

THE
NATURE OF SYMPATHY

BY MAX SCHELER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

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WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
TO MAX SCHELER'S WORK

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Chapter III

GENETIC THEORIES OF FELLOW-FEELING

THERE are several genetic theories of fellow-feeling which, whatever their explanatory value, prove unequal to the phenomenological factors we have dwelt upon.

To commiserate is, as we have seen, to be sorry at another person's sorrow, *as being his*. The fact that it is his is part of the phenomenological situation. There is no question of any sort of identification in feeling with the other person, nor of my sorrow with his. Even in the first-mentioned example above,¹ the process of feeling in the father and the mother is given separately in each case; only *what* they feel—the *one* sorrow—and its value-content, is immediately present to them as identical. In pure emotional infection, on the other hand, the incoming infective emotion is *not* ascribed to others, but regarded as 'one's own'; only in its causal origins does it relate back to some other person's experience.

I have already construed suggestion and the behaviour of crowds on the lines of the herd-animal's relationship to its leader. I would add that a similar transference of experience also plays an important part in the process of *forming traditions*. 'Tradition' represents a transmission of experience, whether of thought or behaviour, which is the opposite of mere communication or teaching, and likewise of conscious imitation. For in any kind of communication there is a giving, not only of information, but also of the accompanying fact that my *informant* thinks this, says that, etc. In tradition the latter is absent. Here I believe that 'A is B', *because* the other person does so, but *without knowing that* he does so; I simply share his opinion without distinguishing the act of understanding the sense of his belief from my own act of opining. Thus I may feel resentment, anger or love for a thing, or a cause,

¹ Cf. p. 12.

with here. They are partly *psychological*, partly *metaphysical*.

Quite a number of philosophers have alleged that the phenomenological course of fellow-feeling largely consists in a kind of *comparison*, which, if put into words, would run as follows: 'How would it be if this had happened to *me*?' Whatever the place such a comparison may occupy in life, it certainly has nothing to do with genuine fellow-feeling. If only because the answer would very often be, 'Had it happened to *me*, with *my* character and temperament, it would not have been so bad; but being the sort of person he is, it is a serious matter for him'. True fellow-feeling betrays itself in the very fact that it includes the existence and character of the other person as an individual, as part of the object of commiseration or rejoicing. Can one rejoice more profoundly with a person than at his being the perfect, talented, unspoiled individual *that he is*? or commiserate more deeply than for his having to suffer as he does, being the sort of man he is? In the phenomenon

¹ The distinguishing of what is inherited from what is traditional is always very difficult in the individual case, and most difficult of all in the problems of instinct and experience in animal-psychology. Cf. Lloyd Morgan: *Instinct and Habit*. Herbert Spencer, for instance, considers the categories of primitive thought to be inherited, while William James and Lévy-Brühl regard them as merely traditional. (Cf. Lévy-Brühl's Preface to *How Natives Think*.) I incline to the latter view, on account of the great historical and cultural differences in the forms taken by primitive thinking.

of compassion, which is a heightened commiseration bestowed from above, and from a standpoint of superior power and dignity, commiseration displays its characteristic consideration for the *condition* of its object, in a special degree. Thus wherever fellow-feeling has a direct reference to the other person, as such, or to the *individual uniqueness* of his sorrow or joy—which can hardly happen indeed, unless it is based on love—it follows that ‘comparison’ must already be ruled out as insufficient for an understanding of the situation. Even if the assumption were otherwise correct, it would still cover only those cases in which the emotions involved lie closest to the region of sensory feeling, and farthest from that of the spiritual emotions, which are also the most highly individualized.

But the fact of the matter is that such ‘comparison’ simply *cannot* be found in commiseration proper at all. It is a fabrication of those theorists who echo the psychology and ethics of the French Enlightenment in taking the natural egoism of man for granted, and therefore seek to construe the altruistic sentiments, and fellow-feeling likewise, as a *consequence* or *counterpart* of some kind to the self-regarding sentiments and attitudes. If, at the moment of reacting in commiseration or 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. A phenomenological reference to the other person as such would no longer be apparent as the immediate purport of the feeling itself. The more so when this theory, having rightly perceived that the comparison is certainly not a matter of judgement and inference, goes on to allege that instead of my merely supposing ‘what it would be like’ for this to happen to me, I really have a fleeting and involuntary illusion of its actually doing so; in short, an emotional hallucination, like the typical case of the soldier in battle who feels his adversary’s uplifted sabre cut painfully into his arm, though it never actually strikes him at all. On this view, fellow-feeling would really be a self-regarding emotional reaction, which has acquired the specious appearance of being a special type of feeling owing to a *misapprehension*. For in entertaining this illusion or hallucination I should have a phenomenological awareness of myself as the sufferer; my practical response would be to try to remove its cause, and even though this might lie in the other person’s pain or distressing circumstances, such a reaction would be in no way different from one that was aimed at removing discomforts of my own. But from this it is evident that in so far as this attitude is based on illusion and error, *no sort of moral value* can be ascribed

to it. Ethics would then have to counsel us: ‘Take good care that you don’t mistake the miseries of others for your own, or devote your energies to their removal’; and if it proved impossible to carry out this injunction, one could only tell the person concerned to ‘Go and see a doctor’.

There is a further case which resembles this *spurious* type of fellow-feeling, and presents a similar contrast to the real thing: it arises where, although there is an understanding of the other’s sorrow, whose effect is to release a reaction of distress, this feeling is not directed upon the other person’s condition, but upon the consequential reaction in oneself. An example of this is when someone adopts the maxim ‘I must have cheerful faces around me’ and thereupon dispenses happiness to those about him; or conversely, when he relieves the woes of others because he ‘can’t bear to see that kind of thing’; or accedes to the importunities of a beggar or petitioner in order to ‘get rid of him’ or ‘put him out of sight’. And such cases shade into those of mere excess of sensibility, which Nietzsche so misguidedly identified (along with emotional infection), as akin to fellow-feeling; as when a person ‘cannot stand the sight of blood’, or ‘cannot bear to see a fowl’s neck wrung’. The really instructive feature here is the way the agent brings his own pleasure or pain into the foreground of attention, so as to *mask* their presence in the other person, and concentrates upon these obtrusive feelings of his own. From just such a spurious case as this we may see that genuine instances of commiseration or rejoicing are never self-regarding states of feeling. But this can be grasped only if we do not lose sight of the sharp distinction between feeling-*functions* and emotional *states*. As I have said on a previous occasion:¹ the suffering of pain is a different thing from the pain itself: suffering as a function has quite different thresholds from those of pain, just as the *capacity* for suffering, joy or satisfaction is distinct from *susceptibility* to pain or to sensory pleasure (the latter being largely constant in history, whereas the former varies widely according to the level of civilization).² Now 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. It may seem extraordinary that we should be able

¹ *Der Formalismus in der Ethik*, p. 262 seq. Cf. also the essay ‘Vom Sinne des Leides’ (1917) in *Moralia*.

² There is a phase in anæsthesia by narcosis in which the pain is still quite objectively present, though there is no longer any suffering at all.

to feel the emotional states of others, and really 'suffer' over them; that the result of rejoicing *with* them should be, *not* that we are joyful on their account, for this would then be simply our own joy, but that we are able to *savour* their joy without thereby needing to get into a joyful mood ourselves; but this is just what happens in the phenomenon of *genuine* fellow-feeling. Whereas the causation or infective propagation of analogous feeling-states in ourselves by reason of their presence in others, is no true fellow-feeling at all, but merely seems to be so because of a misapprehension.

In my essay on 'Self-deception'¹ I have dealt with yet another type of case, where again there is no authentic fellow-feeling present, but this time because there is a sort of identification with the other person. It is to some extent the opposite of the previous case. I have in mind the situation in which our own life acquires a tendency to dissipate itself in a vicarious re-enactment of the doings of one or more other people; where we are so *caught up*, as it were, in the other's changing moods and interests that we no longer seem to lead a life of our own; or where our own life largely consists in a series of reactions to such material content as becomes available, *at second hand*, through the other person's experience. Here we react to what actually touches him, as though touched by it ourselves; not because of any illusion or hallucination concerning the priority of the individual feelings, but simply because we are leading *his* life and not our own, while remaining quite unaware of the vicarious relationship by which this process is effected.² The distinctive element in this sort of case lies above all in the attitude to one's own self and the evaluation of one's own interests, acts of will, conduct, and indeed one's very existence. This attitude and assessment are now no more than derivative, being determined by the changing *regard* in which the other person holds or might hold us, and which he may demonstrate. We think well of ourselves in finding favour with him, and badly when we do not. Our very acts and decisions are determined by the implicit demands inherent in *his conception of us*. Now this picture he has of us is not, as it normally is, a *result* of our own spontaneous life and activity, which we then receive back at second hand, rejoicing, for example, to find him endorsing it. On the contrary, what happens is that this life and activity becomes entirely dependent on his fluctuating opinion of us.³ This produces a purely reactive style of life having, on that account alone, a low moral value.

¹ Vide *Zeitschrift für Psychopathologie*, Heft I (1913); also in *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, II, Band, under the title 'Die Idole der Selbsterkenntnis'.

² Cf. the cases of pathological identification mentioned above.

³ Cf. the subtle analyses of V. von Gebattel in his essay 'Der Einzelne und sein Zuschauer', *Zeitschrift für Psychopathologie*, II, I. It is a different matter when we merely take over the other person's ideal picture or model of himself as

Such a reactive attitude towards society is characteristic of the abnormally *vain* man, who—in contrast to the proud type, is utterly in thrall to the notice and opinion of other people; it is only *as* one who is seen, marked and attended to that he has any sense of his moral reality, and his own personality, wishes and feelings are completely hidden from him by the 'personage' he enacts. It is also characteristic, though in a very different fashion, of a type I should describe as the mental *parasite*. This human species lives, mentally, entirely on those around him, or on a *single* member of his acquaintance, in the sense that he partakes of the latter's experiences as his own, not merely echoing the other's thoughts and opinions, but thinking and uttering them on his own account, and sharing his moods likewise. It is a consciousness of internal emptiness and nullity, which gives rise to this type of personality; a vacuity which drives him out of 'himself', and hence to fill his empty belly with the experience of others. And this passive type finally passes into the far more dangerous active form of the disposition: that of the spiritual *vampire*, the hollowness of whose existence, coupled with a passionate quest for experience, drives him to a limitless *active* penetration into the inmost reaches of the other's self; unlike the passive type, he does not fasten on a single individual, but always on one after another, so as to live a life of his own in their experiences, and fill the void within. Strindberg has given a masterly description of the type in his play *The Dance of Death*. It is also common for certain psychoses to exhibit a variant form of the general attitude here outlined; I refer to that excessive deference in attitude, thought and action, towards the 'spectator' and the impression supposedly made upon him, which is so especially noticeable in *hysteria*. Here the presence of an onlooker immediately upsets the patient's natural self-possession, his consciousness of himself being replaced by the *image* of himself as seen by the onlooker, and as judged by the latter's standards of preference. He speaks, acts and conducts himself by reference to this image and on the spur of the moods it evokes—refusing to eat, for instance, or even committing suicide in some cases. It would be a mistake to describe this, as many psychiatric textbooks do, simply as 'excessive vanity', 'play-acting' or 'coquetry' on the part of the patient. For those who affect such attitudes are conscious, not only of the picture they present, but also that it is *they* who present it; they oscillate between this picture and an awareness of themselves as they really are. For the hysterical patient, however, the picture has come to life; the image

appropriate to ourselves also, and judge ourselves accordingly. Cf. on this point the second volume of *Vom Ewigem im Menschen*, 'Vorbilder und Führer', to be published shortly [published in *Nachlassband*, I, 1933].

of what he might be has come, for him, to *displace* what he actually is. Preoccupied as he is with the other person, the real course of his receptive, expressive and active life is actuated by variations in the fully-formed image supposedly seen there, depending on whatever authoritative version of it may have caught his fancy at the time; though he does not consciously set out to produce such variations in the image, for the sake of a pleasurable reaction thereto. Such a patient therefore, will not be content, like the still normal 'prima donna' type, to put on a stricken air so as to make others feel sorry for him, or a gay one to cheer them up; instead, he will implement the wished-for calamity by *actually* staging one, will actually kill himself, actually get into a state of wild hilarity, etc., but all still entirely for the benefit of the spectator and depending on his presence. The vain man, the play-actor and the coquette do not act thus, for they have not lost their capacity for self-awareness and merely vacillate between their own true condition and the image of themselves as others see them.

All such sub-species of this general type consist of forms which have nothing to do with fellow-feeling proper, seeing that the conditions for this, the consciousness and feeling of being oneself, of leading one's own life and thus of being 'separate' from others, are only apprehended here in a degenerate form. For this reason, too, their *ethical value is negative*, however much they may be mistaken for refinements of fellow-feeling or even for love. There is certainly nothing to prevent such attitudes from leading to actions of great benefit to the other person. All these people are capable of acts of what is commonly called 'sacrifice'. But in fact that is merely what they look like. For a man who neither leads his own life nor finds it worth living cannot sacrifice himself for another. He simply does not possess the one thing needful for sacrifice, namely a life of his own. Such neglect of self may have the quality of being useful and well-intentioned towards others, or it may be damaging and malevolent—as in the case of pure villainy, which may render the villain quite forgetful of his own advantage and even reckless of damage to himself; but even where the process begins in goodwill, it is an almost invariable rule in such cases, that it *ends in hatred*, and the more so, the more the agent persists in throwing himself *away* in this spurious fashion, for it is the very opposite of really meritorious self-devotion. Without a certain self-awareness and self-respect, acquired at first hand, and not derived from the effect produced on others, it is not possible to live morally. But the more our self-respect is impaired in the process referred to, the harder do we struggle to retain it, and the sterner grows the conflict between this endeavour and the countervailing tendency to lapse into absorption in another person. Figuratively

speaking, although the 'slave' has voluntarily delivered himself into the bondage of living another's life rather than his own, he comes at last to chafe against his fetters, and to rise up against his 'master'. And so the expense of spirit which at first resembled love turns necessarily to hatred, as a final means of self-assertion.¹

A peculiar mixture of genuine fellowship with subservience of this type is to be found in the relationship of 'patriarchal' authority between parents and children, or master and man. Its characteristic feature is the *mixture* of authority and considerate or indulgent fellow-feeling in the superior towards his subordinate, and, in the latter, a submissive deference to the life and will of the master, together with a genuinely solicitous fellow-feeling for him. The Russian appellation of 'Little Father' expresses this very strikingly.

But let us return to the genetic theories of fellow-feeling, and to the point made earlier, that in true unalloyed commiseration and rejoicing there is no state of sorrow or joy in oneself. This phenomenological fact is a stumbling-block for all those theories which undertake to explain the fact of fellow-feeling, without reverting, as before, to 'inference' or 'automatic illusion'. For they do so by asserting that perception of the symptoms and occasioning circumstances of joy or sorrow in another person either has the effect of *immediately* evoking the *reproduction* of a similar joy or sorrow previously experienced in oneself, or else that it does so *indirectly* by way of a tendency to imitate the symptoms so perceived. Let us disregard the second alternative and confine ourselves to the reproduction of past states of feeling. Lipps,² like Störing,³ makes all fellow-feeling consequent on a prior reproduction of feeling, and assumes that, given such a reproduction, which would necessarily present the feelings in question as having been previously felt to be my own, there is a further process of 'empathy' by which they are then carried over into the other person. In so doing he recognizes a problem which Störing disregards. For in fact we do at least have the impression that in fellow-feeling the other's emotions are in some sense 'given'. Störing does not explain this impression at all. While in view of

¹ This process often finds expression in an 'ambivalent' oscillation between love and hatred, in which hatred always sets in when self-abandonment has gone too far, to be again transformed into love, once the personal self has been reinstated. The fear of love, so-called, is in fact the fear of 'throwing oneself away'.

² Cf. Theodor Lipps: *Einleitung in die Psychologie und Grundfragen der Ethik*.

³ Cf. G. Störing: *Beiträge zur Ethik*, II Band. The pure theory of fellow-feeling in terms of reproduction and association has been worked out with even greater thoroughness and precision by Antonin Prandtl in his book on Empathy, and by Benno Erdmann in his *Grundzüge der Reproduktionspsychologie*, Berlin, 1920.

all I have previously said about his theory of empathy, Lipps explains it wrongly. For it follows from what has already been shown that a genetic theory is irrelevant here, since the other person's state of mind is directly grasped *in* the expressive phenomenon itself—without any sort of projective 'empathy'. But this raises the question whether such a reproduction of one's own joy or sorrow does or can play any part whatever in genuine fellow-feeling.

Let us first consider those cases where such reproduction undoubtedly does occur. Everybody must have had the experience of going in serious trouble to someone and telling this interested relative or friend of his distress. And he may well have noticed how the adviser in question, instead of entering into his visitor's circumstances, takes the latter's tale as an opportunity for indulging in a spate of reminiscence about *himself*, as to how a very similar thing once happened to him, and what he then did about it. 'Yes', they say, 'that's life all over: I once had pretty well the same thing happen to me.' Somewhat put out, we draw our friend's attention to the fact that here the circumstances are 'rather different'; we do our utmost to divert the rapt historian's gaze from his own career to our present troubles. But all too often he calmly goes on with his tale. Again, we have all met people who temper the quantity and direction of their interest according to what has given *them* most joy or sorrow in their own lives. But is such an obtrusion of one's own experience, even though it be reproduced quite automatically *without* any act of recall, any more authentic as a case of fellow-feeling than the previous one, seeing that it again involves a diversion of interest from the other person back to oneself? I do not think so. This genetic theory does nothing to account for positive unalloyed fellow-feeling, which is a genuine *out-reaching* and entry into the other person and his individual situation, a true and authentic *transcendence* of one's self; it merely explains some of the casual empirical circumstances associated with the working of fellow-feeling, and these are more liable to disturb and detract from it, than to produce or promote it. In so far as our own reproduced experiences may intervene between our fellow-feeling and the other person's state of mind, the purely positive character of the feeling is veiled in an obscuring medium originating in the particular state of our psychophysical organization at the time. This genetic association-theory overlooks the very existence of *pure* fellow-feeling as such, just as it ignores the possibility of pure remembering (independent of the memory-image, as Bergson has effectively shown¹), and of a pure intuition

¹ Henri Bergson: *Matter and Memory* (authorized translation by N. M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer), London, Macmillan, 1911.

indivisible into sensory constituents. To add a further point, the experience reproduced, for instance the grief or anguish felt in pitying a person afflicted by these states, would have to be a *genuine* feeling (though less intense than the original state). For it is not supposed to be a question of remembering a feeling one has possessed or shared, but of actually reproducing it, so that there really is a new feeling present, albeit a weaker one. Thus, to pity a drowning man, I should have to be stricken for a moment with fear like his own; to have pity for someone in pain, I should need to feel a twinge of it myself. But the purer and truer the fellow-feeling, the less does this happen; the more it does occur, the closer we approach to a condition of emotional infection, which actually does consist in such a reproduction of feelings, either directly or by virtue of the tendency to echo the expression of feeling in others; and the effect of this is to *lower* the moral value of the attitude accordingly.

This theory is at fault in yet another respect. For it entails that our fellow-feeling must necessarily be confined to processes and incidents in other people's experience such as *we have already met with ourselves*. But this conclusion is as little in accord with the facts as the corresponding view, that we can only understand what we have actually been through ourselves. We can have a lively and immediate participation in joy or sorrow, can share with others their appreciation of value, and can even enter into another person's commiseration for a third party, without ever having sampled that particular quality of experience before. 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 or value in question, such as those comprised in fear, or in some sort of 'death-like feeling', in the present case. For what sort of 'elements' are these? How far must we descend in search of those mental particles which the atomistic psychology believes to be constituent of experience? And on what principle or rule are these 'elements' to be compounded, if we do not already have some idea of what the end-product is to be, namely mortal terror? Are we to go on shuffling these elements in imagination, until they happen to fit the case? Such a game would be most unlikely to come out. Certainly, the variety of emotional tones within the compass of a species such as man, is no less *finite* however large it may be, than the limited number of basic colours he is able to perceive. Nevertheless, it is quite wrong to suppose that these basic colours must necessarily be encountered in actual perception and sensation, before they can be 'visualized' at all; the fact is that this intrinsic limitation of range holds *equally* good throughout

for *all* modes of colour-awareness alike, whether in perception, in judgement, or in the use of imagery (in memory, fantasy, etc.); it is only because of the biologically purposive character of the order in which these acts are brought into use, that we usually begin by perceiving qualities in sensation, on receipt of an external stimulus, before they are presented in imagery.¹ It is exactly the same in the present case. Given the range of emotional qualities of which man is intrinsically capable, and from which alone his own actual feelings are built up, he has an *equally innate* capacity for comprehending the feelings of others, even though he may never on any occasion have encountered such feelings (or their ingredients) in himself, as real unitary experiences.

Moreover, this applies increasingly, the more such feelings ascend from the sensory level, through the vital, to the spiritual plane. It is only for *sensory* feelings ('feeling-sensations') that reproduction is required, in order to be sure of understanding and participating in them.² Thus it is scarcely possible for a normal person to acquire a real understanding of a perverse sensual pleasure and impossible for him to share in it, any more than he can in the enjoyment of pain. It is equally difficult to partake in the enthusiasm of the Japanese for consuming raw fish; and difficult even, for a man of culture to summon up a genuine sympathetic enjoyment in the pleasures of the populace, such as their taste for rowdy music, for instance. The varieties of sensory pleasure and pain in animals are also largely alien to us, and fellow-feeling is no longer operative in such cases. Nevertheless, so far as the various modes of *vital feeling* are concerned, understanding and fellow-feeling are able to range throughout the *entire* animate universe, even though they rapidly fall off in respect of specific qualities as we descend the organic scale. The mortal terror of a bird, its sprightly or dispirited moods, are intelligible to us and awaken our fellow-feeling, despite our total inability to penetrate those of its sensory feelings which depend on its particular sensory organization. Again, the very people whose sensuous enjoyments are unintelligible and uncongenial to the person of culture, are perfectly comprehensible to him in respect of their

¹ It has not yet been established for certain whether those born blind have any conception of colour.

² A detailed analysis of the four levels of feeling: spiritual, mental, vital and sensory, and an outline of the specific laws appropriate to each, is to be found in my book *Der Formalismus in der Ethik*, p. 344. My theory has recently been confirmed on the pathological side by Kurt Schneider in his essay 'Pathopsychologische Beiträge zur psychologischen Phänomenologie von Liebe und Mitfühlen' (*Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, Bd. 35, 1921) and further in *Bemerkungen zu einer phänomenologischen Psychologie der invertierten Sexualität und erotischen Liebe* (ibid., Bd. 71, 1921).

vital emotions, and awaken his wholehearted interest therein. While the understanding and sharing of *mental*, and still more of *spiritual* feelings, is completely independent of all such gulfs between the contingent personal backgrounds of individuals. Jesus' despair in Gethsemane can be understood and shared regardless of our historical, racial and even human limitations. And for every candid heart which steep itself in that desolation it operates, not as a reminder or revival of personal sufferings, great or small, but as the revelation of a new and greater suffering hitherto *undreamed* of.

Only so are we enabled, by understanding, emotional reproduction and fellow-feeling for other people's circumstances, values and standards (fellow-feeling plus evaluation), to effect a real *enlargement* of our own lives and to *transcend* the limitations of our own actual experience; thereby reconciling the appearance of both such fields of actual experience under that *governing* master-concept of life in all its fullness, vouchsafed to the open-hearted through a sympathetic understanding of value and circumstance in the present and the past. According to the theories we are rejecting, we are supposed, firstly, to be necessarily confined in the prison of our own casual experiences, in all their individual, racial and historical heterogeneity, so that the objects of our understanding and sympathy would represent merely a *selection* from such experience as *we* have actually had. Thus an age could only understand and sympathize with those aspects of a bygone epoch which were familiar from its own experience. 'Wha's like us?'¹ would become an axiom for the historian, and the habit of analogical comparison with the present day, which is really a grave abuse of history, would be enthroned as the basic principle of historical method. The idea of an inner *moral unity of mankind*² over and above the actual contacts of its members, would likewise become a pure fiction. A second conclusion would necessarily follow from such a view: that though fellow-feeling so often seems to affect our volition and action, and even the entire course of our inner life, setting it right, for instance, by inducing us to abandon a plan or renounce decisions already made lest they should prove detrimental to others, this would merely be an illusory effect, since such sympathy could only extend to matters for which our own life hitherto had furnished the material. Fellow-feeling and its objects, being merely epiphenomenal to what has actually been experienced, would have no hope of ever exerting any *real effective* influence on its present course of development. And now let us confront this view with a

¹ [An approximate rendering of: 'Wie haben wir's so herrlich weit gebracht'. The reference is to Wagner in Goethe's *Faust*, Pt. I, 1, 573.—Tr.]

² Cf. my analysis of this in *Der Formalismus in der Ethik*, p. 555.

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case like that of Buddha's conversion. A man who, having grown up amid luxury and splendour and all the amenities of life, was led by the sight of a few instances of poverty and sickness to discern and respond to all the pain and misery of the world, so that his whole life thereafter took an entirely different course. Or again, we may take an example from Tolstoi's story *Master and Servant* which tells how the master's mean little heart is *opened*, after life-long closure, in the act of his first experience of pure sympathy at the sight of his servant perishing of cold; and this not only for the limited feeling of the moment, but for everything to which he had hitherto been blind, neglectful or obtuse in his own life.¹

But we have no need of such exalted examples. We can perceive in our own daily lives a rhythmic alternation between the closed and the open viewpoint, between self-regarding aloofness and sympathetic interest in the lives of other people. We may notice how our flow of sympathy is by no means dependent on variations in the external stimuli, but fluctuates widely in spite of them. Thus it often fails us when confronted with the fact and the evidence of intense suffering, and then often without any such powerful inducement, some trifle may open all our soul to human joys and sorrows for days and weeks on end, as if a light were suddenly shone, or a window opened, in a darkened room. It is brought home to us here with especial clarity, how fellow-feeling differs, in the *autonomy* of its functioning, from states of mind occasioned by factors external to ourselves.

¹ Jacob Wassermann's novel *Christian Wahnschaffe*, gives a masterly portrayal of a man addicted to selfish enjoyment and a slave to the conventions of his station and class, who slowly learns, by repeated acquaintance with human distress and misery, to open his heart to the other side of life and society (tr. by Ludwig Lewisohn as *The World's Illusion*, Rahway, N.J., 1921, re-issued by Allen and Unwin, 1929).