

Conscience: Phenomena and Theories**Hendrik Stoker****Publication Date**

30-03-2018

License

This work is made available under a Copyright Controlled by External Host license and should only be used in accordance with that license.

Citation for this work (American Psychological Association 7th edition)

Stoker, H. (2018). *Conscience: Phenomena and Theories* (Version 1). University of Notre Dame.
<https://doi.org/10.7274/24853326.v1>

This work was downloaded from CurateND, the University of Notre Dame's institutional repository.

For more information about this work, to report or an issue, or to preserve and share your original work, please contact the CurateND team for assistance at curate@nd.edu.

CONSCIENCE

PHENOMENA
AND THEORIES

HENDRIK G. STOKER

TRANSLATED BY PHILIP E. BLOSSER

CONSCIENCE

HENDRIK G. STOKER
TRANSLATED BY PHILIP E. BLOSSER
FOREWORD BY D. F. M. STRAUSS

CONSCIENCE

PHENOMENA
AND
THEORIES

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

University of Notre Dame Press
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556
undpress.nd.edu

English Language Edition Copyright © 2018 University of Notre Dame

Translated by Philip E. Blosser from
Das Gewissen: Erscheinungsformen und Theorie by Hendrik G. Stoker,
vol. 2 in the series *Schriften zur Philosophie und Soziologie*
(series editor Max Scheler),
printed by Mänicke & Jahn A.-G., Rudolstadt.
Copyright © 1925 by Friedrich Cohen in Bonn

All Rights Reserved

Published in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stoker, H. G. (Hendrik Gerhardus), author.
Title: Conscience : phenomena and theories / Hendrik G. Stoker ;
translated by Philip E. Blosser.
Other titles: Gewissen. English
Description: Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press, 2018. |
Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2017055847 (print) | LCCN 2017056757 (ebook) |
ISBN 9780268103194 (pdf) | ISBN 9780268103200 (epub) | ISBN 9780268103170
(hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 0268103178 (hardcover : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Conscience.
Classification: LCC BJ1471 (ebook) | LCC BJ1471.S713 2018 (print) |
DDC 170—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017055847>

∞ *This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992*
(Permanence of Paper).

This e-Book was converted from the original source file by a third-party vendor.
Readers who notice any formatting, textual, or readability issues are encouraged
to contact the publisher at ebooks@nd.edu

To my parents with gratitude and love

Contents

	Foreword	<i>D. F. M. Strauss</i>	<i>ix</i>
	Translator's Introduction		<i>xiii</i>
	<i>Conscience: Phenomena and Theories</i>		
	Editor's Foreword	<i>Max Scheler</i>	3
	Author's Preface		7
1	Current Scholarship and Orientation		11
2	The Ambiguity of Conscience		16
	Excursus: A Brief History of Theories of Conscience		35
3	Intellectualism and Bad Conscience		75
4	Intuitionism and Bad Conscience		106
5	Voluntarism and Bad Conscience		125
6	Emotionalism and Bad Conscience		157
7	Personal Evil and the Essence of Conscience		211

8	The Problem of the Genesis of Conscience	231
9	Some Theories of the Development of Conscience	244
10	The Reliability of Conscience	273
	Notes	294
	Bibliography	333
	Index	349

Foreword

D. F. M. Strauss

Hendrik G. Stoker was an eminent philosopher in the Afrikaner Reformed tradition. He was a man of diverse affiliations and diverse influences, all of which played into his thought and writing. He was closely affiliated with the neo-Kuyperian tradition of Reformational Philosophy pioneered by Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. Th. Vollenhoven. From his vantage point in South Africa, Stoker carried on a lively debate with Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and their disciples throughout his career. Like them, he was influenced by the neo-Calvinist movement stemming from the remarkable figure of Abraham Kuyper, who was not only a statesman and prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905 but also a noted theologian and seminal original thinker. Like them, Stoker also fell heir to the legacy of the great neo-Calvinist theologian Herman Bavinck. Unlike them, however, Stoker was not so disposed to dismiss every classic metaphysical distinction—such as “substance” versus “accidents”—when it appeared in thinkers like Bavinck or Kuyper. Unlike Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, moreover, Stoker also studied with Max Scheler, adapting the latter’s phenomenological method to his own Reformed outlook. These differences and

affinities have led to stimulating discussions among Calvinist philosophers about the relationship of Reformational thinking to Scholastic and phenomenological categories of thought—a discussion that Stoker's influence has significantly enlivened with his contributions.

One of Stoker's most profoundly original, significant, and unjustly neglected works is *Das Gewissen: Erscheinungsformen und Theorien*. The work has been too long overlooked, not only for the many reasons, cited in translator Philip Blosser's introduction, related to the long shadow cast by the aforementioned Calvinist debates over the relationship of Reformational philosophy to Scholastic and phenomenological categories of thought, but also because it has remained untranslated from its original German for far too many years. I myself have seen a copy of *Das Gewissen*, but I unfortunately have not owned one. This explains why it has been an exceptional experience for me to finally read *Das Gewissen* in English translation. The neglect of this singular study of conscience, with its detailed analysis of associated psychological phenomena and various philosophical theories of conscience by a Calvinist philosopher, has been exceedingly unfortunate—it is gratifying to see this situation remedied by Blosser's English translation. It is an exceptional work within the field of moral psychology and philosophy, which should be of interest not only to philosophers and psychologists but also to theologians, epistemologists, and those interested in moral issues generally. Although Stoker was modest about the scope of his project, the scholarship is solid and amazing, displaying a sound knowledge of related literature that is reflected in notes and wide-ranging references. Stoker was on the forefront of knowledge about the leading figures of various fields of study. His exposition of the ideas and conceptions of the leading intellectuals of his time is impressive and in many instances could serve as a brief orientation to the views of the authors discussed by him. Well written and well organized, *Das Gewissen* also reflects an exceptional mastery of the German language—we are grateful that the translator succeeds in transferring these lingual skills into the English translation. Blosser's translation is very good, and the work will definitely be readable and accessible to an American audience. I am not aware of anything comparable to Stoker's study of conscience in English or in other European languages.

I should mention that I have most of the works and monographs written by Stoker in my study room at home—a collection I began in the early 1960s. I also had the privilege of meeting Stoker in 1969 during a philosophical discussion held near Potchefstroom, South Africa. I also contributed to a special issue of the scholarly journal *Koers* in 1994 dedicated to the legacy of Stoker. In my contribution I discussed an article by Stoker on the modern theory of biological descent he published in 1927, two years after the appearance of *Das Gewissen*.¹ Stoker's views on the comparative ways in which humans and animals experience reality could be profitably compared, I contend, with those of Jakob von Uexküll, well known for his theory of *Umwelt*, and also with the views of Adolf Portmann, who significantly notes the mysterious fact that full-grown organisms present themselves as purposeful structured wholes.²

It should be also noted that I first met Philip Blosser, the translator of Stoker's work, at the Second and Third International Symposia organized by the Stichting voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte in the summers of 1982 and 1986 in Zeist, Netherlands, where he delivered the papers "Edmund Husserl and Kitaro Nishida: The Phenomenological Connection" and "Reconnoitering Dooyeweerd's Theory of Man." Blosser was introduced to the philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven as a student of H. Evan Runner at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, before going on to study (at Runner's suggestion) at Duquesne University, where he wrote a dissertation (at Ted Plantinga's suggestion) on Scheler's phenomenology. Thus he is somewhat uniquely and fortuitously situated to serve as translator of Stoker's work. Like Stoker, he has been schooled in the neo-Kuyperian philosophical traditions of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Like Stoker, he has also studied the phenomenology of Scheler, who was Stoker's mentor at Munich. Like Stoker, furthermore, he is also somewhat amicably disposed toward the classical metaphysical categories of Aristotle and Aquinas, doubtless influenced to some degree by his later embrace of Roman Catholicism. Whatever one makes of these influences, they surely contribute to a sympathetic and well-informed translation of Stoker's work.³

One final thought. As I was reading over this translation of *Das Gewissen*, I was forcibly struck at how Stoker presents a view of conscience in which evil is a necessary presupposition. In other words, conscience is regarded as inconceivable without a personal awareness of

moral responsibility for evil—this awareness of the possibility or actuality of personal evil is regarded as the essential feature in our experience of conscience. This is remarkable, because, by contrast, evil is normally seen as a parasite within the good order of creation. Perhaps this insight may be credited to an Augustinian perspective within Stoker's radical Calvinist view of original sin.

I commend this work and its translation to anyone interested in understanding more deeply the nature of human conscience and the diverse and fascinating phenomena associated with the experience of guilt, remission of guilt, and forgiveness. It is a work that should be of interest not only to trained philosophers or psychologists but also to a broadly educated laity from diverse lives and worldviews.

Notes

1. See Strauss, "Die vakwetenskaplike en wysgerige betekenis van Stoker"; and Stoker, "Die Desendensieeler."
2. Uexküll, *Umwelt* and *Theoretische Biologie*; Adolf Portmann, "Vorwort."
3. Representative of this sympathetic character is an article by Blosser titled "Toward a Resolution," which places Scheler and Dooyeweerd in dialogue with each other, the original of which was first published in Italian under the title "Per una soluzione."

Translator's Introduction

Hendrik G. Stoker's study of conscience is a remarkable work. Originally written as a dissertation at the University of Cologne under the celebrated German philosopher Max Scheler, it was first published under the title of *Das Gewissen: Erscheinungsformen und Theorien* in Bonn by Verlag von Friedrich Cohen in 1925. Acclaimed and well regarded by philosophers in the phenomenological tradition, such as Scheler, Martin Heidegger, and Herbert Spiegelberg, *Das Gewissen* is, if not above criticism in every detail, quite probably the single most comprehensive philosophical treatment of conscience in any language, not to mention a treatment that combines a perspective deeply informed by the traditions of Western Christianity with an uncanny gift for essential phenomenological description and a conscientious disposition for thoroughness.

A work of surprising scope, substance, and insight, Stoker's study offers a detailed historical survey of the concept of conscience from ancient times, through the Middle Ages, and into modern thinkers, such as Joseph Butler, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, John Henry Cardinal Newman, F. J. J. Buytendijk, Martin Kähler, Albrecht Ritschl, and others. He analyzes not only the concept of conscience in various academic theories but also various terms for conscience, etymologies, and even colloquial proverbs about

conscience in different languages. Most notably, he presents a systematic and phenomenologically rich analysis of various types of theories of conscience—which he divides into *intellectualist*, *intuitivist*, *voluntarist*, and *emotionalist*—and he also gives an insightful discussion of problems and theories related to the genesis, reliability, and validity of conscience. Particularly remarkable is the dexterity, sensitivity, and subtlety with which Stoker analyzes the diverse moral, psychological, and spiritual phenomena associated with the interior experience of *bad conscience*, which turns out to be of decisive significance for understanding conscience.

Das Gewissen promises to be of special interest not only to scholars in the phenomenological tradition, including those interested in phenomenological psychology, but also to those interested in moral and religious psychology, ethics, and religion. It should also find a warm welcome among the educated laity. It is an eminently accessible and readable work.

Reception of the work

The reception of Stoker's study of conscience among those in the phenomenological school of philosophy is worthy of some consideration. In his widely respected two-volume work, *The Phenomenological Movement* (1976), Spiegelberg mentions Stoker among "at least two" of Scheler's students who "deserve special mention," referring to "the South African philosopher Hendrik G. Stoker, [who] prepared a noteworthy monograph on conscience considered primarily as the expression of the evil in man, a study which Scheler himself recommended particularly for its phenomenological insights."¹ Again, in reviewing the development of the phenomenological movement internationally, Spiegelberg mentions that "South Africa is noteworthy chiefly in connection with Scheler's influence on H. G. Stoker at the University of Potchefstroom in the Transvaal."²

Scheler himself observes in his preface to *Das Gewissen* that Stoker's work not only takes complete account of the existing German works on conscience, but it is also "the most analytically incisive and pene-

trating, . . . exhibits the greatest breadth," and is "the most complete . . . because it tackles the problem simultaneously from the points of view of psychology of language, essential and descriptive phenomenology, onto- and phylo-genetics, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion." He continues: "What is best and most beneficial in his presentation may be his earnest struggle for a living and immediate grasp of conscience. . . . With distinguished mastery of the methods of essential-phenomenological analysis, the author lays bare the vital nerve of conscience."³ Then, remarking on Stoker's Calvinist South African background, Scheler writes:

The origins of the author in the religious and cultural milieu of Dutch-Afrikaner Calvinism undoubtedly predispose him to a high degree to an investigation of an inner personal faculty such as conscience. Perhaps nowhere in the world has this introspective penchant been experienced in such purity, rigor, power, and depth as it has, in the best times, in that religious and Christian heroism that the history of religion attaches to the name of Calvin. A distinct feeling of this kind permeates the author's analysis and his attitude toward life and the world, which is as austere as it is magisterial, and it is bound up almost exclusively with God in the inner powers of his mind. No matter how one may be inclined to appraise this prodigious historical ethos, it serves to provide a particularly favorable disposition for purposes of investigating the phenomena of conscience. . . .

. . . Professor Stoker's thorough and deeply penetrating treatment of these problems, which most of the relevant current works of psychology and hitherto existing monographs have treated in a completely inadequate way, constitutes a significant landmark for all further research.⁴

Again, in his 1926 preface to the third edition of his own work, *Formalism in Ethics*, Scheler comments on how his own writings have been elaborated upon and deepened, but in a manner different from Nicolai Hartmann's, by his South African student, Stoker. *Das Gewissen*, he says, has been "very well received by critical readers" and represents "the

most precise and minute analysis on the phenomenon of conscience that we have today," and it "has also been recognized on various occasions by eminent critics."⁵

Heidegger, in a section of *Being and Time* entitled "The Existential-Ontological Foundations of Conscience," mentions the interpretations of conscience found in Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and suggests that one also should take note of the treatments by Martin Kähler, Albrecht Ritschl, and Stoker. Never generous in his praise of anyone who fails to plumb the depths of the "ontological roots" of phenomena according to his own particular "existential interpretation," Heidegger nevertheless praises Stoker's work in his typical back-handed way:

This is a wide-ranging investigation; it brings to light a rich multiplicity of conscience-phenomena, characterizes critically the different possible ways of treating this phenomenon itself, and lists some further literature, though as regards the history of the concept of conscience, this list is not complete. Stoker's monograph differs from the existential interpretation we have given above in its approach and accordingly in its results as well, regardless of many points of agreement. . . . Stoker's monograph signifies notable progress as compared with previous interpretations of conscience, though more by its comprehensive treatment of the conscience-phenomena and their ramifications than by exhibiting the ontological roots of the phenomenon itself.⁶

It is notable that in a dissertation submitted jointly to the University of Montreal and the Sorbonne in Paris, entitled "Conscience and Attestation: The Methodological Role of the 'Call of Conscience' (*Gewissensruf*) in Heidegger's *Being and Time*" (2011), Gregor B. Kasowski claims that Heidegger never once described conscience as a "call" before reading Stoker's *Das Gewissen* in 1925. His dissertation examines specifically how Stoker's phenomenology contributed to shaping Heidegger's account of the "existential call."⁷

Despite this evidence of early recognition and esteem for Stoker's work, surprisingly little attention has been paid to Stoker's *Das Gewissen* since the 1920s. Indeed, there is a distinct lacuna in the lit-

erature of phenomenology on Stoker's treatment of conscience. There is no mention whatsoever of Stoker, for example, in David Stewart and Algis Mickunas's *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and Its Literature* (1974), the 764-page *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* edited by Lester Embree (1997), Robert Sokolowski's *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000), or Dermot Moran's sizeable *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000).⁸ In fact, one is hard-pressed to find even a passing reference to Stoker in philosophical, psychological, or theological literature outside of a small circle of Dutch Calvinist writers. This is extremely unfortunate. Yet the reasons for this lacuna in contemporary scholarship, beyond the general waning of interest in phenomenology and the intuitive phenomenological approach embraced by both Stoker and Scheler, may become clearer in the course of examining Stoker's personal background.

Stoker's background

Hendrik G. Stoker (1889–1993) was born in the Boer Republic of Transvaal in South Africa at the beginning of the devastating Second Anglo–Boer War (1899–1902), and he grew up among the defeated Boers under British colonial rule. He belonged to the Afrikaner branch of the Dutch Calvinist tradition that took root among the Dutch immigrants of South Africa.⁹ He was first sent to the Deutche Schule in Johannesburg, then in 1916 to the Potchefstroom Gimnasium and the Reformed (Calvinist) Theological School in Potchefstroom, which eventually grew into Potchefstroom University, from which he graduated in 1919 just after the First World War. J. D. du Toit (Toitus), the celebrated military chaplain with the Boer Commandos who became rector of the Theological School and later chancellor of the university, was well acquainted with the philosophical climate of the Netherlands, having earned his doctorate at the Calvinist-founded Free University of Amsterdam, and he advised Stoker to study at the Free University, providing him with funding.¹⁰ After earning his master's degree from the University of South Africa in 1921, Stoker therefore resolved to complete his graduate studies at the Free University. He had hoped to study with the celebrated Dutch Reformed theologian

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), but by the time Stoker arrived in The Hague in 1922, Bavinck had already died. At a loss regarding his further study options, Stoker sought the advice of S. O. Los, a student who was finishing up his own dissertation that year. Los referred Stoker to the respected philosopher D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, who was then serving as a minister in The Hague.¹¹ This referral was propitious. Vollenhoven had been advised himself by the Dutch anthropologist F. J. J. Buytendijk in 1920 to go to Germany to study under the psychologist Felix Krueger in Leipzig. Buytendijk in turn advised Stoker to go to Germany and study under Scheler in Cologne. These connections were quite natural: like Scheler, Buytendijk was a phenomenologist and, like Stoker, a Calvinist,¹² and he taught at the Free University from 1914 to 1925 before converting to Catholicism in 1937.¹³ Scheler, for his part, was widely regarded as the leading philosopher of Europe between the world wars, although his influence has waned since.¹⁴ It was therefore no small thing that Stoker was able to pursue his doctorate under someone of Scheler's philosophical stature between the wars.¹⁵

Stoker tells us something about the appalling conditions in which the German people lived during this period, making them easy prey for the National Socialists, a development that helped precipitate the Second World War (1939–45).¹⁶ The turbulent effects of the war years were also felt in South Africa, where Stoker had taught since 1925. Great Britain's call for her colonial subjects to take up arms against Germany met with resistance from many Afrikaners who nursed bitter memories of British brutality during their conquest of the Boer Republics and their formation of the colonial Union of South Africa as a British dominion in 1910. Native Afrikaners demonstrated their defiance in 1939 by organizing an anti-British organization with pro-German sympathies called the *Ossewabrandwag*.¹⁷ Stoker was a captain within the organization and was imprisoned in the Koffiefontein internment camp for a year, ostensibly because of opposition to the pro-British policies of Prime Minister Jan Smuts. Stoker and his fellow inmates reportedly made the best of their imprisonment, forming a "Camp University," of which he was appointed rector.¹⁸

Stoker was a product of difficult times and had to navigate his way among significant rival ideologies and worldviews and philosophically justify his positions so as to offer guidance to others. These were not

innocent theoretical concerns but all-too-real challenges, namely, the British imperialism that led to the Anglo-Boer Wars; German National Socialism that clashed with Anglo-American liberalism during the Second World War; the republican nationalist struggle for freedom from British colonial rule in Africa; not to mention the ideology of apartheid that was official policy in South Africa until 1994.¹⁹ Some today might be tempted to say that Stoker found himself in certain respects on “the wrong side of history.” Nevertheless, throughout these historical upheavals, the hardships of his wartime internment, the ideological challenges he faced, and the academic projects he undertook, Stoker’s single most abiding commitment throughout his career was to his religious faith as a son of the Reformed Church in South Africa. This was what sustained him. This was the lens through which he saw and understood his own life and work. Even his purely theoretical work, which was primarily methodological and concerned with systematically establishing philosophical first principles and foundations for various disciplines, is intelligible only in this light. His adaptation of Scheler’s phenomenological method to a Christian perspective is but one example of this.²⁰

Stoker and the Calvinist philosophical tradition

Stoker clearly belongs to the Dutch Calvinist philosophical tradition, yet his place in that tradition is not easy to assess.

On the one hand, it is clear that he is an important thinker. He has been called “one of the three fathers of a Reformational Philosophy” (“*een van die drie vaders van ’n reformatoriese filosofie*”) alongside the internationally known Dutch neo-Calvinist philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.²¹ Like the latter two thinkers, Stoker was born, nurtured, and educated in a Calvinist environment, albeit in a South African milieu. He followed closely the developments of Reformed philosophy in the Netherlands, exhibiting his critical appreciation of his colleagues’ work at the Free University.²² He served on the editorial board of the new movement’s philosophical journal, *Philosophia Reformata*, in its early years. Throughout his teaching career he embraced the ideal of theorizing from a Christian perspective.²³ His

courteous criticisms of Dooyeweerd's "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea," along with his development of his own version of Christian philosophy, which he first called "Theistic Philosophy" and later "The Philosophy of the Creation Idea," are clearly the product of an independent thinker—not to mention his numerous taxonomical neologisms coined for philosophical use,²⁴ or his contention that values and events represent distinct dimensions of reality, or his deep reflections on the methods of science.²⁵ The importance of his philosophy for theology has been specifically noted.²⁶ His legacy has been described as nothing short of profound.²⁷ He was invited to lecture at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1963, at a number of American institutions in 1973, received the Stals Prize for Philosophy from the South African Academy for Science and Art in 1964, was made honorary professor at Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg) in 1970, and was granted an honorary doctorate by Potchefstroom University in 1971.²⁸

On the other hand, it is no less clear that Stoker's work has been nevertheless overlooked, if not almost forgotten. In this respect, his professional fate is not unlike that of his German mentor Scheler, whose work has also been largely eclipsed by other thinkers and movements since his death. Indeed, given the depth and substantial nature of his work, the lacuna of scholarship on Stoker, especially among scholars interested in the phenomenological movement or in the Calvinist philosophical tradition, is remarkable. The South African scholar B. J. Van der Walt devotes the entire first section of his excellent 2013 article "Stoker as a Christian Philosopher" to the question why Stoker's philosophy remains relatively unknown and without much apparent influence.²⁹ Among the reasons he discusses (together with others), I think the most important fall into four groups.

1. *Stoker's relative isolation in South Africa.* Stoker remained his whole life in South Africa. Most of his writings remain untranslated in Afrikaans. He spent his entire career teaching at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, a parochial institution associated with the Boer nationalist movement in the Transvaal.³⁰ His work in South Africa has unfortunately sometimes been treated too dismissively as little more than a "Dutch export," or a backwater adaptation of the "Amsterdam Philosophy" of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.³¹ For

these reasons and others, his work has not received much attention even in South Africa. Few of his original students are still living. Biographical treatments of Stoker are inadequate, given the limited scope of the sketches by Van Dijk and Stellingwerff, Klapwijk, and Raath.³² There are only three dissertations on his work—by Malan, Schutte, and Kasowski.³³ And, even after the appearance of an international festschrift honoring him,³⁴ there were only two unpublished theses—that of his grandson, H. G. Stoker, Jr., and M. F. Van der Walt.³⁵ Students found his style and vocabulary cumbersome, calling him “the bracketing philosopher,”³⁶ and some of his traditional Afrikaner social and political views are easy to dismiss as out of step with the times.³⁷

2. *Waning interest in phenomenology.* Although Stoker's *Das Gewissen* was received with acclaim when published, and his mentor Scheler was in the heyday of his renown as the best-known philosopher in all of Europe, the phenomenological approach embraced by both men has been eclipsed largely by changing trends and styles of philosophy. Scheler himself remains comparatively unknown today due to a number of factors, including not only the wartime Nazi suppression of his work but also the postwar ascent of Heideggerian existentialism and its repudiation of all philosophies of value,³⁸ the dwindling support for intuitionist approaches, and growing European interest in Anglo-American forms of analytic philosophy. Stoker has fallen victim to these trends along with Scheler.

3. *Waning interest in Christian philosophy.* The rapid secularization of academia in the West has led to generally decreasing interest in Christian approaches to philosophy like Stoker's.³⁹ This trend is reflected in most colleges and universities with historical religious affiliations, including Stoker's own, where the role of Christian perspectives in the curriculum declined until 2005, when the institution was merged with others to form a new, secular institution under the name of North-West University.⁴⁰ This trend can also be seen in the diminishing interest among students and scholars from Reformed backgrounds in the legacy of neo-Calvinist thinkers such as Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, a trend that unfortunately also erodes incentive for examining a work such as Stoker's *Das Gewissen*.

4. *Calvinist disagreements over Stoker.* This factor is more of an in-house problem within the Afrikaner and Dutch Reformed community, but it has had significant consequences for the reception of Stoker's work within (and by influence, beyond) that community and therefore bears examining.

Stoker is generally classified as a member of the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition of philosophy laying claim to the worldview and legacy of the prolific scholar and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), who was also prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905. As such, Stoker can be said to belong, like the neo-Calvinist philosophers Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, to one of the few Christian traditions outside of the Catholic world to have its own substantial philosophical movement.

Beyond this, however, the question of classification becomes more challenging. Those laying claim to the neo-Calvinist legacy of Kuyper include not only members of the “Reformational” school pioneered by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven in the 1920s, but also others such as those affiliated with the movement of “Reformed Epistemology” identified with Alvin Plantinga (at Notre Dame) and his followers since the 1960s. “Neo-Calvinists,” in turn, are a subset of “Reformed” thinkers, with the latter representing a broad spectrum of Calvinist views, including even a tradition of “Reformed Scholasticism.”⁴¹ Any affiliation with Scholasticism, however, poses major problems for Reformational thinkers, who aim to purge their ideas of any residue of “synthesis” with ideas alien to the biblical or Reformational Christian tradition, whether Greek, medieval, or modern. Thus, Dooyeweerd, in a 1939 essay on Kuyper's philosophy of science, distinguishes between “Reformational” and “Scholastic” currents in Kuyper's thought, promoting the former and criticizing the latter.⁴² For Reformational philosophers, not only is any influence of Reformed Scholasticism problematic but so is the influence of any non-Reformational “synthesis thinking” of any kind.

For this reason, members of the Reformational philosophy movement pioneered by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven sometimes demur at classifying Stoker as a Reformational thinker, despite his role in the movement. Why? The nub of the problem has to do principally with two major influences on Stoker—that of the Dutch Calvinist theologian

Herman Bavinck, and that of Scheler—both of which pose more or less unique problems for Reformational neo-Calvinists.⁴³

Bavinck's Scholastic influence

Bavinck (like Kuyper) was a household name in the early twentieth century among Afrikaners, just as in Holland, and shaped Stoker's worldview even before he went to Europe. Stoker developed his early philosophical thinking along lines suggested by Bavinck, as there was not yet an established Christian philosophy such as Dooyeweerd or Vollenhoven would later develop.⁴⁴ Part of Bavinck's appeal may have been his combination of traditional Calvinism with an expansive view of Christianity and the church, which called on people to involve themselves in renewing the world around them with a biblical idea of religion as a central response of the heart to God's all-pervasive revelation.⁴⁵

Bavinck, despite being an eminent Calvinist theologian, nevertheless has been thought to have had contaminating traces of Thomistic Scholasticism in his thought. Thus in the writing of Reformational scholars concerned about such influences in a fellow Calvinist like Bavinck, one often finds a number of recurring catchwords signaling concern for the author's Reformational integrity, such as "neo-Scholasticism," "logos speculation," "substance-thinking," "nature-grace dualism," *analogia entis*, and the like. It is often hard for an outsider to see what the problem exactly is, but from a Reformational perspective it is often viewed as quite damning, and a number of critics have alleged similar "Scholastic" influences in Stoker's thought, ostensibly through Bavinck's influence. Even an adequate discussion of these issues (and the seemingly interminable arguments back and forth) lies well beyond the scope of this introduction, but it may be said that one basic concern seems to be that there is a biblically untenable notion of the "self-sufficiency" of creation and of the "autonomy of reason" allegedly suggested by the Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysical framework and tradition, which influenced Stoker through Bavinck.⁴⁶ Stoker does indeed address the metaphysical aspect of conscience and other phenomena with which he deals in terms of their "substance" or "being" (or

their “ontical” dimensions—a term he prefers), which he considers fundamentally necessary for an authentic understanding of their creaturely mode of existence, but he would reply that this in no way entails either a “self-sufficient” view of nature or an “autonomous” view of reason. Yet despite the fact that Stoker and others have repeatedly countered these sorts of allegations, they nevertheless seem to have stuck.⁴⁷ Stoker’s position within the Reformed tradition remains, thus, a matter of continuing debate.

The influence of Scheler’s “irrationalist” phenomenology

Scheler’s influence is likewise seen as problematic because of certain assumptions believed to underlie his phenomenological method and concern about how far these may have influenced Stoker’s own qualified version of that method.⁴⁸ These include the following: (1) ironically, the presumption of “presuppositionlessness” underlying Scheler’s notion of “essential intuition” (*Wesensschau*), which he shared with Edmund Husserl; (2) the identification of an independent realm of mentally intuited and hypostatized “value-essences” alongside and distinct from the realm of concrete events, things, and individual and social structures; and (3) a current of “irrationalism” underlying Scheler’s phenomenological approach, including his insistence that values are the primary phenomena of intentional “value-feeling” (*Wertgefühl*) and cannot even be apprehended by reason. The first is seen as not only untenable but incompatible with Stoker’s own position that theoretical neutrality is impossible. The second is dismissed as a species of unsupported phenomenological essentialism.⁴⁹ The third—since it involves, among other things, not merely the recognition of nonrational, emotional ways of knowing (which is readily admitted), but the claim that these are completely cut off from reason in the manner of Pascal’s “logic of the heart,” which has “its reasons of which reason knows nothing”—is criticized as an untenable form of “irrationalism.”⁵⁰ Although Stoker does indeed embrace a form of the phenomenological method, a form of essential intuition, and a certain primacy of the emotional over the rational in our *experience* of a bad conscience, he carefully adapts Scheler’s insights to his own Calvinist perspective, and he demonstrably

holds no irrationalist view of “value-feeling,” since he refuses to isolate emotion from reason. Yet despite the fact that Stoker countered most of these allegations with carefully reasoned responses, they nevertheless also seem to have stuck, probably because the disagreements pertain to deeper-level commitments concerning philosophical approach.⁵¹

There is certainly no question that Stoker was influenced by Scheler, as he was by Bavinck, but it should not be supposed that he adopted his ideas uncritically without due consideration from his Calvinist perspective. Stoker was not a mere imitator, but an independent thinker, maintaining his distance from Scheler on certain questions and resisting certain assumptions he found unacceptable.⁵² Accordingly, a sympathetic reader of *Das Gewissen* may very well find that concerns about Stoker tending toward “irrationalism” or a presuppositionless “neutralism” in his philosophy seem a bit alarmist and overwrought, just as do concerns about the nefarious influence of Bavinck’s “Scholasticism” and “substance-thinking” on him. In fact, even though it may do little to allay the concerns of many Reformational thinkers, Stoker’s approach to Scheler’s phenomenology of values, and his willingness to incorporate basic metaphysical ideas of “being” and “substance” into his own approach, in many ways appears to independently confirm many of the critically circumspect yet appreciative assessments of Scheler, and of phenomenology generally, found in the Catholic tradition.⁵³

Stoker’s analysis of conscience

Stoker himself offers a partial summary of *Das Gewissen* in English, entitled “A Phenomenology of Conscience”⁵⁴ (which omits entirely his elegant linguistic and historical survey of the concept), but a brief analysis may be helpful to the reader, based on the three basic problems identified by Stoker: What is conscience? How does it originate? Is it reliable?⁵⁵ In his English summary, he treats only the first question, but in what follows we will cover briefly all three.

1. *What is conscience?* Stoker begins by contrasting the profound role conscience plays in ordinary experience with the confusing variety of scholarly opinions about it, and he asks, “Why the confusion?” He suggests as possible reasons the difficulty of conceptually grasping a

phenomenon so profoundly interior and spiritual, the haphazard development of our language about it, and the ideological straitjacketing of our understanding of it by various theories. Such difficulties, he maintains, underscore the need for a meticulous, descriptive phenomenological approach to determine exactly *what* we experience in conscience. Such an approach must employ, he says, not logical or scientific abstractions, but intuitive means of distinguishing essential from accidental characteristics of conscience. It also requires isolating and minimizing any distorting prejudices. Describing an essence (like “greenness”) is difficult, since it cannot be directly defined but only indirectly circumscribed by metaphors or analogies. The same is true of an experience like “guilt.” We must allow the experienced phenomenon itself to guide the process of description. The approach may initially seem logically circuitous or tautological (x is not a, not b, not c, etc.), but intuitively it is inductively illuminating.

Stoker rejects out of hand as improper candidates for what we mean by “conscience”: (1) abstractions like “the nineteenth-century conscience”; (2) a person’s moral character; or (3) mere moral awareness. The first is too amorphous; the second and third involve judgments about people that may have nothing to do with conscience. More credible candidates include (4) moral knowledge, (5) moral willing or inclination, and (6) moral feeling. He classifies the latter three types of theories, respectively, as *rationalist* (subdivided into *intellectualist* and *intuitivist*), *voluntarist*, and *emotionalist*, corresponding to their view of conscience as residing, respectively, in (1) moral inferences and moral intuitions, (2) moral volitions and inclinations, and (3) moral feelings.

Moral knowledge is presupposed by conscience, says Stoker, but not identical to it, because we can know the morality of our deeds without experiencing conscience.⁵⁶ Scholasticism stresses the intellectual element in conscience, he says, whereas moral sense theorists and phenomenology take an intuitivist view. Among the latter, however, neither Scheler, nor Hartmann, nor Hildebrand identifies moral knowledge with conscience. They correctly identify knowledge as an *element* in it, but not as its essence. If moral knowledge were conscience, suggests Stoker, the history of literature could never have yielded such tortured characters as Macbeth and Raskolnikov.⁵⁷

Moral willing or inclination are also involved in conscience, says Stoker, and they help to explain the sense of moral responsibility we feel for our actions. They cannot be identified with conscience, however, because they, too, can be experienced without the least stirring of conscience. Conscience requires the further recognition of evil in oneself. Scholastic theories about our innate sense of morality (*synteresis*) emphasize this voluntarist aspect of conscience.

Moral feeling is also present in conscience, though, again, not identical to it. Pharisaical feelings of moral self-worth, for example, are not remotely related to conscience. By contrast, the feeling that our own moral welfare is at stake in our real or possible moral guilt is essential to conscience. Moral feeling, especially that involving *bad* conscience, is therefore the most profound and penetrating manifestation of conscience, according to Stoker. It is in this connection with the moral feelings associated with bad conscience, furthermore, that Stoker's descriptive powers are most acute and compelling—in his analysis of our experience of guilt, the gnawing sense of isolation, alienation, shame, remorse, fear of being found out, and anger toward ourselves.

Is such an experience of conscience normal or abnormal, healthy or pathological? Certainly the experience of it is unpleasant and resists repression. Those who try to understand it within a naturalistic framework (biology, psychology, sociology), like Darwin, Bain, Freud, or Nietzsche, consider conscience a pathological aberration. By contrast, from a religious standpoint (Calvin, Newman, Scheler), it appears eminently—if terrifyingly—sane, even when the experience of guilt does not explicitly presuppose religious awareness.

This raises the question: *To whom does the guilty person feel responsible?* Stoker demonstrates in detail that it cannot be oneself, one's family, friends, society, or the state. Alleviation of real guilt requires not therapy but punishment or forgiveness. Following Scheler, Stoker suggests that conscience implies a transcendent Judge who summons us to account, and he describes this summons, expressed by conscience, as *theal* (from the Greek *theos* for "God"), implying an immediate relatedness to God that need not be necessarily religious. Conscience is essentially *prereligious*, he says, but finds its loftiest expression and fulfillment in religion. It is ultimately an emotional experience, but it involves

moral knowledge, will, and aspirations permeating the depths of moral character and personality.

2. *How does it arise?* Skeptics point to the lack of complete uniformity in judgments of conscience as evidence of its relativity and its genesis by natural evolutionary processes. Stoker allows that conscience does develop in both individuals and communities, but only within clear limits. He distinguishes four types of development: (1) *momento-genetic* (instantaneous) and (2) *psycho-genetic* (gradual)—both within the individual; and (3) *phylo-genetic*, within the species, and (4) *bio-genetic*, from lower to higher species.

Conscience proper, as a real internal announcement of personal evil, says Stoker, only appears suddenly (*momento-genetically*), when we become aware of our guilt. Improperly understood (as moral will or knowledge), however, conscience may be thought to develop by gradual formation (*psycho-genetically*), but the acquisition of moral knowledge or faculty of moral volition is not the same thing as the stirring of conscience, which is always sudden. By the same token, conscience cannot properly be thought to arise within a species (*phylo-genetically*) as such, much less via evolution (*bio-genetically*) from lower life forms. Conscience proper always arises suddenly through experience of one's own moral culpability.

Stoker examines at length the *bio-genetic* claims of evolutionists like Darwin, along with the equally reductionist theories of Bain, Mill, Nietzsche, Rée, and Spencer. He relies on the research of Buytendijk to show that human beings exhibit subject-object awareness and are not completely immersed in their milieu like animals. He shows that Köhler's chimpanzees don't grasp the meaning of their punishment but only the practical effect; that evolutionists conflate emotional infection and projection with moral sympathy or conscience; that Nietzsche's attempt to explain conscience as stemming from resentment (*ressentiment*) reads into conscience something that is external to it; and that each of these theories in some way commits the reductionist fallacy.

3. *Is it reliable?* Stoker distinguishes conscience in (1) its proper sense of a real internal disclosure of personal evil from (2) its secondary sense as a deposit of insight into the good. The former is objectively infallible, provided we locate it, he says, not in the objectively correct

detection of evil, but in the awareness of our subjective consent to what we perceive as evil.⁵⁸ The latter is fallible, though it remains subjectively absolute and binding in the sense that we can never inculpably oppose it. Stoker compares the patristic and Scholastic distinction between *synteresis* and *conscientia* with positions within his own Reformed tradition, touching, for example, upon the theory of Valentin Hepp. Even though conscience is not directly educable, according to Stoker, we have a duty to examine and form our conscience (indirectly) via our intellect, intuition, and will.

Remarks concerning the translation

Throughout the translation, I have made it my principal objective to keep faith with the meaning of the author's text. Thus, I have endeavored to achieve a rendering that is as literal as possible without compromising the readability of the English translation. Such an objective invariably requires use of the principle of dynamic equivalence with the aim of expressing as naturally as possible in English the equivalent meaning of the German text. Inevitably this entails making certain compromises. I have avoided using terms that seem excessively awkward in English, such as "logicize" and "intellectualize," even if this meant occasionally more circumlocutious renderings. Take, for example, the following sentence: "*In der wissenschaftlichen Sprache ist die Logisierung der Volkssprache notwendig.*" Translating this rigidly might result in this ungainly sentence: "The logicizing of the vernacular language is necessary in scientific language." Instead, therefore, I translated it thus: "For the sake of scientific clarity it is necessary to recast the vernacular in terms that are logically more precise," which I think is not only more readable but substantially preserves the meaning of the original.

In other cases, I have kept closer to Stoker's language, using English cognates of his terms even where they may strike the English reader as a bit awkward. One example is where Stoker distinguishes four types of theories of conscience—*Intellektualismus*, *Intuitionismus*, *Voluntarismus*, and *Emotionalismus*. Here some awkwardness seems unavoidable, and I translate these, accordingly, as "intellectualism,"

"intuitionism," "voluntarism," and "emotionalism," along with their adjectival cognates, "intellectualistic" or "intellectualist," and so on. Another example is where Stoker uses the term "psychological" (*psychologisch*) as a contrast to "logical" (*logisch*), as when he describes language as not developing "logically" but "psychologically." I can imagine this could seem awkward and even a bit confusing to English readers, and it is tempting to express the sense of Stoker's text by rendering "psychologically developed" language as "organically evolved," which in my opinion better communicates the intended meaning in the original context. Yet I have retained the original "psychological," on the advice of Danie Strauss, for the sake of faithfulness to the text and also because Stoker elsewhere uses "organic" in a nonpsychological, biological sense.

Some liberties I have taken with the text include changing certain nouns and pronouns to conform to current conventions in academic English. For example, I usually translated *Wissenschaft* (singular) as "sciences" (plural), since it is more common today to distinguish social sciences (like psychology) from natural sciences (like biology), rather than refer monolithically to "science" without differentiation. In certain contexts I also found that "theoretical" served better than "scientific" as a translation of *wissenschaftlich*. Except where Stoker quotes other authors within his text, I also took similar liberties in order to avoid irritating contemporary aversions to gender-inclusive use of third-person-singular masculine pronouns ("he," "him," "his"), thereby removing what would otherwise present an unfortunate obstacle to many readers today, despite the change in tone this introduces into Stoker's traditional usage and some compelling arguments against the practice.⁵⁹ I had to draw a line, however, at such philistine infelicities as "a human being is not an end in themselves," or "Godself" as a substitute for masculine pronouns for God, which violate all canons of sane logic, good grammar, and good taste.

A unique problem was posed by the German term *Drang*, which is sometimes translated as "urge," "impulse," or "drive." It would have been tempting to use the most natural sounding of these alternatives in English and translate *Drang* as "impulse," so that *Drang des Gewissens* could be rendered quite naturally as "impulse of conscience," or *böse Drang* as "evil impulse." But Stoker explicitly distinguishes *Drang*

(as insightful and enduring) from *Impuls* (as blind and momentary),⁶⁰ eliminating that option. Another alternative is “drive,” which seems to gain support because Stoker himself translates it as “driving force” in his English essay “A Phenomenological Analysis of Conscience.”⁶¹ The difficulty with “drive,” however, is that it not only sounds a bit strained in English (the “drive” of conscience?), but that elsewhere Stoker also contrasts *Drang* with “drive” because, like “instinct,” “drive” generally connotes a motive power that is *blind*.⁶² “Inclination” might seem to be a serviceable and natural alternative, particularly because of its ease of use in English, but Stoker also dismisses this option because “inclination is always a passive disposition, whereas the motive of conscience is intentional and active.”⁶³ The term “impulsion” would seem to express the actively intentionality resident in Stoker’s use of *Drang*, but it seems altogether too contrived and laden with mechanical connotations to be serviceable in the context of conscience. “Conation” (Lat. *conatus*) might also serve, but it is too broad conceptually, has fallen out of use, and is listed among the “1000 most obscure words in the English language.”⁶⁴ As a result, I have settled on “urge” as the best, if not ideal, translation for *Drang*. The “urge” or “urgings” of conscience, and also good and evil “urges,” are at least readily understandable and clearly express the conative force of *Drang* as used by Stoker. All one has to bear in mind is that it is an insightful, intentionally directed “urge.”

Another challenging term used by Stoker is *ontische* (from the Greek *ὄν*, “entity”; genitive *ὄντος*, “of that which is”), which is usually translated as “ontic” or “ontical.” His usage is not exactly that of the well-known idiom of Heidegger, however, who contrasts the “ontical” (signifying concrete, specific realities) with the “ontological” (signifying deeper underlying structures of reality). Rather, Stoker seems to conflate both of these meanings, to some extent, in his use of “ontical,” which he employs to refer to entities and facts about them, and to that which is fundamentally real as opposed to merely phenomenally apparent. He also seems to want to avoid the connotations of theoretical reflection (in “onto-logical”) and also the sense of groundless speculation sometimes associated with “metaphysical.” “Ontical” has for Stoker the sense of that which is most interior, essential, and basic in the nature of a person or thing. In some contexts, where the emphasis

is more on a subject's *experience* than on objective structures of reality, as when Stoker uses the term to refer to a person's *feelings*, it might have been more natural to substitute the term "existential," and refer to "existential feelings" rather than "ontical feelings" without thereby doing violence to the author's intended meaning. I have nevertheless retained Stoker's use of "ontical," again at the suggestion of Danie Strauss, because of the importance Stoker seems to attach to the term.

Other changes were made in the arrangement of the text to make the English translation more user-friendly. Some things in the body of the text were moved into the notes, including parenthetical "asides." Longer quotations in Latin, Greek, or other foreign languages were also moved to the notes, and English translations substituted for them in the body of the text. In a number of passages, where Stoker directly quotes an author without indicating whom he is quoting except in a footnote, I took the liberty of introducing the quotation by means of interpolations: "as Nietzsche writes," "Freud observes," and so on. Excessively long paragraphs have been subdivided according to natural thematic breaks, and some unnecessarily short ones (e.g., at the beginning of chapter 10) have been consolidated into a single paragraph. Foreign terms have been generally placed in parentheses, with transliterations or English translations inserted preceding them. Some names of patristic and medieval authors unfamiliar to contemporary readers have been Anglicized and standardized for easier recognition—for example, "Hieronymus" has been changed to "St. Jerome." Where I found parenthetical remarks or changes in font size in the original text that did not suggest a break in thought with the surrounding context, I simply removed the parentheses, standardized the font size, and incorporated the remarks into the body of the text for a smoother flow. Errors in punctuation, spelling, personal names, or titles of books in the original text have been corrected without indication, unless otherwise noted, but only after painstaking verification, including the insertion of first names of authors mentioned where missing.

Stoker's citation and documentation style has been also modified to conform to current American academic style. I have eliminated redundancies in the notes, such as reiterations of full publication data, and have adopted our publisher's recommendation of notes with shortened citations coordinated with a comprehensive bibliography. Multiple note

references within single sentences have been consolidated into single notes at the end of sentences or paragraphs. My own notes, and my remarks within Stoker's notes, have been placed within brackets to distinguish them from Stoker's. Numerous corrections within Stoker's notes and bibliographical data, however, have been made without notice, including the insertion of complete names of authors, titles cited, place of publication, and such, which have all been provided in full in the attached bibliography. In some cases, as seemed appropriate, more recent still-in-print editions of works cited by Stoker have been included in the notes and bibliography for the reader's convenience. Translations from Stoker's quoted material are my own unless indicated otherwise. Also, some of Stoker's chapter titles have been altered to make them more concise and descriptive.⁶⁵

Acknowledgments

Several months after completing my doctoral dissertation on Max Scheler, I received from Hendrik G. Stoker, with whom I had been corresponding, a letter, dated December 13, 1985, in which he wrote: "My work—'*Das Gewissen*'—has not yet been translated into English and I would really appreciate it if you would undertake this translation." At the time, I had not yet read his work, but I was aware of the high regard for it among a number of scholars in the field of phenomenology with whom I was familiar, so I told Stoker that I was interested in taking on the project. It has taken me three decades to find the time necessary to complete the project, but thanks to a sabbatical granted to me in the fall semester of 2013, I have been able to finally keep my promise to Stoker. *Deo gratias!*

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to all those who have rendered assistance to me throughout this translation project.

To the late Professor Stoker himself for encouraging me to undertake the translation of *Das Gewissen* through our personal correspondence in 1985, but also to his son, Pieter Stoker of the School of Physics and Chemical Sciences of the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University, for his kind permission, on behalf of the estate of Stoker and his surviving family, for me to translate and publish his father's work,

and to Stoker's grandson, Henk Stoker, of the Faculty of Theology at the same institution, for permission on behalf of the extended Stoker family for the use of their photograph of the young Stoker from his student days in this publication.

To the staff at the University of Notre Dame Press, acquisitions coordinator Robyn Karkiewicz, acquisitions editor Stephen Little, managing editor Rebecca DeBoer, copyeditor Scott Barker, and manuscript editor Matthew Dowd for their patient assistance and expertise in expediting the publication of this work; to Thomas Grundmann of Bouvier-Verlag for help in obtaining German copyright permissions; and to Eugene Kelly of the Department of Social Science, New York Institute of Technology, and Danie Strauss of the School of Philosophy, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, for their review of the manuscript and many helpful suggestions; and to Strauss for his kind assistance in securing a generous grant of financial assistance through his offices at North-West University in South Africa.

To the administration of Lenoir-Rhyne University, particularly Robert Spuller, former academic dean, for a summer research grant in 2000 (which I spent in Washington, DC, researching Stoker's extensive bibliographical sources), a reduced teaching load in the spring semester of 2003, and a sabbatical leave in the fall semester of 2006, during which I completed a substantial part of the translation project; and to the administration of Sacred Heart Major Seminary, particularly Msgr. Todd Lajiness, rector, and Fr. Timothy Laboe, academic dean, for their generous grant of a sabbatical leave in the fall semester of 2013 to complete the project.

To the library staffs of Lenoir-Rhyne University, particularly Burl McCuiston; Catholic University of America; the Library of Congress; and the Cardinal Szoka Library of Sacred Heart Major Seminary, especially Christopher Spilker, Mark Hornbacher, and Norma Forbes, for their tireless efforts and frequent detective work in securing often obscure monographs and articles in various languages.

To the late great Manfred S. Frings, and also Eugene Kelly, Gabrielle Weinberger, Werner Schultz, Kent Matthews, Marshall Bradley, Jochen and Amica Ewe, and especially Chase Fauchaux for their help with various German colloquialisms and difficult passages in the primary text; to Eduardo Echeverria for his assistance with a few passages in

Dutch and Afrikaans; to Bohdan B. Kuropas for assistance with translating several French passages; to John Blakey and Edgar Foster for help with both Latin and Greek, and to Edward Peters for additional help with several nettlesome Latin passages; and to Victor Salas for help in deciphering the abbreviated Latin primary sources for the works of St. Albertus Magnus cited by Stoker.

To my mentor at Calvin College, the late H. Evan Runner, and my mentor at Duquesne University, the late Lester Embree; my colleagues at Lenoir-Rhyne University: Richard Von Dohlen, J. Larry Yoder, and Robert Winter; my colleagues at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, especially Eduardo Echeverria, Edward Peters, and Victor Salas; my good friends Marshall Bradley, John Timothy Bell, Kirk Kanzelberger, Alex Begin, and Kyle Jennings; my spiritual directors, Fr. Deo Rosales of the Opus Dei Prelature, while in Durham, North Carolina, and Fr. Titus Kieninger of the Canons of the Holy Cross, Fr. John Bustamante and Fr. Eduard Perrone, in Detroit—for their friendship and personal support through various stages of the project.

To our network of close family friends: Eduardo and DonnaRose Echeverria, Nina Bryhn and Bobby Lee, Edward and Margie Laabs, and Colleen and Trevor McInnes, Edward and Angela Peters, Victor and Elizabeth Salas, Darren and Tina Hogan, and all of their respective children, for their loving companionship, long-suffering support, and help with everything from childcare to schoolwork; and to my family, especially Lori, Christopher Eugene Yoshiya, Jonathan Yoshiro, Benjamin Philip, Nathaniel Maas, Amy and Hannah Cabrini, without whose indulgence and support, at various times and various ways, this undertaking would not have been possible. Thank you.

Philip Blosser, Detroit, Michigan
Pentecost, 2015

Notes

1. Spiegelberg, *Phenomenological Movement*, 1:267.
2. Ibid., 2:626 (Spiegelberg has “Potschefstrand” instead of “Potchefstroom”).
3. See Scheler, “Editor’s Foreword” in the present volume.

4. Ibid.
5. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, xxxi–xxxii. For the original German, see Scheler, *Formalismus* (4th ed., 1954), 23–24.
6. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 217nvi; cf. 496–97.
7. Kasowski, “Conscience and Attestation,” 64–70.
8. Stewart and Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology*; Embree, *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*; Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*; Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*.
9. Van der Merwe, “In Memoriam H. G. Stoker,” 95.
10. The Free University of Amsterdam was founded in 1880 by Dutch Calvinists as an institution formally independent (hence “free”) of both church and state. On the Calvinist milieu in South Africa, see Stoker, *Die Stryd*, 274–75; and Van der Walt, “H. G. Stoker,” 54–68.
11. Van der Walt, “Stoker,” 54–68.
12. Buytendijk published a series of four notable articles in November and December 1921 dealing with Scheler and depth psychology, in the journal *De Reformatie, weekblad tot ontwikkeling van het gereformeerde leven*, entitled “Kennnis der Ziele-Diepte” (“The Knowledge of the Soul’s Depth”), “Over het Berouw” (“On Repentance”), “Over het Ressentiment” (“On Ressentiment”), and “De Deemoed” (“On Humility”). Cf. Buytendijk, *De Vrouw*.
13. Beijck and Merwe, “H. G. Stoker as Student,” 502–5.
14. For Scheler’s influence, see Heidegger, “In Memory of Max Scheler,” 59, who hailed him as “the strongest philosophical force” in all of contemporary philosophy; Bochénski, *Contemporary European Philosophy*, 140, who called him “the most brilliant thinker of his day”; Frings, *Max Scheler*, 103, who called his *Formalism in Ethics* one of the most profound, erudite, and ingenious works of philosophy. For his influence on H. G. Gadamer, J. P. Sartre, M. Merleau-Ponty, N. Hartmann, J. Ortega y Gasset, E. Cassirer, M. Buber, J. Maritain, G. Marcel, and R. Ingarden, see Good, *Max Scheler*; Blosser, *Scheler’s Critique*, preface and chap. 1; and see Wojtyła, “Ocena,” for Pope John Paul II’s doctoral dissertation on Scheler. For the waning influence of Scheler and phenomenology, see the discussion below.
15. Stoker’s published correspondence with F. J. J. Buytendijk sheds considerable light on his relationship with Scheler during his years in Cologne, including his respect for Scheler, his concern for Scheler’s marital troubles and defection from Christian theism, references to the authors whom Stoker was then reading, and his great admiration for his South African mentor, du Toit (cf. Beijck and Merwe, “H. G. Stoker as Student,” 501–28).
16. Stoker, *Die Stryd*, 4–5.
17. An older, better-known organization with similar sympathies at the time was the Afrikaner Calvinist secret society, founded in 1918, called the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, dedicated to the proposition that “the Afrikaner Volk has

been planted in this country by the Hand of God" (see Smith, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond*).

18. For a summary of this period, see Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 58–59; for Stoker's views of the Smuts government, security police, and Germany, see Stoker, *Die Stryd*, 270–73; for details on the reasons for Stoker's arrest and his political position, see Van der Schyff, *Wonderdaad!*, 504–5, 520–22; for details about conditions in South Africa during the Second World War, see the anthology edited by Stoker, *Agter tralies en doringdraad*, 1–82, containing contributions by former political prisoners, including a chapter contributed by Stoker himself (306–25).

19. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 1:305–8; 2:237–43; Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 58–59.

20. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 1:305–8; 2:237–43.

21. Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 64.

22. See, for example, Stoker, *Die nuwere wysbegeerte aan die Vrije Universiteit*.

23. Van der Merwe, "In Memoriam H. G. Stoker," 95.

24. Examples include Stoker's use of *idions* (*oeridionne*) for essential creaturely phenomena and *idiostances* (*idiostansie*) for things, so as to avoid problematic nuances of the Scholastic term "substance"; *diafanerotic* (*diafanerotiese*) for his own phenomenological method of sounding the depths of creaturely essences; and *theal* (*teaal*) for the immediate relatedness of all creatures to God; see Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 2:204–5, 212, 216, 263–73; Stoker, *Philosophy of the Creation Idea*, 6, 14, 19, 73–83. See also Stoker's penchant for extensive classifications in "Contingent and Present-Day Western Man," 144–66.

25. See Stoker, *Beginnels*, 1:202n1; Van der Walt, "The Value of Stoker's Methodology," 65–66, 91–92.

26. Heyns, "Betekenis van H. G. Stoker se Filosofie," 455–72.

27. Raath, "*Soli Deo Gloria*," 343–62.

28. Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 58.

29. *Ibid.*, 56–57.

30. To keep matters in historical perspective, it should be remembered that most American Ivy League universities, like Harvard and Yale, also were founded as parochial schools for the training of Protestant pastors.

31. Cf. Stellingwerff, *Geschiedenis van de Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte*.

32. Van Dijk and Stellingwerff, *Perspectief*; Klapwijk, "Honderd Jaar Filosofie aan die Vrije Universiteit," 529–93; Raath, "*Soli Deo Gloria*," 343–62.

33. Malan, '*N Kritiese Studie van die Wysbegeerte van H. G. Stoker*, written under S. U. Zuidema at the Free University, created a stir by criticizing Stoker's philosophy, but is called a "less-than-successful" dissertation by Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 57, cf. 61–62; Schutte, "Die noodwendigheid van Christelike wetenskap"; Kasowski, "Conscience and Attestation."

34. Bingle and Du Plessis, *Truth and Reality*.
35. H. G. Stoker, Jr., "Die Vraagstuk van die Deontologie"; M. F. Van der Walt, "Value of Stoker's Methodology."
36. Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 58.
37. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 1:209–22.
38. Cf. Emad, *Heidegger and the Phenomenology of Values*.
39. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light*. For a specifically Dutch Calvinist philosophical context, cf. Zylstra, "Introduction," 29–32.
40. Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," 56.
41. Van Asselt et al., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*.
42. Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer," 193–232; Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," 153–78.
43. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 2:218–19, 332–36, indicates that the earliest influences in his intellectual formation were the Calvinist theologians Abraham Kuyper, J. Woltjer, Wilhelm Geesink, Valentin Hepp, and especially Herman Bavinck—all of whom have been criticized at one time or other as having certain "Scholastic" elements in their thought. The other major influence during his doctoral studies was his German mentor, Scheler. The influence of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven came later. Van der Walt, "H. G. Stoker," suggests that the two most seminal influences were Bavinck and Scheler.
44. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 2:334.
45. Cf. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*.
46. For example, Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, 2:32; 3:62–76, sees the idea of "being" as applying to God alone, not to creatures. See also Vollenhoven, *Vollenhoven's laatste werk*, 105, and Vollenhoven, *Schematische Kaarten*, 257; Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 628; Heideman, *Relation between Revelation and Reason*, 345–56; Strauss, "Scholasticism and Reformed Scholasticism," 97–114.
47. For Stoker's counterarguments against this and other related charges, see his *Oorsprong*, 2:202–30; and Stoker, *Philosophy of the Creation Idea*, esp. 118, 131–40. Among those who question the negative assessment of Bavinck's "Scholasticism," the following should be mentioned: Echeverria, *Dialogue of Love*, who devotes about a quarter of his book to this issue; Zigterman, "Dooyeweerd's Theory of Individuality Structures," who questions the classic Reformed critique of "substance" thinking by Dooyeweerd and specifically defends Bavinck and Stoker; Hendrik Hart in his "Malan's Critical Study" in Bingle and Du Plessis, eds., *Truth and Reality*, 109–21, who defends Stoker against similar criticisms; and Van Woudenberg, "'Aspects' and 'Functions' of Individual Things," 1–13, who questions whether Dooyeweerd's resistance to the concept of "substance" is self-defeating, suggesting that it lands him in "metaphysical antirealism."
48. Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 1:305–8; 2:237–43.

49. Dooyeweerd's theory of modal spheres (*New Critique*, vol. 2, *passim*) leads him to deny that things have "essences" and to refer, instead, to "individuality structures"; and his critique of the phenomenological notion of "essential intuition" (*Wesensschau*) is quite nuanced (see his *New Critique*, 2:486–90, esp. 487n1). In fairness to Scheler, it should be noted that he denies the real existence of values: "As to the question: 'What is value?' I submit the following answer: Insofar as in the question the word 'is' refers to existence . . . a value 'is' not at all (*Der Wert ist überhaupt nicht*)" (in Scheler, "Beiträge," 98, translated by Frings, *Mind of Max Scheler*, 23). Frings suggestively refers to Scheler's view as a "functional" view of values (*ibid.*).

50. This touches only one element in the Reformational critique of phenomenology and is far from being the sum and substance of its critique of "irrationalism." See, for example, Strauss, "(Ir)rationalism," 1–9. For a general Calvinist critique of phenomenology, see Van der Hoeven, *Kritische Ondervraging*, and Van der Hoeven, *Rise and Development of the Phenomenological Method*. For more specific Reformational criticisms of Scheler and Stoker, see Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, 3:62–76, 487, 545, 591; Vollenhoven, *Vollenhoven's laatste werk*, 75, 101; Vollenhoven, *Schematische Kaarten*, 245, 247; Van der Walt, "Stoker's Methodology," 73–74; for Stoker's views on the matter, see his *Philosophy of the Creation Idea*, 86–124, and Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 2:202–30; and for Stoker's account of his own phenomenological method, see, esp., *Oorsprong*, 1:237–43. His method, as seen in his analysis of conscience in *Das Gewissen*, basically follows the method of essential and descriptive phenomenological analysis found in Scheler's middle period and represents the phenomenological *realist* movement adapted to a Christian perspective (cf. Smith, "Realistic Phenomenology"). For significant parallels to Stoker's view of the value-dimension and phenomenology as adapted to a Christian perspective, see Hildebrand, *Ethics*, pts. 1 and 2; the metaphysics-friendly Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 64–65; assimilation of phenomenology in Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30–41; and Crosby, *Selfhood of the Human Person*.

51. Stoker follows Scheler in granting a certain primacy to essential intuition (or intentional feeling) in the area of values, as can be seen from the primacy he grants to emotion (over intellect and will) in his phenomenology of conscience, but it is no less true that he refuses to isolate emotion from reason, as evident in *Das Gewissen*, 52–55, 86–87, 138–92, 209–11 (in the present English translation, see the Excursus following chap. 2, and chaps. 4, 6–7). For Scheler's view of value-feeling, by contrast, as completely *independent* of rational thought, see, esp., Scheler, "*Ordo Amoris*"; and Scheler, *Formalismus*, chap. 1.

52. E.g., Stoker, *Oorsprong*, 2:333.

53. The "phenomenological Thomism," or "Lublin Thomism," of Karol Wojtyła is a good example of this. In addition to his aforementioned dissertation on Scheler, see Wojtyła, *Person and Community*, and Schmitz, *At the*

Center of the Human Drama. Other examples include Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, which places St. Thomas Aquinas in dialogue with Edmund Husserl; and Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, which describes phenomenology in terms congenial to classic Thomist metaphysics. For studies critically appreciative of Scheler's approach, see also Hildebrand, *Ethics*; Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*; Kelly, *Material Ethics of Value*; and Blosser, *Scheler's Critique*; and the relatively more negative assessments of Staude, *Max Scheler*, and Nota, *Max Scheler*, whose criticisms are focused chiefly on Scheler's personal life and eventual abandonment of Christian theism.

54. In Oorsprong, 1:305–322.

55. The term used by Stoker is *Geltbarkeit*, which concerns the question whether conscience can be shown to have “validity.” (See note 1 in chapter 10 of the present work.)

56. Note that Stoker's view that moral knowledge is presupposed by conscience (cf. Stoker, *Das Gewissen*, 52–55, 86–87, 209–11) confutes, at least in this one respect, the argument of those who suspect him of having a fundamental “irrationalist” epistemology, as some have suggested of Scheler (e.g., Vollenhoven, *Vollenhoven's laatste Werk*, 75, 101; Vollenhoven, *Schematische Kaarten*, 245, 247; and Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, 3:62–76).

57. See Stoker's discussion of Macbeth and Raskolnikov in chapter 3 of the present work.

58. It is remarkable, as Strauss pointed out to me, that Stoker developed a view of conscience in which evil is a necessary presupposition (see, esp., chaps. 5–7 and 10). By contrast, evil is normally seen as a parasite within the good order of creation.

59. For example, Kreeft, *Philosophy*, 9n1: “‘Man’ means ‘mankind,’ not ‘males.’ It is traditional inclusive language. ‘Humanity’ does not go with ‘God’ (‘God and humanity’) because ‘God’ and ‘man’ are concrete nouns, like ‘dog’ and ‘cat,’ while ‘divinity’ and ‘humanity’ are abstract nouns, like ‘canininity’ and ‘felinity’ or ‘dogginess’ and ‘cattiness.’ Whatever the political or psychological uses or misuses of these words, that is what they mean. We do not undo old injustices against women by doing new injustices against language.”

60. See chapter 5 of this work.

61. Stoker, “A Phenomenological Analysis of Conscience,” 312.

62. See chapter 5 of this work.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Schur, *1000 Most Obscure Words*.

65. For example, Stoker's title for chapter 7, “Andere echte Gewissensphänomene (das gute, das warnende Gewissen usw.) und die Zusammenfassung über das Wesen des Gewissens,” has been replaced with: “Personal Evil and the Essence of Conscience,” which achieves brevity without sacrificing accuracy in capturing the central issue of the chapter.

Conscience

Phenomena and Theories

Editor's Foreword

In the first of the philosophical and sociological works that inaugurated this series, Dr. Paul Ludwig Landsberg's work on *The Nature and Significance of the Platonic Academy*,¹ we delineated the general perspectives guiding us as editor of the series. The series, whose backlog of accepted material has increased considerably and has had to be held up for a time due to problems at the publishers, should now proceed again at regular intervals.

We now resume publication with an investigation of the "phenomena of conscience." This work—which concerns the field of ethics, descriptive and genetic psychology of moral phenomena, and philosophy of religion—comes from the hand of Dr. Hendrik G. Stoker of Johannesburg, South Africa, who at present occupies the position of Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Psychology at the University of Potchefstroom (Transvaal).

In our own book, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, and also in our essay on "Repentance and Rebirth," we sought to formulate more completely some of the problems arising from the phenomena of conscience and to help promote their resolution using our own groundbreaking method of phenomenological analysis and subsequent theoretical explanation.² These works mark the point of departure for the new and independent endeavors of Professor Stoker.

It is quite true that we already have rigorous scientific works in the German language on conscience, its origin, and significance. Professor Stoker's research takes complete account of these works and carefully considers their merits. Moreover, by comparison with these works, his own investigation is not only the most analytically incisive and penetrating, but it also exhibits the greatest breadth. As far as his critical utilization of past and present literature is concerned, it is also the most complete work that we have concerning what is certainly—as the author shows in detail—a linguistically challenging and often confusing state of affairs concerning the phenomena of “conscience.” We say that it exhibits the most breadth because it tackles the problem simultaneously from the points of view of psychology of language, essential and descriptive phenomenology, onto- and phylo-genetics, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion—indeed, virtually from every side at once. And even if it by no means exhausts the aspects of animal psychology, developmental psychology, or patho-psychology in dealing with the matter at issue, it nevertheless advances the subject in a most valuable manner. The author considers German, Dutch, and English literature (in keeping with his own educational background), roughly in equal proportions, and investigates the problem at issue carefully within the context of the great ethical and philosophical movements of history. Further, he seeks to extract some of the best material for his task from the often audacious and one-sided interpretations of “conscience,” “guilt,” “remorse,” and so forth found in Nietzsche and Freud—and, further still, from the great poetic and literary incarnations of struggles of conscience found in the works of Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and others. What is best and most beneficial in his presentation may be his earnest struggle for a living and immediate grasp of conscience. This elevates his discussion above any mere symbolic value of words, and it allows him to engage the phenomena themselves apart from any sort of merely arbitrary rational interpretation. The object of this struggle is to unveil the most basic facets of experience, which fulfill the abiding elements intended by the word “conscience” and its synonyms and analogues in other languages. With distinguished mastery of the methods of essential-phenomenological analysis, the author lays bare the vital nerve of conscience.

The origins of the author in the religious and cultural milieu of Dutch-Afrikaner Calvinism undoubtedly predispose him to a high degree to an investigation of an inner personal faculty such as conscience. Perhaps nowhere in the world has this introspective penchant been experienced in such purity, rigor, power, and depth as it has, in the best times, in that religious and Christian heroism that the history of religion attaches to the name of Calvin. A distinct feeling of this kind permeates the author's analysis and his attitude toward life and the world, which is as austere as it is magisterial, and it is bound up almost exclusively with God in the inner powers of his mind. No matter how one may be inclined to appraise this prodigious historical ethos, it serves to provide a particularly favorable disposition for purposes of investigating the phenomena of conscience. Of course, various limitations in the author's investigation, as we have noted ourselves, may be rooted in the very same fact. Despite his rigorously scientific attitude, in our opinion the author underrates the social and evolutionary factors that conscience evidences—even if one considers the content and objective value of its apparent “testimony.” By the same token, he perhaps also overrates the constancy and clarity of its historical manifestations and does not sufficiently appreciate those who may be blind to values and insensitive to moral feelings, for whom conscience quite seriously really seems to be completely lacking. Furthermore, as deeply considered as it may be, the metaphysical and religio-philosophical function that he assigns to the phenomenon of conscience in keeping with his theistic metaphysical persuasion—in a manner influenced strongly by the methodology of John H. Newman—may hardly be claimed so unequivocally as appears to be the case with the author. Because of these limitations of attitude, even the author's statements about the developmental psychology of animals, children, and so on cannot be regarded as definitive yet. There still remains a field wide open to research in this direction.

In his book, Professor Stoker sets for himself three profound questions for investigation, representing the principle problems of conscience: (1) What is conscience? (2) How does it develop? (3) What value attaches to its impulses? Although it obviously cannot be said that his work completely resolves all of the multifaceted and still largely

obscure questions attached to the treatment of these three problems, Professor Stoker's thorough and deeply penetrating treatment of these problems, which most of the relevant current works of psychology and hitherto existing monographs have treated in a completely inadequate way, constitutes a significant landmark for all further research.

—Max Scheler, Cologne, January 1925

Author's Preface

The “moral conscience” is often distinguished from the “religious conscience.” If one seeks to grasp conscience simply as *conscience*, however, this distinction is not so fundamental as it often seems. The distinction appears to be a fundamental one to us only when the “religious” experience in religious conscience is compared with the exclusively “moral” experience in moral conscience. Although the “religious conscience” may perhaps present the appearance of a more delicate, more sensitive, purer phenomenon—one that is more adequate to the deeper conditions of sensibility proper to the essence of conscience itself—the focus of our present work is chiefly on the so-called *moral conscience*. The reason for this is that the conscience as moral phenomenon is quite certainly the most difficult thing to distinguish from the remaining other aspects of moral experience. Only by delimiting the matter in this way can we expect to apprehend conscience in its peculiar and unique character.

The present work is the result of various phases of development in my understanding of conscience. At first it was my view that the intellectualist and relativist conception of conscience was correct. But after a thoroughgoing phenomenological investigation of the phenomena associated with conscience and after a historical-critical investigation of theories of conscience, I found myself compelled to accept the view

that the deepest core of conscience is emotional. Still further investigations yielded the conclusion that the phenomena of conscience, in their deepest sense—in their unity and peculiarity—cannot be understood primarily in formal terms. Such is the ordinary way of attempting to determine what the conscience is—by defining it, for example, as an act of reason, intuition, judgment, inclination, will, feeling, and so on. But only in terms of its material content—its objective, actual stirrings in which it is given and makes itself felt—does the fundamental possibility present itself of clearly comprehending conscience as a group of inherently unified and unique phenomena in its actual depth, meaning, and character. Based on these insights I arrived at the principles by which, in my opinion, conscience must be understood. These are suggested by the following “slogans”—insofar as “slogans” can indicate a mode of interpretation—namely: *emotionalism*, *objectivism*, *personalism*, and *absolutism*.

The core of conscience yields itself as a suprabiological fact after all the temporal, relative, and accidental factors have been peeled away; just as suprabiological *acts* are given to us in the intuition of essences—in the preferring of values according to their objective order of rank, in grasping the beautiful, in lived experiences of a religious nature, and so forth—on the basis of a suprabiological principle: the mind, or spirit. (Here I could very well refer the reader to the investigations of Max Scheler and F. J. J. Buytendijk.)¹ This core of conscience is no more capable of being derived from that which is “merely biological” than any of the other aforementioned “spiritual” acts. Nor can the principle of a gradual development from the “biological” to the “suprabiological” be maintained here. The *dread* associated with conscience, for example, cannot have developed gradually out of an instinctual or biologically based fear of “punishment.” Even so, however, it is undoubtedly true that conscience in its concrete empirical manifestations has numerous relative, socially acquired, and biologically conditioned elements. Illness, deeply traumatic experiences of various kinds, misfortune, charity, romance, success, fulfilled expectations, and so forth can all have an influence on how conscience presents itself. One cannot overestimate how embedded and embodied conscience is in the concrete profusion of everyday life. Socially conditioned understandings and insights regarding moral values, laws, norms, and so forth likewise exert a deep

influence upon conscience. Relative factors of a psychogenic and phylogenetic variety are also significant codeterminants for conscience. The core of conscience presents to us something absolute, while the outer layers surrounding the core suggest that which is relative. Conscience itself demands unconditional submission and asserts its infallibility and authority, even though in its outward appearance it is bound to countless relative, acquired, and uncertain factors. In the history of conscience, the attempt has been made repeatedly—and will continue to be made—to dissolve this sharp distinction. Any theories that view conscience simply as the product of mere biological or sociological factors are radically distorted, as are any theories that do *not* acknowledge social, biological, and evolutionary factors. On the basis of the objective phenomena, and in accordance with my own understanding, I have attempted here to do justice to both sides of conscience.

SINCE THE PRESENT WORK, ORIGINALLY WRITTEN AS A DISSERTATION, BRINGS to a close one period of my life and opens another, I would like to add a personal note to these brief introductory remarks.

This monograph is lovingly dedicated to my parents as a token of my gratitude for all their devotion and sacrifices on my behalf, for their unflagging support for me despite the expenses of a three-year course of studies abroad that enabled me to complete my academic work. I remember with admiration and gratitude the comprehensive and wide-ranging education that they made possible for me.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my highly esteemed teacher and professor, Dr. Max Scheler, for deepening my understanding of philosophical, psychological, and sociological problems of the greatest importance, and also for his influence in impressing upon me the formation of diverse interests and a broad appreciation of research problems. His struggle for the truth, especially for the absolute truth, his penetrating insight into connections between the essences and values of ontical² data and their phenomenal appearances, and his wide-ranging knowledge, which encompasses nearly all areas of learning, were of fundamental importance for my education. My time of study in Cologne under Professor Scheler will always evoke warm and pleasant personal memories.

Furthermore, I would like to mention my gratitude to Professor F. J. J. Buytendijk (of Groningen), to whom I am very much indebted both personally and in connection with my European studies.

I have followed with interest the lectures of Professor of Experimental Psychology Dr. Max Wertheimer and Professor Wolfgang Köhler of Berlin, and Professor Johannes Lindworsky of Cologne, and also Professor of Sociology Dr. Werner Sombart and Professor of Pedagogy Dr. Eduard Spranger of Berlin.

Concerning my academic education during my studies at the University College of Potchefstroom (in Transvaal, South Africa), I want to mention at this point especially my highly esteemed teacher and professor, Dr. Jacob Daniël du Toit, Rector of the Theological School, and Dr. Ferdinand Postma, Rector of the University-College. Furthermore, I would like to mention the recently deceased Professor J. Kamp, who was widely loved and admired by his students, and Professor S. O. E. Boshoff and Professor S. O. Los, now in The Hague; and I would not want to leave unmentioned my friend Professor J. C. van Rooy, MA.

I am thankful to the publisher, Friedrich Cohen, for the printing of this work despite the difficult circumstances of publication.

—Hendrik Gerhardus Stoker, Johannesburg, South Africa,
February 24, 1925

1

Current Scholarship and Orientation

One of the most interesting, profound, and important challenges to depth-psychology¹ and psychology in general is the question concerning what conscience actually is, particularly a guilty conscience. It claims dominion over the whole of a person's experience. Its power plays a vastly important role in one's life. The phenomenon mystifies the researcher, yet it is patently obvious to anyone with a troubled conscience. In some people it is evinced as a horrible dread, driving them further and further away in flight and leading them to perceive all other people as a threat. In other people it reigns as an unspeakable shame, leaving in them the desire to sink into utter oblivion. In others it works as an infinite grief and loving sorrow, producing acts of redemptive and consoling repentance. In still others it works as an electromagnetic sensor for detecting the presence of a dangerous electric current, warning and restraining them from committing an irrevocable and irreversible evil act. What we glimpse in the dread and contrition of conscience is no trivial or superficial matter, but it touches us in our deepest core and seems to bring us into immediate proximity with the higher principles of personal justice and love by which we feel ourselves to be governed. In no way is this a vague, imperceptible, mystical, or incomprehensible experience, but rather a phenomenon whose movement in us is felt concretely, individually, personally, intensely, powerfully, and with complete clarity.

Nevertheless, psychology has hitherto treated this phenomenon in an all too negligent and perfunctory way. When one consults the table of contents of any psychological works or handbooks on this subject, it is astonishing how few observations and acknowledgments may be found directly bearing on the phenomenon. Why is this? Perhaps it could be said that psychology is still a young science and has had to tackle the more superficial problems of the inner life and to work through these first before it could begin to plumb the depths of the inner life and take on the more fundamental problems. Perhaps it could also be said that psychology in its beginnings has stood directly under the spell and influence of the mathematical sciences and the scientific method of the past century and could not yet break free of their mathematical ideals and atomistic hypotheses. Perhaps also, since conscience and the problems related to it do not lie in the foremost line of interest for researchers in psychology, it may also be said that this negligence is a matter related to the particular outlook of our times, and that a positivistic scientific orientation must inevitably turn its back on the deepest essence and meaning of this type of phenomenon.

Today one sees everywhere an awakening to new questions of greater human significance. Psychology has recently entered a new phase, with phenomenological investigations, such as those by Max Scheler, F. J. J. Buytendijk, Alexander Pfänder, and others; works of gestalt-psychology, such as those by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka; the endeavors of Eduard Spranger in psychology of culture; the psycho-analytic studies of Sigmund Freud; the works of William McDougall in behavioral psychology—to mention only a few new movements in psychology. All of these, regardless of how they may differ, are united by their common desire to overcome the older natural-scientific orientation of atomistic psychology (*Elementenpsychologie*) and the earlier school of associationist psychology, and by their conviction that the proper subject for psychological investigation is not to be found in discrete atomistic data but in the whole “nature,” the *Gestalt*, the “complex,” and the “structural-unity” of the mind as a “totality,” and that the realities signified by these words form the fundamental basis of psychology.² This turning point—this crisis—within the discipline of psychology today has yielded a resurgence of interest in deeper, more

fundamental problems, which, it may be hoped, may soon give *conscience* the attention it properly deserves.

Although precious little has been said about the subject of conscience by those in psychology before now, the subject has managed to garner considerably more attention in theological and philosophical ethics. Unfortunately, however, within those disciplines the psychological point of view is usually subordinated to philosophical and theological interests—which are quite lethal for the problem of conscience itself and for the other theories in question. As a result, a complete chaos prevails in ethics concerning the problem of conscience—a “war of all against all” (*bellum omnium contra omnes*)—and, at the same time, a consummate labyrinth of ambiguous concepts. One need only consult miscellaneous definitions in miscellaneous works of ethics to see this.

Conscience may be regarded as a divine oracle, as the highest court of reason, as human judgment, as feeling, as will, as a compulsion, or as an instinct. It may be identified with our general moral nature or with syllogistic logic. It may be seen as infallible or, contrariwise, as “untrustworthy,” as grounded in convention, as the voice of the community, or individual subjectivity. It may be seen as something divine in the person, or as a biogenetically predisposed experience of “guilt” found even in animals—as a condition, a function, an organ, an act, and so on.

When we venture into the problem of conscience under such circumstances, therefore, it is imperative that we do not let such theories of conscience and the history of the problem prejudice our judgment. It is important, instead, to take as our starting point the objective reality—the actual experience of *conscience* as such—and to let this objective reality alone have the last word over the truth of the theories. This is what we intend in the present work—to endeavor to understand conscience, not as abstractly or theoretically conceived, but to grasp it descriptively in its concrete and actual existential depth, and to strive thus to understand its significance.

Before we can proceed, however, it is unfortunately necessary to perform something analogous to a surgical operation. The term “conscience” and its referent (what it refers to) are burdened with immense ambiguities and perplexities that must be cut away. Much that is ordinarily associated with “conscience” has nothing to do with it.

In chapter 2 and the Excursus of this work we will attempt to gain an overview of the many meanings of terms and concepts associated with “conscience,” and their sources, and to find a way out of the confusing labyrinth in order to establish, subsequently, which parties in this cosmopolitan assembly belong to the realm of conscience merely in name and which parties by ties of blood.

Then, and only then, can progress be made toward understanding the problem of conscience itself. Here three questions must be clearly distinguished. Too often the failure to distinguish these questions has led to disastrous effects for the resolution of the problem. The three basic questions are the following:

What is the essential nature of conscience?

How does it develop in the individual and in the community?

Is the witness of conscience absolutely valid and trustworthy?

These questions about the essential nature, genesis, and validity of conscience correspond to the following three parts of the work.³ It is wishful thinking to suppose, like Paul Rée (and many others), that all the problems of conscience can be solved merely by a consideration of *The Origin of Conscience* (as his [Rée’s] work is entitled).⁴ On the contrary, every question of origin or genesis is preceded in principle by the question of a thing’s essential nature. Every process of becoming or emerging presupposes something that becomes or emerges, which first must be grasped in its essence if we intend to do justice to the question of development. Otherwise the problems and investigations end up being turned on their head. Moreover, once conscience has been examined according to its nature and genesis, then the problem of validity also becomes clear.

The present work stems from my active interest in clarifying this poorly understood phenomenon of conscience. Even so, I am all too aware of my inadequacies in meeting the formidable challenges posed by this problem and that many more years of intense work would be required to do it justice. Perhaps a subsequent work will achieve this.⁵ Only through the cooperation of additional researchers can the precious gold be fully extracted from the rich mine of this issue. This work is in-

tended, therefore, only as a contribution, a psychological-philosophical study toward a deeper understanding of the problem of conscience.

Not all of the problems of conscience dealt with in this work are treated in the same detail. Some are merely noted or suggested, insofar as a deeper treatment would take us too far afield from the main questions at issue. Such problems are still noted, nonetheless, insofar as they cast new light on the phenomenon and are important for its metaphysical implications, meaning, and nature.