

On the Meaning of Philosophy and Human Existence

Summary

Through this collection of the German philosopher Max Scheler's writings, the editor seeks to present his philosophical contributions into the philosophy of religion, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of emotions. The volume opens with a presentation of Max Scheler's life and philosophical development, offering a detailed examination of his biography and philosophical works. In addition to the main text, the anthology features translations of some of Max Scheler's writings that grapple with essential philosophical issues. My commentary on these translations can be found in the concluding section of the book. The text "On the Essence of Philosophy and the Moral Condition of Philosophical Knowledge" examines the fate of philosophy in modernity from the perspective of phenomenology. However, in contrast to the founder of phenomenology, E. Husserl, Scheler grounds philosophical thought in the emotional a priori and Christian values. This approach stands in stark contrast to the tradition of positivism, which presupposes a mechanistic, natural-scientific consideration of philosophical problems. In his article "Love and Knowledge," Scheler reflects on the problems that arise during wartime and delves into the vicissitudes of the relationship between love and knowledge. Despite the difficult experiences of the time, Scheler succeeds in treating the relationship between love and knowledge in a universal way. The influence of Plato's philosophy, especially the dialogue "Symposium," is evident in the article. In his philosophical work "On the Essence of Grief," also published during wartime, Scheler delves into the meaning of grief, the negative pole of emotions. In my view, this text served as a sketch for the problem of resentment that Scheler would later develop in detail. After all, grief is a frequent companion of families during wartime. Scheler connects grief with suffering, pain, and anguish. It is

important for a person to have an example, both in joy and in sorrow, to help them navigate life. On the path to seeking the meaning of grief, the greatest authority for the philosopher is Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice on the cross gives the believer the strength to survive even the most difficult things in life. In his work "Repentance and Rebirth," which belongs to his Catholic period, Scheler explores the relationship between repentance, atonement, and guilt. The philosopher unravels this connection using philosophical, theological, and psychological perspectives. Experiencing one painful event after another, a person is forced to look at his life from the outside. An autoreflective attitude directs the gaze towards reflection on the past. Old mistakes cause painful emotions, which a sufficiently well-knowing individual can understand and cope with, if only he has developed a moral backbone. The basis of this awareness is love for oneself and one's neighbor, arising from God's love. The other path is the position of personal justice, which does not allow for moral improvement. However, Scheler encourages choosing the path of love, which leads to personal life changes. The relevance of Scheler's article "On Eastern and Western Christianity" is undoubtedly dictated by the events of World War I. For Germany, which had started the war, Russia was an enemy that belonged to the opposing military bloc of the Entente. And although Scheler does not directly mention the war in this article, the publication of this text in the book "War and Reconstruction," while fratricidal battles were still raging on both fronts, reveals the thinker's desire to introduce thoughtful readers, at least to some extent, to Russian cultural thinking, so that through the prism of Mary's Prayer Rope, one could understand the behavior seen in social reality. Christianity is a religion of peace and love, so it is not by chance that in this work Scheler tries to find not only differences, but also similarities. The main ideological difference is the discrepancy between the specific dogmas of faith of Christians of both denominations, arising from the human vicissitudes of the relationship between power and religion. Both Eastern and Western Christians are perhaps most united by the deep meaning of love and repentance, which can be experienced only by a person who sincerely believes in God. Scheler's text "The Position of Man in the

Cosmos” is considered a classic of philosophical anthropology. Scheler’s text, once a lecture, was influenced by scientific publications. Delving into various philosophical and scientific theories, the question of human nature is raised. Scheler finds traces of human nature at various stages of life’s development. As in many of his works, Scheler is not so much interested in human rationality and the primacy of power that derives from it, but rather in human activity as the creator of certain values. Accordingly, the philosopher criticizes scientific theories that oversimplify the concept of man. Contemporary humanists are also tempted to do this. In addition to interest in the classics of philosophical anthropology, the reading of this text stimulates significant parallels of both wrong and right understanding of contemporary science and man. In the final part, I focus on significant person appearing in Scheler’s works and on key concepts that are not explained in more detail in the thinker’s considerations. Finally, I provide a summary of the parts of the work and an index of important personal names that are most common in the text.