

Foreword

Manfred S. Frings

This volume of studies is the latest demonstration of the rapidly intensifying interest and expanding research in the philosophy of Max Scheler (1874-1928). During the last decade of the past century, two events spurred this development, also on a surprisingly wide international scale.

The first of these events was the 1993 founding of the International Max Scheler Society. It was formed at the University of Cologne, in Germany, where Scheler lectured from 1919 until shortly before his death in 1928. The Society, which is presently represented by scholars from fourteen countries, has organized biannual colloquia since 1993, each with a specific topic lectured on by Scheler scholars, discussed at length with the audience, and published by a reputable publishing house in Germany.

The second of these events was the completion in 1997 of the German Collected Edition of Scheler's philosophy, his *Gesammelte Werke*. This completion, coupled with free access for research at the Max Scheler archives in Munich, Germany, and in Albuquerque, New Mexico, widened considerably the very base from which studies in Scheler's thought could further proceed.

The German Collected Edition had been published from its inception in 1954 to 1958 by Francke Verlag of Berne, Switzerland, and Munich, Germany. Subsequently, it was published by Bouvier Verlag, of Bonn, Germany, where new editions of out-of-print volumes will also be published in the future.

Perhaps, however, a third factor should be added that further manifests said ongoing interest and research in Max Scheler. For, in addition to the two mentioned events, translations from original texts have also noticeably increased, a number of them in Chinese, English, Italian, and Russian. As of the writing of this Foreword, translations have appeared in fourteen countries in their respective languages. A periodically updated list of all translations is available at the Max Scheler website:

<http://www.maxscheler.com>

Pinpointing origins for new interests in the humanities seems always to leave some room open for new portrayals and interpretations of them. This is in stark contrast to pinpointing comparable origins of emerging interests in the natural sciences. In the natural sciences, origins of the kind are most often determined by scientific inventions, of late discovered technological conse-

quences from earlier positions, or by either intentionally sought findings or fortuitous ones.

Regarding the humanities, one explanation in Scheler's case makes the current rise of inquiry in Scheler's philosophy just about permanently understandable: it is a matter of scope.

We have enough evidence now of the scope of Max Scheler's thought in that it far exceeds that of most, if not all, of his philosophical contemporaries. This factor undoubtedly makes his thought more pliable for global inquiry. For, Scheler does not have "a philosophy," as a common saying goes. His thought pries into sociology, psychology, anthropology, religion, quantum mechanics, relativity physics, and evolution, among other disciplines, and it offers prognoses for the future of humankind at the dawn of a new century and millennium. Indeed, many different peoples, nations, racial units, tribal communities, religions, geo-political systems, and their institutions, are in a position to find some observations, answers, and possible solutions to present-day questions and issues offered by a thinker who for many years (and for merely external reasons) had been in the background of others. Some specimens of Scheler's handling of current issues are his analyses of the relation between politics and morals, of capitalism, of waning faith, of population growth and decline, of capital punishment, or of unpredictable components in economic processes.

As can be expected, such subjects are difficult reading without appreciating the larger horizon within which Scheler wrote on these and other subjects. Some key respective background texts for recognizing this horizon would be: his monumental value-ethics, entitled *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value: A New Attempt toward the Foundation of Ethical Personalism*; his analysis of contemporary hatred and *ressentiment*; his lengthy essays and manuscripts on aging, dying, and death; not least, his life-long work concerning the essence of the person as the bearer of a world-disclosing act, the act of love; and his writings that refer to the person as the bearer of five specific ranks of values with their prism in the seat of human feelings, the *logic of the heart*, distinct from the logic of reason. In contrast to interpretations of the nature of the human being made in the past twentieth century, Scheler offered a view showing that the individual person is an irreplaceable self-value, regardless of gender, race, or religion. To borrow some of Scheler's own terms, we can say that being a person is existence acted-out, spawned by love, into world openness.

A requirement of knowledge of such respective background texts, however, also makes a thinker like Scheler controversial. We can see this in the opinion that some philosophers have expressed on this. For example, after reading Scheler's above-mentioned *Formalism in Ethics*, Jean-Paul Sartre noted quite positively that "we have to start all over again." By contrast, little or no mention of Scheler's value-ethics is evidenced in Martin Heidegger's

Collected Edition (*Gesamtausgabe*) comprising seventy-plus volumes. Nor is there any personal dimension of the notion of *Dasein* in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Over and against Edmund Husserl's "consciousness as such," Scheler simply quipped that a consciousness without personal existence is "evident nonsense." Recent thinkers such as Jacques Derrida or Ludwig Wittgenstein leave little or no room for value-ethics, whereas José Ortega y Gasset could not praise Scheler enough for his findings on the subject. Philosophy, however, is no matter of praise and blame. It is insight into what is...no matter who and no matter when an insight has been provided for us.

This leaves me with the distinguished honor of congratulating each of the authors of the chapters in this book, and their editor, for their ever-so-valuable work and gift to us, the readers.

Albuquerque, New Mexico
2 May 2000