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"Among twentieth-century philosophers Helmuth Plessner stands apart, anticipating key ideas in theoretical biology and cognitive science. His unfairly neglected major work is now available in this fine translation. What a welcome moment for twenty-first-century philosophy."

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"The *Levels* is Plessner's masterwork. . . . Its new paradigm should be regarded as belonging to the forward edge of contemporary philosophical thought."

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Now available in English, this key work by a titan of modern thought draws on phenomenological, biological, and social scientific sources in a highly original systematic account of nature, life, and human existence. On Plessner's unique account, living things articulate complex boundary dynamics between their insides and surrounding world, thereby establishing a characteristic "positionality" within an environment. The approach underwrites not only philosophical biology but philosophical anthropology as well, since the "excentric positionality" of humans, by which we take a stand outside our own bodies, holds significant implications for knowledge, culture, religion, and technology.

Initially obscured by the superficially similar views of Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger and by his forced exile during World War II, Plessner's vision has, in recent decades, once again become appreciated, as scholarship has moved more squarely into engagement with animality, human dignity, social theory, and the philosophy of technology and nature.

A powerful and sophisticated account of embodiment, the *Levels* is not merely a historical monument but contributes to a range of vital current conversations around posthumanism, the material turn, and the biology and sociology of cognition. A modern philosophical classic, the *Levels* helps us undertake philosophy and social theory together with science, without reducing the former to the latter.

HELMUTH PLESSNER (1892–1985) was a German philosopher and sociologist. His *Political Anthropology* has recently appeared in English.

Forms of Living Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers, series editors

Cover image: *Theseus Slaying Minotaur*. Copper and bonded marble statue. 12 × 7 × 5.5 inches, 2014. Image provided by Nick van Woert. Cover design by Ann-Christine Racette

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