Max Scheler 1874 - 1929

Philosophy of Love:
Only Love can disclose Personality
Rethinking the Phenomenological Question

• Max Scheler is the philosopher who has presented in a very clear way the problem of the question of the human person raised in phenomenology. In his first two major works, *The Nature of Sympathy* and *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, Scheler focused on human feelings, love, and the nature of the person. He showed that the ego, reason and consciousness presuppose the sphere of the person and denied the possibility of a pure ego, pure reason or pure consciousness. In this, Scheler criticized the well known positions held by Kant, Husserl, and German Idealism.
Phenomenology as an attitude not a Method

• Scheler never agreed with Husserl that phenomenology is a method in the strict sense, but rather an attitude of spiritual seeing or rather something which otherwise remains hidden. Calling phenomenology a method fails to take seriously the phenomenological domain of original experience: the givenness of phenomenological facts (essences or values as a priori) before they have been fixed by logic, and prior to assuming a set of criteria or symbols, as is the case in the empirical and human sciences as well as other (modern) philosophies which pattern their methods to those of the sciences.
Human Being as Ens Amans

• It is the human "heart" or the seat of love, rather than a transcendental ego, reason, a will or sensibility, that accounts for the essence of human existence. He distinguished many types of feelings, most of them are quite hidden and personal, and among which human love is shown to be the center. The human person is at very bottom of its being a loving being (ens amans).
The logic of love

- Scheler follows the seventeenth century French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal in arguing that feelings and love have a logic of their own, quite different from the logic of reason. In their initial inceptions (beginnings), all feelings are conjoined to experiences of values. There are five value ranks feel-able (that can be felt) by all humans. They are felt in; variable body-feelings, feelings of needs, feelings of life, feelings of the person, and of the Divine.
Human is un-objectifiable

According to Scheler, the human person is un-objectifiable from the intellectual point of view. Different from other beings, the human person is not an object but a subject. As a subject, a human person is a unique being. One loses the uniqueness of the human person by objectifying it. The human is not a thing (a what) but a person (who). The objectivist deforms what a person is because in the course of objectifying the person he ends up not with a unique and clear vision of an abstract person, but with an object among objects. The human person is something unique and un-repeatable. To objectify a person is to lose his/her personality.
Empathy

• The only way you can have access to a human person is through empathy.

• **Empathy** is the psychological state through which you experience the experience of another as your own experience. It is the disposition of understanding; being aware of; being sensitive to; and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.
Empathy...

- It can also be an experience of an imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it as though it shared the other’s being and essence. It is a way of sharing in the feelings of another as though it was your own experience.
Feelings are personal

• Just consider the fact that there are various things we know in a unique way, not because we are told or taught but because we have experienced them personally. I do not know what is cold until I feel cold. You cannot clearly explain what cold is unless you tell its effects such as shivering, freezing etc.
Feelings...

There is no rational explanation that can express personal experience of feeling cold, joy and fear, hot, happy. These are unique experiences that a person undergoes where only that person can share that experience in a unique way. Likewise, you cannot know the human person unless you enter into its being and experience what they experience through empathy or connaturality with the person’s concrete existence.
The stranger next to me

Whenever we encounter an individual, we meet with an ultimate which cannot be manufactured in any way out of features, qualities, activities etc. Conversely in that very mode of discernment that alone discloses the individual, it is always the features, qualities and activities that retain a merely abstract and general character of what we think the person to be. Unfortunately they are not all what there is about the individual to whom they belong. When you meet a stranger you first look at features or actions to try to learn the person’s personality. This is wrong because a person is not defined by their actions or features. The truth about the person is more than that.
I* can be acquainted with the other only through Love

- It is characteristic of human personalities that we only become acquainted with it in and through the act of loving. The value of a personality as an individual is likewise disclosed only in the course of this act of loving. Being an object of love represents as it were the only objective status wherein personality has existence and can therefore be manifested.
Genuine Love

• It is quite misguided way of loving by claiming that you love an individual in such terms as those relating to his qualities, acts, achievements or dispositions. To love a person because of what they have or can be is not true love but love that is clouded with prejudice and selfish utilitarian interests. Genuine love of a person is when a person is loved irrespective of what they may have or may not have.
Personality

• **Personality** is that unity of substance baffling observation and eluding analysis which the individual experiences as inherent in all the acts s/he performs. Personality is neither an object therefore, nor a thing.
The Supposedly Objective

• The part of another that presents itself to me is never more than,

• 1. *a physical body*,

• 2. *its corporeal unity*, and,

• 3. *the self and the vital soul belonging to it*. The same applies to everyone in respect to themselves.
The Given

• That which is given in observation is given only in the seeing and experiencing act itself. The essences are never given to an 'outside' observer with no direct contact with the thing itself. Observation as in phenomenology is an engagement of phenomena, while simultaneously a waiting for its self-givenness or disclosure. It is not a methodical procedure of observation as if its object is stationary.
Spiritual Posture of the Philosopher

• Thus, the particular attitude, or "disposition of the spirit" or "spiritual posture" of the philosopher is crucial for the disclosure, or seeing, of phenomenological facts. This attitude is fundamentally a moral one, where the strength of philosophical inquiry rests upon the basis of love. Scheler describes the essence of philosophical thinking as "a love-determined movement of the inmost personal self of a finite being toward participation in the essential reality of all possibles (of the other)."
Attempt at the Disclosure of the Personality of another

• The personality of another can only be disclosed to me by joining in the performance of his/her acts, either cognitively, by understanding and vicariously reliving them or morally by following in his footsteps. It is in this way that the moral core of Jesus is revealed only to a disciple; one who has chosen to follow Him irrespective of whether he knows Him historically or from theological interpretations.
Again, Do not Objectify a human person!

• When we try to objectify someone in any way, his personality eludes our grasp and only the trappings remain.
Attempt for the disclosure of the ultimate

• The ultimate moral value of a personality is disclosed to us only when we associate ourselves with its own act of love. In order to elicit this moral value in our original, we must love what s/he loves and love it with her/him. This is the only way we can come close to understand a person by understanding their experience through empathy.
**Human Being remains a Mystery**

- However, we must remember that the objective understanding of the person is a mystery that remains. We know a person in the measure that a person is able to reveal himself or herself to us. Sometimes the **revelation** becomes a **concealment** of who truly the person is. While we trust the much we know from a person’s verbal and non-verbal revelation of himself/herself, we try to understand the person through empathy by reliving with them their own unique experiences that account for their being as such.
**Love is a Personal Attitude**

• Love is the most personal of all attitudes while at the same time the most objectifying. In it, we are objective in so far as we free ourselves from bondage of our interests, wishes, ideas or even fears, and care about the other.

• However, we must remember that even with all these considerations the element of the personal in a human person can never be disclosed to us as an object. Persons cannot be objectified not even in love or in any other however genuine act including cognition.
Love is a Movement

The movement and act of love is important to philosophy for two reasons:
Movement of love is important to philosophy- 1

- If philosophy, as Scheler describes it, looking back to the Platonic tradition, is a participation in a "primal essence of all essences" it follows that for this participation to be achieved one must incorporate within oneself the content or essential characteristic of the primal essence (form, the ideal archetype). For Scheler, such a primal essence is most characterized according to love.
Therefore, the way to achieve the most direct and intimate participation is precisely to share in the movement of love. This is what we refer to as the Eros of the soul where two minds communicate in love. It is important to mention, however, that this primal essence is not an objectifiable entity whose possible correlate is knowledge; thus, even if philosophy is always concerned with knowing, as Scheler would concur, nevertheless, reason itself is not the proper participative faculty by which the greatest level of knowing is achieved. Only when reason and logic have behind them the movement of love and the proper moral preconditions, can one achieve philosophical knowledge (the kind that is said in the book of Genesis that Adam knew his wife Eve).
movement of Love is important to Philosophy -2

- Love is likewise important insofar as its essence is the condition for the possibility of the givenness (un-concealment or revelation) of value-objects and especially the givenness of an object in terms of its highest possible value. Love is the movement which brings about the continuous emergence of ever-higher value in the object. It is as if streaming out from the object of its own accord, without any sort of exertion or effort on the part of the lover. True love opens our spiritual eyes to ever-higher values in the object loved.
Hatred as Closing away values

• Hatred, on the other hand, is the closing off of oneself or closing one’s eyes to the world of values. It is in the context of hatred that value-inversions or devaluations become prevalent. Where there lacks true love in society, there lacks genuineness and prejudice becomes prevalent and is sometimes solidified as proper in societies.
Love and Hate are more than reactions to felt Values

• Furthermore, by calling love a movement, Scheler hopes to dispel the interpretation that love and hate are only reactions to felt values rather than the very ground for the possibility of value-givenness or value-concealment. Scheler says that love and hate are acts in which the value-realm accessible to the feelings of a being is either extended or narrowed (love extends, hate narrows). Love and hate are to be distinguished from sensible and even psychical feelings. They are, instead, characterized by an intentional function (one always loves or hates something) and therefore must belong to the same anthropological sphere as theoretical consciousness and the acts of willing and thinking.
Love and Hate are Spiritual Feelings

• Scheler, therefore calls love and hate, "spiritual feelings," and are the basis for an "emotive a priori" insofar as values, through love, are given in the same manner as are essences, through cognition. In short, love is a value-cognition, and insofar as it is determinative of the way in which a philosopher approaches the world, it is also indicative of a phenomenological attitude. The intentional feeling of love discloses values insofar as love opens a person evermore to beings-of-value.