

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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### THE 'FORMAL PROBLEMS' OF SCHELER'S SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE.

EVEN students of philosophy hardly knew what to expect when first they saw the title of Scheler's most recent book: *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*.<sup>1</sup> Nor did they feel very much enlightened when they found that a little more than the first third of the volume dealt with "Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge." The very phrase 'sociology of knowledge' was new and perhaps more apt to arouse suspicion or at best curiosity, than to result in understanding.

It may be helpful, therefore, to begin this discussion by outlining the basic position upon which Scheler seems to build his 'sociology of knowledge.' Three statements would appear as fundamental in his view:

1. Culture is a social phenomenon.
2. No social phenomena (and therefore no society) without

<sup>1</sup> Leipzig, *Der Neue Geist Verlag*, 1926. (Max Scheler, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cologne, shares with such men as Edmund Husserl, Moritz Geiger and A. Pfander the leadership of the phenomenological school, which holds an important position among the contemporary schools of philosophy in Germany. The 'phenomenological method,' upon which it professes to place entire dependence, consists in beginning all investigations with the facts 'given' in experience, without the use of any metaphysical presuppositions. It disavows any preconceived theory, any bias or prejudice, unless these terms are to be applied to the conviction that we are in the presence of some sort of facts, the place, relation and meaning of which within human experience is ascertainable by careful and accurate observation. It finds no occasion to speak of 'ultimates' or of an 'absolute.' This brief statement, though wholly inadequate as an account of the school and its method, may serve to obviate such misunderstandings of Scheler's position as would follow from attaching to some of the terms used in this paper their ordinary connotations.)