates more antinomies of freedom, including five antinomies of religion. There are also many different positive and negative opinions about these antinomies. For instance, H.M. Baumgartner criticizes them, as he thinks that it is only a specific interpretation of Hartmann himself that produces those antinomies; it is not freedom itself that is aporetic, but only Hartmann's way of thinking about freedom (Baumgartner 1982, 35–45). Anton Schlittmaier endeavors to demonstrate that, by describing antinomies, Hartmann seems not to remember that, based on a pure description of the phenomena, one should know (and Hartmann certainly does) that axiological determination is weak and indirect (Schlittmaier 1999, 102–3). The most extreme opinion is presented by Martin Morgenstern, who thinks that Hartmann formulates antinomies only in order to show how excellent his own method is because it is able to solve them. What is typical of Hartmann's philosophy, according to Morgenstern, is something like "the pleasure of formulating and solving antinomies" (Morgenstern 1992, 195).

between the Ought and the Will, upon the question of freedom" (Hartmann 1932b, 107). To solve the Ought-antinomy, one should accept the idea that human persons have this distance and are free in relation to the imperative. However, this results in the next antinomy, which shows that there is an unresolvable contradiction between the solutions to both antinomies (the causal antinomy and the antinomy of the Ought): what makes it possible to solve the causal antinomy at the same time makes it impossible to solve the antinomy of the Ought, and what makes it possible to solve the Ought-antinomy makes it impossible to solve the causal antinomy at the same time. This contradiction is evident. Hartmann analyses it particularly on three levels and describes three different conflicts: between positive and negative freedom, between being determined by values and not being determined by values, and between general and individual freedom (Hartmann 1932b, 126–33).

The solutions proposed by Hartmann seem to be comprehensive and based on the idea of personal self-determination that constitutes a third level of axiological determination as such (value cognition, decision about realization, and realization itself). Self-determination is placed on the second level. Hartmann argues that it is impossible to include it in Kant's conception due to the dualistic nature of Kant's thought: either I am a member of the moral world or I am a member of nature. *Tertium non datur*. This is self-determination wherein, on the one hand, an individual person is not yet determined by values and, on the other hand, this person is no longer determined by natural forces. It is the level of self-determination where real personal determinism starts. A person must choose a proper (i.e., valuable) way of behavior, and only in this way can he or she be determined by values: being determined by values must be preceded by the self-determination of a person.

In this way, Hartmann replaces Kant's deterministic dualism with a deterministic pluralism composed of three levels: natural determination, value determination, and the self-determination of the person. Human will is thus determined by values, but the latter cannot determine the will directly: it is always the free person who must decide which values are to be realized. The person must respond to their appeal or demand and must really do so within his or her own value cognition and self-determination. Values cannot be realized in the real world in a moral way without human acceptance. As Hartmann writes:

> Among these it is the ability to decide, in which the element of freedom is most conspicuously contained. This ability is especially essential to the

> metaphysical situation. If the person were constrained to follow the requirement of the Ought in regard to all apprehended values, he would indeed still be a mediator between value and actuality, a pivot of the Ought in the real world, but he would be a passive pivot, a forced mediator. He would not be an entity in which the distinctive valuational qualities could manifest themselves; he could very well actualize situational values beyond himself, but not moral values in himself. Man would then be without will as regards the values apprehended. . . . He is by no means an absolutely faithful mediator. He does not act under valuational points of view as under some necessity. Even if he possessed complete insight into values and unlimited power, he would not make the world perfect. (Hartmann 1932, 21–22)

We have now reached the core of the problem of free will: what is its structure? If freedom is understood as self-determination, we must ask what kind of reasons (motivations) are used by a free subject in order to determine its own will. Such reasons must exist according to all forms of determinism. The answer seems to be given in Hartmann's thesis that each stratum is positively free in relation to the lower strata. However, does not positive freedom assume negative freedom? In general, it is only if a person is negatively free that they can fill this empty space of negative freedom with some positive reasons. In other words, positive freedom is conditioned by negative freedom. Yet, in Hartmann's opinion a positive human freedom must be doubly directed towards nature and towards values—and this opinion is especially significant given its similarity to that of Kant. I am positively free in my relation to nature, because my activity is based on values. I am positively free in relation to values, because values can really determine me only through my activity and my acceptance of them. Only human beings are able to recognize values, accept them, and use their own real power to manifest values in the real world. But to do so in a moral way, human beings must also have the possibility of rejecting values. In this context, the following question comes to be asked: is this not a definition of negative freedom—to have the possibility to do something or not? The answer is obviously affirmative.

In this context, Hartmann's solutions to the Ought-antinomy should be reconsidered. What I mean, in particular, is the explanation given by Hartmann of the following issue:

> How can freedom as against the principle be positive? It means simply that the will can act one way or another! But this open alternative is the form of "freedom in the negative sense," of negative freedom of choice, concerning

> which it was shown that it is not freedom of the will. The free will is certainly not an undetermined will; but prior to the choice the will is an undetermined will. (Hartmann 1932b, 128–29)

However, Hartmann explains that this is only an apparent contradiction. To see this, one needs to consider that axiological determination is, for him, of a complex nature and is composed of several stages. This is why an axiological determination can contain various types of freedom without contradiction. When someone, for example, considers what type of value should be chosen, they are positively free; when someone's decision is already made, their freedom in relation to values is only positive. Thus, there is no contradiction when an axiological determination is treated as a process of a complex nature. What is important here is that Hartmann explicitly writes that human will is positively free only in relation to other real conditions like psychological motivation, biological instinct, or social pressure. Everything in the real world has to be fully determined. Hartmann also states that this is the sense of freedom which Kant meant in the solution he gave to the causal antinomy (Hartmann 1932b, 54–56). However, values are not real for Hartmann—they belong to the ideal sphere of being.[11] As a result, in relation to values, human freedom can also be negative (Hartmann 1932b, 223–30). Therefore, when it comes to values, human freedom

11. The ideal self-being of values seems to be a concept that, even if controversial, is peculiar to Hartmann's ethics. However, to understand this concept properly, one has to consider the following explanations. It is true that Hartmann never actually modified his theory explicitly. However, he faced many criticisms and significantly added a small yet valid footnote in the second edition of the *Ethics* (namely, the footnote in Chapter XVI): "Gegen den hier eingeführten Begriff des Ansichseins hat sich seinerzeit—beim ersten Erscheinen dieses Buches—ein wahres Sturmlaufen der Kritik erhoben. Der Angriff traf indessen auch nicht einen einzigen der hier entwickelten Punkte. Das meiste von dem, was vorgebracht wurde, beruhte auf gröblicher Verwechselung mit dem kantischen ‚Ding an sich.' Andere Missverständnisse nahmen das Ansichsein für etwas Substantielles, oder wenigstens für etwas isoliert für sich Bestehendes. Vor allen solchen Verirrungen muss hier eindringlich gewarnt werden. Das ‚Ansichsein' besagt vielmehr etwas ganz Schlichtes, durchaus Nachweisbares: die Unabhängigkeit vom Dafürhalten des Subjekts—nicht mehr und nicht weniger" (Hartmann 1962, 148). This footnote has not been translated into English. The interpretation proposed by Hartmann here is only epistemological, and the self-existence of values means only that they are independent of any cognition. Epistemological independence is not the same as metaphysical independence. However, the main content of this chapter regrettably remained unchanged. Ewald van der Vossenberg expresses a similar opinion: "H. stellt hier also das gnoseologische Ansichsein in den Vordergrund. Dennoch nimmt er an mehreren Stellen in seinen Werken mehr als bloss diese Unabhängigkeit von unserem Erkennen an . . . . Meines Erachten setzt sich diese Ungewissheit und dieser Zweifel in allen Hartmannschen Werken fort; bald wird bloss das gnoseologische Ansichsein angenommen, bald deutlich der ontologische Charakter herausgearbeitet" (Vossenberg 1963, 8).

is both positive and negative.[12] The human will is positively free with regards to values, since its agreement, its "yes," constitutes a necessary component of all real value-determinism. Without human acceptance, values cannot determine real human activity. This is why, according to Hartmann, the human will and its act of value-acceptance adds something to values themselves: it gives to values its own real determination and power. Only in this manner can values be "realized." However, at the same time, the human will is negatively free when a person makes choices and decides which values should be realized. It is only free human decision (meaning negatively free decision) that determines which value will be chosen and realized. Therefore, Hartmann claims that his own solution to the problem of freedom completes Kant's own theory of freedom.

In this way, one gets to the heart of the matter. In order to avoid the contradiction that is contained in the antinomy of autonomy, Hartmann must accept that human will is not determined by ideal values, at least partly. However, it does not suffice to show that there is no contradiction here. It would rather be necessary to demonstrate that this "real" freedom cannot be interpreted as undetermined will. As a matter of fact, one cannot find such a demonstration in Hartmann's ethics. One only encounters a distinction between free will towards values and free will towards real conditions. The principal question is whether personal will, which is negatively free in relation to values, does not have to be real human will. If so—and any other answer would seem absurd—the next question of importance will be whether we should not accept the idea that there is something in the real world that is both real and undetermined.

As far as the first question is concerned, Hartmann's critique of Kant's (transcendental) ethical subject leads us to respond in the affirmative. Only a real person, and not a transcendental reason or transcendental subject, is able to be a real moral subject; only a real person, and not a transcendental reason or subject, can be free and responsible. Hence, Hartmann maintains that Kant's perspective is unrelated to the real subject of morality and that, in fact, it misinterprets the real person as the subject of morality. When criticizing Kant's opinion that values are constituted by reason, Hartmann writes:

> Yet herein is contained a whole nest of arbitrary assumptions. Especially has it been shown to be false, that moral principles emanate from reason. But

12. In her analysis of political freedom, Alicja Pietras uses Hartmann's distinction between positive and negative freedom (see: Pietras 2019, 140–61).

> even granted that this were so, we should thereby have only a "transcendental freedom" of reason, not the freedom of the person as an individual entity; hence not a freedom of the will. In the Kantian sense, "reason" is not individual, but is the universal reason in which individuals participate. . . . Kant means to prove the freedom of the will; yet he does not notice that he is actually proving something altogether different—something, to be sure, which is essential as a presupposition of freedom of the will but is nevertheless not that freedom itself: what he proves is merely that the principle is autonomous. (Hartmann 1932b, 102–03)

Given the individuality of a person, according to Hartmann the subject of morality must belong to the real world; the fact that a person has negative freedom with regards to values means that reality itself must contain a certain type of negative freedom. The moral subject must be a real person that must be negatively free. Only such freedom can lay the foundation for the morally relevant form of positive freedom. Without negative freedom, a positive one seems to be a sort of dependence.

Regrettably, Hartmann does not use terms such as "person" and "real determination of a person" consistently. I am referring here to what he says in *Possibility and Actuality*:

> What has not yet been decided, however, is the question of the self-determination of the will itself. For this always occurs under the influence of values; however, values are not products of the will, but rather, universal essences. Even with regard to them, the will must have the freedom to decide for or against them. This side of the question of freedom, however, no longer involves the problem of real determination. For that against which this freedom holds its own is no longer real. (Hartmann 2013, 224)

Two things are important in this passage. On the one hand, he correctly notes that a person must decide for or against "ideal" values: i.e., that a person must decide in relation to something which is not real. However, he also consistently says that the problem of freedom is not involved in that of real determination (Hartmann 2013, 224). If the subject of a decision is a real person, their decision must be real as well, even if they decide for or against something that is not real. Hartmann's argument would be right on the level of axiological cognition alone: there is actually a relation between reality and ideality here. But, if a real decision must be individual, as Hartmann explicitly states in his third antinomy, it must be a real determination.

5. Is Hartmann's Conception of Free Will Consistent?

For the foregoing reasons, I conclude that if one wants to understand Hartmann's philosophy of freedom consistently, and take account of its consequences, then his critique of indeterminism and negative freedom in the real world ultimately leads, rather paradoxically, to the acceptance of both indeterminism and negative freedom. Of course, Hartmann himself would probably claim otherwise. He would probably say that my interpretation is unjustified. According to him, if a person is not yet determined by values, and not already determined by natural forces, it does not follow that they are completely undetermined. A person is always self-determined, and self-determination is fully consistent with universal pluralistic determinism. Personal self-determination is one of the real determinations.

However, given these doubts, should we not infer that personal determinism requires some distance from a subjective principle contained in self-determination? And, moreover, Hartmann explicitly notes that even if we cannot understand what self-determination is in itself, we can cognize the teleological nature of its structure (Hartmann 1932b, 237–39). This is precisely the point where my worries begin: typical human teleology requires consciousness and choice—not only consciousness of what determines us, but also the ability to choose it. An argument against Hartmann similar to mine was deployed by Hartmann himself against Leibniz. When criticizing the latter's conception of freedom, Hartmann explicitly noted that it is insufficient to say that there is a principle in the general structure of personal subjects determining their activity. If one wants to argue that free will is possible, one must also demonstrate that human will is free in relation to its general principle. Free will must be individual and determined; it must not be determined by its general principle. This argument, which Hartmann formulates against Leibniz, is conclusive insofar as Leibniz's metaphysics is individualistic:[13]

> Behind the individual will, directing it, there stands no general law, no transcendental subject, no absolute ego. Even in its metaphysical foundation it is individual. Hence, what a man does, wills or even only bears within himself as an inner commitment, is to be attributed to himself alone. He is an absolutely accountable and responsible being. . . . Here another mistake is committed: the freedom of the monad is not the freedom of consciousness, but that of a deeply unconscious metaphysical entity. Already in his

13. On Hartmann's relation to Leibniz, see the present author's two articles (written in Polish) (Kopciuch 2009, 213–22; 2012a, 165–74).

> predisposition man is here actually predestined. He cannot will or act otherwise than he must, with his given predisposition. (Hartmann 1932b, 122)

In general, however, Hartmann's attitude towards Leibniz's conception of freedom is rather complex (Hartmann 1957a, 252–78). On the one hand, he accepts Leibniz's idea that freedom must be individual, but, on the other hand, he criticizes the latter's thesis that free will can be identified with spontaneity (Hartmann 1932b, 120–23). Through its own spontaneity, human will can be independent of the external world, but to be really free it must be independent of its own internal principle as well (Hartmann 1957a, 269–70).

Based on Hartmann's criticism of Leibniz, one can expect that his own conception rectifies Leibniz's theory in that it adds the idea of independence between a subject and its principle. This is the most crucial point of my considerations here. If free will is independent in relation to its own principle, it must also be negatively free and undetermined. This conclusion is logical in itself, but not consistent with Hartmann's own explicit statements; for him, the real world is fully determined, even if different parts of it are determined in different ways.

This interpretation may also be supported by referring to the "metaphysical" core of free will, which is described in the third level of the antinomy of autonomy. Hartmann thinks that we are unable to explain the nature of individual self-determination, because of its irrational nature. He provides several reasons for this metaphysical irrationality, three of which are especially relevant to our topic. First, freedom is irrational insofar as one cannot explain the relation between the individual motivation of a person and the general personal type of determination. Second, it is irrational insofar as one cannot understand what the content of the teleological determination of the will is. It is clear that the activity of the will is teleological but, at the same time, it is unclear what the structure of this teleology is: if human teleology is based on values, how to explain the structure of a decision in relation to values? And third, he is explicit that the "irrationality" of free will may be compared to problems we encounter when attempting to define such terms as "principle," "reality," or "value."

Hartmann treats the problem of free will as a metaphysical question: one cannot explicate it, and yet one cannot abandon it. At the same time, though, he explains that there is no place here for negative freedom:

> It is clear that even the concept of positive freedom does not here offer a solution. Each positive component—it might be axiological and would not

> be included here—would be already drawn into the texture of ontological determinants. But still less can there be a question of merely negative freedom. Irrespective of the fact that this can exist only over against values, not over against ontological necessity, the merely "empty place" in the texture is contrary to the meaning of positive self-determination. (Hartmann 1932b, 240)

Individual self-determination is incomprehensible, because free will cannot be identified with spontaneity. There must therefore be an ontological distance between the individual person and their individual principles. This is why, if one wants to pursue this idea consistently, one must accept that the result of this is a kind of indeterminism: a person has to be undetermined by his or her individual principle. Even though this kind of reading of Hartmann is rather uncommon, a similar interpretation of his conception of determinism is adhered to by Hedwig Below. She also thinks, on the one hand, that Hartmann's positive freedom is based on a negative one and, on the other hand, that in his ontology of the real world Hartmann is explicit that negative freedom in relation to the real does not exist (Below 1966, 150–53).

Hartmann would probably reject such an interpretation. Nevertheless, at the same time, he states that this is the level at which our thinking about freedom seems to be impotent. The situation is somewhat paradoxical. He should not speak about the deepest level of freedom because he interprets it as a metaphysical (trans-intelligible) dimension. However, while rejecting being undetermined, Hartmann claims to know something about this dimension, even if it is trans-intelligible.

To summarize, Hartmann's explicit view can be made consistent with general compatibilism. Paradoxically, however, his philosophy of free will can also, to some extent, be interpreted as a form of incompatibilism. His critique of indeterminism and negative freedom seems to be partly inconsistent, because his understanding of personal freedom appears to contain an element of negative freedom, even though he himself does not confirm this. Despite this apparent inconsistency, there is no doubt that Hartmann's philosophy of free will is the greatest achievement of his *Ethics*. No one else has analysed this problem as deeply as he did, even if his concepts contain some ambiguities.

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