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The Human Place in the Cosmos

MAX SCHELER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY MANFRED S. FRINGS

INTRODUCTION BY EUGENE KELLY

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Introduction

Eugene Kelly

This little book, published in the year before Max Scheler's death, is an adventure in high philosophy. It contains all the elements expected of the grandest human struggle to achieve broadness of vision, profundity, lucidity, and wisdom: careful analysis of ideas, attention to established fact, bold metaphysical speculation, reverence for the highest and last things, and a moral teaching that inspires striving for the best that can be achieved in human life. Scheler offers us a response, distinct from those of theism and naturalism, to the astounding character and order of the world. His theme is the nature of the human being and the significance that man's appearance in the cosmos may have for the constitution of the world at large. How must it be with the Ground of Being, he asks, that such a creature as the human being could emerge, and what is its role in the further evolution of the cosmos?

Scheler begins with a challenge: *What is man?* The educated European's response to this question, Scheler believes, is inadequate in the light of new information derived from science. We hear: man is the "rational social animal," we are the "children of God," or the "descendants of apes," definitions derived respectively from the ancient Greeks, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and neo-Darwinian science. The first incorporates nothing of what was later learned about human psychology, sociology, and biology; the second assumes theism, which Scheler and many modern thinkers reject; and the third fails to grasp what is unique about human beings. Moreover, most "educated Europeans" are perplexed by what seems to be a contradiction in their thought on humankind: we are surely members of the animal kingdom, they hold; but are not human beings *different* from the animals, don't we stand in some essential *opposition* to them? Such confusions indicate that a new beginning is needed, one that is at once scientific, metaphysical, theological, and moral in its reach and in its aspirations.

Scheler's relation to Husserl is generally negative when not outspokenly polemical, and while he praises Husserl for his development of the concept of intentionality as insight into essences, or what he calls "ideation" in the present work, Scheler rejects Husserl's central concept of

phenomenological reduction. He argues here that the taking of a phenomenological standpoint is insufficient to lead the mind to a view of the essential structures of the world. It must first free itself from the impulses of life that necessarily direct our attention to what is practical, and thus limit our projects to the achievement of the ends of life. No doubt Scheler's practice of philosophical analysis would be incomprehensible without some understanding of the phenomenological method. Scheler often adverted to Husserl throughout his creative life, at times with admiration and at times with trenchant criticism.

Phenomenology, in Scheler's hands, is the perfection of what he calls in this late work *ideation,* the capacity of persons to bring before the mind the natures of the things we encounter and create. This capacity is the foundation of language, and it is also the characteristic activity of the philosopher. Phenomenology is not the attempt to give the necessary and sufficient conditions of the meaning or applications of a term, as was sought by the Socratic *elenchus.* Nor is it the observation of the form, behavior, origins, or causal properties of things. Phenomenology is also not intended to establish what exists and what does not; that is, it is not concerned as such with semantics or with metaphysics. As contrasted with science, phenomenology is nonreductive; it attempts to exhibit the fullness of the essential phenomena we perceive as "carried by" the things of the world, rather than to trace their attributes or behavior to general laws, substances, or categories. Phenomenology is rather the grasping *in mente,* the cognition, of the meaning-elements we encounter in the world; it requires intuitive reflection upon the meaning-contents of terms in an effort to exhibit their essential relations with each other and their order of foundation. This latter task seeks to establish what cognitions must take place before some other cognition becomes possible, and what cognitions are primordial, that is, the most deeply founded of a series of cognitions.

Accordingly, in this essay Scheler describes the meaning-structures found in association with such terms as *life, psyche, self,* and *spirit,* drawing on what we know through science concerning the facts about these phenomena, bringing them before the eye of the mind, and correcting what he takes to be factually and phenomenally incorrect assertions about them. His aim is to make visible meaning-relations among those phenomena that might easily elude the psychologists, biologists, botanists, or archaeologists who study their physical embodiments. The clarification of these root concepts will make plain the uniqueness of the phenomena found in living things and in men and women. Such a phenomenology will allow, Scheler believes, cautious extra-phenomenological

speculation on the ontological Ground of the Cosmos itself, and on how we may properly contribute to the perfection of the great drama of life and spirit unfolding about us. His analysis sets forth four theses that encompass his efforts in this work.

The First Thesis: The Living Body and the Psyche Are a Unity, and Ascended Together in a Four-Step Evolutionary Process

Scheler was conversant with then-recent findings in plant and animal biology, psychology, and physiology. The first part of this essay consists in an analysis of the phenomena revealed by these findings, which point, he believes, to the gradual ascent of life, in which biochemical and psychic factors develop in tandem throughout the evolutionary process. There is an isomorphism of psychical and physiological events; to each physiological event there corresponds a psychic function, examples of which are given throughout this essay. Today such a theory is called property-dualism. Mind or psyche does not emerge *from* biological life; it arises *with* the life-impulsion itself, and it serves the ends of life: the survival of species and the perfection of its members. Psyche is a function of all living things, and develops in diversity and complexity along with the organisms of each species.

The ascent of life as physiological impulsion and corresponding psychical structure displays four essential levels, each of which marks a growing liberation of organisms from the conditions of their existence. The first beginnings of life, as seen in plants, display a dependence of the organism upon the inorganic environment, and an absence of any capacity of the organism to report back to a center either the groping of the organism's feeling-drives for light, water, and sustenance, or the resistance of inorganic things to those drives. Yet the psychic life of plants, though minimal and entirely passive, is real: there is feeling, resistance, drive, but no awareness of it, no consciousness. Even at this level, life displays an *integrity* that is absent on the inorganic level. An attack upon any part of the plant is an attack upon the whole. Plants, unlike things, are capable of expression: a plant, even a blade of grass, may appear wilted, parched, or healthy.

Instincts, a new psychic level that is absent in plants, are characterized in animals by patterns or rhythms in which several organs are used together to achieve some end dictated by the drives. Instincts are specific

in their aims, whereas the feeling-drives are blind. Instincts thus are not mere reflexes, and cannot be derived from the feeling-drives. Animals possess locomotion and are not dependent for their sustenance on their immediate environment.

In the higher animals we find the third psychic level, learned associative behavior and memory, whose phenomena are again not derivable from the feeling-drives and instincts. This capacity manifests itself in the slow alteration of the animal's behavior on the basis of past experiences. It makes possible the separation of the individual from the herd: the individual member of a species is able to distinguish itself from its fellows by the range of behavior determined by its associative memories.

Finally, in still higher animal life we see intelligence: the animal repeats actions, and then adjusts itself differentially to changes in the conditions of its existence by means of insight into means and ends. Intelligent animals are conscious, though not self-conscious; psychic life in them can even be creative, but they are not capable of knowing what they do and achieve. Scheler concludes that each step upward in this fourfold development is dependent upon the lower steps, but each step results in a genuine physiological and psychical novelty that is not in essence derivable from the lower ones.

Scheler's initiative is intended to avoid the problem of how psychophysiological interaction is possible, a question that has plagued Western philosophy since Descartes set forth the concept of mind-body dualism. Since mental events (my desire to eat, let us say) appear to be different in kind from physical events (the level of glucose in my blood), they must, Descartes thought, each inhere in distinct substances as their attributes. He identified these two substances as thinking or mental substance and physical or extended substance. The state of my blood is a mode of an attribute of physical substance (it is extended in space), and my desire to eat is a mode of thinking substance (and is not extended in space). But if these substances are different in kind, then how can a physical state of my body cause me to have a mental representation of desire? Scheler notes that to Descartes the accompaniment of a physical event by a mental one was an amazing miracle, one requiring for its explanation some ingenious but usually unconvincing metaphysical account.

Philosophers of mind in the late twentieth century usually resorted to some form of naturalism to resolve this problem. Scheler refers to such theories as "mechanical" or "vitalistic," depending on whether they attempt to reduce mental events to inorganic or organic states. Psychic events, such as my desiring to eat, are thought to be "functions" or "epiphenomena" of patterns of neuron activity in the brain that supervene

upon those physical events. This concept has the enormous advantage of avoiding the postulation of nonphysical events and the problem of their interaction with physical ones, and the further advantage of being consistent with physical science. If mind is a nonphysical but physically effective agent, capable of initiating events in the world, the laws of thermodynamics would be threatened. Neuroscience awaits only, as Sir Francis Crick once put it, the discovery of the mechanism whereby neurons, each one of which lacks any form of consciousness—they are, after all, electrochemical events—give rise to such "epiphenomenal" events as my awareness of being hungry, desiring something to eat, and deciding to act to satisfy my desire.

The Second Thesis: Spirit is a Non-Emergent and Autonomous Phenomenon That Stands in Opposition to Impulsion

Scheler's account of mind is consistent with physicalism insofar as he postulates psychic events as functions of one and the same process of advancing life, and grants to life a physical or organic basis, although he denies the possibility of reducing life to a function of inorganic matter. But he breaks with naturalism, for in the human being a phenomenon appears with no roots in psychic life: spirit, *Geist,* what the Greeks called *psyche,* the highest form of which was *nous* or intellect. The term *spirit,* Scheler notes, has been so abused that for most persons the term has only vague associations with such uniquely human capacities as language and culture. Yet its phenomenology reveals far more: it discloses four essential characteristics of spirit.

Spirit, Scheler argues, first *opens us to the world.* The animal, subject only to its drives, lives too close to the reality environing it to be able to grasp that reality as such. But the human being breaks free of the drives and says "no" to them. Specifically, a human being is able to focus upon the being-thus of things themselves, and not only on those things that have significance for the physiological and psychic drives. Through this freedom from the drives, humans are able to collect themselves and the world, that is, to grasp themselves as persons in a coherent world. In this way the function of spirit we call "self-consciousness" arises and takes the form of *personhood.* Second, thanks to spirit, both the body and the psyche of human beings become intentional objects. An animal feels pain, but it cannot grasp the pain as its own; an animal behaves intelligently and displays insight, but it cannot grasp its own intelligence.

Third, spirit is characterized as incapable of becoming an intentional object to itself or others. Spirit as person is pure actuality, and exists in the execution of intentional acts. We can grasp the personal spiritual existence of others only by sympathetically re-performing their intentional acts in which meanings and values are cognized. We can make the acts of intelligent insight of man or beast the objects of psychological inquiry, but a human person, as spirit, always transcends our efforts to "objectify" him or her. Fourth and finally, the basic character of the human spirit is the act of "ideation," which lifts the reality-character of things and achieves intuitive insight into their character and value. This act of ideation is what Scheler elsewhere calls the *Wesensschau* or insight into essence. It requires what Plato called a kind of "dying to the world," insofar as it looks upon the being-thus of things, and not upon things as they have significance for the organism's survival and prosperity.

The character and function of spirit have been misunderstood, Scheler believes, by naturalism. He carries his analysis to the naturalistic theories of Freud and others concerning the relationship of conscious life to psychic life. If language, culture, and science all arise out of the *Verdrängung,* or repression of the vital drives (among which are Freud's foundational drives, *eros* and *thanatos*), then what is it that executes this act of repression, if not a function *opposed* to the drives? Freud's answer, that it is the unconscious or preconscious functions of the ego (the "censor") or those of the superego that perform this repression, is unsatisfying to Scheler. Why is it, Scheler asks, that such repression at times leads to neurosis, and at other times to the higher forms of culture? Spirit, Scheler declares, the phenomenon that frees us from the psychic life dominated by the drives, can alone achieve the repression of the drives and their reorientation toward what is *not* originally the aim of drives, precisely the *spiritualization of impulsion.* The psyche cannot achieve this repression, because repression *inhibits* the drive impulses, whereas everywhere else in nature the psychic functions of life, including intelligence and mind, *enhance* the operation of the drives and the achievement of *their* ends. Only what has not emerged from impulsion, only what is opposed to the drive-life and its satisfactions can make possible the unhappy, sick, neurotic, but civilized and culturally productive phenomenon man: and that opposed principle is spirit. Spirit, however, is *impotent:* like the physicalist philosophers, Scheler denies that spirit is an active force in the universe. It possesses no energy of its own. It can only attract the drives and offer them representations of possibilities that the drives, on their own, could not have contemplated. It offers these possibilities to the drives as a kind of "bait" to them, inhibiting the pursuit of their

original ends and encouraging them toward the higher ends pointed out by spirit.

The Third Thesis: Spirit Pertains to the Very Foundation of the Universe

Insofar as spirit is not reducible to impulsion and the psychic functions, it is reasonable to posit both spirit and life as autonomous functions of the Ground of Being, the *ens a se*. Thus the ultimate and irreducible being of the cosmos is spirit and life, not matter and mind, as in Descartes. Scheler noted in an earlier essay that an insight fundamental to all religion, and universal in the human race, is that of the nobility and independence of spirit and its fragile opposition to life. His philosophy throughout his life was dualistic, although not a substantialist dualism such as Descartes', but rather a phenomenal one. It is only through the interpenetration of the two primordial phenomena, spirit and life, both seated in the very Ground of Being, that we can make sense of the upward flow of evolution and establish the proper role of human beings in its purposes. Why, indeed, must we interpret reality naturalistically, as consisting of matter and life alone? Why not posit instead spirit and life interpenetrating each other at the root of being, similar to what is taught by the Chinese doctrine of the yin and the yang, the opposed but mutually interpenetrating structures at the foundation of the Tao? What facts persuade us that spirit and life, unlike all the inorganic elements formed after the originating event of the cosmos, are derivable only from the cosmic evolutionary pressures that produced complexity and order out of simplicity and chaos? And if spirit is primordial but impotent, and appears in man as a frail flower, producing images of values higher than those of life, why should it not be the essence of piety toward the whole of being to turn our drives toward the achievement of those higher values: in a word, to spiritualize the universe as much as possible? Scheler does not conclude that the emergence of spirit as a human function opposed to life's impulsions requires for its explanation a theological foundation, such as he so wonderfully described and even wonderfully defended—or appeared to defend—in *On the Eternal in Man.* In this late essay he rejects theism out of hand, and condemns it as an effort to lessen humankind's responsibility for the coming-to-be of spirit in the world. No doubt his final "theology" asserts a kind of eternity in man, but it is one that men share only temporarily, as they struggle unto death to

realize the Ground of Being as Spirit by becoming spiritual themselves. And this is the fourth thesis.

The Fourth Thesis: The Role of the Human Being in the Cosmos Is the Infusion of Life with Spirit

This role follows from the human being's place in the cosmos as the sole known bearer of spirit, the sole entity that is able to say "no" to the drives and sublimate their power. The proper life of man is the personal engagement in this process of the spiritualization of life, the process which, on a macroscopic level, is that by which the Ground of Being becomes a *Deitas,* spiritual god. The means to this balancing-out of spirit and life is sublimation, the turning of impulsion to ends selected by the spirit. The highest ends of spirit are the highest values available to a person at a given time and place; the images of those values attract the drives, which are at first indifferent to them, and infuse them with a will to achieve those higher ends.

At the end of this essay, Scheler reflects on the amazement felt by some of his acquaintances that one could tolerate the notion of an unfinished God, a God in the process of becoming God. We call out to God when we need his help; yet Scheler argues that God as Spirit can effectuate nothing at all without the connivance of impulsion. Theology insists on the infinity and absoluteness of God: it possesses the awesome notion of a "being greater than which nothing can be conceived," a *causa sui,* whose essence and existence are one. Yet if the Deity as Spirit is unfinished, impotent, and opposed to and in a very real sense subject to the forces of life, then how can he be worthy of our worship? Scheler's answer is unambiguous: the God-to-be as spirit does not require our worship, it needs our help just to become a spiritual person. In the *Euthyphro,* Socrates does not entirely reject Euthyphro's idea that piety is the part of justice that serves the gods—not as a servant serves a master, but as a physician serves a patient, helping the divine patient to achieve some value that it could not achieve on its own, and which Euthyphro could not identify. Perhaps, like Scheler's, Socrates' piety expresses itself in the pursuit of the perfection of the spiritual soul through the practice of philosophy. This requires the "conversion of our soul" from its thralldom to finite things and its liberation for those that are infinite, so that we may perfect a still-imperfect world. The gods themselves, Socrates may have believed, will benefit from such work.

Man is a microcosm, isomorphic with the Ground of Being as Life and Spirit, for it is in human beings that the spirit struggles with life to create things of value. Scheler's answer to the question of man's place in the cosmos asserts that "the *fundamental relation the human being has to the Ground of Being* consists in this ground *grasping itself and realizing itself* in the human being who is, because he has both spirit and life, a part of the Ground's own spirit and impulsion." Spirit and impulsion must *interpenetrate each other.* That process of interpenetration requires, as we have seen, the Freudian act of "sublimation"—not, however, by unconscious impulsions of ego and superego, but by the conscious leading of impulses by the spirit in man. That process of leading is manifested most clearly in *philosophy,* which, by re-performing the *Wesensschau* and deepening our insight into essence and value, allows the impotent Spirit to lead the drives to achieve *its* ends in the world: ever-higher forms of being-in-the-world. By perfecting our knowledge of the essences of things, and by turning our energies to the achievement of the ideal ends inherent in that knowledge, we sublimate our drives, interpenetrate them with spirit, and create a high and balanced culture that contributes to the further spiritualization of the world and the coming-to-be of God. We can neither rely on God nor demand metaphysical certainties to guide us in life, Scheler says. We can only rely on the highest achievements of the deity as life and spirit that have hitherto been brought forth in the world. And Scheler concludes: "Only in the active commitment of the human person himself is opened the possibility to 'know' the Being of what-is-through-itself." This commitment requires "self-knowledge and a high and lofty sense in man."

Perhaps this final vision of Scheler is Socratic and Greek, and modern scientific/evolutionary in nature, but it is also true in one sense to the Judaism that Scheler learned as a child from his mother's side of the family: that God called out to humankind to establish a covenant with him so that some great divine plan of reconciliation, redemption, and final closure might be achieved. So also Scheler finds in the Socratic admonition to seek perfection of soul the eschatology of Spirit coming to itself.

February 2007

A Note on the Text

The Human Place in the Cosmos is a translation of *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos, Gesammelte Werke,* volume 9, *Späte Schriften,* edited by Manfred S. Frings (Bern and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1976). The essay was first written for a conference held on April 27, 1927, in Darmstadt by the "School of Wisdom" under the title, "Man and Earth." It represents a short exposition of a major work on philosophical anthropology that Scheler was preparing for publication at the time of his death the following year. Scheler's oral presentation was entitled "Die Sonderstellung des Menschen" ("The Special Place of Humankind"), of which an abbreviated version was published under that title in the eighth volume of the journal *Der Leuchter,* edited by Graf H. Keyserling (Darmstadt: Otto Reichl Verlag, 1927). This published version is not identical with the presentation. The manuscript of the presentation survived as an introduction to the Darmstadt lecture, and has the designation of BI 17 in both the Max Scheler Archives, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (Bavarian State Library, Munich, Germany), and in the Max Scheler Archives, University of New Mexico, United States.

The author's first editor, his widow, Maria Scheler, referred to the essay in her publication of a fourth edition of the work as it appeared in *Der Leuchter.* Further details about the history of the work can be found in Manfred Frings's "Nachwort des Herausgebers" in *Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 9, *Späte Schriften* (1976), pp. 345–46.

Translator's Note

Comments and annotations in brackets [ ] are mine. The footnotes are translated from Scheler's original, while the endnotes are my own. Scheler's works that have been translated into English from the German are referred to in the essay by their English titles. Those of his works that have not been translated in English are given by their German titles.

The German collected works (*Gesammelte Werke*) of Max Scheler had been started in 1954 in Munich by Maria Scheler at Francke Verlag, Bern and Munich. She had edited six volumes when she died in 1969. In 1970, I continued the edition in Chicago and Albuquerque. From 1986 on, the collected works were published in Germany by Bouvier Verlag, Bonn. I completed them with volume fifteen in 1997. After the year 2000 no new editions of the volumes had been made available. Since 2008, reprints of the older editions have been made available at Bouvier in Bonn.

I take this opportunity to express my deep and sincere thanks to Professor Eugene Kelly for having read my draft and for his constructive suggestions of emendations for the translation.

THE HUMAN PLACE IN THE COSMOS

Preface to the First Edition

The present work represents a short and very compact summary of my views concerning some main issues of a "Philosophical Anthropology" with which I have for years been occupied. This work will be published at the beginning of 1929. Ever since the awakening of my philosophical thinking, the question "what is the human being and what is his place in being?" has occupied me more fundamentally than any other question I have dealt with. My endeavors of ever so many years—during which time I had been addressing this question from all sides—ended up since 1922 in creating a more comprehensive work covering it. I was blessed with the growing good fortune to see that the vast majority of all problems of philosophy which I had treated earlier coincided in the question concerned.

Many people have expressed their wish that the lecture I gave in Darmstadt in April 1927 on occasion of the "Conference of the School of Wisdom" [Tagung der Schule der Weisheit], entitled "The Special Place of the Human Being" (see the journal *Der Leuchter,* vol. 8, 1927), should be made available in a special printing. This wish is herewith met.

If the reader wants to get to know the stages of the development of my views on the immense subject under discussion, I would recommend the readings of my work given below in the following sequence:

1. "On the Idea of Man" appeared first in the journal *Summa,* 1914, and is contained in my *Gesammelte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze,* entitled *Vom Umsturz der Werte* [*On the Turnover of Values*]; my treatise on *Ressentiment* is also contained in said publication.

2. After this I recommend readings of specific sections of my work *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values** and, furthermore, a study of relevant sections concerning the specifics of our emotive life presented in my book *The Nature of Sympathy.*

3. Concerning the relationship between the human being and the-

* See especially the elaboration therein on the experience of reality and those on perception in part III. Concerning my rejection of naturalist theories about the human being, see part V, sections 4 and 5; concerning the stratification of emotional life, see part V, section 8; and concerning "person," see part VI, A. Also consult the index under "man," "physical," "psychic," and so on.

ories about history and society, the essay "Man and History" would have to be drawn on, as well as my work *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* [of the works in this book, the treatise "Erkenntnis und Arbeit" has not been translated in English, but *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* is available]; and concerning the human being's relationship to knowledge and culturation [*Bildung*], the reader may wish to consult my essay "The Forms of Knowledge and Culture."

4. I addressed humanity's potential for development in my lecture "The Human Being in the Forthcoming Era of Adjustment," printed in a forthcoming collection, entitled *Adjustment as Destiny and Mission,* edited at the Academy for Political Science in a series called "Political Science," Berlin, 1928. [The lecture is now in *Philosophical Perspectives* as "Man in the Era of Adjustment."]

During my lectures at the University of Cologne between 1922 and 1928, I have repeatedly and in detail presented the results of my researches pertaining to "The Foundations of Biology," "Philosophical Anthropology," "Theory of Cognition," and "Metaphysics." These investigations went far beyond the foundation offered in the present text.

May I add with satisfaction that in Germany today the problems of a philosophical anthropology are at the center of all philosophical problematics, and that beyond philosophical experts, there are biologists, medical researchers, psychologists, and sociologists who are working on a new understanding of the human being's essential constitution.

Even apart from this, the study of the problem of man's own nature has reached today a maximum scope in all history known to us. As soon as humans conceded that the amount of precise knowledge about what we are is far less than ever before; and as soon as human beings ceased to be daunted by any possible answer to the question at hand, there also arose in them a new *courage toward truthfulness* to bring up the essential question of who they are, while abandoning hitherto fully or partial links that had been maintained with theological, philosophical, and scientific traditions. That is, the human being has gained the courage to develop a new form of consciousness and a new view of himself—all of this on the foundation of the immense treasures lying in the individual which diverse human sciences had worked out in the past.

Frankfurt am Main, end of April 1928, Max Scheler

The Human Place in the Cosmos

Ask an educated European today what his thoughts are when one uses the term "human being" [*der Mensch*], and he will just about always find three irreconcilable ideas about the term, which are in continuous conflict with each other.

1. There is the thought of the Jewish-Christian tradition about Adam and Eve, and of creation.

2. There is the thought stemming from the ancient Greeks when the human being's consciousness of himself raised him for the first time into a special place, realizing that the human being is what he is through his possession of what is variably called "reason," logos, *phronesis, ratio, mens*—"logos" meaning here the possession of speech as well as the ability to grasp the "what" of each and every entity. Closely connected with this view is the theory that there is also a reason above the human being that underlies the whole universe and with which the human being alone is in a state of participation.

3. There is the thought of natural science and genetic psychology, today already a tradition. According to this theory, the human being represents a late stage in the evolution of our planet. He distinguishes himself only by degrees of complexity of the energies and abilities that he has inherited from ancestors in the animal world and that are found in subhuman nature.

These three ideas lack any underlying unity which could provide us with a common foundation. Thus, we have a theological, philosophical, and a scientific anthropology before us but which, as it were, have no concerns with each other: *yet we do not have one uniform idea of the human being.* The ever-growing number of special disciplines which deal with the human being conceal, rather than reveal, his nature, no matter how valuable these disciplines may be. Furthermore, the said three ideas are severely shaken today, especially Darwin's solution of the origin of the human being.[1] Hence, one can say that in no historical era has the human being become so much of a problem to himself as in ours.

For this reason, I have made a new attempt to submit an outline of a philosophical anthropology with the widest foundation possible. In what follows, I will touch upon only some points that (1) concern the

essence of the human being in his relation to plants and animals and (2) concern, metaphysically, *his special place in the cosmos.* Let, in the following pages, a few results of my investigations be indicated.

Already the term and the concept of "human being" contain a tricky ambiguity. This ambiguity has to be first seen through before we can address the question of the human being's special place. On the one hand, the term is supposed to give us specifications which, morphologically, characterize the human being as a subclass of vertebrates and mammals; no matter what the consequences of this may be, it is quite clear that the human being is here not only *subordinated* to the concept of "animal" but also occupies a very small corner of the animal realm. This also remains the case if we, with C. v. Linné, refer to humans as a "peak" of all vertebrates and mammals (which as to the subject matter and concept concerned here, is highly questionable), because a peak of something still belongs to that of which it is the peak. Entirely independent of such a concept—which establishes the unity of the human being in terms of his upright posture, a transformation of the vertebral column, the equilibration of his brainpan, the large increase of the relative size of the brain, and the organic changes ensuing from his upright posture (such as grasping hands with opposable thumbs, the recession of jawbone and teeth)—the term "human being" also signifies in everyday language something totally different, especially among civilized peoples. We can hardly find another word that shows an analogous double meaning. In this second sense, the term "human being" signifies a concept of something which is completely *opposite* to the concept of "animals in general," including mammals and vertebrates, and is opposed to the latter to the same degree as that of the *infusorium stentor,* although it can hardly be denied that living beings called "humans" are morphologically, physiologically, and psychologically incomparably more similar to a chimpanzee than humans and chimpanzees are to an infusorium.

It is obvious that this second concept of "human being" has an entirely different meaning and an entirely different origin than the first one.* I wish to refer to this second concept as an *essential concept* in contrast to the first one, which is a concept used in the natural sciences. This is our theme: to show whether or not this essential concept, which links

* See my essay "On the Idea of Man" in *Vom Umsturtz der Werte.* It confirms that the traditional concept of the human being is constituted by its resemblance with God. This presupposes the idea of God as a center of reference.