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MAX SCHELER

Dan Zahavi

I. SCHELER'S LIFE AND WORK

Max Ferdinand Scheler was born in Munich on August 22, 1874 and brought up in an orthodox Jewish household.¹ After completing high school in 1894, he started to study medicine, philosophy, and psychology. He studied with Theodor Lipps in Munich, with Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey in Berlin, and with Rudolf Eucken in Jena,² where he received his doctorate in 1897 with a thesis entitled *Beiträge zur Feststellung der Beziehungen zwischen den logischen und ethischen Prinzipien* (Contributions to an appraisal of the relations between the logical and ethical principles). Two years later this was followed by his habilitation thesis on *Die transzendente und die psychologische Methode*. In 1902, Scheler met Edmund Husserl for the first time at a reception in Halle given by Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933), the editor of *Kant-Studien*. Their discussion mainly turned on the relation between intuition and perception.³ It was a meeting that

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1. Max Ferdinand Scheler (August 22, 1874– May 19, 1928; born Munich, Germany; died in Frankfurt) was educated at the Universities of Munich, Berlin, and Jena (1894–97), wrote his dissertation at the University of Jena (1897), and took his habilitation at the University of Jena (1899). His influences were Pascal, *Kant*, *Nietzsche*, Dilthey, Eucken, *Bergson*, and *Husserl*, and he held appointments at the Universities of Jena (1900–1905), Munich (1907–10), Cologne (1919–28), and Frankfurt am Main (1928).
 2. Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) was a prominent philosopher and psychologist known today mainly for his work on empathy. Georg Simmel (1858–1918) was an influential sociologist, and Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926) a philosopher, known mainly for his principle of ethical activism, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1908.
 3. M. Scheler, *Die deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart, Gesammelte Werke Band 7* (Bern/Munich: Francke, 1973), 308.

would prove quite decisive for Scheler. As he was subsequently to write in the preface of *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, “I owe the methodological consciousness of the unity and sense of the phenomenological attitude to the work of Husserl,” but as he then also continues, “I take full responsibility for the manner in which I understand and execute this attitude.”⁴

Scheler is notorious for his rather tumultuous private life. In 1899, Scheler converted to Catholicism and married Amélie von Dewitz-Krebs; it was an unhappy marriage that quickly fell apart, allegedly because of Scheler’s many love affairs. In 1905–6, marital problems led to a public scandal that as a result had Scheler’s wife confined in a psychiatric institution, whereas Scheler was forced to relinquish his teaching position in Jena and move to Munich. One consequence of this move was that Scheler was able to join the Munich Phenomenological Circle. This group consisted of students of Lipps ([282] Conrad, Daubert, von Hildebrand, Geiger, and Pfänder) who had all been devoted to phenomenology since the publication of Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* [283]. In the meantime, Scheler’s unhappy marriage dragged on, and in 1910 as the result of yet another debacle, where his wife publicly accused Scheler of amoral behavior, Scheler lost his position, and had to begin earning his income as a free lecturer, essayist, and publicist. From 1910 to 1911, Scheler lectured in Göttingen, where he met with the Göttingen phenomenologists (including [284] Conrad-Martius, Hering, Ingarden, Koyré, and Reinach). Edith Stein was at this point one of his students. In 1912 Scheler finally managed to obtain a divorce, and shortly afterwards he married Märit Furtwängler – the sister of the noted conductor – and left for Berlin.⁵

Scheler had by then managed to establish himself as a phenomenological voice to count on, and in 1913 he was asked by Husserl to become co-editor of the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* together with Pfänder, Geiger, and Reinach. It was in this venue that both parts of his *Formalismus* were published in 1913 and 1916, respectively. In 1913 he also published the work *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass* (later republished in an extended version in 1923 under the better-known title *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*).

Scheler’s reputation continued to increase and by the end of the First World War he was considered one of the most influential Catholic thinkers in Germany. After a short interim, where Scheler joined the German Foreign Office as a diplomat in Geneva and The Hague, he was in 1919 invited by Konrad Adenauer

4. M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward a Foundation of An Ethical Personalism*, M. S. Frings and R. L. Funk (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), xi.

*5. The work of many of the phenomenologists mentioned in this paragraph is touched on in the essay by Diane Perpich elsewhere in this volume.

– then mayor in Cologne – to become one of the directors of the newly founded *Forschungsinstitut für Sozialwissenschaft* and at the same time professor of philosophy in Cologne. Shortly after taking up the position, however, Scheler publicly distanced himself from the Catholic faith. This alienated him not only from his erstwhile supporters in Cologne, but also from many of his phenomenological colleagues who, owing to his influence, had converted to Catholicism. In the same period, Scheler fell in love with a young student, Maria Scheu. In 1923, he divorced his second wife and married Scheu the following year, a move that did little to improve his popularity in Catholic circles. During these years, Scheler’s reputation as a phenomenologist continued to grow; he was the first of the leading phenomenologists to be invited to visit France, in 1924 and again in 1926, and his 1923 text *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* was the first work of phenomenology to appear in French translation, published in 1928 as *Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle*. In 1928 Scheler was offered the chair in philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt. He accepted the position with pleasure, looking forward to future collaboration with thinkers such as Ernst Cassirer, Karl Mannheim, and Rudolf Otto, but on May 19, 1928, he died suddenly of heart failure. In his eulogy, Heidegger would praise him as “the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such.”⁶

When reading Scheler, one is struck by the scope of his references. It is more wide-ranging than what one will find, for instance, in Husserl or Heidegger. The sources he drew on included not only classics from the history of Western philosophy as well as contemporary empirical research, but also works by figures such as Buddha, Freud, Muhammad, Goethe, Lao Tzu, Darwin, and Tagore.

When Scheler died in 1928 many of his writings still remained unpublished. The publication of his posthumous writings commenced in 1933, but the enterprise came to a sudden halt with the rise of Nazism, which suppressed and banned Scheler’s work owing to his Jewish background. Their publication resumed in 1954.

II. PHENOMENOLOGY AS EIDETIC ANALYSIS

Scheler worked on a wide variety of different topics, and it is impossible to do justice to them all in a short overview such as this.⁷ However, in his late text *Die*

6. M. Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, M. Heim (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 50.

7. For an excellent general introduction, see A. Sander, *Max Scheler zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2001).

Stellung des Menschen in Kosmos, Scheler writes that the question concerning the ontological status of man had been central to him since the beginnings of his philosophical career, and that he had spent more time on this question than on any other.⁸ Given Scheler's recognized status as a phenomenologist and as a pioneer of philosophical anthropology, these two domains will constitute the focal points in the following presentation. I shall start with a brief account of Scheler's phenomenological methodology, and then in turn discuss his concept of person, his description of the nature of sociality, and the in-depth analysis of expression and empathy found in *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. This selection, which pays scant attention to his value theory, is motivated by what I take to constitute Scheler's more enduring contribution, and also reflects the manner in which Scheler was received and discussed by contemporary and subsequent phenomenologists such as [286] Stein, Husserl, Heidegger, Schutz, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.⁹

Scheler's understanding of phenomenology has many affinities with the early reception of Husserl's writings by the Munich and Göttingen phenomenologists. Scheler took the guiding idea of phenomenology to be the clear distinction between the essential and the existential, between the essence and the fact.¹⁰ He consequently (mis)read Husserl's phenomenological reduction to be a question of ignoring the *hic et nunc* of objects in order to focus on their essential features. To put it differently, Scheler read Husserl's phenomenological reduction as an eidetic reduction, thereby disregarding the distinctly transcendental aspects of Husserl's enterprise. Indeed, rather than seeing phenomenology as a form of transcendental philosophy, Scheler primarily conceived of it as an intuitively based eidetic discipline.¹¹ For the same reason, Scheler distanced himself from Husserl's *Ideas I* [287], which Scheler characterized as a turn towards epistemological idealism and as a curbing of phenomenology to a mere eidetics of consciousness.¹²

Phenomenology is supposed to provide a rigorous intuitive method that will allow for the disclosure of *a priori* structures. This intuitive basis was stressed to such an extent by Scheler that his definition of phenomenology must count as decidedly anti-hermeneutical. On his account, the aim of phenomenology is to describe the given in as direct, unprejudiced, and pure a manner as possible,

8. M. Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Darmstadt: Otto Reichl Verlag, 1928), 9. [285]

9. To illustrate (but see also the concluding section of this overview), of the six thinkers mentioned, the most extensive discussion of Scheler is found in a paper by Alfred Schutz entitled "Scheler's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the General Thesis of the Alter Ego."

10. Scheler, *Die deutsche Philosophie*, 307.

11. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 48; *Die deutsche Philosophie*, 308.

12. *Ibid.*, 311.

thereby allowing for a disclosure of its essence. As he writes in one of his posthumously published writings, phenomenology has achieved its goal when “there is no longer any transcendence and any symbol left.”¹³ Indeed, on his view, whereas non-phenomenological experience is experience through or by means of symbols and hence remains a mediated experience that never gives us the things themselves, phenomenological experience is in principle non-symbolic. It alone yields facts themselves in an immediate and unmediated fashion. In phenomenological experience nothing is meant that is not given and nothing is given that is not meant: phenomenological experience contains no transcendence.¹⁴

Scheler’s strength as a phenomenological thinker is undoubtedly to be found in his concrete analyses – in particular in his analyses of emotional life and sociality – rather than in his methodological considerations. It is for this very reason remarkable that he was quite explicit in his rejection and ridicule of what he termed “picture-book phenomenology,” namely, the view that phenomenology should primarily be concerned with various eidetic analyses, and that any overarching systematization and systematic ambition should be avoided since it inevitably would involve distortions of the phenomena to be investigated.¹⁵

III. THE CONCEPT OF PERSON

According to Scheler, the task of philosophical anthropology is to show how all specifically human products, abilities and activities are rooted in the fundamental ontological structures of man.¹⁶ What then, on his account, uniquely characterizes human existence?

Scheler accepts the classical distinction between inorganic (or inanimate) being on the one hand and living creatures on the other. Whereas inorganic being lacks any kind of individual unity and interiority (*Innesein*) – it is in no way for-itself (*für-sich*) – all living creatures possess these features; they are more than merely objects for external observers. Scheler ultimately distinguishes three different levels of living creatures. At the bottom, we find plants, who although they possess unity and individuality (if you cut a plant in two, you destroy it), and even a certain interiority and expressivity (plants can appear as languishing, vigorous, etc.), lack both consciousness and self-consciousness. Next we find animals, who possess consciousness but who at the same time are bound to the environment. At the top level, we find human beings, who possess both

13. M. Scheler, *Schriften aus dem Nachlaß I: Zur Ethik und Erkenntnislehre, Gesammelte Werke Band 10* (Bern: Francke, 1957), 386. [\[288\]](#)

14. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 50–51.

15. *Ibid.*, xix.

16. Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, 86.

consciousness and self-consciousness, and who in contrast to animals are not caught up in the world, but rather retain a certain distance from it: a distance that also enables them to objectify entities. To put it differently, in order to apperceive the given as objects, it is necessary to distance oneself somewhat from it. The ability to do so is a distinctive feature of human beings. Thus, on Scheler's account, among all creatures human beings alone are able to distance themselves from the world and to objectify the world (and themselves). What provides human beings with this ability? The fact that human beings are spiritual creatures. Indeed, what characterizes human beings as human is precisely the presence of spirit (*Geist*). It is our spirituality that makes our human life highly independent of drives and independent of the attachment to a specific environment. It is our spirituality that allows us to transform and transcend the closed environment and makes us open to the world (*Weltoffen*).¹⁷ As he puts it at one point, man is "the one who can say 'no', the ascetic of life, the eternal protestant against all mere reality."¹⁸

Scheler next argues that the center from which human beings are able to perform these objectifying acts cannot be a part of the world, but must rather be appreciated as an aspatial and atemporal dimension.¹⁹ Indeed, for Scheler the spiritual center or source of intentional acts – which he also calls the *person* – is not only not a substance or thing, but is in its core non-objectifiable.²⁰ This holds true not only for our own personal being, but also for other persons. We cannot objectify them without losing them as other persons.²¹

Despite his occasional reference to the Kantian idea of a transcendental subject, however, Scheler's notion of person differs in certain crucial aspects. For Scheler, the person is not some posited supra-individual principle behind or outside the immediately given. Rather, the person is the immediate co-experienced unity of experiencing. The person only exists and lives in the accomplishment or performance of intentional acts.²² Furthermore, every person is individuated as a person, and not merely by virtue of their bodies, their spatio-temporal locations, and the content of experience. Indeed, for Scheler persons are absolute individuals in the sense that they and they alone are individuated in terms of themselves. So far, Scheler's concept of person might be different from Kant's but it seems to retain a high degree of formality. However, Scheler also claims that the possession of a fully sound mind is a prerequisite for being

17. *Ibid.*, 39.

18. *Ibid.*, 56.

19. *Ibid.*, 80.

20. *Ibid.*, 64, 79.

21. *Ibid.*, 49.

22. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 371, 386.

a person.²³ On this account, animals as well as children, madmen, and slaves (!) are not persons. Your thoughts and actions must be bound by a unity of sense, must constitute parts of one meaningful life, if you are to qualify as a person. You must be the source of your own decisions, feelings and thoughts; you must enjoy control and mastery over your own body.²⁴

IV. SCHELER ON EMPATHY

Scheler's work *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923) is frequently listed as an example of a phenomenological investigation of emotional life. But in addition to presenting us with careful analyses of various emotional phenomena, the work must also be considered a significant contribution to the phenomenology of sociality and social cognition. It is no coincidence that Scheler at the outset states that the problem of how we understand other minds is a foundational problem for the human sciences. It is one that must be resolved if we are to determine the scientific status of history, psychology, sociology, and so on, with any degree of adequacy.²⁵

According to Scheler, sociality is not primarily a theoretical matter; rather, it is an essential aspect of our emotional life. Indeed, a fundamental Pascalian claim of Scheler's is that our emotions are characterized by an *a priori* content and are subject to *a priori* laws and that one must recognize an *a priori* "order of the heart" or "logic of the heart."²⁶ It is in connection with his analysis of this emotional *a priori* that Scheler makes the claim that "all morally relevant acts, experiences, and states, in so far as they contain an intentional reference to other moral persons" (acts such as obligation, responsibility, loving, promising, etc.), "refer, by the very nature of the acts themselves, to other people," without implying that such others must already have been previously encountered in concrete experience (NS 229). Hence our relation to the other is not some empirical fact; on the contrary, the concrete experience of others presupposes an *a priori* relatedness to one another, and simply represents the unfolding of this possibility.²⁷

Scheler elaborates on this by stating that every finite person is as originally a member of a community as he is an individual. A human being does not live a communal life with other persons "from pure accident"; rather, being a (finite)

23. *Ibid.*, 476.

24. *Ibid.*, 479.

25. M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, P. Heath (trans.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), xlvi–xlix. Hereafter cited as NS followed by the page number.

26. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 63.

27. *Ibid.*, 535.

person as such “is just as originally a matter of being ... ‘together’” as it is a matter of being-for-oneself.²⁸ Thus, the experience of belonging to a community is just as fundamental as self-experience and world-experience, and the intention “in the direction of community” exists completely independently of whether or not it finds fulfillment in a contingent experience of others. Scheler illustrates this idea by speaking of an epistemological Robinson Crusoe. Such a figure would be aware of his relatedness to an intersubjective community even if he had never had a concrete experience of others, and, indeed, would possess such an awareness by virtue of his experience of an emptiness or absence or lack in the fulfillment of intentions such as loving, promising, requesting, obeying, and so on, which can only form an objective unity of sense “*in conjunction with the possibility of a social response*” (NS 235) [289].

Scheler obviously considers the relation between I and community to be essential. But what kind of justification might we have for positing the real *de facto* existence of a specific other? How is the other given? To answer this question, we need to take a closer look at Scheler’s analysis of empathy. Let us start by considering two groups of cases discussed by Scheler.

Consider first the situation where you see the face of a crying child, but rather than seeing it as expressing discomfort or distress, you merely see a certain distortion of the facial muscles, that is, you basically do not see it as emotionally expressive. Compare this (pathological case) with the situation where you see the same face as emotionally expressive, but without feeling any compassion, that is, while remaining indifferent. And finally consider the situation where you also feel compassion or concern for the child. For Scheler, the last situation counts as a case of sympathy, which he considers an ethically relevant act. But in order to feel sympathy – in order to feel compassion with, say, somebody’s suffering – you need to realize or recognize that the other is indeed suffering. More basic than sympathy is what Scheler terms *Nachfühlen*, which I in the following will render as *empathy*.²⁹ In short, whereas empathy has to do with

28. M. Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, B. Noble (trans.) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 373.

29. Unfortunately, Scheler does not stick to a single term when referring to this basic form of understanding. Rather, he uses terms such as *Nachfühlen* (reproduction of feeling), *Nachleben* (reproduction of experience), *Nacherleben* (visualizing of experience), *Verstehen* (understanding), and *Fremdwahrnehmung* (perception of other minds) (NS 9, 238). In some of the cases, the English translation might not be ideal, but Scheler himself must also be blamed for the inevitable confusion. How can *Nachfühlen* and *Fremdwahrnehmung* refer to one and the same phenomenon? As we shall see in a moment, Scheler rejects the view that our understanding of the emotional experience of others is based on an imitation or reproduction of the emotion in question, but why does he then himself use a term like *Nachfühlen*? The fact remains, however, that Scheler is quite unequivocal in his rejection of the view that our understanding of the emotional experiences of others requires us to have the same emotion

a basic understanding of expressive others, sympathy adds care or concern for the other.

Now, apart from stressing the difference between empathy and sympathy, the point of Scheler's example is also to make it clear that it is possible to empathize with somebody without feeling any sympathy (NS 8–9). Just think of the skilled interrogator or the sadist. Sadistic cruelty does not consist merely in failing to notice the other's pain, but in empathically enjoying it (NS 14).

Consider now a second group of cases. You might enter a bar and be swept over by the jolly atmosphere. A distinctive feature of what is known as *emotional contagion* is that you literally catch the emotion in question (NS 15). It is transferred to you. It becomes your own emotion. Indeed you can be infected by the jolly or angry mood of others without even being aware of them as distinct individuals. But this is precisely what makes emotional contagion different from both empathy and sympathy. In empathy and sympathy, the experience you empathically understand or sympathetically care for remains that of the other. In both of the latter cases, the focus is on the other, the distance between self and other is preserved and upheld. Another distinctive feature of emotional contagion is that it concerns the emotional quality rather than the object of the emotion. You can be infected by cheerfulness or hilarity, without knowing what it is about. This is what makes emotional contagion different from what Scheler calls *emotional sharing*. Consider the situation where a father and mother stand next to the corpse of a beloved child. For Scheler, this situation exemplifies the possibility of sharing both an emotion (sorrow or despair) and the object of the emotion. But emotional sharing must on its part still be distinguished from both empathy and sympathy. Consider the situation where a common friend approaches the despairing parents. He can empathize or more likely sympathize with their sorrow, without himself experiencing the despair in question, which is why his state of mind differs qualitatively from either of theirs. Indeed their sorrow and his empathy or sympathy are clearly two distinct states. Their sorrow is the intentional object of his empathy or sympathy (NS 12–13) On Scheler's account, empathy is not simply a question of an intellectual judgment that somebody else is undergoing a certain experience. It is not the mere thought that this

ourselves (NS 9–10), and one must consequently simply note that his choice of terms left something to be desired. For want of a better term, I have decided to use "empathy" as the best way of capturing what Scheler was referring to when he spoke of a basic experience of others. "Empathy" is usually considered the standard translation of *Einfühlung*, and it so happens that Scheler himself only used the latter term rather sparingly, and, when he did, frequently rather dismissively. However, Scheler's reservation was mainly due to his dissatisfaction with Lipps's projective theory of empathy, and it is telling that other contemporary phenomenologists, including Stein, also referred to Scheler's theory of empathy (*Einfühlung*); see E. Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, W. Stein (trans.) (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989), 27.

is the case; rather, Scheler clearly defends the view that we are empathically able to *experience* other minds (NS 9). It is no coincidence that Scheler repeatedly speaks of the perception of others (*Fremdwahrnehmung*), and even entitles his own theory a *perceptual theory of other minds* (NS 220). Empathy is a basic, irreducible, form of intentionality that is directed toward the experiences of others. It is a question of understanding other experiencing subjects. But this does not entail that the other's experience is literally transmitted to us. It does not entail that we share his or her experience, and it does not entail that we ourselves undergo, say, the emotion we observe in the other. It might – as a consequence – but it is not a requisite. We might encounter a furious neighbor and become furious ourselves, but our empathic understanding of our neighbor's emotion might also elicit a quite different response, namely, the feeling of fear.

To sum up, on Scheler's account empathy neither involves some kind of analogical inference, nor some kind of projection, simulation, or imitation (NS 12). In fact, Scheler insists that it is necessary to reject the projective theory of empathy in all its forms (NS xlvi), and he is also very dismissive of the attempt to account for the experience of others in terms of some imaginative transformation. In basic empathy, the focus is on the other, on his thoughts and feelings, and not on myself, not on how it would be like for me to be in the shoes of the other (NS 39).

V. ANALOGY AND EXPRESSION

Scheler's investigation of empathy and social understanding is restricted to the personal level. He is not concerned with the various sub-personal mechanisms that might be involved in interpersonal understanding. His main objection against competing theories seems to be that they are phenomenologically inadequate and that they fail to do justice to our actual experience. On this basis, it might be natural to conclude that his project is exclusively descriptive. It seeks to describe how we experience other minds, but it does not address the normative question concerning the justification or validity of that experience. But this is a mistake. Not only does Scheler provide more systematic arguments against the appeal to analogical inference, but ultimately he also seeks to provide an account of the nature of experience that makes it comprehensible how we can experience other minds, and why such an experience can be justified.

According to Scheler, the argument from analogy presupposes that which it is meant to explain. In order for the argument to work, there has to be a similarity between the way in which my own body is given to me, and the way in which the body of the other is given to me. But if I am to see a similarity between, say, my laughing or crying and the laughing or crying of somebody else, I need

to understand the bodily gestures and behavior as expressive phenomena, as manifestations of joy or pain, and not simply as physical movements. If such an understanding is required for the argument of analogy to proceed, however, the argument presupposes that which it is supposed to establish. To put it differently, in some cases we do employ analogical lines of reasoning, but we only do so when we are already convinced that we are facing minded creatures but are simply unsure about precisely how we are to interpret the expressive phenomena in question (NS 240).

In addition, Scheler questions two of the basic presuppositions behind the argument from analogy. First, it assumes that my point of departure is my own consciousness. This is what is at first given to me in a quite direct and unmediated fashion, and it is this purely mental self-experience that is then taken to precede and make possible the recognition of others. One is at home in oneself and one then has to project into the other, who one does not know, what one already finds in oneself. Incidentally, this implies that one is able to understand those psychological states only in others that one has already experienced in oneself. Secondly, the argument also assumes that we never have direct access to another person's mind. We can never *experience* her thoughts or feelings. We can only infer that they must exist based on that which is actually given to us, namely, her bodily behavior. Although both of these two assumptions might seem perfectly obvious, Scheler rejects both. As he points out, as philosophers it is our duty to question the obvious. We should pay attention to what is actually given, rather than letting some theory dictate what can be given (NS 244). On his view, the argument from analogy underestimates the difficulties involved in self-experience and overestimates the difficulties involved in the experience of others (NS 244–6). We should not ignore what can be directly perceived about others and we should not fail to acknowledge the embodied and embedded nature of self-experience. Scheler consequently denies that our initial self-acquaintance is of a purely mental nature, as if it anteceded our experience of our own expressive movements and actions, and as if it took place in isolation from others. He considers such an initial purely internal self-observation a mere fiction.

Scheler also denies that our basic acquaintance with others is inferential in nature. As he argues, there is something highly problematic about claiming that intersubjective understanding is a two-stage process of which the first stage is the perception of meaningless behavior, and the second an intellectually based attribution of psychological meaning. Scheler argues that we in the face-to-face encounter are neither confronted with a mere body, nor with a pure soul, but with the unity of an embodied mind. He speaks of an “expressive unity” (*Ausdruckseinheit*), and claims that the notion of behavior is a psychophysically undifferentiated concept. It is only subsequently, through a process of abstraction,

that this unity is divided and our interest then proceeds “inwards” toward the merely psychological or “outwards” toward the merely physical (NS 218, 261).

Foreshadowing something that both Sartre and Levinas would later discuss in more detail, Scheler writes that I experience, say, the hostility or love in the expression of another’s gaze long before I can specify the color of his eyes (NS 244). Indeed, on Scheler’s account, our primary knowledge of nature is knowledge of expressive phenomena. He finds this claim corroborated by newborns’ preferential interest for expressive faces and human voices. This knowledge of a living world is taken to precede our knowledge of a dead and mechanical world. So for Scheler, it is not the case that we first see inanimate objects and then animate them through a subsequent addition of mental components. Rather, at first we see everything as expressive, and then we go through a process of de-animation. Learning is a question of *Entseelung* (de-animation) rather than *Beseelung* (animation) (NS 239).

To sum up, Scheler opposed the view according to which our encounter with others is first and foremost an encounter with bodily and behavioral exteriorities devoid of any psychological properties. According to such a view, which has been defended by behaviorists and Cartesians alike, behavior, considered in itself, is neither expressive nor significant. All that is *given* is physical qualities and their changes. Seeing a radiant face means seeing certain characteristic distortions of the facial muscles. But as Scheler pointed out, this account presents us with a distorted picture, not only of behavior but also of the mind. It is no coincidence that we use psychological terms to describe behavior and that we would be hard pressed to describe the latter in terms of bare movements. In most cases, it is quite hard (and artificial) to divide a phenomenon neatly into its psychological and behavioral aspect; think, for example, of a groan of pain, a handshake, an embrace, a leisurely stroll. In his view, affective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience; rather, they are given *in* expressive phenomena, that is, they are expressed in bodily gestures and actions, and they thereby become visible to others. Instead of attempting to secure an access to the minded life of others through technical detours, he argued that we need a new understanding of the given. If the realm of expressive phenomena is accepted as the primary datum or primitive stratum of perception, the access to the mind of others will no longer present the same kind of problem. What we see is the body of the other as a field expressive of his or her experiences (NS 10). Indeed, on Scheler’s view, expressive phenomena – in particular facial expressions and gestures, but also verbal expressions – can present us with a direct and non-inferential experience of the emotional life of others. As he eventually put it:

For we certainly believe ourselves to be directly acquainted with another person’s joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in

his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection, with his rage in the gnashing of his teeth, with his threats in the clenching of his fist, and with the tenor of his thoughts in the sound of his words. If anyone tells me that this is not “perception,” for it cannot be so, in view of the fact that a perception is simply a “complex of physical sensations,” and that there is certainly no sensation of another person’s mind nor any stimulus from such a source, I would beg him to turn aside from such questionable theories and address himself to the phenomenological facts. (NS 260)

It should by now be clear that Scheler took a solution to the problem of other minds to require a correct understanding of the relation between mind and body. And of course, the mind–body relation in question is not the mind–brain relation. Scheler was not concerned with the search for the neural correlates of consciousness. Rather, he was interested in the relation between experience and expressive behavior, and he obviously took the connection to be intimate and essential. He claimed that a repression of the emotional expression will necessarily lead to a reduction of the felt quality of the emotion (NS 251), and he even postulated the existence of what he called a universal grammar of expression, one that enables us to understand – to some extent at least – the expressions of other species, be it the gasping fish or the bird with the broken wing (NS 11, 82).

Despite his emphasis on the extent to which the life of the mind of others is visible in their expressions, Scheler insisted however that we should not commit the mistake of claiming that all aspects of the experiential life of an individual is equally accessible to others. Whereas we in many cases can intuit and even share the other’s beliefs and emotions, there are, on Scheler’s account, two limitations. On the one hand, we cannot literally share bodily sensations like a stomach ache (NS 255). I can have a similar stomach ache, but I cannot have the very same pain sensation as somebody else. On the other hand, although Scheler obviously concedes that we can learn something about the other from his *automatic* and *involuntary* expressions, he also insisted that there is a limit to how far this will get us. If we wish to grasp what Scheler called the intimate spiritual being of the other, that is the essence of his personhood, we need to rely on language and communication. More specifically, Scheler claimed that there will be aspects of the other that will remain concealed and hidden unless the other decides to reveal and communicate it freely (NS 225). Yet, even then, there will remain something ineffable in the other. There is an absolute intimate sphere of foreign personhood that even the act of free communicative intention cannot disclose (NS 66, 219). On some occasions, though, Scheler suggests that love is what can

bring us closest to the essence of foreign individuality. As he would say, drives makes blind, whereas love makes seeing (NS 71, 160).

VI. SCHELER'S RECEPTION BY AND INFLUENCE ON OTHER PHENOMENOLOGISTS

An early sustained engagement with Scheler's theory can be found in Stein's 1916 dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy*. Not surprisingly, her focus is on Scheler's account of how we come to understand others. Although she does raise critical points, her overall appraisal of his theory is positive, and she certainly takes it to constitute an improvement compared to Lipps's projective account of empathy.

After Scheler lost his position in 1910, Husserl wrote him a strong letter of reference, stating that Scheler was no second-rate thinker, but a very sharp, independent and scientifically rigorous scholar.³⁰ In his subsequent private correspondence, however, Husserl repeatedly expressed serious reservations about Scheler's work. Not surprisingly, his main objection concerned methodological issues. In letters to his friend Adolf Grimme (1889–1963) from 1917 and 1918, Husserl complained about Scheler's alleged attempt to hijack phenomenology for his own purposes, and even described Scheler as a genius of reproduction and secondary originality.³¹ Indeed Husserl's main criticism was precisely that Scheler had misunderstood the sense of phenomenology by confusing the phenomenological reduction with the eidetic reduction, thereby missing its true transcendental character in favor of a philosophically naive anthropology.³² In letters to Ingarden from 1927 and 1931, Husserl disputed that Scheler was a true phenomenologist, and made it clear that Scheler and Heidegger were the main targets of his 1931 lecture "Phenomenology and Anthropology" (although Scheler is only mentioned once by name, and Heidegger not at all).³³ In this lecture, Husserl referred very critically to the younger generation of German philosophers, who, inspired by Dilthey's philosophy of life, had turned toward philosophical anthropology and sought to renew philosophy through a focus on concrete existence.

At the beginning of his analysis of being-with (*Mitsein*) in *Being and Time*, Heidegger quoted Scheler's *The Nature of Sympathy* in support of his claim that a clarification of being-in-the-world leads us to the insight that a subject is never

30. E. Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, 232. [290]

31. Husserl, *Briefwechsel III*, 79–81. [291]

32. Husserl, *Briefwechsel VI*, 429, 457, 459. [292]

33. Husserl, *Briefwechsel III*, 232, 273–4. [293]

given in isolation from others.³⁴ But most of Heidegger's discussion of Scheler concerned the latter's analysis of personhood, in particular his attempt to stress the non-objectifiable character of the person.³⁵ According to Heidegger, Scheler failed to think the *being* of the person in a sufficiently radical manner. This criticism is more developed in Heidegger's 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time*. As we have seen above, for Scheler the person exists in the performance of intentional acts. The person is neither a thing nor a substance. But Heidegger asked for a more positive determination of the being of the person, and argued that Scheler remained silent on this and failed to articulate or develop the concept of performance.³⁶

Of the major phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty was probably the one to appraise Scheler's work most positively. *Phenomenology of Perception* contains a number of references to Scheler, but Merleau-Ponty's most extensive reference to Scheler in that book touches on Scheler's conception of expression and on his criticism of the argument from analogy.³⁷ Scheler's contribution to both of these issues is also taken up in Merleau-Ponty's lectures on child psychology at the Sorbonne, where Merleau-Ponty, however, added a critical remark. He claimed that Scheler, in order to make the experience of others possible, ended up defending a kind of panpsychism that led to a denial of the individuation of consciousness and thereby also to a destruction of the very distinction between I and other.³⁸ Although Scheler does at one point write that we can take the existence of emotional identification (*Einsföhlung*) – a limit case of emotional contagion – as an indication of the metaphysical unity of all organic life (NS 73–74), Merleau-Ponty's criticism is nevertheless unjustified, since Scheler is adamant in insisting that the existence of a unity on the level of organic life in no way rules out the *absolute difference* between individual persons (NS 65, 121). Indeed, one of the central findings of Scheler's analysis of empathy was precisely that it presupposes the difference between self and other.³⁹

34. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 109. [294]

35. *Ibid.*, 44.

36. M. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, T. Kisiel (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 126–8. [295]

37. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, C. Smith (trans.) (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 184, 352.

38. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Merleau-Ponty à la Sorbonne* (Grenoble: Cynara, 1988), 41–4.

39. Merleau-Ponty's criticism is nevertheless interesting since it throws an illuminating light on one of Merleau-Ponty's own famous claims, found in *Signs*, where Merleau-Ponty writes: "The solitude from which we emerge to intersubjective life is not that of the monad. It is only the haze of an anonymous life that separates us from being; and the barrier between us and others is impalpable. If there is a break, it is not between me and the other person; it is between a primordial generality we are intermingled in and the precise system, myself-the others. What 'precedes' intersubjective life cannot be numerically distinguished from it, precisely because

Scheler's application of phenomenology to areas such as the emotional and affective domain, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy of religion was instrumental in making phenomenology known and appreciated outside academia. Indeed, in the period between Husserl's *Ideas I* (1913) and Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) – when neither of these thinkers published any major works – Scheler counted in the public eye as the most prominent phenomenologist.⁴⁰ Although Scheler was not a very systematic thinker, he proved a source of inspiration for many contemporaries, including neurologist Paul Schilder (1886–1940), physician and physiologist Viktor von Weizsäcker (1886–1957), psychiatrists Kurt Schneider (1887–1967), Viktor Frankl (1905–97), Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966), psychologist F. J. J. Buytendijk (1887–1974), and sociologists Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985) and Arnold Gehlen (1904–76).⁴¹

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at this level there is neither individuation nor numerical distinction" (*Signs*, R. C. McCleary [trans.] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 174).

40. W. Henckmann, *Max Scheler* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 232.

41. Indeed, Gehlen argued that Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* constituted the point of departure for modern philosophical anthropology; "Rückblick auf die Philosophie Max Schelers," in *Max Scheler im Gegenwartsgeschehen der Philosophie*, P. Good (ed.) (Bern: Francke, 1975), 188.