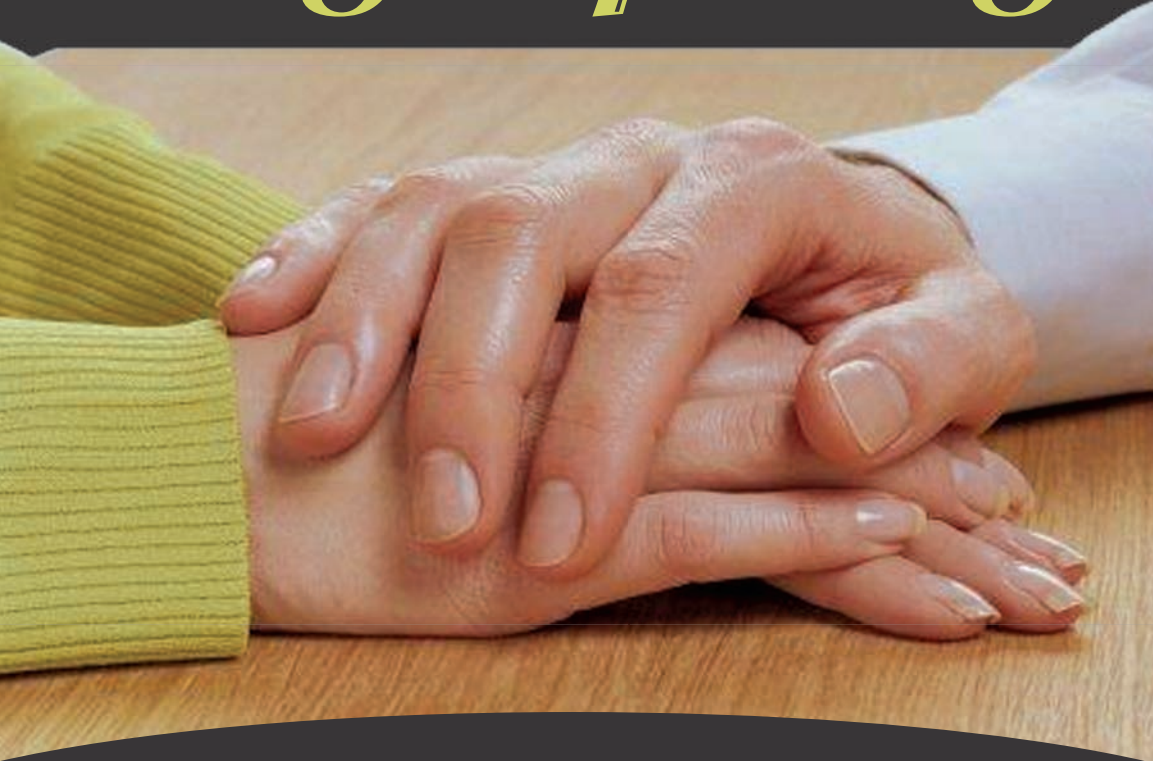


The  
*Nature*  
of  
*Sympathy*



**Max Scheler**

with a new introduction by

**Graham McAleer**

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of *Sympathy*



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

**I**N the last years, there has been a remarkable effort to make the writings of the leading sociologists and social philosophers of the Continent available to the English-speaking world. We now possess full translations of the main works by Toennies and Durkheim, and representative selections from the books of Simmel and Max Weber. Strangely enough, Scheler has so far been passed by. Yet he was as great as all the others, and, indeed, in some respects greater than any of them. The present publication needs therefore no apology. It was more than overdue, and it is hoped that it will be the first of many of its kind.

What has in the past decided English and American translators not to take up Max Scheler was possibly the fact that he is known as 'a German metaphysician'. Certainly, his books are not altogether easy reading, but their study is richly rewarding. The point need not be laboured here. Let anyone take up this volume and see for himself! Only one fact should perhaps be mentioned, namely that there is a deep kinship between Scheler's thought and some fundamental tendencies in American sociology, at any rate as far as substance is concerned. Personally, he has always reminded me of C. H. Cooley. When Cooley writes, in his essay on Spencer, that 'sympathetic qualities . . . are, after all, the only direct source of our knowledge of other people', he expresses a conviction which is also to be found in this and all the writings of Scheler's early and middle period.

W. STARK

*Manchester*  
*May 1953*





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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE life of many if not of most leading philosophers consists in the gradual elaboration of some great idea which has come to them in a sidereal hour of their youth. Such, for example, was Kant's flash of insight that space and time, commonly regarded as objective realities, are in point of fact subjective, i.e. merely the formal scheme which our mind imposes upon the world in order to be able to apprehend and understand its phenomena; such, too, was Bergson's sudden realization that the Greeks were wrong when they considered rest as the perfection of being and movement as an impoverished form of it; that, on the contrary, movement, becoming, is of the essence of life, while rest, immutability, can only be achieved in death. Scheler was a thinker of a different type. He, too, had his Damascus experience, but it was to him a point of departure rather than a point of arrival. Plagued by an extreme intellectual restlessness, he continued to change and re-change his point of view: he was one of those who, in Pascal's phrase, 'search groaning'. In order to understand his philosophical work, it is essential to distinguish three stages in his career, each of which is characterized by an outstanding intellectual achievement: the first by *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*; the second by *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*; and the third and last by the *Philosophische Anthropologie*, a book that was as yet unfinished when death struck him down, a man of barely fifty-four, in May 1928.

### I

At the time when Scheler was born, the intellectual scene was dominated by two great hostile schools of thought. The one, an

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idealistic philosophy, traced its origin back to Immanuel Kant and had just been powerfully restated by Hermann Cohen: the other, an embodiment of the materialistic world-view, had come down from Jeremy Bentham and had gained considerable influence through the much-read and much-appreciated writings of John Stuart Mill. The choice before a young philosopher seemed simple enough: he could either turn to the right, or to the left. There was, apparently, no middle way.

In the narrower field of ethics, the Kantians started from the conviction that the cravings of the individual were, in the last analysis, at variance with the interests of the race. Man had to be tamed if he was to be transformed into a citizen: the moral law had to be imposed on his wayward will, and the moral law was the sum and substance of the claims of the community on its individual components. To the question: what is good?, Kant's disciples answered: good is what you ought to do! The concept of *duty* was thus at the root of their whole ethical system. But if man is a creature who can, in principle, act rightly, but will not, in practice, easily do so, if he is a creature whose spirit is willing but whose flesh is weak, a series of consequences is bound to follow: man cannot then be a unitary being; he must have two warring natures, one sensible, the other supersensible; there must be a phenomenal and a noumenal man. The moral law will reveal itself in conflict rather than in the day-to-day workings of the world: it will confront man as something alien, something independent of his human experience, something absolute and compelling, in a word, as a categorical imperative. He will not be able to say in concrete terms what is good and what not: he will only have a negative criterion for determining the goodness of an action—the rational conviction that it curbs his sinful bent. In such a philosophy, nothing can be good but the good will. In other words, the ethical teaching of the Kantian school was an abstract and formal doctrine of duty, not a concrete and material catalogue of values. It was this latter alternative of moral thinking which had been worked out and propagated by the opposite school, the children and grandchildren of Jeremy Bentham.

The Benthamites started from the sub- or semi-conscious assumption that the desires of the individual were in harmony with the needs of the race, either because an inborn principle of sympathy holds them together from the very beginning, or else because the mechanism of social intercourse ensures an ultimate reconciliation. The most that can ever be wanted is an appropriate system of laws to support and perfect the working of that mechanism. Thus there is, for them, little need to discipline man: on the contrary, discipline, as a source of pain, will be an evil in

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itself, and the highest postulate of practical reason will be to let everybody act as he wishes to do. To the question: what is good?, the Utilitarians could joyfully answer: what we all desire—what we feel will cause us *pleasure*. Their ethical system was frankly hedonistic. Man was in their view a simple and easily understandable being: a pleasure-seeking and pain-fleeing animal like any other, uncomplicated in every respect, and essentially one in nature. As objective goodness and subjective enjoyment coincide, it is not conflict that will reveal the norm of action—conflict can only arise where there is confusion of some kind—but the spontaneous everyday behaviour of men, and psychology will become the basis of ethics. Indeed, ethics will become a highly practical, one could almost say, economically useful, discipline. It will not concern itself with the metaphysical notion of a noumenally good will, but will elaborate instead a concrete list of values which sensible men do pursue, and which all men should pursue, and which will provide the basis for the practical maximization of both public and private felicity.

It must have looked, in Scheler's student days, as if a choice between these two theories—so perfect in themselves, so antithetic to each other—was unavoidable. In point of fact, however, both schools had come to the end of their tether: their very perfection had exhausted their original inspiration, and they had equally lost their attractiveness to young, keen minds. Life, so dialectical and so inventive, had provided a *via media*, a *via tertia*, after all, and that new departure in philosophy was connected with the name of Franz Brentano, whose outstanding importance for the recent history of epistemology and ethics is even now not fully realized. In the very year in which Scheler was born—in 1874—Brentano had published the first volume of his *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, and this book was destined to become the starting-point of a new and powerful philosophical movement which Scheler joined after having given, for a while, a tentative and half-hearted allegiance to the idealistic teaching of Rudolf Eucken.

Brentano's ethical theory is lucidly set forth in his little book, *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, a lecture delivered in 1889 to a circle of lawyers and translated into English in 1902. In it, Brentano makes short work of both the older theories. Kant's ethic, he claims, is practically useless because it does not tell us in definite terms what we ought to do. 'The Categorical Imperative . . . even when admitted, . . . leads to no ethical conclusions' (p. 45). Its demand, that we should act in such a manner that the maxim of our action could be a law for every man, is a purely formal principle, not a concrete guide for the perplexed;

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and, even worse, it is the kind of abstraction that can, by a little logical jugglery, be perverted to almost any purpose, even the most immoral. But Bentham's pretended ethic is no whit more satisfactory. 'Ought we to say', Brentano asks, 'that whatever is loved and is capable of being loved is worthy of love and is good?' No, he answers, 'this is manifestly untrue, and it is almost inconceivable that some have fallen into this error. One loves what another hates, and, in accordance with a well-known psychological law . . . it often happens that what at first was desired merely as a means to something else, comes at last from habit to be desired for its own sake. In such a way the miser is irrationally led to heap up riches and even to sacrifice himself for their sake. The actual presence of love, therefore, by no means testifies unconditionally to the worthiness of the object to be loved, just as affirmation is no unconditional proof of what is true' (16 seq.).

What, then, is Brentano's own opinion? Its most pregnant formulation is contained in the proposition that 'the ethical sanction is a command similar to the logical rule' (XI). What Brentano means is that our mind can distinguish between good and bad in the same way that it distinguishes between true and false, or if not in exactly the same way, then at any rate in an analogous manner. If I hold the proposition that 'two and two make four' against the competing proposition that 'two and two make five', I know at once, and with certainty, that the former assertion is right and the latter wrong: my intellect 'commands' me to accept the one and to reject the other. Something similar is happening, Brentano tells us, if we compare two possible modes of action. A spontaneous judgement will tell me—indeed command me—that I ought to pursue the one and turn away from the other. The better alternative will have a definite inner superiority over its rival, a superiority which is brought home to my mind with a kind of evidence and conviction reminiscent of that experienced in the solution of a logical problem. It is true that in the one case reason, the intellect, decides, and in the other sentiment, the feelings. That is why ethical sanction and logical rule must not be altogether fused and confused: but though distinct, they are parallel, and even more than parallel, akin to each other. As Scheler was to express it later on: 'The heart possesses, within its own realm, a strict analogon of logic, which it does not, however, borrow from the logic of the intellect. As the ancient doctrine of the *nomos agraphos* can already teach, there are laws written into it which correspond to the plan according to which the world, as a world of values, is built up. It can love and hate blindly, or with evidence, just as we can judge blindly or with evidence' (*Ordo Amoris*, Schriften aus dem Nachlass I, 1933, 244).

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It is easy to see why and how Brentano's ethic (though by no means an absolute novelty in the history of moral philosophy) provided, round about the year 1900, an attractive way out of the impasse into which the discussion had drifted, under the head-on clash between the idealist and materialist traditions. It seemed to combine what was true and sound in each of them. It found the origin of the knowledge of right and wrong in experiences of an emotional kind, and to that extent moved along Benthamite lines; yet it came near to the Kantian position when it insisted that these experiences are analogous to rational judgements. By distinguishing between a 'blind' preference on the one hand (a preference based on, say, a purely animal drive) and an 'enlightened' preference (a preference that deserves to be characterized as 'right') on the other, it did away with the most objectionable feature of the hedonistic theory, its inability to choose between the higher and the lower values: and it avoided the greatest weakness of the opposite doctrine, its formalism, by pointing out that our 'correct' judgements give us a concrete knowledge of right and wrong, an immediate and reliable guide in perplexity, not a vague and abstract formula that makes nobody the wiser. Indeed, even with regard to the a-priority or a-posteriority of ethical rules, their independence from, or dependence on, human experience, it managed successfully to steer a middle course: the proposition that 'pain is bad', the new school explained, is a-posteriori in so far as nobody can recognize it as correct who has not once in his life felt what pain is; yet the condemnation of pain springs from the very concept of suffering, and so it is not really induced from observation—hence it is an a-priori statement of a kind.

Scheler's philosophical work must be understood as a follow-up of Brentano's successful pioneering. Yet it would be wrong to describe the younger man simply as a disciple of the older. Scheler was a rather independent and self-willed disciple of Husserl and Meinong, and Husserl and Meinong were on their part again rather independent and self-willed disciples of the master. It is impossible here to discuss in detail the disagreements which split the original unity of the Brentano school. Suffice it to say that the bone of contention was the correspondence theory, the *adequatio rei et intellectus*. In his earlier years Brentano, with his Thomist background, had adhered to it: later on he had fallen away from it. Among his followers Oskar Kraus led a group who decidedly condemned it: the phenomenologists, as they came to be called, equally decidedly took it up and developed its implications. To the older Brentano and to Kraus the sentence 'X is good' meant: X is worthy to be loved; nobody who rightly feels and judges can deny that X is worthy to be loved. In other words, to them the

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statement was simply a statement concerning the operation of the human mind, and no more. But to Husserl and Meinong it did mean more because in their view there is a correspondence between the contents of our mind and the phenomena of reality. It meant to them that X is endowed with a *quality* which we call goodness. Now, a quality inheres in things; it belongs to the external world; hence to the phenomenologists a value judgement was essentially the statement of a fact. Meinong says in this sense that the emotions, by dint of their 'presentative function', have a part to play in the process of cognition. Such ideas raised Kraus's ire: he accused the phenomenologists of fiction-mongering when they said that 'good' was a quality in the same sense as 'red' or 'hot'. Yet their platonizing tendency gained ground in the Brentano school, and one of its most consistent representatives was the subject of this essay, Max Scheler.

We can best see what position Scheler was taking up if we bring to our minds the sociology and anthropology that was implied in Brentano's ethical speculations. For Kant, man had been born bad; Bentham had credited him with a sufficient grain of native goodness to make a spontaneously harmonious social life possible. Brentano shifted the interest from man's inborn nature to man's adult behaviour—for, surely, it is only the mature personality that can, with assurance, decide which line of action can 'rightly' be called good, and which not. Now, what enables the mature mind to make 'evidently correct' pronouncements in moral matters? What speaks in him when he speaks out? Obviously it is the fund of social valuations which has been deposited in him by education, and which has so penetrated his emotional life as to have completely merged with it. It was some conception such as this which (probably unbeknown to himself) had guided Brentano in his moral philosophizing. Now, the social *depositum* in the individual mind consists of certain habits of action and of thought—of customs and ideologies—which seem to have no existence in the outside world: the only existence they can claim is existence in human minds. This, clearly, was the older Brentano's conviction, and that of Oskar Kraus. But Scheler *did* ascribe to them an independent mode of being, thus recalling certain aspects of Emile Durkheim's contemporary work. He distinguishes between 'social valuations concerning good and evil' on the one hand, and 'the matter (*Wertmaterie*) "good" and "evil"' on the other—as if behind the social valuations arising in men's individual minds there were a further objective reality to which they 'correspond'. This is Scheler's much criticized 'ontologism'.<sup>1</sup> It constitutes, for better and for worse, the salient characteristic of his great book:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Oskar Kraus, *Die Werttheorien*, 1937.

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### *The Formalistic Principle in Ethics and the Non-Formal Ethic of Value.*<sup>1</sup>

What Scheler sets out to do in this impressive tome is to build up a doctrine of moral values, their hierarchy, and of the norms which are based on that hierarchy—a doctrine which is to be concrete and evident, and yet independent of all positive psychological and historical experience (2). Values are to him clear, sensible (*fühlbare*) phenomena (11), which are already as phenomena real objective entities (*echte Gegenstände*) totally different from all states of feeling (14); they are, as qualities, ideal objects just as colours and tonal qualities are ideal objects (16), and they are given to us—recognizable by us—in and through feeling (30). His ethic is, like all knowledge, to be founded on a set of facts (*Tatsachenkreis*, 42). As Scheler expresses it with particular clarity in one connection: 'There is a mode of perception whose objects are totally beyond the grasp of the intellect, and for which the intellect is as blind as the ear and the sense of hearing are for colour—a mode of perception none-the-less, which presents to us real objects (*echte objective Gegenstände*) and an eternal order among them—namely the values and their hierarchy' (262). Clearly, it was Scheler's conviction that values are not only valuations but also value-facts, and that these value-facts can be seen by our mental eye in the same way in which our physical eye sees coloured surfaces. It is not without significance that he often speaks of a realm of values into which we can enter—a realm, that is, which is open to our experience and in which we can roam if we like. We can only know what is good subjectively by seeing what is good objectively, and the norms for action can only grow out of a certain kind of knowledge—the knowledge of value-facts and of their mutual relation and ranking.

Out of the wide range of subjects covered in Scheler's more than six hundred pages, only three further facets can be shortly considered here: his doctrine of the scale of values; his distinction between value-modalities; and the problem of relativity. One value is 'higher' or 'lower' in comparison to another, and this relation of theirs is perceived by us in a specific act of value-perception which is called 'preferring' (84 seq.). The values show certain characteristics on which their relative 'height' seems to depend. Scheler mentions four of them: (1) the lasting goods are

<sup>1</sup> First published in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, 1913 and 1916. *Die materiale Wertethik* is translated here as 'the non-formal ethic of value' in order to bring out the contrast, intended by Scheler, to the 'formal principle' of Kant. It is, of course, totally inadmissible and absolutely misleading to speak of Scheler's 'Ethics of Material Values' as does Brock in his *Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy* (1935, 20).



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to be preferred to those that are perishable and changing; (2) those goods are relatively higher which can be enjoyed by a greater number of men without the necessity of dividing them up; (3) if a certain value *b* must already exist before another value *a* can come into existence, then *b* will be higher up in the scale than *a*—the value that forms the foundation must be higher than the value which is founded on it; and (4) certain goods give us a deeper satisfaction than others, and the 'depth' of that satisfaction (which we directly experience) also influences the 'height' of the value which yields it. At first sight, these four points seem to be altogether disconnected from each other, yet Scheler does his best to show that they can be reduced to one ultimately decisive element which he calls degree of relativity (*Relativitätsstufe*).

As for the modes or modalities of value, Scheler also distinguishes four, each one accompanied by a corresponding opposite set of disvalues. There are (1) pleasure-values—the agreeable and disagreeable, seen, as is clear from what Scheler says elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> mainly from the point of view of the individual; (2) a group of values which could best be described in English as welfare-values. Scheler speaks of life values or vital values, because he thinks of all the goods which subserve and promote life, health, vitality and social well-being—the point of view here being essentially that of the community; (3) spiritual or culture-values, comprising beauty, justice and truth; and, lastly, (4) sacred values, or the values of holiness. In another and outstandingly beautiful passage<sup>2</sup> Scheler develops the same concept of order among the modes of value in, as it were, the opposite direction. In the ideal personality, he points out there, the religious being ought to occupy the highest level; underneath it will have to come the spiritually creative person; on the next lower level we ought then to find the citizen who should be alive in every one of us; and only in the last and humblest place the economic subject, the animal man who is concerned about his physical enjoyment. The lesson of these distinctions is that the realm of values is not a uniform whole, but divided into closed circles which rise hierarchically above each other and must, in the case of conflict, give way to each other. We ought to sacrifice our physical enjoyments to our duties as citizens of the state; we ought to sacrifice our social well-being to the claims of culture—beauty, justice and truth; and even these august values should be sacrificed, if the need arises, on the altar of sanctity, on the altar of God.

For a total understanding of Scheler's philosophical achievement it is, in conclusion, necessary to cast a glance at his solution of the problem of ethical relativity. As a moral philosopher he was

<sup>1</sup> *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, I, 274-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

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anxious to present a system that would be absolute, and—in the sense given to the word by Franz Brentano—aprioristic; but as a sociologist he knew only too well that different societies have different value-systems and that no man can reasonably claim to be able to decide between them. The way out of this quandary which he suggests—though it is not without its difficulties!—is certainly ingenious. He compares the eternal and immutable values to a mountain-range which towers high above the valleys in which we humans live. To every age and to every people they reveal, according to their respective points of view, a different aspect of themselves: each one is true, and yet each one is unacceptable to all the others. We must not speak of a relativism of values then, but rather of a perspectivism (314)—an altogether different proposition. Only He who is exalted above the highest peak and who surveys the scene from the farthest heaven—only Almighty God, Himself the Value of Values, can know the truth in its entirety.

## II

Scheler's transition from ethical to religious speculation was, in a way, a natural development. The very logic of his system led, as we have just seen, to a theistic conclusion. Yet, in his second, or Cologne, period, faith was to him more than a matter of intellectual curiosity: it was also a deep concern of the heart. It is this which makes *Vom Ewigen im Menschen* (1920) Scheler's most convincing book. Its title can best be rendered into English—if it be permitted to borrow one of Tolstoi's happiest phrases<sup>1</sup>—as 'Man's Divine Self'.

In the exposition of his religious thought (contained mainly in the second volume of *Vom Ewigen*) Scheler starts again with the presentation of a hierarchical order, this time of the capabilities of the human mind. He distinguishes intellect, reason, and the aptitude for religious experience. The intellect is of supreme importance in man's struggle for survival in that it helps him to make the tools and develop the techniques by which he can subdue and utilize his habitat. But as a source of knowledge it is profoundly problematic. Because the control of nature is its aim, it tends to conceive all phenomena, both of the external and internal worlds, as functions of a universal mechanism—for only in so far as the world resembles a mechanism can we dominate and exploit it for our purposes. Hence the narrow limitations of the intellect in the search for truth. Reason gives us both a wider and a truer knowledge. It can recognize that reality is more than a mechanism, more than a particularly intricate game of billiards (loc. cit., 23),

<sup>1</sup> *Resurrection*, Bk. I, ch. XXXVI.

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that it is much more a field in which certain forms, aims and values are realized. Yet even reason has its *ne plus ultra*, and when it is reached a still higher power of the human mind must take over—its aptitude for religious experience which is an opening up to the outer, ever inbeating waves of revelation and grace, an opening up which is yet not entirely passive because it presupposes and implies a going out and coming to meet those waves which are flowing towards us.

Scheler's main thesis concerning the possible knowledge of God is the assertion that it can only be achieved if reason and religious experience co-operate—if they effect a pincer movement, so to speak. Reason can take us a good way along the road, but not to its end. Metaphysical speculation, he tells us, begins with wonder at the fact that something *is* rather than nothing, that—to formulate it even more precisely—there is not nothing. This root realization—which is not only an intellectual operation, such as the comparison of  $+ a$  and  $- a$ , but also an experience—this deep insight leads at once to further consequences. It gives us the distinction between relative, contingent and imperfect existence on the one hand, and absolute, independent and perfect existence on the other; in other words, it gives us the concept of an *ens a se* which is visible in, through and behind every *ens ab alio*. But reason can take us even further. If it goes beyond the framework in which we accidentally find ourselves, if it delves into the realm of essences, it will perceive that other worlds than the one which has become reality were initially equally possible, and so it will be led to the concept of a *prima causa* of this particular contingent world which will coalesce with that of an *ens a se*. At this point the theory of value can help us on. The *ens a se* which is the *prima causa* of all contingent existence will, as the most important entity in the universe, also be the *summum bonum*. And even this recognition is not the last insight reason can gain. As it is an evident axiom that persons stand higher in the scale of values than things, it will be able to say that the great X it is pursuing—if it is—ought to be a person; otherwise it could not be the *summum bonum*. Yet here reason has reached its limits. It cannot tell us, Scheler asserts, that God is a person, and that for a very simple reason.

Already experience in the circle of men shows us that we cannot know a person unless he chooses to reveal himself to us. A man may be silent, and that distinguishes him from any object of the lower creation. Yet though a man may deny us all knowledge of what he thinks and feels and wills, he cannot keep from us the fact that he exists. As soon as we see his body, we immediately realize, on the analogy of the experience of ourselves, if of no other, that to this bodily configuration belongs an appropriate personality.

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But God is a being without a body, and so this source of knowledge is not available here. If *He* chooses to be silent, no spontaneous act of ours will ever attain Him. Hence we can only know Him if we allow any revelation He may vouchsafe of Himself to enter into our mind. The receipt of this particular knowledge is the religious act. It begins where spontaneous perception ends, and is totally different from it. No metaphysics can take its place. Those who have claimed that it can were bad metaphysicians, because they cannot have had a sound idea of the confines of the human understanding.

The knowledge which we owe to the religious act, and which we can owe only to it, is the knowledge that God is, in point of fact, *a person*. It is this tremendous truth which the religious act grasps, in one blinding flash of insight, with all the evidence which a direct experience can give. Scheler uses in this connection a happy simile, though he does not elaborate it (103). A man may have seen the world day-in-day-out and found in it nothing but finite things, just as one passes a house a thousand times and perceives nothing but the bricks and doors and window panes. But, then, one day, a face is recognized behind one of the windows, and all is changed: the house now 'belongs to' that man: so the *homo religiosus*, once he is awakened to the divine presence, begins to see everything *in lumine Dei*. The parallel to the purely rational finding of the *ens a se*, and the contrast to it, is clear: the saint, like the thinker, perceives the dependence of the relative on the absolute, but the absolute is to him not an abstraction; it is a Person—He Who Is. Now, as the metaphysician advances beyond this point, so does the *homo religiosus*: as the one grasps the *prima causa*, so the other, the creator and sustainer of the universe. This knowledge will be realized in him as a definite feeling of dependence on God, of unworthiness, of creatureliness. Yet this feeling will also have its positive side, a blissful realization of security, of safety, of being enveloped in a stream of love. If the *summum bonum* is to the metaphysician the thing most worthy to be loved, passively as it were, it is to the *homo religiosus* a centre from which love actively radiates in all directions, an inexhaustible source of grace and compassion. And it is this religious realization which gives a new meaning to the findings of reason: it is here that the two wings of the search for the knowledge of God meet. We see now, from the vantage point of religious experience, that, although God *could* in principle hide Himself from us, as the metaphysicians insist, He yet *cannot* in fact do so because this would be in contradiction to His inmost essence, to His all-transcending love.

It might be thought that the direct knowledge of God which flashes upon man in his religious experiences would be perfect in

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itself and would not need any correlation with, and correction by, rational speculation. Yet this Scheler stoutly denies. There is a danger that the God of the *homo religiosus* will be all too personal, as it were; knowing love and anger as He does, He may assume in men's minds too anthropomorphic an appearance. On the other hand, the God of the metaphysician will tend to be a mere abstraction: he will be at best a concept, but not a person. So the two ideas must correct each other to give us full and adequate knowledge: 'The true God is not so empty and rigid as the God of metaphysics. The true God is not so narrow and not so alive as the God of mere faith' (64).

In his detailed analysis of the religious act, there are two points which Scheler is most anxious to establish: the one is that the religious experience is an experience *sui generis*, irreducible to any other, say, social or æsthetic; the other is the still more decisive thesis that all believing is founded on a seeing, all faith on vision. The religious act, Scheler insists, must not be conceived as merely a peculiar *form* of cognition which would share its field of experience with other such forms: it is, on the contrary, *materially* different from them in that it has its own particular phenomena which are inaccessible to them—as inaccessible as sounds are to the visual sense and colours to the sense of hearing. This exclusiveness in subject matter is also behind the three tests or hallmarks enumerated by Scheler, which enable us to decide whether any concrete act of human consciousness may be classed as religious or not. The specifically religious act is characterized (1) by the fact that it transcends the world, and not only this given world of ours, but any and every world, in the sense of an assemblage of finite things. (2) The quest for religious knowledge cannot be satisfied by any finite object or entity, not even if this finite object or entity is idealized out of all recognition. Scheler calls St. Augustine's cry: *Inquietum cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*, a 'basic formula of all religious acts' (252). (3) Unlike any other mode of experience, the religious act demands an answer on the part of the 'object' towards which it is directed: it must 'receive' the truth which it is seeking—it cannot find it on its own.

It is supremely characteristic of Scheler's whole system of religious ideas at this time that he opposes to the sceptic's adage 'seeing is believing' his own confident assertion that 'believing is seeing'. It is based on the phenomenological philosophy which Scheler had taken over from his master Husserl, and in particular on the correspondence theory integral to it. 'To all knowledge', he says in an especially lucid passage (139), 'there must correspond a being, to all being a possible knowledge; analogously, to all loving and preferring, a value-fact (*Wertbestand*), to every value-

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fact a loving and preferring'. But if this is so, the very existence of the religious act will be a pledge of the existence of its intended object. As Scheler expresses it: 'Only a really existent being of the character of divinity can be the cause of men's religious aptitude, i.e. the aptitude to the realization of those acts which cannot be satisfied by any finite experience, and yet crave satisfaction. The object of the religious acts is at the same time their cause. Or: all knowledge of God is necessarily a knowledge from God' (269).

In all these opinions Scheler clearly shows forth his intellectual parentage: he has taken men like St. Augustine, Pascal and Cardinal Newman for his guides. But that means that, like them, he must defend himself on a double front: on the one side against the rationalizing theology of St. Thomas, on the other against the sentimentalizing theology of Schleiermacher. He has many arguments against the Neothomists. One is that their reasoning is circular. They confidently conclude from the creature to the Creator, but they overlook that the creatureliness of the creature, on which the argument is based, can only become apparent when its dependence on God has already been discovered—i.e. when God Himself has already been discovered. Furthermore, it is not permissible to jump, by means of syllogisms, across the great divides of reality. Would a being, however intelligent, that knew only the inanimate world, without having an inkling of what life may be, ever be able to infer from its knowledge the possibility of living things, let alone their characteristics? Surely not. Hence, *a fortiori*, it must be totally impossible for man with his finite intelligence and his finite experience, to grasp at Him who is infinite by simple ratiocination. But Scheler has another, and probably still more wounding, arrow in his quiver: he claims that the cosmological proof, if it is taken stringently, leads to an altogether irreligious result. This world of ours, from which all the reasoning starts, is a world where good and evil are hopelessly intermixed: if we were to conclude from it to the powers behind it, we would be led much sooner to Manichæan dualism than to Christian monotheism. We would certainly not find the God of St. John, the God of Jesus.

Although Scheler does not consciously develop his attack on Schleiermacher and modern Protestantism along the same lines as that on the Neothomist position, there is yet a certain parallel between the two trains of thought. Luther, he argues, has brought a new kind of circular reasoning into the world. He starts from the subjective certainty of faith in order to advance from there to its objective truth; yet is it not clear that the objective truth of faith must precede any subjective certainty, nay, that subjective certainty is utterly unthinkable without it? There is also a far too heavy reliance on causal reasoning. Schleiermacher makes much

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of the 'feeling of absolute dependence' evoked in man at the contemplation of the universe, and infers from it a cause for that feeling which he proceeds to call God. Yet need this be a personal god at all? Are we not rather pushed here into a kind of pantheism, such as in fact appeared in Schleiermacher's associates and successors, for instance in Hegel? Scheler has even less patience with Schleiermacher and his school (in the widest sense of the word) than with the Neothomists; understandably so, for their concentration on man's emotions, on his subjective and internal states of consciousness, makes their believing even less of a perceiving than Thomist rationalism, which, with all its alleged shortcomings, is yet an outward-looking towards reality and an apprehension of it which is at once rational and loving.

Where Scheler most openly disagrees with the traditional theology of either variety is in the low estimate he has formed concerning the value of the rational proofs for the existence of God. They are in his opinion not only unavailing, as they are for Kant, but altogether nonsensical. Who in his senses would demand a rational proof for the existence of colours instead of attempting to see them, or of sounds instead of attempting to hear them? Using a rather pleasing play on words which is possible in German, but unfortunately impossible in English, Scheler contrasts *Aufweis*, *Nachweis*, and *Beweis*. *Aufweis* is a demonstration in the original sense of the word, a pointing towards God, an invitation and a challenge to the yet unbelieving to open his eyes and to see for himself. It is invaluable as a pædagogical device, but it is not a proof. Whereas this *Aufweis* precedes, drives forward, and leads up to, the religious act, *Nachweis* follows upon it. It is a rational re-thinking and testing of the experience, a weighing and securing of its core. It, too, is invaluable, but, again, it is not a proof. *Beweis*, or proof as commonly understood, can reasonably be demanded only for *judgements* concerning an experience, but not for the experience itself. Judgements may indeed be right or wrong, but an experience (lying, as it does, in the pre-logical sphere of cognition) can at best be true or false. It may labour under deception, but it cannot be subject to error, and that is a different matter altogether.

A rational proof of the existence of God is in Scheler's opinion all the less necessary since every human being spontaneously believes in and adores some deity—only, in by far the greatest number of cases, alas! the wrong one. Those who have not found the Absolute will absolutize some relative good—money, promotion, woman, or what not—but everyone *has* his altar where he worships. There is a law, Scheler says, according to which 'every finite spirit believes either in the true God or in a false one' (281). Fallen man's dismal habit of cringing before idols is the moral

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malady which Pascal has called the *désordre du cœur*, and which is seated indeed in the deepest recesses of the human heart. Who would imagine that it could be driven out by clever argument? No, here we are in a sphere where reason is very largely (though perhaps not altogether) powerless. What is needed is a casting down, a smashing up, of golden calves. Once they lie in the dust, once their hollowness has become apparent, the obstacle will be removed which has stood between man and God, and he will be able to see Him whom, unwittingly, he has sought all the time—Him who alone can still the deepest desire of man's longing soul.

At this point our short survey of Scheler's thought in his Cologne period could fittingly be brought to a close, were it not for his incidental analysis of the concept of time, which is too valuable to be passed over in silence. If man cannot see God, it is because he has, on his part, erected a barrier which blocks his field of vision. This barrier can always be removed. Yet this barrier may consist of guilt: indeed, it always bears an element of guilt in itself—the pure in heart are never divorced from God. Can *guilt* then be wiped away as if it had never existed? Can an evil deed be blotted out so that it disappears without leaving a trace? In other words: can something that was done in the past be undone in the present as if the passing of time were not an irreversible process? Scheler suggests, in some of his most splendid passages, that repentance (*Reue*) can work this miracle. If our personal existence were a flow akin to the stream of objective time within which physical events take place, repentance would indeed be powerless. There could, in Kierkegaard's terminology, at most be a forgiving of sins, but not a forgetting: our liberation would remain limited because in nature what is past is past, and what is done is done. However, this is not so in human time. In every moment which we experience, the structure and the idea of the *whole* of our life are present, and, because present, in our power also. We cannot indeed change *ex post* the external *effects* of our actions, but we can alter their internal *meaning*. If we repent, then we expel out of ourselves, out of our personality, and out of human time, the deed with its motive, that is to say, the fact with its root, and it is, in a very definite sense of the word, true that it has never been. We are re-instated, as it were, into our pristine innocence. In this way, every moment of history can be redeemed and will remain redeemable while yet a spark of life continues to glow.

### III

Scheler's philosophy of religion, as profound in thought as it was genuine in feeling, impressed friend and foe alike. Even an



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adversary such as Jacques Maritain speaks of him with respect—indeed, with affection.<sup>1</sup> Yet Scheler himself could not rest for long in his own achievement. Why did he fall away from it? The deeper reasons for his defection are not obvious. They could only be revealed by a sympathetic study of his life, by an investigation of those crises of faith at which Maritain is hinting, and for such a study, for such an investigation, it may already be too late today. But two more superficial reasons suggest themselves to the reader of his books. Scheler was quite willing to admit that the philosopher should give pride of place to the *homo religiosus*, the saint; but he was decidedly not willing to yield an inch to the theologian. Metaphysics as *ancilla fidei* was all right, but metaphysics as *ancilla theologiæ* by no means so. The rationalizing theologians around him were a thorn in his flesh and set up an irritation in his system which was apt to poison it altogether. If this was a comparatively petty cause, the other was of a more substantial nature. There is noticeable in Scheler's writings a growing desire to achieve a wider and wider synthesis—to break out of the narrow confines of the European tradition and to take into account at any rate the great achievements of Asiatic thought, if not indeed to advance to a universal vision. In the course of this endeavour, Christianity became of less and less importance to him, and this unavoidably estranged him from his own past. His removal to Frankfort in 1928 was but an external indication of his internal travellings.

The *Philosophical Anthropology* which was to outline Scheler's new position was as yet unfinished at the time of his death, but his essay *The Place of Man in the Universe*<sup>2</sup> clearly shows the direction in which he was drifting. It is significant that he first wanted to speak of 'man's *special* place', but that he later dropped the adjective because he increasingly found and felt that there is nothing so special about man as he had fancied for so many years. Indeed, he says quite brutally: 'There is not the slightest reason why one should, because of man's psychic life, make a more than gradual distinction between him and the animal, or why one should ascribe to his vital soul a special kind of origin and future destiny, as is done by theistic creationism and the traditional doctrine of immortality. The Mendelian laws apply to the building-up of psychic character in the same measure as they do to any physical features' (77). There is little talk in this essay of St. Augustine, Pascal and Cardinal Newman, whose influence had been so prominent in 'Man's Divine Self'; the figures now in the foreground are Buddha and Freud, whose doctrines, Scheler in-

<sup>1</sup> *De Bergson à Thomas d'Aquin*, New York, 1944, pp. 104-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, 1927.

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sists, stand, in spite of all their differences, in a 'curious, sometimes even clearly recognized connection' (60).

And what insight is it that Buddha and Freud have in common across the centuries? It is the deep knowledge that all life is one, an indissoluble unity. Scheler proceeds to develop this theme in his own manner. Wherever there is life, he asserts, there, too, is psychic life: all living things are characterized by individuality and innerliness (*Selbst- und Innesein*). Even the plant possesses a vital urge instinct with feeling; even the plant has individuality in so far as it cannot be cut up without being destroyed; even the plant has a certain physiognomy, i.e. expresses and shows forth its internal states, such as vigour and listlessness. What the plant has not got, is any kind of reporting back of the stimuli which it receives to a centre from which appropriate movements of response would then issue. The existence and operation of such a centre is reserved to the higher forms of life, of which Scheler distinguishes three, described respectively by the terms instinct, habit and intelligence. As we ascend from the former to the latter, we perceive a threefold progress: progress in structure, in adaptability and in consciousness. So far as structure is concerned, the response of the living being to external stimulations becomes less and less pre-determined and mechanical. Even instinct shows already the beginnings of a separation between sensation and reaction, but functionally there is here still the closest connection between the two. This connection is considerably loosened on the next higher level, that of habitual behaviour. Conditioned reflexes are not automatic as unconditioned reflexes are, yet they are still semi-automatic, and that distinguishes them from intelligent action, which is essentially free. Thus the separation between the sensory and the motor systems becomes ever more pronounced, and the position of the 'centre' ever more central.

Hand in hand with this growing liberation goes a growing pliability. Instinct provides its ready-made solutions only for the typical life-problems—survival-problems—of the species; habit gives us an answer even to relatively variable situations such as those of social intercourse, provided only they recur sufficiently often to allow the habit-making processes of trial and error to do their work; intelligence, however, can guide us in absolutely unique constellations, constellations never encountered before: it is thus the basis and the mainstay of all truly individual existence. Finally, there is an increase in consciousness and clarity as we rise from instinct to habit and from habit to intelligence. The plant has none of it: it is not possible in a being whose vital urge is directed, all of it, outward, which lives 'ecstatically' as it were; it arises only where resistances 're-flect' life inward, back onto itself,

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thus increasing and intensifying that innerliness which, for Scheler, is the hall-mark of all living things.

There is nothing at all remarkable about this description of the ascending series of life-phenomena, which is basic to the argument put forward in 'Man's Place in the Universe': it is quite obviously taken, with all its detail, from contemporary science. Yet a few points need emphasizing. The dark vital urge which he sees active in vegetative life is, according to Scheler, fundamental even in man. In a somewhat poetic passage he calls it 'the steam which drives everything up to the most exalted heights of spiritual activity, and which provides the energy even for the purest acts of thought and the most tender deeds of goodness' (14). It is, as he says again, behind every sensation, every perception, every mental image (18). Nor must it be thought that intelligence is the exclusive privilege of man; it is present already in the infusorium (25). It is true that Scheler is aware of the problematic character of so-called animal intelligence, even in so highly developed creatures as chimpanzees; yet, basing himself on the researches of some zoologists, e.g. Wolfgang Köhler, he confidently asserts that they may, in the full sense of the word, be described as intelligent. And goodness, too, is not a thing of which we alone can boast. 'The making of gifts, the readiness to help, reconciliation and similar phenomena can be found already among animals' (37)—which, incidentally, are also credited with genuine learning and tradition (30).

In view of all these assertions it is somewhat surprising to see that, in the end, Scheler does, after all, find an *essential* difference between man and all other creatures. He makes a distinction between psyche and spirit, and says that only the former is within the confines of nature, whereas the latter is not. This doctrine of the spirit is perhaps the only pillar of his earlier work that is now left standing. The spirit is not a phenomenon of life (as is, for instance, intelligence, that product of evolution); it stands outside and over against it; man is not only a feeling, acting and thinking creature, he is also a person. By dint of his spirit, the person is able to objectify his environment—an achievement of which merely vital beings are not capable, even if they are intelligent, because they must, through their very organization, remain bound up with, and in it. And this objectification is not restricted to things, it can also apply to man's physiological and psychological structure. Here lies the true contrast between animal and man. The animal is locked up in the concrete reality of its immediate present. Man can think of empty space and empty time. The animal has vague intuitions of quantity, but these are always embodied in concrete things. Man can conceive of abstract num-

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ber. Indeed, man can even watch the interplay between his own body and his vital soul as if he were a third observer. How, it must be asked, is it that man can in this way break out of the prison-house of reality and look down upon it as from a higher vantage point? The answer is that man, by and through the spirit, is capable of suspending, as it were, his vital urge and organism which, if unsuspending, would keep him immersed in the stream of life, as it does the plant and the animal, and that, by and through the spirit, he can act ascetically, say 'no!' to life, and thus rise above it. Man is he that, by conquest of his lower self, can transcend the *hic* and *nunc*, and acquire true *a priori* knowledge.

Thus the person is spirit, and, as spirit, exalted above life. This, certainly, had been the conviction of the young Scheler—understandably so, for it is typical of, and integral to, the Christian tradition which he had upheld and developed in 'Man's Divine Self'; but was it really still the conviction of the older man, the Scheler of 1927? Probably not. Some parts of 'Man's Place in the Universe' certainly suggest that he was holding fast to this position, but others indicate that he was falling away from it. Immediately after defining 'the "person" in man' as 'the centre which is above the contrast of organism and environment', Scheler writes, in one of his most decisive passages: 'Is this not as if there were a progressive development in which a primal reality, in building the world, bends more and more back towards itself, to become, in ever higher forms and in ever new dimensions, aware of itself—and, finally, in man, to have and to grasp itself in all its entirety?' (44).<sup>1</sup> But if the spirit is simply the vital urge when it has come to self-knowledge and self-consciousness, then it is *not* outside life; it is life itself—a very different interpretation. The truth is that, by 1927, Scheler was rapidly sinking into the pantheistic or panentheistic mode of thought which he had fought, tooth and nail, all his life. It is characteristic that he now speaks with a new voice and a new sympathy of his erstwhile adversaries, Spinoza and Hegel (90).

But however Scheler may have conceived of the spirit in his closing days, whether as standing over against life, or as life become conscious, one thing is certain, namely that he did not ascribe to it the smallest particle of power. Pure spirit, he held, is pure impotency. It can only become effective, indeed, it can

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also p. 77. Scheler here says that even spiritual acts must, because of the essential unity of all psychophysical life, have a physiological *and* psychic component. It is not certain whether the word 'spiritual' is here used in its technical connotation, or means simply 'mental'. The context, however, strongly suggests that by 'spiritual acts' Scheler *does* mean acts of the spirit. But how can the acts of the spirit be independent of, and above life, if they are merely aspects of psychophysical processes?

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only manifest itself, if it borrows energy from the lower vital urges of man, bending them, as it were, to its purposes. The utilization by the spirit of energies alien to it Scheler calls, with Freud, sublimation. Using two concepts which, as we shall see, were first applied in his sociological thinking, Scheler defines sublimation as the 'guidance and direction' of the power-stream of the organic impulses by the spirit and the spiritual will. 'Guidance' is the purposive stimulation of some drives and the corresponding lulling to sleep of others, which can be achieved by the conscious supply and the conscious cutting off of ideas and images; 'direction' the resulting inhibition (*non fiat*) and release (*non non fiat*) of spontaneous energies. What man's spirit can *not* do, according to this theory, is fight *directly* against the dark powers of vitality. Weak as it is, it can only lure them in certain directions, or play off one animal tendency against another. Thus the asceticism of which Scheler speaks as the root of our liberation from the trammels of reality, can only be passive and contemplative, not active and conquering. Here, better than anywhere else, we see how far he had drifted from the Christian tradition and become engulfed in Asiatic modes of thought.

With this doctrine of the spirit, Scheler believed he had found a way out of the age-old conflict of the idealist and materialist traditions. Materialism—the 'negative' theory—erred when it regarded the spirit as such a product of sublimation, for who or what is to start that process of sublimation unless it is the spirit itself which is thus, illogically, presupposed? But whereas the spirit is a pre-existing entity, an attribute of absolute reality, of the very ground of things, it is in itself powerless, and that is where idealism—the 'classical' theory—falls down; when, for instance, in its Greek form, it ascribes to ideas an irreducible power and potency and influence in the world.

Although this new philosophy may have given some satisfaction to Scheler's intellect, it cannot have been more than cold comfort for his heart. An unmistakably pessimistic mood lies over the pages of 'Man's Place in the Universe'. 'Short-lived and rare are the flowering periods of culture in human history,' he writes with a tragic pen. 'Short-lived and rare is beauty in its tenderness and vulnerability' (66). But this pessimism is more than a mood: it has congealed into a theory, even a law. This law was formulated with great pungency by Nicolai Hartmann whom Scheler quotes: 'The higher categories of being and value are in themselves the weaker ones' (65). Is not the inorganic world independent of the organic, while the organic is dependent on it? Is not the plant independent of the animal, while the animal depends upon the plant? Are not both plants and animals independent of man

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whereas man depends heavily on them? And is not the inert mass of society relatively independent of the genius, whereas the genius can live only if he is tolerated by the mass? Wherever we look, we perceive the same picture: the higher forms of existence can only realize themselves through the powers of the lower ones.

It is abundantly clear that this world-view is utterly irreconcilable with any kind of theism. The idea of a creator-spirit who, by his powerful command, calls forth the world from the void, seemed to Scheler now the height of absurdity. He, who had followed the footsteps of St. Augustine, of Pascal, and of Cardinal Newman, has become a downright atheist. And, like most atheists, he is aggressive. Religion, he now declares, is no more than a sop for weaklings, unknown to, and not needed by, the strong.

For why is it that religions have arisen? They have arisen because the spirit of man, once it has objectified everything, once it has taken up its stand outside the confines of the concrete universe, feels utterly lonely and lost and thus longs for salvation and security. This salvation and security—alas! a purely delusionary one—is achieved with the aid of man's excessive imagination, which is one of his natural endowments and easily produces all sorts of phantasmagorias to which man can look for support—which cover up, as it were, the yawning depths of nothingness. Thus religion may have helped man in his difficulties, but it has not given him, as metaphysics does, the truth.

What Scheler, in the latter days of his life, envisaged to be the metaphysical truth, can perhaps be summed up in the following manner. Absolute reality—the *ens per se*—contains two elements, one low, one high; a vital urge and a fullness of ideas and values; *natura naturans* and *deitas*. In the beginning, the spirit (*deitas*) is all powerless. But relations change. In the end, the spirit will have gained the ascendancy. Evolution is a progressive spiritualization of matter and life—a progressive empowering of the logos. In this process, man occupies a central place. In him, the spirit has found itself, and he is capable of consciously embracing the cause of the spirit, thus furthering the ultimate 'realization' of the eternal deity. Scheler, as can be seen, was now preaching a *becoming god*.

With this metaphysic, Scheler recalls certain phases in the philosophical development of his great contemporary Henri Bergson. Both regarded the universe as a 'machine for the making of gods.'<sup>1</sup> Both must have asked themselves at one crucial moment whether the *élan vital* comes from God, or is god. But in the ultimate answer to this decisive question, the two thinkers disagreed. Bergson increasingly embraced the former, the theistic alternative; he died

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1932 (Engl. ed., 1935), end.

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on the threshold of the Catholic Church. Scheler travelled in the opposite direction. He sank deeper and deeper into materialism, scepticism and atheism, and it is perhaps not altogether fanciful to suggest that his untimely, all-too-early death was not entirely unconnected with the growing despair that had taken hold of his mind.

### IV

From the very first moment of his career, Scheler was as vitally interested in sociology as he was in the various philosophical disciplines to whose development he later contributed. Already the book on *The Formalistic Principle in Ethics* contains, beside all its ethical speculation, a good deal of positive and descriptive sociology. The present survey, brief as it is bound to be, can only speak of two important sociological ideas contained in Scheler's earlier works, though there are several others that would be well worth considering—his concept of collective responsibility, and his concept of historical relativity, out of which his technical 'sociology of knowledge' was ultimately to develop.

The concept of collective responsibility stands on the borderline between sociology and ethics. It is as much a fact as a postulate. We not only *should feel* co-responsible for all that happens in our society, we *are* so, whether we like it or not, and whether we are aware of it or not. The connection between cause and effect does not depend on man's ability to discern it—in morals as little as in physics. 'There is no moral motion, however small, which would not—like the stone that falls into the water—produce infinite circles, and even these circles become finally invisible only for the naked and unaided eye. Already the physicist can trace them much further—and how far the all-knowing God! The love of A to B awakens not only—if there is no inhibiting cause—a corresponding love in B to A, but it naturally causes an increase, in the heart of the responding B, of the warmth- and life-giving power of loving in general, hence also of his love to C and D; and thus the wave travels on in the moral universe from C to D to E and F—into infinity. And the same applies to hate, injustice, immodesty, and every kind of sin. Every one of us has been an active participant in an uncountable number of good and bad things of which he does not have, and indeed cannot have, any knowledge, and for which he is none-the-less co-responsible before God' (*Vom Ewigen* I, 158). This consideration not only underpins 'the great principle of the solidarity of all the children of Adam in responsibility, guilt and merit' (*ibid.*, 44), but it also opens up a deep and true insight into the underground criss-crossing of

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social forces, on which the degree of social control and harmony achieved in any society depends, and which it is the duty of the sociologist to lay bare.

The realization that the ideas of the past cannot be properly understood unless they are seen against the background of their contemporary conditions, and that many of them cannot be understood at all unless they are so seen, belongs to the oldest possessions of the social sciences; yet only in Scheler's hands did it turn from an empty common-place into a significant sociological principle. He will live on as the founder of the sociology of knowledge, if for no other of his achievements. In discussing Scheler's attitude to the proofs for the existence of God, we spoke of his antagonism to the Neothomists, but we did not mention any antagonism to St. Thomas himself. There was hardly any such antagonism. The reason for this lay in Scheler's sympathetic penetration of the situation which confronted the great philosopher-saint. He realized that in the thirteenth century the cosmological proof was by no means so unconvincing as it is today. Today the creatureliness of the creature, which is the foundation of the whole argument, is not admitted because it is not perceived, and without this initial insight all that follows is bound to be no more than an empty show of cleverness. But at the height of the Middle Ages, the creatureliness of the creature was no problem; it was a matter of course, because the whole atmosphere was drenched, as it were, in theistic sentiment. St. Thomas did not argue in a circle when he derived the existence of the Creator from the existence of the creature: that the creature was, in fact and in truth, a created being—presupposing, implying, demanding a Creator—was not doubted; it was a conviction which formed part and parcel of the unconscious metaphysic of the age. Why then were the rational proofs for the existence of God developed at all? Because, Scheler says, the thirteenth century was the first to be interested in suchlike exercises of the intellect. It was the beginning of the bourgeois age, and the bourgeois, even at that early date, was already a rationalist in the egg-shell, the scientist at the larval stage. It was to satisfy his bent of mind that St. Thomas showed how religion could be justified before the judgement seat of reason if such a justification be desired—a justification which, however, seemed at the time no more than the formal confirmation of what was beyond material doubt anyway.

This explanation of Thomist rationalism from the point of view of its social setting, shows already the specific method of the sociology of knowledge which was later so admirably perfected and so deftly utilized by Scheler and his school. But Scheler always read the equation between social fact and social thought—between



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Marx's substructure and superstructure—from *either* side. If certain social situations demand certain ideas as their natural modes of expression, certain ideas on their part command certain social forms in which they can appropriately embody themselves. Scheler's discussion, in *Vom Ewigen im Menschen* (II, 409 seq.), of pantheism is a case in point. Pantheism, he explains, is necessarily aristocratic. Where God is not regarded as a personal God who reveals Himself to all who love Him, but as an impersonal and mysterious X that is visible only in and through reality, there the idea must and will arise that the scholars, the scientists, the intellectuals have the closest knowledge of supernatural things, or at any rate a closer knowledge than the common run of men. And, in point of fact, pantheism has historically tended, wherever it has appeared, to make a distinction between the religion of philosophers and the religion of the masses, a distinction quite clearly contained, for instance, in Spinoza's system of ideas. Thus ideas shape social relationships, just as social relationships shape ideas, and in the elaboration of the former connection and causation (if the word be permitted) Scheler showed much originality of mind and achieved great success in his pioneering.

The mature fruits of these seeds of thought are to be found in Scheler's work, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, published in 1926. It is perhaps some indication of the importance of this book to say that it led to a complete reassessment of the two great sociological theories which had dominated the nineteenth century, and which were left as its main heritage to the twentieth: Marx's 'historical materialism' and Comte's 'law of the three stages'. Of course, these theories had been repeatedly impugned before 1926: indeed, yet another exposure of their oneness and error would have been a useless flogging of dead horses. But Scheler's treatment of both Comte and Marx was highly original. He saw in them pioneers whose thoughts were well worth re-thinking—who had indeed become bogged down in error when they set out to find the truth, but who had all the same been on the way, and who had posed problems for which sociology must find some answer, if it was to be a true science of social life.

Scheler had no quarrel with Marx's general contention that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary their social existence which determines their consciousness. What he objected to was the equation, so characteristic of Marxian thought, of 'social existence' with 'mode of production'. What, he asked, did Marx really mean when he spoke of *Produktionsverhältnisse*, or relations of production, as the ultimately determining element of the mental life? There are, he urges, at least four different meanings which can be given to that somewhat

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problematic term. It can either mean the human relationships characteristic of certain forms of economic enterprise; or it can mean the legal forms, say, the forms of property, at the basis of a definite social order; or it can, and often does, mean, phenomena dependent on the contemporary state of technological development; or again, class relationships in the narrower sense of the word, relationships between social groupings ranked as higher and lower. The Marxians will, of course, argue that these four elements cannot usefully be separated, since they are simply four facets of one and the same complex of facts; but then *all* contemporary phenomena are facets of one and the same complex of facts. A determinist doctrine ought to say what determines and what is determined, and if it fails in this task, it has failed altogether.

Returning to the Marxian starting-point, Scheler tried to approach the problem set by Marx in an entirely new, unbiased and balanced spirit. He accepts the division of that configurational unity which we call a society into a substructure and a superstructure, but he defines the terms differently and more comprehensively than Marx. Every human act, it is true, has its mental and its material component; yet we are justified in distinguishing actions which are predominantly cultural and ultimately directed towards 'ideal' ends and purposes, and actions which are predominantly determined by natural facts and urges, and aim at some tangible transformation of external reality. The former work themselves out in the world of ideas, the latter in the material world. These, and the institutions in which they are embodied, constitute what Scheler calls the substructure, the former the superstructure. To the substructure, then, belong first of all the great drives which are active in the human world, those for food, sex satisfaction and power, for instance: but also all other objective bases of society, such as there are—racial inheritance, geographical environment, power-political set-up and economic conditions. The substructure is in this way, for Scheler, the sphere of relative necessity, whereas the superstructure, where human expectations, volitions, ideas, ideals, and phantasmagorias play their part, is the field of relative freedom. Either of these halves of social reality has its own immanent and independent tendencies: both contribute in their measure to the reality which emerges from their co-operation and their conflict. But in what measure? Is the one the seal, the other the wax—the one determining, the other determined?

'It is the fundamental mistake of all materialistic interpretations of history', Scheler writes in reply to this question (*loc. cit.*, 31), 'that they attribute to the material factors (*Realfaktoren*) . . . be it race, geo-political structure, political power-relationships, or conditions of economic production, the power univocally to determine

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the world of ideality such as we see it incarnated in the works of the spirit . . .' But, he goes on to say, 'it is the at least equally great error of all ideological, idealistic and individualistic conceptions of history, that they on their part imagine they can understand the history of material events and institutions, and of the state of the masses, be it directly or indirectly, as a simple prolongation of the history of the spirit'. Both protagonists in this discussion err. What happens is in point of fact more complicated than either of them would suppose. According to Scheler, the material factors determine which of the ideas thrown up by the stream of cultural development will come to influence and fruition; they are a selective agency; they 'open and close the sluices of the spiritual stream' (32). The blind tendencies of material development, on the other hand, can come under the 'guidance' and 'direction' (*Leitung und Lenkung*) of the human will, of human ideas and ideals. If the spirit can make use of some pre-existing, independently existing, tendency, i.e. of some fund of material energy, it can exert a very real influence on what is happening. Following Comte, Scheler speaks of a 'fatalité modifiable' of external history (*Realgeschichte*), to which there corresponds, on the part of the spirit, a 'liberté modifiable,' a freedom which, however unrestricted it may be internally, is limited by the objective constellation of the material forces, when it comes to excursions into the outside world.

The problem, of course, remains, in spite of this ingenious, and, it should seem, realistic theory. *How* modifiable is blind necessity? how *great* is the influence of the spirit? Scheler gave different answers to this question at different times, according to the stage he had reached in his descent towards the position expressed in *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*. In 1926, when the book under discussion was published, this process had already gone very far, yet Scheler was still ascribing considerable reality-shaping power to the spirit. Both eastern and western society, he points out, held initially the same seeds of technological development, yet whereas the west allowed them to unfold, they withered away and came to nothing in the east. The reason, Scheler asserts, lay in the different direction taken by the eastern and the western ethos, and by metaphysical and religious thought. Both were marked by a strong will to domination, but in the east it struck inward as it were, in the west outward. In the east, the main aim was to achieve control over the automatic motions of the soul and the processes of the body—the Indian ideal; in the west, to achieve control over the external forces of nature—an ideal traceable in the last analysis to the Jewish conception of the Deity as a Creator and Constructor, whose work man has to carry onward by sub-