CHAPTER VI

MAX SCHELER

ON

THE NATURE OF SYMPATHY
Max Scheler's 'Nature of Sympathy' is a striking example of the application of Phenomenological method to Psychology. What Scholar "saw primarily in Phenomenology was not a method in the sense of a set of mental operations but a peculiar attitude or way of viewing (Einstellung)." This attitude enables the observer to make an intuitive relationship with the things, i.e. the pure facts. Phenomenology, as conceived by Scheler, is "the most radical empiricism and positivism ever developed." Phenomenology, on the one hand, opposes rationalism which presupposes some abstract principle and on the other a crude form of empiricism which holds that sense experience is the only form of experience. Phenomenology in the true sense, is an intuitive apprehension of the essences of Phenomena. Scholar's "Nature of Sympathy" is nothing but a phenomenological approach to the essence of sympathy and a rigorous description of its various forms. And this enables him to shed some light on the emotional and sentimental life of man. Phenomenology breaks the rigid distinction between

reason and emotion. Feeling as understood by the rationalists is wholly subjective. But Scheler shows that there are feelings that are not merely subjective but may also be objective. Some feelings have objective characteristic. He makes a distinction between feeling states and feelings which have reference beyond themselves. Feeling states are like moods of depression, elatedness etc., which have no reference, quite unlike perceptions and desires. Those feelings which have reference are the intentional ones in which, as in all other intentional acts, we are conscious not only of our own psychic states but also of something else. The feeling of value in which the qualities of beauty or goodness are given, is a distinctive case of such functional feeling. "To these 'feelings of value' in contrast to the mere states of feeling and to other non-cognitive types of intentional feeling, scheler ascribes general cognitive function." 4 Such feeling functions have objective significance.

In his book on "The nature of Sympathy" Scheler with begins a phenomenological analysis of sympathy. The term 'Sympathy' cannot be identified with pity or compassion. Actually, there are two types of sympathy - sympathy with suffering and sympathy with joy.

Sympathy is a function, it has an intentional structure. It is directed to somebody. All fellow-feelings refer to other person's experiences. The feeling of joy refers to others' happiness and a feeling of sorrow refers to others' suffering. Phenomenologically speaking, though the other person's sorrow is not the cause of my suffering, his suffering and my feeling of sympathy for it are two distinct things and not one. For, sympathy is neither a state of mere subjective feeling nor is it wholly self-regarding. It refers to the feelings of others and not to one's own. The primary object of understanding is the other person's experience of joy or grief as such, and then my own feeling of sorrow or rejoicing as directed towards them. In fact, fellow-feeling or participation in other's emotion is a reaction to other's feeling. Therefore, there must be a sharp line of demarcation between the understanding of the other's feeling and my feeling of joy and sorrow directed towards his experience. A sympathy, which refers to the feeling states of one's own, is not true sympathy. It is true, that whenever we feel sympathy for others, we are infected with the same suffering. But as fellow-feeling is
not self-regarding, it cannot be directed to one's own psychical states. It is only in pathological cases that we find a complete identification between the sympathiser and the person to whom sympathy is directed. Scheler is right as against Schopenhauer when he holds that sympathy is not an act in which the sympathiser feels an identity with the person with whom he sympathises. For, there is some psychological distance between the two. "Our inability to see into each other's hearts (even into our own hearts), is an essential component of all experience of sympathy, and even of all spontaneous 'love'."\(^5\)

Scheler offers a strong criticism of the naturalistic theory which tries to identify fellow-feeling with similar acts like understanding, apprehending or reproducing the experiences of others, including their feeling states. But we must try to make a distinction between true fellow-feeling and the similar act of reproducing, understanding etc. We must always bear in mind that fellow-feeling presupposes some knowledge of the nature and quality of the experiences in other people. The difference between

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reproduction and fellow-feeling is that in fellow-feeling we feel the other's feeling. Instead of going through the actual experiences, we feel for others whereas in reproduced feeling though we know well that the other is suffering, yet we have no feeling of sympathy for him. Here "we sense the quality of the other's feeling, without it being transmitted to us, or evoking similar real emotion in us." 6

In order to have first-hand knowledge of the nature and quality of other's experience, we must not apply the method of projective empathy or analogy. Empathy or analogy reveals only one's own view of it and not the true nature of others' psychic life. It is wrong to suppose that the only thing which is primarily given to us is the other's bodily experience. Our own bodily experiences are connected with internal experiences, and the relation between them is

We can understand other's experience but we may not feel any sympathy for him. In fact, understanding is possible without sympathy.

But sympathy may be distinguished from feeling.

(1) There may be immediate community of feeling or solidaric feeling with other person's sorrow. Solidaric feeling is a feeling in common or a parallel feeling of parents when they stand before the death-bed of their loving child. Here the two parents feel the same kinness of emotion. Such an experience of identical feeling is possible only in the case of mental suffering. But it is impossible to have the common feeling in the case of physical pain and sensory types of feeling, for, here always there are two sensations, not one.

(2) Emotional infection - Some authors, especially Herbert Spencer and Darwin conceived of fellow-feeling as a mere emotional infection. It is a characteristic of the members of a crowd where we find a transmission of the same emotional experience from one people to another. Here our feelings are neither directed to other's emotion nor do we have an active participation in the joy and sorrow
of other people. We are only involuntarily infected by the feeling of others. Thus we find that both the cheerful and the gloomy atmosphere in our surroundings have equal effect upon our mind. But this infectious emotion is not fellow-feeling. If other's feeling of sorrows and sufferings is transmitted to us, and we view it as that of ours, then we shall try our best to get rid of this sorrow instead of feeling any pity for others. In fact, in true fellow-feeling there is no such real suffering but only a feeling of joy and sorrow directed towards the other's emotion.

(3) Sympathy is also different from emotional identification. There may be an unity feeling among the different members of a group. This is a feeling in which a group of people feel themselves united as one. Such unity feeling is found in the members of the totem. Emotional identification is found in primitive people. In primitive age each member of a totem feels an emotional identification with the other members of the totem species.

An interesting form of identification occurs in the case of mystic ecstasies in which the mystic in his state
of ecstasies feels one with the divine personality. Emotional identification is also found in hypnotic subject. Here "the hypnotic subject is continuously 'wrapped up' in all the individual personal attitudes of the hypnotist, thinks only his thoughts, wills only with his will, esteems, his values, loves with his love and hates with his hate - but at the same time is convinced with this other self with all its attitudes and forms of action is really his own." Freud, in his book 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,' has shown some cases of pathological identification. In one of the cases a girl develops hysteric symptoms. Some of her friends are also equally subjected to hysteric symptoms being psychically infected by their friend's emotion. Freud is of the opinion that in this case the girl's friends develop symptoms not out of sympathy but due to a feeling of identification which awakens sympathy in their minds. For emotional infection never presupposes sympathy but sympathy may arise due to infection. Scheler doubts whether identification can awaken sympathy at all. "For sympathy presupposes just that awareness of distance between selves which is eliminated here by the identification."  

8. Ibid p. 23.
Phenomenologically speaking, whenever we sympathise with somebody's grief, we must regard him as a separate personality and his miseries, sorrows and misfortunes as being his own. There is some observable difference between the two processes of sympathy and suffering. It is my sympathy which is directed to other person's suffering. Therefore, there must be some distance between the two. Thus it is wrong to suppose that there must be some unity feeling with the person who is suffering. "If, at the moment of reacting in commiseration and rejoicing, we could do so only under the momentary impression, or illusion even, of undergoing the process ourselves, our attitude would indeed appear, phenomenologically speaking, to be directed merely upon our own sorrow or joy, and would therefore be an egoistic one." True fellow-feeling is different from self-regarding states of feeling. It is not directed to one's own self but to other's. Sometimes we find that a person cannot stand the sight of a wounded person. We try to interpret the case of the person concerned as that he is too sympathetic to others' sorrows. But if we think we shall find that the person concerned is not sympathetic to others but to himself. As the sight of

misery is a bar to his own pleasure, he cannot bear it. Thus this misinterpretation on our part is due to the fact that we overlook the difference between feeling function and emotional states. "True fellow-feeling is wholly functional throughout: there is no reference to the state of one's own feelings. In commiserating with B the latter's state of feeling is given as located entirely in B himself: it does not filter across into A, the commiserator, nor does it produce a corresponding or similar condition in A. It is merely 'commiserated with', not undergone by A as a real experience." In fact, the true nature of sympathy is such that it is concerned with the other person's feeling as being wholly his, and not as being identical with any state of the sympathiser. Whenever I express sympathy with other's sufferings and joy with others' happiness, I must recognise him as a distinct individual and must not substitute me for him. Thus the phenomenological fact is that in true fellow-feeling there is no feeling of joy and sorrow in the sympathiser. But this view is not accepted by those who hold the view that

the perception of the sign of joy and sorrow in other people has the power of reproducing the similar experience of joy and sorrow in oneself. Such reproductions are to be found in the case of people who are in the habit of reproducing their own experience of joy and sorrow when they hear that similar incident has happened to somebody else. But here again it is not true fellow-feeling, since the person's interest is wholly confined to his ownself instead of the other's. The associationistic theory disregards the fact of pure fellow-feeling. It is wrong to suppose that we can understand only those experiences which we ourselves have previously experienced. "A person who has never felt mortal terror can still understand and envisage it, just as he can also share in it. It is a futile evasion to argue that for this we must at least have had real experience of the 'elements' of the state of value in question." Man has the innate capacity for understanding the feelings and emotions of other people even though he himself has not experienced them before. But there are some sensations - the sensations of physical pain, bodily well-being etc. which

are very much like the simple sensations of colour and sound but their contents are equivalent to feeling. These sensations are called feeling sensations. According to Scheler, in the case of those feeling sensations reproduction of experience is needed on the part of the sympathiser, if he is to understand the nature of those experiences. Thus it is not possible for a person to enjoy a Japanese dish if he has not tested it before. But though the sensory feelings of the uncultured are different from those of the civilised individuals, yet so far as the moods of vital feelings are concerned, we can understand them and feel sympathy for them.

Scheler's theory of love and hatred:—

The method of confrontation is also applied by Scheler to the phenomena of love and hatred. Love is not a passive state of feeling but a movement. It is a spontaneous movement which passes to the higher value from the lower one in such a way that the higher value of the object suddenly flashes before our eyes. In face, "love leads to the flash like effulgence of the higher value."  

Hate on the other hand is concerned with the lower value. Love is not the estimation of the qualities of the object loved. Scheler rejects Brentano's identification of love with preference. In love there is no preference of the higher value of the object to the lower one. But, in preference two values are given between which we prefer one to the other. Since love is a movement in which we visualise the higher value and pass towards it from the lower one it is not a reaction, a reaction to the values which have already been realised; for to say this, is to deprive love of its dynamic value. "Love is the intentional movement in which from a given value A of an object the appearance (Erscheinung) of a higher value is realized.---Love is not the emotionally affirming contemplation of a value, which stands before and is given. It is also not directed upon given things (or real persons) merely because of their positive values which were 'given' before the entrance of love.---Of course, in love we feel the positive value of the loved object, for example, the beauty, charm and the goodness of a person, but this is also possible without love."  

nature of this highest type of love is: "Love only occurs when, upon the values already acknowledged as 'real' these supervenes a movement, an intention, towards potential values still 'higher' than those already given and presented."\(^\text{14}\) It is this characterisation of love as a spontaneous movement for the enhancement of value that enables us to understand it as 'creative force'. But Scheler says that love is not the enhancement of value, but it is a discovery of value. The view that love is directed towards the higher value is not equal to the view that love is the enhancement of value. But if love is to search for the higher value, it must have some previous knowledge of the higher value before it directs itself towards it. In fact, this is impossible, for the higher value can only be realised at the end of the movement of love. Love may not be an affirmative emotional attitude towards values which are already realised, yet as it is a discovery, it must be cognitive. Scheler dissociates love from knowledge because he fails to recognise the active, explanatory character of knowledge.

According to Scheler, love is neither blind nor is it an illusion. To hold the view that love is a movement which creates higher values in the object is to make it an illusion. For, it means that the object possesses only those imaginary values which the lover has imposed upon it. But according to Scheler, this is due to egoism. Scheler holds that "love is that movement wherein every concrete individual object that possesses value achieves the highest value compatible with its nature and ideal vocation, or wherein it attains the ideal state of value intrinsic to its nature." 15

Fellow-feeling and love: - British moralists are wrong in their attempt to derive the phenomena of love and hatred from fellow-feeling. Fellow-feeling is based on love. The difference between love and sympathy is that love is concerned with value. Therefore, it cannot be a sympathy for others. Again, love is a spontaneous act, for it involves a movement. It is not a passive feeling. Love is a spontaneous movement whereas fellow-feeling is reactive to the feeling of sorrows and joys of others. In fact, love and hatred may be described as emotions, but not as feelings. Again love may be self-directing but

sympathy is not self-regarding. The object to which love is directed is not the same as that of fellow-feeling. We know that sympathy is based on love but in some cases our sympathy may be directed to somebody whom we do not love. The only impossible thing is to lack sympathy for the person whom we love.

The limitations and the critique of the naturalistic theory of love:

Among the materialistic theories of love, the theory of Freud seems to be most important.

According to Freud, from the very infancy the child wants to have sexual pleasure. Thus the suckling of the child at its mother's breast has a sexual significance. Again, if the 'erotogenic zones of infancy', which are so called by Freud, are stimulated by chance, the child experiences a sexual pleasure. In maturity these sensations which are aroused accidentally are turned into material for the construction of all fellow-feeling and love. And this is due to the sublimation and repression of libido. Now the various forms of love are explained by Freud in terms of repression and sublimation of libido. The impulses
of the libido, which are not accepted by the society, are repressed in such a way that now the sexual impulses of the libido are not harmful but conducive to the maintenance of normal social life. The forces which restrain the power of the libido are shame, moral principles etc. But it must be noted that the sex desires are not wholly repressed, but are operative in the unconscious. To some people the effect of repression may not be healthy and so they develop the symptoms of neurosis. On the other hand, many of our social habits, such as the habits of feeling sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others, are the products of sublimation or the normal transformation of the sexual impulses into some non-sexual and socially permitted activity.

Freud's ontogenetic theory of love and sympathy may be regarded as the most valuable of all the naturalistic theories. His explanation of the capacity of love and the feeling of sympathy is of special importance. It is the perverse sexual life of the child that enables Freud to shed some light on the subsequent love life of the individual concerned.
But Freud's method tries to strengthen our conception of 'mental causation in general'. He wants to overlook the conflict between empiricism and innate ideas, with his introduction of the new word 'destiny'. "Destiny is the series, the host of happenings which, though we have in no way sought, anticipated, expected or chosen them, are yet felt in a quite peculiar way to be characteristic of us." 16

It is in the erotic impression of early childhood that the main lines of this destiny are laid down. It is empiricism which holds that so far as the nature and significance of the effect is concerned, the positional value of the occurrence of the experience plays no part. But it is held, that the experience which occurs in the early childhood has a far-reaching influence than that of the experience of maturity. Therefore, the positional value, i.e. the particular time (whether it may be early childhood or the youth) at which the experience concerned occurs in the typical life history of the individual, has a significance. The empiricists acknowledge that there is diversity in the effect. But these diversities, according

to them, are dependent on the number of the evidence seen, or on the accumulation of experiences and their association together. But this view is rejected by Freud on the ground that it is the positional value of the experience, i.e. at what particular period in the total development of the individual the experience, may it be a simple sense experience, occurs has some important influence in molding the life of the individual. Thus, the experience which occurs in the early childhood has a different effect, if it occurs in maturity. Therefore, diversity of effect is dependent on the variation in the positional value of the experience. In fact, the nature of psychic experience is conditioned by the positional value of the experience. The misbehaviour, which Schopenhauer received from his mother in his childhood, turned him into a women-hater.

On the contrary, the distinction which Freud draws between his concept of libido and sex instinct is not clear enough. For, what does the word libido stand for, if not a sexual instinct? The notion of libido and sex instinct as depicted by Freud, is nothing but the crude application
of the concept of effort found in the traditional associatio-
nistic psychology. Freud is of the opinion that the libido
can be aroused by the mechanical or causal reproduction of
pleasure sensation. Libido is not an original desire. Due
to accidental stimulation of the 'erotogenous zones of
infancy' the child experiences a pleasurable sensation.
The effort on the part of the child to repeat this pleasure
sensation is termed by Freud 'Libido'. Freud's disciple
Jung holds that the libido is nothing but a striving as
such. But if it is a striving, it must be directed to some
object, some opposite sex which causes pleasure sensation.
In this sense the sexual instinct is innate. Hence it is
impossible to explain how what Freud calls libido should
ever have arisen from the causal or mechanical production
of pleasure sensation. The 'Libido' is a drive, the object
of which is determined by the impulse of vital love even
before its development into conscious sexual love. According
to Freud, "Man is born polymorphously perverse". It is
through various forms of perversion that the sexual life of
the individual is developed. But against Freud, we may say

that perversion in all cases is a deviation from the normal sexual life, and therefore, a pathological phenomenon. Thus it cannot be an inborn tendency of man. Freud's defect lies in the fact that he tries to explain them objectively. He can easily start from their intentional and evaluative tendencies.

Freud attempts to derive all forms of love and higher qualities from the libido by calling upon the concept of sublimation. The socially unapproved impulses of the libido are repressed and its energy is diverted to socially approved channels. In this way all higher forms of love and sympathy are developed. Some of the repressive forces such as shame, disgust are created by the individual in the course of his development, while the others, i.e. rules of sexual morality are imposed upon the self from without. Thus we find that the libido is the entire mental force which imposes limits on itself. According to Scheler, "There is an obvious circularity in Freud's explanation here: All higher moral feelings and activities, and hence, presumably, all moral motives as such, are allegedly due to the 'sublimation of libido'. But in order to account for
the 'sublimation' itself, Freud proceeds to postulate the existence of a 'morality' at the behest of which the repression of libido can be effected, and its diversion to 'higher activities' take place.  

All forms of psychic experiences are derived not from the libido but from an independent fund of mental energy.

The naturalistic theorists must understand the phenomena of spiritual or sacred love which can be derived from any circumstances whatsoever. The naturalists are indifferent to the fact that in the course of development new qualities may emerge. And these qualities may not be regarded as merely a gradual development of the previous state. They are also wrong in holding the view that the world which is given to us through our perception of matter and motion is richer than the real world which lies beyond the given one. They try to explain the psychic life as well as the world of nature in terms of simple elements. For, these simple elements can be easily grasped and controlled. But against this it may be said that 'being and value' may

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not be arranged in such a way so that they may be convenient to fulfil our practical purposes. The phenomena of sacred love, in which the individual sacrifices his own life, his happiness and prosperity, for the sake of something which is more valuable than that of worldly happiness, cannot be experimentally produced and controlled. To consider the phenomena of vital love as perversion of normal vital impulses is wrong on the part of naturalism. Similarly, naturalistic theory fails to explain love for the soul and the relation between love and instinct. According to naturalism, love itself is an instinct. Love is derived from impulses which are blind to values. But "love and hatred form the basis for all other kinds of evaluation (feeling, preference or value judgment), and are naturally at the very root of all effort and tendency." We only strive for that which we love and against that which we hate. It is not instinct which brings love into being. What it can do at least is to determine the way in which the act of love is evoked and it can make a selection and limitation among values, so that it can be appropriate to the specific instinct of the subject concerned.

The phenomenological law, that it is through values that love is directed to other things and that such love is not static but is a movement towards higher values, is overlooked by naturalism. It is in the intentional content of love that the values, which are still to be realized, are included. "It is thus an essential characteristic of love that its object, as phenomenologically apprehended in the act, always exceeds the values which the lover actually feels at the time." Therefore, there is no need of the postulation of the naturalistic doctrine that love is transferred from one object to another. The transcendental consciousness of value is neglected here. It holds that it is impossible for us to love and hate something which is not present before us and which does not affect our senses. But as we find that the object which we love is always placed in the background of some higher value, which is implicit in the lower value, there is no actual transformation of the higher from the lower. Thus, we love the member of the family against the value background of the race, and the race against the nation and so on.

Lastly, Scheler deals with the limitations of the natural empirical psychology. According to Scheler,

immediate intuitive method is the only fruitful method of psychology. If psychology is to be the universal science of mind, it must be possible to have some knowledge of other minds.

Naturalistic or empirical psychology fails to handle this problem accurately. Empirical psychology presupposes the existence of other mind. "Any sort of empirical psychology already presupposes not only that fellow-men do really exist, but also that the organisation of their consciousness enables them to retain their perceptions, outer and inner experiences, sensations, feelings etc., in memory; furthermore, that they can communicate those experiences by statements; and that these statements are understandable." Empirical psychology is equivalent to experimental psychology, and it holds that the psychic states and processes can be objectively and experimentally studied. Some psychical states can be reproduced repeatedly by experiment in a number of people. But Scheler holds that the intrinsic nature of consciousness is such that it cannot be experimentally reproduced. Hence, it is wrong.