

# Freedom as Self-Donation: A Hildebrandian Account of the Cooperative Structure of Personal Freedom

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To my father and mother  
who have shown me the freedom that only comes from love  
A.M.D.G.

# **FREEDOM AS SELF-DONATION: A HILDEBRANDIAN ACCOUNT OF THE COOPERATIVE STRUCTURE OF FREEDOM**

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**Abstract:** In this dissertation, I critically evaluate the contributions of Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977) to the relatively neglected topic of the phenomenology of freedom. We can have, I argue, an experience of a “bias” of freedom in favor of the morally good: willing what is morally good renders one freer, and willing against what is morally good renders one less free. Attempts to reconcile freedom and morality have often identified freedom with autonomy, most famously in Immanuel Kant, or even rendered freedom determined by the morally good, as in Socratic intellectualism and in Scheler. These attempts neglect what Hildebrand finds to be the central feature of the will and freedom: the free self-donation (*Hingabe*) of the person, the will’s *fiat* (let it be); which is the key to the reconciliation of freedom and morality. The height of freedom, I argue, is embodied particularly in our freedom to sanction and disavow value-responses (*Wertantworten*) of the heart (esp. affective love), which Hildebrand calls “cooperative freedom” (*mitwirkende Freiheit*).

In order to give ourselves to what has value, what has value must first be given to us. In Chapter One, I show that doing justice to this givenness requires, for Hildebrand, holding the radically realist epistemological claim that consciousness is directly receptive to being. Receptivity is prior to any activity on the part of the person; it comes before freedom.

Chapter Two explores how things are given as having “importance” (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and “value” (*Wert*). Values issue a call (*Fordern*, “demand”) to give a proper response (*Antwort*). Chapter Two also outlines Hildebrand’s conception of phenomenology as involving “reverence” (*Ehrfurcht*). Reverence is openness to value’s word (*Wort*) and call to give that response. Reverence is defined as freely allowing oneself to be formed by the “laws” of values, and it is essential to freedom.

Chapter Three argues that freedom’s most fundamental aspect is defined as “self-donation” (*Hingabe*), encapsulated in the *fiat* of the will. Building on William James and Edmund Husserl, Hildebrand expands the phenomenological account of willing as giving the person’s *fiat* to being moved by potential motives according to their objective importance, in what amounts to an act of *giving oneself* (*Hingabe*) in one’s free response. It is this notion of self-donation that enables Hildebrand to secure the independence of the will from affectivity (in contrast to Scheler) and from the mind (in contrast to James and Husserl). Yet this independence rests upon a dependence on values being given for the will to will. Reversing Kant and aligning more with Emmanuel Levinas, Hildebrand finds reverent “heteronomy,” not just autonomy, to be the foundation of the independence of the will and “invests” it with meaning and purpose.

Chapter Four explores Hildebrand’s notion of cooperative freedom to sanction or disavow experiences according to their value. For Hildebrand, the sanction can only be actualized in accord with a “general will to be morally good,” or else it is an arbitrary pseudo-sanction. Unlike our freedom to do actions, cooperative freedom is a freedom that can only be fully actualized as a moral freedom. Hildebrand claims cooperative freedom does not pertain to the will, but to a separate “free personal center” (*freies Personzentrum*),

because he associates the will with action. I will argue, nonetheless, that every *fiat* of the will includes what I term the “cooperative moment” of freedom, so that only a morally good *fiat* is fully actualized as a *fiat*.

Chapter Five defines this general will to be morally good. It is a will composed of fundamental moral attitudes, particularly reverence for the hierarchy of values, that are the core of the virtues. In this concept of the general will, Hildebrand unites a Kantian concern for willing what is good-in-itself with Scheler’s concern for willing higher values over lower values. In so doing he comes to a unique synthesis of Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, and value-ethics in his conception of good will, which all rest on the concept of self-donation.

Chapter Six argues that any ethics that is based on what is good-in-itself necessarily, if it recognizes the unique preciousness of the person, becomes a love ethics, for love is the fullest and most proper response to the value of the person. Without recognizing this connection of ethics to love, one almost inevitably misses the connection between morality and happiness. In that case a morality based on the good-in-itself ends up appearing somewhat depersonalizing and burdensome. Just as it is legitimate to pursue one’s own happiness in love by making the beloved the condition of one’s happiness, so too with morality it is legitimate to pursue the happiness that only being moral can bring. So it is in the person who has a quality of loving goodness (*Güte*) for all where we experience the height of personal freedom as moral freedom. From a phenomenological analysis of this person, I derive four ways moral value enhances freedom: 1) it recollects the person to his or her deepest subjectivity (*Eigenleben*, “own life”), 2) it “supports” the will and prevents it from being arbitrary, 3) the happiness being moral can bring

“nourishes” freedom by giving it energy and strength, and, finally, 4) the happiness being moral brings “intensifies” good activities, i.e., it makes the person readier to do them in the future.

Chapter Seven argues that while one is free to reject value in favor of what Hildebrand calls the merely subjectively satisfying, doing so subverts freedom itself into prideful self-enclosure. It also annuls freedom in that it enslaves one to one’s desires. In contrast to Kant, this identification of freedom with moral freedom is not because freedom is the autonomy of following a law given in pure practical reason, but rather it is the reverent acceptance (*fiat*) of the “heteronomy” the word and law of values impose on us.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORTER TITLES:

<i>APS</i>	Husserl, <i>Analyses Concerning Active and Passive Synthesis</i>
<i>AFCL</i>	Reinach, "The A priori Foundations of Civil Law"
<i>Aesthetics I</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Ästhetik I Teil</i> , (EN) <i>Aesthetics Vol. I</i>
<i>Aesthetics II</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Ästhetik II Teil</i> , (EN) <i>Aesthetics Vol. II</i>
<i>AL</i>	D. and A. Hildebrand, <i>The Art of Living</i> .
<i>BN</i>	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i>
<i>BT</i>	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>
<i>CCF</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Celibacy and the Crisis of Faith</i>
<i>Confessions</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>
<i>CTNJ</i>	Reinach <i>Contributions to a Theory of Negative Judgement</i>
<i>Krisis/Crisis</i>	Husserl, <i>Der Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie/ The Crisis of European Sciences</i>
<i>CPR</i>	Kant, <i>The Critique of Pure Reason</i>
<i>CPrR</i>	Kant, <i>The Critique of Practical Reason</i>
<i>CJ</i>	Kant, <i>The Critique of Judgement</i>
<i>DI</i>	D. Hildebrand, "Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung"
<i>Ethics</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Ethics</i>
<i>EOI</i>	Levinas, "Ethics of the Infinite,"
<i>EJ</i>	Husserl, <i>Experience and Judgement</i>
<i>FEB</i>	Stein, <i>Finite and Eternal Being</i>
<i>Formulismus/</i>	Scheler, <i>Der Formulismus in der Ethik und die materiale</i>
<i>Formalism</i>	<i>Wertethik/Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values</i>
<i>GI</i>	D. and A. Hildebrand, <i>Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality</i>
<i>G</i>	Kant, <i>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten/The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>HE</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>The Heart</i> .
<i>Ideen/Ideas I</i>	Husserl, <i>Ideen I/Ideas I</i>
<i>Ideen/Ideas II</i>	Husserl, <i>Ideen II/Ideas II</i>
<i>DP</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>In Defense of Purity</i>
<i>Kaizo</i>	Husserl, <i>The Kaizo Articles</i>
<i>ILI</i>	Husserl, <i>Introduction to the Logical Investigations</i> , ed. Fink
<i>IC</i>	D. Hildebrand "Individual and Community"
<i>LU/LI</i>	Husserl, <i>Logische Untersuchungen/Logical Investigations</i>
<i>OEM</i>	Scheler, <i>On the Eternal in Man</i>
<i>OPE</i>	Stein, <i>On the Problem of Empathy</i>
<i>RW</i>	Brentano, <i>On the Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong</i>
<i>OBBE</i>	Levinas, <i>Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence</i>

<i>Marriage, Ehe</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love</i> , (EN) <i>Die Ehe</i>
<i>MaS</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Die Menschheit am Scheideweg</i> .
<i>MS/MM</i>	Kant, <i>Metaphysik der Sitten/The Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>MG</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft</i> .
<i>MPV</i>	D. Hildebrand, "The Modes of Participation in Value."
<i>Moralia</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Moralia: nachgelassenes Werk</i>
<i>MSE</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>Morality and Situation Ethics</i>
<i>MBH</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>My Battle Against Hitler</i>
<i>NS</i>	Scheler, <i>The Nature of Sympathy</i>
<i>NL</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>The Nature of Love</i>
<i>OA</i>	Scheler, "Ordo Amoris"
<i>RV</i>	Scheler, "On the Rehabilitation of Virtue,"
<i>Person and Community</i>	Wojtyla, <i>Person and Community: Selected Essays</i> . t
<i>Beiträge/PPH</i>	Stein, <i>Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften/Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities</i>
<i>Psychology</i>	James, <i>Principles of Psychology</i>
<i>RG</i>	Marion, <i>Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology</i> .
<i>R</i>	Kant, <i>Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason</i>
<i>RAM</i>	D. Hildebrand, "The Role Affectivity in Morality."
<i>Selfhood</i>	Crosby <i>The Selfhood of the Human Person</i>
<i>Soul of a Lion</i>	A. Hildebrand, <i>The Soul of a Lion: The Life of Dietrich von Hildebrand</i>
<i>SW</i>	D. Hildebrand, "Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis "
<i>TI</i>	Levinas, <i>Totality and Infinity</i>
<i>TC</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>The Transformation in Christ</i>
<i>TH</i>	D. Hildebrand, <i>The Trojan Horse in the City of God</i>
<i>WP</i>	D. Hildebrand <i>What is Philosophy?</i>

## INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING FREEDOM AND MORALITY

The phenomenological ethics and philosophy of freedom of Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977), a student of Husserl and a member of both the Göttingen and Munich circles, has received little attention in current phenomenology outside of some mostly Catholic philosophical and theological debates, and some scant attention in scholarship on early phenomenology. He is most well known in the English-speaking world for his value ethics, built upon the foundation of Max Scheler's *Formalism*, and for his attention to affectivity as possessing intentional meaningfulness.<sup>1</sup> There also has been some attention to his opposition to Nazism.<sup>2</sup> Even less well known is his philosophy of freedom found within his value ethics. This is unfortunate, for Hildebrand possesses a novel approach to a lived existential question: can freedom be reconciled with morality, or can the two ever be found to contravene each other? In the preface to his *Ethics*, first published in English in 1953, Hildebrand states his answer to this question with a resounding affirmation of the former position and a rejection of the latter position:

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<sup>1</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, I: Northwestern University Press, 1973) This work was published in two volumes in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. See Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik: Band 1. Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1.2 (1913): 405–565; *Der Formalismus und die Ethik und die materiale Wertethik: Band 2. Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 2: 21–478. Later the book was republished as a single work for Scheler's *Gesammelte Werke*: Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik: Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*. Ed. Maria Scheler. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Vol 2 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Bern: Franke, 1954).

<sup>2</sup> See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *My Battle Against Hitler: Faith, Truth, and Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* by Dietrich von Hildebrand, trans. John F. Crosby and John Henry Crosby, First Edition (New York: Image, 2014). Henceforth *MBH*.



We hope that this book will also prove that obedience to the inalterable moral law, far from narrowing, thwarting, or stifling our spontaneous life, is the only way conducive to true freedom.<sup>3</sup>

In this dissertation, I will argue that Hildebrand's philosophy of freedom contains within it the key to understanding how freedom and morality can be reconciled in the notion of "self-donation" (*Hingabe*, literally "giving to") to values (*Werte*).<sup>4</sup> This question of how morality and freedom can be reconciled comes from a lived, existential tension we experience between the demands of morality and the expression of one's freedom. Freedom involves being able to do what one wants. Even sailors throwing their cargo overboard in a storm may not want to do so, but they do want to save their lives.<sup>5</sup> Further, freedom seems to imply choice. One is free in a certain respect if and only if one can choose to do A or not to do A. Finally, freedom is paradigmatically defined as freedom from restrictions.<sup>6</sup> Together these three considerations bring out a notion of freedom that one might term, following a long line of philosophers from Immanuel Kant to Isaiah Berlin, negative freedom: freedom to choose to do what one wants without restrictions. This is not just a theoretical view of freedom, but it rather captures something of our experience of freedom. We experience a felt loss of freedom any time our wants are challenged (even by other

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<sup>3</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, ed. John F. Crosby (Steubenville, OH: Hildebrand Press, 2020), L. The book was initially published under the title *Christian Ethics* and then, at Hildebrand's behest, the title was changed to simply *Ethics* when it was republished in 1972, as only the last chapter deals specifically with Christian ethics. See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics*. (New York: David McKay Company, 1953); *Ethics*. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972). German Version: *Ethik*, Vol 2 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation, I will generally present German nouns in the nominative unless they are being presented as part of a direct quote.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Lesley Brown, trans. David Ross, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), III, 1110a10, 38. Henceforth *NE*.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Greek word for freedom, *ἐλευθερία* etymologically means a loosening of bonds. In all ancient cultures where the term and concept of freedom was developed, it was initially defined in opposition to slavery.

wants as in the case of the sailors). We all have this notion of freedom as freedom from restraints operative in our lives, at least implicitly.<sup>7</sup>

Yet if this negative freedom were the whole story of freedom, then freedom would be locked in inevitable conflict with morality. For morality rules out certain choices as immoral and countermands our wants and desires. Moral values, such as generosity and justice, make demands on us to conform to them. We cannot help but experience these as limitations on our freedom. For example, even the best parents are at times tempted to shirk some of their obligations in favor of their own preferences, and to justify what is in fact a selfish attitude in terms of preserving their freedom.

Hildebrand's first contribution is to recognize, in several works, how this supposition of a contradiction between morality and freedom has led to a kind of subjectivism in contemporary society.<sup>8</sup> In his *Graven Images*, first published 1957 with Alice Jourdain (who later became his wife), Hildebrand notes that certain extra-moral values or ideals can take the place of true morality, becoming an "idol" that the person follows.<sup>9</sup> Freedom can function in this manner, leading to a kind of subjectivism where

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<sup>7</sup> I have in numerous cases been told by small children that freedom is doing what they want without hindrance, typically when I am trying to prevent them from doing something bad. This notion of freedom seems to arise as early as toddlerhood and persists throughout life. It is particularly prominent in adolescence and young adulthood. Having this notion of freedom is a quite normal part of the human condition, however flawed it may be. It is also, however, encouraged by various social, economic, religious, and cultural movements in liberal democracies, which I touch on only indirectly here in reference to the influence Kant has had on contemporary conceptions of freedom.

<sup>8</sup> The clearest exposition of this idol is found in Hildebrand's *The Trojan Horse in the City of God* in a short chapter titled "Freedom and Arbitrariness." This work was first published in English in 1967 to counter what Hildebrand saw as the extreme reactions of the post-Conciliar Church to the vices and errors of the pre-Conciliar Church. It was published in German the following year. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Trojan Horse in the City of God* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1967), 106–109, German Translation: *Das trojanische Pferd in der Stadt Gottes* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1968). Henceforth *TH*.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, a certain kind of Prussian refers all of his major decisions to the question of his honor and is even willing to give up his life for honor, but nonetheless this is a "moral code" that falsifies true morality and actually serves pride. See Dietrich von Hildebrand and Alice von Hildebrand, *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality* (Hildebrand Project, 2019). First publication: New York: David McKay Company, 1957. Professor Crosby pointed out to me that while Alice assisted with the publication the work is mostly attributable to Dietrich. I will therefore list him as the sole author from this point forward. Henceforth, *GI*.

freedom is defined as opposed to moral rules. I call this position the idol of negative freedom, where the promotion of one's own or another's freedom becomes the core of morality in a way that prevents a serious conflict between one's subjective wants and morality's demands. Very often this idol is tied to a notion of freedom as autonomy: following no law, rule, or guideline save one imposed on oneself by oneself.

To give an example from recent events, the implicit logic goes: 1) I (and/or others) do not want to wear a mask or go into lockdown despite the pandemic, 2) freedom is freedom to do what one wants and to be free from restrictions, 3) therefore a mask wearing mandate or lockdown mandate contravenes personal freedom. One could then make a number of different, but all morally problematic conclusions: since wearing a mask or going into lockdown is a restriction on personal freedom that is either 1) sufficient warrant to flout the moral rule, or 2) sufficient warrant to hold that the *mandate itself is immoral* precisely because it violates my (and others') freedom. The second has some merit, an arbitrary lockdown or mask mandate in the absence of a compelling public health crisis would be immoral precisely because it restricts freedom. Yet the logic is backwards here. It is not freedom that defines the limits of morality, rather morality takes into account the moral significance of freedom. Once all relevant factors have been considered, if such mandates turn out to be what morality requires, one should not be able to use freedom as an excuse to break a moral rule or deem it in fact immoral. I see this idol as quite prevalent on both the political right and the political left, who on various social/moral issues are prone to cite freedom as a justification for regarding moral restrictions as themselves immoral. A business owner on the political right may often appeal to freedom to justify opposition to environmental restrictions. An environmentalist on the political left may

appeal to freedom to justify opposition to restrictions on recreational drug use. This idol not only falsifies morality but also the nature of freedom, in effect identifying freedom with a kind of moral arbitrariness.

It is not surprising, then, that many religious and philosophical thinkers have asserted that freedom can be reconciled with morality, in contrast to our inherent tendency to see them as opposed. Indeed, there is a lived experience to back this reconciliation of morality and freedom, which I term the “bias” of freedom in favor of the morally good. Often when we are morally good, there is a felt sense of liberation, of becoming freer precisely in and through becoming morally good. This occurs even when doing what is morally good is very difficult, e.g., in serving the sick or poor. Conversely, when we are going against what is moral, either in a particular action (e.g., stealing, lying) or in developing a vice, we experience a felt sense of a lessening of freedom. It will be this experience of what I call the “bias” of freedom that serves as the fundamental experience to be investigated in the present work, the *datum* of the investigation.

However, this investigation cannot be done in a vacuum, but must be put into dialogue with other attempts to reconcile freedom and morality. Perhaps the most famous attempt is that of Kant. His most mature statement on this reconciliation is found in his *Metaphysik der Sitten* (*The Metaphysics of Morals*).<sup>10</sup> Kant is fully aware of our ability to consciously and freely choose what we know to be evil. This is due to the fact that we have

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<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:213, 374–375. German Edition Consulted: Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre: Metaphysik der Sitten. Erster Teil*, ed. Bernd Ludwig, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2018) and Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre: Metaphysik der Sitten. Zweiter Teil*, ed. Bernd Ludwig, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2017). Henceforth *MS* and *MM*.

*Willkür* (which is often translated as “arbitrariness” or “choice” in English), the power to freely choose good or evil, what Augustine would call *liberium arbitrium*:

The faculty of desire...insofar as the ground determining it to action within itself and not in its objects, is called a faculty to do or refrain from doing as one pleases. Insofar as it is joined with the consciousness of one’s ability to bring about the action, it is called *Willkür*.<sup>11</sup>

When one follows one’s subjective inclinations instead of the moral law, this person is subjected to both heteronomy and self-love.<sup>12</sup> Following the moral law leads to autonomy. For “the faculty of desire whose inner determining ground, hence even what pleases it, lies within the subject’s reason it is called the will (*Wille*).”<sup>13</sup> Kant even identifies the will and practical reason. “The will itself, strictly speaking, has no determining ground; insofar as it can determine *Willkür* it is practical reason.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, morality and freedom cannot conflict because personal freedom is always already a moral freedom. Morality and freedom are united in autonomy. Freedom is found in doing what is good-in-itself but, nonetheless, we can and often do choose to pursue what is only subjectively good, the object of our inclinations, over the moral law. Hildebrand, as we will see, similarly finds freedom in willing what is good in itself and rejecting what is only subjectively good when it conflicts with the moral law.

Yet the two philosophers starkly diverge on where the moral law is found. For Kant, the moral law must be freed from all material, empirical objects, as experience cannot

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<sup>11</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 374–375. See St. Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of the Will*. Trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5:73, 200. Henceforth *CPrR*.

<sup>13</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 375.

<sup>14</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 375.

provide a priori knowledge or absolute moral principles. It is not the other person, this beggar here and now who motivates me to be moral. Rather, I view the other only as a representative of the moral law: “Any respect (*Achtung*) for a person is properly only respect for the law...of which he gives us an example.”<sup>15</sup> This person stands only as an example of the moral law because, once I have removed all possible empirical objects, the only remaining motivating factor is pure practical reason.

This brings us to the second point. The law is one that pure practical reason gives itself. Morality and freedom are reconciled because they are *identified* in the autonomy of pure practical reason. Indeed, for Kant, insofar as we submit to the moral law, we do not find dignity or freedom, but rather self-legislation is foundation of human dignity and freedom.<sup>16</sup> Freedom is self-legislation of the moral law or it is being subjected to the inclinations. This does not mean that Kant falls into a subjectivism, but rather that he avoids such subjectivism only by identifying the will of the moral agent with pure practical reason.<sup>17</sup> The price of the reconciliation of freedom and morality is a formal moral law and even a formalized moral subject qualitatively identical to all others.

Scheler sees an ironic depersonalization in Kant’s ethics. If Kant were correct then, as moral subjects, we would all be qualitatively identical to each other rather than unique

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,” in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). German Version Consulted: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, ed. Dieter Schönecker and Bernd Kraft (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2016). Henceforth *G*.

<sup>16</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:440, 68; En. Tr. 88.

<sup>17</sup> Special thanks to Professor Patrick Byrne for pointing this out to me. When I initially raised the objection that Kant ultimately falls into a subjectivism, Byrne corrected me that this is not the case because of Kant’s belief in the universality of reason and morality, which, unfortunately, many in our contemporary culture no longer believe in.

In a separate conversation on this topic, Fr. Giovanni Basile pointed out that “subjective” has a different meaning for Kant than the typical contemporary usage: it means it comes from the subject, i.e., from the structure of pure practical reason. But this is not “subjectivist” in the contemporary sense of the term in the sense that one can make up the moral law.

persons.<sup>18</sup> Scheler sees the root of Kant's moral formalism in his transcendental idealism. Whereas Kant does not think it is possible to derive absolute, a priori moral principles from experience, Scheler (and with him Hildebrand) holds that material a priori moral principles are given in experience, e.g., in the experience of respect shown to a beggar.<sup>19</sup> As Scheler argues, Kant, in neglecting this, is led to implicitly identify autonomy with a heteronomous logonomy, in which one is subject to an impersonal reason.

Thus, the *πρώτο ψευδος* leads to a false alternative: there is either heteronomy of the person through a pure logonomy and, indeed, the tendency to complete depersonalization, or the ethical individualism of living one's life without any inner limits on one's rights.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the solution, for Scheler, is to turn to a value-ethics where freedom would be freely accepting the "heteronomy," to give Kant's own term a positive spin, of giving values a proper response.<sup>21</sup> However, Scheler's own attempt to provide such an account of moral freedom runs into problems. For Scheler, values are given as hierarchically ordered in an *ordo amoris*, i.e., in affective acts of preferring, themselves based on acts of loving values.<sup>22</sup> Once a value is clearly given as higher than another, the person cannot help but will it. "Whenever this insight is totally adequate and ideally perfect, it determines willing unequivocally, without any factor of compulsion or necessitation that might come between insight and willing."<sup>23</sup> John Crosby notes this means the motivating power of the value

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<sup>18</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 372.

<sup>19</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 63–81.

<sup>20</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 373.

<sup>21</sup> My use of the term "heteronomy" in a positive way is inspired by the title of Professor Merold Westphal's book *In Praise of Heteronomy*. See Merold Westphal. *In Praise of Heteronomy: Making Room for Revelation*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 88.

<sup>23</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192.

immediately translates over into action; it is never paused by the person who then decides to give or not to give his or her *fiat* to being moved this way.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Scheler in his own way reconstructs a kind of Socratic intellectualism where a clear insight into the morally good automatically engenders the will for it. Further, values come to givenness for us only with a milieu that is largely determined by our affective feelings, drives, and conations (*Streben*).<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, for Scheler, activity precedes receptivity. As a result, Scheler was eventually led to deny that the will can issue a positive *fiat*. “The act of will, related to action, is always primarily a “non-*fiat*” [It shall not be done] rather than a “*fiat*” [It shall be done].”<sup>26</sup>

Various forms of intellectualism are quite prevalent in Western philosophy. There is in intellectualism an appeal to a positive conception of freedom as freedom-for the good. Just as no one could be said to be free if they absolutely do not want to do what they are doing, so too no one could be said to be free unless they are pursuing something regarded as good. Thus, when we do what is evil, we contradict freedom itself. Most often intellectualism makes use of the notion that the person who does evil seeks what is apparently good and/or is subject to a disorder of one’s desires. The problem with this approach, taken by itself, is that it opens the possibility that one could be determined by the good. If one simply were aware of what is one’s highest good, one could not fail to will it. This intellectualism again has social implications. If this view is held it becomes quite tempting to educate people about what their own true good is, using coercion if necessary,

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<sup>24</sup> John F. Crosby, “Person and Obligation: Critical Reflections on the Anti-Authoritarian Strain in Scheler’s Personalism,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 97. Henceforth “Person and Obligation.”

<sup>25</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 157.

<sup>26</sup> Max Scheler, “The Forms of Knowledge and Culture,” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, trans. Oscar Haac (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 29.



in the ultimate hope that once they see the light they will be determined to freely will it.<sup>27</sup> Scheler himself would be firmly against such a pernicious logic of promoting positive freedom leading to coercion; it can only be one's own free insight into the value that engenders the will. Nonetheless, if Kant introduces a problem by reducing freedom to reason, Scheler likewise introduces a problem by reducing freedom to affectivity (the *ordo amoris*, drives, etc.). To avoid Kant's and Scheler's problematic positions, the genuine role of will, its independence from the heart and mind, must be isolated.

Hildebrand's central contribution to the philosophy of freedom, in my view, is that he reconciles freedom and morality while avoiding intellectualism on the one hand and an unsustainable formalist view of freedom as autonomy on the other. This contribution is to be found in three places. The first is his conception found in his *Ethics*, that the will operates by giving the person's *fiat* to being moved by a potential motive.<sup>28</sup> He inherits this conception of the *fiat* of the will from Edmund Husserl, who himself derives it from William James.<sup>29</sup> The second contribution, is that Hildebrand ties the *fiat* of the will to different types of importance (*Bedeutsamkeit*, which could also be translated as "meaning"

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<sup>27</sup> See Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118–72. Much of this present dissertation is indirectly inspired by the liberal political thinker Isaiah Berlin's distinction between the positive liberty of self-mastery and the negative liberty to do what one wants free of restraints. He warns that those who define liberty primarily in terms of positive liberty have an unfortunate tendency to identify liberty with rational self-rule, and, thus, an enlightened few (be they French Revolutionaries, Marxists, etc.) can impose their vision of rationality on a populace without this imposition counting as coercion. Since reading this work as a first-year student at the University of Rochester in Fall 2012, it has been a driving force of my philosophical development to point out that negative freedom as well is not free from problems of devolving into coercion and to defend the primacy of positive freedom. However, Berlin will not enter into this dissertation beyond this footnote as his conceptions of "positive liberty" is different from my notion of positive freedom as freedom-for the good. Further this work is focused on the phenomenology of individual personal freedom, and it does not directly touch the political issues that interest Berlin, nor does it address his value pluralism which would be at odds with Hildebrand's philosophy. I reserve a work on comparing Berlin to Hildebrand for future research. See my discussion of positive and negative freedom below at [7.1: Introduction](#), p.341.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 211.

<sup>29</sup> See Ullrich Melle, "Husserl's Phenomenology of Willing," in *Phenomenology of Values and Valuing* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1997), 169–92; William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1913), 501. Henceforth, *Psychology*.

or “significance”) that can motivate a response of the will or the heart. The motive for the will could be either what is objectively good for the person, what is subjectively satisfying (*subjektive Befriedigende*, e.g., a pleasant feeling of *Schadenfreude* at a rival’s misfortune), what is objectively good for the person (*objektive Gut für die Person*, e.g., a healthy meal), and finally what is important in itself (*in sich Bedeutsame*, value, *Wert*, e.g., a noble act of forgiveness).<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand’s philosophy is one where the freedom of the will is not identified with the autonomy of pure practical reason, but rather the “heteronomy” of freely accepting the call to give the proper response to moral values. Nonetheless, one can freely and knowingly chose what is wrong by choosing the perspective of the subjectively satisfying over that of value (e.g., kicking a person into the mud in order to experience *Schadenfreude* at his misfortune).<sup>31</sup>

The third and most important contribution of Hildebrand’s philosophy is that the paradigm of freedom must not be found in our freedom to do or not do actions, but rather in what Hildebrand calls the “cooperative freedom” (*mitwirkende Freiheit*) to give a sanction (*Sanktion*) or disavowal (*Desavouieren*) of affective responses or basic attitudes and stances already present within one.<sup>32</sup> He develops this concept of cooperative freedom first in his Habilitation thesis, *Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis*, first published in 1922, and then in a chapter in his *Ethics*.<sup>33</sup> For Hildebrand, one’s cooperative freedom can only be fully actualized in accord with what he terms the “general will to be morally good” (*allgemeiner Wille, sittlich gut zu sein*), i.e., a will to become a morally good person and to

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<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 36–57; *Ethik*, 39–50.

<sup>31</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 317–325.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 331–353.

<sup>33</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, “*Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis*,” *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung* 5 (1922): 549–579, Henceforth *SW*; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 25 “Cooperative Freedom,” 331–353; *Ethik*, 25. Kapitel “*Die mitwirkende Freiheit*,” 329–349.

respond properly to the objective order of values.<sup>34</sup> Sanctioning an emotional response that is vicious, e.g., *Schadenfreude* over an enemy's suffering, is not a true sanction because it is arbitrary that I am giving that response. Were my enemy a friend, I would instead have compassion, but I should have that response regardless.<sup>35</sup> Such a use of freedom encloses one in oneself rather than expressing freedom's true, responsive intentionality toward the good. Thus, though we are free to do wrong, for Hildebrand this cooperative freedom can only be actualized by cooperating with value.

In this dissertation, I will argue that Hildebrand somewhat underestimates the full potential of his own notion of cooperative freedom. Hildebrand himself sees this cooperative freedom as present primarily in the sanction of some stance already within one, which he attributes to the free personal center (*freies Personzentrum*) rather than to the will proper.<sup>36</sup> The free spiritual center is that from which all free acts issue, whereas Hildebrand tends to associate the will with action (*Handlung*). While we cannot have an evil sanction, we can give the *fiat* of our will to doing evil action. However, I will argue, somewhat in contradiction to Hildebrand, that every *fiat* of the will has a structure similar to the sanction of cooperative freedom, giving oneself to something according to its importance. Freedom has what I term a “cooperative moment” with value in that every *fiat* of the will must be, at a minimum, not in contradiction to the call of moral values, or else it falls into a moral arbitrariness. Once this is recognized, a fuller picture emerges of why “true freedom” is found only in the moral law. For while we can (and sadly do) actualize a *fiat* to do an evil

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<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 322. This “general will to be morally good” is the subject of Chapter Five of the dissertation where it is defined in relation to analogous concepts in Kant and Scheler. [CHAPTER 5: FREEDOM AS THE GENERAL WILL TO BE MORALLY GOOD](#)pp. 234–286.

<sup>35</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338.

<sup>36</sup> He makes this distinction clear in last, posthumously published work *Moralia*. See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Moralia: nachgelassenes Werk*. Vol 9 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Regensburg: Habel, 1980), 77. Henceforth, *Moralia*.

action, to will what is evil leads to self-enclosure. I will argue that to will what is evil always goes against the very intentionality of the will as giving its *fiat* to what is good, somewhat moving beyond Hildebrand's own analysis of freedom and moral evil to articulate my own Hildebrandian account. To will only the subjectively satisfying leads to the self-enclosure of the will and the annulment of its own freedom; one becomes free only to will what is subjectively satisfying. By contrast, willing what is intrinsically good, valuable, always liberates this will from this arbitrariness. Personal freedom is essentially moral freedom.

The primary goal of this dissertation is to go "back to the things themselves" and examine personal freedom's structure in the context of its relationship to morality to prove this bias of freedom for the morally good. The secondary goal is to present the unique contributions Hildebrand has to make to the philosophy and phenomenology of freedom. The key to understanding how freedom and morality can be reconciled is, I argue, found in the *fiat* of the will and the free self-donation of the person to value. Thus, this dissertation takes the form of asking what are the conditions for the lived, experienced reality of self-donation. My methodology largely, though not entirely, follows Hildebrand's own methodology as outlined in his major work on epistemology and phenomenological method, *What is Philosophy?*, first published in 1960.<sup>37</sup> This epistemology will be presented in Chapters One and Two of the dissertation, since understanding Hildebrand's

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<sup>37</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *What Is Philosophy?* Studies in Phenomenological and Classical Realism (New York: Routledge, 1991). This work represents Hildebrand's major contribution to epistemology and contains his conception of phenomenology and philosophy as a whole. It was drawn in large part from his earlier German work *Der Sinn philosophischen Fragens und Erkennens* (The Meaning of Philosophical Questioning and Knowing) which was translated by Hildebrand's student William Marra along with substantial changes, including two new chapters, by Hildebrand himself. See *Der Sinn philosophischen Fragens und Erkennens*, ed. Theodor Steinbüchel (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1950). A German version titled *Was ist Philosophie?* was published as part of his *Gesammelte Werke*. See *Was ist Philosophie?*, vol. 1 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Karla Mertens, trans. Fritz Wenisch (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1976). Henceforth *WP*.

realist epistemology and conception of philosophy is actually the key to understanding his whole phenomenology of freedom. My appropriation of Hildebrand's thought will be critical in the sense of testing his insights against experience and rejecting those that, I shall argue, are not properly grounded. I aim not only to provide Hildebrand's phenomenology of freedom, but also my own Hildebrandian phenomenology of freedom that both makes explicit what Hildebrand leaves implicit and even corrects Hildebrand on a number of points.

A second methodological point is in order. Hildebrand is often viewed as a theologian, rather than a philosopher, contrary to his own intention. This is largely due to the fact that he saw his own philosophy, in part, as a phenomenological investigation of how morality is transformed in Christ, taking the morality of the saints as his phenomenological *datum*.<sup>38</sup> I shall be approaching him primarily as a philosopher with important and novel insights which have been neglected in the phenomenological tradition and philosophy of freedom. This is important to note because Hildebrand does claim that all moral values are based on God as their exemplary cause and that it is only through *caritas*, infused love of God in Christ, that morality can be fully revealed as a morality of love.<sup>39</sup> These claims will be brought in to the extent necessary for describing the cooperative structure of human freedom in Hildebrand's own terms. His philosophy, like

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<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 169–179, 488. God serves as the exemplary cause of all values, and the highest moral values, e.g., justice and goodness, are in fact identified with His Being. Values *quod se* presuppose God but *quod nos* lead to God. Hildebrand is careful to note that non-believers can apprehend values in their nature as values. Such non-believers will miss the full dignity of values in their relation to God, but they are no more precluded from apprehending values in taking-cognizance because those values are in fact metaphysically based in God any more than they are precluded from apprehending contingent physical things which must ultimately be referred to God as a necessary Being. I will also note that other metaphysical systems, such as Buddhism or Neo-Confucianism, may try to account for values on their own transcendent basis which cannot be identified with the personal God of Abraham. Hildebrand has, in my view, convincing arguments for why values in fact entail a personal God, but these will not be the concern of the present work.

that of Augustine and Aquinas, is inherently theistic and even Christian. Nonetheless, while a non-Christian would most likely contest the assertions above, I hold that the main findings of this dissertation can be appreciated and accepted by a non-Christian. The experience of what I call the bias of freedom in favor of the morally good and its basis in the self-donation of the person is found in ordinary moral experience and is accessible there, even if one does not agree with Hildebrand that freedom, love, and morality find their culmination in *caritas*.

I define “personal freedom” as that feature of an individual person that is the condition of possibility for moral responsibility and responsibility in love. This is the ability, among other things, for having acts of will be engendered solely *by* the person in the absence of any determination by external or internal factors, and even against a person’s strongest desires.<sup>40</sup> I am therefore focused on individual persons and questions of social, economic, or political freedom will not enter into this dissertation. Nor is this dissertation primarily concerned with the problem of free will and determinism. For Hildebrand, as well as for myself, freedom by definition precludes any causal, psychological, or even motivational determinism, and it is given to our experience as not being determined as such. Thus, Hildebrand has a “free will libertarian” view in that he rejects any free will determinism or compatibilism as it is understood in contemporary philosophy. However, Hildebrand would reject any free will libertarianism that would render freedom arbitrary and unmotivated.<sup>41</sup>

For Hildebrand, the terms “morality” and “moral” refer to a *datum* that cannot be defined in terms of anything else. Morality is found in the experience of specifically moral

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<sup>40</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 299–305.

<sup>41</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

values (e.g., generosity, justice) and morally relevant values (e.g., the value of this beggar, to whom I ought to be generous).<sup>42</sup> These values demand (*fordert*) a proper response.<sup>43</sup> The paradigmatic moral demands are moral obligations, e.g., the obligation to save a drowning person if doing so does not risk one's own life, but Hildebrand accepts the existence of supererogatory moral demands, e.g., saving a drowning person at the cost of one's own life. For Hildebrand, moral values take their place in a unified "world of values" (*Welt der Werte*) and do not contradict each other, though it may be difficult for persons to realize some moral values in conjunction with others (e.g., meekness and stern courage).<sup>44</sup>

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Each chapter introduces key elements of a Hildebrandian account of freedom, which often defy succinct definition. The first two form a pair in that they outline the basis of Hildebrand's philosophy in his epistemology and conception of phenomenology. Chapter One explores Hildebrand's general epistemology and his overall conception of phenomenology. Beginning with his 1912 dissertation *Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung* (The Idea of Moral Action), all knowledge is based on a purely receptive cognitive act of taking-cognizance (*Kenntnisnahme*), which he identifies with any form of intuition.<sup>45</sup> In this taking cognizance, the person is empty (*leer*) or "void," and the content (*Inhalt*) of the relation is solely on the objective side. With this, Hildebrand radically prioritizes receptivity over

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<sup>42</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 15 "The Nature of Moral Values," 179–189.

<sup>43</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethik*, 43.

<sup>44</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 197.

<sup>45</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, "Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 3 (1916): 139–142, <https://open.org/pub-101096>. His dissertation was initially published under the title *Die Träger des Sittlichen innerhalb der Handlung* (*The Bearer of Morality in Action*) and defended in 1912, it was later republished as *Die Idee* in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* in 1916. Henceforth, *DI*.

activity. It is what allows him to reject the transcendental idealism of both Kant and Husserl and, with it, reverse their priority of activity over receptivity.

Chapter Two deals with Hildebrand's ethical epistemological theory of how values are given to us. This chapter explores his concept of value as giving the subject a "word" (*Wort*) demanding a proper value-response (*gebührende Wertantwort*). It explores how that "word" is given in a special *Kenntnisnahme* of values, *Wertnahme*, as well as feeling values (*Wertfühlen*) or, in his later works, being-affected by values (*Affiziertwerden*).<sup>46</sup> This chapter shows how Hildebrand's method of phenomenology is a *precis* of his phenomenology of freedom, in that phenomenology presupposes an attitude (*Grundhaltung*) of "reverence." This reverence is a basic attitude of openness to the word of values and a willingness to give proper value-responses.<sup>47</sup> His priority of receptivity to ethical values over activity is a philosophical position that I find to have parallels with Levinas' primacy of passivity to the Other before any activity of the self.<sup>48</sup> In essence, for Hildebrand, like Levinas, personal subjectivity is always a response-ability toward what is other than oneself. Ethics is first philosophy.

In the next chapters, I will argue it is precisely this priority of receptivity to activity that allows Hildebrand to secure the independence of the will from the mind and affectivity, often setting Hildebrand in contrast to Kant and Scheler in the process. Chapter Three

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<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 467–473; *Ethics*, 196–202; *Ethik*, 237.

<sup>47</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *Art of Living*, by Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand (Steubenville, OH: Hildebrand Press, 2013), 3. Henceforth *AL*.

This essay was published along four others "Faithfulness," "Responsibility," "Veracity," and "Goodness" in his 1933 *Sittliche Grundhaltung*. They were derived from radio talks he gave in 1930. Later this work was translated by Alice Jourdain as *Fundamental Moral Attitudes*. Following their marriage, Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand combined those five essays with others they had written into *The Art of Living*. See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Sittliche Grundhaltungen* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1933); Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Fundamental Moral Attitudes* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950).

<sup>48</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne University Press, 1969). Henceforth, *TI*.



focuses on the human will in its intentionality as giving the *fiat* to being moved by a potential motive. I argue Hildebrand's conception of the will, as giving the person's *fiat*, significantly improves upon its antecedents in Scheler, James, and Husserl. For Hildebrand, unlike Scheler, the will retains an independence from affectivity; it is not determined to act even by a clear and strong feeling of a value. Unlike James and Husserl, Hildebrand recognizes the full independence of the will from the epistemic mechanisms of the mind and therefore is not determined by them. Yet this independence of the will from both the heart and mind rests on its dependence on taking-cognizance. The will must be "supported" by motivating importance or else it becomes arbitrary.<sup>49</sup> I argue, moving beyond Hildebrand, this requirement to avoid arbitrariness is the basis of why moral wrongdoing subverts the very intentionality of freedom.

Chapter Four examines Hildebrand's notion of cooperative freedom and argues that it is and ought to be the paradigm of freedom. One's freedom to sanction or disavow affective responses or stances can only be moral because an attempt to sanction pride or concupiscence leads only to an arbitrary affirmation that fails at its own objectification. In *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand develops the notion of cooperative freedom with regard to our most basic moral stances (*sittliche Grundstellungen*) of pride (*Hochmut*, "arrogance" or "highness"), concupiscence (*Begehrlichkeit*, "covetousness") and reverence (*Ehrfurcht*, lit. "holy fear" or "holy awe").<sup>50</sup> These three basic stances are the "moral centers" of the person; they are that from which all ethically charged acts and attitudes issue.<sup>51</sup> When one forms a basic moral intention (*sittliche Grundintention*) to do what value demands, one

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<sup>49</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305–306.

<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 569–570.

<sup>51</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, *Tiel 4*: "Die verschiedenen moralischen Zentren" (Part 4: "The Different Moral Centers"), 580-593; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 31 "The Centers of Morality and Immorality," 268–293.

sanctions reverence; it is transformed from an unconscious basic stance (*Grundstellung*) into a freely sanctioned basic attitude (*Grundhaltung*).<sup>52</sup> This intention contains a *Gesinnung* (lit. “directed sense,” also translatable as “attitude,” “conviction” and, for Scheler, “basic moral tenor”), which, for Hildebrand, is a kind of conviction that one ought to do what value demands on principle.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Kant and Scheler, for whom the *Gesinnung* is, in different ways, the most basic volitional principle of all moral acts, Hildebrand gives this role to the *Grundhaltung*. Hildebrand argues that many people lack a *Gesinnung*.<sup>54</sup> In so doing, he breaks with Kant, for whom a *Gesinnung* is a most basic maxim at the root of any moral acts, and Scheler, for whom the *Gesinnung* of the will is a directionality of will pre-set by a person’s affective *ordo amoris*.<sup>55</sup> He emphasizes the independence of the will from the heart (the *ordo amoris*) and mind (*maxims*).

Yet Hildebrand himself refuses to attribute the sanction of cooperative freedom to the will but rather he attributes it to the free personal center.<sup>56</sup> Along with Josef Seifert and Stephen Schwarz, I argue this restriction is unnecessary. Cooperative freedom and all forms of freedom properly belong to the will, which simply *is* the free personal center from which all free acts issue.<sup>57</sup> Once this is recognized, I hold one can discern a “cooperative moment” in even the most arbitrary forms of freedom such as the freedom to do actions.

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<sup>52</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 577.

<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551–552.

<sup>54</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 111–121.

<sup>55</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009), 6:21.12, 21. German Version Consulted: Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, ed. Bettina Stangneth (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2017). Henceforth *R*.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 76.

<sup>57</sup> Josef Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart: A Critique of an Error in Hildebrand’s Ethics: Philosophical Anthropology, and Philosophy of Love,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (September 1, 2017): 737–745; Stephen D Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 135–144.

Any morally evil *fiat* fails at its own objectification, subverts the intentionality of the will, and leads to self-enclosure.

This cooperative structure of freedom can only be fully actualized when we will in line with what Hildebrand terms “the general will to be morally good,” which is the subject of Chapter Five.<sup>58</sup> The general will to be morally good represents the actualization of one of the three “moral centers” of the person: the value-responding center.<sup>59</sup> This center conflicts with the other two centers of pride and concupiscence.<sup>60</sup> Like Kant this “good will” (*guter Wille*) involves willing what is good-in-itself over what is merely subjectively good. Like Scheler, it is a will in accord with the objective order of values, the *ordo amoris*. Third, it is constituted by fundamental moral attitudes (*sittliche Grundhaltung*) that enable the person to have the proper responsiveness to moral values.<sup>61</sup> For Hildebrand, these attitudes are the basis of the virtues. While Hildebrand, like Scheler, mistakenly regards Kant as having utterly neglected virtue, I will show that Hildebrand, unwittingly, combines elements of both Scheler’s account of virtue, which emphasizes virtue as an affective quality, power, and “being” of the person, with Kant’s attention to volition. Thus, I will show how Hildebrand, like Kant, finds the good will to be a will that essentially aims at and is fulfilled in virtue.<sup>62</sup>

The last two chapters make the case for the bias of freedom in favor of the morally good. Chapter Six looks at the virtue and fundamental moral attitude of loving goodness (*Güte*).<sup>63</sup> I will show that, for the Hildebrandian, every moral act and attitude in some way

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<sup>58</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 18–19, 161–168.

<sup>59</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 580–593; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 31 “Centers of Morality and Immorality,” 432–437.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 412–413.

<sup>61</sup> See Hildebrand, “Reverence,” “Faithfulness,” “Responsibility,” and “Veracity,” in *AL*, 1–35.

<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*; Kant, “The Doctrine of Virtue” in *MM*, 507–603.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 35–41.

points to universal moral love, which for Hildebrand reaches its culmination in *caritas*. I will argue that any ethics based on the good-in-itself must be a love ethics, if it follows its own logic and recognizes the uniqueness and preciousness of the person. I argue that in loving goodness we find four ways that freedom is enhanced by moral values.<sup>64</sup> First, in acting morally we find recollection (*Sammlung*). As Hildebrand states in his 1970 *Das Wesen der Liebe* (*The Nature of Love*), the call of moral values and moral obligations for a proper response bring the person back to his or her deepest “subjectivity” (*Eigenleben*, lit. “own life”) in their call to be given a proper response.<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, in a quite Kantian and austere mode, holds that the value of an act should be the sole motive for the act, not one’s own happiness in being moral.<sup>66</sup> This, I argue along with Seifert, is a flawed position that actually leads to a depersonalization of morality. Along with Seifert, I argue that just as Hildebrand himself admits that a lover ought to will his own happiness in being loved as part of the very gift of himself, his *Eigenleben*, to his beloved, so too it is legitimate to will one’s own happiness that comes from being moral.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, while Hildebrand tends to regard happiness as not having as large a role in neighbor love (*Nächstenliebe*) as in other loves, I will argue that we can make any other, our neighbor, the condition of our happiness in doing moral actions out of neighbor love.<sup>68</sup> The happiness being moral brings,

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<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 35–41.

<sup>65</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand. *Das Wesen der Liebe*. vol 3 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke*. (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1971) English Translation: *The Nature of Love*. Translated by John F. Crosby and John Henry Crosby. (South Bend, ID.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), 200–208. Henceforth *NL*.

*Eigenleben* is a word Hildebrand coins which professor John F. Crosby translated imperfectly, but I would add also insightfully, as “subjectivity” since Hildebrand could have used *Subjektivität* in many places where he uses *Eigenleben*. See Hildebrand, *NL*, 200ff, Translator’s footnote.

<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 183.

<sup>67</sup> Josef Seifert, *Was ist und was motiviert eine sittliche Handlung?* (München: Anton Pustet, 1976). English Translation: *The Moral Action: What Is It and How Is It Motivated?* trans. Fritz Wenish. Modifications to the English Text by Seifert. 1st edition (International Academy of Philosophy Press, 2017); Chapter 6. Kindle book.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 208–210

as well as the moral value itself, can “nourish” the will, provide it energy and strength to perform its task, and this is the second relation of morality to freedom.<sup>69</sup> Third, along with Aristotle, I note that the happiness one receives from an activity “intensifies” that activity, it makes one more attentive to it and more likely to repeat it in the future.<sup>70</sup> Finally, I will argue that moral value provides support to the will, preventing it from falling into moral arbitrariness and giving the will meaning and purpose.

Chapter Seven argues for the bias of freedom by showing how moral wrongdoing, while a genuine actualization of freedom, always subverts freedom. In the first section, I note along with John Crosby that Hildebrand’s recognition of different senses of the word “good,” namely the subjectively satisfying and value, make it intelligible that a person can knowingly will what is evil as subjectively satisfying.<sup>71</sup> This sets Hildebrand in opposition to any intellectualism. We can both willingly and knowingly do evil. However, doing so always subverts personal freedom in three of the four ways mentioned in Chapter Six: it deprives the will of support, recollection, and nourishment. Finally, it intensifies morally negative activities, leading to the formation of vice.

At the end of Chapter Seven, I argue that Kant was wrong to identify moral freedom with autonomy, freedom is rather the free assumption, *fiat*, to the heteronomy of value. Only with this conception of freedom as a paradoxical kind of submission can one recognize the true role and dignity of the will as the faculty of free self-donation of the person. In the Conclusion, I argue that this conception of freedom opens up many new

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<sup>69</sup> I derive this concept of nourishment in part from Levinas’ works, albeit I use it in a very different way and context than Levinas himself does. See Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.5, 1175a30, 190.

<sup>71</sup> John F. Crosby, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Fundamental Freedom of Persons,” in *Personalist Papers* (Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 194–220.

avenues of research, in particular with regard to how to understand the human person as a creative being called to self-donation.

# CHAPTER 1: OPENNESS TO THE REAL: HILDEBRAND'S CONCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE AS FUNDAMENTAL RECEPTIVITY

## 1.1: Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the foundations of Hildebrand's phenomenology of freedom, which are found in his general realist epistemology, while the second chapter focuses more specifically on his moral epistemology. Many of the students of Husserl broke from their teacher's endorsement of transcendental idealism in his *Ideen I (Ideas I)*, and Hildebrand was among the most strident of those students.<sup>1</sup> In his major work on epistemology, *What is Philosophy?*, which was first published in English in 1963, Hildebrand argues that transcendental idealism, in both its Kantian and Husserlian forms, covers over the essentially receptive character of being conscious-of (*Bewußtsein-von*) some real object or real value.<sup>2</sup> For Hildebrand, knowing is a direct relation of "contact" or "having" (*Haben*) the object-known where the subject is "void" (*leer*), and the content of the relation is on the object side."<sup>3</sup> But in no way can consciousness be considered as involving constitution of all of its objects, nor as positing their existence.

Hildebrand therefore breaks with Kant and Husserl in prioritizing receptivity to activity. He follows Adolf Reinach in seeing knowing as a pure receptivity to being.<sup>4</sup> This deeply affects Hildebrand's entire view of the human person. It even represents a break with his friend Max

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl HUA III/2, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I*, ed. Walter Biemel, (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950) <https://open.org/pub-137694>. English Translation: *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014). Henceforth *Ideas I*.

<sup>2</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 16, 24. "Consciousness-of" is Hildebrand's translation of *Bewußtsein-von* in his English works and vice versa in his German works.

<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206; *Ethik*, 206.

<sup>4</sup> See Adolf Reinach, "A Contribution Toward the Theory of Negative Judgement," trans. Don Farrari, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1981): 9–64; Henceforth, *CTNJ*.

Hildebrand's express appreciation for Reinach's influence on his philosophy can be found in an introduction to Reinach's *Gesammelte Werke*, which was never published in Germany. This introduction was then translated and published in English in *Aletheia* side by side the original German text as "Reinach as Philosophical Personality" by John F. Crosby. See Dietrich von Hildebrand, "Reinach as a Philosophical Personality," trans. John F. Crosby, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1983): xv–xxvi.

Scheler, who in his *Formalism* prioritizes activity over receptivity insofar as the person is a non-objectifiable center of acts.<sup>5</sup> For Scheler, receptivity is accomplished only in the context of activity. Hildebrand's prioritization of receptivity has immediate relevance for a phenomenology of freedom. Hildebrand understands any "willing" (*Wollen*, which could also be translated as a "wanting") as a "response" or "answer" (*Antwort*) to beings and their importance.<sup>6</sup> In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand states, "*Nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*—nothing is willed if it is not first known."<sup>7</sup> I will argue that the very vocation and structure of freedom involves what Hildebrand calls a "dialogue between the person and being."<sup>8</sup> This is a dialogue that Hildebrand sees as precluded by any idealist conception of the person and reality. As we will see in the following chapters, it also leads to a break with the activist, voluntarist tendencies of Husserl and Kant.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in order to understand Hildebrand's phenomenology of freedom, it is necessary to first understand how his rejection of transcendental idealism enables him to understand consciousness as purely receptive to real beings. The task here is not to claim that Hildebrand's arguments would convince Kant or Husserl, but rather to show how his rejection of transcendental idealism opens up a coherent, realist conception of phenomenology, which in turn makes possible his conception of freedom as a response-ability. In the second section of this chapter, I show how

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<sup>5</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 370–386. See below at [1.7: Conclusion: The Fundamentality of Receptivity and Human Freedom](#), p. 60; and especially [3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>6</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 159; *Ethics*, 210–213; *Ethik* 210–212. The ambiguity of the translation of *Wollen* as "wanting" or "willing," will be a major theme in the Chapter Three. See below at [3.3.4: The Ambiguity of "Want": Hildebrand in Dialogue with Harry Frankfurt](#), pp. 151–154.

<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27, 207.

<sup>9</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *G*, 4:436, 85, where Kant defines freedom as autonomy.

Husserl developed in his largely unpublished research manuscripts a position he termed "universal voluntarism" whereby a "general will" (*allgemeiner Wille*), which is a general teleological tendency for the rational life, guides and structures the constitution of all experience. He announced this to Dorion Cairns in a conversation which the later recorded. See Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague, Netherlands: Springer, 1976), 60–62. For a good overview of Husserl's position see James G. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life: Studies in a Husserlian Social Ethics*, *Phaenomenologica* (Dordrecht ; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).



Hildebrand adopts what amounts to a realist echo of Husserl's famous Principle of All Principles.<sup>10</sup> The third section then explores how Hildebrand and Scheler build on Husserl's notion of a material a priori to reject the transcendental idealism of Kant. The fourth section shows how Hildebrand considers things to be given to us in their *reality* with his distinction between the experience of the such-being of a thing (*Soseinserfahrung*) and the experience of the existence of a thing (*Daseinserfahrung*), a notion he develops in his *What is Philosophy?* and in his 1975 essay "*Selbstdarstellung*" (translated as "Survey of My Philosophy").<sup>11</sup> The fifth section shows how Hildebrand understands the subject in knowing as being purely "void" (*leer*) and thus receptive to content (*Inhalt*) on the object side.<sup>12</sup> The sixth section will indicate how the conclusions of the past three sections enable Hildebrand to come to a realist conception of phenomenology. Finally, the conclusion will indicate the far-reaching implications of the priority of receptivity to activity for Hildebrand's whole conception of the human person and especially freedom, pointing to the next chapters.

## 1.2: A Realist Echo of the Principle of All Principles

From his 1912 dissertation, at the foundation of Hildebrand's philosophy is his claim that all the different forms of knowledge are forms of "consciousness-of" where the subject is wholly receptive to what is given.<sup>13</sup> In his "Husserl und Hildebrand," Karl Schuhmann notes that this notion of pure receptivity is the primary source of Hildebrand's divergence from Husserl's turn to transcendental idealism, which Husserl announced in *Ideas I* only shortly after reading Hildebrand's dissertation.<sup>14</sup> This claim also was refined by Hildebrand, in part as a response to

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<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 5; Husserl, HUA III, §24, 52; *Ideas I*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, "*Selbstdarstellung*," in *Philosophie in Selbstdarstellungen*, ed. Pongratz (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1975), 77–127; English Translation "Survey of My Philosophy," trans. John F. Crosby, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (2017): 522. See also *WP*, 86–92.

<sup>12</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134. See also *Ethics*, 207.

<sup>13</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Schuhman, "Husserl und Hildebrand," *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1992): 10.

Husserl's transcendental turn, in his *What is Philosophy?*<sup>15</sup> Thus, Hildebrand's claim is perhaps best understood in critical contrast with his teacher on the very nature of phenomenology. To understand their divergence, it is necessary to first emphasize how similar Hildebrand and Husserl are with each other. They agree that any theorization of their own must strictly follow what is given in intuition. This is most famously articulated in Husserl's "Principle of All Principles" in *Ideas I* §24:

That each intuition affording [something] in an originary way is a legitimate source of knowledge, that, whatever presents itself to us in "*Intuition*" in an originary way (so to speak, in its actuality in person) is to be taken simply as what it affords itself as, but only within the limitations in which it affords itself there. Let us continue to recognize that each theory in turn could itself draw its truth only from originary givenness.<sup>16</sup>

Intuition for both Hildebrand and Husserl means that the object is self-given to the mind.<sup>17</sup> For both, intuition is like a kind of "perception" in the broadest sense of the word, going far beyond sensory perception. It is the basis of all knowledge. Further, phenomenology is understood as a science of essences, which both Hildebrand and Husserl refer to by the Greek term "*eidos*."<sup>18</sup> To use one of Hildebrand's examples, the statement that "willing requires consciousness of the object willed" expresses an a priori truth based on our conscious experience or "intuition" of the essence of willing.<sup>19</sup> Thus, one finds in Hildebrand's "Prolegomena" to his *Ethics* a short paragraph that echoes Husserl's Principle of All Principles:

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<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 22–25.

<sup>16</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §24, 52; *Ideas I*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> See Hildebrand, *WP*, 215.

<sup>18</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §3, 13; *Ideas I*, 11; Hildebrand, *WP*, 101, 132.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 217.

It will be one of our chief aims to avoid any thesis that is not imposed on us by the data and, above all, to abstain from tacit presuppositions that are neither evident nor proved. We take reality seriously in the way in which it discloses itself; we greatly respect everything that is immediately given, everything that possesses a real, intrinsic meaning and true intelligibility.<sup>20</sup>

However, the two appearances of the word “real” in the quote above cannot be innocent given Hildebrand’s disagreement with Husserl on the issue of realism. In *Ideas I*, Husserl holds that our normal conscious life takes place in the “natural attitude” where there is a most general positing of the world and the objects and values within it as being actual, real, being-there.<sup>21</sup> Within this “general thesis” (*Generalthesis*) of the world, objects of consciousness, which are posited to exist, have the “doxic modality” (*doxische Modalität*) of belief.<sup>22</sup> For Husserl, belief itself appears as being on the object, as a doxic modality of the object. Nicholas de Warren notes that “Husserl has in a single stroke de-subjectified belief from the merely subjective or psychological.”<sup>23</sup> De Warren gives the example of a statue which at first appears to be a statue, but when it moves “the object itself ‘appears to be questionable,’ ‘to be doubtful,’ etc.”<sup>24</sup> The background of all doubt, conjecture, assumption, etc. as doxic modalities of belief is the *Urdoxa*, a general belief in the world as existing independent of the mind. Husserl proposes “bracketing” this general positing. In this bracketing, one keeps the positing in place but one does not go along with it. This is the basis of the *epochē*. Instead of assuming the statue is real or an illusion, in this new phenomenological attitude I simply have the statue precisely given as an *appearance*.

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<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §30, 63; *Ideas I*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §103, 257; *Ideas I*, 206.

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas de Warren, “Concepts without Pedigree: The Noema and Neutrality Modification,” in *Commentary on Husserl’s Ideas I*, ed. Andrea Staiti (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 245.

<sup>24</sup> De Warren, “Concepts without Pedigree,” 245.

This bracketing, Husserl claims, frees up the field of true phenomenological research into *eidē*, for while the world as fact falls away the world as *eidos* remains.<sup>25</sup> This should not be taken to mean that facts are without ontological significance for Husserl. Claudio Majolino notes that Husserl distinguishes individual essences, which he sometimes refers to as the *Sosein* (such-being) of an object, from an *eidos* proper.<sup>26</sup> Ruby-red is an *eidos*, this ruby-red of this cup is an individual essence. When one enters into the transcendental phenomenological attitude the focus becomes the *eidē* proper.

Moreover, in the phenomenological *epochē* and reductions, while the empirical ego falls away, an absolute (i.e., non relative) transcendental “pure ego” remains. As Sebastian Luft points out, this pure ego is non-objectifiable, but rather is that to which there can be objects. It cannot be captured even in reflection, for then it would be objectified. Rather, “it must be assumed to exist as the ‘radiating center’ of acts.”<sup>27</sup> It is revealed in the reduction that this pure ego constitutes the world of consciousness.<sup>28</sup> The objects of consciousness are always unities of sense (*Sinn*) that, in the reduction, are found to presuppose a “sense-affording” or “sense-giving” (*Sinngebung*) consciousness. Thus, they fall prey to the reduction.<sup>29</sup> Husserl did not view his transcendental idealism as a rejection of realism but rather as a robust form of it. As Luft states succinctly: “Constitution [for Husserl] is the process of working out how the world is *when* it gives itself.”<sup>30</sup>

In *Ideas I*, Husserl claims this bracketing involves suspending all values (*Werte*) with their value positings, as values are also constituted as objects by the subject.<sup>31</sup> For Husserl,

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<sup>25</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §33, 74; *Ideas I*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Claudio Majolino, “*Individuum* and the Region of Being: On the Unifying Principle of Husserl’s ‘Headless’ Ontology,” in *Commentary on Husserl’s Ideas I*, ed. Andrea Staiti (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 42–43.

<sup>27</sup> Sebastian Luft, “Laying Bare the Phenomenal Field: The Reductions as Ways to Pure Consciousness,” in *Commentary on Husserl’s Ideas I*, ed. Andrea Staiti (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 140.

<sup>28</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §55, 134; §57, 138; *Ideas I*, 102, 105.

<sup>29</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §55, 134; *Ideas I*, 102.

<sup>30</sup> Luft, “Laying Bare the Phenomenal Field,” 151.

<sup>31</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §53, 132; *Ideas I*, 104.

phenomenology makes values thematic and helps us to grasp their ultimate foundation as given in experience.<sup>32</sup> Yet the way Husserl conceives of this givenness precludes the cognitive phenomenological attitude itself from involving affective delighting in values, though it presupposes such affectivity. In his *Ideas II*, we find a distinction between the theoretical, objectivizing attitude (*Einstellung*) and a non-objectivizing axiological attitude.<sup>33</sup> A subject may take on an axiological attitude, and this is an attitude in which one lives in appreciation for various not yet objectified values. I take pleasure in a beautiful sky in “an attitude of purely delighting abandon or surrender.”<sup>34</sup> This feeling the value is not an objectifying act but is founded on an objectifying act. By “objectifying” here, Husserl does not mean becoming an object of conscious explicit knowledge, but rather appearing in an object-like, intuitive manner. For Husserl, things appear objectified, in this sense, in sensory intuition, but, initially, values do not. Thus, I first must see the sky in an objectifying act of sensory intuition, and then I feel it as beautiful in a non-objectifying feeling of value. But when I come to reflectively regard the sky as a “beautiful sky” in the theoretical attitude, I become aware of my intending acts as objectifying acts, and the value becomes an object of knowledge. I have now sedimented the value “beautiful” onto the object “sky” to constitute it as a “beautiful sky,” a higher level value-object.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, by moving out of the axiological attitude into the theoretical attitude found in reflection, I no longer live in an attitude of “delighting abandon or surrender.”

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<sup>32</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA VI, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, ed. Walter Biemel. (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1954) <https://open.org/pub-108581>; Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

<sup>33</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA VI, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Zweites Buch*. Edited by Marly Biemel (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1952), §4, 7. <https://open.org/pub-108556>. English Translation: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), §4, 9. Henceforth *Ideas II*.

<sup>34</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 7; *Ideas II*, §4, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, §4, 10.

It should be noted that this particular passage of *Ideas II* shows the influence of Edith Stein, Husserl's editorial assistant at the time. It may reflect her position as well as Husserl's, and she may well have written it.<sup>36</sup> Yet it does express Husserl's own views. Melle and Hart note that Husserl maintained this division between axiological and cognitive attitudes throughout his career.<sup>37</sup> As a result, there is a certain neutrality to cognition for Husserl. The theoretical, phenomenological attitude can certainly grasp values, but it does not live through the experience of them. In order to avoid Husserl's conclusions, Hildebrand must defend a different conception of how consciousness works.

With this, the words "respect" as well as "reality" in the quotation from Hildebrand above become suspect for the Husserl of *Ideas I* and *Ideas II*. To support his conception of phenomenology, Hildebrand must find a way to claim that the reality of objects and their values are "immediately given" in intuition. Further, he must show that his method is capable of obtaining the absolute, a priori truths and essences that both Husserl and Hildebrand seek. Below, in the next section I set out how Hildebrand responds to these challenges by presenting his notion of material a priori insights into essence. In the remaining two sections, I show how Hildebrand's distinction between experience of an object's such-being and of an object's existence, and his notion that knowledge is purely receptive. These insights together enable Hildebrand to justify the word "reality" in his realist echo of the Principle of All Principles.<sup>38</sup> They allow Hildebrand to bypass

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<sup>36</sup> Edith Stein, "Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 5 (1922): 141–149; English Translation: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, ed. Marianne Sawicki, trans. Mary Catharine Baseheart (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2016), 157–165. Special thanks to professor Magri for pointing out to me the influence of Stein on this passage. Henceforth *Beiträge* and *PPH*.

<sup>37</sup> As Hart puts it: "Husserl, it would seem, held until the end of his life that although apperceptions of the heart are not reducible to apperceptions which govern the experience of objects, the evaluations are founded necessarily in the 'objectifying acts.'" See James G. Hart, "Husserl's Axiology as a Form of Purity of Heart: Reading *Husserliana XXVIII*," *Philosophy Today* 34, no. 3 (1990): 214. See also Melle, "Husserl's Phenomenology of Willing."

<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, "Survey of My Philosophy," 522.

the transcendental idealism of both Kant and Husserl without abandoning the Principle of All Principles or the study of essences.

### 1.3: The Material A Priori

Hildebrand, along with his friend Max Scheler, pays special attention to Husserl's notion of categorical intuition and the material a priori, and they develop that notion further than their teacher had.<sup>39</sup> For Husserl, as well as Scheler and Hildebrand, intuition could be defined as the act by which a thing is immediately given as self-present.<sup>40</sup> In the Sixth Logical Investigation, Husserl radically widened the concept of intuition to include "categorical intuition" (*kategoriale Anschauung*).<sup>41</sup> Through categorical intuition, I perceive relations, e.g., the orange is on top of the table, and states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*). States of affairs denote the relationship of objects and are the correlate of propositions, e.g., the-being-on-top-of-the-table-of-the-orange, the being-white-of-the-paper, which correlates to the proposition "the orange is on top of the table," and the "I see that the paper is white." Such categorical intuitions can bring to consciousness "ideal" objects, "objects of a higher order."<sup>42</sup> Husserl's logic is that since categorically structured meanings can be fulfilled, there must be intuitions that correspond to them.<sup>43</sup> This, of course, expands the notion of intuition beyond sensuous intuition, but this, Husserl claims, is warranted by the reasoning above. I have a sensuous intuition when I see the white paper, but contained within that sensuous intuition I can pick out a categorical object, the being-white-of-the-paper, and make that the object of its own intuition. Thus, I can say "I see *that* the paper is white" which is a distinct statement from "I see

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<sup>39</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism*, 48–55; Hildebrand, *WP*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA XIX *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band - II. Teil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, ed. Ursula Panzer (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1984), <https://open.org/pub-10883>. English Translation: *Logical Investigations Volume 2*, ed. Dermot Moran, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (New York: Routledge, 2001), VI, §46, 282. Henceforth *LI*.

<sup>41</sup> Husserl, HUA XIX, VI, §46, 673; *LI*, VI, 281.

<sup>42</sup> Husserl, HUA XIX, VI, §48, 681; *LI*, VI, §48, 288.

<sup>43</sup> Husserl, HUA XIX, VI, §46, 673; *LI*, VI, 281.

the white paper.” Such categorial intuitions are founded on and require sensuous intuitions. After all, the being-white is given to me as a part or “moment” (*Moment*, i.e., a part that cannot exist independent of the whole) of the paper. I cannot see simply the color white with no sensuous object. Categorial intentional objects show themselves “in person” no less than the sensible object does in sensuous intuition.

These categorial intuitions allow for a priori truths to be grasped on the side of the object, what Husserl terms the “material a priori.”<sup>44</sup> In these categorial intuitions, one can grasp the essence of an object, say a color. Indeed, Scheler and Hildebrand use the example of color to exemplify how a priori truths can be grasped on the side of the object.<sup>45</sup> Suppose I see an orange fruit. From this experience of orange I can immediately grasp several general truths: “colors require extended surfaces” and “orange is between yellow and red.”<sup>46</sup> These statements correspond to necessary states of affairs that express the essence of the color orange and of color in general. However, I then wake up, it turns out I was dreaming and no such fruit exists. Nevertheless, the insight I acquired in the dream remains valid. Orange is, of its very essence, between yellow and red; even if no orange things exist at all. The truth I have grasped is a priori; it is independent of experience even if I have grasped it through the experience of a dream. Professor Dermot Moran once pointed out to me that this is why, for Husserl, the reduction leaves a priori truth untouched. Even if I do not experience a real colored surface, I still can have an intuition of the *essence* of the color orange, and, from there, I can learn a priori truths about the color orange.

In *What is Philosophy?* Hildebrand understands these essences as “such-being” (*Sosein*) unities: the principle of unity in virtue of which various elements of a being are held together and

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<sup>44</sup> Husserl, HUA XIX, III, §12, 258; *LI*, III, §12, 21.

<sup>45</sup> For Scheler’s example, see Scheler, *Formalism*, 156. In what follows I give Hildebrand’s example in his *What is Philosophy?*

<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 75.



given their sense (*Sinn*).<sup>47</sup> Josef Seifert, who was a student and family friend of Hildebrand, in his essay “Essence and Existence” notes that this sense of “essence” is primarily opposed to the non-being of the chaotic or the indeterminate.<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand distinguishes three kinds of “such-being unities,” of which only the third, “necessary, highly intelligible essences” e.g., freedom, justice, and color, yield synthetic a priori truths and are the objects of philosophy.<sup>49</sup> The knowledge derived from these highly intelligible essences possesses three marks: intrinsic necessity, incomparable intelligibility, and absolute certainty.<sup>50</sup> The necessity comes from the truth’s basis in essence. The truths we discover from it, such as that freedom requires knowledge, are necessary truths, and for this reason, somewhat idiosyncratically, Hildebrand calls the essences themselves “necessary.” The incomparable intelligibility and certainty stem from the fact that a highly intelligible essence is approached “from within” in intuition rather than observed “from without.” Hildebrand, in probably a deliberate echo of Husserl and Plato, often uses the term “*eidos*” for these essences.<sup>51</sup>

It is helpful to understand the ontological status of these essences as developed first by Hildebrand and then further developed by his student Seifert. Such essences possess their own “laws” which then structure those real existing beings that participate in them, a notion that can be found in Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*.<sup>52</sup> Any just action must conform to the “laws” that the

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<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Josef Seifert, “Essence and Existence: A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of ‘Phenomenological Realism,’ and a Critical Investigation of ‘Existential Thomism’ Part 1,” *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1977): 47.

<sup>49</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 110–112. The other two are 1) “accidental unities” that are extrinsically imposed and have a “merely factual coherence,” e.g., a pile of books held together by gravity and 2) “morphic unities,” which possess an inner principle of unity and meaning and are the objects of empirical science. Knowledge of these morphic unities can be gained “from without” by empirical observation; they are the objects of the natural empirical sciences, e.g., coal and diamonds have the same constitutive nature as carbon despite appearing to be completely different substances. See Hildebrand, *WP*, 100–110.

<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §3, 13; *Ideas I*, 11; Hildebrand, *WP*, 101, 132.

<sup>52</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA XVIII. *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*. ed. Elmar Holstein. (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1975). <https://open.org/pub-108810>. English Translation: *Logical Investigations Volume I*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2001), *P*, §46, 110. Henceforth *LI*.

essence of justice imposes on all such actions. Further, even if no actions are ever just, justice itself as an *eidos* still has a full, self-contained, ideal existence. These essences are therefore transcendent to their bearers, though they are only found instantiated in their bearers. Hildebrand insists that these essences can never be considered as constituted by some subject.<sup>53</sup> In no sense do we give them their sense (*Sinngebung*) as they have that sense (*Sinn*) in themselves.

Hildebrand himself notes this realism gives his philosophy a distinctly Platonic favor: “Genuine essences...are the ‘Ideas’ toward which Plato primarily aimed at in his discovery of the world of Ideas.”<sup>54</sup> Justin Keena, in an insightful recently published article “Hildebrand’s Critical Rehabilitation of Plato’s Forms,” notes that Hildebrand appeals to essences to ground the necessity of certain states of affairs, which in turn ground necessary knowledge, e.g., that orange is between yellow and red.<sup>55</sup> Keena notes that by focusing on the *necessity* of states of affairs and the knowledge that they give rather than on the immutability of philosophical knowledge, Hildebrand is able to avoid reifying these essences as actually existent Idea-objects in a Platonic realm.<sup>56</sup> Further, Seifert notes that, as with Husserl, these essences have only “ideal” existence, as opposed to the actual real existence of an essence of a real concrete being. Seifert, following Edith Stein among others, carefully distinguishes an ideal, general *eidos* in Hildebrand’s sense from the real, existing essence of an individual existing being, e.g., Socrates with his Socratesness.<sup>57</sup> Following Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Seifert claims these ideal essences have no real existence but are instead

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<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 116.

<sup>54</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 116.

<sup>55</sup> Justin Keena, “Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Critical Rehabilitation of Plato’s Forms,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 121.

<sup>56</sup> Keena, “Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Critical Rehabilitation of Plato’s Forms,” 121. It is, of course, controversial whether Plato held such a realm of forms and ideas exist. I do not contest these reinterpretations of Plato, only note that Hildebrand avoids the criticisms that are typically leveled against what is commonly known as “Platonism” in the negative sense of the word.

<sup>57</sup> Seifert, “Essence and Existence: Part 1,” 62. However, the ideal essences of pure perfections, e.g., justice, goodness, and freedom, are more than merely ideal in that they are one with the Being of God who is Goodness itself, Justice itself, Freedom itself, etc. This, however, will not enter into the current analysis of such essences.

“pure beings of meaning” (*reines Sinnsein*) or to use Stein’s term “merely essential being” (*reines wesenhaftes Sein*).<sup>58</sup> As Manfred Frings notes with regard to Scheler, such essences have “functional existence;” they must enter into some function with some real existing object in order to properly have a real existence of their own.<sup>59</sup> Seifert, expressing a similar concept in a different way, rechristens Hildebrand’s *eidē* as “essential plans.”<sup>60</sup>

These highly intelligible such-being unities yield synthetic a priori truths, which allows Hildebrand to reject, along with Scheler, the Kantian position that the synthetic a priori is only made possible by the constitutive activity of the subject. In the case of Kant, transcendental idealism means that the subject actively constructs or constitutes the object from a confused sensory manifold. This means for Kant that the thing-in-itself is never given to the subject: “I understand by transcendental idealism of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not things in themselves.”<sup>61</sup> Kant limited intuition to sensibility and “unformed” sensory data, which are then structured by the forms of sensible intuition, space and time, and the formal categories of the understanding. All a priori knowledge comes from subjective forms and categories imposed by the subject on the constituted object. The notion of categorial intuition allows Hildebrand to reject, along with Scheler, the Kantian position that the synthetic a priori is only made possible by the constitutive activity of the subject.<sup>62</sup> Once

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<sup>58</sup> Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 2002), 83, Henceforth *FEB*; Hedwig Conrad-Martius cited in Seifert, “Essence and Existence Part 1,” 87.

<sup>59</sup> Manfred S. Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler: The First Comprehensive Guide Based on the Complete Works* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Univ Pr, 1997), 24.

<sup>60</sup> Seifert, “Essence and Existence Part 1,” 81.

<sup>61</sup> Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), A369, 426. Henceforth *CPR*.

<sup>62</sup> See Scheler, *Formalism*, 48–49; Hildebrand, *WP*, 84. Hildebrand here mistakenly claims that Kant restricts the synthetic a priori to mathematics since for Kant intuition is restricted to sensibility. He forgets that many of the most important synthetic a priori truths come from the categories of the understanding (e.g., that a cause is followed by an effect) as well as from pure practical reason (that persons are to be treated as ends and never as mere means). This mistake does not, however, invalidate Hildebrand’s and Scheler’s central contention against Kant’s assumption that

it is understood that intuition is much broader than Kant's restrictions imply, one can recognize non-formal, material a priori truths on the side of the object. Scheler and Hildebrand find this expansion of the a priori to be especially critical for ethics, as it means that "values" (*Werte*), with their own laws and essences, exist in our experience. The experience of them can ground synthetic, a priori truths. Thus, one can see how Hildebrand would feel justified in rejecting the transcendental idealism of Kant and can hold that his conception of phenomenology can secure essences.

Yet Husserl shares this realism of essences with Hildebrand, even if they diverge on the question of transcendental idealism more generally. Hildebrand tends to refer to transcendental idealism as a unified position which, in general, posits that the object of consciousness is a "creation" (*Schaffen*) of the subject.<sup>63</sup> This is an oversimplification of Husserl's transcendental idealism, which is quite distinct from Kant's. For Husserl, transcendental idealism means that the ego constitutes the objects of consciousness according to their given essences. Husserl did not see his transcendental idealism as vacating his earlier commitment to realism. Yet his position does hold that consciousness has a primacy over objective being. "The world of the transcendent *res* is utterly dependent upon consciousness."<sup>64</sup> We must, according to Husserl, reject a naïve objectivism which does not see that the constitution of objects is still an achievement of the subject, but instead holds that they straightforwardly exist independent of the mind. So for both Husserl and Hildebrand, essences can be grasped directly by the subject, and they give rise to a priori truths which can also be grasped in experience. They both disagree with Kant that these a priori truths

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the synthetic a priori is grounded in the constitutive activity of the subject. See also Kant, *CPR*, B xvii, 110–111, where Kant introduces the notion of constitution as the solution of the problem of grounding synthetic a priori knowledge.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 24; *Was ist Philosophie?*, 28.

<sup>64</sup> Husserl, *HUA* III, §49, 115–116; *Ideas I*, 89.

are solely subjective forms of intuition and categories of the understanding imposed by the subject on an in-itself confused sensory manifold. Thus, Hildebrand will need to make further claims on the nature of consciousness to secure his straightforward realism from not just Kant's version of transcendental idealism, but from Husserl's as well.

#### **1.4: Intuition of the Essential and the Real**

In his *The Mind of Max Scheler*, Manfred Frings holds that Husserl thought one had to "bracket" things in order to bring values into focus.<sup>65</sup> What was said about Husserl above does not, in fact, entail the position that Frings attributes to him. In *Ideas II* values can be brought to consciousness as within value-objects or as objects themselves in a reflective, theoretical attitude even without bracketing per se. It is a specifically phenomenological appropriation of values that requires bracketing.<sup>66</sup> Yet Frings' explanation of how Scheler avoids this need to bracket things in order to reach their values is illuminating. Frings turns to one of Husserl's favorite examples to illustrate.<sup>67</sup> I see a person and this person is given to me as alive, having aliveness. However, I then find this "person" is in fact a dummy. Nevertheless, for Scheler, I have a genuine experience of aliveness in its essence even in the case where, in fact, the thing I am intuiting is not alive. This is similar to the case of where I gain knowledge of the color orange and that it is between yellow and red in an experience of a merely dreamt orange fruit and not a real fruit.

Hildebrand develops this insight by distinguishing two different experiences contained in every experience of a real object: the experience of an intentional object's "such-being" versus the experience of the object's existence.<sup>68</sup> This distinction comes in his later works, but the basis of it is already found as early as 1912 in his dissertation. There, Hildebrand distinguishes between an

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<sup>65</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 36–37.

<sup>67</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 36–37.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 88; Hildebrand, "Survey of My Philosophy," 522.

act of “taking-cognizance” (*Kenntnisnahme*) of some real or imagined object and a “recognizing” (*Erkennen*) of a state of affairs. In contrast to taking-cognizance, it is not possible to have *Erkennen* without the state of affairs being given as real (*wirklich*), as existing or obtaining (*Bestand*).<sup>69</sup> The notion of *Erkennen* is one that Hildebrand adopts from Reinach’s seminal essay “A Contribution to the Theory of Negative Judgement,” published in 1911.<sup>70</sup> Reinach notes that it is odd to say one perceives the state of affairs “that-the-rose-is-red;” rather, one sees the rose and the red while the state of affairs is recognized (*erkannt*) by me through my perception of the red rose.<sup>71</sup> Crucially, for Hildebrand, *Erkennen* refers to the state of affairs obtaining or existing (*bestand*). Thus, in *Die Idee*, Hildebrand notes if I imagine my friend visiting me, I can be said to be intuitively taking-cognizance (*kenntnisnehmen*) of my friend’s arrival in an imagination. Yet I cannot be said to know that my friend has arrived in the sense of *Erkennen* because his arrival is not given to me as obtaining in reality.<sup>72</sup>

Husserl, in his notes to his own copy of Hildebrand’s dissertation, questions Hildebrand’s claim. Why not say I recognize (*erkenne*) my friend’s imagined arrival?<sup>73</sup> In Hildebrand’s defense, it must be reiterated that what *Erkennen* gives to a person is not just the state of affairs, which is also given in taking-cognizance, but the state of affairs’ obtaining (*Bestand*). If one wanted to speak of *Erkennen* in the case of imagining my friend’s arrival, one would have to say that the state of affairs obtains in the imagined world or obtains *as* a fictional state of affairs. However, Hildebrand himself seems to want to restrict obtaining to cases where the state of affairs really does actually exist or obtain. Here, he is more interested in the ontological correlate of each type

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<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 144–145.

<sup>70</sup> Reinach, *CTNJ*, 37.

<sup>71</sup> Reinach, *CTNJ*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 144–145.

<sup>73</sup> Schuhmann, “Husserl und Hildebrand,” 15.

of apprehending act than the content that is given. The content of taking-cognizance and *Erkennen* can be the same, but *Erkennen* necessarily corresponds to obtaining, which is not the case for taking-cognizance. With this, we have a form of knowing, *Erkennen*, that can only be referred to reality and therefore gives that reality. Even at this early stage, Hildebrand is making the claim that reality is given in its very existence.

In his *What is Philosophy?*, Hildebrand does not mention *Erkennen* in the English text, and in the German translation, *Erkennen* directly translates the general English term “knowing” rather than picking out a specific kind of knowing as opposed to taking-cognizance.<sup>74</sup> Instead, implicitly in this work and then expressly in his “*Survey of My Philosophy*,” Hildebrand introduces both *Daseinserfahrung* and *Soseinserfahrung* as contained within taking-cognizance.<sup>75</sup> Taking the examples of the orange fruit and the dummy above, we can say that though I lacked an experience of the existence of the orange fruit and of a person, I did not, in fact, lack all experience of the color orange or of a person with aliveness. Rather, I had a valid “such-being experience” of the color orange and of aliveness that took place even though no experience of the existence of those things occurred.

*Soseinserfahrung* yields most of our a priori knowledge, and this knowledge has absolute certainty. This is because *Soseinserfahrung* obtains essences. *Daseinserfahrung* lacks this a priori certainty with one exception, one’s own existence, which is given in the “*si fallor, sum*” of Augustine.<sup>76</sup> In all other cases, whether one has *Daseinserfahrung* or not can be doubted. However, if the experience of an object, say a house, fits into the overall stream of experience, then, Hildebrand says, “there is no possibility of deception.”<sup>77</sup> One might be less optimistic than

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<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *Was ist Philosophie?*, 32–40.

<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 86–87; “*Survey of My Philosophy*,” 522.

<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 73.

Hildebrand is about continuity guaranteeing the reality of an experience. Nevertheless, it remains that Hildebrand has identified here two unique and irreducible forms of givenness. As he puts it in his “Survey of My Philosophy,” “Both essence and the existence thereof are given to us through our perception.”<sup>78</sup>

Here, we begin to see how Hildebrand attempts to circumvent Husserl’s, as opposed to Kant’s, transcendental idealism. Hildebrand places most of the emphasis in his philosophy on *Soseinserfahrung*. Hildebrand and Husserl agree that for objects there is an *eidos* and an individual essence, and for Hildebrand these two together present a *Sosein* to the mind. Yet Hildebrand sees no need for a reduction to make the *eidos* as *eidos* thematic. This is because the attendant notion of *Daseinserfahrung* implicitly guarantees his philosophical realism. By making this distinction between *Daseinserfahrung* and *Soseinserfahrung*, Hildebrand is implicitly claiming that one does not, *pace* Husserl, “posit” things as existing in any way. Rather, things simply are *given* as existing in perception.<sup>79</sup> In essence, for Hildebrand, belief in existence is still subjective but knowledge of existence, however fallible, is thoroughly objective.

Further, while Hildebrand tends to speak of *Daseinserfahrung* as only pertaining to when I genuinely grasp a real object that in fact really does exist, one can extend the notion of *Daseinserfahrung* further than Hildebrand expressly does himself. Once I realize the dummy is not a person, I recognize that I did have a *Daseinserfahrung* of a person-looking-thing, though not of an actual person. Insofar as an *eidos* is “real” and “there-being” (*Dasein*) for me, in the sense of having its own self-contained, ideal existence intuitively before me, one could even speak of having a *Daseinserfahrung* of an essence, e.g., justice itself, precisely in the *Soseinserfahrung* of the “such-being” of a thing to which that essence pertains. To give an example, suppose I watch a

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<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, “Survey of My Philosophy,” 522.

<sup>79</sup> Hildebrand, “Survey of My Philosophy,” 522.



man give to the poor seemingly out of pure respect for their human dignity. In this act, I see and grasp the essence of justice, for I realize respect for a person is what is demanded by the value of the person. I realize this respect is essential to and contained within justice itself. I recognize in witnessing this action, perhaps for the first time, that justice *exists* (albeit as ideal). However, I later find out this “just” person is actually a mob boss who was doing the action solely for publicity. Nevertheless, I still cannot deny that justice exists, for I saw it in its essence in the mobster’s act even though that mobster’s act was not in fact just. With this distinction, Hildebrand moves to both secure essences without having recourse to the *epochē* and to claim that reality itself is given to one precisely in intuition. We do not *posit* most objects as existing in any way, nor do they have a doxic modality of belief. They are simply given as existing. Hildebrand’s realism is a direct realism in that it affirms existence is directly given in experience and intuition, but, for Hildebrand and for me, this directness is no objection because it is found in taking-cognizance.

### 1.5: Knowledge as “Empty” Having.

Hildebrand’s realism is further supported by his conception of knowledge and consciousness as purely receptive. By his own admission, Hildebrand’s notion that knowledge is purely receptive again rests on the work of Adolf Reinach’s essay “A Contribution to the Theory of Negative Judgement.”<sup>80</sup> Reinach carefully distinguishes two distinct senses of judgement: a conviction (*Überzeugung*) and an assertion or “claim” (*Behauptung*).<sup>81</sup> The objects of both conviction and assertion are states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), but how conviction and assertion relate to states of affairs differ. Convictions are spontaneous position-taking acts (*Stellungnahmen*) that arise in one upon a recognition (*Erkennen*) that a state of affairs does or does not obtain. I see that the rose is red, and the conviction that the rose is red immediately arises in me. According to Hildebrand,

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<sup>80</sup> Hildebrand, “Reinach as a Philosophical Personality,” xxi.

<sup>81</sup> Reinach, *CTNJ*, 15–16.

such convictions have the character of a theoretical response (*Antwort*) to the state of affairs, affirming or denying that they do or do not obtain (*Bestand*).<sup>82</sup> By contrast, in a claim or mere assertion, a state of affairs is intended or meant (*meint*) through the medium of concepts and words.<sup>83</sup> In Hildebrand's terms, an assertion is a positing or "putting down" (*Hinstellen*) of a state of affairs rather than a response (*Antwort*) to it.<sup>84</sup> Reinach and Hildebrand hold that such meaning-acts are "blind" in that they do not have intuitive contact with the object. The state of affairs is not given in the assertion. For Reinach, this givenness of states of affairs is instead found in a presentation (*Vorstellung*), which is a simple "having" (*Haben*) of a content.<sup>85</sup> One can assert a state of affairs that one has neither recognized nor is convinced obtains; one can lie.

Hildebrand wrote an unpublished introduction to Reinach's *Gesammelte Schriften*, which was ultimately not published until the introduction was translated by John Crosby as "Reinach as a Philosophical Personality." In that work, Hildebrand finds a deeper distinction contained within Reinach's separation of meaning-acts and presentations:

[Reinach] makes the distinction within the sphere of theoretical acts between acts in which a position or stance is taken, and acts in which something is grasped or apprehended.... [a distinction which is] fundamental to every ontology of the person.<sup>86</sup>

This distinction is fundamental as it relates to how one understands truth itself. Alessandro Salice notes in his SEP article on the Munich and Göttingen circles of phenomenology that Reinach's conception of meaning marks a significant divergence from the *Logical Investigations*.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 20; *Was ist Philosophie?*, 24.

<sup>83</sup> Reinach, *CTNJ*, 23.

<sup>84</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 145.

<sup>85</sup> Reinach, *CTNJ*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> Hildebrand, "Reinach as a Philosophical Personality," xxi.

<sup>87</sup> Alessandro Salice, "The Phenomenology of the Munich and Göttingen Circles," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology-mg/>.

For Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* VI §37-39, truth is defined as *adaequatio rei intellectus*. Husserl understands this adaequation as the correspondence of the meant with the given. It occurs when a meaning act, a signification, is fulfilled in intuition.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, Hildebrand sees no need for “the meant” for an *adaequatio* to occur; only a simple “having” (*Haben*) of an object of knowledge’s content (*Inhalt*) suffices. In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand distinguishes between 1) an act of purely receptive taking-cognizance, *Kenntnisnahme*, where the subject is “void” (*leer*) and the objective content (*Inhalt*) of the relation is on the side of the apprehended object or state of affairs, and 2) a spontaneous “position-taking” act, *Stellungnahme*, where there is experiential content (*Gehalt*) on the side of the subject.<sup>89</sup> Truth as agreement of the mind with the thing does presuppose some intention, i.e., a proposition that is adequate to reality. Just looking at a beautiful sky without thinking any proposition (e.g., “the sky is beautiful”) does not establish any truth. But the basis of this propositional truth is a direct having of the object and/or state of affairs given, not an intention or signification co-given with the intuitive fulfillment of that intention.

The distinction between *Inhalt* and *Gehalt* is critical for Hildebrand’s philosophy, for it is what allows him to say that the person is void in all taking-cognizance. This “emptiness” applies to all types of acts of consciousness-of some object or state of affairs, and therefore to all forms of knowledge. Consciousness-of can therefore be distinguished from all “spontaneous” acts of the person as a simple “having” of an object where the subject is empty.<sup>90</sup> For Hildebrand, all acts of consciousness-of some object are 1) cognitive in nature (rather than affective) and 2) void except for the *Inhalt* on the object side.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Husserl, HUA XIX, VI, §37-39; *LI*, VI, 259–266.

<sup>89</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 139–142. I am indebted to the Spanish translation of this work for the translation of *Gehalt* as “experiential content” and *Inhalt* as “objective content”. See Dietrich von Hildebrand. *La Idea de la Acción Moral*, trans. Sergio Sánchez-Migallo, Madrid: Ediciones Encuentro. 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134.

<sup>91</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206–208.

In summary, what Hildebrand finds in Reinach are the keys to unlocking a conception of knowledge, and, more fundamentally, a conception of any act of consciousness-of (*Bewußtsein-von*) an object, as purely receptive.<sup>92</sup> Hildebrand calls knowledge a “spiritual grasping” of and “immaterial participation” in its object.<sup>93</sup> “Knowledge is a wholly unique contact in which one being touches another and possesses the other in an immaterial manner.”<sup>94</sup> However, only the knower and not the thing known is changed by this contact. The act of knowing something, just like the act of rejoicing over something, is a real constituent part of the person and the person’s conscious life. But the object known remains distinct from us even if we “penetrate” it in a particular way.<sup>95</sup> The object known and the knower retain their own independent existence. Knowledge, therefore, is a real “having” of being without the being that is known becoming itself an internal “part” of the knower’s being.

Hildebrand considers overlooking this distinction to be the central error of psychologism. Psychologism, according to Hildebrand, exploits an equivocal notion of “content-of-consciousness.” There is 1) content as having a consciousness-of an object (*Inhalt* in *Die Idee*, “objective content”), and 2) content as being itself a conscious entity (*Gehalt* in *Die Idee*, “experiential content”).<sup>96</sup> Psychologism takes all *Inhalte* (objective contents) to be *Gehalte* (experiential contents) since they are experienced by the subject. But this is an error; we are simply able to have and grasp an *Inhalt* without a corresponding *Gehalt*. Indeed, Hildebrand insists that all apprehending forms of consciousness-of an object, as opposed to responses to an already grasped object or being affected by that object, have this pure receptivity.<sup>97</sup> They are all properly

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<sup>92</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 15; *DI*, 136.

<sup>97</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206–208.

cognitive acts.<sup>98</sup> This distinction between *Inhalt* and *Gehalt* is especially important for understanding Hildebrand's rejection of what Husserl would call a non-objectifying, affective, axiological attitude, which will be covered in the next chapter.<sup>99</sup>

### 1.5.1: The Different Types of Knowledge.

In his earliest works, *Die Idee* and in his habilitation *Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis* (*Morality and Ethical Value-Knowledge*), which was published in the *Jahrbuch* in 1922, Hildebrand deepens this analysis of knowledge by noting the differences among four different German words that could all be translated to English as “knowing.”<sup>100</sup> The first two deal with knowing as apprehension: 1) *Kenntnisnahme*, which in *What is Philosophy?* is translated as “taking-cognizance,” and 2) *Erkennen*, which could be translated as “recognizing.”<sup>101</sup> The second two are forms of static knowing: 1) *Kennen*, translated by Hildebrand in *What is Philosophy?* as “having knowledge,” and which could also be translated as “knowledge by acquaintance”, and 2) *Wissen* which Hildebrand, quite artificially by his own admission, translates as “knowing” in scare quotation marks.<sup>102</sup> All four types of knowing are purely receptive in their structure.

First, a *Kenntnisnahme*, a taking-cognizance, is, in the broadest sense of the term, any apprehension where the object or state of affairs is apprehended and directly given as self-present to one. Taking-cognizance includes any form of perception (*Wahrnehmung*) and intuition (*Anschauungen*). Taking-cognizance also includes, as we will see in the next chapter, the perception of value (*Wertsehen*).<sup>103</sup> In taking-cognizance, the subject is always “void” (*leer*) and

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<sup>98</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206–208.

<sup>99</sup> See, [2.4.2: Reverence as the Unification of the Cognitive and Axiological Attitudes](#), pp. 99–103.

<sup>100</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 143; *SW*, 473–477.

<sup>101</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 143; Hildebrand, *WP*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 33. I am indebted to Sergio Sánchez-Migallo's translation of *Kennen* in *Die Idee* as “*estar familiarizado*” for my own translation of *Kennen* as “knowledge by acquaintance.” The translation was also suggested to me by Professor Bloechl.

<sup>103</sup> See below at [2.3.1: The Intuitive Givenness of Values](#), pp. 82–90.

the content (*Inhalt*) is on the object side.<sup>104</sup> The second form of apprehension, *Erkennen*, refers only to recognizing states of affairs as obtaining. Only in taking-cognizance is an object or a state of affairs “self-given” (*selbstgegeben*) to me, whereas only through *Erkennen* does a state of affairs become “evident” (*evident*) to me.<sup>105</sup> I can know a state of affairs in the sense of *Erkennen* “in its existence and at the same time [the state of affairs] can be there for me as distant and empty, as a merely known one.”<sup>106</sup> For example, I may know (*erkenne*) that one ought not to lie without really grasping the wrongness of lying, without grasping its disvalue. Discussing this distinction in his article “Actions, Values, and States of Affairs in Hildebrand and Reinach,” Alessandro Salice explains this distinction as one between merely recognizing-that (*erkennt*) a deontic state of affairs obtains and taking-cognizance of the real value that grounds that deontic state of affairs.<sup>107</sup> A person who saves another from an oncoming train might intuitively feel that this is the right thing to do, i.e., he has taken-cognizance of the value of doing so. Conversely, he may merely recognize (*erkennt*) that saving-the-person-ought-to-be-done as a duty. Compared to taking-cognizance, *Erkennen* is a vacuous form of knowing, e.g., “saving that person ought to be done.” It is a kind of mere recognizing-that some state of affairs obtains without the state of affairs necessarily being full-bodied present to one.

This does not mean *Erkennen* is based on blind prejudice. *Erkennen* can be based on inference or the testimony of another, but it does not solely rely on taking-cognizance. In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand states that *Erkennen* can occur with regard to a state of affairs without a concurrent taking-cognizance of that state of affairs, e.g., when I infer and recognize (*erkenne*) that there is a

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<sup>104</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 136.

<sup>105</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 143.

<sup>106</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 144. Translation is my own.

<sup>107</sup> Alessandro Salice, “Actions, Values, and States of Affairs in Hildebrand and Reinach,” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 15 (2015): 259.

fire from seeing rising smoke without any taking-cognizance of the fire itself.<sup>108</sup> However, to recognize (*erkennen*) this fact requires taking-cognizance of the smoke and of prior cases of fire causing smoke. Thus, taking-cognizance represents the foundation of all knowledge. Further, as mentioned above, in the English text of *What is Philosophy?* there is no mention of an analogue of *Erkennen*. Indeed, Hildebrand now calls inference a form of taking-cognizance in its own right in both the English text and the German translation. He even uses the same example he used in *Die Idee* of inferring a fire from taking-cognizance of smoke, but now, in contrast to *Die Idee*, he calls this inference a form of taking-cognizance whereas previously he had called it recognizing and not taking-cognizance.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps by this time Hildebrand had decided that *all* acts of apprehension count as some form of taking-cognizance. This change does not invalidate the different levels of givenness of a state of affairs that he pays attention to in *Die Idee* in distinguishing taking-cognizance from vacuous *Erkennen*. Yet it does place taking-cognizance at the very center of his theory of knowledge as the basis of all knowledge.

In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand claims that taking cognizance is purely passive (*passiv*), with no activity on the part of the subject whatsoever.<sup>110</sup> This is because it lacks any *Gehalt*, which would indicate a centrifugal intentional directionality of the experience and some activity on the part of the subject toward the object. It is worth quoting Hildebrand's argument for this radical passivity at length:

Having [*Haben*, i.e., having an objective content in consciousness-of], which as such remains the same, whatever its objective content (*Inhalt*), is, as we can see, primarily characterized by the fact that it has no experiential content (*Gehalt*) whatsoever on the

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<sup>108</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 143.

<sup>109</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 29; Hildebrand, *Was ist Philosophie?*, 32.

<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134–138.

subject's side, and that all of its wealth is based on the objective content (*Inhalt*). It [a having] could be compared to a pair of pincers, which opened towards its object, enclosing it at both ends, but otherwise enclosing an empty space between its limbs. A second characteristic of taking-cognizance is *the absence of any activity on the part of the subject* (*Als ein zweites Charakteristikum der Kenntnisnahme ist das Fehlen jeglicher Aktivität des Subjektes anzuführen*), which is closely related to what has just been said. Since there is absolutely no content (*Gehalt*) that is experienced on the subjective side as my position, my behavior, there can be no question of an ideal direction from me to an object. Rather, we see that in “being there for me (*für mich da sein*)” there is something completely different, something incomparable to the position-taking. But it must be particularly emphasized that no activity-consciousness (*Tätigkeitsbewußtsein*) in the broadest sense of the word is inherent in having. It is passive in that it includes an opposition to any activity, both spiritual and practical.<sup>111</sup>

This represents a very stark departure from the transcendental idealism of Husserl, for whom all experience is at least in some sense actively constituted by the subject. Husserl moderated this activist conception of experience by introducing the notion of passive sense-giving (*Sinngebung*) in *Erfahrung und Urteil* (*Experience and Judgement*). This book was published just after Husserl's death in 1938, and it is likely Hildebrand never read it.<sup>112</sup> But even this passive *Sinngebung* represents a spontaneous activity of the subject, actively constituting unities from temporal and sense manifolds. By contrast, here in *Die Idee* Hildebrand makes the radical claim

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<sup>111</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 136. Translation my own, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>112</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, trans. James Spencer Churchill and Karl Ameriks, 1st edition (Northwestern University Press, 1975) Kindle Book, §17.



there is no activity whatsoever in taking-cognizance. It is passive in the sense of being wholly void of activity.

More than thirty years later, in his *What is Philosophy?*, Hildebrand changes this realist position. He now holds that the otherwise passive process of taking-cognizance contains an activity of “spiritual going with” (*geistiges Mitgehen oder Mitvollzug*, “going along with,” “execution”) the object.<sup>113</sup> This *Mitgehen* is distinguished from turning one’s attention to an object. Attention is the presupposition for taking-cognizance rather than a component of taking-cognizance. This “spiritual going with” is an “intentional echoing of” or “concerting” (*konspirieren*) with the object that does not detract from the receptive character of the process of taking-cognizance.<sup>114</sup> The higher and more complex the object is, the more pronounced is this “concerting” with the object.<sup>115</sup> The going-with neither produces nor copies the object or its content. It does not produce a second spiritual object, but rather enacts the very intentional participation in the object. “It is only an active cooperation with the self-disclosure of the object.”<sup>116</sup> This activity does not represent any kind of synthetic, putting together, sense-giving (*Sinngebung*) activity on the part of the subject. Thus, while in his later works taking-cognizance is no longer purely passive, i.e., there is some

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<sup>113</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 22–24. Edith Stein has a similar conception of *Vollzug* in her *Beiträge*. There she distinguishes between three different kinds of a *Vollzug* of an object, which are translated by Baseheart and Sawicki as “realization.” First there is the original realization (*ursprünglicher Vollzug*) where an object comes to givenness for the first time. Second is “reproduced realization” (*vergegenwärtigender Vollzug*) where the categorical object is before my mind for the second time (or further times) “with incarnate self-presence, just as it did for my first insight.” For example, the second time in my life I think of the categorical object isosceles right triangle, it is fully self-present before my mind no less than the first time I thought of the isosceles right triangle. Third is “repeated realization” (*wiederholtener Vollzug*) where a sensate object is before my mind in a repeated, non-originary way. I remember my friend’s arrival, but since he is no longer here, he is not given to me in an originary way. The first two roughly correspond to Hildebrand’s *Mitvollzug* in that the “realization” or “going with” executes the very reception of the object as it is given. See Stein, *Beiträge*, 88; *PPH*, 101.

<sup>114</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 22–24. This notion of concerting will be crucial again when, in Chapter Four, I will argue that the will in a value response “concerts with” the demand of the value. See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338. See also: [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 210–220

<sup>115</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 23.

<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 23.

activity present in taking-cognizance, taking-cognizance and the other forms of knowledge remain purely receptive.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Hildebrand does not completely reject the notion of constitution. For example, the blue of distant mountains (which are actually green close up, and, like all colors, dependent on light photons) or a melody (as opposed to sound waves) are aspects of intentional objects that are, by Hildebrand's admission, "constituted" for the subject.<sup>117</sup> They presuppose a human mind and sensory apparatus. Nonetheless, this blue color or this melody still have "objective validity," bearing an intrinsically important "message" that is proper to the object (e.g., mountains). They are not mere semblances like a dream or the apparent bentness of an oar in water.<sup>118</sup> They carry a valid "message" to humans proper to the object; mountains are *meant* to be seen as blue by most humans.<sup>119</sup> The blue of mountains is no less real than scattered photons, which exist, in part, to allow such colors to be.<sup>120</sup> They belong to reality, to the object. Moreover, Hildebrand is careful to note that highly intelligible essences (e.g., the essence of orange as between yellow and red) are in no way constituted by the subject; in their such-being they have a full independence from the mind.<sup>121</sup> And he rejects the Kantian idealist thesis that all objects are "appearances" relative to the mind, even to the mind of all human subjects in general.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 158–171.

<sup>118</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 160. Hildebrand uses the term "brokenness" but I think that is going too far. The oar is given to me as illusorily bent but not as broken, as defective.

<sup>119</sup> In Hildebrand's analysis this "message" is ultimately willed by God. However, I do not think one has to be a theist to accept Hildebrand's claim here. Even those aspects of things which are given to and dependent on a subject's sensory and mental makeup still can present a valid aspect of that being directed to that particular species or subject. Presumably, if other species of embodied persons exist with radically different sensory makeups (e.g., they sense gravitational waves or ultraviolet light with distinct colors), they could experience different objectively valid aspects of beings bearing a "message" for them analogous to the blue of mountains.

<sup>120</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 163. Hildebrand speaks of "vibrations" explained by physicists. These are presumably vibrations of an electromagnetic field, so I have updated Hildebrand's terminology to meet modern science on this point.

<sup>121</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 152.

<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 167; Kant, *CPR*, A369, 426.

Thus, for Hildebrand, in all forms of knowing, receptivity is prior to activity, and activity only serves to enact receptivity. This is the case even where what is received depends in some way on the human subject. It can still be an objectively valid aspect of a being, like the blue of distant mountains. The “going-with” found in taking-cognizance cannot be understood as always being a kind of constitution or *Sinngebung*, even as a passive constitution that serves mainly to enact the reception of the object according to its essence. Specifically, unlike Husserl’s constitution, Hildebrand’s conception of the “going-with” leaves no room for speaking of “positing” an object’s existence, nor of the “doxic modality” of the object. If I see an orange fruit, and in fact this fruit does exist, then in taking-cognizance of it I have a *Soseinserfahrung* of the color orange and a *Daseinserfahrung* (which I can doubt) of the fruit’s there-being, its existence. While I will argue below that Hildebrand himself perhaps too quickly conflates Husserl’s constitution with a “creating” (*Schaffen*) of the object, he nonetheless proposes an alternative understanding of phenomenology that gives much less weight to constitution than Husserl would allow.<sup>123</sup>

The dynamic act of taking-cognizance and *Erkennen* as apprehension are distinguished from static, already apprehended forms of knowing found in *Kennen* and *Wissen*. In Hildebrand’s earlier works, the distinction between *Kennen* and *Wissen* hinges on the relationship between the knower and the known. *Kennen*, which has the connotation of “being acquainted with” the object known, involves “standing in relation” with the content of the object known.<sup>124</sup> *Wissen* lacks this strong relationship. In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand distinguishes “actual” (“*aktuelles*”) *Wissen* where the content known is concretely before one’s mind, and “inactual” (“*inaktuelles*”) *Wissen* where this concreteness is lacking.<sup>125</sup> Actual *Wissen* can only refer to states of affairs; one would say “Yes I

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<sup>123</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 24; *Was ist Philosophie?*, 28.

<sup>124</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 474.

<sup>125</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 147–148.

know that is so, but I cannot really imagine it.”<sup>126</sup> If this content is not concretely present before one’s mind, however, I can be said to have inactual *Wissen* with regard to either states of affairs *or objects*. In both actual and inactual *Wissen* I know only “from without,” e.g., I know that lying is wrong, but I am not really aware of its wrongness. By contrast, in *Kennen*, the object is present to me, e.g., in being familiar with a person who is not currently physically present to me. Also, with *Kennen* I know by acquaintance and can feel the wrongness of lying when I am tempted to do so.<sup>127</sup> However, in the case of highly intelligible essences, the such-being of the object, i.e., the essence, is in fact intuitively present in *Kennen*.<sup>128</sup>

However, by the time of *What is Philosophy?*, *Kennen* and *Wissen* are distinguished more straightforwardly in terms of their correlates: *Wissen* refers *only* to states of affairs and *Kennen* refers *only* to non-states of affairs.<sup>129</sup> I know *that* my friend has arrived (*Wissen*) as compared to having knowledge and familiarity with my friend as a person (*Kennen*). As noted above, Hildebrand gives “having-knowledge” as a translation of *Kennen* and “knowing” as a translation of *Wissen*, noting both English terms are purely artificial *termini technici*.<sup>130</sup> One might have expected Hildebrand to instead translate *Wissen* as “knowing-that” given the reference to states of affairs. However, there is an implicit reason for this apparently less helpful translation. As seen before in the contrast of taking-cognizance with *Erkennen*, only in *Kennen* and not in *Wissen* is the object really fully self-present to one. *Wissen* is a relatively weak and vacuous relationship, and thus represents a mere “knowing,” whereas in *Kennen* the relationship of knower to object known is much more pronounced, and thus it is “*having knowledge*,” a knowledge by

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<sup>126</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 148.

<sup>127</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 474.

<sup>128</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 474.

<sup>129</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 33–36.

<sup>130</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 33.

acquaintance. The real significance of *Wissen* for Hildebrand in *Die Idee* and to a lesser extent in *What is Philosophy?* is not so much its correlate but rather the vacuity of the knowing-act. The fact that the object is not full-bodied present to one is the primary distinguishing mark of *Wissen*. So while he could have translated *Wissen* as knowing-that in *What is Philosophy?* (but not in *Die Idee*) the fact that he did not do so suggests that the vacuity of *Wissen* is still foremost in his mind.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Hildebrand states that *Kennen* possesses degrees of intimacy and depth that can be gained by further taking-cognizance of the object.<sup>131</sup> *Wissen* involves a precise knowledge that a state of affairs is, or is not, the case.<sup>132</sup> If we are asked if a particular state of affairs obtains or not, with *Wissen* we can reply with a simple “yes” or “no.”<sup>133</sup> By contrast if I am asked “how well do you know so and so’s work” I can answer “only superficially,” or “thoroughly,” with different gradations. *Kennen*, therefore, pertains to the such-being of an object rather than its mere existence, which is the province of *Wissen*. Deeper knowing in the sense of *Kennen* will yield more states of affairs known in *Wissen*. There are different degrees of both intimacy and understanding in *Kennen*, but with *Wissen* there are different degrees of certainty.<sup>134</sup> Overall, Hildebrand’s emphasis between the earlier works and *What is Philosophy?* changed, but not in a way that necessarily makes them contradictory.

### 1.6: Hildebrand and Husserl on Reality as Given

Combined with the distinction between *Daseinserfahrung* and *Soseinserfahrung*, the purely receptive character of all four forms of consciousness-of enables Hildebrand to reject Husserl’s transcendental idealism while remaining faithful to the Principle of All Principles. According to Hildebrand, transcendental idealism (in general) interprets the “going-with” of the object as an

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<sup>131</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 34.

<sup>132</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 34.

<sup>133</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 34.

<sup>134</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 35.

active spiritual “creation” (*Schaffen*) of the object.<sup>135</sup> This is clearest in Kant. For Kant, the confused sensuous manifold is made sense of and put together into objects through the deployment of forms of intuition and the categories of the understanding. Kant thereby denies that we can grasp the real object as it is. Nevertheless, according to Hildebrand, all transcendental idealists make the claim that they disclose the authentic nature of knowledge. They claim that knowledge involves this active constituting activity, and that it is impossible to know the object in itself. Yet these very claims about knowledge are claims about a fundamental object, a *datum* that is given, namely the very nature of knowledge itself as the object of the claims of transcendental idealism about knowledge.

For Hildebrand, all transcendental idealists are therefore guilty of presupposing and “silently reintroducing” the notion of a purely receptive taking-cognizance of knowledge, namely they take-cognizance of the very nature of knowledge itself and claim that knowledge is constructed.<sup>136</sup> Yet in so doing, they assume in a self-contradictory way that the nature of knowledge has been simply received by them, given to them. Hildebrand holds that this silent reintroduction of a purely receptive conception of taking-cognizance is inevitable.

Husserl is not without replies to Hildebrand’s position. Husserl would certainly take Hildebrand to have mischaracterized his own distinct version of transcendental idealism, conflating him with Kant or even Berkeley.<sup>137</sup> Karl Schuhmann relates that in his notes on his copy of Hildebrand’s original dissertation, Husserl made several criticisms of Hildebrand, and more can be found implicit in *Ideas I*.<sup>138</sup> First, while Husserl marked the idea of the subject being “*leer*” in taking-cognizance as “*sehr gut*,” he held that the subject being empty of ideas, *doxa*, and modality

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<sup>135</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 16, 24; *Was ist Philosophie?*, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 16.

<sup>137</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §55, 134; *Ideas I*, 102.

<sup>138</sup> Schuhmann, “Husserl und Hildebrand.”

of executions is “*nicht korrekt*.”<sup>139</sup> Second, Husserl notes that for him almost all intentional acts are centrifugal, only affections are centripetal. So he would agree that the ego in perception is “empty” in a relative sense compared to an expressly decided upon recognition, but he would resist Hildebrand’s notion of a pure passivity and receptivity in knowledge. Third, as mentioned above Husserl does not see a reason why *Erkennen* is limited to only really obtaining states of affairs for Hildebrand.<sup>140</sup> Finally, in *Ideas I*, which Schuhmann notes Husserl was close to drafting around the time of reading Hildebrand’s dissertation, Husserl is careful to note that the positing of the general thesis is *not* a particular position-taking act (*Stellungnahme*) but is more basic and fundamental than any particular *Stellungnahme*.<sup>141</sup> Husserl allows for a passive constitution (*Sinngebung*) that allows for content on the object side, rather than supposing objects are actively constructed by the subject in *Stellungnahmen*. In summary, Schuhmann notes “the basic tenor” of Husserl’s criticisms “is that Hildebrand considers consciousness to be receptive in principle.”<sup>142</sup>

Further, constitution, for Husserl, does not involve an active making of the object. Instead, the process of constitution is often passive, where the object is constituted by the subject according to the object’s own essence. In a brief discussion of Husserl’s comments on Hildebrand’s dissertation in his book *The Person and the Common Life*, James Hart argues that, once passive synthesis is taken into account, Hildebrand’s taking-cognizance is revealed to be passive synthetic construction.<sup>143</sup> In a private email correspondence with me, professor Hart confirmed that he regards Husserl’s constitution as “manifestation and display of being, not creation of it,” *pace* Hildebrand’s interpretation of Husserl.<sup>144</sup> According to Hart, Hildebrand fails to account for the

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<sup>139</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA B III 12/167 quoted in Schuhmann, “Husserl und Hildebrand,” 10.

<sup>140</sup> Schuhmann, “Husserl und Hildebrand,” 15. See above at [1.5.1: The Different Types of Knowledge](#), pp. 46–55.

<sup>141</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §31, 63–67; *Ideas I*, 52–55.

<sup>142</sup> Schuhmann, “Husserl und Hildebrand,” 17.

<sup>143</sup> James G. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, 68–70.

<sup>144</sup> Reprinted with Hart’s permission. Special thanks to James Hart for his conversation on this topic with me.

fact that even taking-cognizance of an object, say a tree, represents a kind of achievement of the subject. Hart thinks Hildebrand was prevented from recognizing this achievement character because he divides conscious acts into taking-cognizance and *Stellungnahmen*. This leads Hildebrand to assume that since taking-cognizance does not involve an active position-taking, in Hildebrand's sense of term, this means there is no activity involved whatsoever in taking-cognizance. Hildebrand indeed makes exactly this claim in *Die Idee*, as seen in the long quote above.<sup>145</sup> In *Die Idee*, at least, Hildebrand denies there is *any* activity on the part of the subject in taking-cognizance.<sup>146</sup> For Hart, *pace* the Hildebrand of *Die Idee*, there is constitutive activity on the part of the subject that Hildebrand fails to account for.

In Hart's telling, constitution for Husserl functions in much the same way the "spiritual going-with" functions for Hildebrand in *What is Philosophy?*: it makes sense of the object by enacting the very reception of the object in its manifestation. With Hildebrand's introduction of the "spiritual going-with" and Husserl's progressive accentuation of the receptive and passive character of constitution, the two philosophers' positions end up far closer than either man realized in his lifetime. Yet Husserl's constitution and Hildebrand's "going-with" are still, in my opinion, distinct. For Hildebrand, the going-with, does not in any way represent an active or passive sense-giving (*Sinngebung*) activity on the part of the subject. It is merely the "echoing" or "concerting with" the object and its "word" or "message" (even in the case of taking-cognizance of the blue of distant mountains). Specifically, "going-with" does not involve any position-taking, nor, moreover, does it involve any positing of any sort. Things are simply *given* in both their such-being content and their existence. By *Ideas I*, Husserl sees the world as colored by belief, this supposed statue is given to me as doubtful (is it really a wax figure?) because it looked like it

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<sup>145</sup> See [1.5.1: The Different Types of Knowledge](#), pp. 49–55.

<sup>146</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 136.



moved.<sup>147</sup> I make sense of it, constitute it as a statue, until it seems to move. For Hildebrand it is rather that I experience a *Soseinserfahrung* of a statue but, once it moves, I doubt I had a *Daseinserfahrung* of the statue.

Thus, Husserl's "general thesis" is challenged by the notions of *Soseinserfahrung* and *Daseinserfahrung*. As noted above, this experience of existence does not contain apodictic certainty (with the exception of oneself), yet this does not imply that one "posits" things as existing with a particular "doxic modality" of belief. What this reveals is to call the activity found in taking-cognizance "sense-giving" or "constituting" is, in most cases, for the Hildebrandian, at best, an unhelpful way of characterizing the essentially receptive character of this activity. For this reason, Hildebrand holds, there is no need to bracket things, for there is no positing to be put out of operation in a special transcendental attitude. He sees no reason for the *epochē*. The point here, again, is not to claim that this would convince Husserl, but rather to show how Hildebrand sees his philosophy as conforming to the Principles of All Principles because of rather than in spite of his realism. He is not assuming his version of realism in a circular manner but rather finds consciousness itself to be structured as a fundamental receptivity to real beings.

### **1.7: Conclusion: The Fundamentality of Receptivity and Human Freedom**

In conclusion, we have found that in his early works Hildebrand posits four distinct kinds of knowledge: *Kenntnisnehmen*, *Erkennen*, *Kennen*, and *Wissen*. These are all cognitive acts where the person experiences consciousness-of some intentional object, be it an object proper (e.g., a rose) or a state of affairs (e.g., that-the-rose-is-red). In taking-cognizance, which is the basis of all knowledge, Hildebrand asserts that we not only experience the such-being of objects, where their essences are found, but we also have their existence directly given to us. The former in turn gives

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<sup>147</sup> See above [1.2: A Realist Echo of the Principle of All Principles](#), pp. 26–32.

us material a priori knowledge of “highly intelligible essences” that need have no reference to the subjective conditions of the experience of the subject.<sup>148</sup> Hildebrand holds that knowledge must come before an active response of the person, *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*.<sup>149</sup> This means that at the core of the human person we find not activity but receptivity. Receptivity not just to essence but to real beings with their real essences is central and foundational to the person.

Hildebrand’s notion of consciousness as purely receptive is indeed a notion “fundamental to every ontology of the person,” as he says with regard to Reinach.<sup>150</sup> It is fundamental, because it details how we are in relation to the world and to truth. For Hildebrand, we are primarily and inevitably receptive beings, and we cannot act before receiving. We must be given an object before we can act. In a way not without parallels to Levinas, Hildebrand implicitly finds in this fact about our very nature as persons a testimony to the fact that we are creatures.<sup>151</sup> We are free and active beings, capable of free will and reason, yes, but only after receiving what is true and, as we shall see, what is good, from the world in Chapter Two, and, ultimately, for Hildebrand, from its Maker.

Much of the Western philosophical tradition nevertheless gives activity pride of place in what it means to be a person. By making the personal subject the one who constitutes experience, even in a passive *Sinngebung*, transcendental idealism reaffirms this priority of activity to receptivity. It at least posits a co-dependence of one on the other so that receptivity to objects always involves at least the activity and achievement of passive *Sinngebung*.

Even Scheler, by no means a transcendental idealist in either Kant’s or Husserl’s sense of the term, prioritizes activity over receptivity, insofar as for Scheler the person is no more than the

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<sup>148</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 93.

<sup>149</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand, “Reinach as a Philosophical Personality,” xxi.

<sup>151</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 89. I discuss this below at [5.4.2: The Constitutive Fundamental Moral Attitudes](#), pp. 281–283.

center of acts.<sup>152</sup> Even though Scheler admits our receptivity to values and their essences, for him receptivity is contained in the activity of feeling-acts, preferring-acts, loving-acts, etc.<sup>153</sup> These acts in turn are partly conditioned by human drives (e.g., thirst) which situate objects within a value-laden milieu. Only from such a milieu can we pick out objects to cognize and will.<sup>154</sup> Thus, for Scheler, activity precedes receptivity.

By contrast, Hildebrand reverses this priority. At the very origin of knowledge, taking-cognizance, the only activity is the “spiritual going-with,” which is itself contained in and is a part of a receptivity that is otherwise prior to all activity. The “going-with” serves only to enact that receptivity. A further look at the differences between Scheler and Hildebrand’s view of the person will be taken up in Chapter Three.<sup>155</sup>

By placing receptivity at the center of consciousness, Hildebrand not only reverses the priority of activity to receptivity for knowing, but also for the human person as a whole. For in asserting *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*, Hildebrand is claiming that the activity of the will, of freedom, must be subsequent to the pure receptivity of cognition.<sup>156</sup> Consciousness of an object must precede its being willed. Indeed, the highest activities of the person for Hildebrand are precisely *responses*, most notably responses to values.<sup>157</sup> The vocation of the human person comes into focus as “dialogue between the person and being.”<sup>158</sup> One first “listens to the voice of being” in the silence of acts of consciousness-of and then one gives a response of one’s own.<sup>159</sup> As we

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<sup>152</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 370–386.

<sup>153</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 70.

<sup>154</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 133–159. I discuss this in detail below at [3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>155</sup> See below at [3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>156</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>157</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 207.

<sup>158</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 207.

<sup>159</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 3. It is striking how close Hildebrand seems to echo Heidegger and his notion of *Gelassenheit* here, despite the fact that Hildebrand probably did not read much of Heidegger. Despite vast differences between the

will see in subsequent chapters, the voluntarism we find in Kant and in Husserl is untenable for Hildebrand. Freedom could not be an autonomy but can only exist with some measure of receiving what is to be willed from outside of itself. This entails that freedom necessarily involves openness to reality, to what is other than itself, in order to be freedom in the first place.

As we turn in the next chapter from Hildebrand's general epistemology to his ethical epistemology of values, the full implications of this receptivity will become clear. For Hildebrand, values are part and parcel of objectivity. Hildebrand's epistemological realism fundamentally opens the door to a thoroughgoing ethical realism, one where values are no less real and no less given in an intentional relationship of taking-cognizance than their bearers. This in turn means that "respect" as much as "real" will be found to be not only included in but required by the Principle of All Principles for Hildebrand. The very freedom that philosophy brings will have to be one that is always already a moral freedom, a reception of and submission to value. To this we now turn.

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two thinkers, they drew similar conclusions from the general spirit of Husserl's phenomenology as an openness to Being. A comparison between Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and Hildebrand's phenomenology is one which, however, would not be germane to the present dissertation. For Heidegger on *Gelassenheit* see Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* Trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1969).

## CHAPTER 2: THE ROLE OF REVERENCE IN PHENOMENOLOGY

### 2.1: Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter looked to Hildebrand's general epistemology, here we turn to his ethical epistemology, specifically how we apprehend things as good and as valuable. Perhaps one of the more surprising features of Hildebrand's philosophy is his claim that the fundamental moral attitude (*sittliche Grundhaltung*) of reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) is essential not just to the moral life but to the philosophical life as well.<sup>1</sup> For Hildebrand, the phenomenological method is far from implying a neutral objectivity, where values are bracketed to allow the things themselves to appear in a phenomenological *epochē*, as Husserl sometimes holds.<sup>2</sup> Instead, reverence for value is the very condition of objectivity for Hildebrand

Husserl in *Ideas II* holds that values are not initially perceived as objects in an affective axiological attitude (*Einstellung*) of "delighting abandon and surrender," and it is only a subsequent theoretical attitude that makes values objective and thematic for consciousness.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, for Hildebrand values, with their demands, are given as intentional objects in intuition precisely in a reverent "surrender" to them. If one is unwilling to be moved by values, and to give them the proper value-responses, one will not be able to see the world as it objectively is, a world of value.

To make this case, in the following section I introduce Hildebrand's phenomenology of "importance" (*Bedeutsamkeit oder Wichtigkeit*, which could also be translated as "significance"). Particularly crucial is Hildebrand's distinguishing three

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 198. See also Hildebrand "Reverence," in *AL*, 3–8.

<sup>2</sup> Husserl, HUA III, §56, 37; *Ideas I*, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Husserl, HUA VI, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10.

irreducible categories of importance: 1) what is important-in-itself (*Wichtigkeit an sich*), especially value (*Wert*), 2) what he calls “the merely subjectively satisfying” (*Wichtigkeit für mich* in *Die Idee*; *das bloß subjektiv Befriedigende* in the German translation of *Ethics*), and 3) the objective good for a person (*das objektive Gut für die Person*).<sup>4</sup> Importance is the characteristic of an object that allows it to motivate either the center of affectivity, which he terms “the heart” (*Herz*), or the center of volition, the will (*Wille*) to respond, in contrast to a neutral object that cannot motivate a response of the will or the heart.<sup>5</sup> In the second section, I explore what importance is and how it is tied to its object. In the third, I explain how value is given on the side of the object in not only cognition, but also in feeling and in basic moral attitudes (*sittliche Grundhaltungen*). In the third section, I show how Hildebrand’s reverence combines elements of Husserl’s theoretical and axiological attitudes.<sup>6</sup> The penultimate section will note how Hildebrand’s conception of philosophy parallels certain insights on the priority of receptivity to activity in the philosophy of Levinas. I will argue that, for the Hildebrandian, ethics will be found to be not just a subset of philosophy but rather at one with phenomenology itself. Thus, in the last section, I will show that an ethical attitude, reverence, is essential to the very freedom and autonomy of philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2: The Phenomenology and Ontology of Importance

We have in Chapter One reviewed the main, general epistemological and phenomenological reasons for Hildebrand’s rejection of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. Yet further reasons can be found in Hildebrand’s phenomenology of importance and

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<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 168–177; *Ethics*, 36–53; *Ethik*, 39–58.

<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 26; *Ethik*, 212–214.

<sup>6</sup> Husserl, HUA VI, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 1–9.

values. Hildebrand's rejection of transcendental idealism is crucial to understanding his notion of importance and especially value. For Hildebrand, a value, such as the life of an endangered person, stands "without any relation to one's own person (*ohne jeglichen Bezug auf die eigene Person*)."<sup>8</sup> The term "value" implies a relation to a possible person motivated by the value, but the motivation comes from the value in itself. I would argue that this means values are in no way constituted as important by the subject, even if the bearer of value is so constituted (e.g., the beauty found in the blue of distant mountains is not constituted even though the blue is constituted by our human sensory makeup). Thus, it is crucial to investigate the nature of importance, with a particular focus on value. I do this below by first investigating the different types of importance in the first subsection. I then investigate how such importance inheres in beings in the second subsection. The next section deals with how values are given to us.

### **2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance**

Hildebrand terms the ability to motivate either a volitional or affective response to an object as good or evil "importance," as opposed to mere indifference or neutrality.<sup>9</sup> Objects with importance stand out to one; they have some kind of salience. They appear as either good (*bonum*) or evil (*malum*) in some way, having either a positive or negative importance.<sup>10</sup> Lacking this salience, a being is purely "neutral" and is unable to motivate an affective or volitional response. If we ask a person why he is in despair, and he answers "because three angles of a triangle equal 180 degrees" we would reject this explanation as unintelligible.<sup>11</sup> Such a response simply cannot be motivated by so neutral a being as the Pythagorean

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<sup>8</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 174.

<sup>9</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 25; *Ethik*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 25.

theorem. In all cases, an object's importance issues a "word" (*Wort*) that one can "respond" or "answer" to (*Antwort*).<sup>12</sup>

However, the nature of this word differs greatly depending on the type of importance. One of Hildebrand's most crucial innovations is that he distinguishes three irreducible categories of importance, distinctions which are not found in his phenomenological contemporaries such as Husserl, Scheler, and Hartmann.<sup>13</sup> All of these thinkers held that good and value were essentially coterminous in extension with each other, anything good can be said to have a kind of value (e.g., pleasure value, aesthetic value, and vital value). By contrast, for Hildebrand, values are only a specific kind of good. There are three different and irreducible senses of the word "good," and these three senses cannot be all subsumed under the name "value." I discuss this difference below with regard to Scheler at the end of this section.<sup>14</sup>

In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand distinguishes between importance in itself, which he typically terms "value" (*Wert*), and merely subjective importance for a person.<sup>15</sup> In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand introduces the term "merely subjectively satisfying or dissatisfying" for this second kind of importance.<sup>16</sup> An underserved compliment has this kind of merely subjective importance. It offers an "invitation" (*Einladung* in the German text of *Ethics*) to

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<sup>12</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40; *Ethik*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> For Husserl "good" tends to refer to a practical object of will, whereas "value" refers to axiology. Every object of will must be, in some sense or another, a value. See James G. Hart, "Husserl's Axiology as a Form of Purity of Heart: Reading Husserliana XXVIII," *Philosophy Today* 34, no. 3 (1990): 206–221.

For Hartmann, there can be many conflicting values, each of which imposes an "ought" (*Sollen*) on one, but every good can be considered a value in some sense. For Hildebrand, by contrast, only certain goods are values, and these values do not essentially come into conflict with each other. For Hildebrand a person who is set on willing what value demands will will to realize the highest value. See Nicolai Hartmann, *Moral Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186–200.

<sup>14</sup> See below at [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), pp. 74–76.

<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 168–177; *Ethics*, 36–51.

<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 36–39; *Ethik*, 39.



be appreciated, which one is not bound to accept or reject.<sup>17</sup> If a person gives me a compliment which does not flatter me, it has no positive importance as subjectively satisfying for me. It sinks back into the neutral or even upsets me. When I intuit something as having this kind of merely subjective importance, e.g., a compliment, I realize that my pleasure in the compliment is the *principium*, the principle or cause of the compliment's character as important, and the importance is the *principiatum*, the determined, the effect.<sup>18</sup> In a certain sense, my subjective interest in it enters into its very constitution as important. Willing to eat a cake has the character of a response, which has a centrifugal intentionality of going out toward the object. However, this response to the object as subjectively satisfying, even when it is morally legitimate, always has the character of what I term self-affirmation, though Hildebrand does not use this term. For in responding to the cake I am ultimately acting to satisfy my own subjective desires and will. As a result, I would argue that responses to the merely subjectively satisfying or dissatisfying have a limited transcendence in that the response ultimately returns back to the self.

By contrast when I am exposed to a value, e.g., a noble act of forgiveness, I am conscious that this value *ought* to be (*Seinsollen*).<sup>19</sup> One, in general, ought to be kind. The importance I recognize in it is immediately recognized as independent of my knowledge of it or of my stance toward it. This character of being independent from relation to me is given in intuition; I grasp the value as intrinsically important. Second, values, when given to us, issue a “call” (translated as *Fordern* in *Ethik*, which itself could also be translated as “demand”) or “word” (*Wort*) to the subject to give a proper valuepresponse (*gebührende*

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<sup>17</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 44; *Ethik*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 64–66.

*Wertantwort*) that, even if not morally obligatory, “ought” or “is due” (*Sollen*) to be given to the value.<sup>20</sup> A “due relation” (*Beziehung des Gebührens*) obtains between my response and the value. Not only should the value of this beautiful sunset exist and it makes the world better by its existence (the *Seinsollen* of the sunset), but it demands that a proper response from me to it should exist as well (the due-relation). Upon receiving this call, one is bound to give the proper response, and one can be faulted for not doing so.<sup>21</sup> The intrinsic importance of the act of forgiveness is given as the *principium* and my response of joy toward it is the *principiatum*.<sup>22</sup>

Here, a full transcendence beyond the subject occurs. “In every value-response our attitude has the character of self-donation (*Hingabecharakter*).”<sup>23</sup> *Hingabe* literally means “giving to” with the implication that one gives a response to the object from oneself as a person.<sup>24</sup> In this literal sense, *Hingabe* is found in every response to importance in all three categories, and this will be crucial in the following chapters.<sup>25</sup> However, in ordinary German *Hingabe* typically means “surrender,” “dedication,” “abandon,” or “devotion.” For Hildebrand, this term is sometimes used in a negative sense of a surrender to an evil passion.<sup>26</sup> However, for Hildebrand, particularly in his *Ethics* and his 1971 *Das Wesen der Liebe* (*The Nature of Love*), *Hingabe* means the specific kind of surrender to a value which

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<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 18 “Due Relation,” 255–267; *Ethik*, 18. Kapitel “*Die Beziehung des Gebührens*,” 255–266.

<sup>21</sup> This fault is not necessarily a moral fault or even one I can be blamed for. Upon seeing a beautiful scene, through no voluntary fault of my own, I am not enthused by it. I recognize I should be enthused, that this failure to be enthused is a failure to give a proper response and in that sense a fault. But I am not culpable for this fault nor, even if I were culpable somehow, would it be a moral fault.

<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 225; *Ethik*, 225.

<sup>24</sup> Special thanks to Michaela Reißlandt for pointing out this literal sense of *Hingabe* as “giving to” to me.

<sup>25</sup> See [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 165–174.

<sup>26</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 494.

is “self-donation” or “commitment.”<sup>27</sup> Self-donation involves not only going out to the object in a response, but also leaving behind merely subjective preferences and inclinations to give oneself to the value as one ought to.<sup>28</sup>

Up until his last work, *Moralia*, published posthumously in 1980, Hildebrand tended to identify value (*Wert*) with the important-in-itself (*Wichtig an sich*).<sup>29</sup> However, expressly in *Moralia* he came to see that value is just one type of intrinsic importance.<sup>30</sup> Further, he came to realize that not all moral acts could be reduced to the value-response.<sup>31</sup> To give a brief example, promising something trivial, e.g., to return a baseball to a neighbor, makes it morally relevant and morally obligatory, and therefore good-and-important-in-itself, without the content of the promise necessarily having a morally relevant value of its own. In contrast to the bare, formal importance-in-itself of the content of a trivial promise, all values proper have certain material, qualitative richness, i.e., the “inner fire of values” (*inneres Feuer der Werte*), and their “metaphysical beauty” (*metaphysische Schönheit*).<sup>32</sup> In his *Ästhetik I*, first published in German in 1977, Hildebrand notes that all values have a kind of qualitative “metaphysical beauty” distinct from the beauty of sights and sounds, e.g., the physically ugly Socrates possessed a moral beauty.<sup>33</sup> This metaphysical beauty is described by Hildebrand as a “splendor” and an

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<sup>27</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Das Wesen der Liebe*, 83, 372.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 225.

<sup>29</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 42, 51–53, 171.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 42, 51–53, 171.

<sup>31</sup> See [5.3.3: The Other Sources of Morality](#), pp. 258–264.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 51–53, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ästhetik Teil I*, Vol 5 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977), 92–95; English Translation: *Aesthetics: Volume I*, ed. John Crosby, trans. Brian McNeil (Steubenville, Hildebrand Press, 2016), 87–89. A second, incomplete volume was posthumously published in German in 1984. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ästhetik Teil II*, Vol. 6 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984); English Translation *Aesthetics: Volume II*, trans. Brian McNeil, John F. Crosby, John Henry Crosby, ed. John F. Crosby and John Henry Crosby. (Steubenville, Hildebrand Press, 2019). Henceforth *Aesthetics I* and *Aesthetics II*.

“irradiation” of the moral value.<sup>34</sup> This is because the metaphysical beauty of a value is itself a qualitative value, albeit one tied inextricably to the primary value. Just as value calls for a proper response, beauty specifically calls to our happiness: “Every beauty is *delectabile*, something delightful... The beautiful calls us to apprehend it, to be happy in it, to take delight in it.”<sup>35</sup> However, it is crucial that metaphysical beauty is not isolated at the theme of the moral-response. If it were isolated as the primary theme of the response, that would result in an aestheticism that divorces the beauty from its basis in the primary value, but it is and is supposed to be rather the “face” and “appearance” of the moral value.<sup>36</sup>

As early as *Die Idee*, Hildebrand makes a key distinction between qualitative moral values proper (*sittliche Werte*), such as justice or generosity, and morally relevant values (*sittliche bedeutsame Werte*), which are values that take on moral relevance only in a specific situation.<sup>37</sup> The beauty of this painting or the ontological value of this person as a human being having dignity are originally non-moral values per se, but this beauty or this person takes on moral relevance if I am called to save them from the Nazis. Thus, the “oughtness” of values is not necessarily a moral oughtness, but it can be one.

By the 1930s, Hildebrand had discovered a third irreducible category of importance: the objective good for a person (*objektive Gut für die Person*).<sup>38</sup> This third

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<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 85–87.

<sup>35</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 85. The call to delight in and be made happy by all values will become important later when I discuss how the happiness value can give one energy and strength to perform moral tasks. See [6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom](#), pp. 315–325.

<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 182ff. These morally relevant values can come in four distinct types: ontological values (such as the dignity of all human persons), qualitative values (such as beauty, justice considered in itself), technical values (such as strength of will, which could be used for good or evil), and finally the general and very thin value all being has in virtue of being “autonomous” in standing out from nothingness, which is violated in every lie. See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 135–154; *GI*, 55–59.

<sup>38</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand. “Die Rolle des ‘objektiven Gutes für die Person’ innerhalb des Sittlichen,” in *Philosophia Perennis: Festschrift für Josef Geyser zum 60. Geburtstag*. ed. Fritz-Joachim von Rintelen (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1930), 973–995.

kind of importance straddles his earlier distinction of merely subjective importance that necessarily refers to a relation to a person and intrinsic objective importance that does not so refer to a relation with a person. Objective goods for a person are those that are in a person's "true interest," all things considered, and can typically be identified with what fulfills a person's nature.<sup>39</sup> A healthy meal has salience for a person primarily in this sense. It is not merely and perhaps not even subjectively satisfying, and while it does possess a value insofar as it allows me to sustain my life, that comes from the fact that it is an objective good for me. John F. Crosby, a direct student of Hildebrand, notes that, in contrast to the "call" of values and "invitation" of the merely subjectively satisfying, as an objective good for me, a healthy meal "addresses me." I experience it "from within" as an objective good specifically for me. It has a "pro" character toward me.<sup>40</sup> In *Moralia*, Hildebrand admits that some objective goods, as objective goods, generate moral obligations.<sup>41</sup> Crosby notes that the objective goodness for me as well as the value of having a moral character imposes a moral obligation on me to cultivate that moral character.<sup>42</sup> In responding to a good as an objectively good for me *qua* objective good for me there is a greater transcendence than in the pursuit of the subjectively satisfying, analogous to "self-donation." I break out of my subjective preferences to pursue what is objectively in my own true interest. I would argue that a return to the self is still present here but in a very different sense from that of the subjectively satisfying or dissatisfying.

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<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 52.

<sup>40</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 99–126.

<sup>42</sup> John F. Crosby, "Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand's Personalism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (September 1, 2017): 699–702.

Maria Fedoryka notes that Hildebrand here is making a crucial distinction between importance as an objective characteristic of the being and importance as the way in which a person approaches a being.<sup>43</sup> I can approach a being of great value, e.g., my spouse, as an object of lust, i.e., from the perspective of the subjectively satisfying. This has profound implications for understanding how freedom operates, as we shall see in the following chapters of the present dissertation.<sup>44</sup> For now, it is crucial to note that importance can and does refer both to the property of the object in virtue of which it attracts or repels one, appears as *bonum* or *malum*, and the stance of the person toward the object as *bonum* or *malum*.

The importance of value is primary in that it, to coin my own term, objectively “validates” the importance of objects bearing the other two kinds of importance as being themselves ultimately important. This does not mean that the other two types of importance depend on value for their existence. Flattery has no value but it is almost inevitably experienced as subjectively satisfying. Rather it means that the call of a value can invalidate the other goods, make them objectively illegitimate as goods. Its fine for me to enjoy a warm bath, until the moment I see a child is drowning in my hot tub. If I ignore the child because the bath is pleasing to me, then while enjoying the bath is “good” in the sense of subjectively satisfying, it is no longer good in any morally legitimate sense of the word. What I am doing (and failing to do) is morally evil. In a second sense of the term, “validate” means a good has some level of ultimate importance by relation to a value. A warm bath may be subjectively satisfying for me and objectively good for my nature. However, until

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<sup>43</sup> Maria Fedoryka, “Is Moral Evil Only Privation? The Ontological Ground and Reality of Moral Evil. In Dialogue with St. Thomas Aquinas” Ph.D. Dissertation. Directed by John F. Crosby. (Liechtenstein, International Academy of Philosophy, 1999), 36.

<sup>44</sup> See esp. [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 165–174.

we have asked what is the value of something being pleasing to me or my nature being fulfilled we have not reached the question of ultimate importance.<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand along with Scheler rejects any eudaimonism that reduces the good to what fulfills a being's nature, rather we must first say that the being is valuable and only then is fulfillment of its nature good.<sup>46</sup> It is because I am a value as an intrinsically precious human person that a warm bath which brings me pleasure, i.e., is subjectively satisfying, and makes me healthy, i.e., is an objective good for me, has its ultimate importance, i.e., has a derivative value from my value as a person.

This should not mislead us into considering these three categories as being placed in a means-end relation of finality with each other.<sup>47</sup> Values are pursued for their own sake and in that sense are “ends in themselves;” but the other two can also be legitimately or illegitimately pursued for their own sake within certain boundaries. Health is primarily pursued as an objective good for one. The fact that health is itself a value and participates in the value of the human person need not become thematic. Nor is it a relationship of grounding. Air is good for a bird not because of its value, but because of the bird's nature. But the fact that air and birds are ultimately good things to have in this world is due to their inherent ontological value as well as the fact that they sustain other valuable creatures, e.g., humans.

In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand criticizes Scheler's failure to recognize these three categories of importance.<sup>48</sup> Scheler calls all forms of importance just different levels of

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<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 56; Scheler, *Formalism*, 344–370; Kant, *MS*, 6:378, 8–9; *MM*, 511. The issue of whether Scheler, Hildebrand, and Kant go too far in their rejection of eudaimonism, to the point of neglecting a legitimate motivating role for the objective good for a person (especially happiness) in moral acts is discussed in Chapter Six. See below at [6.3.2: Eudaimonia and Motivation Reconsidered](#), pp. 325–332.

<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 42–50.

value on his order of love, the *ordo amoris*.<sup>49</sup> Manfred Frings distinguishes five ranks of non-moral values in a hierarchical ordering, the *ordo amoris* (the order of loves): sensible values (e.g., bodily pleasure), values of the useful (e.g., shelter), life-values (e.g., health), spiritual or mental values (*geistige Werte*, e.g., beauty), and values of the holy.<sup>50</sup> Moral evil is realized when one realizes a lower non-moral value over a higher one, and moral goodness is realized when one realizes a higher non-moral value over a lower one. Typically, wrongdoing is due to a deformation of one's subjective *ordo amoris* in comparison to the objective *ordo amoris*. So if Edmund chooses to go to a party with lots of cake rather than visit his sick mother-in-law as he promised, this is because he regards the pleasure value of the cake as being a higher value than the value of the holy found in assisting his mother-in-law.<sup>51</sup> Put differently, he is blind to the true height of the value realized in helping his mother-in-law. According to Hildebrand, however, Edmund does not choose a lower value over a higher one. Rather, Edmund culpably abandons the perspective of value altogether in favor of the subjectively satisfying. Edmund may choose to go to the party rather than see his sick relative because the former is subjectively satisfying. We see here that Hildebrand's and Scheler's different notions of value lead to radically different accounts of *akrasia*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 104–110.

<sup>50</sup> Max Scheler, "Ordo Amoris," in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. David R. Lachterman, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 98–135 Henceforth, *OA*; Manfred S. Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler: The First Comprehensive Guide Based on the Complete Works* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1997), 26–40;

<sup>51</sup> Martin Cajthaml and Vlastimil Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 94. I have changed the name of the character in Cajthaml and Vohánka's example from Peter to Edmund.

<sup>52</sup> This difference in how Hildebrand and Scheler explain *akrasia* will be discussed below at [7.2: Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 343–348.



Peter Spader has attempted to respond on Scheler's behalf to this objection.<sup>53</sup> Spader correctly points out that Hildebrand tends to understand Scheler's notion of a preference of a lower to a higher value as a conscious choice. Instead, for Scheler, preference is most of all an affective act that precedes choice, in which one value is *given*, i.e., affectively apprehended, as higher than another in a person's affective *ordo amoris*. Edmund, on this account, *feels* the pleasure of the party to be a higher value than helping his mother-in-law, and thus acts accordingly. However, Cajthaml and Vorhánka note that Spader's response, while it does clarify Hildebrand's potentially misleading reading of Scheler's notion of preference, misses the real issue of Hildebrand's critique.<sup>54</sup> Again, for Hildebrand, unlike Scheler, Edmund can be fully conscious that helping his mother-in-law is a higher value, but he chooses to abandon the perspective of value altogether and instead adopts the perspective of "what is most subjectively satisfying for me?," where visiting the relative is indeed a lower good than the party. Spader is able, Cajthaml and Vorhánka note, to partially account for such a choice, e.g., a person's habitual desires may pull one to what one knows to be a lower value.<sup>55</sup> But it remains the case that Scheler does not recognize a form of importance, i.e., the subjectively satisfying, which is not reducible to value. Scheler still considers the party to be apprehended as a value, albeit an objectively low-level value, whereas for Hildebrand, the party is apprehended as merely subjectively satisfying and *not*

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<sup>53</sup> Peter H. Spader, "Defending the Central Role of the Heart in Value-Ception," in *Scheler's Ethical Personalism, Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 266–272. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1g2kn9v.15>.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Cajthaml and Vlastimil Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 67.

<sup>55</sup> Spader, "Defending the Central Role of the Heart in Value-Ception," 260; Cajthaml and Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 67–68. Max Scheler, "Problems of Religion; Max Scheler, "Repentance and Rebirth," in *On the Eternal in Man*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2017), 135–166. German Original Version: *Vom Ewigen in Menschen*, vol. 5 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1973). This book appeared in 1921 and is one of the later works of Scheler's Catholic period. Henceforth, *OEM*.

as a value. By making this distinction between value and subjectively satisfying, Hildebrand decisively breaks with Scheler and moves closer to Kant. We have what is objectively good in itself (for Kant following the moral law, for Hildebrand, value) and what is only subjectively good (for Kant the object of the inclinations, for Hildebrand, the merely subjectively satisfying).

### **2.2.2: The Objectivity of Importance and Value**

In order to properly understand how importance, and in particular value, is given to a person, one must understand how importance functions as property of an object. In a careful analysis, Crosby makes a convincing case for considering all forms of importance, even the subjectively satisfying, to have objectivity in the sense of being a “distinct moment” of their objects.<sup>56</sup> Importance cannot exist independently of its bearer, and yet it is distinct from any other properties of the bearer. Suppose I develop a thirst and a glass of water takes on importance from my perspective as subjectively satisfying. This “subjective importance” cannot be identified with being the recipient of interest, nor the power to engender interest.<sup>57</sup> Interest always already presupposes importance as what grounds interest. Even when my desire enters into the constitution of this water as subjectively satisfying, Crosby notes that “the importance, once constituted, however subjective, does not exhaust itself in engendering interest.”<sup>58</sup> I now take interest in the water *in virtue of* its being subjectively satisfying for me. The importance exists not in the person, nor in the relation to the person, but only stands over against the person in the object (*Gegenstand*). Following W. D. Ross, Crosby considers importance to be a “consequential” property of

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<sup>56</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 247.

<sup>57</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 251–253.

<sup>58</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 256.

an object based on but not reducible to various “constitutive” properties of the object.<sup>59</sup> Various causal and constitutive properties of the water enable the water to quench my thirst, yet those properties are not the importance of the being.<sup>60</sup> Finally, importance adds some “content” to the being irreducible to any other property. It is always “more” than the features of the being that ground that importance.<sup>61</sup> For this reason, it is possible to consider a being apart from its importance, e.g., to prescind from the human person his or her dignity. Importance, therefore, is irreducible to any other feature of a being. With G. E. Moore, we must say that importance is just—importance.<sup>62</sup>

Crosby notes our value knowledge often follows from, grows out of, other features of that being that ground the importance. Crosby notes that Max Scheler tends to posit the reverse, that values are known and given in acts of feeling before their bearers are given.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Scheler holds a more radical separation of values from their bearers than a Hildebrandian could accept. Values can directly “grow out of” natural features of a being, e.g., a person has value in virtue of being a rational organism. Thus, Hildebrand is not as opposed to ethical naturalism as Moore is.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> David Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ed. Philip Stratton-Lake, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘Bonum,’” 314, note 93.

<sup>60</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘Bonum,’” 252–253.

<sup>61</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘Bonum,’” 257.

<sup>62</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘Bonum,’” 257.

<sup>63</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘Bonum,’” 311; See Scheler, *Formalism*, 12–15. Scheler’s position is discussed below at [3.3.2: Scheler and vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>64</sup> See his *Situation Ethics* for Hildebrand’s defense of the notion that some acts are intrinsically evil acts, such as euthanasia or contraception, partly on the basis of natural law theory. Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand, *Morality and Situation Ethics* (Steubenville: Hildebrand Press, 2019), 59–60; German Version: Dietrich von Hildebrand, “Wahre Sittlichkeit und Situationsethik,” in *Situationsethik und kleinere Schriften*, Vol 8 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), 65; This work was originally written with Alice Jourdain as *True Morality and its Counterfeits* and then following their marriage it was expanded and republished in 1966 in its current form under the title *True Morality and Situation Ethics*. See Dietrich von Hildebrand and Alice M. Jourdain, *True Morality and Its Counterfeits* (New York: Mckay, 1955); Dietrich

In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand himself considers the issue of whether importance is a “property” of a being in a different sense from Crosby’s sense of “property.” Is this importance here a “valid title” of a being, i.e., part of its own real, objective meaning, or is there a “split” between “the importance that is an objective property of the being and the importance that is a point of view of our motivation[?]”<sup>65</sup> With value no such split is possible. An act of forgiveness is important because of its very nature. There is an “intelligible link” between a value and its bearer.<sup>66</sup> Crosby notes this link exists because value as a consequential property relates to constitutive properties, e.g., humans being valuable “grows out of” their being free and rational persons.<sup>67</sup> One might be tempted to identify a being’s character as subjectively satisfying with its objective property of being “agreeable,” i.e., its ability to bestow pleasure.<sup>68</sup> However, the “objective significance” and “real importance” of such agreeable goods comes from being low level objective goods for a person.<sup>69</sup> Such objective goodness for a person can claim to be a valid title.<sup>70</sup> The subjectively satisfying cannot make such a claim. I would give my child a cake as that is an agreeable good for her. Yet I would not do so if the cake would food-poison her no matter how agreeable she may find the cake. Further, a thing can be subjectively satisfying in the absence of any real objective positive importance. In *Schadenfreude*, my rival’s suffering becomes subjectively satisfying to me, even though there is no objective positive

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von Hildebrand and Alice von Hildebrand, *True Morality and Situation Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966). Henceforth, *MSE*.

It should be noted that situation or existential ethics by this time was associated with Jean Paul Sartre, and while he is not mentioned by name, Sartre is likely a target of this book.

<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 84.

<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 91.

<sup>67</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 314.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 85.

<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 88.

importance at all in his suffering.<sup>71</sup> Thus, importance as subjectively satisfying is “objective” only in the sense Crosby notes above, existing as a moment of the object but one that I myself constitute in the object.

Values have an objectivity and unity with their bearer that the other two types of importance do not, for values are fully intrinsic to the being. As Crosby puts it, values “grow out of” the being as a kind of “radiance of the being.”<sup>72</sup> In an appendix to Crosby’s article, Josef Seifert notes that speaking of “values” is somewhat misleading in that one might incorrectly suppose a separate and independent reality for values. It is better to speak of “the being insofar as it is precious in itself.”<sup>73</sup> In his own essay “*Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von ‘Sein’*” (“The Different Meanings of Being”), Seifert argues that value is one of three distinct ways a thing can be opposed to nothingness and have “being” (*Sein*): 1) inner unity, meaning, and intelligibility as opposed to nothingness in the sense of the chaotic, 2) having real existence as opposed to nothingness as lacking real existence (e.g., numbers, ideas, imaginings), and 3) being something that ought to be as opposed to neutrality.<sup>74</sup> The third dimension, value, adds a special “weight of being” that a purely neutral being would lack, an “oughtness-to-be” (*Seinsollen*).<sup>75</sup> Crosby notes that this does not mean value is reducible to the notion of being. A being’s knowability is just the being insofar as it is knowable by a possible person, but a thing’s valuableness always adds a certain “content” over and above the features of the being, which would be neutral if we

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<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 86.

<sup>72</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 314.

<sup>73</sup> Josef Seifert, “Appendix to ‘The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’”” trans. John Barger, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* 1 (December 1, 1977): 334.

<sup>74</sup> Josef Seifert, “*Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von ‘Sein’-Dietrich von Hildebrand als Metaphysiker und Martin Heideggers Vorwurf der Seinsvergessenheit*,” in *Wahrheit, Wert, und Sein: Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: J. Habbel, 1970), 316–321.

<sup>75</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 301.

prescind from its value.<sup>76</sup> Value is therefore able to be considered as distinct from the bearer, but in reality it is “the being insofar as it is precious.” Moreover, this content is inexhaustible, with moral values in particular having “unending depth” (*unendliche Tiefe*).<sup>77</sup> One can always come to a fuller and fuller awareness of a value. As we will see below, this means that values can only be given to one in an attitude of reverence.

Thus far, we have been speaking mainly about positive importance, but what about negative importance? Hildebrand, along with Seifert, Crosby, and Fedoryka, break with much of the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition in philosophy to argue that some disvalues, particularly pain or moral evils such as hatred or envy, have their own content irreducible to privation. Such evils cannot be considered to be merely privations or non-being *tout court*.<sup>78</sup> However, the Hildebrandian school does affirm that evil is always “parasitic” on the good in several ways.<sup>79</sup> Most notably, a disvalue’s unworthiness-to-be always depends not only on the qualitative badness of the disvalue alone but also on the positive value that

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<sup>76</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 303–305.

<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 471.

<sup>78</sup> I should note that I do not, in fact, agree with Hildebrand and his students on this metaphysical point. Currently, I do think it is possible to defend the notion of that all evils are non-being. However, this metaphysical issue will not be addressed in the present dissertation. The closest I come is when I will argue that an evil will lack a certain kind of objectification when it chooses the subjectively satisfying over what is valuable. However, I will be arguing on this point about the human will on purely phenomenological grounds that do not, in themselves, rule one way or another about the metaphysical nature of evil. Developing from this moral phenomenology a metaphysics of moral evil is a task I reserve for a future work.

See Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 91–94; John F. Crosby, “Is All Evil Really Only Privation?,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 75 (2002): 197–209, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpapro20017517>; Josef Seifert, “Essence and Existence: A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of ‘Phenomenological Realism,’ and a Critical Investigation of ‘Existential Thomism’ Part 2,” *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1977): 394–359.

For opposing views defending that evil is non-being, see Marcus Otte, “The Metaphysics of Moral Values and Moral Beauty,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 6, no. 2 (October 1, 2016): 44–61, <https://doi.org/10.1353/qud.2016.0003>; Patrick Lee, “Evil as Such is a Privation: A Reply to John Crosby,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (August 1, 2007): 469–488, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq200781324>.

<sup>79</sup> Crosby, “Is All Evil Really Only Privation?,” 209; Seifert, “Essence and Existence,” 442–444.

is violated.<sup>80</sup> A murder's unworthiness-to-be and one's horror at it responds not only to the act of murder's own evil but also to the violated life and dignity of the murdered person. In a similar way, the objective evil for a person always refers to that person's true interest and good. Thus, with regard to disvalues and objective evils for one, one's response of aversion to them always includes the corresponding good, at least implicitly. In the next chapter, however, I will argue that, in the realm of the subjectively satisfying, negative importance can dominate positive importance; so that what is apprehended as "good" is so solely because it is "not evil."<sup>81</sup>

### **2.3: The Givenness of Value**

It is clear that knowledge of values must be given in conjunction with and in some cases founded upon knowledge of their bearers. The first subsection deals with how values can be given not only in cognition but also in a supplemental way through feeling.<sup>82</sup> However, Hildebrand also claims that without a certain basic moral stance (*sittliche Grundstellung*), one will not be open to taking-cognizance of values.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, in the second subsection, we will examine how precisely values are given in the basic stance. This section will also discuss his crucial distinction between basic stances (*Grundstellungen*) and basic attitudes (*Grundhaltungen*).<sup>84</sup>

#### **2.3.1: The Intuitive Givenness of Values**

As seen in the last chapter, all knowledge ultimately rests on taking-cognizance, and thus knowledge of values must be traced back to a special taking-cognizance of values

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<sup>80</sup> Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of 'Bonum,'" 324, note to page 288.

<sup>81</sup> See below at [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 165–174.

<sup>82</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 467–473.

<sup>83</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 520.

<sup>84</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 467.

(*Wertnahme*). In this taking-cognizance of value (*Wertnahme*) one recognizes the call to give a proper response, coupled with the recognition that one ought to be affected by the value.<sup>85</sup> In *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand distinguishes two types of intuitive grasping of values (*intuitives Werterfassen*): the cognitive “seeing of values” (*Wertsehen*) and the feeling of values (*Wertfühlen*).<sup>86</sup> *Wertsehen* is a solely cognitive form of grasping of values. I can cognitively see the beauty of this melody and even know that I ought to be moved by it, yet I find I am not so moved. I remain cold. *Wertfühlen* is an affective givenness of values, but it contains and depends on a cognitive *Wertsehen*. *Wertfühlen* gives more of the depth of a value. Hildebrand compares the difference between *Wertsehen* to *Wertfühlen* as being like the difference between seeing a color and feeling pain.<sup>87</sup>

Hildebrand finds himself at odds with nearly all of his phenomenological contemporaries, including Husserl, Stein, and especially Scheler, in that he holds that values are not primarily apprehended by feelings but rather in cognition. Scheler holds that values are intuited in acts of feeling (*Wertfühlen, Gefühl*), which are receptive to these values.<sup>88</sup> Hildebrand notes in *Aesthetics I* “When Max Scheler speaks of a feeling of value (*Wertfühlen*) he clearly means a special kind of consciousness-of, not a feeling that occurs in me as something which exists as part of my conscious being.”<sup>89</sup> Yet for Hildebrand, all cases of consciousness-of some object are properly cognitive acts rather than affective acts.<sup>90</sup> This, as we will see throughout this dissertation, is a crucial difference between them, as Scheler’s conception of value apprehension leads to a number of positions

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<sup>85</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 467.

<sup>86</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471.

<sup>87</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471.

<sup>88</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 60–65.

<sup>89</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics*, 23.

<sup>90</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 242.



regarding the will that Hildebrand, because of his own different position on value apprehension, cannot accept.<sup>91</sup>

Kevin Mulligan holds that Hildebrand came to abandon the notion of affective intuition of value in *Wertfühlen* found in *Sittlichkeit*. According to Mulligan, Hildebrand replaced it with the notion of non-intuitive “being-affected” (*Affiziertwerden*) by value in his later works such as his *Ethics* and his major work on affectivity *The Heart*, which was published in English in 1965.<sup>92</sup> There, Hildebrand even states “affective responses always include the cooperation of the intellect [i.e., cognition] with the heart...again it is a cognitive act in which we grasp the value.”<sup>93</sup> Mulligan interprets Hildebrand as saying the only way in which we can apprehend values, the only way they can come to givenness for us, is through cognition and not affectivity. Mulligan suspects that Hildebrand came to recognize that affective states could not be epistemic as they have valence (i.e., are either positive or negative). Further, by replacing his initial concept of *Wertfühlen* to *Affiziertwerden* Mulligan holds Hildebrand came to see such states as what Mulligan calls “primitive responses” to value rather than an intuitive givenness of value.<sup>94</sup> If this were so, since responses and reactions have a centrifugal intentionality from the person to the object, they could not receive a value but only respond to it.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See below at [3.3.2: Scheler and vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>92</sup> Kevin Mulligan, “On Being Struck by Values-Exclamations, Motivations, and Vocations,” in *Leben mit Gefühlen: Emotionen, Werte und ihre Kritik*, ed. Barbara Merker (Paderborn: Mentis, 2009), 155. Mulligan for his part wishes to defend the notion that values are apprehended in affective feelings and he takes Hildebrand to be an opponent on this front.

See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 219; Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007). This work was initially published as *The Sacred Heart* in 1965 and contains an initial phenomenological section outlining Hildebrand’s mature conception of affectivity and then a second section which applies it to a devotional to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and an analysis of the role of the heart in the Christian life. Henceforth, *HE*.

<sup>93</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 219.

<sup>94</sup> Mulligan, “On Being Struck by Values-Exclamations, Motivations, and Vocations,” 155.

<sup>95</sup> Mulligan, “On Being Struck by Values-Exclamations, Motivations, and Vocations,” 155.

However, I do not think that Hildebrand neglects the role of feelings in value apprehension, but rather that he recognizes a cognitive component *included* within any act of affective value apprehension. I argue that for Hildebrand, being-affected and *Wertfühlen* are synonymous, but he switched to speaking only of the former precisely because it avoids any confusion of feeling of values with a centrifugal reaction or response. To consider being-affected by values a “primitive response,” as Mulligan suspects Hildebrand does, is actually mistaking the type of intentionality that being-affected/*Wertfühlen* has for Hildebrand. To feel values (*Wertfühlen*) involves taking-cognizance of them. It contains an additional affective *Gehalt* that has a receptive centripetal rather than a responsive centrifugal intentionality. The feeling, so to speak, wraps around this cognitive act. Notably, many values call for us to be affected by them, delighted by them, and not just to cognitively grasp them or respond to them with either affective or volitional responses. In essence, for Hildebrand, feeling values is an apprehension which is at the same time both cognitive and affective in nature.

Moreover, the affective dimension of this feeling plays a role in the givenness of the value.<sup>96</sup> There is a greater givenness of a sharp object in feeling pain as it penetrates my skin versus merely seeing it. Similarly, there is a depth (*Tiefe*) of givenness of values which only feelings can supply. Conversely, there is a remoteness to seeing values versus feeling them. Hildebrand speaks of how a morally struggling person can see the value of a virtue, his example being purity. He can grasp its “value-nature” (*Wertnatur*), he knows that this virtue is good in itself and that he ought to strive for it. This is an intuitive grasping of the value, but it gives him only a mere knowing (*Erkennen oder Wissen*) of the value.

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<sup>96</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471.

This morally struggling person is unable to feel the value, and as a result he cannot grasp its depth.<sup>97</sup> He feels “cold,” he fails to have a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of the value.<sup>98</sup> By contrast, the saint, who has realized this virtue, can feel the value. The saint alone really experiences the value in the sense of *erleben*, living it. He knows (*kennt*) the value in a new way, *Kennen* rather than *Wissen* or *Erkennen*. The saint knows the depth of the value, reaching all the way to God. Nonetheless, Hildebrand does not abandon the cognitivist position he outlined in *Die Idee*. Taking-cognizance of values is always necessary for value apprehension, and this taking-cognizance, even if accompanied by no feeling, is a genuine and complete, if imperfect, intuitive grasping of the value.

Hildebrand’s position on value apprehension can be better understood by comparison and contrast with Edith Stein’s outline of her own position on value apprehension, which is found in her discussion of affective acts in her *Beiträge*.<sup>99</sup> Stein’s *Beiträge* was published in the same issue of the *Jahrbuch* as Hildebrand’s *Sittlichkeit*, and so she was only aware of Hildebrand’s seemingly radically cognitivist view presented in *Die Idee* and not of his further development of that view in *Sittlichkeit*. She notes that “under the heading of ‘feel’ or ‘feeling’ two different things are combined;” namely, the acts whereby “we are confronted with value, with objects as value endowed,” and second, “apart from that, the attitudes the values evoke in us.”<sup>100</sup> Feelings involve both value-apprehensions and responses to those values. She claims “it holds true of affective

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<sup>97</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471.

<sup>98</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–476.

<sup>99</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 141–149; *PPH*, 157–165. Stein makes only a passing reference to Hildebrand in a footnote (See Stein, *PPH*, 158ff). Her footnote explains that her term “value” encompasses both intrinsic and subjective importance, in contrast to Hildebrand’s restriction of the term “value” to intrinsic importance, which she admits is crucial for ethics but not for her own question of how value (Hildebrand would say “importance”) is given in affective acts. However, having read both works, it is clear that Stein has Hildebrand’s *Die Idee* in mind throughout this passage on affective acts.

<sup>100</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 142; *PPH*, 159.

acts...that they are of a founded nature, that they are stance-takings (*Stellungnahmen*) toward an allegedly factual material, that they are ‘reactions’ (*Reaktionen*).”<sup>101</sup> Moreover, taking the example of feeling gladness after seeing something beautiful, she states, “the gladness itself, for its part, contains hyletic components, not only extra-egoic (*ichfremde*) but egoic (*ichliche*) content (*Gehalte*).”<sup>102</sup> Implicitly referring to *Die Idee*, Stein asks rhetorically, “What gives us the right to designate the grasping of the value itself as a feel? Doesn’t whatever has to do with feelings lie within the response-reaction?”<sup>103</sup>

Stein answers that a value apprehension of the beauty without the *Gehalt* of joy in the beauty would give one the value but it would only give one an empty grasp of it. You can, Stein notes, have an object in front of you and “catch a glimpse of its value” without being “filled up” by it, i.e., having the proper responsive *Gehalt*.<sup>104</sup> In that case, “The missing contents are represented by empty places which...bear within themselves an intention toward those contents and a ‘tendency’ toward fulfillment by them.”<sup>105</sup> In contrast to Hildebrand’s *Sittlichkeit*, Stein denies that this cold, affectively dry grasp of a value can be called an intuition of the value, though in many other respects she comes very close to Hildebrand’s position outlined in *Sittlichkeit*.<sup>106</sup> It is worth quoting her at length:

The egoic contents (*Gehalte*) that belong to a complete value experience (*Werterleben*) are not available here...The missing contents (*Gehalte*) are represented by empty places, which are marked off as place holders for the specific

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<sup>101</sup> Stein, *Beiträge* 142; *PPH*, 157.

<sup>102</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 142; *PPH*, 158. I have modified Baseheart and Sawicki’s translation from “extra-egoic and egoic ones” to “extra-egoic and egoic content” to emphasize the crucial role *Gehalt* plays in Stein’s conception of value apprehension.

<sup>103</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 144; *PPH*, 159.

<sup>104</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 146; *PPH*, 162.

<sup>105</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 146; *PPH*, 162.

<sup>106</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 146; *PPH*, 162.

contents (*Gehalte*), bear within themselves an intention toward those contents and a ‘tendency’ toward fulfillment by them, and, by virtue of this place holding, can serve as the basis of the corresponding value-intention. Analogously to the empty presentation of a thing, this value-intention isn’t presented as a pure X, but rather with all of its qualities (except that those qualities aren’t in your face intuitively but are presented precisely empty).<sup>107</sup>

The egoic *Gehalt* is “the material on the basis of which values come to givenness for us.”<sup>108</sup> “Thus, the completely fulfilled value perception (*Wertnehmen*) is always a feel in which the value-intention and the response reaction are united.”<sup>109</sup> Stein argues this is because the beauty itself demands this unification of intention and response. It demands a value-grasping and affective attitude (*Gemütsstellungnahme*).<sup>110</sup>

Beauty...insists that I inwardly open myself up to it...And for as long as this inner contact is not as effected, for as long as I withhold the response beauty requires, beauty doesn’t entirely divulge itself to me. The intention inhering in the mere information remains unfulfilled.<sup>111</sup>

Stein is, in effect, implying that Hildebrand’s own philosophy would require that values are given primarily in affective acts (the gladness) rather than solely in taking cognizance. For Stein, much like Hildebrand, feeling, apprehension of value, and cognition of the bearer of the value are so united that neither the bearer nor the value are given separately from each other. Yet for Stein the thematicity of the gladness is in tension with

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<sup>107</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 146; *PPH*, 162.

<sup>108</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 145; *PPH*, 160.

<sup>109</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 143; *PPH*, 159.

<sup>110</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 146; *PPH*, 163.

<sup>111</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 143; *PPH*, 159.

the thematicity of the value; if I focus on and surrender myself to the value, the gladness fades, but if I focus on the gladness, the value fades. One's orientation toward the world will determine what one can grasp in the world. Stein writes "when oriented theoretically, we see mere things. When oriented axiologically, we see values."<sup>112</sup> If I focus on the beauty of this poem and feel its beauty, enthusiasm for it wells up in me. If instead I focus on the poem as an object of a study of philosophical theoretical aesthetics, I will not be so moved.

As we will see in the following subsection, Stein in fact anticipates Hildebrand's own realization in *Sittlichkeit* that one must already respond to values in the proper manner in order to be open to their own disclosure. Stein here tries to mediate a path between Husserl and the direct realism of Hildebrand and Reinach.<sup>113</sup> Whereas Husserl places cognition of things before the apprehension of values, for Stein, like Hildebrand, values are given with their bearer in a unified experience of value feeling. Similar to Hildebrand, to fully grasp the value, the proper feelings and attitude must be present, there must be an openness to what the value has to disclose. Like Hildebrand, Stein allows for a kind of value-apprehension when the proper feelings are not present. However, unlike Hildebrand, she would hesitate to call this cold value apprehension an "intuition." Stein retains Husserl's language of values as constituted, a constitution for which feelings are ultimately necessary, and the language of intention and fulfillment; both of which Hildebrand eschews. While Stein and Hildebrand are fundamentally speaking of the same experience, Hildebrand takes a more direct realist approach, the value can be directly intuited in an object-like manner, even in the absence of the proper feelings. Indeed, for Hildebrand,

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<sup>112</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 145; *PPH*, 161; Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 7; *Ideas II*, §4, 10.

<sup>113</sup> Ingrid Vendrell Ferran, "Intentionality, Value-Disclosure, and Constitution: Stein's Model." In *D Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*. Ed. Dermot Moran and Elisa Magri. (Dordchet: Springer, 2017), 80–85.

consciousness-of is just the relation of a subject who is void and the content (*Inhalt*) of the relation is on the object side. Seeing a value is merely a remote and deficient, but still intuitive, mode of a value being given to me when compared to a feeling of a value.

This should not be taken to mean that Hildebrand denies values are given in feelings, as Mulligan and perhaps implicitly Stein herself read Hildebrand to say. Affective content (*Gehalt*) can wrap around this cognitive apprehension. This represents a deeper and no less intuitive givenness of values.<sup>114</sup> But, for Hildebrand, the response that opens one to values is located in a basic stance (*Grundstellungnahme*), which is not identical to Stein's particular affective acts (*Gemütsakte*) and affective attitudes (*Gemütsstellungen*).<sup>115</sup> To these basic attitudes we now turn.

### **2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance (*Grundstellung*)**

In his *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand discerns a need to recognize a third, indirect form of givenness of values in relation to what he calls the “basic attitude” (*Grundhaltung*) or “basic stance” (*Grundstellung*) of a person.<sup>116</sup> Echoing Plato's *Republic* Book IV, an interest in a particular good is conditioned and constituted by a most general interest in either value or the subjectively satisfying or dissatisfying, for the particular is contained in the more general *eidos*.<sup>117</sup> A glutton's desire for a cake speaks to a basic concupiscent stance (*Grundstellung*) in favor of the subjectively satisfying. Hildebrand finds three basic stances: pride (*Hochmut*), concupiscence (*Begehrlichkeit*, which could also be translated as “covetousness”), and the reverent, value-responding stance (*Ehrfurcht*). These stances

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<sup>114</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471.

<sup>115</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 141–149; *PPH*, 157–165.

<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 520.

<sup>117</sup> Plato, *Republic*, ed. C.D.C. Reeve, trans. G. M. A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, 2nd Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1992), 114, 437d–438d.

are *Stellungnahmen*, basic position-takings directed toward the world.<sup>118</sup> Briefly, concupiscence refers to *having* subjectively satisfying goods, whereas pride refers to *being* in a subjectively satisfying superior position.<sup>119</sup> By contrast, the reverent stance is open to receiving value and conforming to value.

Given Hildebrand's distinction between value and the subjectively satisfying as distinct points of view for motivation, I argue that the existence of these three stances logically follows. As with any ethics that, like Plato, views ethical objects as standing under more general essences, a desire for a particular object will contain a desire for the more general.<sup>120</sup> My desire to help others testifies to a basic favorable orientation I have toward values. Conversely, my desire to scarf down unhealthy food speaks to a basic orientation in favor of the subjectively satisfying. Thus, there must be at least two ultimate ethical orientations, the two fundamental moral options available to us, which are the pursuit of value or of the subjectively satisfying.<sup>121</sup> This is further underlined by the fact that even if I pursue what is objectively good for me in contradiction to value (e.g., I flee battle to save my life, when I was ordered to stand my ground), I nonetheless ultimately choose a standard that is subjectively satisfying for me over what is valuable. Yet the orientation in favor of the subjectively satisfying must be split. Sometimes it refers to *having* subjectively

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<sup>118</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 520.

<sup>119</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>120</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 437d-438d, 114.

<sup>121</sup> Crosby notes in his introductory study to Hildebrand's *Ethics* that Hildebrand finds himself in agreement with theologians that hold a person's morality is based on a "fundamental option" or choice in favor of the morally good. However, these theologians, unlike Hildebrand, can tend to be situation ethicists willing to excuse a sin so long as one has adopted a fundamental option in favor of the morally good. For Hildebrand, to commit a deliberate wrong is *eo ipso* to abandon, at least for the moment, one's fundamental option in favor of the morally good and adopt in that moment a prideful or concupiscent stance. See John Crosby, "Introductory Study" in *Ethics*, xlv.

Hildebrand's arguments for how in wrongdoing one's basic moral attitude of reverence becomes inoperative will be discussed below at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 189–192.



satisfying goods and other times to *being* in a superior position that is subjectively satisfying to me.<sup>122</sup> The former is concupiscence and the latter is pride. There is a phenomenologically felt difference between them. The pride of Macbeth phenomenologically strikes one as different from the concupiscent lust of Father Karamazov. Thus, one is either open to values or one refuses them, and if they are refused, this is either because one is focused on having subjectively satisfying goods, being in a subjectively satisfying position, or both.

If the morally evil stances dominate one, one is both blind to values and either indifferent or hostile to them.<sup>123</sup> A person completely dominated by concupiscence will have a “blunt,” total moral value blindness; the nature of values and their ability to make demands on a person are entirely foreign to this person. Any attempt to awaken this person to the values will be met with cold indifference.<sup>124</sup> “What is it to me if the score is what you call ‘beautiful,’ I am only interested if it is pleasant.” In the paradigmatic case of pride, satanic pride, one recognizes a kind “metaphysical power” in values that one resents and covets. One seeks to overthrow each value with its opposite, e.g. by calling kindness mere sublimated *ressentiment*.<sup>125</sup> This person only “knows” (“*kennt*” scare quotes in the original German) values without apprehending them in their material nature as values or feeling them.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>123</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 514–520.

<sup>124</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 519.

<sup>125</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 466–68. Hildebrand had already developed this notion of “satanic” pride as early as *Die Idee*. Once it is established that values exist and call on one to give a proper response, the concept of a resentful attitude that seeks to overturn them becomes quite intelligible. See Hildebrand, *DI*, 242. I discuss this type of pride below at [7.4.1: Types and Dimensions of Pride](#), pp. 359–364.

<sup>126</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 418.

This raises a question: how is it possible to have a basic general stance of indifference or hostility to values and also to claim that the very stance itself renders a person blind to value as such? Hildebrand's response is that the basic stances do not, in contrast to more particular position-takings, intend any particular object or value. Rather, they refer to the world as such, the good as such.<sup>127</sup> A *particular* affective response, e.g., of gladness upon reading a beautiful poem, is not necessary to perceive a value, but a general openness to values in one's basic stance is necessary. Here, despite their differences on whether a cognitive apprehension of value can count as an intuition of value or not, Stein and Hildebrand are very much in agreement. I must be open to being moved by values or they will not be disclosed to me. Further, Hildebrand emphasizes the role of volition in being open to value. I must *will* to receive the proper emotions so I can fully experience (*erleben*) the value.

In this basic stance toward the world there is an indirect givenness of the world of values. It is not particular values in their nature as values that are grasped but rather the "location" (*Ort*) of values.<sup>128</sup> In pride or concupiscence the person is directed toward the world as good but only under the aspect of subjectively satisfying. We could say the person is oriented in the direction of values but fundamentally closed to whatever may come from that direction. The concupiscent person is merely indifferent to whatever may come from this direction. Upon seeing a beggar in need of assistance while on the way to eat ice cream, the concupiscent person bluntly ignores the beggar as he would a stone. In pride the person

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<sup>127</sup> In this reference to the world, basic stances are somewhat like Heidegger's basic moods (*Grundstimmung*). See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Revised Edition of the Stambaugh Translation*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Revised edition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

<sup>128</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522. Hildebrand later distinguishes other forms of pride such as pharisaical pride and mere vanity where this war on values is not undertaken but rather one wants to be endowed with values as a means to self-satisfaction. See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 35 "Pride," 468–476.

here recognizes the call to submit to values, but this call in no way appears as a call of goodness but rather as a hateful call to submission to what is other than him or herself. In both cases, the receptivity of taking-cognizance, to say nothing of feeling values, is potentially present, but simply shut closed.

Notably, Hildebrand makes a unique and crucial distinction between mere stances “stances” (*Einstellungen*) of the person, which can be more or less unconscious, with what he calls *Haltungen* (which Alice Jourdain translates as “attitudes” in her approved translation of Hildebrand’s *Sittliche Grundhaltungen* as *Fundamental Moral Attitudes*).<sup>129</sup> A *Haltung* is a stance that is consciously adopted, given a sanction (*Sanktion*).<sup>130</sup> A *Haltung* therefore contains an additional component, what Hildebrand in *Moralia* came to recognize as a conscious *volitional* “basic moral intention” (*sittliche Grundintention*).<sup>131</sup> This is the volitional core of an attitude.

In contrast to pride and concupiscence, the reverent stance must be an attitude (*Haltung*). This is because values of their very nature call for a free and conscious response of the person. If out of a natural, childlike goodness I help a beggar, but I do not recognize that so doing is a moral obligation that *demands* my free and fully conscious affirmation of the beggar in his dignity, my response, while good, is incomplete and imperfect as it does not fully involve me as a free and conscious person. The invitation to my concupiscence to eat a cookie makes no such demand on my will. Freedom is inherently involved in value-responses. The issue of freedom and basic stances will be expressly taken

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<sup>129</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Sittliche Grundhaltungen* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1933); Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Fundamental Moral Attitudes*, trans. Alice Jourdain (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950).

<sup>130</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 550–564.

<sup>131</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 74–76.

up in Chapter Four.<sup>132</sup> For now, it is enough to note that reverence involves a free willingness to accept values. Thus, a basic stance or attitude refers to whether a person is or is not willing to receive values, to be moved by and feel values, and to respond to them in the proper way. The trifold of receive, feel, and respond are what constitutes a person's openness to values. This openness pertains to the heart and will alike.

## **2.4: Reverence in Phenomenology**

With these distinctions in place, it is possible to see how Hildebrand's general epistemology as well as his more specific ethical epistemology enables and indeed requires him to introduce the notion of reverence into phenomenology. I begin by exploring what reverence is for Hildebrand. Then in the second subsection, I show how Hildebrand unifies Husserl's cognitive and axiological attitudes. In the last subsection, I explore how Hildebrand utilizes reverence in his phenomenological method. The next section notes parallels between Hildebrand and Levinas.

### **2.4.1: What is Reverence?**

Hildebrand gives a rich description of the reverent attitude in his eponymous essay "Reverence." This essay was first written in German in 1933, based on a radio talk he gave in 1930, and it is now found in its most recent version in *The Art of Living* translated by Alice von Hildebrand (née Jourdain).<sup>133</sup> For Hildebrand, reverence is first and foremost a response (*Antwort*) not to a particular value but to the world of values as such. Its active character is both affective and volitional in nature, it is a willingness to receive values and freely conform to their demands, and it is a readiness of one's heart to give proper affective

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<sup>132</sup> See below at [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 210–220.

<sup>133</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence" in *AL*, 1–9.

responses. But this activity is the very activity of opening oneself to receptivity. I would argue that reverence is the willing openness of the person to receive values and their demands, including the demand to be moved by values rather than be hard heartedly unmoved. It involves what Husserl and Stein would call an axiological attitude of “delighting abandon and surrender.”<sup>134</sup>

Hildebrand credits Scheler’s “Rehabilitation of Virtue” for the term “reverence” (*Ehrfurcht*).<sup>135</sup> There Scheler’s main focus is the Christian virtues of reverence and humility (*Demut*). *Ehrfurcht*, which literally means “honor” (“*Ehre*”) and “fear” (“*Furcht*”), has the connotation of religious awe or holy fear in ordinary German. It is, for Scheler, primarily an affective attitude. Scheler defines reverence as “the attitude in which one perceives something else beyond what one lacking in reverence does not see and to which he is blind: the mystery of things and their deep value.”<sup>136</sup> Reverence notices “the tender thread by which things extend into the invisible” in relation to God.<sup>137</sup> Without reverence the world of values becomes “two-dimensional,” losing both “perspective” and “horizon.”<sup>138</sup> The translator, Eugene Kelly, defines the “core of reverence” for Scheler as “[the] sense of what surpasses our vision. It has the power to reveal to us the deeper power and value of things.”<sup>139</sup> In Scheler’s words reverence “alone gives us the awareness of the

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<sup>134</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, §4, 10.

<sup>135</sup> Max Scheler, “The Rehabilitation of Virtue,” trans. Eugene Kelly. *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2005): 21–37. Hencefore, *RV*.

Scheler, it should be noted, is heavily influenced by Rudolf’s Otto’s description of the Holy as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* which we can never grasp. Thus, through Scheler, Otto also has an influence on Hildebrand. See Rudolf Otto. *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>136</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 32.

<sup>137</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 33.

<sup>138</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 33.

<sup>139</sup> Eugene Kelly, translator’s abstract, in Scheler, *RV*, 21.

depth and fullness of the world and ourselves.”<sup>140</sup> To the one who is reverent “with a grand *embarras de richesse*, things speak of themselves in ever new ways and disclose ever new aspects of themselves.”<sup>141</sup>

Reverence, for Scheler, is essentially connected to humility, which involves the “assumption that nothing is owed us and everything is a gift.”<sup>142</sup> The essence of humility, for Scheler, is to not focus upon one’s own value, for that leads to a pharisaical pride.<sup>143</sup> Humility, for Scheler, involves a kind of willing to let go of one’s intentions, will, and strivings. Scheler sees reverence and humility as essential to phenomenology. Humility involves a relaxation of effort which is “in the intellectual realm, the way of pure ‘intuition.’”<sup>144</sup> Reverence for Scheler is a “kind of shame that becomes spiritual” in which we recognize that our limited categories of understanding are narrow and particular.<sup>145</sup>

As with Scheler, for Hildebrand values pervade the world and give it an infinite depth that leads up to, in the ultimate analysis, God, though one who does not believe in God can apprehend many, if not all, of these values.<sup>146</sup> Yet for Hildebrand reverence not only grasps the depth of values and their connection to a unified world of values. More importantly, reverence is necessary for there to be any grasping of any values as values in the first place. The person without reverence does not grasp only lower values, or “empt[y] values of their depths,” as Scheler puts it, he or she instead grasps only the subjectively satisfying and is blind to values *tout court*.<sup>147</sup> This difference from Scheler again follows

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<sup>140</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 33.

<sup>141</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 33.

<sup>142</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 28.

<sup>143</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 25; *Formalism*, 27.

<sup>144</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 29.

<sup>145</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 34.

<sup>146</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 14 “God and Values” 169–179.

<sup>147</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 33.

from Hildebrand's crucial distinction between subjectively satisfying and value, which Scheler lacks. Further, for Hildebrand, reverence is not so much a letting go of one's will as a will to "let thy word be done" when confronted with values. It is a will for submission.<sup>148</sup>

Implicitly, Hildebrand connects Scheler's reverence as *Ehrfurcht* with Kant's reverence as *Achtung*.<sup>149</sup> *Achtung* has the connotation of "attention to" and "respect" in ordinary German, and, for Hildebrand, *Ehrfurcht* could be defined as an attitude of attention to and respect for what Hildebrand calls the "autonomy" of beings.<sup>150</sup> In contrast to fantasy, a real being is "autonomous," as Hildebrand puts it, in the sense that it is "independent of the person considering it, it is withdrawn from his arbitrary will," and it is therefore "never a mere means."<sup>151</sup> Second, there is the "autonomy" of the essences of values, which one respects by listening to and accepting the "word" of values. A prideful impertinent person who is a "know it all" and never understands objects "from within" will never realize that there are more things in heaven and earth than dreamt of in his or her philosophy.<sup>152</sup> The concupiscent person who bluntly ignores values and knows things only "from without" is "shortsighted and comes too close to all things, so that he does not give them a chance to reveal their true essence."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> This marks a theme present throughout this dissertation and Hildebrand's works. In general, while Hildebrand greatly appreciates Scheler's concern for the importance of the heart, he implicitly breaks with Scheler by also asserting the importance of free volition, which Scheler consistently tends to depreciate. As I will argue in the next chapter, Hildebrand works to secure the independence of the will from the heart in a way which Scheler precludes. See below at [3.3.2: Scheler and vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>149</sup> See Kant, *G*, 4:402ff, 56. Special thanks to my colleague Michaela Reißlandt for pointing out the differences and deep similarity between *Ehrfurcht* and *Achtung*. Kant in fact does in a few places use the term *Ehrfurcht*, but there is a marked predominance of *Achtung* in his works.

<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 6.

<sup>152</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 4.

<sup>153</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 5.

The reverent person keeps a “reverent distance from the world” that allows objects to “unfold” and give themselves and the “word” of their value in taking-cognizance.<sup>154</sup> Yet the “word” of values is always a call to give a proper value-response and to be affected by the value, if possible. Thus, reverence involves a willingness to “abandon” oneself to values and the call to give a proper value-response, as Hildebrand phrases it, again implicitly referring to Kant, “to be formed by their law.”<sup>155</sup> Because reverence lays at the heart of all value-responses, it is “the mother of all virtues.”<sup>156</sup> It is essential in love, for in love, one gives oneself to the beloved who is precious and valuable not according to one’s own wishes and desires, but rather one’s desires and wishes are for what is good for the beloved.<sup>157</sup> In a similar way reverence is essential to philosophical *eros*; where one conforms to the “laws” of highly intelligible essences, adaequating one’s mind to them, and receiving the delight of contemplation that only such an abandoning surrender can bring.<sup>158</sup>

#### **2.4.2: Reverence as the Unification of the Cognitive and Axiological Attitudes**

Now one is in a position to see how Hildebrand would respond to Husserl’s bracketing of values in the *epochē*. In what follows I will, quite artificially, be using Husserl’s terminology of “objectifying” and “axiological” attitudes and transposing them onto Hildebrand, to allow for a better comparison. These terms are, however, quite foreign to Hildebrand himself for reasons that will soon be apparent.

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<sup>154</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 4.

<sup>155</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 3.

<sup>156</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, “The Role of Reverence in Education,” *Lumen Vitae* IV, no. 4 (1949): 643–644.

<sup>157</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 7.

<sup>158</sup> See above at [1.3: The Material A Priori](#), pp. 32–38.



First, as noted above, Hildebrand sees no need to suppose that the subject constitutes any object unless the object itself is given to one as so constituted, e.g., the subjectively satisfying character of the undeserved compliment, a fantasy, or the blue of mountains. Second, values in their very nature are defined as not constituted by the subject. Rather they stand in full independence of any position-taking of the subject.<sup>159</sup>

The third reason deals with the nature of how values are given to one. In *Ideas II*, values are first apprehended and constituted in a non-objectifying stance toward the object that bears them, e.g., in an attitude of delighting surrender I find a landscape scene beautiful.<sup>160</sup> In this “non-objectifying” stance, the value does not appear to me in any kind of object-like way; that only comes later. In his *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis* (translated by Antony Steinbock as *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*), Husserl claims that prior to all active and passive constitution, soon-to-be objects entice us to notice them by means of their affective “allure” or “stimulus” (*Reiz*).<sup>161</sup> This suggests that values are initially given or at least hinted at by means of this allure.

Yet for particular values, the non-objectifying axiological attitude that apprehends them relies on a prior objectifying stance. “Objectifying” here does not mean becoming an object of explicit knowledge. In that sense of objectifying, Hildebrand and Husserl are in agreement that, after a value is given, only in a separate act of theoretical, cognitive attention does the value become an object of knowledge.<sup>162</sup> Where they differ is in a more

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<sup>159</sup> See above at [2.2: The Phenomenology and Ontology of Importance](#), p. 65.

<sup>160</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10.

<sup>161</sup> Edmund Husserl, HUA XI, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*, ed. Margot Fleischer (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966). English translation: *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. A. J. Steinbock, Softcover reprint of the original 1st ed. 2001 edition (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001), §50, 279. Henceforth *APS*.

Husserl’s claim here sounds similar to Scheler’s that affective apprehension of values as objects precedes seeing things as objects. See Scheler, *Formalism*, 149–159.

<sup>162</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 50; Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10.

basic sense of “objectifying,” which means simply that the object is given in a cognitive intuition in an object-like manner, not solely in feelings. For Husserl, I must first have an objectifying sensory intuition of the landscape before I can find it beautiful, though in another sense the allure of that landscape already drew my attention to it. The difference with Hildebrand is that Husserl does not think the value appears to one as an object unless one takes a separate and distinct objectifying stance, in which the object is constituted as a value-object.<sup>163</sup> As Hart notes in an article on Husserl’s axiology, the early Husserl therefore tended to distinguish sharply between value and being, valuing and knowing.<sup>164</sup> This, I hold, is one of the main reasons why for Husserl the cognitive process of phenomenology requires bracketing values. There is a value neutrality to cognition for Husserl which does not exist for Hildebrand.

For Hildebrand, in contrast to Scheler, Stein, and Husserl, values can be given directly and intuitively in a cognitive act: taking-cognizance. Values are grasped in what Husserl would call an “objectifying,” way immediately in intuition, as part of the “content” (*Inhalt*) of a particular object. In this taking-cognizance of a value, *Wahrnahme* is united in one and same act with a *Wertnahme*. I do not see the sky and then feel its beauty, nor would I be totally deprived of this beauty if I could feel nothing. Instead, in one and the

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<sup>163</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10.

<sup>164</sup> James G. Hart, “Axiology as the Form of Purity of Heart: A Reading *Husserliana* XXVIII,” 207.

Dale Hobbs has noted that, in his later research manuscripts, Husserl moves away from considering value as a kind of object-like entity, seeing them instead as appearing on the horizon of objects in different feeling-acts. Hobbs objects to Scheler’s conception of values as objects, claiming this conception does injustice to the unity of value experience by dividing it into a perception (*Wahrnahme*) of a thing and an affective *Wertnahme* of a value as an object. Under this horizontal model, the value of beauty enters into the perception of, say, Salvador Dalí’s “Persistence of Memory” as being on the horizon of the artwork for Bert, who stands in rapture when confronted by the painting, while Ernie sees it as ugly while he stands in disgust. As I show directly below, Hildebrand comes up with his own unique solution to the problem of the separation of *Wahrnahme* and *Wertnahme*. See Dale Hobbs, “Investigations of Worth: Towards a Phenomenology of Values,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Milwaukee, WI, Marquette University, 2017).

same act I see the beautiful sky, for, to quote Seifert, the value of an object is just the object itself insofar as it is precious.<sup>165</sup> The sky is immediately, even in the absence of feeling, “objectified” for me as a beautiful sky. Hildebrand thereby secures the unity of value experience. Intuition is, for Hildebrand, inherently value-laden. Further, intuition is included in feeling. When, in a reverent attitude I have a feeling of a value (*Wertfühlen*), my attitude of abandon and surrender in no way precludes me from a perception of the value (*Wertsehen*) as an objective characteristic of the object.<sup>166</sup> As noted above feeling value always includes a cognitive seeing of values.

To better understand this difference between Hildebrand and Husserl it is helpful to turn to Hildebrand’s distinction between frontal and lateral consciousness (*frontales Bewußtsein-von und laterales Vollzugbewußtsein-von*) found in his *Aesthetics I*.<sup>167</sup> Frontal consciousness is the object oriented conscious-of something other than the agent. However, one’s own affective states, e.g., joy, are typically given in a lateral consciousness; where they are known “from within”: “When someone falls in love he is indeed totally oriented toward the person with whom he is in love. He has a ‘consciousness of’ this person, but he also learns thereby what being in love means.”<sup>168</sup> For Hildebrand, lateral consciousness can be loosely called knowledge, but the knowledge is never thematic. When one is experiencing joy, one has not yet made joy the subject of knowledge. To do this requires a reflective act where the joy becomes the object of a taking-cognizance, i.e., of frontal

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<sup>165</sup> Seifert, “Appendix to ‘The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’”” trans. John Barger, *Aletheia: An International Journal of Philosophy* 1 (December 1, 1977): 334.

<sup>166</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 550–564.

<sup>167</sup> Hildebrand, *Ästhetik I*, 32–34; *Aesthetics I*, 20–22.

<sup>168</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 21.

consciousness-of. “Naturally it [the joy] ceases at that very moment to be consciously lived,” but it is instead remembered.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, Hildebrand’s position is distinct from Husserl’s notion that the cognitive attitude and axiological attitude are in tension with each other. For Husserl, in an affective apprehending act, the value is not given in an objectifying manner. By contrast, for Hildebrand, the value is given in an objectifying manner in taking-cognizance, which is a cognitive rather than affective act. This taking-cognizance can be co-given with a being-affected by the value. It is not the *value* but only the *response* and *being-affected* that is not given in Husserl’s “objectifying” manner but rather a lateral manner. Thus, for Hildebrand, recognizing the very *objectivity* of the value is in no way inconsistent with “delighting abandon and surrender.” Indeed, the presence of a reverent readiness for delighting abandon and surrender is necessary for the value to appear precisely in an objectified manner. The point of this contrast is that for Hildebrand, unlike Husserl, cognition is not, considered by itself, value-neutral or value-blind. To bracket values is for Hildebrand not necessary to phenomenology, for values are given at the very origin of experience, inextricable from intuition itself. For Hildebrand, any value neutrality, even in the service of the broader purpose of coming to a better understanding of values, is beside the point of phenomenology. Insofar as phenomenology strives to be faithful to intuition, it must be reverent toward value.

### **2.4.3: The Role of Reverence in Phenomenology**

How should the phenomenological attitude be described, in light of the distinctions made above? For Hildebrand, as much as for Husserl, phenomenology is best brought to light by

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<sup>169</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 21.

distinguishing it from the naïve, pre-philosophical attitudes that precede it.<sup>170</sup> For Hildebrand, the theoretical attitude presupposes a prior “naïve” taking-cognizance.<sup>171</sup> Although the subject is “void” and receptive in taking-cognizance, precisely what the subject is open to receiving is determined by the kind of attitude in taking-cognizance.

When I am waiting for a friend, I may see a tree, but neither the object of my taking-cognizance, the tree, nor knowledge of the object is thematic for me.<sup>172</sup> Or perhaps I go out childlike into the woods simply to become acquainted with the trees there. Here, knowledge is thematic but only implicitly.<sup>173</sup> Third, in trying to escape prison, I take-cognizance of the window as a practical means of escape. Here the object (the window) and knowledge (knowledge about the window) are only secondarily thematic, and a practical theme (escaping the room) is the main theme. This “pragmatic attitude” can lead to certain discoveries, but it always leads to a “prejudiced limitation of our knowledge.”<sup>174</sup> Such pragmatic taking-cognizance needs to be distinguished from cases where I take-cognizance of something that both bears a high importance and requires immediate intervention, e.g., seeing a child I must rescue from immediate danger. Here the object, the child, is extremely thematic, and there is no “pragmatic deformation” of the knowledge, but the knowledge itself is thematic only insofar as is it necessary to know how to save the child.<sup>175</sup> In contrast to all of these cases of pre-theoretical taking-cognizance, in theoretical taking-cognizance, knowledge is the explicit theme, though the object is often less thematic.<sup>176</sup> A philologist may devote great attention to the question of whether a trivial phrase in *Beowulf* is

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<sup>170</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 4–11; *Ideas II*, §4, 6–13; Hildebrand, *WP*, 39.

<sup>171</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 50.

<sup>172</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 39.

<sup>173</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 40.

<sup>174</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 42.

<sup>175</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 45.

<sup>176</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 50.

authentic. But in specifically philosophical taking-cognizance, both the object and the knowledge of the object are of great importance and thematic.<sup>177</sup>

Hildebrand has a distinct account of theorization and contemplation vis-à-vis Husserl. For Husserl, theorization can have many meanings. In *Ideas II*, a theoretical attitude is what “objectifies” a sensory object into an object of knowledge, and, further, objectifies values for the first time out of the initial non-objectifying feeling acts, as we have seen just above and in Chapter One.<sup>178</sup> This could be done in the service of many purposes, e.g., to escape from prison or to come to a better insight into the nature of values. Later on in the “Vienna Lecture,” Husserl describes the theoretical attitude as a unique attitude aimed at discovering the truth. There he defines “attitude” as “a habitually fixed style of willing life compromising directions of will or interests that are prescribed by this style.”<sup>179</sup> This is similar to Hildebrand’s *Haltung*, which includes a consciously directed orientation toward values. The theoretical attitude, as defined in the “Vienna Lecture” is defined as “totally unpractical” and “disinterested.”<sup>180</sup> It leads to a science which “wants to be unconditioned truth.”<sup>181</sup> It could be called “contemplation” in that sense. Yet disinterested here means not a lack of interest but a lack of practical interests, the overriding interest is the truth. This theoretical attitude has ethical import for Husserl, as leads to a praxis where one aims to shape oneself and one’s culture by absolute ethical insights.<sup>182</sup>

Hildebrand’s sense of “theoretical attitude” is closer to Husserl’s first sense in *Ideas I*. The theoretical attitude has a different “key” relative to taking-cognizance. For

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<sup>177</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 173–176.

<sup>178</sup> See above at [1.2: A Realist Echo of the Principle of All Principles](#), pp. 26–32.

<sup>179</sup> Edmund Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

<sup>180</sup> Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

<sup>181</sup> Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

<sup>182</sup> Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

Hildebrand, the theoretical attitude is a primarily an active rather than receptive stance. According to Hildebrand, “one does not allow the object itself to speak. Instead one tries to acquire...knowledge of it by observations, reflections, inferences.”<sup>183</sup> For Hildebrand, theorization does include considering an object specifically as an object of knowledge, but values are always already “objectified” (in Husserl’s sense of the term) in intuition for this purpose. They need merely be taken up as objects of inquiry. For Hildebrand, theorization is raising some insight to a general and typical level. For example, from a single or multitude of instances of taking-cognizance of free action I come to the conviction that “freedom in general presupposes knowledge.”<sup>184</sup>

Yet philosophy has a third theme over and above the object theme and the knowledge theme, (which Hildebrand often groups together as the “notional theme”): the “contemplative theme.”<sup>185</sup> For Hildebrand, taking-cognizance, particularly perception, can “go” in two directions, one toward knowledge of the object and the other that goes “in the direction of intimate real contact of having the object in a most immediate and full possession...of confronting the object face to face.”<sup>186</sup> Seeing one’s beloved, one can indeed gain knowledge of the beloved, his or her traits or character, but one can also enjoy union with the beloved precisely through a mutual interpenetration of looks of love (*Ineinanderblick*).<sup>187</sup> In an analogous manner, a highly intelligible essence is intuitively before one’s mind in a continual taking-cognizance of that essence, e.g., contemplating the

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<sup>183</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 50–51.

<sup>184</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 217. Such theorizations can be, in Hildebrand’s terms, either “organic” or “inorganic.” Organic theorization grow out of naïve contact with the objects theorized about. Such theorizations are not necessarily correct. When the Little Drummer Boy concludes “all people are bad” from the single experience of his parents being murdered by Roman soldiers, his theorization is not correct, but it does have an “organic link” to his experiences. By contrast inorganic theorizations lack this link. See Hildebrand, *WP*, 52–57.

<sup>185</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 178–179.

<sup>186</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 177.

<sup>187</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 234.

nature of justice or of goodness. For Hildebrand, this contemplation involves not just perception but also being affected, being delighted by the contemplated object. This contemplation is the aim of the “philosophical *eros*” of Plato and of the wonder at the heart of all philosophy.<sup>188</sup>

The two themes complement each other, the more knowledge one has the more one is able to contemplate.<sup>189</sup> Yet they are distinct. In contemplating a philosophical object, say the nature of goodness, one is no longer concerned with the question “how is it?”<sup>190</sup> Here there is a faint parallel with Husserl’s position that the theoretical and axiological attitudes are in tension with each other.<sup>191</sup> Insofar as I am contemplating the object, I am not concerned with knowledge but with what Husserl would call “delighting abandon and surrender.”<sup>192</sup> In contrast to active striving for knowledge, contemplation is rest in what is already had. But unlike Husserl, this contemplative attitude of “delighting abandon and surrender” in no way lessens the objectivity of the value, though it is no longer concerned with it as an object of knowledge. Phenomenology. requires the hard work of analysis of experience where one is not in an affective attitude of “delighting abandon and surrender,” but it also, at different times, requires contemplation, which is such an attitude. This contemplation is distinct from theorization but part and parcel of the phenomenological attitude itself. Thus, the phenomenologist is one who “dwells in” the object, a union that Hildebrand does not shy from calling a “spiritual wedding” with the object.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 188, 227.

<sup>189</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 184.

<sup>190</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 180.

<sup>191</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §4, 8; *Ideas II*, 10; Stein, *Beiträge*, 145; *PPH*, 161.

<sup>192</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 145; *PPH*, 161.

<sup>193</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 177–178.



Had Husserl been alive to read *What is Philosophy?* in the 1960s, one could well imagine him wondering how wedding bells have entered into phenomenology as a rigorous science. And Hildebrand's inevitable answer would be they have entered in virtue of the Principle of All Principles itself. For in intuition we grasp values as the very preciousness of their objects in a unified value-experience. To recognize a value includes recognizing the call to give a proper value-response, and also to be moved by it, delighted by it, in the proper manner, e.g., the beauty of a melody calls for being moved by the beauty, even if this does not happen, and for a response of admiration for it. If I close myself off from the call to contemplate value, I close myself from what is given in the very intuition of values. I cannot have a lived experience of values. I violate, therefore, Hildebrand's realist version of the Principle of All Principles.<sup>194</sup> In philosophy, the value in question is primarily truth about highly important essences.<sup>195</sup> A philosopher is called to theorize carefully and critically about the contents of his or her investigation and to develop accurate theorizations that accord with the truth. Yet the values and beauty of the particular objects of philosophy, e.g., goodness, justice, and freedom, are also to be responded to appropriately. This proper response requires reverence and even contemplative delight, or else, as Stein herself noted, the object will not give itself to you.<sup>196</sup>

What roles, then, does reverence play in the phenomenological attitude when one is theorizing and not just contemplating? It establishes a theoretical attitude quite close to the one Husserl outlines in the "Vienna Lecture." First, the object is considered, according to Hildebrand, "in the light of the absolute."<sup>197</sup> This means the object of inquiry itself

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<sup>194</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 5. See above at [1.2: A Realist Echo of the Principle of All Principles](#), p. 28.

<sup>195</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 185.

<sup>196</sup> Stein, *Beiträge*, 143; *PPH*, 159.

<sup>197</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 196.

determines the main theme of the inquiry in its givenness in *Soseinserfahrung* and *Daseinserfahrung* according to its highly intelligible essence. The philosopher places herself in a “depragmatized” and “deactualized” stance; she maintains a certain reverent “distance” from the object.<sup>198</sup> By this Hildebrand means that anything that might interfere with the inquiry, both presuppositions and limitations of view imposed by any particular pragmatic interest are suspended, as the Principle of All Principles demands. This distance is therefore an aid to lived contact with the object and its highly intelligible essence. One finds, then, that reverence for the truth is in fact at one with respect for the autonomy of beings in their existence and essence. The phenomenologist considers the object a “partner” in the inquiry.<sup>199</sup> To continue the metaphor of language, one receives and then one gives one surrender (*Hingabe*) to the object’s “word.”<sup>200</sup> Finally, reverence excludes moral attitudes that may well distort the inquiry. Especially in ethics, pride and concupiscence are liable to deprive one of the experience of moral values necessary to conduct ethical investigations.<sup>201</sup> Even if this is not the case, in all philosophical fields and in all inquiries a prideful attitude is liable to give rise to inorganic theorizations, forgetting the lesson Hamlet tells Horatio. Thus, Hildebrand states that, for the philosopher, the objects of inquiry:

Always mean more than mere objects of knowledge. Hence, the unique reverence that is found in philosophical inquiry, and also the solemn character of

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<sup>198</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 199.

<sup>199</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 190.

<sup>200</sup> This is not to suggest that all experience is linguistic. Rather, the metaphor of language Hildebrand employs here shows that experience involves reception or response. One receives, one can be moved, and then one does (or does not) respond.

<sup>201</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 202–203.

philosophical knowledge. Philosophy is essentially not so “neutral” as are the other sciences with respect to their own proper objects.<sup>202</sup>

## 2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics

I wish to close this section by pointing out similarities that Hildebrand’s notion of reverence has with the philosophies of Levinas and the later Husserl. As I have noted in another work, Hildebrand’s philosophy has striking parallels with, though also clear divergences from, the philosophy of Levinas.<sup>203</sup> Somewhat like Hildebrand, Levinas is critical of Husserl’s notion of intentionality, in large part because intentionality for Husserl includes a sense-giving constitution (*Sinngebung*). In this intentional relation, I grasp and comprehend the Other as an intentional object. I see a poor Other and I make sense of him, according to Levinas, I end up constituting him as a beggar (or, worse, a moocher). Such an intentional grasping, inevitable as it is, reduces the Other to what Levinas calls “the same” as my conception of the Other according to the dictum *adaequatio rei intellectus*.<sup>204</sup> In this intentional relationship to the other “thought remains an adaequation with the object.”<sup>205</sup> The Other has become “the same” as my thought of him, but precisely in so doing I have lost his Otherness. A “distance” between me and the Other, the fact that the Other is exterior to me, has not been respected.<sup>206</sup> He has been absorbed in to my interiority and thus the exteriority of the Other, which, by definition, I can never absorb, has been lost.

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<sup>202</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 188.

<sup>203</sup> Alexander Montes, “Toward the Name of the Other: A Hildebrandian Approach to Levinasian Alterity.” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10 no. 1 (Fall 2019): 82–109.

<sup>204</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 37, 123.

<sup>205</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 27.

<sup>206</sup> This notion of “distance” will be crucial in later in chapters. See esp. [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#) p. 167; and [7.7: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy](#), pp. 389–398.

Levinas also has a deep suspicion of affectivity, which I will briefly touch on here and in Chapter Six.<sup>207</sup> For Levinas, Scheler's affective *Wertfühlen* "keeps something of the character of comprehension."<sup>208</sup> Levinas' critique of intentionality more broadly applies to Husserl's characterization of affective value apprehending acts that constitute and give sense (*Sinngebung*) to an object. There is something troubling for Levinas about the thought that I constitute the Other as valuable in my subjectivity, even if this is based on Husserl's passive *Sinngebung*. Third, strong affective states have a tendency to overwhelm the subject: "[They] put into question not the existence, but the subjectivity of the subject, it prevents the subject from gathering itself up, reacting, being someone."<sup>209</sup> Finally, even if Levinas were willing to admit affective responses to the Other have ethical legitimacy (which he by and large does not), they are still at best happenstances and particular, whereas our responsibility to all Others is perpetual and universal. If someone wounds me emotionally I may find myself, through no fault of my own, unable to have much affection for that person. Yet my responsibility to that Other, indeed to all Others, is for Levinas infinite and unchanging.

For Levinas, the relationship to the Other as Other is not primarily intentionality, nor any affective grasping, but rather it is language.<sup>210</sup> Language has two components, "the said," which is the content of the words spoken, and "the saying," which is the directionality those words have as coming from the Other toward me and vice versa.<sup>211</sup> The Face of the Other is, for Levinas, manifested to me as the "first word," given before the

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<sup>207</sup> See below at [6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom](#), pp. 315–325.

<sup>208</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2017), 88. Henceforth, *EE*.

<sup>209</sup> Levinas, *EE*, 88.

<sup>210</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 75.

<sup>211</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 202–214.

intentional relation and prior to all constitution. All subsequent activity by me toward the Other is a response to this first word. The relationship that is thereby established between me and the Other is not an equal relationship, rather I am bound in responsibility to the Other. Once I see the face of the beggar pleading for help, I recognize that I am called in responsibility to help him. I can choose to spurn this beggar but in so doing I am implicitly recognizing my obligation to the beggar. For we are called “to give to the Other even the bread out of one’s own mouth.”<sup>212</sup> My very subjectivity as an active subject of my own actions is always already a subjugation to and response-ability for the Other, as all my actions are responses to that Other. Further, this ethical responsibility to the Other precedes any cognition of the truth, and in this sense Levinas claims that goodness precedes truth.<sup>213</sup> In *Otherwise than Being*, language testifies to a “passivity more passive than all passivity,” and which is prior to all activity.<sup>214</sup> It testifies to the fact that the Other always comes before my subjectivity and makes it possible for me to be a subject in the first place.<sup>215</sup>

Levinas, of course, would critique Hildebrand as still holding on to Husserl’s and Scheler’s primacy of intentionality as object grasping. Nevertheless, Hildebrand’s rejection of *Sinngebung* and his claim that all knowledge originates in a purely receptive taking-cognizance where I am “void” and the content is on the side of the object implies that perception does not involve the reduction to “the same” that Levinas fears. For Hildebrand, the Other is prior to all activity of me as a personal subject because the pure receptivity to the Other in taking-cognizance precedes all such activity. Indeed, in *Die Idee*, Hildebrand

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<sup>212</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Hague ; Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 88. Henceforth, *OBBE*.

<sup>213</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 47, 90.

<sup>214</sup> Levinas, *OBBE*, 37, 60.

<sup>215</sup> Levinas, *OBBE*, 51–60.

did allow for a total passivity prior to all activity when he claimed that taking-cognizance is purely *passiv* and involves no activity whatsoever, to Husserl's displeasure.<sup>216</sup> Even later when he allows that there is the activity of the spiritual going-with, this cannot be understood as a constituting that does violence to the alterity of the Other. Rather, it is listening to the Other's "word." Whereas Levinas opposes intentionality to language, for Hildebrand, intentionality metaphorically *is* language.

Therefore, in a way similar to Levinas, all active subjectivity as a free personal subject is always already a response-ability to what is given, namely value. In all of my theorizing and philosophizing I act as a free subject of my actions who is nevertheless subject to the value recognized on the side of the object. Even if this value happens to be myself, e.g., the value of my own existence when I recognize that I am precious, i.e., valuable, as a human person, this value is "other" than the subject who is "void" in taking-cognizance. This value is worthy of reverence. Thus, for Hildebrand, ethics is in a certain sense first philosophy.<sup>217</sup> This is not because goodness precedes truth, as Levinas holds, but rather because truth and goodness are identified with each other in the givenness of values.

Levinas' ethical anthropology leaves no room for affectivity to be included as essential to ethical responsibility.<sup>218</sup> Yet by basing all genuine being-affected and affective

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<sup>216</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134–138; Schuhmann, "Husserl und Hildebrand," 14. See above at [1.6: Hildebrand and Husserl on Reality as Given](#) p. 56.

<sup>217</sup> This formal otherness will be crucial when discussing the will. See [3.4.2: Kant's Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), p. 167 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) p. 211.

<sup>218</sup> In his unpublished works Levinas, perhaps inspired by Scheler, admits that shared values are necessary for communal life and that these values are grasped affectively. We cannot do without them if we want peace. However, even these affective states feature only in what Levinas calls "justice" and what we might term "morality" as opposed to ethics, where I am forced to arbitrate between the claims of two or more Others, which inevitably involves a return to comprehension and sameness. Special thanks to professor Bloechl for pointing this out to me.

value-responses on taking-cognizance of value, Hildebrand secures affectivity from some of the concerns Levinas raises. In *The Heart*, Hildebrand admits that affective states can overwhelm us, if they do so they lose their proper character of being engendered by the value, degenerating into passions.<sup>219</sup> *Wertfühlen*, for Hildebrand, includes taking-cognizance, which is a pure receptivity to the Other, within it. For Hildebrand, listening to the “word” of a value precedes and conditions any and all activity. As Hildebrand rejects the notion of constitution in *toto* with regard to values, particularly the value of persons, affective responses or being-affected, no less than taking-cognizance, do not, for Hildebrand, involve reduction to the same or comprehension. My affective love for the Other comes with full awareness that I will never plumb the depths of the Other’s preciousness and value, that I will never grasp nor comprehend the Other. Thus, even though Hildebrand retains a priority of epistemology from Husserl, he has his own way of prioritizing receptivity and passivity before activity, similar to Levinas. I am first struck by the value of the Other, and any subsequent activity on my response can only be a response to the Other. What Hildebrand has done is shown a way in which something like the ethical relation Levinas describes can be inscribed in affective responses. They both find a particularly ethical concern to be “first philosophy” because the ethical demands of the Other always comes before my subjectivity, and makes my subjectivity possible.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 29–36.

<sup>220</sup> This is not to suggest that Levinas would accept Hildebrand’s philosophy. Hildebrand’s and Levinas’ philosophies are better seen as distinct phenomenological approaches that run parallel to each other rather than intersecting with each other. Rightly or wrongly, they are both animated by a concern that Husserl does not do justice to the separateness, the distance of the Other (or to value in Hildebrand’s terms). But whereas for Levinas prioritizing passivity to activity requires displacing the priority of truth and epistemology in favor of language and ethics, Hildebrand finds a way to inscribe ethics and language into the very reception of truth.

## 2.6: Conclusion: The Freedom of Philosophy

The final comparison is with Husserl himself, for while Hildebrand rejects the notion of the phenomenological *epochē* (in particular, the bracketing of values) as presented in *Ideas I*, he would not be so at odds with how Husserl uses the *epochē* in his ethics. While Husserl never abandoned the distinction between the theoretical, practical, and axiological attitudes, he came to see that even the theoretical attitude itself takes place in the horizon of a practical and axiological attitude oriented to truth and the fully rational life. Husserl posited that this autonomous ethical life was the teleological goal of a “general will” (*allgemeiner Wille*) that underlies all of one’s attitudes and strivings.<sup>221</sup> Ullrich Melle, Nicholas de Warren, and James Hart have noted that in his later published and unpublished ethical writings, Husserl advanced the notion of an “ethical *epochē*” where one brackets one’s previous life and goals and subjects them to a universal critique.<sup>222</sup> The goal is to base every position-taking of one’s free and ethical life on one’s own insights. One takes a distance from the values and goals posited by one’s society, critically investigates whether they are truly founded and good, and then one can appropriate either them or radically new rules as one’s own insights.<sup>223</sup> The result is an “autonomous” and authentic ethical life. And this should encompass not just the individual but the whole of human culture. Husserl aims at a special ethics praxis. To quote from the “Vienna Lecture,”

It is a praxis whose aim is to elevate mankind through universal scientific reason, according to norms of truth in all forms, to transform it from the bottom up into a

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<sup>221</sup> Hart, “Axiology as the Form of Purity of Heart,” 215.

<sup>222</sup> Nicholas de Warren “Husserl and Phenomenological Ethics,” in *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 562–578; Hart, “Axiology as the Form of Purity of Heart,” 243; Ullrich Melle, “Edmund Husserl: From Reason to Love,” in *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy*, ed. John J. Drummond and Lester Embree (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 208.

<sup>223</sup> Husserl, *Ideas II*, §60, 281.



new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights.<sup>224</sup>

One can find in the ethical writings of Husserl a marked attitude of what Hildebrand calls reverence. One takes a “distance” from the practical entanglements of life to let values be as they are and to understand and respond to them according to their truth and with full insight. This praxis involves a synthesis of an ethical practical attitude and the theoretical attitude. The theoretical attitude “arising within a closed unity and under the *epochē* of all praxis...is called to serve mankind in a new way.”<sup>225</sup> Hildebrand would note that this does not preclude but rather requires an attitude of abandonment and surrender to and delight in values.

Finally, Hildebrand would agree with Husserl that such an attitude of distance and seeking grounding of one’s life projects, one’s free position-takings, to be based on evident insights, grants *autonomy*.<sup>226</sup> For both, there is a freedom, an autonomy, that can only be had by submitting one’s life to the demands of values as grasped in apodictic insights, based on their essences. Indeed, whereas Hildebrand tends to focus on particular value-responses, Husserl notes that such an ethical reduction opens up one’s whole life to become a coherent grounded project of love.

In summary, we have found that for Hildebrand values cannot be constituted by the subject insofar as they are by definition independent of any stance-taking on the part of the person. They are instead so united with their bearers that they are the bearers insofar as they are precious. Moreover, the comparison with Levinas brings out that the objectivity

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<sup>224</sup> Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

<sup>225</sup> Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book.

<sup>226</sup> See esp. Husserl, “Appendix IV: Philosophy as Mankind’s Self-Reflection; the Self-Realization of Reason,” in *The Crisis*, Kindle Book; Hildebrand, *WP*, 199.

of those values is what make our ability to be a free active subject with respect to values possible. Values are what enable freedom itself. Paradoxically, but in full conformity to the Principle of All Principles, our investigation of knowledge has found that the autonomy of the human person, which Husserl so well explains that philosophy can bring, requires, for Hildebrand, what one could call the “heteronomy” of “being formed by the laws” of values.<sup>227</sup> Freedom is dialogue and language where one is silent so as to receive the word of a world saturated in value. As a chord of one stringed instrument receives and responds of its own accord to the vibrations of another, so too we receive and find our hearts already being moved and responding to the word of values.<sup>228</sup>

Yet our will must both listen and join in the song, for this very openness to values is not a mere stance (*Einstellung*) but a free, conscious and sanctioned attitude (*Haltung*). To recall, a mere stance may exist within a person outside of one’s control or be merely allowed by the person. An attitude, by contrast, requires a free “yes,” a *fiat*, be given to the initially unfree stance. It is a stance freely sanctioned. As reverence is free willingness to receive values and follow their demands, our investigation of the role of reverence in freedom cannot be complete until we have investigated how precisely the will submits to value. This phenomenology of knowledge has to make way for a phenomenology of the will. To this task the next chapter turns.

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<sup>227</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 4.

<sup>228</sup> In much of Confucian metaphysics, strings responding to other strings on an instrument from a distance serves as the model of causality in much the way Hume’s billiard ball moving another billiard ball serves as the paradigm of causality in Western metaphysics. This notion of causality was expressly developed from noting how human emotions, particularly the moral emotions, act as responses to the stimuli in the world, most notably the benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*) of others. In future works, I plan to compare Hildebrand and other early phenomenologists to the philosophy of the emotions in classical Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought. See Franklin Perkins, “Metaphysics in Chinese Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/chinese-metaphysics/>.

## CHAPTER 3: FREEDOM AS FIAT: THE DEPENDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE WILL

### 3.1: Introduction

In the previous chapters, our investigation of Hildebrand's general and ethical epistemology found that reverence as an attitude of surrender (*Hingabe*) to values is essential to the very freedom of philosophy. This self-donation turns out to be the paradigm of freedom as such for Hildebrand, insofar as all willing involves "giving to" (the literal meaning of *Hingabe*) an object bearing some importance a "response" (*Antwort*) according to that importance's "word" (*Wort*). This is summed up in the word "*fiat*." The will gives the *fiat* of the person to freely willing or doing a certain thing. As Hildebrand puts it:

The will is in our immediate power. Its unique character is clearly revealed by the fact that its immediate issuance from our spiritual center is the only case of a *fiat* in our human existence.<sup>1</sup>

Hildebrand did not develop his conception of the will in a vacuum. In addition to the influence of Augustine, it is possible that he derived the concept of the *fiat* from Husserl who in turn found it in William James. In his 1890 *The Principles of Psychology*, William James develops the notion of the will as giving the person's *fiat* ("let it be!", "make it so!") to being moved by potential motives.<sup>2</sup> I will argue that in his *Ethics*, Hildebrand implicitly recognizes that the very structure of the will's *fiat* is freely giving oneself to (*Hingabe*) what is important in itself. He finds the essence of the will to be self-donation, *Hingabe*.

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 211.

<sup>2</sup> James, *Psychology*, p. 526. For James's influence on Husserl's conception of the will, see Melle, "Husserl's Phenomenology of Willing," 176.

This conception of the will as ordered to giving one's *fiat* leads Hildebrand to several important innovations in the philosophy of freedom. In the second section, we will see how the self that is given in all cases of willing is the free person. For Hildebrand, the will is one of three spiritual centers of intentional responses, the others being the mind for theoretical responses and the heart for affective responses. In contrast to affective and theoretical responses, such as enthusiasm and conviction, which are engendered in us but are not under our control, will responses are always engendered by us. All acts of will, therefore, carry the "*signum*" (mark) of coming from the "free personal center" (*freies Personzentrum*).<sup>3</sup> They must be distinguished from mere voluntariness, e.g., acts done out of unconscious habit.<sup>4</sup>

In the third section, I argue that Scheler problematically renders all volition determined by affectivity, a position which Hildebrand strives carefully to avoid. I also show how this caution to avoid determinism allows Hildebrand to improve on both James' and Husserl's conception of the will and its *fiat*. In an insightful article, "On the Rationality of Will in James and Husserl," Susi Ferrarello notes that James and Husserl in different ways problematize freedom by claiming that the epistemic mechanisms of the mind can automatically bring about willed action. This leaves little room for free choice.<sup>5</sup> In essence, Ferrarello argues, and I concur, that Husserl and especially James do not give a satisfactory account of free will. I will argue that Hildebrand can supply this account. This section also shows how, in contrast to much of English philosophy of the will, represented by Harry Frankfurt's "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person," "willing" (*Wollen*)

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<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336.

<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 311–316.

<sup>5</sup> Susi Ferrarello, "On the Rationality of Will in James and Husserl," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* II, no. 1 (July 1, 2010), 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.946>.

engendered by us rather than “desire” (*Begehren*) engendered in us must be recognized as the central term of conation.<sup>6</sup> For Frankfurt, willing is a first-order *desire* that is approved by a second-order desire. However, all desires of any order may be causally engendered in the person by outside factors; Frankfurt is ultimately open to free will compatibilism. This, for Hildebrand and for myself, is unacceptable, since the free will must be causally self-sufficient for willed action and responsibility to be what they are given to us as: free acts for which we bear moral responsibility.

Finally, in the fourth section, we will see how this independence of the will is based upon its dependence on importance. The will’s dependence on the mind and heart is what enables its independence from them. Although willing is freely engendered by us, Hildebrand claims it must be “supported” by importance, i.e., be motivated by importance. Without this support, the will would lose its very character of being a volitional response and it would fall into arbitrariness.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Kant attempts to rescue the will from arbitrariness by identifying it with autonomous, lawgiving practical reason, Hildebrand instead parallels Levinas in that what liberates freedom from the arbitrary can only be other than the will itself and reason itself.<sup>8</sup> This is what Levinas terms the “investiture” of freedom by the Other (for Hildebrand, by value). The fundamental receptivity of taking-cognizance entails that importance is always formally on an object that is other than both the mind that apprehends this importance and the will that responds to that importance. *Nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*: nothing is willed if it is not first known because what the will

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<sup>6</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 5–20.

<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

<sup>8</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:436, 85; Levinas, *TI*, 88.

wills can always be construed as a response to a motive (e.g., to eat this cookie, because it is subjectively satisfying).

### **3.2: The Will and the Person**

It is impossible to understand either freedom or the will in isolation from the rest of the person. As Karol Wojtyła notes in his essay “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in describing a free action, it is somewhat artificial to speak of “the will” doing the action.<sup>9</sup> Rather it is better to say the person does the action through his or her own will. In order to commence a proper phenomenology of the will it is necessary to see both how the will is related to the whole person and how it is distinct from other faculties and dynamisms in the person that could be confused with the will. The first subsection explores how the will is linked to the metaphysical structure of the person as a substance in relation. The second distinguishes the will, the seat of volitional responses, from the other spiritual centers of the person, namely the mind, the heart, as well as Hildebrand’s distinction between the will proper and the broader free personal center. The third subsection notes what is specific to the will in contrast to the merely voluntary.

#### **3.2.1: The Will and the Metaphysics of the Free Person**

Willing testifies to the person as a free, responsible, and *unified* person in that it is not a part of me that does and is responsible for a free act. Rather, *I* did it, as a whole. In his *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft* (*Metaphysics of Community*), published in 1930, Hildebrand regards the person’s unity as the unity of a substance (*Substanz*).<sup>10</sup> This forms something

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<sup>9</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, Catholic Thought from Lublin, Vol. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 187–195.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft: Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wert der Gemeinschaft*, Vol. 4. of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1975), 17–20. Henceforth *MG*.

of a contrast to Scheler, who went back and forth on whether the person could be considered a substance. In *Formalism*, Scheler holds that the person is no more than a non-objectifiable center of acts, given as a unity in all acts of volition, feeling, thinking, etc. “The whole person ‘varies’ in and through every kind of act without being exhausted in his being in any of these acts.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, Scheler claims “there is no necessity for an enduring being that subsists in this succession [of acts] in order to safeguard the ‘identity of the individual person,’” as he holds substance theory would claim.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Scheler notes that considering the person as a substance would mean “everyone would carry the same ‘substance’ within him which...could not yield differences with one and the other.”<sup>13</sup> This worry is well grounded in the history of Western thought. Many forms of hylomorphism hold that each human substance (*ousia*, *substantia*) possesses the same qualitatively identical rational nature (*ousia*).

In contrast, Scheler holds each individual person has a unique qualitative value-essence (*Wertwesen*) grasped in love.<sup>14</sup> The principle of individuation is not matter, rather each person has a unique essence that marks each person as irreplaceable and precious, a “value-essence.” I do not love my spouse as an instance of a general human rational nature, I love *her* as a unique, ineffably precious person. This *Wertwesen* gives each person a unique vocation, which the person ought to actualize. Eventually, this concept of a *Wertwesen* led Scheler to reverse his position on the substantiality of the person. If the person ought to actualize his or her vocation based on a personal *Wertwesen*, then the

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<sup>11</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 385.

<sup>12</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 385.

<sup>13</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 384.

<sup>14</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 489. Hildebrand accepts the idea of a personal value-essence, as we will see just below. See Hildebrand, *NL*, 304.

person must stand in but also behind (sub-stare) his or her acts. In the heavily revised 1922 edition of his *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (translated as *The Nature of Sympathy*), Scheler notes “The spiritual substances inherent in persons or their acts are...the only substances having a truly individual essence.”<sup>15</sup>

Hildebrand defines being a substance as having an inner principle of unity that marks one off as unique and independent from one’s environment. The “form” (*Gestalt*) of a mere quantity of water or of a hill in hilly terrain cannot mark the being as an independent thing or substance.<sup>16</sup> A living creature with an inner principle of meaning (*inneres Sinnprinzip*) has this substance character.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, a living creature has this substance character even more than a stone, a mere material substance, because of this inner principle of meaning.<sup>18</sup> A person is “the highest form of substance (*die höchste Form von Substanz*)” in that the person “is a conscious free, self-possessing, self-contained being who possess his or her own content (*ist ein bewußtes, ein Ich besitzendes, in sich zusammengehaltenes, sich selbst besitzendes, freies Wesen*).”<sup>19</sup>

Following Scheler, this content (*Gehalt*) includes the unique value-essence of the person, whom Hildebrand calls in his *Nature of Love* an “unrepeatable individual.”<sup>20</sup> This value-essence is perceived in the look of love, I see the beloved person as this unique, irreplaceable, and precious person. The unity and self-possession are especially evident in free acts where it is precisely *I* who am acting. It is not merely a part of me that acts but

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<sup>15</sup> Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, ed. Manfred S. Frings, Vol. 6 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Bern: Francke, 1973); Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, Revised edition (Piscataway, N.J.: Routledge, 2008), 123.

<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 19. Translation my own.

<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 203, 304.



rather I act through the will as this substantially, essentially unique person. Implicitly, Hildebrand would be very much in agreement with Fr. Norris Clarke S.J., who in his *Person and Being* argues that relationality is not possible without the standing in oneself (*sub-stare*) of substantiality. Without a self who possesses oneself there would be no self to give in self-donation.<sup>21</sup> Substantiality and relationality are, as it were, the two poles of in-itself and to-the-other in personal being. This will be the crucial metaphysical principle for understanding Hildebrand's phenomenology of freedom. We must stand in ourselves (*sub-stare*) to give ourselves, but conversely it is in giving ourselves, especially to value, that we are most brought to the fact that we stand in ourselves as unique, irreplaceable persons.

### **3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person**

The three forms of intentional relationality that most interest Hildebrand are the relations to value previously mentioned in Chapter Two: 1) being conscious-of a value (where one is void and the content, *Inhalt*, is on the object side), 2) being affected by a value (where an experiential content comes to one from the object), and 3) responding to value (where the content goes out to the object from one).<sup>22</sup> Throughout his corpus Hildebrand notes these three forms of intentionality mark the person as a "spiritual" person insofar as they imply rationality.<sup>23</sup> Only a person can recognize a value as a value. Seifert gives an example of a dog who saves his master, but the dog does not recognize the value of what she has done; it is not a value-response to the value of her master.<sup>24</sup> For Hildebrand, there are three

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<sup>21</sup> Norris W. Clarke S.J., *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206–246. See above at [2.3.1: The Intuitive Givenness of Values](#), pp. 82–90.

<sup>23</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Josef Seifert, "Persons and Causes: Beyond Aristotle," *Journal of East-West Thought* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 9.

kinds of responses that correspond to the three “spiritual centers” (*geistige Zentren*) of the person: theoretical responses with the mind, affective responses with the heart, and volitional responses with the will.<sup>25</sup> These are not “centers” in the way the value-essence of the person is a center, rather they are the locus of intentional states. “Center,” when referring to the mind, the heart, and the will, is roughly synonymous with the term “faculty” of intentional responses.<sup>26</sup>

The mind or intellect is concerned with truth. It is the seat of all four forms of knowing: *Kenntnisnehmen*, *Erkennen*, *Kennen*, and *Wissen*.<sup>27</sup> It is also the seat of cognitive responses, e.g., conviction, and assertions. Hildebrand’s epistemology emphasizes the receptivity of reason over the activity of reason. The mind does work hard to figure out ethical truths in difficult situations, for instance, but these truths are ultimately grasped by purely receptive acts of taking-cognizance. In a chapter in *Ethics* titled “Morality and Reasonability,” Hildebrand is careful to note that being morally good cannot be reduced to being reasonable in the sense of prudently determining what conforms to one’s nature.<sup>28</sup> Rather, at its core, morality is conforming to the call of values, which are external to one on the side of the object. Morality, and with it moral rationality itself, has an other-directed character.<sup>29</sup> To say an action is unreasonable because it goes against our nature does not

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<sup>25</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206–246; *HE*, 8–9.

<sup>26</sup> These “spiritual centers,” in turn, are distinct from the three “moral centers” of pride, concupiscence, and reverence, the basic stances from which all moral and immoral acts and attitudes issue, which we have already seen in Chapter Two and which I explain further below in Chapter Four. See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 437; SW, “IV Tiel: Die verschiedenen moralischen Zentren,” 580–593. For my introduction of Hildebrand’s basic stances as moral centers, see below at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 189–192.

<sup>27</sup> See [1.5.1: The Different Types of Knowledge](#), pp. 46–55.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 195–198. Hildebrand is, of course, arguing against the Aristotelian-Thomistic view that moral goodness consists in fulfilling one’s rational nature. For a Thomistic response, see Norris W. Clarke, “Two Perspectives on the Meaning of ‘Good,’” in *Values and Human Experience: Essays in Honor of the Memory of Balduin Schwarz* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 121–128.

<sup>29</sup> This other-directed character of morality and rationality will be crucial when comparing Hildebrand to Kant, Husserl, and even James. See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 135–

yet answer the fundamental question of whether going against our nature, in this matter, is morally wrong and disvaluable.<sup>30</sup>

In his main work on affectivity, his 1965 *The Heart*, Hildebrand notes that the term “heart” can have multiple senses, some of which include the will as a component of the heart, e.g., as in much of medieval philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Yet the two must not be confused. Hildebrand restricts the meaning of the term “heart” to two senses: 1) the broader sense of the heart as the “organ of all affectivity” and 2) the more specific sense of the heart as the “focal point” of the deepest affective experiences.<sup>32</sup> For Hildebrand, affective responses are not under one’s direct control, unlike the will, but also unlike the will, they possess an affective plenitude that all responses of the will lack.<sup>33</sup> There is always a felt “more” in an affective response than in a mere volition. For instance, if we compare a weak esteem for a person with a will to esteem that person, there is something “more” in the affective esteem than in the mere will. As a result, Hildebrand assigns wish (*Wunsch*) and desire (*Begehren*), which are often both outside of our direct control and have affective plenitude to them, to the heart and not the will.<sup>34</sup>

Yet we do have the direct “cooperative” freedom to “sanction” (*sanktionieren*) or “disavow” (*desavouieren*) an affective response.<sup>35</sup> If I sanction an affective response of love for a person, that initially automatic response becomes a full response of me as a free

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142; [3.4.2: Kant’s Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 159–165; and [7.7: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy](#), pp. 373–398.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 20–21.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 213.

<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 25 “Cooperative Freedom,” 331–353; *Ethik*, 25. Kapitel “Mitwirkende Freiheit,” 329–350.

person.<sup>36</sup> By contrast disavowing an affective response, e.g., *Schadenfreude*, “decapitates” the response and deprives it of its status as a response of the person and I am no longer responsible for it.<sup>37</sup> Notably, Hildebrand does *not* consider the sanction or disavowal a response of the will, even though it is a free act.<sup>38</sup> We do not have two responses, one of the heart and one of the will, but rather a single affective yet also free response. Thus, Hildebrand makes a distinction between the “free personal center,” (*freies Personzentrum*) which is that from which all free acts emerge (including the sanction, the disavowal, and all acts of will) and the will proper (*Wille*), from which only certain free acts emerge.<sup>39</sup> In Chapter Four, I will challenge this distinction and argue that the will and the free personal center are one and the same; all free acts issue from the will.<sup>40</sup> But for this chapter, our focus will be on the will as conceived of by Hildebrand.

The will itself is distinguished from the heart and the mind in several ways. First, prior to *Moralia*, Hildebrand held that the will properly speaking is set over only states of affairs one can realize through activities that can be commanded by one’s body.<sup>41</sup> I can will to go to downtown Boston, but I cannot will, but only wish, to travel to the Andromeda galaxy. In *Moralia* he allows that the will can intend non states of affairs directly, e.g., I can volitionally affirm the dignity of a person, but he still assigns only some free acts to

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<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339.

<sup>37</sup> However, I may be responsible for allowing myself to obtain a character that makes me prone to *Schadenfreude*.

<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 77.

<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> See below at [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), pp. 207–209.

<sup>41</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 302. In the Chapter Four, I will argue that along with Seifert that Hildebrand was in fact incorrect to limit the will only to states of affairs one can realize, a position that Hildebrand himself came to see as untenable soon before he died in a private conversation with Seifert. See Josef Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 737–745. Hildebrand corrects his position in *Moralia*. See Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 73–79. I discuss this below at [4.4.1: Extending the Range of the Fiat](#), pp. 204–207.

the will and the rest are assigned to the more general free spiritual center.<sup>42</sup> Second, the will is a solely responsive faculty. While the mind has the receptivity of taking-cognizance and the heart has the receptivity of *Wertfühlen*, nothing is *given* to the will as will. *Nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*: nothing is willed if it is not first known.<sup>43</sup> This marks the essential dependence of the will on the heart and the mind, which must provide it objects bearing importance for it to will.

Third, Hildebrand makes a key distinction between motivation and engenderment, which come apart in willing. The motive is the “reason” for the response, and it is what the response is responding to. For affective responses and theoretical responses, the motive, the object, directly engenders the response in us. For this reason, they are not under our direct control. Upon seeing my friend recover, the conviction “he will live” and the joy over this fact well up in me outside of my control, even if for some reason I did not want them to. However, volitional responses are never engendered (i.e., brought into existence) by the motive but are engendered by us. I and only I can will to say “he will live.” Thus, the unique character of the will is “revealed by the fact of its immediate issuance from our spiritual center is the only case of a *fiat* in our human existence.”<sup>44</sup> This marks the independence of the will from the heart and the mind.

Fourth, in *Die Idee*, Hildebrand speaks of the will as having a special “centrality” in that it is associated with the “actual I...which is experienced as arbitrarily free” (*das aktuelle Ich ...und das willkürliche frei erlebt wird*).<sup>45</sup> By “actual I,” I hold Hildebrand means one’s actual present here and now consciousness, coupled with one’s ability to do

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<sup>42</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 73–79.

<sup>43</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 211.

<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161. Translation my own.

what is under one's immediate power. A particular willing is spontaneously engendered by one from one's actual I whereas many other kinds of responses lie deeper in the person beyond the actual I. Finally, as just mentioned, the experiential content (*Gehalt*) of a willing lacks affective plentitude. An affective response always has a felt "more" compared to a volitional counterpart of that affective response (e.g., a mere will for esteem versus true affective esteem).

### **3.2.3: Mere Voluntariness and the Will**

Hildebrand is careful to distinguish the will from what he calls "mere" voluntariness. His main reason for this is to avoid any trace of causal determinism. For Hildebrand, personal freedom can never be considered a link in a causal chain, but rather all free acts are always initiated by the person.<sup>46</sup>

The volitional act in which the person takes a specific position in relation to an object cannot be interpreted as being determined by anything exterior to him, or by his dispositions, his character, or any unfolding of his entelechy.<sup>47</sup>

Certainly, the will causes our actions and activities, but in this case, the person is the initiator of a new causal chain of events. The willed action is not given merely as one event in a chain of causality. If it were an event within a chain of causality, then the will would be determined and free action and moral responsibility would be unintelligible.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Seifert notes that all efficient causes except the free will have more the character of a transfer of causality than being an efficient cause proper.<sup>49</sup> Only the free will contributes more than it has received, moves more than it has been moved.

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<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301.

<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301–304.

<sup>49</sup> Seifert, "Person and Causes," 8.

Thus, Hildebrand distinguishes the human free will from “animal voluntariness,” which both animals and humans possess (e.g., drives for food and sex). Animal life has a certain voluntary spontaneity.<sup>50</sup> An animal’s voluntary movements are necessitated by external and internal stimuli. For example, upon seeing grass, a sheep necessarily moves to eat it as long as other factors don’t intervene. Despite animals’ unique spontaneity, their actions have the character of a transfer of causality. Yet personal freedom can never be considered a link in a causal chain but rather is always initiated by the person.<sup>51</sup> This is because the perception of animals does not involve what Aquinas terms perfect knowledge of the end as an end but only imperfect knowledge of the end.<sup>52</sup> Again, a dog who saves his master does not realize that doing so is valuable.<sup>53</sup> The free act involves an intentional response to some importance whereas animal action is merely an evoked reaction.<sup>54</sup> Further, there is no conscious assumption of a position by the animal. The voluntary activity of an animal does not have the character of a conscious, meaningful response.<sup>55</sup> Fourth, the most significant difference between animal voluntariness and human freedom is that our free will can counteract even our strongest desires, urges, and tendencies.<sup>56</sup> By contrast “animal voluntariness can only follow the direction prescribed by instincts and natural tendencies.”<sup>57</sup> An animal’s urges and tendencies can only be inhibited by other, stronger urges and tendencies.

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<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 312–313.

<sup>51</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301.

<sup>52</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.6, a.2. cited in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 311.

<sup>53</sup> Seifert, “Person and Causes,” 8.

<sup>54</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 300.

<sup>55</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.6, a.2. cited in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 311.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 312.

<sup>57</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 312.

Hildebrand also distinguishes free, willed actions from acts performed voluntarily but unconsciously out of habit.<sup>58</sup> While my mind is on something else, I return a book to its place on the shelf without thinking of it. What was once activity that could only be done by the will has become accessible to what Hildebrand terms “mere voluntariness.”<sup>59</sup> Additionally, habits can create psychical urges and needs in us which increase the agreeableness of certain objects (e.g., a habit of playing a game every day). Some habits even “give motivating power to something neutral as such,” e.g., a daily routine.<sup>60</sup> It is less that these object attracts me than the “*vis a tergo*” of the habit, a kind of gravity that can move the will proper.<sup>61</sup> In these cases, the role of the will is to allow or stop habits from having this effect, e.g., to change my routine if it is a bad one. This is analogously the proper role of the will with regard to animal voluntariness. My urge to drink can move me to drink, but this requires a voluntary yielding (*fiat*) to the urge by my will.<sup>62</sup> Finally, Hildebrand tends to set the will in contrast with “mere” teleological drives.<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand tends to see these drives as having less than full intentionality in that they operate automatically and often subconsciously. They have a relation to their objects, but it is one of finality rather than one that has the character of a response.

### 3.3: The Structure and Independence of the Will

In summary, the will is dependent on the heart and the mind to provide objects for willing, but the will is independent of them in that the person alone can engender a free response of the will. The will is not determined by either the heart or the mind. In the first subsection,

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<sup>58</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 315.

<sup>59</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 315.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 392.

<sup>61</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 392.

<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 314.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 204.



I provide a more detailed analysis of Hildebrand's account of the structure of the will. In the second subsection, we will see that Hildebrand forms a contrast with Scheler, who tends to subordinate the will to affectivity, and in the third subsection, we will see how Hildebrand differs from James and Husserl, who tend to subordinate the will to the mind. Finally, in the last subsection, I compare Hildebrand's conception of *Wollen* with Harry Frankfurt's account of the will as reducible to desires, and I will argue against this reduction.

### **3.3.1: Hildebrand's Phenomenology of the Will**

The primary function of the will, for Hildebrand, is to issue volitional responses to objects bearing importance. In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand is concerned with showing that the will is not determined by any other faculty of the person. He does so by noting the independence of what he calls the two "dimensions" or "perfections" of the will: 1) engendering a response and 2) commanding my body to do an activity.<sup>64</sup> Suppose I see a child about to toddle into a well. To use the terms from Chapters One and Two, in a taking-cognizance of the situation, I am "void" and receive the disvalue of the child drowning. I then engender a willing, which is a position-taking, (*Willensstellungnahme*) to save the child. My will issues a response (*Antwort*), a specific volitional experiential content (*Gehalt*), toward the object of the will, in this case saving the child. The "willing" (*Wollen*, the act of will, also "wanting") is always a position-taking (*Willensstellungnahme*).<sup>65</sup> Notably, in contrast to affective responses such as enthusiasm and theoretical responses, which are both engendered directly by the object *in* the person, a willing is engendered *by* the person. To

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<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 299–301.

<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 159–160.

repeat, this engendering of a will “in its immediate issuance from our spiritual center is the only case of a *fiat* in our human existence.”<sup>66</sup> It is the moment of the decision (*Entscheidung*) to respond.<sup>67</sup> For Hildebrand, a will is never automatically brought about by any physical or psychological process, and as evidence of this Hildebrand notes that we can will to do something even against our strongest desires and the influence of our milieu, e.g., resisting a temptation.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, while the object and its importance does not engender the response, the importance does motivate the response and “supports” the response.<sup>69</sup> My decision to save the child is not purely arbitrary or unmotivated, like a sudden random volition to raise my hand. It is instead a meaningful response supported by the very value of the child, whom I save.

After forming a will-response, I command my arm to stretch out and save the child. This “commanding” my arm to reach for the child is the second perfection and dimension of the will.<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand, conscious of the risk of determinism, describes this “commanding” as the person initiating a new causal chain in the world.<sup>71</sup> This commanding is not a response or even a *Stellungnahme*, though it is founded on the response. This second dimension refers to the will as the master of actions and activities; whereas the first dimension, the response, refers to engendering the act of will itself. Commanded activities happen not in us or on us, not even by us in the same sense that a response of the will is engendered by us. Rather, they happen through us.

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<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 211.

<sup>67</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 299.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 303. I discuss this support below at [3.4.2: Kant’s Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 159–165, and [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 165–174.

<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 300.

<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301.

In Part I Chapter 2 of *Die Idee*, Hildebrand distinguishes three different sense of *Wollen*. In the first sense, a person has a “mere” (*bloß*) will to forgive another person but cannot do so.<sup>72</sup> Here, the will is a position-taking which is both separate from the position taking that is to be enacted, i.e., forgiveness, and which is aimed at that second position-taking. This second position-taking serves as the fulfillment of the will, but inherently this “mere” will cannot directly found that second position-taking. In the second case, when I say, “It is nice outside so I will (*Ich will*) take a walk,” the will refers here to an activity, walking, that is identical to the state of affairs to be realized by the will.<sup>73</sup> Finally, in the third sense, the will refers to the will to do some *Handlung*, a German word for “action” which is not just any act but one which aims at the realization of a state of affairs distinct from the action undertaken, e.g., saving this child.<sup>74</sup> Any action, therefore, instantiates a relationship of finality; I intend to do something to produce some state of affairs.

In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand distinguishes *Wollen* from putting-forward (*vorsetzen*) or undertaking (*vornehmen*) the realization.<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, he says it is possible to “command” (*kommandieren*) a *Vorsetzen* without that *Vorsetzen* being founded by a *Wollen*, though implicitly one must have a will for that will.<sup>76</sup> For instance, I want (*Ich will*) to have a will to do my duty, say my duty to be generous toward this person whom I happen to dislike, and I even command myself to accomplish generous acts.<sup>77</sup> However, as much as I berate myself, I recognize that I do not really want/will to do my duty. Here, Hildebrand seems to imply that my generous actions are founded not by a real will to do

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<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 154.

<sup>73</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 155.

<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 156.

<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 156.

<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161.

<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 158.

my duty to be generous, but by an impotent mere will to have a generous will and a will to do my duty. This mere will for a will is sufficient to produce actions, but it is also a substitute for a real generous will to do my duty due to a specific kind of *akrasia*. Thus, a will can be impotent either by failing to produce action, e.g., the mere will to forgive, or another willing, e.g., the mere will to have a generous will.

*Wollen* is also distinguished from *Vorsatz*, “resolution,” which for Hildebrand has the connotation of a premediated purpose, e.g., “he planned out the killing; it was done on purpose.”<sup>78</sup> There can be actions which I do without a purpose, e.g., instinctively avoiding a car as it hurtles down the road.<sup>79</sup> Although such acts are not mere reflexes, such actions are not experienced as the willed realization of a state of affairs. Further, *Wollen* is distinguished from *Inangriffnahme*, which is the “last impulse of the will” that “switches on” the realization of the action.<sup>80</sup> Finally, the realization itself and the act (*Tun*) done by the will are distinct from the will.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, if some external factor prevents my will from being realized, e.g., I will to save the child and stretch out my hand to do so, but I find that in fact I cannot because I am suddenly paralyzed, this in no way affects the will as a response, but it does prevent me from fully realizing and commanding the action.

### 3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will

Although Hildebrand was very inspired by Scheler, throughout his corpus Hildebrand breaks with how Scheler subordinates the will to affectivity. For Scheler, “the phenomenon of willing contains nothing more than a conation in which a content is to be realized.”<sup>82</sup> In

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<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 156–160.

<sup>79</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 162.

<sup>80</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161.

<sup>81</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161.

<sup>82</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 123.

direct contrast to William James (see below), Scheler holds that the will cannot be confused with a mere representation of a voluntary movement that, of its own accord, initiates that movement.<sup>83</sup> Instead “the primary intention of willing always remains directed toward the realization of a state of affairs or a ‘value-complex’...Only secondarily is an intention of willing-to-do...connected with this realization.”<sup>84</sup> There is a difference between willing-to-do (intending to do X) and willing such doing (intending that one do X), and the latter is primary.<sup>85</sup> I intend the “lamp-on-table” and not “carrying the lamp to the table.” For Scheler, there is, first, a most basic connation for something, e.g., a small child wants it to stop raining and gets mad when it doesn’t, as if she had the power to stop it.<sup>86</sup> Eventually, there comes consciousness of being-able-to-do, and this leads to a distinction between primary willing, mere wishes, and willing-to-do. Thus, unlike Hildebrand, wishes are ascribed to the will and not to the affections.

Importantly, Scheler, unlike Hildebrand, holds that objects are *given* in a particular way in willing and in drives (*Triebe*) and connation (*Streben*, “striving”) more generally.<sup>87</sup> An object “with-stands” my willing, it is given as directed against my willing. This withstanding (*Widerstand*) is given as on-the-object and it is “given” and has its “seat” in willing.<sup>88</sup> With-standing constitutes objects as practical objects, and these objects are situated in a *milieu*.<sup>89</sup> The *milieu* is “the value world as it is experienced in practice.”<sup>90</sup> The Sun of the *milieu* of an Inuit is different from the Sun of the *milieu* of a Floridian, and both

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<sup>83</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 123.

<sup>84</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 126.

<sup>85</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 127.

<sup>86</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 126.

<sup>87</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 135.

<sup>88</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 136.

<sup>89</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 139.

<sup>90</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 142.

are different from the Sun of astronomy.<sup>91</sup> As a result, Scheler holds that the affective feeling of values precedes the cognitive perception of objects. For instance, I can know something feels wrong long before I realize that a painting is missing from my bedroom. Moreover, in his essay “Problems of Religion,” Scheler asserts that with-standing is what gives us our sense of reality as objects resist us, unlike in fantasy.<sup>92</sup> “The phenomenon of reality is initially only given in the empirically known resistance of an object to the exercise of volition.”<sup>93</sup> Notably, a person’s *milieu* determines the perception of things; “we only sensibly perceive what belongs to the *milieu*.”<sup>94</sup> Things must be given already for interest before they are cognitively perceived. Crucially, the *milieu* is dependent on “drive-constellations” (*Tribeinstellungen*) based on the lived body:

We can see that 1) objects that become determining factors in acting, i.e., *milieu*-objects, can become such objects...on the basis of *value-directions* (*Wertrichtung*) of the *portion of life of the lived body* and its immanent rules of preferring. The *milieu* of a being is therefore the precise counterpart of its drive-constellation (*Tribeinstellungen*) and its structure, i.e., its make-up. The fullness and emptiness of the *milieu* (when world-facts remain the same), as well as the prevailing values in such facts, are dependent on these drive constellations and directions. The occurrences of sensible feeling-states are dependent on the primary drive manifestations (*Triebregungen*) which are stirred by milieu objects which are themselves selected through drive constellations (*Tribeinstellungen*).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 139.

<sup>92</sup> Scheler, “Problems of Religion,” in *OEM*, 166.

<sup>93</sup> Scheler, “Problems of Religion,” in *OEM*, 166.

<sup>94</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 148.

<sup>95</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 157; *Formalismus*, 177. Scheler’s, Kant’s, and Hildebrand’s different conceptions of the *Gesinnung* is discussed below at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 189–204.

This reveals that all aspects of willing are based upon and even determined by affectivity. The *Gesinnung* of the will, which Frings and Funk translate as the “basic moral tenor” of the will, is the basic directedness of a person’s will to higher or lower values. The *Gesinnung* is, for Scheler, the most basic locus of moral good and evil in the person.<sup>96</sup> The *Gesinnung* pertains to the will, but it is dependent upon a person’s affective *ordo amoris*, i.e., what they feel to be higher or lower values. Scheler makes all apprehension of what Hildebrand would call “importance” into affective value-apprehension (*Wertfühlen*), as he has no distinction between value, the subjectively satisfying, and the objective good for a person. Thus, “every connotation has its immediate foundation in value-feeling (in preferring or loving and hating) and its contents.”<sup>97</sup> These values are non-moral values. The moral value of the particular act is and ought not to be intended by the person in his or her acting, on the pain of a pharisaical pride, but rather the moral value of an act is “on the back (*auf dem Rücken*)” of that act and intention.<sup>98</sup> A person whose *ordo amoris* leads her to view pleasure values as the highest values will have a corresponding direction of will, a *Gesinnung*, toward those values as the highest values.

However, willing and the *Gesinnung* also come from the *Gefühlszustand* of the person (Frings and Funk translate *Gefühlszustand* as “feeling-state”).<sup>99</sup> A *Gefühlszustand*, e.g., an overflowing feeling of happiness or misery from a sense of my own value (which is not intended in acts), exerts a centrifugal push on the person; whereas in *Wertfühlen*, I experience a centripetal pull from the motive, the value-object. “A central feeling that

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<sup>96</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 111–112.

<sup>97</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 133.

<sup>98</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 129. I discuss how Hildebrand adopts this restriction while still holding that we can directly intend moral values proper below at [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–254.

<sup>99</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 344.

accompanies the value of the person is the ‘source’ of willing and direction of the basic moral tenor (*Gesinnung*).<sup>100</sup> For this reason, Scheler holds that “only the blissful person can have a good will, and only the despairing person must be evil in his willing and actions.”<sup>101</sup>

The *Gesinnung* must be kept distinct from intention (*Absicht*), deliberation (*Überlegung*), resolution (*Vorsatz*), decision (*Entschluss*) and deed (*Handlung oder Tun*).<sup>102</sup> The intention is a volitional will for something to be done on purpose.<sup>103</sup> Deliberation is “[the] process of formation of intentions...which consists in an inner emotive scrutiny of possible intentions and their values.”<sup>104</sup> Deliberation and decision, therefore, are determined by either 1) the value that appears higher according to one’s subjective affective *ordo amoris* or 2) by the lingering pull of one’s desires to what one now recognizes as a lower value after reforming one’s previously deformed *ordo amoris*.<sup>105</sup> Thus, Edmund’s unfortunate decision to go to a party with cake rather than help his mother-in-law must be attributed to either viewing the cake as a higher value than helping his mother-in-law (i.e., he has a hedonistic *ordo amoris*), or being powerless to resist strong desires that are the result of his earlier hedonistic *ordo amoris*.<sup>106</sup> Yet not only wrongdoing is completely determined by affectivity. So is doing what is morally good. Indeed, Scheler holds that a perfectly clear insight that this value is the higher value to be realized directly *engenders*, to use Hildebrand’s term, the morally good will to realize that value:

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<sup>100</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 348.

<sup>101</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 348.

<sup>102</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 121; *Formalismus*, 141.

<sup>103</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 133.

<sup>104</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 126.

<sup>105</sup> Scheler, “*Ordo Amoris*,” 100; Spader, *Scheler’s Ethical Personalism*, 260.

<sup>106</sup> See the example of Edmund above at [2.2.2: The Objectivity of Importance and Value](#), pp. 73–75.



Whenever this insight [into value] is totally adequate and ideally perfect, it determines our willing unequivocally, without any factor or compulsion or necessitation that might come between insight and willing.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, in his Catholic period, Scheler is ambiguous as to whether he accepts a notion of the will as giving a person's *fiat*. It is not, to my knowledge, thematized by him apart from a few passing references that cannot rule either way whether he did or did not accept the *fiat*.<sup>108</sup> However, by his later pantheistic period, Scheler expressly *denies* the positive *fiat* to affirm a potential motive. By this point, Scheler holds a dualistic view where spirit (*Geist*), which can perceive values but is in itself powerless, and drive (*Drang*), which is blind to values but possess power, comprise reality.<sup>109</sup> In his essay "The Forms of Knowledge and Culture," Scheler says "The spiritual subject, man, can be determined only by the contents of the object, and not by the drives, physical needs, and inner conditions of the organism."<sup>110</sup> But this ability to be determined by the object and thereby "transcend all possible *milieu* of physical life" is based on affective love. Scheler then immediately proceeds to define free will:

Thus, what we call "free will" in man, as opposed to drive and instinct, is *not* a *positive* power to produce and create, but a negative power to control and release the impulses of drives. The act of will, related to action, is always primarily a "non-*fiat*" [It shall not be done] rather than a "*fiat*" [It shall be done].<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192.

<sup>108</sup> See Scheler, *Formalism*, xxxi for an example of such a passing reference.

<sup>109</sup> Max Scheler, "The Forms of Knowledge and Culture," in *Philosophical Perspectives*, trans. Oscar Haac (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 29.

<sup>110</sup> The clearest statement of this pantheism and Scheler's dualism between *Geist* and *Drang* can be found in his *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Hofenberg, 2016). English Translation: *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, trans. Karin S. Frings (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

<sup>111</sup> Scheler, "The Forms of Knowing and Culture," 29. All emphasis in the original translation.

I argue that the seeds of this position can be found latent in Scheler's earlier, Catholic works. Peter Spader notes that in his later pantheistic period, the "with-standing" of *Formalism* has been transferred from will to affective drives.<sup>112</sup> Even in *Formalism* we can see that drives are what initially bring our attention to things, inserting them in the *milieu*, and only in that *milieu* do we grasp them and their values. Further, it is only conation (*Streben*) that gives us a sense of reality. Hildebrand's *Daseinserfahrung* is missing.<sup>113</sup> The will is therefore totally dependent on drives and feelings of values to provide objects for it to will, and once these are presented, it is ultimately *determined* by them. The will can resist drives and desires, but only by being determined by value-insights given in feelings. The will has no positive *fiat* of its own to give, only a higher form of affectivity, *Wertfühlen*, provides escape from a lower form of affectivity, drives. Yet even this *Wertfühlen* is dependent on drives to make objects appear in a *milieu*. Hence, Scheler's prioritization of activity over receptivity in affectivity and conation, present even in his Catholic works, proved fatal not only to the independence of the will from the affectivity but also to the will's own positive character. Indeed, had Scheler earlier held that there was a positive *fiat* of the will, this position could not have been consistent with his broader theory of volition and affectivity.

Throughout his corpus, Hildebrand is often implicitly but clearly reacting against Scheler's conception of the will as subordinate to affectivity. First, for Hildebrand, nothing is given in willing. It is wholly dependent on cognition to provide objects for willing, sometimes coupled with feeling the value of those same objects. Instead of reality being given in conation, it is found in a purely receptive taking-cognizance, in *Daseinserfahrung*.

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<sup>112</sup> Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*, 191.

<sup>113</sup> See above at [1.4: Intuition of the Essential and the Real](#), pp. 38–43.

For Hildebrand unlike Scheler, values and importance more generally are given in cognition, not just affectivity. Thus, the will is not completely subordinate to affectivity. Finally, and most crucially, only the person can engender a willing, no matter how clear or unequivocal the insight that this value is to-be-willed. Crosby notes that by saying that a value can directly engender the will, Scheler, oddly, resurrects Socratic intellectualism: if we simply knew clearly enough what is good, we could not fail to will it.<sup>114</sup> This would mean a clear insight into value oddly deprives the will of its freedom. Instead, for Hildebrand, we can, even when we clearly know what is right, do what is wrong by choosing the subjectively satisfying over value. Thus, for Hildebrand, affectivity does not determine willing.

### **3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the *Fiat* of the Will**

William James begins the tradition of associating the will with a person's *fiat* in his *Principles of Psychology* Chapter XXVL, on the will.<sup>115</sup> For James, the will is essentially related to kinesthetic motions; his focus is entirely on voluntary movements. Like Hildebrand, James notes that the movements of the will must be "desired and intended beforehand."<sup>116</sup> Only animals with "divinatory power," who can foresee the act can be said to have voluntary movements.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, for James, when a mental representation has no other representation counteracting it, the automatic result is "ideo-motor action."<sup>118</sup> James gives a simple example of such ideo-motor action: one suddenly gets up out of a

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<sup>114</sup> John F. Crosby, "Person and Obligation: Critical Reflections on the Anti-Authoritarian Strain in Scheler's Personalism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 98.

<sup>115</sup> James, *Psychology*, 486–592. This will be discussed below at [7.2: Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 343–348.

<sup>116</sup> James, *Psychology*, 486.

<sup>117</sup> James, *Psychology*, 486.

<sup>118</sup> James, *Psychology*, 522.

comfortable bed on a cold morning despite lacking the will to do so previously. It is worth quoting this passage in full:

A fortunate lapse of consciousness occurs; we forget both the warmth and the bed; we fall into some revery connected with the day's life, in the course of which the idea flashes across us 'Hullo! I must lie here no longer!' – an idea which at that lucky instance awakens no contradictory or paralyzing suggestions, and consequently immediately produces its appropriate motor effects. It was our acute consciousness of both the warmth and the cold during the period of struggle which paralyzed our activity and kept the idea of rising in the condition of *wish* and not of *will*. The moment these inhibitory ideas ceased, the original idea exerted its effects. This case seems to me in miniature form to carry the data for an entire psychology of volition.<sup>119</sup>

A few notes are in order here. First, the simple idea of getting up produces the movement of its own accord. "Consciousness of its very nature is impulsive. We do not have a sensation or a thought and then have to add something dynamic to get a movement."<sup>120</sup> There is no *fiat* or decision here, action follows immediately upon idea. Second, the idea alone *is* the will when it is unimpeded by other factors. There need not be any conscious moment of decision. This means, for James, that the will need not always be a will for some good. Indeed, the idea of doing some evil action in some sorry cases can simply lead to the action because of how stuck the abhorrent but fascinating idea is in the mind.<sup>121</sup> Finally, the will need not take on the character of a response to something bearing

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<sup>119</sup> James, *Psychology*, 524–525.

<sup>120</sup> James, *Psychology*, 526.

<sup>121</sup> James, *Psychology*, 553.

importance.<sup>122</sup> The mere representation of a possible action may initiate it even if this action contains no positive or negative importance of its own, such as when I utter a silly word simply because the idea of doing so is present to me.<sup>123</sup>

James introduces the notion of the *fiat* for when there are two or more countervailing influences on the mind. “The express *fiat*, or act of mental consent to the movement, comes in when the neutralization of the inhibitory idea is required.”<sup>124</sup> As with Hildebrand, the *fiat* is the moment of decision: “We are said to decide, or to utter our voluntary *fiat* in favor of one or the other course.” The reinforcing or inhibiting ideas are now “termed the reasons or motives by which the decision is brought about.”<sup>125</sup> For James the *fiat* is nothing more than voluntary attention to one idea when it is difficult to do so. This attention represents a consent to having that idea produce the movement. “The essential achievement of the will, in short, is when it is most ‘voluntary,’ is to ATTEND to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind. The so-doing is the *fiat*.”<sup>126</sup>

Susi Ferrarello has noted that James’ conception of the will problematizes the notion of free will, particularly the moral dimensions of freedom.<sup>127</sup> The will and its freedom are reduced to attention and memory. As a result, freedom is subordinated to an epistemological mechanism of attention. Further, James’ conception of the will both downplays and elevates the notion of choice. Choice is not necessary for willing as such. Yet the will “when it is most voluntary,” i.e., when the *fiat* is involved, always involves two or more choices. Decision can only be preceded by indecision, which is therefore

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<sup>122</sup> James, *Psychology*, 554.

<sup>123</sup> James, *Psychology*, 554.

<sup>124</sup> James, *Psychology*, 526.

<sup>125</sup> James, *Psychology*, 528.

<sup>126</sup> James, *Psychology*, 528.

<sup>127</sup> Ferrarello, “On the Rationality of Will in James and Husserl,” 6–8.

necessary for the will “when it is most voluntary.” These conclusions are the direct result of James having no sense of “will” as independent of cognition and attention, no distinction of the will from the mind.

Husserl, by contrast, does preserve a distinction between the will, concerned as it is with practice, and the mind.<sup>128</sup> For Husserl, there are three analogous forms of reasoning: 1) theoretical reasoning which deals with objects, 2) axiological reasoning which deals with values, and 3) practical reasoning which deals with “goods” or goals for the will.<sup>129</sup> An object must first be regarded as having some kind of value, and then I can will it. Unlike Hildebrand, Husserl does not distinguish different senses of “good” as different irreducible categories of importance, e.g., value, objective good for a person, and subjectively satisfying. Rather, “good” refers to the object of a practical intention, which is underlined by a value on the axiological level. Helping a beggar is good because doing so is valuable, but, for Husserl, seeking undeserved praise is also “good” in the sense that it has a “value” as pleasant. The will, therefore, is tertiary to objectifying theoretical and axiological reason.

The will is secondary in another sense; it is always an active position-taking (*Stellungnahme*) that depends on prior passivity. In *Ideas II*, Husserl distinguishes between the free, active ego from which issue position-takings (*Stellungnahmen*), and the passive ego “in the sense of being affected as well as being receptive...the ego of ‘tendencies.’”<sup>130</sup> Melle notes it is unclear how Husserl would classify desires or wishes that I passively undergo, e.g., upon seeing this pastry I immediately undergo the experience of having a desire for it. Melle thinks it is possible that these desires are properly affects for Husserl,

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<sup>128</sup> See HUA XXVIII. *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre 1908-1914*. ed. Ullrich Melle. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988) <https://open.org/pub-109118>. Melle, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of Willing,” 175.

<sup>129</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §53, 213; *Ideas II*, 225.

<sup>130</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §53, 213; *Ideas II*, 225.

as they are for Hildebrand.<sup>131</sup> Husserl does clearly distinguish wishing and desire from acts of will.<sup>132</sup> For both Husserl and Hildebrand, one can only have a willing (*Wollen*) for what one can realize, otherwise it is not a will but a wish.<sup>133</sup>

The will for Husserl includes three types of volitional positings as different moments of a complete willing: 1) the resolution or resolve (*Vorsatz*), 2) the *fiat*, and 3) the will activity or action.<sup>134</sup> Of these, the *fiat* is central to the will as a whole. *Fiat* is a term Husserl directly derives from James.<sup>135</sup> Like James, Husserl identifies his *fiat* as a decision and consent “the subject ‘consents,’ says ‘yes’ to the invitation of the stimulus precisely as an invitation to yield to it, and gives its *fiat* in practice.”<sup>136</sup> Unlike James, for whom consent, resolve, and *fiat* become more or less synonymous with each other, Husserl distinguishes resolve from the *fiat* in that, in resolving to do something, I am not directed at a state of affairs to be realized but to future willings. I plan to write this chapter, but I have not done so yet. When I sit down to write, I give this plan my *fiat* (“let it be”). This *fiat* both initiates and passes over into the whole process of writing the chapter. The willing as action is then the realization, the fulfillment of the *fiat*. Pulling on Frankfurt’s analysis of the will, which I will discuss just below, Hart reads Husserl’s *fiat* to be a second-order intention that says “let it be” to a first-order intention, and it identifies the person with that intention.<sup>137</sup> This first-order intention may be anything passively undergone or received, which is then identified with the person as an active position-taking of the ego. So in *Ideas II* §61, Husserl claims that I can either passively accept a rule in my society, or I can

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<sup>131</sup> Melle, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of Willing,” 180.

<sup>132</sup> Husserl, HUA XXVIII, 103, 105.

<sup>133</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §60, 257; *Ideas II*, 269.

<sup>134</sup> Melle, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of Willing,” 180.

<sup>135</sup> Melle, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of Willing,” 176.

<sup>136</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §60, 257; *Ideas II*, 269.

<sup>137</sup> See Husserl, HUA IV, §60, 257; *Ideas II*, 269; Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, 93.

consciously and freely adopt it. When I do the latter, the rule “becomes a part of me....it has become a position-taking of my own ego.”<sup>138</sup>

This discussion of Husserl brings to light the essentially dependent character of the *fiat* for both him and Hildebrand. As we will see in Chapter Four, in *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand distinguishes between the sanction of cooperative freedom and the mere “assent of the person” (*Zustimmung der Person*) found in every willing.<sup>139</sup> Let us focus on the structure of this “assent,” which is what he calls the *fiat* in *Ethics*. For Hildebrand the *fiat* of the will is what I term a second-order intentionality that gives or refuses the “assent of the person” to a lower order intentionality or to some other state of the person.<sup>140</sup> However, I am using the term “intentionality” in a very broad and somewhat unusual sense. I include under it not only intentional responses or being affected, but also the very “word” of values or other objects that one receives as an *Inhalt* in the purely centripetal intentionality of taking-cognizance. The call of a value for a proper response, which I cognize, is therefore something I count as an intentionality. One then assents to giving or rejects giving a response in accord with the word of that cognized importance. In some cases, I am called to give a sanction or a disavowal of an intentionality that is already an experience in me, and this is the realm of cooperative freedom proper.<sup>141</sup> I notice enthusiasm for the beauty of this melody welling up inside of me, and I am called to sanction that enthusiasm. But, I would argue, the *fiat* of the will is similar in that, even in the case where I am purely void, I feel nothing, my will is called to give its *fiat* to the call of value to do what is morally

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<sup>138</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §61, 269 *Ideas II*, 281.

<sup>139</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509. See below at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), p. 197.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509.

<sup>141</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509.



good. The word of the object gets my stamp of approval to the value at hand; I ratify its word with a response of my own.<sup>142</sup>

Returning to Husserl, Susi Ferrarello gives a similar critique of him as she does of James. For both thinkers the will is so tied to epistemological reason that choice seems “automatic.”<sup>143</sup> Decision (*Entscheidung*) for Husserl consists of an epistemic and axiological weighing of values.<sup>144</sup> Whichever way the balance goes the will inevitably follows. Ferrarello notes that freedom is thought to involve choice between distinct possibilities, and yet Husserl seems to rule this out. Hart does little to allay Ferrarello’s concerns, noting that Husserl is committed to a kind of “teleological determinism;” one ought to and inevitably will choose what seems best.<sup>145</sup> This determinism, according to Hart, is “one which holds that one is most free when one is disposed to pursue with a kind of moral necessity what appears as evidently good and true.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, whereas for James choice is not necessary for the will in the broadest sense of the term but is necessary for volition when it is “most voluntary,” for Husserl choice seems to be unnecessary in the ultimate analysis.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> This is not to suggest that the *fiat* of the will can itself be termed a sanction in Hildebrand’s sense of the term “sanction.” For my own distinction between the *fiat* of the will and the sanction, see [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 219–220.

<sup>143</sup> Ferrarello, “On the Rationality of Will in James and Husserl,” 8–10.

<sup>144</sup> Husserl, HUA XXVIII, 110–113, 126.

<sup>145</sup> Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, 96.

<sup>146</sup> Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, 96.

<sup>147</sup> Andrea Staiti notes that in the soon to be published *Studien zur Struktur des Bewußtseins* (HUA XLIII) Husserl develops a radically different account of free action than the one I have presented here. Husserl enacts a paradigm shift where the focus turns from the will as a supposed faculty that initiates action to a phenomenological investigation of free action itself. When I kick a ball to hit a goal, it’s the whole extended movement of my leg that must be seen as a voluntary action, and not simply a series of bodily activities activated by the will (which would be Hildebrand’s position). The whole movement is not phenomenologically given to me as a naturally caused event but rather as a creative and volitional event. Staiti also notes that for some primary willings, e.g., the sudden willing to stop writing my paper, get up, and get a glass of water, there is a *fiat* but not one that proceeds from a pre-thought out resolution. However, in this case, we still have some good that is willed (water to drink), to which I give my *fiat*.

The issue Ferrarello identifies in both James and Husserl is insufficient separation of the will from reason. This is akin to the insufficient separation of the will from the heart found in Scheler. Hildebrand, I hold, sidesteps this issue by clearly distinguishing the will from the mind in claiming that the will and the will alone engenders the *fiat*. With this Hildebrand implicitly accounts for freedom even when a person is univocally set on a course of action. Hildebrand notes that, for a virtuous person, “the general intention of the will” may be “directed so univocally” to the morally good that “as soon as a morally relevant value is at stake the person freely conforms to this good, without considering in any way the possibility of not doing so.”<sup>148</sup> Suppose Sally is so virtuous that, upon seeing a hungry beggar, the idea of eating her pastry alone immediately becomes abhorrent to her. She does not even consider doing anything except giving it away. Here, Hildebrand notes, “Although objectively there exist always two possibilities (that of conforming our will and that of not conforming) a real choice does not take place.”<sup>149</sup> Hildebrand says it would be artificial to say that the person here makes a choice, given the subjective lack of

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This to me seems like a potentially fruitful way of understanding freedom in the context of the lived body, and it is radically distinct from Hildebrand’s conception of the will as commanding actions by its *fiat*. However, it does not seem to me to be opposed to Hildebrand’s position, but merely a different way of viewing action where the locus of freedom is no longer hypostatized into a “will” but is rather seen as a *sui-generis* property of some lived-body actions. I can view actions either as proceeding from a center in me that is free (the will) or that the action itself has the property of being free. Either approach preserves the essential freedom of the person from causal determinism, and either approach leaves intact the orientation of freedom toward the good. The action approach avoids a hypostatization of the will into a faculty that one might, erroneously, divide from the person. As Karol Wojtyła notes, it is not my will that acts but I who act through the will as a whole and unified person. On the other hand, retaining the terminology of willing enables one to better understand how free action is possible for non-corporeal or not currently corporeal persons (e.g., a saint in Heaven, who, prior to the Resurrection, wills to intercede for me, despite not having her body). For the purposes of this paper, I will continue to speak in terms of freedom of the will rather than freedom as a property of lived-body actions taken as a whole, but I intend eventually in a future work to incorporate Husserl’s insights into an account of moral freedom once the HUA edition is published. See Andrea Staiti “Husserl’s Account of Action: Naturalistic or Anti-Naturalistic?: A Journey through the *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins*,” in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*. Vol. XVII (New York: Routledge, 2019): 8–21.

<sup>148</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 325–326.

<sup>149</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 326.

alternatives.<sup>150</sup> For Hildebrand, Sally does not necessarily feel compelled, but rather is so internally committed to following what values demand that the motivating power of the call of the value to act is immediately, unequivocally, and yet freely given the *fiat* of her person and transferred over to free action.<sup>151</sup> However, I do see a virtue in retaining the term “choice,” insofar as Sally alone engenders the will to give and has the potential power to not engender that will.<sup>152</sup>

James would see this as a case of ideo-motor action and thus not “most voluntary” insofar as no indecision is present. James would deny that a *fiat* is present in Sally’s case. In contrast, Husserl would hold a *fiat* is present; however, for him this *fiat* would be determined by and inevitably follow upon practical reason and Sally’s unhindered recognition that sharing the pastry is a higher value than the pleasure of eating it alone. While for Husserl the will alone gives the *fiat*, it is still determined by the mind. By contrast, for Hildebrand it is still up to the will to decide to say “*fiat*” to sharing the pastry. One could say that while psychologically Sally experiences no “real choice,” one would not be wrong in saying she freely chooses to give. She could, at least potentially and from an objective perspective, choose the subjectively satisfying over value, though in this case she does not even consider that possibility. For not engendering the *fiat* to share is in her power even after reason has presented it as unequivocally to-be-done. The *fiat* of the will does not automatically follow upon the deliberation of reason but rather belongs to the will

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<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 326.

<sup>151</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 326.

<sup>152</sup> I give an additional reason for holding that a meaningful sense of choice is involved even in the case of a person with a virtuous will univocally set on the good in the Chapter Four. There I note that any mature finite person must have already made a choice to be virtuous if they are in a situation like that of Sally. See [4.6.3: Freedom of Choice, Decision, and Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 229–230.

alone. Hildebrand is able to claim moral freedom without recourse to teleological determinism insofar as the will is independent of the mind.

### 3.3.4: The Ambiguity of “Want”: Hildebrand in Dialogue with Harry Frankfurt

In calling Husserl’s *fiat* a “second order intention,” Hart is reading Frankfurt’s seminal paper “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” into Husserl. For Frankfurt, volition involves a second-order *desire* to have a first-order *desire* produce action, e.g., one desires that one’s desire to stop smoking to be effective, even though in fact the desire to smoke is effective.<sup>153</sup> Our ability to have these second-order desires comes from self-reflection.<sup>154</sup> Frankfurt notes one can have a second-order desire to have a first-order desire, while not desiring the object of that first-order desire. Frankfurt gives the example of a physician who wants to experience what it is like for his patients to have an addictive desire for drugs, but he does not want to actually take any drugs.<sup>155</sup> In contrast to these mere second-order desires for desires, Frankfurt posits “second-order volitions” which are second-order desires to have a first-order *effective* desire, i.e., a first-order desire that is not overwhelmed by other desires and that actually moves the person “all the way to action.”<sup>156</sup>

For Frankfurt, it is having these second-order volitions that marks one as a person. Yet it is not these second-order desires, but rather the effective first-order desire that is said to be a person’s will.<sup>157</sup> By contrast, someone who only has first-order desires is not a person but a mere “wanton” who does not care about his or her (or its) will.<sup>158</sup> A wanton may still be able to deliberate about how to secure what he or she desires, but he or she

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<sup>153</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 6–8.

<sup>154</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 13.

<sup>155</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 9.

<sup>156</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 8.

<sup>157</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 8.

<sup>158</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 11.

does not ever deliberate about what kind of desires to have. This wanton inevitably follows the strongest desire with all of his or her being. Frankfurt's account is in some respects similar to James' account of the will. The will is identified not with the higher position-taking stratum of the person but rather the lower stratum that is *effective*.<sup>159</sup>

Frankfurt characterizes both strata as *desires*. For him desire is the central notion of conation. This is crucial because he understands desires as something that could be, to use Hildebrand's terminology, engendered in the person by outside factors.<sup>160</sup> All of my desires could be determined by my causal history, leading back to the Big Bang. In his article "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Will and Intentional Agency," Alessandro Salice attributes this failure to distinguish between will and desire to the fact that English has no noun corresponding to the verb "to want."<sup>161</sup> Indeed, Frankfurt himself notes that to speak of "want" as a singular noun is something of an "abomination."<sup>162</sup> However, in German, *Wollen* performs exactly this function, and thus it is strictly distinguished from desire (*Begehren*). Implicitly in Husserl and expressly in Hildebrand, desires are affective states that are engendered in one, outside of one's control, whereas "willings" or "wants" (*Wollen*) are engendered directly by the free person.

If we ignore Frankfurt's warning and use the term "want" as a noun, we can see now that in ordinary English the term "want" is ambiguous. Often "wants" refers to desires passively engendered in one that are not in one's power. One might say "I couldn't help but want to eat the pastry, but I chose and willed to give it away." In other cases, a want is a deliberate "willing" engendered *by* the person. Thus, we can say to one, "You shouldn't

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<sup>159</sup>See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 142–151.

<sup>160</sup> Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person," 20.

<sup>161</sup> Salice, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Will and Intentional Agency," 13.

<sup>162</sup> Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person," 7ff.

want that, it is not good for you.” The person is addressed as if by an act of will he or she can abolish the want for that object. In many cases we actually do abolish it, but in other cases we find the “want” is actually a desire outside of our direct control. “Willing” like “want” is also not typically a noun in English, but it does have the advantage of being associated with a deliberately engendered “will” to do something. We can now see that “want” can refer to a desiderative state engendered *in* one (*Begehren*) and also *by* one (*Wollen*).

If “want” is identified solely with *desire* engendered in one, then one is not free unless one can do what one desires. As noted above in the introduction, it is impossible for an act to be freely done unless the person, in at least some sense, *wants* to do that act.<sup>163</sup> An external observer will never take my statement “I in no way want to do this” as I give away my pastry as being absolutely literally true. Taken in a completely literal sense, my act would then be some freak occurrence rather than a willed act. But one would count it as free even if those desires are fully determined by factors ultimately outside of one’s control. Frankfurt openly admits this; his conception of free will is open to a compatibilist interpretation of free will, one that Hildebrand could never accept.<sup>164</sup> For Hildebrand, by contrast, even if I have no desire, and I do not “want” to be generous, I can still command myself to do generous deeds and engender the will to have the will to be generous, as seen above.<sup>165</sup> For Hildebrand it matters less what “level” the volition is at, be it first-order, second-order, third-order, etc. All that is needed is that it be a second-order intentionality to some lower order intentionality and that it be engendered by the person for it to count as

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<sup>163</sup> See [INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING FREEDOM AND MORALITY](#), p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person,” 20.

<sup>165</sup> See [3.3.1: Hildebrand’s Phenomenology of the Will](#), p. 134–135.

a full volition. A will to act or a will to have a will may both count as a willing (*Wollen*), provided they are engendered by the person. Thus, Hildebrand is able to avoid a compatibilism that is almost built into the English language.

### 3.4: The Subjection of Motivation

However, the picture of freedom in the previous section is one-sided in that it only pays attention to the active side of freedom and the independence of the will engendering its own acts. The adage *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum* implies that there is a receptive side to freedom.<sup>166</sup> If the previous section focused on the “autonomy” of engendering the will, this section will focus on the “heteronomy” found in the requirement that an engendered response of the will be “supported” by some importance on the side of the object. First, I show that a will unsupported by importance, a purely arbitrary willing, lacks precisely the character of a volitional response that makes a willing a willing, for Hildebrand.<sup>167</sup> Then, in the second subsection, I proceed to show how Hildebrand’s acceptance of fundamental receptivity to importance prior to willing means that he diverges from Kant in attributing only autonomy to the will. It brings him closer to Levinas in that what is other than one’s freedom is what liberates it from arbitrariness and gives freedom its meaning.<sup>168</sup> In the volitional value-response, we find what I call, in a deliberate reversal of Kant, an autonomous assumption of heteronomy. Finally, in the last subsection, I explore how in all cases of responding to importance there is something of this subjection of the will to what is other than the will. In this concluding section, it will be shown that it is in fact the

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<sup>166</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>167</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

<sup>168</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 88.

heteronomy of self-donation that makes the autonomy of the will, freedom of choice, and freedom to do what we want possible.

### 3.4.1: Freedom and/vs Arbitrariness

Hildebrand notes that it is possible to confuse freedom with the arbitrary.<sup>169</sup> Often, raising one's hand of one's own accord, and perhaps for no reason at all, is taken as a paradigmatically free act.<sup>170</sup> Crosby concedes "it may really be the case...that arbitrary free acts are possible toward what is apprehended as neutral."<sup>171</sup> His rationale is that "free acts, being free, are not engendered by their objects, but rather by free agents, and so such acts might be possible without any apprehended importance."<sup>172</sup> However, Crosby immediately notes that such acts would be "meaningless and irrational."<sup>173</sup> It's not a willing if it is not motivated by consciousness of some kind of importance as importance. Indeed, as Alasdair MacIntyre notes in his *After Virtue*, we never are satisfied in explaining an action unless we can attribute some motive or reason to the action.<sup>174</sup> Until I have found a motive bearing the proper importance to motivate the movement, I cannot accept that it was freely done. Upon seeing a person suddenly raise her hand, I am forced to consider either a completely involuntary tick or that there is some reason of which I am ignorant. For while the object

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<sup>169</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

<sup>170</sup> Seifert has noted in several articles the insufficiency of Libet's conclusion that his famous experiments disprove positive free will in several articles. Seifert notes, among other things, that the action of moving one's hand which is the central "free act" of Libet's experiments is an arbitrary action that lacks much of the voluntary character of genuine free actions, and it should not be taken as a paradigm of free activity. See Josef Seifert, "In Defense of Free Will: A Critique of Benjamin Libet," *The Review of Metaphysics* 65, no. 2 (2011): 377–407; "Can Neurological Evidence Refute Free Will? The Failure of a Phenomenological Analysis of Acts in Libet's Denial of 'Positive Free Will,'" *Pensamiento: Revista de Investigación e Información Filosófica* 67, no. 254 (January 1, 2011): 1077–1098; "Persons, Causes and Free Will: Libet's Topsy-Turvy Idea of the Order of Causes and 'Forgetfulness of the Person,'" *Journal of East-West Thought* 4, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 13–51.

<sup>171</sup> Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of 'Bonum,'" 254–255.

<sup>172</sup> Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of 'Bonum,'" 255.

<sup>173</sup> Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of 'Bonum,'" 255.

<sup>174</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 208–210.



does not engender the will, the object does play a role in that it “supports” and motivates the will.

In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand goes further than Crosby. For Hildebrand, “Willing cannot be brought into existence simply by our free center without any motive supporting it from the object side (German translation: *Ohne ein von der Objektseite her unterstützendes Motiv kann das freie Personzentrum ein Wollen nicht einfach zur Existenz bringen*).”<sup>175</sup> For Hildebrand, to ascribe a capacity to will without motives, even in an attempt to emphasize the free character of willing, “actually destroys the dignity and rationality of willing and even places it below mere urges.”<sup>176</sup> For while urges have, at least, a directionality that we can understand “from without,” such an arbitrary willing utterly fails to aim at an object.<sup>177</sup> “Willing would no longer be a position taken by man,” a *Stellungnahme*, becoming “a merely blind movement.”<sup>178</sup> In contrast to this hypothetical blind movement, in all cases of willing we do in fact find a meaningful intentional response that is always “supported,” to use Hildebrand’s term, by some cognized importance. It is the very dependence of will on knowledge that makes its independence from reason or the mind possible. Hildebrand does not reduce freedom of the will to the mechanisms of memory and attention, as James does, nor does Hildebrand make the will teleologically determined by reason, as Husserl arguably does. The will is not determined by cognition, but it is dependent on it. Lacking this dependence, the will loses its very character as

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<sup>175</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305; *Ethik*, 301.

<sup>176</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305; *Ethik*, 301.

<sup>177</sup> In his *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand notes that a sanction that aims at what is merely subjectively satisfying as if it were valuable “fails at objectification,” a conclusion I note both below in this chapter and in Chapter Four. I will argue that a similar failure of objectification can be found in any morally arbitrary willing. See Hildebrand, *SW*, 553. See also [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 190–191; and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 204–212.

<sup>178</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

“volition,” as taking a position toward some object. For this reason, Hildebrand declares, “Freedom and the arbitrary are essentially incompatible.”<sup>179</sup>

I am inclined to agree with Crosby that we cannot strictly rule out arbitrary free movements. However, these “free” movements seem to represent more of a theoretical limit case for freedom than an actual possibility of the will. The notion of a purely arbitrary, motiveless willing can function in a phenomenology of the will in a manner similar to how prime matter functions in Aristotelian metaphysics. It is necessary for explanatory purposes, but one will never encounter a real case of it. One will always suspect in alleged cases of arbitrary willing that there is some hidden motivation. Such arbitrary acts represent the limit case where an unfounded will possess its bare activity. Thus, the act is “free” since it is engendered by the person and not determined. Yet such acts lack freedom in the sense of being blind and lacking their own volitional character as a position-taking.

However, I want to argue, in a somewhat Augustinian mode, that a mitigated form of arbitrariness is found in an analogous sense in any immoral action, which perhaps even Hildebrand himself misses. As we will see in the next chapter, in *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand says an attempt to sanction something morally bad, say a concupiscent desire, fails, because this pseudo-sanction is “an arbitrary assent, that fails at its objectification (*eine willkürliche Zustimmung, die in ihrem Objektivierungsversuch scheitert*).”<sup>180</sup> I want to argue that a similar failure of objectification is present in any morally wrong *fiat* of the will, which Hildebrand himself does not recognize. For Hildebrand, an evil action is intelligible because it is “supported” by the subjectively satisfying, which I choose over a value. I

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<sup>179</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

<sup>180</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 553. See also [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 197; and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 210–220.

should give my pastry to the beggar, but it is delicious, so I scarf it down in front of him. Thus, eating the pastry in front of the beggar is a free and genuine willing, a position taking. Yet there is a gap between what I should will (to give the pastry, because doing so is valuable) and what I do will (eating the pastry, because it is subjectively satisfying).<sup>181</sup> If someone were to ask me why I am eating the pastry, I could respond, “Because it is delicious.” When they point out to me that this is not a sufficient reason or motive in the present circumstances, I can only respond “Well, I want (*Ich will*) to do so.” The object of an evil will, while being a true object, is in a way like a wormhole leading back to the self. The intentionality of my will, my going out to the object to affirm it with my *fiat*, curves back onto my illegitimate subjective will and desires. The willing has and yet is somewhat (but not totally) deprived of its character as being a response, being a *Stellungnahme*. In this morally arbitrary act, the freedom of the will, while remaining free, falls into the unfreedom of the arbitrary.

Hildebrand tends to speak of situations where one does what is morally wrong as an activation of one’s “physical” or “ontological” freedom as opposed to one’s moral freedom, insofar as one’s freedom is activated but lacks meaning.<sup>182</sup> Yet physical and moral freedom must not be understood as distinct levels of freedom; rather, I would argue that moral freedom pervades the very structure of the will, our very ontological freedom, in the way I have detailed above. To will immorally is to simultaneously actualize one’s freedom and to subvert it. A lack of moral freedom deprives willing of its intentional, meaningful character as a response, of its very character of being a willing. We humans, and indeed all

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<sup>181</sup> This gap, and therefore the moral arbitrariness of eating the pastry, would not be present if the beggar were not present. There is nothing wrong with eating a delicious pastry. It’s the fact that I ought to give to the beggar but eat it anyway that leads to the inversion of the will.

<sup>182</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

finite persons, possess an incredible and haunting ability to subvert our freedom into the arbitrary in and through our very use of our freedom, a paradoxical freedom to be freely unfree.<sup>183</sup>

### 3.4.2: Kant's Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom

With this we move from a notion of freedom centered on desires, choices, and wants to one that focuses on the opposition between freedom and the arbitrary. In a private conversation, Professor Dermot Moran related to me that this is characteristic of the conception of freedom in much of German philosophy. Freedom is not contrasted with the constraint law imposes on us, but rather freedom is the very law we give to ourselves. In this autonomy, I am self-determined. Nowhere is this clearer than in Kant.

Notably, the word “arbitrary” in German, *willkürlich*, refers to the German noun *Willkür*. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant defines *Willkür* as “the faculty to do or to refrain from doing as one pleases.”<sup>184</sup> For Kant, it has less the connotation of “arbitrary” in the sense of “unfounded” or “irrational.” Rather, it corresponds to Augustine’s *liberium arbitrium*, the free power to choose. “The ground determining it [*Willkür*] to action lies within itself and not in its object.”<sup>185</sup> One has *Willkür* when one is conscious of being able to do this action, and one has only a wish if this consciousness is lacking.<sup>186</sup> When the faculty of desire’s determining ground lies in the subject’s reason, it is *der Wille*, the will.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> I say “finite” because supposing there was an Infinite Person or Persons, God, He would never have a motive to will arbitrarily insofar as His Own Being is His motive for all possible free acts. Such a Being would experience a very different freedom in that its (His) will can supply from itself (Himself) anything that is to be willed.

For the full discussion of how being morally evil subverts freedom, see [7.3.2: The Annulment of Freedom](#) pp. 353–358 and [7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom](#), pp. 364–375.

<sup>184</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 374.

<sup>185</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 374.

<sup>186</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 375.

<sup>187</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 375.

For Kant it is reason that makes one free. For one is free only insofar as one's choices can be determined by practical reason, apodictic insight into the morally good.

However, one can choose to give into one's inclinations and this is a free act that one is responsible for. Yet it is one that Kant holds subverts one's freedom. The subjective principle of the will for Kant is a *maxim*, e.g., to never lie or to always avenge insults.<sup>188</sup> Maxims express rules or imperatives for persons whose wills are not determined only by practical reason but who are also subject to inclinations. These imperatives are conditional and hypothetical if they determine the will with regard to a desired effect, e.g., "feed the poor in order to avoid revolution." When a practical principle has an object or matter (*Material*), this matter is always empirical and it cannot found a practical law.<sup>189</sup> If the determining ground of *Willkür* is not a formal law but rather the material (i.e., non-formal) representation of some object, the relation of the representation by which the will is moved is *pleasure* in the reality of the object.<sup>190</sup> As a result, Kant refers such representations to sensation (*Empfindung*) and feeling (*Gefühl*), words he often uses interchangeably.<sup>191</sup> The feeling of pleasure serves as the incentive for the adoption of certain subjective practical principles. Moreover, Kant holds that "All material practical principles as such...come under the general principle of self-love and one's happiness."<sup>192</sup> Self-love (*Eigenliebe*) is "the propensity to make oneself as having the subjective determining grounds of *Willkür* into the objective determining ground of the will."<sup>193</sup> This self-love becomes self-conceit when it "makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle."<sup>194</sup> Such

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<sup>188</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:19, 153.

<sup>189</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:21, 155.

<sup>190</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:21, 155.

<sup>191</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 155ff. Translator's note.

<sup>192</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 155.

<sup>193</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:73, 200.

<sup>194</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:73, 200.

principles are always heteronomous for Kant as they are based on sensibility. Perhaps surprisingly, it is precisely self-love that leads to the subversion of the will into heteronomy.

Autonomy, by contrast, is found in the Categorical Imperative, which binds one regardless of one's purpose. As no material (non-formal) object could be the principle of this law, Kant concludes the object of this law is "the mere form of giving universal law."<sup>195</sup> This universal law is given by practical reason, and thus it is autonomous in that one's will is not determined either by the inclinations or by causation. This universal lawgiving is the very dignity of humanity, or rather rational personhood, insofar as persons set themselves as ends in themselves and never mere means, and thereby give themselves the universal moral law.<sup>196</sup> In this way, Kant unifies personal freedom with moral freedom because freedom simply is giving oneself the moral law, autonomy. There is a negative conception of freedom in Kant, independence from being determined by sensible impulses, and a positive one, namely "that of the ability of pure reason to be of itself practical."<sup>197</sup> Therefore, freedom is not found in anything that the will receives from what is other than the will, but rather freedom is found in the very moral law the reason gives of its own accord. When this law imposes itself, this very imposition produces and is a feeling of respect (*Achtung*) and reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) for the law.<sup>198</sup>

For Hildebrand, by contrast, reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) involves adopting the "law" of values that are precisely distinct from and other than the will and the understanding as the

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<sup>195</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:27, 160.

<sup>196</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:436, 66; En. Tr. 85.

<sup>197</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 375.

<sup>198</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:82, 206.

person receives this law in a wholly receptive manner.<sup>199</sup> *Pace* Kant, this does not mean that a feeling of pleasure serves as the incentive of adopting this law. Rather, the call of value strikes one directly and can be accepted even in the absence of any feeling in favor of adopting this law. Recall that a morally struggling person might be able to only see the value of the virtue he or she is pursuing without feeling it.<sup>200</sup> Yet this is enough for that person to know he or she should obtain that virtue.

As seen in the previous chapter, for both Hildebrand and Levinas, what is other than the will founds and makes possible my very subjectivity as a free personal subject. Levinas speaks of this as the “investiture” of freedom, which “liberates freedom from the arbitrary.”<sup>201</sup> I am walking about and enjoying a beautiful day in downtown Boston. I then see a beggar. I may, upon seeing the face of the beggar calling for help, refuse the beggar, or I constitute this beggar as a “moocher” who should not be helped. Yet in so doing I am always already bound in responsibility to that Other. The Other “invests” my freedom in that it is the Other who, before the activation of my own free subjectivity, gives my freedom its purpose and meaning. Levinas typically sees this investiture as an external demand that interrupts one’s arbitrary freedom but also, on further analysis, is what makes freedom both possible and also gives it meaning. It is in being subjected in responsibility to the Other that I find I am a free subject. Yet everything I freely do can be construed as a response to the Other, even if that is simply to ignore him.

In a similar way, for Hildebrand, freedom receives its law and purpose from values that are essentially other than the will itself. For the will is unable to receive importance on

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<sup>199</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 1–9.

<sup>200</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–471. See the discussion of Hildebrand’s *Wertfühlen* above at [2.3.1: The Intuitive Givenness of Values](#), pp. 82–90.

<sup>201</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 84–85.

its own, it relies on taking-cognizance. Yet in taking-cognizance, one is always “void” and the content is on the object side.<sup>202</sup> The importance of any potential object for willing, therefore, stands against me as other than me in taking-cognizance. Even if what I am cognizing and willing is my own dignity, e.g., when I stand up for myself against a bully, formally speaking that dignity still stands as other than my will.

Hildebrand goes further than Levinas does in that this investiture of freedom is not only experienced as a demand “from without” but also “from within.” In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas considers freedom largely in terms of the freedom to cognize objects.<sup>203</sup> Following Husserl, for Levinas, freedom both precedes and can even condition objectivity. I can freely cognize and make sense (*Sinngebung*) of this beggar as a beggar-to-be-helped or as moocher-to-be-avoided. Yet response-ability precedes freedom insofar as the beggar has to present himself as an Other before me before I can constitute him any way I like. The investiture of freedom is experienced as coming from an Other who is radically distinct from me and thus at a “distance” from me before this intentional relation. The call is “from without” to use Hildebrand’s terms. It is a call to goodness that invests my freedom. Yet this call also calls into question the very spontaneity of my freedom, which I am called to give up in serving the Other. For Levinas, the pure spontaneity of freedom is always arbitrary in that by itself freedom is detached from the Other, “by itself, it is only freedom, that is, arbitrary and unjustified.”<sup>204</sup> The call of the Other reveals my freedom to be arbitrary, and at the same time liberates freedom from that arbitrariness.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206. See also [1.5: Knowledge as “Empty” Having](#), pp. 43–46 and [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 109–114.

<sup>203</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 42–47. Heidegger is another target of this passage, as well as Husserl.

<sup>204</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 88.

<sup>205</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 88. This is not the whole story of investiture, as I am postponing explaining the role affective enjoyment plays in investiture for both Levinas and Hildebrand for Chapter Six. See [6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom](#), pp. 315–325.



Hildebrand, for whom *Sinngebung* is not at issue in what Husserl and Levinas call objectification, holds that freedom is subsequent to receiving the object in a purely receptive manner. As a result, freedom is not merely given its meaning from without by the Other's call but rather the call of the Other founds my freedom "from within." For Levinas, cognizing the Other is a free activity, albeit one done always already subjected to the Other, who has made this freedom possible by speaking the first word. By contrast, for Hildebrand, taking-cognizance of the Other is precisely receiving the "word" of the Other in a purely receptive manner that precedes the activation of the will. This taking-cognizance is a centripetal intentional relation that does not presuppose language but metaphorically *is* language.<sup>206</sup> Through this taking-cognizance the subsequent free response of the will is then invested with meaning. As a result, freedom is not revealed to be arbitrary by investiture for Hildebrand, though he would agree with Levinas that "by itself, it [freedom] is only freedom, that is, arbitrary and unjustified."<sup>207</sup> Rather, freedom itself always already is given meaning "from within" by the very taking-cognizance of the call of the Other. This represents not so much an interruption of freedom per se as what invigorates freedom, gives freedom life and meaning. For Hildebrand, freedom is never "by itself" unless it severs its own connection to the Other and to the world of values.

Drawing from Hildebrand, I think one can claim that freedom, and especially moral freedom, is found not in autonomy alone, but rather in the free, autonomous assumption of "heteronomy." I am here deliberately turning the Kantian notion of heteronomy, which is for Kant a negative term, on its head and giving it a positive sense. The power to choose, *Willkür*, is liberated from arbitrariness by receiving a law not from pure practical reason,

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<sup>206</sup> See [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 109–114.

<sup>207</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 88.

but precisely from receiving and freely submitting to the “word” and “law” of the value.<sup>208</sup> This word is “other” than the intellect and the will, even it is the will’s own dignity, for the very structure of willing presupposes a taking-cognizance where the person is wholly “void” and receptive. The word of importance is what gives the will the power to choose to engender or not to engender a response, i.e., to be Kant’s *Willkür*, and at the same time invests that response with a meaningfulness that ensures it is not arbitrary (*willkürlich*). Here, the heteronomy of value is precisely what makes possible the autonomy of the will, to be a will that gives the law to itself by freely adopting the law of the value.<sup>209</sup> Precisely by being subject to what is other than it, the will is set free for freedom (NAB Gal 5:1).

### **3.4.3: *Hingabe* and Motivation**

One can see now that motivation is, for Hildebrand, “heteronomous” in the loose sense of the term in that one is always responding to what is other than the will itself. Motivation always includes a moment of giving oneself over to (*Hingabe*) what is important in any of the three senses of the term “important” (intrinsically important, objective good, and subjectively satisfying). We must, therefore, evaluate how this receptive, “heteronomous” character of freedom plays out in responding to the different types of importance, for it turns out to be different in each case.

First, it is clear that the will cannot change the kind of importance a being has. I cannot by an act of will make something that is merely subjectively satisfying into a value or into an objective good for me if it is not already those things. Very often we try to deceive ourselves as to the nature of the importance we are responding to: “It is a

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<sup>208</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 3.

<sup>209</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 3.

celebration, Friday! So it is valuable for me to have chocolate.” Even this duplicity affirms that in no way can we change that importance from one type to another. We only try to convince ourselves that we have discovered the object has a value-importance when in fact we know it is only subjectively satisfying.

In value-responses, we find what I have called heteronomy in the strict sense of receiving an essential law from what is other than the will. As noted in Chapters One and Two, values, like all essences, have their own essential “laws.”<sup>210</sup> In issuing a call for a proper response from the person’s heart and will, values can be said to impose that law on the person in virtue of their essences. Moreover, I cannot by mere *fiat* of the will grant an object its value, which it possesses by definition independently of any stance of the person.<sup>211</sup> I can bring about many valuable things, e.g., a beautiful painting, but I cannot grant them their value by mere *fiat* of the will.

In *Ethics*, Hildebrand makes it clear that values appeal to us and specifically to our freedom in a way very distinct from the subjectively satisfying. “The call of an authentic value for an adequate response addresses itself to us in a sovereign but non-intrusive way.”<sup>212</sup> This call “appeals to our free spiritual center” from “above” and at “sober distance.”<sup>213</sup> The motivating power of values are not experienced as threatening to overpower one. It does not, *pace* Scheler, engender the response of the will on its own accord. The reason for this is that a value-response can only be adequate if it is a free value-response. Suppose, I jump to save a child, but did so because I my will is being somehow “mind-controlled,” or controlled by sheer instinct. In such cases, I have not given the proper

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<sup>210</sup> See above at [1.3: The Material A Priori](#), p. 35, and [2.4.1: What is Reverence?](#), p. 98.

<sup>211</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 227.

<sup>212</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>213</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

response, because *I* have not given it as a free person. Even affective responses, (e.g., enthusiasm) which are engendered in the person by the value, are still incomplete unless they are sanctioned by my free spiritual center.<sup>214</sup> Values always call to our freedom because the value-response, even when it is engendered by the object as in affective value-responses, require our free *fiat* to them.

Ultimately, this freeing atmosphere that pervades any call of a value for a response exists because any value-response always contains “an element of self-donation.”<sup>215</sup> In the German translation, it is made clear that every value-response has a character of self-donation (*Hingabecharakter*).<sup>216</sup> A value-response “consists not only in motivation and intentionality, but in a meaningful concerting with the value in its intrinsic, luminous importance, with its objectivity.”<sup>217</sup> I surrender to the value and conform to it, transcending my own subjective preferences. This, paradoxically but evidently, brings a sense of liberation, “a transcending of the boundaries of our self-centeredness.”<sup>218</sup> I am free from the self-centeredness that would otherwise rule my life. I am also free to do an intrinsically meaningful action, rather than one which derives its importance only from my own needs, desires, or will.

I argue that it is the very “call” of value for self-donation that makes freedom of choice possible and make it possible to want to give the value-response. It is in my power to engender or to refuse to engender a response to this value only because the value calls me to give myself to it. The object is what activates the possibility of choice. Further, this

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<sup>214</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 47.

<sup>215</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 227.

<sup>216</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethik*, 225.

<sup>217</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 227. This “concerting” will be important when discussion cooperative freedom. See [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), pp. 181–184 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) p. 210–217.

<sup>218</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

very response of self-donation is itself a will or “want” (*Wollen*) to make a gift of oneself (*Hingabe*) to the value as it objectively deserves. In rejecting the temptation to eat a pastry by myself but rather give it to a beggar, I give *myself as a free person* over to the beggar and refuse to give myself to the temptation. Even if like Sally above I could not dream of doing otherwise, I still possess the freedom to choose to engender my response to the value and to will and to want this value to be realized. This very freedom to choose and to do what one want are both made possible by and are moments of the self-donation of the will when the willing in question is a value-response.

Objective goods for the person appeal to one in a different way. A similar *Hingabe* founds freedom in the case of responding to an objective good, though one cannot speak of fully fledged self-donation or heteronomy in this case. A response to an objective good for me, as it refers to my own objective interest, involves transcending my subjective desires. Yet it does involve a moment of what one could call a return to the self as well. As a result, this giving oneself over to (*Hingabe* in the literal sense) what is important does not count as full self-donation (*Hingabe*). Though there is always giving oneself over to what is other than the will, heteronomy in the sense of receiving a law from what is other than the will is not necessary here. Some objective goods do not reference any law, bracketing the sometimes quite distant relationship all objective goods have to the laws that constitute my being. I am under no law to clean my dishes if I live alone, except insofar as doing so is necessary to keep my body healthy, given the biological laws that govern my body. As with values, one is powerless to grant an object its character as objectively good for one by mere *fiat* of the will; I can only indirectly bring this character about. Fulfilling a promise is an objective good for me as it makes me a moral being, but this character is

not granted by my *fiat* but rather by the nature of promises and of persons as moral beings. Again, it is the giving oneself over to (*Hingabe*) that makes both choice and wanting possible. I “want” to clean my dishes insofar as I will to do so. This will is my own free choice insofar as I have engendered that will and I could have refused to do so. Neither the will nor the choice would be possible unless the object presented itself as an objective good.

Hildebrand notes that the subjectively satisfying, even when legitimate, appeals to one in a very different manner than the call of a value. First, the “invitation” (*Einladung*) of the subjectively satisfying is strictly optional: “it is up to us whether we heed their invitation or not.”<sup>219</sup> However, the subjectively satisfying also “lulls us into a state where we yield to instinct, it tends to dethrone our free spiritual center.”<sup>220</sup> The appeal of the subjectively satisfying is “insistent, oftentimes assuming the character of a temptation, trying to sway and silence our conscience.”<sup>221</sup> It tries to take “hold of us in an obtrusive manner.”<sup>222</sup> Willing only what is subjectively satisfying necessarily leads to what Hildebrand calls “self-enclosure.”<sup>223</sup> I respond, ultimately, to things that are important for me only because they reference my needs, my desires, my will. I never transcend my self-centeredness.

This does not mean that all cases of willing what is subjectively satisfying is morally negative. In the case of responses to the legitimately subjectively satisfying, we find “giving oneself over to” (*Hingabe*) something “other” than the will only in the

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<sup>219</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>220</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>221</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

<sup>222</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

<sup>223</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, “Veracity,” in *AL*, 30.

technical sense that the importance appears a moment on the object that one cognizes as “void” in taking cognizance.<sup>224</sup> Yet there is no transcendence beyond one’s subjective interests. For in the case of the subjectively satisfying, it is our subjective interest that enters into the very constitution of the importance.<sup>225</sup> Often, this interest is engendered in us through desires outside of our control, e.g., upon seeing a cake I cannot help but think of eating it as subjectively satisfying, even against my will. Yet in some cases it is possible for the will to directly grant or revoke importance in the sense of subjectively satisfying by a mere *fiat* of the will. I am undecided between playing chess and the Chinese strategy game Go, as both are initially equivalent to me. I need not be helplessly torn between them like Buridan’s Ass. I can close my eyes and simply pick up one game blindly. The game has acquired its legitimate subjectively satisfying character over the other simply by my *fiat*. This is a somewhat arbitrary act, but not a viciously arbitrary one as the legitimately agreeable character of choosing a game is enough to justify my otherwise arbitrary choice.

However, the legitimately subjectively satisfying always possess the potential to lure the person beyond what is legitimate. For some, playing fun games can lead, little by little, to wanting to do nothing else all day. Thus, at a minimum, I must refer all my acts that are oriented toward what is subjectively satisfying at least implicitly to the question of whether this is morally permissible or not. Even to simply let myself go is to hand myself over to the subjectively satisfying without a guardrail and is morally wrong.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Hildebrand has a chapter on the legitimately subjectively satisfying in his *Ethics*, Chapter 33 “Legitimate Interest in the Subjectively Satisfying,” 451–454; *Ethik*, 33. *Kapitel “Das legitime Interesse am subjektiv Befriedigenden,”* 441–443. Crucially this legitimate interest must always be bound by a more basic moral attitude of reverence for value. I must be ready to give up even a legitimately subjectively satisfying good (e.g., this pastry) when called to do so by moral value (e.g., of feeding this beggar), or else it becomes illegitimate. It must receive a “*nihil obstat*” (nothing hinders) from my conscience.

<sup>225</sup> Crosby, “The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of ‘*Bonum*,’” 256.

<sup>226</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 451–454.

I would argue, that the nature of this giving oneself over (*Hingabe*) differs greatly from the morally legitimate subjectively satisfying in comparison with morally illegitimate pursuit of the subjectively satisfying. I hear a scream for help, but I decide to keep playing my game. Here, the potentially tempting character of the subjectively satisfying becomes actual. The legitimately subjectively satisfying refers only to my own subjective desires, but so long as I give into it only when it is morally permissible to do so, I am not wholly self-enclosed. But once it becomes illegitimate, I have shut myself off from value, and self-enclosure necessarily results. This can develop into what Hildebrand calls the “egospasm” of pride or concupiscence, where I react against or ignore any assault of values on my self-sovereignty.<sup>227</sup>

Hildebrand’s analysis ends here, but I think it can be taken further, even though this potentially challenges his own view that moral evil has a positive reality of its own.<sup>228</sup> I would argue that in all cases of willing what is illegitimately subjectively satisfying, the will necessarily grants its importance. For there is always a gap between what should be willed and the importance that I do will.<sup>229</sup> Consider Augustine’s teenage theft of pears in *Confessions*, Book II.<sup>230</sup> As Maria Fedoryka notes, it was precisely doing what was wrong that made stealing the pears subjectively satisfying for Augustine, “my criminality was the piquant sauce.”<sup>231</sup> Augustine mentions that he desired liberty in committing this theft,

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<sup>227</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 5.

<sup>228</sup> See above at [2.2.2: The Objectivity of Importance and Value](#), pp. 76–81.

<sup>229</sup> I further develop this argument and discuss the case of Augustine’s theft of the pears again at [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 206–210.

<sup>230</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, 1st edition, Oxford’s World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), II vi.12, 30–31.

<sup>231</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II vi.12, 31; Maria Fedoryka, “Is Moral Evil Only Privation? The Ontological Ground and Reality of Moral Evil. In Dialogue with St. Thomas Aquinas” (Leichtenstein, International Academy of Philosophy, 1999), 87.



though he recognizes this liberty is only the false liberty of a runaway slave.<sup>232</sup> I think when we investigate this motive further, we find that what was subjectively satisfying for Augustine in the theft was precisely the assertion of himself in the theft. Fedoryka and Hildebrand would stop here, there is a positive content, namely what is subjectively satisfying (i.e., the theft), that is willed by Augustine. Yet what is this self who was being so arbitrarily asserted?

The answer, if we follow Hildebrand's analysis of the will to its logical conclusion, beyond his own analysis, is precisely *nothing*. For the will lacks its proper source of content and its support. The person and the will exist, for the person is a substance, but it lacks content. For its own content (*Gehalt*) the will depends taking-cognizance where the person is "void" and the content (*Inhalt*) is against one on the object. In contrast to the limit case of a random raising an arm, the pears have an importance that supports my interest. Yet the content of this importance is nothing but the will itself projected onto the theft, a will that is precisely unfounded and therefore has no content itself beyond bare willing. The will vainly tries to support and feed itself. For in being self-enclosed, one is not able to receive the content (*Inhalt*) of the world to fecund one's own content (*Gehalt*). Yet the will, even though it subverts its own freedom, remains free. If the door of the person becomes locked to value, it, like Hell, is locked from the inside.<sup>233</sup>

Further, I would argue that only in the realm of the subjectively satisfying and dissatisfying is it possible for negative importance to take primacy over positive importance. Here, I think Hildebrand would agree with my claim. In most cases, we do not

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<sup>232</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II vi.14, 32.

<sup>233</sup> This topic of the subversion of freedom is raised again at [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 210–220, [7.3.2: The Annulment of Freedom](#), pp. 353–358 and [7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom](#), pp. 364–375.

will to avoid something having negative importance without at least an implicit will for what has positive importance. This is clearest in the case of an objective evil for oneself, which always represents a harm to one's life in the broadest sense of the term. Similarly, as Crosby notes, a disvalue's unworthiness to be rests not only on itself but also on the value it violates, e.g., a murder ought not exist not only because it is a disvalue but also because of the value of the murdered person.<sup>234</sup> Thus, in a willed aversion to an objective evil or disvalue, there is at least an implicit assent to a positive good. The very content of the evil as evil contains an implicit reference to the good.

However, there is nothing to prevent the main content of one's pleasure and satisfaction from becoming the mere avoidance of what is regarded as evil with no further reference to what is good. For example, an environmentalist may become a misanthrope for whom combating the "evil of humanity" becomes the whole purpose of her life, forgetting the initial goodness of creation or the natural world that motivated her to become an environmentalist in the first place. She pursues what is considered good, but the very meaning of what is "good" has become "not evil" and nothing more.<sup>235</sup> Necessarily this is only possible with regard to the subjectively dissatisfying, as it involves a detachment from real objective evil and disvalue, as these always have a reference to some good which this person precisely lacks.

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<sup>234</sup> Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of '*Bonum*,'" 324, note to page 288.

<sup>235</sup> In a recent colloquium on Hildebrand's *Ethics* in April of 2021, Maria Seifert Wolter, in response to a question I asked, suggested it is possible to be motivated to do evil for the sake of evil without any positive importance. One could wish to inflict pain on another even while realizing that doing so would be subjectively dissatisfying for oneself (to say nothing of the victim). I agree with Wolter that it is possible to will an evil as an evil, but I think that is only because it is seen as good in the sense of subjectively satisfying. Even in the case of a person who wants to inflict pain, this person regards inflicting pain as subjectively satisfying (e.g., as revenge on a person who hurt one), even if she knows that in other respects, it is and will be subjectively dissatisfying, to say nothing of its disvalue.

### 3.5: Conclusion: Freedom as Self-Donation

In summary, we found that contained in the notion of the will as a response, a *fiat* to some importance is recognition that self-donation is the very paradigm of freedom. This is for two reasons. First, the very structure of the will is always already a “giving to” (*Hingabe*) some importance from oneself as a free person. By definition, this importance is always other than the will, which can only receive the “word” of importance from taking-cognizance. This *Hingabe* takes different forms depending on the type of importance, containing legitimate self-affirmation in the case of responses to the objective good for one and legitimately subjectively-satisfying, and reaching the full heteronomy of self-donation in the value-response. It is precisely the ordering of the will to *Hingabe* that renders both freedom of choice and freedom to do what one wants necessary for freedom, for only if one freely engenders a will or “want” (*Wollen*) from oneself and if one can do otherwise (prescinding from one’s free total commitment, e.g., with Sally above) does one give *oneself* in one’s willing.

Recall that value is the ultimately valid form of all importance.<sup>236</sup> Value’s ultimate validity relative to the other two forms of importance places willingness to abandon oneself to value in self-donation as the very condition of freedom from the arbitrary. For to violate the call of value is always to willfully grant a subjectively satisfying standard its arbitrary importance and surrender to it, rendering one’s own will empty in the process. The pursuit of all objective goods for one and subjectively satisfying goods must always already be in the context of general willingness to obey values, what Hildebrand terms “the general will to be morally good” (*allgemeiner Wille, sittlich gut zu sein*), which will be the subject of

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<sup>236</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 75. See [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), p. 72–73.

Chapter Five.<sup>237</sup> Here again we find reverence plays a regulative role, not just in the freedom of philosophy, but in freedom in general.<sup>238</sup> For as Husserl and Kant so clearly saw, it is only the absolute ought of what is good-in-itself, that can ground freedom.

With this we have in a general way outlined Hildebrand's phenomenology of the will. However, the task would be incomplete if stopped here, for it remains to be seen whether this general structure of the will can be applied to the great variety of different instances of freedom, e.g., freely doing an action, freely acquiring a habit, freely doing an activity like walking, etc. To this task the next chapter turns.

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<sup>237</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343, 453; *Ethik*, 267. See [CHAPTER 5: FREEDOM AS THE GENERAL WILL TO BE MORALLY GOOD](#), pp. 234–285.

<sup>238</sup> See above at [2.6: Conclusion: The Freedom of Philosophy](#), pp. 114–117.

## CHAPTER 4: THE COOPERATIVE MOMENT OF FREEDOM

### 4.1: Introduction

One of Hildebrand's most fundamental contributions to the philosophy of freedom is his careful discernment of many different types of freedom. There is the freedom to do actions (*Handlungen*), to command activities, to make choices, to develop virtues or vices, etc. Of these, perhaps most significant is his notion of cooperative freedom (*mitwirkende Freiheit*).<sup>1</sup> In the first section, I explore the concept of cooperative freedom as presented in *Ethics* in relation to affectivity. In his *Ethics*, this cooperative freedom is defined as being set over "the free attitude toward experiences already existing in our soul," to say yes or no to them.<sup>2</sup> Hildebrand focuses on our ability to freely "sanction" (*sanktionieren*) or "disavow" (*desavouieren*) some response or being-affected that already exists within the person. This cooperative freedom is necessarily a moral freedom. A "sanction" of a morally bad *Schadenfreude* over the suffering of a rival is only a "pseudo-sanction" that subjects one to one's desires.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a "quasi-sanction" of the basic stance of concupiscence or pride subverts its own transcending, volitional character (*willensmäßige Charakter*) as a sanction.<sup>4</sup>

The first section introduces and explores the notion of cooperative freedom in the context of sanctioning or disavowing affective responses and being-affected, which is covered in Hildebrand's *Ethics*. In the third section, we will see how this cooperative freedom is a freedom absolutely essential to our moral lives, underlying every moral choice

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 25 "Cooperative Freedom," 331–353; *Ethik*, 25. Kapitel "Die mitwirkende Freiheit," 329–349.

<sup>2</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 331.

<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.

<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552; *Ethics*, 341–345.

we make. Hildebrand's notion of cooperative freedom is first developed in *Sittlichkeit* with regard to basic stances (especially reverence), which are transformed by the sanction into basic attitudes.<sup>5</sup> The basic stances (*Grundstellungen*) of pride, concupiscence, and reverence are the "moral centers" (*moralische Zentren*) of the person, that from which all morally good or evil acts and attitudes issue. Just as Kant in his *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (*Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*) and Scheler in his *Formalism* posit a basic *Gesinnung* as the principle of our evil (and good) intentions and actions, so too in *Sittlichkeit* Hildebrand sees it as our task to disavow the "radical evil" of our inherent basic stances of pride and concupiscence.<sup>6</sup> We must form a basic *moral* intention (*sittliche Grundintention*) that sanctions our reverence and disavows pride and concupiscence.<sup>7</sup> Yet, unlike Kant and Scheler, this *Haltung* and not *Gesinnung* (both of which, unhelpfully, could be translated as "attitude"), is the most basic volitional principle of moral acts. Indeed, for Hildebrand, it is possible for a person to lack a *Gesinnung*. In prioritizing *Grundhaltung* over *Gesinnung*, I will argue that Hildebrand breaks from the close association between the will and mind that Kant posits and the will's determination by affectivity which Scheler posts.

In the fourth section, I try to show how the structure of cooperative freedom can be found in freedom in general. In essence, I hold that Hildebrand failed to recognize that a structure analogous to cooperative freedom pervades all morally good or permissible

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<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, III.2 Teil "Die Wesen der Grundhaltung" ("The Being of the Basic Attitude"), 547–579.

<sup>6</sup> I leave *Gesinnung* untranslated as Kant, Scheler, and Hildebrand each have a subtly different notion of what *Gesinnung* is, so that it is best defined by context in my discussion of the topic below. See Scheler, *Formalism*, 111–118; Hildebrand, *SW*, 552; Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 2nd edition (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2017); English Translation: *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009), 6:21.12, 24; En. Tr., 21. Henceforth *R*.

<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552.

willing and, when it is not present, the very intentionality of freedom is subverted. For Hildebrand, cooperative freedom is a specific kind of freedom and its inability to be actualized in a morally bad way is largely unique to it. Hildebrand tends to divide the sanction of cooperative freedom, which he attributes to the free personal center and not to the will, from the *fiat* of the will.<sup>8</sup> This, I will argue, is largely due to the fact that Hildebrand associates the will with actions. Indeed, prior to *Moralia*, he held that one can will only states of affairs within our power to bring about through action.<sup>9</sup> While the sanction cannot be actualized in a morally bad way, clearly we can and do give the *fiat* of our will to doing evil actions.

In this chapter, after presenting Hildebrand's conception of cooperative freedom in the first and second sections, I will present arguments from Seifert and Stephen Schwarz, another student and family friend of Hildebrand, that the cooperative sanction does indeed involve the *fiat* of the will. My own contribution to a Hildebrandian understanding of the will is to show that once this is recognized, we can find what I term a "cooperative moment" of freedom in *all fiats* of the will. First, any morally bad use of the will subverts freedom in that one attempts to sanction an attitude of pride or concupiscence. Second, the *fiat* of the will itself fails to find a proper "support" for itself, falling into arbitrariness.<sup>10</sup> In this I move beyond and somewhat against Hildebrand's own position. While for Hildebrand a morally evil willing does not seem to violate the principle *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*, since one cognizes and affirms a subjectively satisfying good (over value), I will argue that

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<sup>8</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 553

<sup>9</sup> For his pre-*Moralia* position, see Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 302; for his correction in *Moralia*, see Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 74–75. Seifert reports that he convinced Hildebrand to change his position following a conversation they had.

<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

such a willing in fact fails to properly realize its own intentionality. The object has been constituted as important by my subjective desires and will, and so the will goes out to the object only to find the self. With this, it becomes clear that while there are forms of freedom, such as freedom, of action that can, unlike cooperative freedom proper, be actualized in morally bad ways, doing so always on a deeper level subverts the very intentionality of freedom.<sup>11</sup> In the last section, I show how Hildebrand's many different senses of freedom all implicitly refer to cooperative freedom. Personal freedom is necessarily a moral freedom.

#### **4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses**

One of the most salient features of affective responses is that they cannot be commanded or engendered by the will.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Hildebrand notes that commanding affective responses would “deprive them of [being]...a response motivated by the importance of the object...[and] place them on the level of certain activities without even giving them the specific (although much lower) perfection these activities possess.”<sup>13</sup> Nor can we engender such responses as we engender a response of the will.<sup>14</sup> As a result, volitional responses possess a superiority in that they are free and under our control since we can engender them, while affective responses are not engendered directly by the person and are not directly free. Yet, for Hildebrand, what we can will is “limited in ontological rank.”<sup>15</sup> Recall from Chapter Three that willing lacks the affective content, the affective plentitude of even low-level affective response (e.g., a will to esteem a person versus actual affective

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<sup>11</sup> See [7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom](#), pp. 364–375.

<sup>12</sup> See [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 334.

<sup>14</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 334.

<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 335.



esteem for that person).<sup>16</sup> There is always a felt “more” in an affective response compared to its volitional counterpart. Thus, affective responses, which we cannot engender but possess a “plentitude” the will necessarily lacks, are called by Hildebrand “gifts.” Conversely, Hildebrand denies that the will can be considered as a “gift”: “The really pertinent and decisive difference between willing and all affective responses is that willing never comes by itself as a gift.”<sup>17</sup> We can engender it, we do not find it given to us outside of our control.

Philosophers have often noted that while we cannot directly control our affective responses, we can indirectly and over time change them by changing our character. This is what Hildebrand calls our “indirect freedom” For instance, if I know I am inclined to desire too much chocolate, so then I stay away from chocolate, read up on the health problems with overeating chocolate and eventually I can develop a more moderate taste for chocolate, or I develop a disgust for it.

However, Hildebrand discovers a direct role for freedom *vis-à-vis* affectivity: “We have the freedom of taking a position toward experiences that have come into existence without our free intervention and that cannot be dissipated by our free influence.”<sup>18</sup> This is our cooperative freedom, our free attitude toward experiences already present within us and which we did not directly engender. In *Ethics*, Hildebrand restricts his focus to the role of cooperative freedom in sanctioning and disavowing affective responses and being affected. We have the ability to give a free sanction and disavowal to our affective responses; that turns them into free, conscious responses of the person.

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<sup>16</sup> See [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), pp. 124–129.

<sup>17</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 306.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 331.

Suppose Denise feels a spontaneous *Schadenfreude* at the suffering of her rival, but, conscious this is wrong, she disavows it. This disavowal comes from her as a person, from her “free personal center,” analogous to how a willing comes from the will and is engendered by her and not by the object.<sup>19</sup> A disavowal deeply modifies the *Schadenfreude* by denying it of its validity.<sup>20</sup> Merely allowing *Schadenfreude* represents an “undisputed solidarity” and identification with it.<sup>21</sup> Disavowing the *Schadenfreude* “decapitates” the response by depriving it of the status of being a personal response.<sup>22</sup> Even though this disavowal cannot immediately dissolve the response, one is no longer directly responsible for it. One is committed to its dissolution, i.e., commanding whatever actions or activities may be necessary to make the response cease to exist.<sup>23</sup>

The positive sanction, however, represents a much fuller actualization of freedom than the disavowal. First, when I sanction an initially affective response, this is not a mere “let it be” or “*nihil obstat*” (nothing hinders) given to the response from “from without.” Were this the case, the will would merely passively allow the affective response to develop by itself.<sup>24</sup> Rather, the free cooperation and the affective response fuse into a single unified, free, though no less affective, response of my whole person.<sup>25</sup> The free person enters into the affective response “from within,” and in that sense freely cooperates with it.<sup>26</sup> For this reason, “the sanction...is a ‘concerting’ with the world of values.”<sup>27</sup> One enters into what

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<sup>19</sup> For the distinction between will and free spiritual center, see above at [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338.

<sup>21</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 350.

<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338.

<sup>23</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 351–352.

<sup>24</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339, 346.

<sup>25</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 323.

<sup>26</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339.

<sup>27</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

Hildebrand calls the “objective intrinsic rhythm of values.”<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand holds that, “only in being supported and nourished by the very *logos* of the values are we able to actualize this deepest ‘word’ of our freedom.”<sup>29</sup> One cooperates not just with the value but with the affective response (assuming the affective response is the appropriate one).

With regard to being-affected (as opposed to affective responses), the role of cooperative freedom is different.<sup>30</sup> Upon being confronted with a beautiful scene, I notice myself being moved by it. I can choose to “disavow” this being moved, or I can choose to “abandon” myself to the experience of being moved, “drinking into the soul, as it were, the contents of the object.”<sup>31</sup> However, whereas both affective responses and the sanction are spontaneous and come from the person, being affected comes to me from the object. As a result, the sanction and being-affected do not merge, but rather “the free cooperation and our being affected remain two different sides of the same attitude, notwithstanding their deep and organic interpenetration.”<sup>32</sup> Because the sanction has a centrifugal intentionality, from me to the state of being-affected, whereas the being-affected itself has a centripetal intentionality, from the value-object to me, the two intentionalities cannot merge into a single one.

Notably, implicitly in his *Ethics* and expressly in *Moralia*, Hildebrand holds the sanction and disavowal come from the free spiritual center of the person, but they are *not* acts of the will.<sup>33</sup> This claim is counter intuitive.<sup>34</sup> In essence, Hildebrand is claiming that

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<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345.

<sup>29</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339.

<sup>31</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 332.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339.

<sup>33</sup> Hildebrand, 341; *Moralia*, 77.

<sup>34</sup> We have already encountered this claim above in [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), p. 127.

not all free acts issue from the will. Freedom is distinct from our will. All of our free acts issue from the free spiritual center, but only some come from the will. Yet the sanction and the disavowal are not among those free acts attributable to the will. It is worthwhile quoting Hildebrand on this point:

Neither of them [the sanction or disavowal] is a kind of will (*Art des Willens*), but, like the will that takes a position (*der stellungnehmende Wille*), it is a self-determination of the free personal center (*eine Selbstsetzung des freien Personenzentrums*)...The sanction is a unique actualization of my free personal center. But unlike the will, it penetrates in a very special way into the affective value-response in a way that the will cannot evoke.<sup>35</sup>

Hildebrand's refusal to attribute the *fiat* of the sanction to the will is surprising, given that he states in *Ethics* that the will's "unique character is clearly revealed by the fact that its immediate issuance from our free spiritual center is the only case of a *fiat* in our human existence."<sup>36</sup> What could the sanction be if not a *fiat* to an affective response? From this passage, it seems that Hildebrand does not attribute the sanction of affective responses to the will because the response, even after it has become a free response of the person, remains a properly affective response rather than a volitional one. One could say that the affective response becomes grafted to my free personal center by my sanction, whereas acts of will issue immediately and directly from this center.

In *Ethics*, Hildebrand raises the possibility that this cooperative freedom might extend to all free *fiats* of the will, which, as we will see below, is close to my own position. "Someone could object...It is obvious that everything that we do...even if it is by itself

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<sup>35</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 77. Translation my own.

<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 211.

morally indifferent has to be endorsed by our free spiritual center.”<sup>37</sup> Speaking as the objector, Hildebrand attributes this endorsement to the will: “This willing should not take place without a confrontation of those activities with the call of the values.”<sup>38</sup> We should not will to do an action or activity unless we know, at the very least, that it is not morally bad.

Hildebrand’s response to this objection is that “such an argumentation confuses sanction with a mere endorsement from ‘without.’”<sup>39</sup> With regard to a morally permissible affective response toward something legitimately subjectively satisfying or an objective good for me, e.g., joy over winning a game of chess, the *fiat* is a “mere ‘let it be,’ which endorses something in giving free reign to its development.”<sup>40</sup> It is not “a solemn identification of our free spiritual center with this joy...a forming of this joy from within.”<sup>41</sup> As opposed to the will’s endorsement of a morally neutral response, the sanction can only apply to responses (or being-affected) bearing a moral value or disvalue. As a result, “a different stage of being morally awake is required for an actualization of our freedom in sanction and disavowal than what is necessary in willing.”<sup>42</sup> For “the sanction...is only possible as a ‘concerting’ with the world of values.”<sup>43</sup>

This cooperative freedom cannot be actualized outside of what Hildebrand calls in his *Ethics* a “general will to be morally good.”<sup>44</sup> This general will, which is implicitly identified with the sanctioned attitude of reverence, will be our subject in the next section

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<sup>37</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345.

<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345.

<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 346.

<sup>40</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 346.

<sup>41</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 346.

<sup>42</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 346.

<sup>43</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342–343.

<sup>44</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339.

below and in the next chapter.<sup>45</sup> It is the general willingness to follow the demands of values and reject whatever is contrary to them.<sup>46</sup> Cooperative freedom is impossible for the morally unconscious person (*der sittlich unbewußte Mensch*).<sup>47</sup> A morally unconscious person is one who perceives moral values and gives genuine free value-responses to them but fails to see their true binding, moral significance. The person apprehends values in general but fails to see the specific moral relevance of certain values. This person responds to moral values and morally relevant values only insofar as his or her nature prompts him or her to do so. He or she fails to see that morally relevant values *demand* (*fordert*) proper responses. His or her responses are “merely conditioned by an accidental coincidence between his [or her] nature and the call of values.”<sup>48</sup> This person does not recognize that what is morally good ought to be done because it is morally good, that the requirement to do what is morally good is not dependent on one’s moods. So if this person is asked why he does the right thing, he or she will answer “because I like to do so, and I dislike being bad or mean.” This person will not understand that he or she should do so because it is right.<sup>49</sup>

A good natured morally unconscious person would freely do morally good actions, e.g., feed a beggar out of pity. For “even if he followed without hesitation the promptings of his instincts, the action would inevitably impose on him the necessity to actualize his free will.”<sup>50</sup> But this person will not realize that he is called to sanction or disavow his

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<sup>45</sup> See [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 189–204 and [Chapter 5: Freedom as The General Will to be Morally Good Hildebrand](#), pp. 234–284.

<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 268.

<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336; *Ethik*, 337.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336; *Ethik*, 338.

<sup>49</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 277.

<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341.

affective responses, instead remaining only in “undisputed solidarity” with them.<sup>51</sup> His unsanctioned responses of joy lack the “*signum*” (mark) of freedom; they have an accidental character.<sup>52</sup> Such a person would typically respond with joy to a person’s recovery from illness, but if the recovering person is a rival, he would not have this joy but rather sadness.<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand thus states:

When the realization of something through the will is not at stake (as in the case of affective responses since they can be neither engendered nor dissolved by our free intervention), the morally unconscious man simply ignores the possibility of an intervention of his freedom. Much more is required for a man to be aware of this role of freedom than is necessary for him to be aware of the role of freedom in the sphere of actions. This brings us to a point of greatest interest: the difference between the freedom embodied in the sanction and disavowal and the freedom embodied in willing. Our sanction and disavowal are possible only when our approach is rooted in a general attitude of value-response.<sup>54</sup>

Nor can cooperative freedom be actualized with a “sanction” from concupiscence. Suppose Kathy realizes that she is experiencing *Schadenfreude* and she, out of concupiscence, consciously and freely gives herself over to this response. She says to herself (and others) “I *want* to rejoice, for I dislike this man and I am glad now he suffers an affliction.”<sup>55</sup> Here, “the undisputed and tacit solidarity [with her *Schadenfreude*] becomes an explicit one.”<sup>56</sup> However, according to Hildebrand, this only represents a

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<sup>51</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336.

<sup>52</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336.

<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 336.

<sup>54</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341.

<sup>55</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341. The quote is from Hildebrand, but Kathy is a fictional example that I have invented. Robert, Sally, and Denise are also my own invention.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341.

“pseudo-sanction” because the accidental character of her response and her moral unconsciousness is not modified by her conscious assent to it.<sup>57</sup> Were the sufferer her friend, she would have pity instead.

Recall from Chapter Two that concupiscence entails a blunt blindness to moral value because one is indifferent to value.<sup>58</sup> Because of this blunt unconsciousness, the pseudo-sanction of concupiscence has the character of a “voluntary self-imprisonment” and an “obstinate spasm” of flinging oneself away into passion.<sup>59</sup> Such a pseudo-sanction from concupiscence “is in reality a complete yielding to the trends of our nature.”<sup>60</sup> For Hildebrand, such pseudo-sanctions or pseudo-disavowals made from concupiscence are “typical cases of the actualization of our ‘physical’ freedom that entail simultaneously the complete absence of ‘moral’ freedom.”<sup>61</sup> One acts freely, and one is culpable for this surrender to one desires, but one is subject to one’s desires because of this free surrender nonetheless.

Now suppose Robert, out of a value-hostile pride, “sanctions” his *Schadenfreude* not because his nature prompts him to it, as in the case of concupiscence, but rather expressly because it is evil. Robert has a “general will directed toward the satisfaction of pride [which is] in a certain way antithetical to the morally unconscious type.”<sup>62</sup> He does not have a tacit solidarity with his response, but rather “an identification *by principle*.”<sup>63</sup> Yet, Hildebrand continues, “there exists (even from a merely formal point of view), no

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<sup>57</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>58</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522. See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>59</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>61</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.



strict analogy between morally positive and morally negative attitudes.”<sup>64</sup> While his pseudo-sanction does not have the character of an “obstinate spasm,” of flinging oneself into passion (which is what we saw with Kathy), we find “a habitual spasm, not of obstinacy but of a much deeper and most vicious pride.”<sup>65</sup> Even more than Kathy, Robert is trapped by his own freedom in the “voluntary self-imprisonment” of the illegitimately subjectively satisfying. His pseudo sanction, though not accidental like Kathy, is still arbitrary. Indeed, while “from a purely formal point of view” the pseudo sanction of concupiscence is formally more opposed to the genuine sanction, insofar as it is a flinging oneself away to one’s nature, “from a qualitative point of view” the more conscious, express pseudo sanction of pride represents an even greater antithesis to the true sanction.<sup>66</sup>

We therefore see that cooperative freedom with regard to affectivity is a special type of freedom that pertains not to the will properly so called but to the free personal center, at least for Hildebrand. It is special in that it is set over experiences which we cannot engender ourselves and thus are “gifts.” We can, by contrast, directly engender our freedom of action. I can simply choose to act, but I must wait for joy to arise in me as a “gift” before I can sanction it. More importantly this sanction represents “the supreme actualization of our ontological freedom (which is always simultaneously a moral freedom).”<sup>67</sup> Further down, Hildebrand notes:

We saw that the true sanction and disavowal are inner gestures that are possible only as participations in the objective inner rhythm of values. Only in being

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<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.

<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.

<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 334.

<sup>67</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.

supported and nourished by the very logos of values are we able to actualize this deepest ‘word’ of our freedom.<sup>68</sup>

### 4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances

Cooperative freedom makes its first appearance in *Sittlichkeit* as the sanction that transforms our basic stances (*Grundstellungen*) into free basic attitudes (*Grundhaltungen*).<sup>69</sup> His notion of cooperative freedom leads Hildebrand to regard *Grundstellungen* as the most basic volitional principle of morally evil acts and *Grundhaltungen* as the most basic principle of fully realized morally good acts. This forms a contrast with both Kant and Scheler, as I discuss below.

Recall from Chapter Two that these basic stances are pride, concupiscence, and reverence.<sup>70</sup> Basic stances represent where the person objectively “stands” (*steht*) with regard to the world of morality, sometimes even against a person’s stated intention.<sup>71</sup> A person might be genuinely trying to be a moral person, but in one area of his life (say in regard to sweets), unknown to him, we can see he is subject to concupiscence.<sup>72</sup> The basic stance is both affective and volitional in character in that it determines the responses of both the heart and the will. A basic attitude is a basic stance that has been sanctioned by the person; thus, it has a greater volitional character than a mere stance. Hildebrand coins a new adjective, “superactual” (*überaktuell*), to describe the kind of endurance basic stances and other types of affective responses can have.<sup>73</sup> My love for my wife not only remains with me when I am not thinking of her, i.e., when she is not present in my actual

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<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345.

<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551; *Moralia*, 74–76.

<sup>70</sup> See above at [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), pp. 90–94.

<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 557–558.

<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 535.

<sup>73</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 494–498.

consciousness, but it also “colors” my whole life.<sup>74</sup> In a similar way, a basic stance colors one’s life, shapes one’s expressions, in addition to determining one’s moral acts. It characterizes a person in a certain way beyond his or her actual affections, acts, etc.

Hildebrand argues that the fundamental stances of pride, concupiscence and reverence are the three “moral centers” (*moralische Zentren*) of the person.<sup>75</sup> They are “centers” not in the sense that the will, the affective heart, and the mind are ontological “centers,” i.e., faculties of intentional responses, nor in the sense that a person’s value-essence is the “center” of that person. Rather, they are “centers” in a new, third sense: they are the most basic attitudes or stances from which other more particular acts, attitudes, and stances come from as from a root.<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand notes there is a qualitative exclusivity that makes it so that two position-takings, e.g., rancor and forgiveness, cannot be actualized at the same time even if directed at different objects because their very quality and locus of origin are opposed.<sup>77</sup> Suppose I elect to forgive all who have hurt me except one consciously chosen exception.<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand claims I have not, in fact, given true forgiveness to anyone. By refusing to disavow rancor toward that single offender, my “forgiveness” for the others has an accidental character, rather than one that properly responds to the *eidos* of forgiveness. Moral acts refer not only to particular subjects, but to the *eidos* of the moral value itself.<sup>79</sup> It is inconsistent with the very nature of forgiveness to “forgive” one person and yet refuse to forgive another. As a result, we find that what Hildebrand calls the “loving, reverent, value-responding center” cannot be actualized at the

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<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 377.

<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 473.

<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 437.

<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 580–584; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 433.

<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 434–435.

<sup>79</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 272. How a moral value proper can appear to one is discussed below at [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–253.

same time with the immoral centers of pride and concupiscence. However, the two immoral centers can cooperate with each other.<sup>80</sup> Hildebrand goes so far as to metaphorically call each center a different “I” (*Ich*) in *Sittlichkeit*.<sup>81</sup>

The notion of one moral center and two immoral centers as the principle of all moral acts and attitudes flows from the very nature of an ethics centered on willing what is good in itself. A more basic stance or desire is implicit in more particular acts and attitudes because the particular is contained in the essence of the more general.<sup>82</sup> Contained within every moral act is a value-response to the morally good, and thus an openness to value stands as the heart and center of all moral activity. Conversely, every morally evil act is the result of selecting the subjectively satisfying and rejecting value. Every morally evil act embodies a basic orientation toward the subjectively satisfying, but this orientation can be split. One can be oriented primarily toward having subjectively satisfying goods (concupiscence) or toward being in a superior position that is subjectively satisfying (pride).<sup>83</sup> Thus, we have three moral centers: two immoral centers (pride and concupiscence) and one moral center (reverence).

As Kant and Scheler, like Hildebrand, base their ethics on willing what is good in itself, we would expect them to have a notion similar to Hildebrand’s moral center, and they do have such a notion. But for Kant and Scheler, this most basic locus of moral good and evil, this most basic volitional principle of moral acts, is not a *Grundstellung* (basic stance) nor a *Grundhaltung* but a *Gesinnung*.<sup>84</sup> Unhelpfully, all three German terms could

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<sup>80</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 436–439.

<sup>81</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 580–589.

<sup>82</sup> See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>84</sup> Kant, *R*, 6: 21.12, En. tr. 21ff; Scheler, *Formalism*, 111.

be reasonably translated as “basic attitude” in English. *Gesinnung* literally means a directed sense (*Sinn*). Stephen Palmquist’s argues that, for Kant, *Gesinnung* should be translated as a “conviction,” a volitional counterpart to *Überzeugung* as theoretical conviction.<sup>85</sup> I will present his argument below and suggest that the translation “conviction” is suitable for Hildebrand’s notion of the *Gesinnung* as well. The term “conviction” will not work for Schele, for whom a *Gesinnung* is more closely related to affectivity than to the mind. Frings and Funk translate *Gesinnung* for Scheler as “basic moral tenor.”<sup>86</sup> I will argue that Hildebrand, in prioritizing *Grundhaltung* over *Gesinnung*, implicitly critiques both Kant and Scheler—Kant for tying the most basic volitional principle of moral acts too closely to the mind and Scheler for tying it too closely to affectivity.

In *Religion*, Kant defines a *Gesinnung* as a subjective principle of maxims.<sup>87</sup> Matthew Caswell argues for understanding Kant’s *Gesinnung* as the most basic, general maxim to submit to the moral law or to submit to the inclinations in self-love.<sup>88</sup> Kant states at *R* 6:21.12 “the first subjective principle of maxims...[is] always a maxim.”<sup>89</sup> All actions are based on maxims, and more particular maxims fall under more general ones. Thus, the most general maxim determines our acts. As noted above, Palmquist argues that *Gesinnung* should be translated as a “conviction.”<sup>90</sup> It is the volitional counterpart of a cognitive *Überzeugung* (also “conviction”). He notes that in English, the word “conviction” applies not only to the mind but also to the will. We can say that a person has a conviction that so and so is morally good, but also that he or she acted with conviction that so and so is good.

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<sup>85</sup> Palmquist, “What Is Kantian *Gesinnung*?,” 235–236.

<sup>86</sup> Manfred Frings and Roger Funk, “Forward” in Scheler, *Formalism*, xv.

<sup>87</sup> Kant, *R*, 6: 21.12, 24; En. Tr., 21ff.

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Caswell, “Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good, the *Gesinnung*, and the Theory of Radical Evil,” *Kant-Studien* 97, no. 2 (2006): 184–209; Kant, *R*, 6: 21.12, 24; En. Tr., 21ff.

<sup>89</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:21.12, 24; En. Tr., 21.

<sup>90</sup> Palmquist, “What Is Kantian *Gesinnung*?,” 235–236.

Notably, the latter sense depends on the former; a person who acts with volitional conviction is typically thought to believe that his or her actions are right. A *Gesinnung* is a maxim that serves as a principle for our acts, our true conviction. It is a maxim, a conviction, that a person freely adopts.

Kant, famously, uses his notion of *Gesinnung* to argue that humans are freely subject to radical evil, a kind of original sin. As we all do evil actions, it follows that the morally evil *Gesinnung* does in fact reside at the core of our moral being as a radical principle of evil.<sup>91</sup> For Kant, since, to be evil, the *Gesinnung* must be freely chosen, it represents a timeless, noumenal deed, a *peccatum originarium* (Latin for “original sin”).<sup>92</sup> He rejects a notion of original sin as a hereditary sin, for how could we be responsible for a sin of our first parents?<sup>93</sup>

Scheler notes with approval that Kant, like himself, locates the basic values of moral good and evil in the *Gesinnung*.<sup>94</sup> According to Scheler, because for Kant the *Gesinnung* is the form of possible intentions, it must be without material and purely formal. Scheler holds that Kant considered the only possible *Gesinnung* to be one in accord with the formal ethical law.<sup>95</sup> This is inaccurate. In *Religion* Kant clearly holds there is a morally bad as well as good *Gesinnung*. However, the main thrust of Scheler’s critique is directed against Kant’s formalism:

The basic moral tenor (*Gesinnung*), i.e., the directedness of willing toward a higher (or lower) value and its content, contains a non-formal value-quality (*Wertmaterie*)

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<sup>91</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:20, 22; En. Tr. 20; 6:31, 38; En. Tr., 35.

<sup>92</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:31, 39; En. Tr., 34.

<sup>93</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:31, 39; En. Tr., 34.

<sup>94</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 111–115.

<sup>95</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 111–115.

that is independent of success and even of all further levels of an act of willing...

The importance of the basic moral tenor consists in the delineation of a non-formal a priori field for the formation of possible intentions, acts done on purpose, and deeds.<sup>96</sup>

Scheler, therefore, does away with Kant's cognitive understanding of the *Gesinnung*. The *Gesinnung* of a person is therefore not a most basic maxim, but a most basic "tenor," a directionality of will toward higher or lower values. It is based on values, not on a formal law. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to translate *Gesinnung* for Scheler as "conviction." One need not have any principle in mind; one simply is directed to pleasure values or to values of the holy. In contrast to Kant and Hildebrand, the *Gesinnung* for Scheler depends totally on affectivity. The *Gesinnung* is the basic direction of will, and it is totally determined by the affective *ordo amoris*; it is the volitional manifestation of that *ordo amoris*.<sup>97</sup> A playboy will have an *ordo amoris*, and therefore a *Gesinnung*, directed toward lower pleasure values, whereas a saint will be directed toward the highest values. Thus, though the *Gesinnung* pertains to the will for Scheler, at its basis the *Gesinnung* is primarily affective in character.

Hildebrand's conception of how a basic stance is transformed into a basic attitude through use of one's cooperative freedom challenges the primacy of the *Gesinnung*. To transform a basic stance into a basic attitude, one must form a basic moral intention (*Grundintention*) to be moral. Suppose Aiko forms what Hildebrand calls a "basic intention" to be moral, but it is impotent, and she still has affective responses and freely

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<sup>96</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 115.

<sup>97</sup> Special thanks to my colleague Zachary Willcutt for pointing out this affective character of Scheler's *Gesinnung*.

wills particular actions from pride and concupiscence.<sup>98</sup> She still stands (*steht*) in pride and concupiscence, though by disavowing them her head, so to speak, is free.<sup>99</sup> However, unlike the will as the master of actions, we do not have direct control over our stances.<sup>100</sup> They tend to change only very slowly and with effort.

This basic moral intention “is itself [the] sanction (*ist selbst Sanktion*)” that serves to transform a moral *Grundstellung* into a *Grundhaltung* and liberate one from morally bad *Grundstellungen*.<sup>101</sup> This distinction between a free and consciously adopted *Grundhaltung* and a largely unconscious *Grundstellung* is unique to Hildebrand, but it does have a precedent in Husserl. In *Ideas II*, Husserl notes that there can be a position-taking that I passively go along with.<sup>102</sup> Everyone in my culture is vegetarian, and so am I out of a mere passive, unthoughtful acceptance of this cultural norm. However, I can then learn the true reason and value of this position-taking toward food, and then I consciously endorse it, give it my *fiat*.<sup>103</sup> At this point, the position-taking “becomes a part of me...it has become a position-taking that issues from my own Ego and is not merely a stimulus that comes from outside.”<sup>104</sup>

Because for most of his philosophical career he tied the will to the realization of states of affairs, Hildebrand admits in his *Moralia* that he did not realize in his earlier works that the basic intention is not just an actualization of the free personal center, but pertains specifically to the will.<sup>105</sup> In *Moralia*, Hildebrand states that the basic intention is an

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<sup>98</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 577.

<sup>99</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 562. See above at p. 183.

<sup>100</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 542.

<sup>101</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 542. For a brief introduction of the notion of the “actual I” see [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), pp. 128–129.

<sup>102</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §60c, 268; *Ideas II*, 281.

<sup>103</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §60, 257; *Ideas II*, 269.

<sup>104</sup> Husserl, HUA IV, §60c, 268; *Ideas II*, 281.

<sup>105</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75ff.



attitude of the will (*Willenshaltung*) and an actualization of the first dimension of freedom, engendering a basic response to the world of values.<sup>106</sup> Hildebrand notes that a basic intention differs from the more narrow sense of the will (*Wille*) as “the king of action” (*der König der Handlung*) in that it does not intend a particular value of a state of affairs.<sup>107</sup> Further, the second dimension of the will, commanding activities, is only potentially contained in the intention.<sup>108</sup> One instead intends to follow the call of the basic value (*Grundwert*) of the morally good and reject evil.<sup>109</sup> It is a willingness to command any action that may be morally required, but it does not involve a command in itself. Though Hildebrand himself does not draw this conclusion, it follows that the sanction of basic attitudes, which is itself the basic moral intention, is an act of will, unlike the sanction of affective responses.

Nonetheless, the *fiat* of the basic intention is still distinct from the *fiat* we find in typical cases of willing some action. In *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand distinguishes between the “assent” or “approval” (*Zustimmung*) that is found in every willing (*in jedem Wollen*) and the sanction.<sup>110</sup> The former can be morally bad; I can assent to do something morally wrong. We can will to do evil actions. But the sanction of a basic stance “is a very special kind of assent (*Zustimmung*) in which contact with objective importance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) is always included and an objective validity is always found.”<sup>111</sup> A morally negative “*quasi Sanktion*” of pride and concupiscence, by contrast, “is always an arbitrary assent that fails at its own objectification (*Es bleibt stets eine willkürliche Zustimmung, die in ihrem*

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<sup>106</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>108</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>109</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 549.

<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509.

<sup>111</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509. Translation my own.

*Objektivierungsversuch scheitert*).<sup>112</sup> A “sanction” that declares the subjectively satisfying instead of value to be one’s good lacks an objective demand to found it. One could say the world of values fails to provide the parchment to imprint one’s sanction. Only a going-with (*Mitvollzug*) the objective demands of value can found a true sanction on. The word “*Mitvollzug*,” as with “concerting with the world of values” which was seen above in *Ethics*, should again bring back to mind the spiritual “going-with” that is found within taking-cognizance, which also concerts with its object.<sup>113</sup> Just as the mind actively goes with and conforms to the object in order to receive its “word” in taking-cognizance, so too in the affective value-response (*Wertantwort*) and in the volitional response to the world of values in a basic attitude, one’s answer (*Antwort*) goes with the word (*Wort*) of the value. In a deliberate echo of the traditional definition of truth as *adaequatio rei ad intellectum*, Hildebrand says the value-response is “*adaequatio cordis et voluntatis ad valorem*.<sup>114</sup>

Besides a basic moral intention, one requires a *Gesinnung* in favor of the morally good, which is contained in the basic moral intention. In contrast to both Kant and Scheler, Hildebrand holds that, while all people do morally good or bad acts, some people lack a *Gesinnung*. Hildebrand contrasts the basic intention with both a reflective consciousness of one’s basic stance and a *Gesinnung* directed to the world of moral values. A morally unconscious Goethe-like person who is reflectively aware of his basic stance may “sanction” it (“*sanktioniert*,” scare quotes in the German) in such a way “that [it] does not, on the other hand, take a stance in a new, principled sense (*das...in einem ganz neuen*

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<sup>112</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 553. Translation my own. This quote will be crucial below at [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 210–220.

<sup>113</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338; *WP*, 22–24. See above at [1.5.1: The Different Types of Knowledge](#), pp. 50–51.

<sup>114</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 70. Latin in the original.

*prinzipiellen Sinn Stellung nimmt*).<sup>115</sup> For example, suppose such a Goethe-like person notices he naturally has a concupiscent basic stance (*Grundstellung*). He says “Hmm, so it is; let it be.” He remains in tacit solidarity with his basic stance. He is no less morally unconscious for his express reflective awareness and affirmation of the stance as his nature.<sup>116</sup> He does not conform to it because it is good or bad, he is indifferent to that question. He affirms his stance only because it happens to be his nature. Hildebrand says a Goethe-like person lacks a *Gesinnung*.<sup>117</sup>

By contrast, the Greek hedonist philosopher Aristippus of Cyrene does have a sort of *Gesinnung*, but not a basic *moral* intention. Aristippus forms a *Gesinnung* when he declares *as a principle* that one ought to pursue pleasure.<sup>118</sup> Unlike the Goethe-like person, Aristippus is not indifferent to the question of what is good or bad. He expressly identifies the good with the subjectively satisfying. This does not mean one must be a philosopher to form a *Gesinnung*, but one must have a position on principle and not be indifferent to the question of the good and bad.

Yet, for Hildebrand, Aristippus’ *Gesinnung* is missing the “volitional character” (*der willensmäßige Charakter*) of the moral intention.<sup>119</sup> In reality, Hildebrand says, “It is more a principle than a *Gesinnung* (*Sie ist mehr ein Prinzip als eine Gesinnung*).”<sup>120</sup> It is more theoretical than volitional because it lacks the seriousness (*Ernst*), “which can only be given as founded in an objective demand (*den allein die Fundierung in der objective Forderung geben kann*).”<sup>121</sup> Lacking this *Forderung* and *Ernst* that only values can

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<sup>115</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551.

<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551.

<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551–552.

<sup>118</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 551.

<sup>119</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. Translation my own.

<sup>120</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. Translation my own.

<sup>121</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. Translation my own.

provide, Aristippus' *Gesinnung* remains a "private infatuation" (*private Liebhaberei*), despite being raised to a general principle.<sup>122</sup> From these statements, we could translate Hildebrand's *Gesinnung* as "conviction" which is both theoretical and volitional in character, as when say of someone "he did that act not haphazardly, but with conviction."<sup>123</sup> Hildebrand generalizes the following from Aristippus' case:

As there is on the [morally] negative side no analogy to real self-donation (*Hingabe*), as there is no counterpart to the value-response to what is merely important for me (*für mich wichtig*, the subjectively satisfying) and that satisfies pride and concupiscence, so there is here no subordinate and at the same time volitional intention (*es gibt es hier auch keine sich unterordnende und willensmäßige Intention*), no "good will" (*keinen guten Willen*)...The consciousness of the person represented by the moral intention and the factual basic stance (*der tatsächlichen Grundstellung*) is found only as a positive conscious direction (*Richtung*) toward the good, since only here is the self-donation (*Hingabe*) to the legitimate demand of values. Only here can we speak of a 'sanction' in the full sense, where there is, as it were, a going-with the objective (*ein Mitvollzug der Objektiven*), which is the demand of the value on the subjective side.<sup>124</sup>

We are now in a position to return to Kant and Scheler and see how Hildebrand both converges with them in having a most basic volitional principle of all moral acts, and yet diverges from them by assigning this role to a *Grundhaltung* rather than a *Gesinnung*. A *Gesinnung* for Kant functions much like a basic stance or attitude does for Hildebrand.

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<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. I am indebted to Robin Rollinger's unpublished translation of *Sittlichkeit* for this translation of *Liebhaberei* as "infatuation."

<sup>123</sup> Palmquist, "What Is Kantian *Gesinnung*?" 235–264.

<sup>124</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. Translation my own.

It is the free morally good or evil basis of our actions. For both, the morally bad principle of self-love comes naturally to humans, but the morally good principle is “more real, authentic” (*eigenliche*) as Hildebrand puts it.<sup>125</sup> For Kant, this is because the good *Gesinnung* establishes us in the autonomy of pure practical reason, whereas for Hildebrand it is because the *Grundhaltung* of reverence opens us to our true value-receiving and value-responding nature as persons. With Scheler and against Kant, the morally good basic attitude responds to values and not to a formal moral law given by pure practical reason. However, in a Kantian turn, Hildebrand sees the difference between a morally good *Grundhaltung* and a morally evil *Gundstellung* as corresponding to a basic orientation in favor of what is good in itself and of what is merely subjectively good, whereas Scheler understands a morally bad *Gesinnung* as an orientation toward lower values over higher ones. This is, of course, a function of Hildebrand’s distinction between value and the subjectively satisfying, which Scheler lacks, but which parallels Kant’s distinction between following inclination and following the moral law.

Kant and Hildebrand differ on how radical evil is free. Whereas Kant holds that a hereditary sin could not be a culpable radical evil, and that such an evil must be a noumenal deed, Hildebrand’s theory of radical evil is, not surprisingly, compatible with the traditional view. For Hildebrand we are responsible for having our basic stances not because it is necessarily a deed but because we can freely disavow them. Our fallen nature ensures that we already stand in these morally evil stances of pride and concupiscence. Yet we are culpable for standing in these evil stances and allowing them to govern our actions and responses. Of course, as a philosopher, Hildebrand cannot assert that the contingent event

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<sup>125</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:32, 43; En. Tr., 35; Hildebrand, *SW*, 592–593.

of original sin occurred. He can only cite the existence of universal evil stances as a kind phenomenological evidence for it. He does, however, provide a purely philosophical account of radical evil, like Kant.

Further, the charge that Scheler levels (incorrectly) against Kant that for Kant there is no morally evil *Gesinnung* hits true with Hildebrand. For Hildebrand, a morally bad *Gesinnung* is not a full *Gesinnung*. Hildebrand's charge against Aristippus is that a morally bad *Gesinnung* or "conviction" lacks both the volitional character and the seriousness proper to a *Gesinnung*, and it becomes more a theoretical principle than a genuine *Gesinnung*. *Pace* Scheler and Kant, only a morally good *Gesinnung* that coincides with a morally good basic intention is a *Gesinnung* in the fullest sense. The *Gesinnung* must be morally good if it is to have its proper volitional character. For there is a failure of objectification in the morally bad *Gesinnung* that leads it be turned back to the self, and it is therefore lacking the meaning and seriousness of a morally good *Gesinnung*. It remains a "private infatuation," however universalized the person seeks to make it. Further, what supplies this seriousness and voluntary character is not a principle or maxim but a basic intention to follow values.

For this reason, *Grundstellung*, *Grundhaltung* and *Grundintention* play the same central role in Hildebrand's philosophy that *Gesinnung* plays in Kant's and Scheler's philosophy. Indeed, whereas for Scheler and Kant everyone must have a *Gesinnung*, Hildebrand notes that a Goethe-like person can fail to have a *Gesinnung*. Against Scheler, a *Gesinnung* does not automatically result from a person's ordered or disordered *ordo amoris*. Rather a person must consciously choose to have a *Gesinnung*. A concupiscent Goethe-like person never forms a *Gesinnung* oriented to lower values; he is simply

directed, without holding any conviction, to the subjectively satisfying. This is also an implicit critique of Kant. Kant overemphasizes the cognitive aspect of a *Gesinnung*. There can be and are some people who have no convictions. Objectively, we might say such people, when doing evil, adopt a maxim of following the subjectively satisfying, but, from their own perspective, they might not adopt any cognitive maxim or conviction at all. Further, even if such a person adopts a conviction that pleasure is to be pursued on principle, such a conviction or *Gesinnung* has more of a theoretical and cognitive character and lacks something of the volitional character proper to a genuine *Gesinnung*. It's a "conviction" that remains a self-centered private infatuation. We find at the core of every moral act not a "maxim" but rather a basic direction of will and heart in favor of moral values. Conversely, in morally wrong actions, we need not find any conviction or maxim at all, just a basic directionality toward the subjectively satisfying.

It is therefore affective and volitional stances (*Grundstellungen*) that are the most basic principles of immoral acts and a *Grundhaltung* that is the principle of moral acts. Just as with cooperative freedom with regard to affective responses, it is impossible to have the sanction of basic attitudes out of line with the morally good. Any attempt to sanction pride or concupiscence or disavow reverence cannot fully actualize our free personal center. Such a sanction "fails at objectification," i.e., it fails to give a proper response to the world in its aspect as a world of values. Such pseudo sanctions and disavowals blind us to value and always subvert freedom into the unfreedom of the arbitrary. Thus, paradoxically, the structure of our deepest freedom is a going-with (*Mitvollzug*) and even "surrender" (*Hingabe*) to the truth that values impose demands on us. As Hildebrand quotes from

Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*, "This is our liberty when we are subordinate to the truth."<sup>126</sup>

So in rejecting the *Gesinnung* as the most basic principle of moral and immoral acts, Hildebrand is making an implicit point about moral freedom. Kant ties the will too closely to the mind and Scheler too closely to the heart. Both miss something of the properly volitional character of the most basic principle of moral acts, and how this volitional character is lacking in the principle of morally evil acts, though Scheler is guiltier on this charge than Kant is. One must have a basic moral intention to will in accord with what is morally good, which sanctions whatever reverence for value one might have as a basic stance. One must further will what is good on principle, i.e., out of a conviction (*Gesinnung*) that one should do what values demands. An intention or a *Gesinnung* to do otherwise, to will in accord with what is subjectively satisfying, fails to have the same volitional character as will to will in accord with values. It is experienced as lacking freedom, being determined by one's subjective desires. Thus, it is not a cognitive conviction/maxim nor a "tenor" determined by the *ordo amoris* of the person that is the foundation of moral freedom. It is the very giving of the will to values, self-donation done intentionally and on principle, that is at the basis of all moral freedom.

#### **4.4: The Sanction as a *Fiat* of the Will**

As we have seen, Hildebrand takes pains to separate the sanction of cooperative freedom from the *fiat* found in a typical case of willing. This has an important significance for moral freedom. While cooperative freedom cannot be actualized outside a general will to be morally good, other forms of freedom, e.g., freedom to do actions, can be fully actualized

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<sup>126</sup> St. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, trans. Francis E. Tourschner (Philadelphia: Peter Reilly Co., 1937), bk. II qtd. in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 343.



outside of a basic general will to be morally good. However, I will argue, against Hildebrand, that the cooperative sanction does contain the *fiat* of the will. To do this, I will argue, along with Seifert, that the will can extend to non-states of affairs.<sup>127</sup> Then, I will argue, along with Schwartz, that once the prejudice that the will pertains only to action is removed, we can recognize that Hildebrand's distinction between the will and the free personal center is mistaken.<sup>128</sup> The will just is the free spiritual center, the origin point of all free acts, including the sanction and disavowal of cooperative freedom.

#### **4.4.1: Extending the Range of the *Fiat***

In his "Human Action and the Human Heart," Josef Seifert notes that Hildebrand throughout his philosophical career, up until *Moralia*, limited the will to willing only states of affairs under one's control. This limitation comes from a focus on action, for in action the will can only will what it can also command the body to either indirectly or directly bring about.<sup>129</sup> I can only engender a will to organize a protest if it is under my power to command activities that can realize a protest. Because something cannot be brought about through the command of the will, we cannot engender a will for it. This is true with regard to the "narrower" sense of will as the king of actions, but Seifert notes Hildebrand extends this restriction to the will generally in his *Ethics*.<sup>130</sup>

Seifert holds this restriction of the will to realizable states of affairs not only contradicts phenomenological evidence that our will does extend past this limitation, but it is actually inconsistent with other parts of Hildebrand's philosophy. First, we have direct immediate insight "that each good endowed with intrinsic value calls for free praise and

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<sup>127</sup> Schwarz, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love," 143.

<sup>128</sup> Seifert, "Human Action and the Human Heart," 742.

<sup>129</sup> Seifert, "Human Action and the Human Heart," 738.

<sup>130</sup> Seifert, "Human Action and the Human Heart," 738–739; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 302.

admiration,” e.g., the act of saving a life, even when the person is in no position to bring these goods about.<sup>131</sup> This is not merely willing to give a praise-act but rather a call by the value to directly affirm that value in a volitional manner, which is then expressed by the act of praising that value. We are called to have free affirmation and respect for the dignity of human life. Further, Hildebrand’s own account of the virtues posits that they are constituted by *free* attitudes in favor of what is morally good, *Haltungen* rather than mere stances, *Stellungen*.<sup>132</sup> Seifert asks rhetorically:

Is it not evident that in the virtue of justice, purity, or honesty, we are taking a superactual free stance, speaking an inner ‘yes’ to values that we cannot bring into existence? Why should this superactual ‘yes’ to moral and morally relevant values be a lesser actualization of the first, value-responding perfection of free will than the response that underlies human action? Does not Hildebrand’s own analysis prove his thesis false?<sup>133</sup>

Finally, *pace* Hildebrand, Seifert argues that some forms of love, which Hildebrand attributes only to the heart, can be of a volitional character, e.g., love for my spouse in a period of affective dryness.<sup>134</sup> Schwartz builds on Seifert’s critique.<sup>135</sup> Love and forgiveness are primarily affective stances characterized by a certain affective plentitude that the will can never give. We experience regret when we want to have love for a person but cannot find this affective response within us. Nevertheless, after an initial period of

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<sup>131</sup> Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 742.

<sup>132</sup> Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 742; See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 357–378. Hildebrand’s theory of the virtues will be discussed at [5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, Scheler, and Aristotle on the Virtues](#), pp. 267–278.

<sup>133</sup> Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 742.

<sup>134</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 41–42. Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 745.

<sup>135</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 141. I discuss Schwarz’s position in more detail below. See [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), pp. 207–210.

affective love for a person, it is possible to have a primarily volitional love for that person during a period of dryness, always wanting to have that affective plenitude return. Thus, the will can *directly* respond to a wide range of values, not just states of affairs one can realize.<sup>136</sup> This does not mean that the response of a will to a value, say a person, has the affective plenitude of a corresponding affective response. If I can only muster a volitional love of a person as a person rather than the affective response of love for that person, I experience this solely volitional love of the person as quite deficient. It lacks the “more” that would be found in affective love for a person. The will does not have any affectivity of its own, but it can respond to the same range of values as the heart can. Moreover, its responses are engendered directly by the person, whereas the affective responses of the heart well up inside of us without our direct control.<sup>137</sup>

Seifert notes that following a private conversation with Hildebrand, Hildebrand came to accept Seifert’s critique.<sup>138</sup> Hildebrand subsequently expressly corrected himself in *Moralia*: “The will as position-taking (*Stellungnahme*)— through the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ contained in it to an object contained in—is not necessarily directed to a state of affairs.”<sup>139</sup> He notes, “The will as the king of action cannot focus on a state of affairs that has already been realized or is in principle beyond my sphere of influence.”<sup>140</sup> But, as seen above and in line with Seifert’s criticism, the basic moral intention is a *Stellungnahme* of the will that is not directed to states of affairs, as here the second perfection of commanding activities is only potentially present.<sup>141</sup> Second, there are particular acts of will which are “a mere

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<sup>136</sup> Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 745.

<sup>137</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 213. See above at [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), pp. 126–128.

<sup>138</sup> Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 744.

<sup>139</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 74.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>141</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

actualization of the first perfection of the will.”<sup>142</sup> We can say “yes” or “no” to states of affairs that we cannot realize, e.g., I can will a man not be executed though I have no power to prevent the execution and I cannot command that it be halted.

#### **4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will**

As we saw above and in Chapter Three, Hildebrand makes an odd distinction between the free spiritual center of the person, which is the center from which all free acts issue, and the will, from which only certain kinds of free acts issue. This distinction has been implicitly challenged by Hildebrand’s student Schwarz. In his “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Will and Heart in Love,” Schwarz aims to claim along with Hildebrand that love is essentially a gift of the heart, but he also holds that love comes from the will as held by Karol Wojtyła and other Thomists.<sup>143</sup> He agrees with Hildebrand that love is at its core a “gift,” something that we cannot engender on our own but that must be sanctioned. In this sanction, according to Schwarz, “the response of my *will* joins with the response of my heart to form a new reality.”<sup>144</sup>

Schwarz thinks there is an equivocation of the term “will” in Hildebrand’s philosophy. Quoting the following passage from Hildebrand’s *Ethics*, “The will alone is free in the sense of being under our immediate power, whereas affective responses are not free in this sense,” Schwarz notes that “this means that what von Hildebrand calls the ‘free spiritual center,’ the center for cooperative freedom, is really the will, even though he rarely, if ever, wants to call it that.”<sup>145</sup> The reason for this omission, Schwarz suggests, is

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<sup>142</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>143</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 135.

<sup>144</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 139. Emphasis added.

<sup>145</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Press, 1972), 203 qtd.in Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 142. The quoted passage can be found in the 2020 edition from Hildebrand Press at *Ethics*, 213.

that, “He identifies the will with the basis of actions.”<sup>146</sup> For Schwarz this is only one of four principal roles of the will: 1) the master of action, 2) the source of a direct inner ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to an object or person, 3) the source of cooperative freedom, and 4) the source of volitional commitment and faithfulness one can have for a person, even in affective dryness.<sup>147</sup> Had Hildebrand lived to read Schwartz’s article, he might have resisted this interpretation of his own philosophy, as he expressly denies that the sanction is an act of will in *Moralia*. In *Moralia*, Hildebrand accepts 1, 2, and 4, but not 3, claiming that the sanctioned response still comes from the heart not the will.<sup>148</sup> While for Hildebrand the sanctioned forgiveness or love is seen as coming solely from the heart, for Schwarz both the heart and will speak in it.

Yet what we see here is that once the restriction of the will to only states of affairs is lifted, as Hildebrand admits in *Moralia*, his claim in *Moralia* that the sanction is distinct from willing need no longer hold. Instead, I would claim that a sanctioned affective response can still be primarily affective rather than volitional in character, and it certainly is distinct from the will as master of actions, and yet it still comes from *both* the heart and the will. It is not so much that the affective response is grafted onto the free spiritual center as the will, which *is* the free spiritual center, is grafted to the affective response. I would argue, *pace* Hildebrand, that to posit a separation of the will and the free spiritual center is an unnecessary multiplication of entities. Further, if Seifert and Schwarz are correct that we can perceive in love a gift of both the will and the heart, and I think they are correct, then this means that the will must be the seat of cooperative freedom, and not a distinct

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<sup>146</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 142.

<sup>147</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 143.

<sup>148</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 143.

“free personal center.” This new understanding of will, Schwarz notes, greatly alters our typical conception of it:

The idea of will is usually associated in our minds with the idea of power and control, of bringing something new into existence; and this is indeed one of its key features in being the master of actions. But there is another deeper layer in which it turns to something already existing in a cooperative way.<sup>149</sup>

#### **4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom**

My contribution to this development of Hildebrand’s conception of the will is to say that every *fiat* of the will, viewed in terms of its formal structure, always “turns to something in a cooperative way.” Once it is recognized that cooperative freedom involves the will, that the sanction is a particular kind of *fiat* of the will to an affective response or a basic attitude, then it also becomes clear that something like cooperative freedom exists in the very structure of the will. For there is a concerting with the world of value in any morally good *fiat* of the will.

First, let us review why Hildebrand himself does *not* ascribe cooperative freedom to the *fiat* embodied in a typical willing. Recall the distinction between the mere *fiat* or *Zustimmung* of the will and the sanction in *Sittlichkeit* and *Ethics*. The reasons for Hildebrand’s distinction between them can be summarized as follows. First, cooperative freedom pertains to responses (either affective responses or basic stances) or being-affected that are already “gifts” within us and not under our direct control. Recall, that in *Ethics* he expressly distinguishes between the *fiat* of the will, which is under our direct power, and affective responses, which are gifts.<sup>150</sup> Second, whereas the will only refers to the

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<sup>149</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 143.

<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 213.

importance that pertains to states of affairs under our control, the experiences cooperative freedom is set over can refer to importance that belongs to non-states of affairs. Third, the sanction merges with the basic stance and affective responses, while the *fiat* of the will does not.<sup>151</sup> The fourth, and perhaps most important reason, is that in contrast to the mere, potentially arbitrary assent (*Zustimmung*) of the will, which can pertain to any of the three types of importance, a sanction and disavowal requires a founding by an objective demand that only values can supply. A “sanction” of pride or concupiscence “always remains an arbitrary assent, which fails at its objectification (*Es bleibt stets eine willkürliche Zustimmung, die in ihrem Objektivierungsversuch scheitert*).”<sup>152</sup> We can assent to evil, but we can never give it a true sanction. In contrast, we can give a *fiat* to being moved by any kind of importance, even the illegitimately subjectively satisfying. An evil sanction is impossible, but an evil *fiat* is not.

Yet there is, I want to argue, a kind of gift character even to the *fiat* of the will that Hildebrand does not recognize but that should play a role in a phenomenology of freedom. Recall the adage *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*, nothing is willed if it is not first known.<sup>153</sup> Any potential object of the will must be cognized as having some kind of importance. Moreover, in this taking-cognizance the person is “as it were void, and the whole content is on the object side.”<sup>154</sup> It follows that the importance cognized is always other than the cognizing subject. From this it also follows that what the will wills is always other than the will itself. This is what was mentioned in the Chapters Two and Three where I argued that Hildebrand, in a way like Levinas, considered subjectivity itself to be a subjugation to what

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<sup>151</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341.

<sup>152</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 553.

<sup>153</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>154</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206.

is other than itself.<sup>155</sup> So while Hildebrand is right to say that “willing never comes by itself as a gift,” it is essentially dependent on importance, which must be received.<sup>156</sup> Ultimately, willing never comes “by itself.” It always comes with importance and taking-cognizance. While willing is never a gift, I must be *given* something to will or else I cannot will.

I would argue, then, that the intentionality of the will is to give the *fiat* to some object which is cognized prior to willing and is, at least formally speaking, other than willing. It goes out to the object and assents to it. The will is eminently transcendent in its nature because it is a responsive faculty. We must note two features of this responsive faculty. First, qua response, it is always a “going with the objective” (*Mitvollzug der Objektiven*), the call of the object’s word. This is clearest in the value-response; I conform my will to the call of the value to give a proper response. Yet it is also true in the cases of responses to objective goods for one or to the subjectively satisfying. I respond to a subjectively satisfying good only as subjectively satisfying, not as a value. Second, and following from the first, the will has a basic orientation to the good. “Good” here includes any form of positive importance, including the subjectively satisfying.

What this basic orientation toward positive importance does is give the will a basic implicit de facto ordination to value, which finds its fulfillment in sanctioned reverence. This ordination is not an ordination in the sense of a teleological ordination. It is rather that the very intentional structure of the will is to go out toward and volitionally affirm a potential object as good. The reason for this ordination is that value “validates” the other types of importance, it can give them a “*nihil obstat*” or rule them as illegitimate.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> See [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 109–114 and [3.4.2: Kant’s Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 158–165.

<sup>156</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 306.

<sup>157</sup> See above at [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), p. 72–73.



Hildebrand asserts above, correctly, that in the mere *placet* or *nihil obstat* to joy over winning a game of chess (a legitimate, subjectively satisfying good) we do not find the sanction of an affective response. But we do find an underlying, sanctioned reverence. For the response of the will (should I give in or not give in to this joy?) is referred to the standards of morality and value. Winning a game of chess is good because it is a legitimate, pleasant low-level objective good for me. It is validated, legitimated by the fact that it does not contradict values. It is, as it were, a legitimate good within what one may call the horizon of values. Although my will for this subjectively satisfying good has the character of a self-affirmation, it nonetheless is legitimate in that it has been given a *nihil obstat* by the value-responding attitude of the person. Thus, the cooperative freedom to sanction reverence therefore outlines all morally good or even all morally legitimate acts. This claim, I hold, is implicit in Hildebrand's philosophy. All moral acts indirectly refer to the cooperative freedom to sanction or fail to sanction reverence and to disavow or fail to disavow pride and concupiscence.

However, I want to make a further, stronger, and more Augustinian claim that Hildebrand himself might not accept. I claim that in every morally evil willing there is a "failure of objectification" and an ultimate inversion of the very intentionality of the will. This can be seen in the fact that such a will lacks the support of a proper motivating importance, though in a different way from a purely unmotivated action. Recall, that, for Hildebrand, "willing cannot be brought into existence simply by our free center without any motive supporting it from the object side."<sup>158</sup> Lacking this motive, a willing would fail to be a position-taking that aims at an object. It would be a blind movement, lower than

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<sup>158</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305.

even teleological urges and drives. It would lose its own volitional character a position taking.<sup>159</sup> The question, then, for evil willings is whether they are in any way like a will that lacks motivation, lacks support.

Hildebrand, along with much of his school, I think, would answer no, such acts of will do have support. Consider again the teenage Augustine's *fiat* to steal the pears. Augustine himself struggles to explain the action, it appears to him like an unmotivated action in that he cannot assign it a good which his will aimed at.<sup>160</sup> Translated into Hildebrand's terms, Augustine struggles to find the "support" of the will. For Augustine, much like Scheler, to do evil is to will a lesser good over a higher one, and thus, for Augustine, evil is a privation, e.g., Cataline plotted to instigate a riot because he desired his private security over the peace of Rome.<sup>161</sup> However, Augustine's analysis of evil breaks down with the investigation of his theft of the pears because he did it because it was evil, not for a lower good.

Maria Fedoryka has noted that Hildebrand's ethics provides a way to shed light on Augustine's dilemma that eluded Augustine himself.<sup>162</sup> While there was nothing good in the object of his act (the theft), the experience of thieving was itself experienced by Augustine as subjectively satisfying. The mistake of the privative theory of evil, according to Fedoryka, is to consider that the person makes all of his choices "from only one point of view, that is that the person approaches everything for which he acts for *as if* it were his good."<sup>163</sup> But in this case, the theft is not viewed by the teenage Augustine as a value or as

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<sup>159</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305. See above [3.4.1: Freedom and/vs Arbitrariness](#), pp. 155–159.

<sup>160</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, bk. II.iv (9)–x(18), 28–34.

<sup>161</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, bk. II.v (10–11), 29–30.

<sup>162</sup> Fedoryka, *Is Moral Evil Only Privation?*, 29.

<sup>163</sup> Fedoryka, *Is Moral Evil Only Privation?*, 44.

an objective good for himself. Rather it was subjectively satisfying precisely because it involved a rejection of his true good and moral value. Thus, at first glance, we see nothing formally lacking in Augustine's will to steal. In accord with the adage *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*, he first took cognizance of an object (the theft) as positively important (subjectively satisfying). He then engendered a response, the *fiat* of his will, to thieving, and commanded his body to carry out the deed. Had he tried to sanction *Schadenfreude* at the misfortune of his robbed neighbor, he could at best have given only a pseudo-sanction. But in this case, the *fiat* of his will to do the action of thieving seems fully actualized as a *fiat*.

I think this moral divergence between the actualization of mere *fiat* and the actualization of a sanction is why Hildebrand so carefully distinguishes between them and attributes only the former to the will. Hildebrand's ethics makes an important advance over Augustine's analysis by introducing the category of the subjectively satisfying. It parallels, in a way, Kant's distinction between the moral law and inclinations as possible motives of the will. Yet, I hold, the nothingness, arbitrariness, and unintelligibility that so haunted Augustine in considering his theft is not fully removed.

Let us re-examine the intentionality of Augustine's will to steal. Like all willings, there is a *fiat* that goes out to an object and affirms it as a good (i.e., as positively important) according to the "word" of its importance, which Augustine takes-cognizance of. In this case, the motive is the subjectively satisfying character of the theft. He takes cognizance of the object (the theft and in a derivative way the pears) as "something-inviting-me-to-take-because-it-is-subjectively-satisfying-(as-a-way-to-assert-my-will)." He then actualizes his will, and at this point he takes cognizance of the pears as "something-there-

being-stolen-by-me.” Now let us suppose that, in the moment, we confront the teenage Augustine and ask him why he is doing this theft. Were he to answer “doing so is subjectively satisfying,” we could respond that this is not a sufficient reason. There is a gap between what he should will and what he does will. But this is not because he somehow views the theft “as if” it were an objective good for him or a value; that was the mistake of the later Augustine’s analysis of teenage theft which the Hildebrandians rightly correct. The Hildebrandians rightly point out that Augustine, in that moment, simply didn’t care about the moral law, he just wanted what was subjectively satisfying. He closed himself from value. Yet still, there is a gap, and eventually the only response the teenage Augustine could give is “I will it to assert my will” or “I will it because I will and desire it.”

Here we can see what I call the subversion of the intentionality of the will. The will, in contrast to an unmotivated willing, has an object which is positively important. But this positive importance is constituted, in part, by willfulness. There is a “failure of objectification,” not because there is no object or no positive importance formally distinct from the will, but because the subject’s subjective will and desires have, in part, constituted that object as important. The will, in essence, is trying to be the foundation of itself. It goes out to the object, yes, but only to curve back onto itself. The *incurvatus in se* of morally evil willing is like the trajectory of a ship that reaches beyond the singularity of the self only to curve right back to it; like the warped lines of space in a black hole.

Nor, I should note, would this unintelligibility, nothingness, and arbitrariness disappear if the act aims at a good that has its own independent character as good separate from the mere will to be evil, from sheer willfulness. Suppose, in an alternative scenario, Augustine stole the pears because they were the most delicious, enticing pears in the world.

In this alternate scenario, Augustine steals them not to assert his teenage independence or to be evil, but simply because he cannot resist their deliciousness. Here indeed a lower good (delicious pears) is chosen over a higher good (moral integrity). The pears' agreeable character makes it eminently intelligible why Augustine would find them subjectively satisfying. Nonetheless, there is a gap between the importance Augustine should respond to (moral integrity) and what he does will (stealing delicious pears). The gap can only be explained by Augustine's making an arbitrary decision to will what is subjectively satisfying over what is valuable. And this results in the previously mentioned failure of objectification. His arbitrary will enters into the constitution of the pears, not as delicious *per se*, but as delicious-to-steal. The will again tries to be its own support and foundation and fails.<sup>164</sup>

To be very clear, this subversion of the intentionality of willing does *not* mean that the theft is anything other than a culpable, free action with an object and which is actualized by Augustine. Unlike the sanction, the *fiat* of the will can in some senses of the term be fully actualized outside a general will to be morally good. An evil *fiat* is possible in a way that the evil sanction of an affective response or basic stance is not. But in another and deeper sense, the *fiat* of the will can be *fully* actualized (i.e., actualized without the *incurvatus in se*) only in concerting with the world of values. And this concerting is supplied by the basic stance (or better, sanctioned attitude) of reverence. Only a person who is reverent, who subjects all of his or her decisions, all of his or her *fiats* of the will, to the standard and judgement of values is able to fully actualize his or her freedom. Otherwise, we have a case where physical freedom, the bare ability to engender a *fiat*, is

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<sup>164</sup> This leads to what I below call the vitiation of freedom. See [7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom](#), pp. 364–375.

used, but the *fiat* itself fails at its own objectification (while still aiming at an object) and inverts its own transcendence and intentionality. In a way analogous to Aristippus' *Gesinnung*, a morally evil will loses something of its volitional character (*willensmäßige Charakter*), though it remains a genuine willing and a volitional response.<sup>165</sup> It executes a transcendence from itself to the object, but it cannot execute a full transcendence because the intentionality of the will curves back to itself.

There must at least be an implicit connection to value if the will is not to be arbitrary. In choosing to steal, Augustine disavows what reverence he has, at least for the moment, and gives into his pride and concupiscence. This giving-into is not necessarily a fully consciousness act: Augustine need not think, "Yes, I want to do this because it is evil." We could imagine Augustine is so enticed by delicious pears that, out of concupiscence, he ignores the moral question altogether and is like a morally unconscious person. Nonetheless, a reference to his basic stance is there. Conversely, any *fiat* that is not morally problematic, even as mundane as choosing Go over chess, contains an implicit reference to value and to reverence if it is to avoid arbitrariness.<sup>166</sup> Every *fiat*, then, is tied to the cooperative freedom of sanctioning and disavowing basic stances. Moreover, in its very structure, each and every *fiat* has an implicit orientation to the world of values and becomes arbitrary and unfounded if this orientation is cut. Each *fiat* must at least implicitly be rooted in a cooperative, reverent basic attitude toward the world of values on the pain of arbitrariness. In this way, we can see in each and every morally good *fiat* a cooperative

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<sup>165</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552. See the discussion of Aristippus' *Gesinnung* and how it is missing its proper volitional character above at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 199–200.

<sup>166</sup> See [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), p. 170.

moment. When this cooperative moment is lacking, we have a morally evil *fiat* that subverts its own intentionality.

I see this cooperative moment of freedom attested to in Hildebrand's own careful analysis of the motivating power of values and the subjectively satisfying. Recall that the invitation of the subjectively satisfying by its nature lacks the salutary relationship to freedom that the call of a value for a proper response has.<sup>167</sup> "The call of an authentic value for an adequate response addresses itself to us in a sovereign but non-intrusive, sober way. It appeals to our free spiritual center."<sup>168</sup> Hildebrand claims a value "speaks to us from above, and at a sober distance."<sup>169</sup> By contrast, "the attraction of the subjectively satisfying...lulls us into a state where we yield to instinct; it tends to dethrone our free spiritual center."<sup>170</sup> Its invitation "is insistent, often assuming the character of a temptation," which is "trying to silence our conscience, taking hold of us in an obtrusive manner."<sup>171</sup> In my interpretation, this means that values always appeal to the will, whereas the subjectively satisfying tends to bypass the will. Professor Crosby once put this to me nicely: "values take the person seriously." They demand and ask for a free response. For a value can be given a proper response only with the free *fiat* of the will. The subjectively satisfying, by contrast, needs the *fiat* only accidentally. It calls not for a free submission but merely for its own actualization, its satisfaction. This is clearest in concupiscence or "covetousness" (*Begehrlichkeit*), which appeals to our desires (*Begehren*). But even the

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<sup>167</sup> See above at [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 169–171.

<sup>168</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>169</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41. It is notable that Levinas turns to a similar metaphor of "height" and "distance" to describe the ethical relationship to the Other. See Levinas, *TI*, 68.

<sup>170</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40–41.

<sup>171</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

appeal of a prideful assertion of one's will in stealing still bypasses the *fiat* of the will in this manner.<sup>172</sup>

If Schwarz is correct that the sanction is itself a *fiat* of the will, once one conceives of the will more broadly than Hildebrand does, then can the *fiat* be considered a sanction, once the term sanction is conceived of more broadly than Hildebrand's restricted notion? In previous drafts of this dissertation, I held so. Yet I have been convinced by conversations with Josef Seifert and John Crosby that this move is inadvisable. First, cooperative freedom proper is, as Hildebrand notes, a much higher actualization of freedom than a mere *fiat* to do an action. There is a concerting not only with what is formally other than the will and implicitly with value, but also this sanction can *only* be actualized as concerting with values. This is because the sanction must concert not just with values but with value-responses (or being affected by values) already present within the person. The *fiat* can, unlike the sanction, be actualized in an evil manner. The sanction requires an affective response or stance that is always already present and not engendered by the person, a gift. The *fiat* by itself is not a gift. It can be engendered by the person though it requires the gift of importance, which is not given by the will itself. Thus, the sanction is only a certain kind of *fiat*; the genus *fiat* is broader than that of sanction.

Nonetheless, we do see that the *fiat* in its very intentional structure has a character not unlike the sanction. It goes out to an object and affirms it. Only if this object has some tie to value can the *fiat* fulfill its own intentional structure, otherwise, it curves back on itself. In other words, the *fiat* must be based in sanctioned reverence, in a concerting with the world of values.

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<sup>172</sup> This leads to what I later term the “annulment” of freedom, see [7.3.2: The Annulment of Freedom](#), pp. 353–358.



#### 4.6: The Cooperative Moment in Non-Cooperative Freedom

To complete this analysis, it must be shown that there is what I call the “cooperative moment” of freedom even in those types of freedom that are distinct from and more arbitrary than cooperative freedom proper. These types of freedom are 1) the freedom to do actions or perform activities, 2) the freedom to engender a bare will for something that does not issue in action, 3) the freedom of choice and decision, 4) the indirect freedom to bring about things, in particular virtues and vices, not under our direct control. From the beginning of his philosophy in *Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung* (*The Idea of Moral Action*), Hildebrand implicitly takes freedom of action as a kind of paradigm for, if not freedom, then the will in general. This focus on action is understandable; there is perhaps no clearer use of our freedom than to freely intervene in the world and bring about new states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), as Hildebrand himself often notes.<sup>173</sup> This basic focus on action and activity influences his conception of all non-cooperative forms of freedom, leading him to implicitly hold that they can be fully actualized in morally bad ways. This, I think, prevents him from seeing how there is a “cooperative moment” in all non-cooperative forms of freedom. My goal, therefore, will be to find it present in all other forms of freedom. I have divided these into four classes, which each have a subsection: 1) freedom of action and activity, 2) freedom of mere willing (e.g., willing to love someone when you don’t have affective love), 3) freedom of choice and decision, and finally 4) indirect freedom to bring about things, in particular virtues and vices, which are not under our direct control.

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<sup>173</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 300.

#### 4.6.1: Freedom of Action and Activity

As mentioned in Chapter Three, in *Die Idee* Hildebrand defines three different senses of willing (*Wollen*): the bare will for some other position-taking, willing an activity (*Tätigkeit*, e.g., walking for the sake of walking), and willing an action (*Handlung*).<sup>174</sup> While walking just for the sake of walking is typically considered a free “action” in English, even in the English text of the *Ethics*, Hildebrand continues to refer to such acts as “activities” rather than “action.”<sup>175</sup> This is because the German “*Handlungen*” refers to actions done for the sake of realizing states of affairs distinct from the actions themselves, e.g., walking to go save a child vs. walking for walking’s sake. Activities are that by which we accomplish actions. Mere activities tend to have rather low-level importance because they are not directed at any other state of affairs. To walk to see a beautiful sunset or for exercise is an action, not a mere activity. There are exceptions, e.g., contemplation is an activity we do for its own sake.<sup>176</sup> But when we compare activities with deep affective responses such as enthusiasm or joy, which are never engendered or commanded by us, we find they have a “much lower [level of] perfection.”<sup>177</sup>

With our ability to realize a state of affairs and command activities, the second dimension of the will takes on a distinct themacity in this freedom of action, one that affects even the first dimension of engendering a will. I cannot will to stage a mass protest if I am in solitary confinement; I can only do so if I can command my body to do the activities necessary to organize the event. Indeed, in his *Ethics*, Hildebrand claims that the first dimension of giving a *fiat* to being moved by some importance is limited by the second

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<sup>174</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 154–156. See above at [3.3.1: Hildebrand’s Phenomenology of the Will](#), pp. 134.

<sup>175</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 301–302.

<sup>176</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 178.

<sup>177</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 334.

dimension of commanding activities.<sup>178</sup> One can only will a state of affairs that can be realized through commanding activities, and not an object itself. It was this thesis that Seifert convinced Hildebrand was an error.<sup>179</sup> Yet the basic tie between the ability to give one's *fiat* to doing an action and commanding the action is nonetheless important, even once Hildebrand's limitation of the will in general to states of affairs is corrected. For it is this tie that gives freedom of action its distinctive arbitrariness. As noted in Chapter Three, Hildebrand's notion of commanding in his *Ethics* has its antecedent in *Die Idee's* "Vorsetzen" (Putting forward the activity).<sup>180</sup> In *Die Idee*, Hildebrand notes that this *Vorsetzen* has a certain arbitrariness insofar as it is associated with the bare centrality of the "actual I":

The peculiarity of putting-forward (*Vorsetzen*) is related to its starting point in the ego. It springs from the central point that we want to call the actual I (*aktuelles Ich*). This I, always present to me, which seems one-dimensionally empty and unquestioning, and which is experienced as arbitrarily free (*und das als willkürlich frei erlebt wird*), represents the peripheral endpoint of a central line of the person.<sup>181</sup>

One can fully actualize a *fiat* to do an evil action or activity, e.g., the teenage Augustine can steal. However, as we saw above, willing to do evil always involves a certain failure in the very structure of the *fiat*. This is not to say that acts motivated by the merely subjectively satisfying lack intentionality, only that their intentionality curves back on the self. Thus, only when freedom of action is guided by reverence, does it fully achieve its own intentionality. My evil, subjective intention may be fulfilled in an evil action, but the

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<sup>178</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 302.

<sup>179</sup> See [4.4.1: Extending the Range of the Fiat](#), pp. 204–207.

<sup>180</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161. See [3.3.1: Hildebrand's Phenomenology of the Will](#), p. 134.

<sup>181</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 161. Translation my own.

will's own intentional structure is subverted. In this way, we can discern a cooperative moment of freedom in even this seemingly most arbitrary form of freedom. Only when the will cooperates with value, i.e., the person has reverence, can it avoid the arbitrariness that haunts freedom of action when we consider it in isolation from reverence.

It should be noted that Hildebrand holds there are some actions that involve the actualization of the will but are not themselves acts of will, namely social acts (*soziale Akte*) such as asking, obeying, and promising.<sup>182</sup> Hildebrand assigns these social acts to the volitional sphere, rather than to the theoretical or affective sphere, but he does not assign them to the will per se. This is because they cannot be fully actualized by the will since they require another person in order to be fully actualized; whereas an action such as of saving a child can be fully actualized by the will.<sup>183</sup> Following Reinach's "The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law," social acts require being heard in order to be fully actualized, otherwise they are like spears that fail to hit their target.<sup>184</sup> They require another person, who is expressed as the dative: "I obeyed *him* on the matter of reading this book." Taking obedience as his example in *Moralia*, Hildebrand notes it is "similar to the will in that it too is free in the full sense of the word...we find the immediate actualization of the free spiritual center."<sup>185</sup> But it differs from the will in that there is a "new theme of its own in relation to the will as such. It is a unique act of submission."<sup>186</sup>

Nonetheless, we can note that each free social act requires the *fiat* of the will. Though the will cannot fully actualize a social act, I must will to initiate it. It therefore

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<sup>182</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 313–321.

<sup>183</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 319.

<sup>184</sup> Adolf Reinach, "The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law," trans. John F. Crosby, *Aletheia. An International Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1983): 19. Henceforth, *AFCL*.

<sup>185</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 317. Translation my own.

<sup>186</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 317. Translation my own.

contains a cooperative moment of freedom no less than freedom of action. Asking someone for something evil or obeying someone on an evil matter subverts the very intentional structure of the *fiat* to doing this asking or obeying.

#### 4.6.2: Freedom of Mere Willing

Just as freedom of action appears arbitrary in that one can directly actualize it or not actualize it, a similar arbitrariness is found in the bare impotent will for some other position taking of the person, e.g., the mere will to love someone romantically or to forgive someone. It is crucial to note here that Hildebrand regards love and forgiveness as primarily affective responses, not volitional. In his *Moralia*, Hildebrand distinguishes between the two examples above. The mere will to forgive someone serves as a “skeleton” (*Skelett*) for a real forgiveness that is also a gift of one’s heart.<sup>187</sup> It lacks the real affective plentitude and depth proper to forgiveness. Yet the “skeleton” will to forgive helps prepare the heart for affective forgiveness. The affective response is the flesh that is to be put on the skeletal will.

Forgiveness itself is a special kind of free “act.” Just as Hildebrand does not attribute the sanction to the will, he also denies that the will pertains to what he calls act-like position-takings (*aktartige Stellungnahmen*) such as repentance (*Reue*) and forgiveness (*Verzeihen*).<sup>188</sup> These position-takings have an actlike structure in that they are accomplished at once and during that moment they are under the power of one’s immediate freedom.<sup>189</sup> In that sense they are like the will. However, they are primarily affective position-takings. I can have a skeletal will to forgive someone, and this forgiveness ought

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<sup>187</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 76–78.

<sup>188</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 31. Kapitel “Aktartige Stellungnahmen: Das Verzeihen,” 313–353.

<sup>189</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 335.

to be accepted, but if involuntarily (and disavowed by me) my heart still holds on to rancor then I have not accomplished genuine, full forgiveness. It needs to be the voice of the heart that speaks this forgiveness. For Hildebrand, forgiveness is, therefore, an affective position-taking that is very close to the will, but properly pertains to the affective heart and not the will.<sup>190</sup> Consistent with what I have said above with regard to love, I would, *pace* Hildebrand, claim that these act-like position-takings pertain in fact to both the will and the heart.<sup>191</sup> They occur when, by an act of will, I can freely and directly give a response, a position-taking, of my heart. At last, my heart breaks forth and I genuinely forgive the person with my will and heart, and I no longer give just a skeletal will to forgive.

In contrast to the skeletal will to forgive someone, the mere will to love someone represents a “substitute” (*Ersatz*) for the affective response.<sup>192</sup> Hildebrand gives the examples of someone who tries to fall in love with another but fails, and of a husband who has fallen in love with another person but strives to be faithful and wills to love his wife. Such a mere will “does not have the reality and fullness of the will as a ‘skeleton,’ and certainly not the full fulfillment of the actual will, which is the king of action (*der König der Handlung*).”<sup>193</sup> The reason is because to be in spousal love with someone, unlike forgiveness, is not something we can give ourselves in any sense. We can certainly prepare ourselves for falling in love in general rather than being hard-hearted. Yet whereas with forgiveness we can work toward a concrete case of forgiving someone in both our heart and will, spousal love must be received as a sheer gift.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 335.

<sup>191</sup> See above at [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), p. 209.

<sup>192</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 78. Translation my own.

<sup>193</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 78.

<sup>194</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 79.

Finally, following his correction by Josef Seifert, Hildebrand in his *Moralia* came to recognize that one can engender an inner “yes” or “no” to a state of affairs even in the absence of being able to command its realization. There are particular acts of will that are “a mere actualization of the first perfection of the will,” but not the second.<sup>195</sup> Suppose I regard the death penalty as immoral and read in the news that someone is going to be executed. As I am not the judge, I am in no position to command that the execution not take place. Nevertheless, by a spontaneously free act of will I say “no” to this execution. Unlike the skeleton will and substitute wills above, this act of will is a complete free act that achieves its fulfillment all at once, whereas the other skeleton and substitute wills are impotent.<sup>196</sup> But all three pertain to the actual I, and can be actualized by the person directly without further ado, giving them a sort of arbitrariness. There is nothing to prevent me from actualizing a mere will to obtain a vice, or to will that some person I despise come to a bad end, which I can in no way realize.

Here again the arbitrariness comes from the fact that these bare willings can be actualized by the person directly and immediately, by mere *fiat*. Again unlike cooperative freedom, this *fiat* can be actualized in an evil manner. Yet the *fiat* here, no less than in freedom of action and activity, is intentionally directed toward what is important. It too can have or fail to have not just support, but the proper support that only the connection to value and reverence provides. If I will to love someone I should not (e.g., another’s spouse), this will to love is motivated by the value of the person whom I want to love. Conversely, if, in a period of great dryness, I engender a skeletal will to love my spouse, this will is properly motivated.

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<sup>195</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

<sup>196</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 75.

#### 4.6.3: Freedom of Choice, Decision, and Fundamental Freedom

In Chapter Three, I noted that freedom is typically seen as involving choice, either between two or more goods or at least of either doing or omitting the action.<sup>197</sup> This freedom of choice would seem necessarily arbitrary. For freedom of choice qua freedom of choice is no less free if you choose the immoral option over the moral one. However, in *Ethics* chapter 23 “The First Dimension of Freedom,” Hildebrand objects to a requirement of subjective choice between two alternatives.<sup>198</sup> Again, recall the case of Sally.<sup>199</sup> Sally is so virtuous that she simply cannot conceive of not sharing her pastry with a nearby beggar. Hildebrand would hold that Sally is no less free due to the subjective lack of alternatives. It is she alone that engenders this will. Hildebrand himself wants to say that “real choice” is not present in this case.<sup>200</sup> “Subjectively [the] alternative is often absent, even though we might say that objectively every decision implies the rejection of innumerable possibilities. But this would be...artificial.”<sup>201</sup> In his *The Acting Person*, Karol Wojtyła makes a distinction that can be found implicit in Hildebrand’s own work between free *decision* and choice.<sup>202</sup> Only the later implies the subjective presence of alternatives. In this sense, Sally has no less freedom of decision than a person who is tempted to keep the pastry but she does not experience a choice.

However, in contrast to Hildebrand, I do think it is appropriate, if admittedly a bit artificial, to say that Sally acts *of* her own free choice though she does not choose among alternatives. This way of speaking emphasizes that Sally has made a basic choice in favor

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<sup>197</sup> See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 142–151.

<sup>198</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 324–326.

<sup>199</sup> See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 142–151.

<sup>200</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 326.

<sup>201</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 325.

<sup>202</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, vol. 10 of *Analecta Husserliana*, trans. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Boston: DReidel, 1979), 130.



of the morally good over the morally evil, something Hildebrand affirms is always a choice for finite persons and certainly for any fallen human person.<sup>203</sup> Hildebrand sets himself against a long tradition of intellectualism running from Socrates to Scheler that claims knowledge of the morally good compels us to will it.<sup>204</sup> In opposition to intellectualism, Hildebrand quotes Ovid: “*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* (I see the good and approve of it, I do the worse).”<sup>205</sup> It is possible to choose to abandon the perspective of value *entirely* in favor of the perspective of the subjectively satisfying.<sup>206</sup> *Pace* Aristotle, we are able to freely and consciously choose even our most ultimate ends in this life.<sup>207</sup> This realization is available to Hildebrand because he recognizes that importance does not fit under a single category, but rather there are irreducibly different types of importance: the subjectively satisfying, the objective good for one, and value. The first dimension of the will, the response to importance, can be set to be in line with value or the subjectively satisfying. Hildebrand regards the free choice to reject pride and concupiscence in favor of reverence as a task set before all of us. Although Sally does not consider the subjectively satisfying, this is because she has set value as an overall guide to her life, and this was and is free choice to sanction reverence and disavow pride and concupiscence. In an insightful article Crosby calls this freedom of choice our “fundamental freedom,” since in it one adopts a fundamental position toward being or not being morally good.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> See above at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), p. 201.

<sup>204</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 463.

<sup>205</sup> Hildebrand quotes this line both in his *Sittlichkeit* and in *Ethics*. See Hildebrand, *SW*, 464; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 243. I have more to say about Hildebrand’s conception of fundamental freedom and his rejection of any intellectualism or determinism by the good at [7.2: Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 343–348.

<sup>206</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 324.

<sup>207</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 317–325.

<sup>208</sup> John F. Crosby, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Fundamental Freedom of Persons,” in *Personalist Papers* (Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 194–220.

Suppose Sally has three siblings, Kathy, Denise, and Sally's evil twin Robert. Robert has a general will toward pride and does not even consider giving away his pastry to the beggar. Instead he eats it in front of the beggar in cruel mockery because he hates morality. Kathy and Denise, by contrast, experience a moral struggle with concupiscence. Denise ultimately gives the pastry, but Kathy walks away to eat in peace. Sally's freedom of decision, based on her fundamental choice in favor of the morally good, is more free than all of the others. In contrast to Denise, Sally's decision to give the pastry is less constrained than Denise's "real choice." Yet Denise in turn is freer than Kathy, who in freely choosing to do wrong out of a concupiscent desire, surrenders her own freedom to that desire. Finally, Robert's univocal will and fundamental choice in favor of pride renders his decision less free than all of the others. Whereas in contrast to Denise he does not give into a concupiscent desire engendered by the pastry, his cruel will traps him even more in the subjectively satisfying than Kathy's surrender to concupiscence, to say nothing of Denise and Sally. His will has, in one sense, more of a volitional character than Denise's concupiscent desire to eat in peace, but in another sense his freedom falls into the arbitrary even further than hers does.

#### **4.6.4: Indirect Freedom**

In Chapters 24 and 26 of his *Ethics*, Hildebrand notes that we bear responsibility for many things that are not "in the range of our direct free influence."<sup>209</sup> I cannot simply decide to have a virtue of generosity and there it is. Yet I can indirectly work to bring it about; I can prepare the way for it and remove obstacles to it.<sup>210</sup> This is the work of what Hildebrand

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<sup>209</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 24 "Direct and Indirect Freedom," 327–330; Chapter 26 "Indirect Influence of Man's Freedom," 354–358.

<sup>210</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 356.

terms “indirect freedom,” which is set over “those things...which are withdrawn from our command and whose realization cannot therefore become our aim. Nevertheless we can do our share.”<sup>211</sup> Our share is “free in the sense of being in the direct zone of our power; it is something that we can freely command. But the end to which this free intervention aspires is not accessible to our direct power.”<sup>212</sup>

This indirect freedom has an enormous range. Of particular interest to Hildebrand is its role in the “molding of our personality” by preparing the way for or eliminating virtues and vices, affective responses, being-affected, and sensitivity to values.<sup>213</sup> Our education and milieu, the love or oppression we receive from others, books we read, and, in general, the world we live in is “partly beyond our power, partly accessible to our free influence.”<sup>214</sup> An adult can choose to move out of a bad milieu, though a child cannot. Further, some decisive experiences a person undergoes permanently mark one’s personality. The Little Drummer Boy’s experience with Roman soldiers makes him bitter toward all people.<sup>215</sup> These experiences are clearly removed from our free influence. Yet how one “digests” one’s experiences is up to one. One’s free attitude toward those experiences are at least potentially completely within the realm of our freedom.

Finally, there is a person’s basic “general superactual attitudes” (e.g., reverence), which constitute “the very core of man’s virtues and vices.”<sup>216</sup> These general attitudes, although they pertain to the will and the heart and are both affective and volitional in character, are removed from the direct intervention of our will (except insofar as we

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<sup>211</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 329.

<sup>212</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 330.

<sup>213</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 354.

<sup>214</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 355.

<sup>215</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 355–356.

<sup>216</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 356.

sanction or disavow them).<sup>217</sup> However, we do have indirect influence over them, e.g., by doing good acts and removing obstacles to having those virtues.<sup>218</sup>

Of all the non-cooperative types of freedom, indirect freedom, especially with regard to virtues and vices, is the least arbitrary in its character. For Hildebrand, a virtue always involves what he calls free “superactual general attitudes” in responding to a general sphere of moral goodness, e.g., generosity with giving and reverence with the dignity of being.<sup>219</sup> Virtues are not mere dispositions of heart and will but rather are “habitual” and “superactual” qualities of the person.<sup>220</sup> This is not the sense of habit that reduces an act to mere voluntariness, as custom does. Having gained a virtue, e.g., generosity, indirectly by doing many virtuous acts makes one’s now-easier acts of generosity no less freely engendered by one than before.<sup>221</sup> Indeed, they freer in that the heart now goes along with the will rather than opposing it. By contrast, doing vicious acts leads to enslavement to the desires and passions engendered in one. It always leads to a kind of self-enclosure.

With regard to indirect freedom, it is clear that Denise’s doing generous actions, if she continues them, will render her freer just as Sally already is. Kathy in giving into her temptations further encloses herself in the subjectively satisfying, similar to how Robert has already become self-enclosed. To use indirect freedom to acquire virtue liberates the will, whereas to use it to bring about vice traps the will in itself. The person of vice is locked in self-enclosure and what Hildebrand calls the “egospasms” of pride and

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<sup>217</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 356. Hildebrand’s theory of virtue will be more fully discussed at [5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, and Aristotle on the Virtues](#), pp. 267–278.

<sup>218</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 356.

<sup>219</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 377–79.

<sup>220</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 381.

<sup>221</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 382–398.

concupiscence.<sup>222</sup> For the indirect freedom to gain or acquire virtues (or vices) is always already implicitly a use of cooperative freedom to sanction or disavow the fundamental moral attitudes of pride, concupiscence and reverence. This will be clearer when we consider the nature of virtue and its relationship to the will in the next chapter.

#### **4.7: Conclusion: Toward the General Will to be Morally Good**

In summary, what this and the previous chapter have shown is that the general will to be morally good is internal to all instances of freedom. For the *fiat* of the will is inherently other-oriented. It is oriented toward giving its own word in harmony with the word of importance it receives. This *fiat* represents an assent (*Zustimmung*) that is always a giving oneself to (*Hingabe*) the object according to its word of importance. It is always tied to one's cooperative freedom to sanction or disavow reverence. Only when we say to value "let it be done unto me according to your word" can we be set free for freedom (NAB Luke 1:38, Gal 5:1). However, our task is incomplete insofar as it must be further specified what this general will to be morally good is. To this task the next chapter turns.

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<sup>222</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 5.

## CHAPTER 5: FREEDOM AS THE GENERAL WILL TO BE MORALLY GOOD

### 5.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained the nature of cooperative freedom in Hildebrand and argued that a “cooperative moment” of freedom is present in all morally good free acts. This means that in order to be fully free, I must have “the superactual general will to be morally good (*der überaktuelle allgemeine Wille, sittlich gut zu sein*).”<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, we investigate the structure of the general will to be morally good, and then, in Chapter Six, we will explore how having this general will makes one freer by examining the case of the person who possesses the fullest degree of moral goodness, one who possesses what Hildebrand calls “*Güte*” (“goodness” or “goodness and kindness”). In Chapter Seven, we will discuss how lacking the general will to be good due to pride or concupiscence makes one less free.<sup>2</sup> This chapter, therefore, will lay out the basics of Hildebrand’s morality. For Hildebrand, a general will to be morally good performs three crucial functions: 1) it enables the full consciousness of moral values and avoids culpable moral value blindness, 2) it sets one to will higher values over lower values, and 3) it orients one toward and provides the beginnings of moral virtue. These will be the topics of the three main sections of the chapter.

In the second section below, we will start to see how Hildebrand in effect blends Scheler’s and Kant’s accounts of the good will into a unique synthesis. For Kant, the good will obeys what is good in itself, embodied in moral duty and obligation, and rejects what

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 339; *Ethik*, 267.

<sup>2</sup> These three chapters, and in particular the present one, outline some of the content of Hildebrand’s conception of morality. However, this is done only insofar as is necessary to understand moral freedom; thus, particular moral issues and questions, such as whether euthanasia can be moral, are addressed only in this context.

is merely subjectively good, the inclinations, when they conflict with these demands.<sup>3</sup> For Scheler, the good will is one that corresponds to a proper *ordo amoris*; one wills a higher value over a lower value out of an affective love for value.<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand blends elements of Scheler's and Kant's conceptions of good will, taking care to mark the independence of the will from the heart and the mind. In essence, a good will for Hildebrand both rejects the subjectively satisfying when it conflicts with value and conforms to the *ordo amoris*.

In the second section, we also will see that Hildebrand inherits from Scheler a concern for explaining value blindness.<sup>5</sup> Yet Hildebrand understands value blindness as engendered not by the pull of lower values on a deformed *ordo amoris*, but rather from the subjectively satisfying, giving a more Kantian explanation of value blindness.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, just as the desire to give in to the inclinations for Kant can lead to false conceptions of morality, so too for Hildebrand can the subjectively satisfying lead to value blindness and false conceptions of morality.<sup>7</sup>

Yet if Hildebrand moves closer to Kant in distinguishing between the good-in-itself and the subjectively satisfying, he does not neglect Scheler's insights into the *ordo amoris*. Hildebrand finds Scheler's notion that morality can be reduced to willing higher non-moral values over lower ones to be too simplistic. First, while he follows Schler in holding one ought not intend one's own moral value, one can intend the moral value of the act, which Scheler does not recognize.<sup>8</sup> Second, Hildebrand returns somewhat to Kant in that he

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:393–4:402, 11–22; En. Tr., 49–57.

<sup>4</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 53–65, 112, 192. See above at [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), pp. 74–76 and [3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142.

<sup>5</sup> Scheler, “*Ordo Amoris*,” 100; Hildebrand, *SW*, II. Teil “*Die Wertblindheit in ihren verschiedenen Grundformen*” (Part 2: “Value Blindness in its different Basic Forms”), pp. 486–524.

<sup>6</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:441–4:444, 69–72; En Tr., 89–92; Hildebrand, *GI*; *Ethics*, 441–447.

<sup>8</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 183; “*Ordo Amoris*,” 93 ; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 272–274.

recognizes the central role of moral obligations in morality and moral freedom, which is inconsistent with Scheler's philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in *Moralia*, Hildebrand realized that both Scheler's and his own attempts to reduce all moral acts to responses to the value of an object was flawed: some moral acts, e.g., fulfilling a trivial promise, are not reducible to value-responses.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, I will argue that Hildebrand's philosophy rehabilitates the notion of the *ordo amoris*. Choosing the morally best among various possible acts and attitudes realizes the highest value on the side of the subject. This is a revised *ordo amoris* that is compatible with Hildebrand's ethics and is embodied in the general will to be morally good.

Finally, unknown to himself, since he follows Scheler in holding that Kant utterly neglects virtue, Hildebrand, in essence, combines their accounts of virtue into a new synthesis based on his conception of basic attitudes (*Grundhaltungen*).<sup>11</sup> For Hildebrand the core of virtues are fundamental moral attitudes, in particular reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, veracity, and humility.<sup>12</sup> These attitudes are constitutive of any moral value-response, and, thus, are constitutive of the general will to be morally good. Virtue obtains when the basic moral attitude encompasses the "being" of the person, so that there is an affective fullness in one's moral acts, a harmony of heart and will.<sup>13</sup> Kant's strength of

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<sup>9</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 203–232; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 401–412.

<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, *Erster Teil*: "Die Quellen der Sittlichkeit," (Part 1: "The Different Sources of Morality"). I briefly mentioned this inability to reduce all moral acts to value responses above in Chapter Two, where I again used the example of a trivial promise. In contrast to the bare moral importance in itself of the content of trivial promise, values have an "inner fire" and metaphysical beauty, See [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), pp. 69–70.

<sup>11</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:394, 28; *MM*, 524; *MS*, 6:395, 29; *MM*, 525. Scheler, *RV*, 21; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 365.

<sup>12</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 1–8; "Faithfulness," in *AL*, 9–17; "Responsibility," in *AL*, 19–26; "Veracity," in *AL*, 27–34. A fifth essay describes the fundamental moral attitude of "Goodness" (*Güte*), conceived by Hildebrand as a quality of overflowing love. This fundamental moral attitude is not a prerequisite for a general will to be morally good but rather is the ultimate fruit of that general will. This quality of goodness will be the subject of the next chapter and will be described at [6.3.1: Güte and the Nature of Love](#), pp. 290–292. See Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35–41.

<sup>13</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 558.



good will meets Scheler's affective quality of a person in Hildebrand's unique, and, in my view more complete, account of virtue.<sup>14</sup>

## 5.2: The General Will and Moral Consciousness

The notion of a “general will to be morally good” found in *Ethics* has its antecedent in the basic moral intention (*moralische Grundintention*) in *Sittlichkeit*. These two can be identified. Hildebrand, in a deliberate echo of Kant, calls the basic moral intention the “good will” (*der gute Wille*).<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand introduces the concept of good will in the context of explaining why such good will is necessary for moral consciousness. First, as we will see in the first subsection, the good will is both demanded by values, and yet the good will is a precondition for fully receiving and understanding values.<sup>16</sup> We have, briefly, seen this claim above in Chapter Two. While particular values are given in taking-cognizance and *Wertfühlen*, one must be open to the location (*Ort*) of values.<sup>17</sup> The eyes can see only when they are not shut closed. Thus, the good will prevents pride and concupiscence from imposing moral value-blindness.<sup>18</sup> This blindness is due to the fact the value-responding and value-receiving “moral center” either excludes or is excluded by the two immoral centers of pride and concupiscence.<sup>19</sup>

### 5.2.1 The General Will as Demanded by Moral Values

To situate Hildebrand's account of the good will, it is helpful to briefly summarize Kant's and Scheler's accounts of the good will. For Kant, the good will is the only thing good-in-

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<sup>14</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:394, 28; *MM*, 524; *MS*, 6:395, 29; *MM*, 525. Scheler, *RV*, 21; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 365.

<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 550.

<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522.

<sup>17</sup> See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, II. Teil: “Die Wertblindheit in ihren verschiedenen Grundformen” (Part 2: “Value Blindness in its Various Basic Forms”); Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 19 “Moral Consciousness,” 268–293.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, IV. Teil: “Die verschiedenen moralischen Zentren” (Part 4: “The Different Moral Centers”), 580–593; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 31 “Centers of Morality and Immorality,” 268–293.

itself because it alone conforms to the moral law.<sup>20</sup> The moral law demands that I have a good will. This will is “general” insofar as the moral law takes the form of the Categorical Imperative, which demands that my life conforms to universal maxims that ensure that my actions are good-in-themselves.<sup>21</sup> I adopt as my most basic maxim and conviction (*Gesinnung*) that I should do what morality demands and reject the inclinations to the degree that they interfere with morality’s demands. This moral law is found in pure practical reason; it is not found in experience. Indeed, Kant holds this moral law can be discovered by “common” human reason, and we require moral philosophy mainly to preserve our conception of it from false conceptions of the moral law.<sup>22</sup>

Scheler, famously, takes issue with Kant’s approach. For Scheler, the good in itself, value, is precisely found in experience.<sup>23</sup> For Scheler, will is secondary to a person’s affective *ordo amoris*, i.e., what values they perceive as higher or lower values. If my *ordo amoris* is properly ordered, then clear insights into value will necessarily engender a good will.<sup>24</sup> I will have a morally good “tenor” or directionality of will, a morally good *Gesinnung*.<sup>25</sup> For both Kant and Scheler, then, what is good-it-itself requires me to have a good will and brings about a morally good *Gesinnung* as the most basic volitional principle of good acts.

Like Scheler and Kant, the good-in-itself requires, nay demands, that I have a general good will. Yet, as we saw in Chapter Four, Hildebrand diverges from both Kant and Scheler in that he prioritizes a morally good *Grundhaltung* over a morally good

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:393–4:402, 11–22; En. Tr., 49–57.

<sup>21</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:393, 11; En. Tr., 49; 4:402, 22; En. Tr., 57.

<sup>22</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:405, 22; En. Tr., 59.

<sup>23</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 53–65.

<sup>24</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192.

<sup>25</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 112.

*Gesinnung* as the most basic volitional principle of moral acts.<sup>26</sup> He is closer to Kant in that this *Grundhaltung* involves a basic moral intention where I resolve and will on principle to do what morality demands, rejecting what is subjectively satisfying if necessary. It does not automatically result from properly ordered feelings, *pace* Scheler. A good intention and a basic moral attitude must be consciously adopted by my will. In Chapter Two, we saw how only if the person is directed toward the location (*Ort*) of moral values can one properly take cognizance of them.<sup>27</sup> Thus, even though the basic intention is itself a response to the world of values, it is also a precondition for the reception of moral values. Ironically, by prioritizing the receptivity of taking-cognizance over activity of volition and affectivity, Hildebrand comes to a unique position that one must have a good will in order to receive values. One does not find the moral law always already present in pure practical reason nor is it given solely in feelings. Values are given in taking-cognizance of values, sometimes coupled with feeling values. But in order to take cognizance of values, I must keep my eyes open and not be turned away from them. This is a function not solely of my feelings but primarily of my will.

In *Ethics*, Hildebrand modified the term “good will” into “general will to be morally good” for several reasons already present in *Sittlichkeit*. First, taking-cognizance of moral values involves recognizing the demand of moral values that we realize them.<sup>28</sup> This demand pertains to three different spheres of realization: actions in the proper sense (*Handlungen*), both affective and volitional individual responses (*Antworten*), and virtues

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<sup>26</sup> See above at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 189–204.

<sup>27</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522. See also [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 272.

(*Tugenden*).<sup>29</sup> The moral values—justice, humility, etc.—demand not only that I realize them in particular actions, but that I disavow morally bad affective responses and sanction morally good ones. They also demand that I have the virtues of justice, humility, etc.<sup>30</sup> So a good will involves a will that *I be good*. Second, the general will refers not just to the grasp of a moral value in a particular situation, but a real knowing-by-acquaintance (*Kennen*) of a moral value in its general essence, e.g., justice itself, humility itself, and this is why the good will is a *general* will.<sup>31</sup> Third, the general will is also general in the sense that this will is “superactual.”<sup>32</sup> It is not only present when I am consciously aware of it but “colors” my life in the way akin to knowing that I am loved colors my life even when I am not thinking of that love.<sup>33</sup>

This general will is absent in the good natured, morally unconscious person (*sittlich unbewußte Menschen*) mentioned in the last chapter.<sup>34</sup> In *Moralia*, Hildebrand states “that the morally unconscious [person] grasps the value of the morally significant good (*der moralische Unbewußte den Wert des sittlich bedeutsamen Gutes erfaßt* [e.g., a drowning child’s preciousness]) but not its moral significance (*nicht aber seine sittliche Bedeutsamkeit*),” in a conscious way.<sup>35</sup> All values call for proper responses and the morally unconscious person recognizes many of these calls, but the particular “you should” (“*Du sollst*”) and seriousness (*Ernst*) that are proper to morality are missing from this person’s

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<sup>29</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 27 “The Three Spheres of Morality,” 361–398; *Moralia*, 299.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 183.

<sup>31</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 473.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 277.

<sup>33</sup> See above [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), p. 190, for where the concept of “superactual” attitudes are introduced.

<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethik*, 275. For my introduction of this morally unconscious person, see [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), pp. 185–186.

<sup>35</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 37.

consciousness.<sup>36</sup> This person would save a drowning child but does it because “I dislike being mean or bad.”<sup>37</sup> One fails to see that an act of saving a drowning person is morally obligatory, and that one should not do it solely because of one’s good nature, but on principle. Like Hildebrand, Kant also considers the case of a person who is good from nature rather than from a clear recognition of the good-in-itself. This is the person who is beneficent from an inclination to be beneficent.<sup>38</sup> Such a person acts out of his or her own nature and does not recognize the express demand of what is good-in-itself. Remove the inclination, remove his beneficent nature, and he will become a stingy person. Yet Kant would say this person’s acts have no moral worth, since he does not follow the moral law in principle. Hildebrand, because he rejects Kant’s formalism, has a more nuanced picture. This person does perceive values and executes genuine value-response; there is some moral worth to his acts. Nonetheless, he is blind to the full significance of morality, and he acts out of an insufficient basis—from good nature rather than recognizing clearly the morally good. This leads us to the next topic, moral blindness.

### **5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities**

The notion of value-blindness is one that Scheler brings to the fore. As one might expect, it is tied to the affective *ordo amoris*. A person with a disordered *ordo amoris* will only feel lower values and be blind to higher values. Scheler compares the *ordo amoris* of the person to a “shell”: “He perceives the world and himself through the windows of this shell, and perceives no more of the world, of himself, or of anything else besides what these windows show him.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, a playboy with a disordered *ordo amoris* will be unable to

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<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 271.

<sup>38</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:398, 16; En. Tr. 53.

<sup>39</sup> Scheler, *OA*, 100.

grasp values higher than pleasure values; he will be blind to them. Once again here we see it is feelings and not will that determine a person's moral life.

In his *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen* (translated as *Ressentiment*), Scheler points to another way value-blindness, or rather value-delusion comes about.<sup>40</sup> Scheler defines *Ressentiment* as “lasting mental attitude” which is based on value feelings (*Wertfühlen*) and one's basic feeling-state (*Gefühlszustand*).<sup>41</sup> *Ressentiment* springs from consciousness of a higher value that one desires but feels impotent to obtain. A repressed envy for the bearer of those higher values is eventually turned against their very existence; one hates the existence of such people.<sup>42</sup> An unconscious affective inversion of the table of values occurs. “*Ressentiment* brings about its most important achievement when it determines the whole ‘morality,’ perverting the rules of preference until what was ‘evil’ appears ‘good.’”<sup>43</sup> Although Scheler calls *Ressentiment* a self-deformation of the mind, it clearly deforms the mind by deforming feelings of values. The priority of affectivity is maintained.

Scheler's views here, taken by themselves, still overall render the will impotent. Hildebrand breaks with Scheler in that the will plays a key role in whether one is value-blind or not, though affectivity is also responsible. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Hildebrand argues that the fundamental attitudes of pride, concupiscence, and reverence are “moral centers” (*moralischen Zentren*) of the person.<sup>44</sup> Every morally good act actualizes the morally good center, and every morally evil act actualizes pride, sometimes

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<sup>40</sup> Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, Marquette Studies in Philosophy ; vol. 4, trans. Manfred Frings (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994). Henceforth *Ressentiment*.

<sup>41</sup> Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 29. For the distinction between value feelings and feeling states see above at [3.3.2: Scheler and/vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 138–139.

<sup>42</sup> Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 35.

<sup>43</sup> Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 63.

<sup>44</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 473.

also with concupiscence. However, the morally good and morally evil centers cannot be actualized in the same act. The incompatibility of the moral center with the two immoral centers helps explain the phenomenon of moral value-blindness.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, if pride or concupiscence totally dominate the person, the result is total blindness to the fundamental value (*Grundwert*) of moral goodness, because that person is closed off to the location (*Ort*) of values by a value-hostile or a value-indifferent attitude.<sup>45</sup> The total constitutive blindness (*totale konstitutive Blindheit*) that results closes one off from the basic value of moral goodness in general.<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand outlines two other general forms of value-blindness. In partial value-blindness (*partielle Blindheit*), a person grasps the basic moral value of goodness, but is unable to grasp the general essence of some particular moral values *in toto*, e.g., one knows justice but is completely unable to understand humility.<sup>47</sup> Thus, that person's grasp of moral goodness can only be partial, not complete. The third type of blindness is subsumption blindness (*Subsumptionsblindheit*), where a person recognizes the relevant value in general, e.g., generosity or the disvalue of miserliness, but fails to see that one's own action violates this value because personal interest or passion is involved.<sup>48</sup>

This subsumption-blindness does not result from the person consciously avoiding the incompatibility of the value with self-interest. It is rather a true blindness brought about by an unconscious *unwillingness to see* the incompatibility that actually prevents one from seeing the disvalue of one's action in the first place. There is here a superactual willingness

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<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522.

<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 514.

<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 506–514.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 486–506.

to combine the good and the agreeable and to shove aside conflict between them.<sup>49</sup> A morally struggling person consciously surrenders (*hingabe*) to a moral evil that is grasped as evil when she falls because of weakness. By contrast, in the value blind person, there is a deeper already being-given-over (*Hingegebensein*) to moral evil.<sup>50</sup> The unwillingness to see, the impurity or lack of the person's general will to be morally good is a deeper being-given-over to evil and the root of all culpable moral value-blindness.

Culpable value-blindness can take many forms. For the incompatibility between the two immoral centers of pride and the moral center does not prevent them from coexisting, but the two morally evil centers always act in a way antithetical to the true character of the moral center.<sup>51</sup> In his *Ethics*, Hildebrand lists five different types of people where the good and evil centers coexist: 1) the morally struggling type (*der kämpfende Typ*), 2) the morally unconscious type (*der unbewußte Typ*), 3) the compromise type (*der Kompromißer*), 4) the idolator (*der Idolanhänger*), and 5) the discontinuous type (*der diskontinuierliche Typ*).<sup>52</sup>

The existence of these five types makes sense. Most people recognize that they ought to do what morality demands and have a basic will to be moral. Yet these people often fall out due to weakness to their still present and strong, but resisted, pride and/or concupiscence. The morally struggling person does not typically have value-blindness and has a general will to be morally good, but he or she often consciously surrenders to temptation out of weakness and soon repents.

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<sup>49</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 492.

<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509.

<sup>51</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 439.

<sup>52</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 32 "The Forms of Coexistence of Good and Evil in Man," 439–450; *Ethik*, 32. Kapitel "Formen der Koexistenz von Gut und Böse im Menschen," 428–439.



In the case of a morally unconscious person, his or her value-responses and yielding to pride and concupiscence have an accidental character. They come from his or her nature (Kant would say “inclinations”) rather than from a general will. As a result, the immoral and moral centers do not come into conscious conflict with each other because their opposition is not grasped.<sup>53</sup> The discontinuous type is one “in whom the value-response attitude and pride or concupiscence dominate alternately, each in an outspoken and complete manner, and with an irrational and abrupt transition of one to the other.”<sup>54</sup> This person lacks “above all the full awareness of the role of freedom” and is subject to his or her moods.<sup>55</sup> The *general*, i.e., permanent and superactual, will to be morally good is lacking here because the rapid alteration prevents a sustained moral struggle from being undertaken.

The compromiser “wants neither to ignore completely the call of values nor to renounce the satisfaction of his pride and concupiscence.”<sup>56</sup> For example, a certain kind of bourgeois says, “I will be good so long as I can remain respectable, beyond that I will not go. Indeed, how could being respectable be different from being good?”<sup>57</sup> Respectability functioning as a pseudo morality is the “compromise” between pride and concupiscence with the value-responding center. The idolator is similar to the relatively unconscious compromiser, but here the compromise has become an express idol which is followed with a zeal “nourished by pride and concupiscence.”<sup>58</sup> The notion of the “idol” is a major theme in Hildebrand’s works from *Sittlichkeit* onward, and is the main subject of his *Graven*

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<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 441.

<sup>54</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 450.

<sup>55</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 449.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 441.

<sup>57</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 441–444. Hildebrand uses the example of a bourgeois man but the quote is my own invention.

<sup>58</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 446.

*Images: Substitutes for True Morality*.<sup>59</sup> The idol is an existential, lived ideal and norm that takes the place of morality.<sup>60</sup> It has morality's formal feature of submission to a norm while it falsifies morality's material content.<sup>61</sup> A non-moral value (e.g., honor) becomes the "wrong denominator of will" and "general denominator of morality."<sup>62</sup> The person subject to a compromise has a kind of moral "conscious-unconsciousness," e.g., a Prussian officer has principles and a critical attitude toward himself (did I do what is honorable?).<sup>63</sup> Yet he is still enclosed in pride, and he does not fully confront the true demands of the moral sphere. He lacks a genuine unconditional general will to be morally good.<sup>64</sup>

Here I see a connection to Kant. Kant doesn't have a concept of what Scheler and Hildebrand would call value-blindness *per se*; he holds that the moral law is simply given in pure practical reason.<sup>65</sup> No one can claim ignorance of the moral law. Yet the moral law is often obscured by false, heteronomous conceptions of morality (e.g., eudaimonism, moral sense theory, etc.).<sup>66</sup> These false conceptions of morality are not purely innocent mistakes, they result from a desire to satisfy the inclinations while still being "moral." Of course, for Hildebrand, true morality is "heteronomous" in that one follows the "laws" of

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<sup>59</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 28.

<sup>61</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 28.

<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 2–3, 22, 31. There are also anti-moral idols that do not function as a "substitute" morality but attempt to supplant morality with an anti-moral norm, e.g., Nazi racial Darwinism or Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.

The notion of an idol in Hildebrand's works has a faint resemblance to that of Marion. For Marion, an idol restricts the divine to the limitations of one's subjective experience. In this process, the idol "delivers the divine to us to the point of enslaving it to us, just as much as it enslaves us to it." Similarly, Hildebrand's idols, as false norms that replace and often distort true morality, confine the content of morality to a limit imposed by our pride or concupiscence. In so doing, we submit and become enslaved to an idolatrous norm, but at the same time that norm is enslaved to us. See Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, 1st edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 26–27.

<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 29. I discuss the notion of an idol further in [7.5.1: The Nature of Idols](#), pp. 375–377.

<sup>65</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:404, 24; En. Tr., 59.

<sup>66</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:441–4:444, 69–72; En Tr., 89–92.

values given in experience. But like Kant, it is the subjectively good that pulls us away from the good-in-itself and can result in false conceptions of morality or value-blindness. In essence, Hildebrand provides a Kantian explanation for the value-blindness that Scheler identifies.

As a result, it is imperative that one have the proper “modality” of good will/basic intention (*Modalitäten der Grundintention*).<sup>67</sup> Modality refers to whether the basic intention is itself both formally and materially pure. The bourgeois man above not only has a qualitatively impure conception of the basic moral value good when he identifies it materially with respectability. His basic moral intention is formally limited. He is *unwilling* to step beyond the limit set by his pride and concupiscence, and not just unable to see this limit. Another may hold the same false ideal of respectability but implicitly have a formally unlimited good will. In this second case, the person may be invincibly ignorant of the fact that the morally good cannot be reduced to respectability, but he could be still culpably responsible for this false conception of morality as a subconscious effect of pride or concupiscence. The difference with the first bourgeois man is that if this second person is ever clearly told the truth, he will accept it and not simply dismiss it. Finally, a third person may consciously execute this unlimited good will and say, “I am ready to disavow pride and concupiscence wherever they may be found.” However, in order to overcome value-blindness there is always, “a moment of ‘needing-help’ (*ein Moment der ‘Hilfsbedürftigkeit’*).”<sup>68</sup> The blind cannot cure the blind no matter how willing the blind person is to be cured. Some moral authority is needed to point out where the blindness is in order that the person may disavow it. Even the person who in fact has disavowed all

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<sup>67</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 564–569.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552.

pride and concupiscence still considers him or herself potentially subject to it, continuing to disavow the now removed evil basic stances.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the proper modality of the basic intention, the good will also has different degrees of “sovereignty” (*Herrschaft*) over the person.<sup>70</sup> First, the good will exists but is ineffective; the person often falls. In the second degree, the good will, the basic intention, has gained sovereignty over the sphere of actions, but many affective responses (e.g., *Schadenfreude*) are misaligned. Finally, in the last degree, the good will has triumphed over the basic stances of pride and concupiscence and established itself as the moral being (*sittliche Sein*) of the person.<sup>71</sup>

Notably, when the value-responding center is actualized, “the human person becomes sovereign (*der Mensch zur Herrschaft gelangt*)” in one, at least for a moment.<sup>72</sup> Here, Hildebrand notes that while pride and concupiscence are easier for fallen humans, the value-responding center is more “authentic” (*eigenlichste*), for it represents the true nature of being a person.<sup>73</sup> To be a rational, spiritual person is to be one capable of giving free value-responses. The subjectively satisfying, even when legitimate, is always sub-personal. Its call to one’s desires and satisfaction is ultimately indifferent to whether the response is freely given or not.<sup>74</sup> Were my will and reason suddenly suspended, the invitation of this chocolate cake, for example, would remain unchanged. By contrast, values call for a free or sanctioned response.

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<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 564–569.

<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 564–569.

<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 593.

<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 584.

<sup>73</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 553–554. See [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 210–220 for a discussion of how the subjectively satisfying bypasses the freedom of the person.

<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40–41.

In this, Hildebrand parallels Kant, for whom being a person involves awareness of our personality, the fact that we alone can be aware of and follow what is good-in-itself. For Kant, we are most autonomous when we are morally good because we follow a moral law given by our pure practical reason. We are acting as we are, rational persons. Hildebrand, of course, views being morally good in terms that Kant would consider heteronomous; we submit to moral values that we grasp on the object. But for Hildebrand no less than Kant, this is certain realization of who we are as rational persons. Unlike Kant, for Hildebrand to be a rational person is to be open to values and to respond to them. Thus, while pride and concupiscence come easier to fallen man, reverence for value is the more authentic moral center. We are most ourselves when are reverent.

This actualization of the person is clearest in a virtuous person in whom the good will has triumphed over the basic stances of pride and concupiscence. Here the basic intention has “the fullness of the authentic organic being of the person ([*Die*] *Füllung durch das eigentliche organische Wesen der Person*).”<sup>75</sup> In this person, there is not only bare good will but an affective plenitude, e.g., one not only does generous acts but does so with a generous, joyful heart. As will be apparent in this and the next chapters, this claim that the value-responding center represents the actualization of the person is perhaps the most central claim for a Hildebrandian phenomenology of freedom.

### **5.3: The General Will and The *Ordo Amoris***

Hildebrand’s ethics is always informed by a critical dialogue with Scheler’s notion that ethics can be reduced to the principle of *ordo amoris*, that a higher value should be selected over a lower value. From *Die Idee* to *Moralia*, Hildebrand develops several critiques of

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<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 558.

Scheler's position. I have already referred to a few of these critiques in Chapter Two, and I will go over them quickly in this paragraph.<sup>76</sup> First, whereas Scheler understands the *ordo amoris* to refer to a pre-volitional affective *preference* for higher or lower values, Hildebrand tends to use the term "*ordo amoris*" to refer to a conscious *choice* of higher values over lower ones.<sup>77</sup> Second, Hildebrand understands value-apprehension to be based on taking-cognizance rather than being based solely on affective feelings of value.<sup>78</sup> Third, for Hildebrand, many immoral acts are neither the result of preferring a lower value over a higher one, nor the result of a habitual pull to a lower value. Rather, they are the result of a choice of forgoing the perspective of value in favor of the perspective of the subjectively satisfying.<sup>79</sup>

In this chapter, I present several more divergences that emerge in Hildebrand's later works. First, Hildebrand circumvents Scheler's dictum that moral values proper can never be the intention of an action on the pain of self-righteousness.<sup>80</sup> Second, unlike Scheler who restricts moral obligation to a negative, pedagogical role, Hildebrand, in something of a return to Kant on a value-ethics basis, places moral obligations at the center of his ethics. Third, in *Moralia*, Hildebrand comes to discover other sources of morality (*Quellen der Sittlichkeit*) irreducible to value and the value-response.<sup>81</sup> After exploring these three critiques of Scheler's position, we will be in a position to understand how a modified principle of *ordo amoris* informs Hildebrand's general will to be morally good. This is crucial to the argument about freedom. For Hildebrand finds a way to connect Scheler's

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<sup>76</sup> See [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), pp. 74–76.

<sup>77</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27, 87; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 42–50.

<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 242.

<sup>79</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 42–50; Martin Cajthaml and Vlastimil Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 67–68.

<sup>80</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27.

<sup>81</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 1 Teil: "*Die Quellen der Sittlichkeit*," (Part 1: "The Different Sources of Morality").

deep insights into value-feeling and the *ordo amoris* to his own with a “Kantian” regard for moral obligation and pursuing what is good in itself over what is merely subjectively good. This allows him to unite Kant’s concern for volition with Scheler’s concern for affectivity in a unique synthesis.

### 5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?

Above, I noted that, according to Hildebrand, we are called to realize moral values.<sup>82</sup> Yet if I aim to realize my own moral value, does this not lead to a certain self-righteousness whenever I think I have achieved my aim? In the chapter on moral consciousness where he introduces the general will to be morally good, Hildebrand points back to a crucial passage in Scheler’s *Formalism*, which I quote from Frings’ and Funk’s translation below:

Kant is correct on one point. It is in essence impossible for the value contents ‘good’ and ‘evil’ to be contents of a realizing act (‘willing’). For instance, he who does not want to do good to his fellow man—in such a way that he becomes concerned about the realization of his fellow man’s weal—but who merely seizes the opportunity ‘to be good’ or ‘to do good’ in this act, neither is good nor does ‘good’; he is truly an example of a Pharisee... The [moral] value appears on the back (*auf dem Rücken*) of the act of willing. It is for this reason that it can never be the content of an act of willing.<sup>83</sup>

In this passage, Scheler claims that moral values proper are not included in willing. This is because of the special way in which moral values proper are realized “on the back” of moral acts. Consciousness that one is humble vitiates humility. As a result, Scheler

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<sup>82</sup> See [5.2.1 The General Will as Demanded by Moral Values](#), pp. 238–241.

<sup>83</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27. Cited in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 274.

claims that the values given in the *ordo amoris* must be non-moral values.<sup>84</sup> Manfred Frings lists Scheler's hierarchical non-moral values as 1) values of the holy, 2) values of the mind, 3) vital values, 4) values of the useful, and 5) sensible or pleasure values.<sup>85</sup> When I choose to help a sick friend rather than attend a party, I ought not be conscious of my own generosity in doing so. If I am so conscious, I become a Pharisee. Rather, I am responding to the higher non-moral value of my friend's well-being over the lower pleasure value of the party. Hildebrand agrees with Scheler that humility demands we not be conscious of our own moral values "on the back" of our acts.<sup>86</sup> Hildebrand, however, finds another way we can have consciousness of the moral values that pertain to ourselves:

The moral significance of an action or attitude does not present itself as the value of the person's own action but as something that is as much on the object side as the good [i.e., the bearer of the value] that calls for that action or attitude. It presents itself as the moral goodness of the action or attitude as such, as a task that we want to fulfill. It clearly differs from any reflective focusing on our own personality and the positive or negative qualities there.<sup>87</sup>

In this way, a moral value proper can enter into the intention of the general will to be morally good. Justice, humility, etc., demand that I realize them in myself, but this does not involve a self-reflective gaze on my own moral value. Rather, it is the task imposed on me by the value on the object side, whether I fulfill it or not. This general will to be morally good "is not motivated by our own objective good. It is a pure value-response."<sup>88</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>84</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27.

<sup>85</sup> Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, 29–30. See also Scheler, *Formalism*, 85–110.

<sup>86</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 273.

<sup>87</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 272.

<sup>88</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 290.



in *Moralia*, Hildebrand claims “all moral values and virtues may only be striven from the point of view of the value-response,” rather than from the perspective of objective good for one.<sup>89</sup> While it can be appropriate to engage in ascetic practices in order to indirectly gain virtue (e.g., fasting), like Scheler, Hildebrand bars one from doing a moral act (e.g., giving generously) as a means to virtue, for that would make the object of the act, which is good in itself, a means to one’s own moral virtue.<sup>90</sup> One can only have a general longing to have the virtues, a longing which is itself a pure value-response.<sup>91</sup> In the next chapter, I will challenge Hildebrand’s position that the general will does not include the perspective of one’s own objective good, but for the purposes of this chapter I focus solely on Hildebrand’s own conception of this will as a pure value-responsive will.<sup>92</sup>

### 5.3.2: Scheler vs. Hildebrand on Ought and Obligation

Scheler and Hildebrand also diverge on how they understand the ought-to-be imposed by all values to have a due response to them. Scheler distinguishes between the “ideal ought” and the “normative ought.”<sup>93</sup> The ideal “ought” is that the value ought-to-be (*Seinsollen*,

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<sup>89</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 115.

<sup>90</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 367–370.

<sup>91</sup> Philip Blosser has noted in several publications that Scheler’s position that the will can only intend non-moral values presents a problem in Scheler’s ethics, which Hildebrand solves. Based on what is said here by Scheler, it would seem that all acts realize moral values so long as I prefer a higher non-moral value to a lower one. However, it seems that some acts, such as balancing a checkbook, realize non-moral values (e.g., mathematical values) but not specifically moral ones. Blosser notes that by properly discerning the moral agency that responds to morally relevant values and moral values proper, as well as by introducing the notion of the subjectively satisfying, Hildebrand avoids the problem Scheler falls into. See Philip Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2005): 121–143; “Scheler’s Ordo Amoris: Insights and Oversights,” in *Denken des Ursprungs/Ursprungs des Denkens: Scheler’s Philosophie und ihre Anfänge in Jena*, ed. Christian Bermens, Wolfhart Henckmann, and Heinz Leonardy, special issue, *Kritisches Jahrbuch der Philosophie*, 3 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 160–171; “What Makes Experience ‘Moral’? Dietrich von Hildebrand vs. Max Scheler,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 69–84; *Scheler’s Critique of Kant’s Ethics*, Series in Continental Thought, Vol. 22 (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 84–88. I return to Blosser’s critique below at [6.2.3: Moral Goodness: What’s Love Got To Do With It](#), pp. 304–305.

<sup>92</sup> See [6.3.2: Eudaimonia and Motivation Reconsidered](#), pp. 325–332.

<sup>93</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 203–232.

the same word Hildebrand uses in *Die Idee*) and that a disvalue ought-not-to-be is directed to the exclusion of disvalues.<sup>94</sup> Scheler notes that to say an existing value ought-to-be is something of a misnomer, as “ought” properly refers to the coming-to-be of a value and the exclusion of a disvalue. For this reason, Scheler separates oughtness from value; “every proposition of ought ‘rests’ on a positive value that it cannot contain.”<sup>95</sup> By contrast, for Hildebrand the ought-to-be flows from and refers directly to the positive value, and it does not include an indirect reference to the exclusion of a disvalue.<sup>96</sup> The “ought” has a positive character for Hildebrand that it lacks for Scheler.

In his article “Person and Obligation: Critical Reflections on the Anti-Authoritarian Strain in Scheler’s Personalism,” Crosby notes that Hildebrand and Scheler diverge in the role they give to moral obligations.<sup>97</sup> While for Scheler the “ideal ought” pertains to values themselves, a normative ought is a demand of the will that must be commanded by another will, e.g., a parent to a child.<sup>98</sup> Such normative oughts inherently have a negative and restrictive character, ruling some course of action as impossible.<sup>99</sup>

Normative oughts are only necessary where an agent does not have insight (*Wertfühlen*) into the relevant value. The agent submits to the commands of a kind of pedagogical authority who does grasp the value. Crosby notes this is because, for Scheler, a clear insight into a value *necessitates* the will to realize it, leading Scheler to a kind of Socratic intellectualism. To perfectly recognize that this value is to-be-willed is already to actualize the will for it. As Scheler says, “Whenever this insight is totally adequate and

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<sup>94</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 207; Hildebrand, *DI*, 194–196.

<sup>95</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 209.

<sup>96</sup> See [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), p. 67.

<sup>97</sup> John F. Crosby, “Person and Obligation: Critical Reflections on the Anti-Authoritarian Strain in Scheler’s Personalism,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2005): 91–119.

<sup>98</sup> Scheler, *F*, 210–211.

<sup>99</sup> Scheler, *F*, 211–212.

ideally perfect, it determines willing unequivocally, without any factor of compulsion or necessitation that might come between insight and willing.”<sup>100</sup> Crosby also notes that Scheler distinguishes between the pull of the motive of an action on the person, and the *Gefühlszustand* (Frings translates this as “feeling-state”) out of which the subject does the action.<sup>101</sup> The motive acts as a centripetal pull on the person, whereas the *Gefühlszustand* is the centrifugal outflowing of the action from the root of the person.<sup>102</sup> For Scheler, it is better to do moral acts from one’s *Gefühlszustand* of happiness rather than the heteronomous motive of obligation. He clearly sees this as a critique of Kant, for whom the demand of moral obligation is key. As a result, Scheler claims, “To make the medication of commandments and prohibition our normal moral nourishment is nonsense.”<sup>103</sup>

Hildebrand finds himself more aligned with Kant than with Scheler on the question of moral obligation. For Hildebrand the moral obligation is part and parcel of the call of certain morally relevant values in certain situations.<sup>104</sup> In addition, by the time of *Moralia*, Hildebrand came to accept that there are moral obligations that are not directly connected to values, which we will examine in the next subsection.<sup>105</sup> To neglect the morally obligatory character of giving a proper response is to fail to give a proper value-response to morality. Crosby gives the example of two Good Samaritans; one has no inclination to help the injured man but does so out of pure duty, while the second does so solely out of

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<sup>100</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192.

<sup>101</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 344; Crosby, “Person and Obligation,” 99–101.

<sup>102</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 344. Scheler’s *Gefühlszustand* has many similarities to Hildebrand’s fundamental moral attitude of goodness (*Güte*). See Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in AL, 35–41. See below at [6.5: Conclusion: Freedom as Goodness](#), p. 339–340.

<sup>103</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 214.

<sup>104</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 403.

<sup>105</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 146.

the overflowing goodness of his nature.<sup>106</sup> While the second Good Samaritan would appear superior to the first in Scheler's analysis, he in fact misses that his service is objectively owed to the wounded man, demanded by his dignity. The specifically *normative ought* is contained within the very call to respond to the value of the wounded man. Crosby quotes and translates Rudolf Otto's essay "*Pflicht und Neigung*" ("Duty and Inclination"): "I act imperfectly and in some sense morally objectionably, if I want to give my neighbor something as a mere gift of love when in fact I should understand it as a service that is owed to him."<sup>107</sup> He quotes another essay by Otto that Kantians are right to fault value-ethicists such as Scheler for missing the seriousness (*Ernst*) of moral obligation.<sup>108</sup> Hildebrand, by contrast, notes this seriousness is proper to all morality but it is especially proper to moral obligations.<sup>109</sup>

Yet if Hildebrand is closer to Kant than Scheler on this matter, he also admonishes against a "rigorism" that would claim it is obligatory to choose the morally more perfect attitude over a less perfect one.<sup>110</sup> This rigorism, in essence, would make following Scheler's *ordo amoris* obligatory. First, there are many acts that are morally allowed. If I am about to enjoy a legitimate dessert and the thought comes that fasting is morally more perfect, I am not obliged to fast.<sup>111</sup> Second, some, but not all, moral obligations can be superseded by other factors.<sup>112</sup> If I see a person drowning and I can save him without risk to my own life, it is obligatory, but if I would seriously risk my own life, then it is not

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<sup>106</sup> Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 102–103.

<sup>107</sup> Rudolf Otto "*Pflicht und Neigung*," in *Aufsätze zur Ethik*, ed. Jack Stewart Boozer (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck 1981), 191–192, qtd. and trans. in Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 104.

<sup>108</sup> Rudolf Otto "*Wert, Würde, und Recht*," in *Aufsätze zur Ethik*, ed. Jack Stewart Boozer (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck 1981), 76–77, qtd. and trans. by Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 107.

<sup>109</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 182.

<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 399–412.

<sup>111</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 409.

<sup>112</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 409.

obligatory but meritorious and morally very sublime.<sup>113</sup> Still, in *Moralia*, Hildebrand notes that the presence of obligation introduces a notion of priority (*ein Vorrang*) as an order of precedence in moral tasks that cannot be reduced to Scheler's hierarchical preference (*Vorzug*).<sup>114</sup> First, we are obliged to not destroy any morally significant goods or realize any moral evils, no matter how great a good could be realized by doing so. Closely related but distinct from this first priority is the priority one's moral obligations have over morally valuable but not obligatory acts.

In contrast to Scheler, Hildebrand finds in moral obligation a great moral freedom, which I discuss more in the next chapter.<sup>115</sup> When I receive the demand of a moral obligation, I am brought to myself. "I experience the uniqueness of myself," since I, not my sister or brother but I, am so called here and now to fulfill this obligation.<sup>116</sup> I become free to act with meaning, rather than simply follow whatever I happen to find subjectively satisfying. I experience a great meaningfulness of my action that is founded in the objective demand, and the more meaningful the demand, the greater this sense of meaningfulness. Thus, by recognizing the positive role of moral obligation, Hildebrand is able to do far more justice than Scheler can to the moral freedom experienced precisely in moral obligation.

### 5.3.3: The Other Sources of Morality

By *Moralia*, Hildebrand came to find that his own value-ethics, to say nothing of Scheler's, was too simplistic in their attempts to reduce all moral acts to responses to value on the object side. In *Ethics*, Hildebrand tended to identify value (*Wert*) with the important-in-

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<sup>113</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 408.

<sup>114</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 12. Kapitel "Der Vorrang," (Chapter 12 "The Priority"), 159–164.

<sup>115</sup> See below at [6.4: The Enhancement of Freedom in the Morally Good](#), pp. 336–337.

<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 171.

itself (*wichtig an sich*); however, in *Moralia* he came to see that value is just one type of intrinsic importance.<sup>117</sup> He came to recognize nine distinct, *sui generis*, and equiprimordial sources of morality: 1) the value-response (*Wertantwort*), 2) the treasure of goodness (*der Schatz der Güte*), 3) responses to the objective good for another and 4) responses to the objective good for oneself, 5) obedience to legitimate authority, 6) voluntary self-commitment, 7) the sphere of rights (*der Sphäre des Rechtes*), 8) the metaphysical situation of humans (*die metaphysik Situation des Menschen*), and, finally, 9) motivation.<sup>118</sup> On the side of the object, Hildebrand now distinguishes between the morally relevant value (*der sittliche bedeutsame Wert*), moral relevance itself (*moralische Bedeutsamkeit*), and moral obligation (*moralische Obligation*).<sup>119</sup> These sources of morality give an act or attitude on the side of the subject its moral value, though the demand to realize this moral value is grasped as on the object.

Hildebrand's own treatment of these sources can be rather quick and schematic. I begin with the treasure of goodness, which is the very height of virtue and of moral goodness in general.<sup>120</sup> Forgiveness (*Verzeihen*), compassion (*Mitleid, Barmherzigkeit*) and neighbor-love (*Nächstenliebe*), are all associated with the treasure of goodness. They are all attitudes that contain a value-response to one's neighbor, but they do not come from a call to respond as do typical value-responses. This can be seen in the fact that neighbor-

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<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 171.

<sup>118</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 1 Teil "Die Quellen der Sittlichkeit." (Part 1: The Different Sources of Morality) At least one chapter is devoted to each of these sources in this part of *Moralia*.

I translate the term "*Recht*" as "right" although it can also mean "law." In doing so, I am following Crosby's translation of Reinach's *Die apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechtes*, in which he largely translates "*Recht*" as either "right" or "legal." As Reinach is Hildebrand's main philosophical influence on the notion of *Recht* and in the context of *Moralia* Hildebrand refers to the *Recht* to marry and to hold property, "right" seemed the best translation. See Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 11. Kapitel "Die siebte Quelle der Sittlichkeit: die Sphäre des Rechtes" (Chapter 11: "The Seventh Source of Morality: The Sphere of Rights"), 153-158.

<sup>119</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 36.

<sup>120</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 91-97.

love is not so much a value-response in its structure as an overflowing love that “anticipates” the neighbor beforehand and brings about particular value-responses.<sup>121</sup> It is a readiness to serve. This *Schatz der Güte* is similar to Scheler’s *Gefühlszustand* in that it flows out of the person’s virtue rather than coming as a pull from the object. Yet Hildebrand is very careful to note that this treasure of goodness always includes, even if it surpasses, the value-response and any moral obligation the value supports. He does this to avoid Scheler’s depreciation about moral obligation. The treasure of goodness is always the fruit of a value-responding attitude and comes from it. We could imagine, therefore, a third Good Samaritan who helps the injured man both out of an overflowing love and good nature and because he recognizes doing so is a moral obligation imposed on him by the dignity of the injured man. This, for the Hildebrandian, is the ideal moral state.

Giving another what is objectively good for him or her is an essential component of love. It is constitutive of what Hildebrand calls the *intentio benevolentiae* of love.<sup>122</sup> The good is apprehended as an objective good for a person, not as a value, but as having the crucial characteristic of being “für ihn” (“for him [or her]”).<sup>123</sup> It is this feature of “for him (or her)” that is especially characteristic of the moral goodness of love. Concern for the objective good for the other is incorporated into the value-response of love. We also have a moral duty to pursue some objective goods for ourselves, e.g., health and moral well-being, and so the objective good for oneself is a fourth source of morality.<sup>124</sup>

Authority, voluntary self-commitment, and rights are their own *sui generis* sources of morality, as the acts associated with them generate formal obligations of their very

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<sup>121</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 268.

<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 100; *NL*, 147.

<sup>123</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 100.

<sup>124</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 105–116.

nature.<sup>125</sup> Hildebrand is very quick in dealing with these topics; he does not present a detailed account of how rights or authority comes about in *Moralia*, only that they generate obligations by virtue of their very nature. In his *Morality and Situation Ethics*, Hildebrand distinguishes between material obligations that are “rooted” directly in morally relevant value and formal obligations. Formal obligations are described in the German text as “expressed in juridical terms (*in juristische Begriffe fassen*), they are linked to legal obligations (*Rechtsverbindlichkeiten*).”<sup>126</sup> Though in the 1966 English text of this book Hildebrand implies that all formal obligations are indirectly based in values, by *Moralia* he gives some of them an independent basis in authority, promises, and rights. Hildebrand refers back to Reinach’s *The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law*, where Reinach shows that promises and acts of producing one’s own property from previously unowned material generate legal obligations (*Rechtsverbindlichkeiten*), of their own essences without regard to the value of the content of the obligation.<sup>127</sup> If I cut down a tree in an unowned forest and make a chair, then that chair is my property regardless of any value I or the chair possess. Additionally, a person’s right of property or the right of two people to marry each other must be respected independently of the value of the content of those acts.<sup>128</sup> In a parallel manner, in *Moralia* Hildebrand notes that promises as well as acts of commanding by a legitimate authority generate formal moral obligations independent of their basis in material values.<sup>129</sup> For Hildebrand, controversially, any legitimate authority, say of parents over a child or a legitimate state over its citizens, must be obeyed in a certain sphere

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<sup>125</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 147, 149–151, 153.

<sup>126</sup> Hildebrand and Hildebrand, *MSE*, 59–60; “*Wahre Sittlichkeit und Situationsethik*,” in *Situationsethik*, 65.

<sup>127</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 153; Reinach, *AFCL*, 72–73.

<sup>128</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 153–158.

<sup>129</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 149–158.



because it represents the sovereignty of God.<sup>130</sup> This sovereignty and superiority of God is a primordial aspect of God, irreducible to His qualitative value.

The metaphysical situation of humans also generates obligations. By this, Hildebrand can sometimes refer to our nature as persons ordered to value, but in this case it mainly refers to our limitations. Our metaphysical situation is that we are creatures and mortal; we are not God nor are we immortal angels. Just these limitations can generate obligations in express contradiction to what pure, value-responding attitude would seem to entail. Hildebrand notes that a pure value-response to a greatly suffering, soon-to-die patient who requests euthanasia would be to grant it. After all, it is not morally wrong to pray that a natural, God granted death would take him out of his pain swiftly. However, humans simply lack the proper metaphysical situation to be the lords of life and death. For Hildebrand, only God has that power. To commit this act would be a sin, a kind of hubris.<sup>131</sup>

These ideas are somewhat undeveloped in *Moralia*. For the purposes of this dissertation, the details of these different sources do not matter. What matters is that there are some moral acts that respond to intrinsic moral importance on the object side, but this importance is not value importance. An ethics based solely on responding to values is too simplistic. Nonetheless, any moral act, e.g., fulfilling a trivial promise, does respond to the moral value of the act itself, e.g., honesty, integrity. Thus, while Hildebrand complicates

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<sup>130</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, “*Das Wesen der echten Autorität*,” In *Situationsethik*, 209–220. This is derived from a much earlier 1927 essay. Dietrich von Hildebrand, “*Zum Wesen der echten Autorität*,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 3 (1927): 185–220.

<sup>131</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 167. I note that this notion of the metaphysical situation of humans can be accepted by a non-theist, e.g., one who may accept that terraforming a planet may make it more valuable but hold that humans simply lack the right to change a whole world. However, I do not think Hildebrand’s specific example of euthanasia is correct and that this prohibition must in fact be derived from a value-response to the dignity of the person as well as from a response to the metaphysical situation of humans. The reasons for my disagreement with Hildebrand are beyond the present scope of this dissertation, and I note it only to claim that I accept his concept of the metaphysical situation of humans as a *sui generis* source of morality while rejecting the example he uses to derive the notion.

his value ethics by admitting acts that, in themselves, are not responses to value per se, each of these acts contains a response to the value of that very act. This, as we will see in the next subsection, allows Hildebrand to develop a more robust account of the *ordo amoris* that takes into account the fact that not all moral acts (e.g., fulfilling trivial promises) are in themselves value-responses.

The ninth source of morality, motivation, deserves greater attention. Motivation here refers to whether the person is responding solely to the moral significance of the situation or not. Here Hildebrand is perhaps at his most Kantian and most severe. For Hildebrand, a moral action should be done *solely* for its moral significance and goodness and not for any other non-moral factors, just as for Kant only an act done purely from duty is morally good.<sup>132</sup> Suppose a rich man is in danger of drowning, and I save him. If the thought occurs to me that this man can help me later on, but I immediately disavow this thought, and I would have done the action regardless, my act is morally good. If instead I do the action primarily because it is morally good, but the thought of my own objective good gives my action a vigor it otherwise would not have, then my action is morally tainted relative to the first case.<sup>133</sup> If I do the action for a solely non-moral motive, e.g., to practice my athletic swimming ability, then the state of affairs realized has moral significance, but I accrue a moral disvalue because I have disregarded the value of the person drowning.<sup>134</sup>

There is a priority (*Vorrang*) and order of preference (*Vorzug*) that some sources of morality have over others.<sup>135</sup> All other things being equal, the material obligations stemming from a morally relevant value (saving a wounded person) has priority over

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<sup>132</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 183; Kant, *G*, 4:397–4:400, 15–19; En. Tr., 52–55.

<sup>133</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 186.

<sup>134</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 190.

<sup>135</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 260–271.

promises and positive commands of authority that do not respond to a value on the object side.<sup>136</sup> Further, the material value of the content of many obligations gives them precedence over other obligations. If I have promised to return a book at the same time I also promised to be with a dying friend, the latter takes precedence because of its value.<sup>137</sup> Some moral obligations, however, exercise an “absolute veto” in that they cannot be suspended, e.g., it is never right to commit euthanasia even if one supposes, as Hildebrand does, the morally relevant value calls for it.<sup>138</sup> This will have a bearing on the overall question of the place of *the ordo amoris* in Hildebrand’s ethics.

#### **5.3.4: The Hildebrandian, Modified *Ordo Amoris***

The reader may well wonder at this point whether Hildebrand has subjected Scheler’s *ordo amoris* to the death of a thousand cuts. However, this is not the case. First, in *Ethics*, Hildebrand notes that Scheler’s principle of *ordo amoris* holds absolutely for the sphere of responses as opposed to actions.<sup>139</sup> As far as inner responses of the will and heart are concerned, they should correspond to the moral significance on the object side. The *ordo amoris* does not always apply perfectly to actions because the theme (*Thema*) of the situation can be modified by the moral priority (*Vorrang*) of obligations and by other, non-moral factors.<sup>140</sup> The theme of a religious ceremony is primarily the worship of God, not service to the poor, however morally good that is. Urgency (*Dringlichkeit*) and the irreparability of an evil that may be realized are other factors.<sup>141</sup> Education is in itself a higher objective good for the person than the good of food, but if the person is starving,

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<sup>136</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 261–265.

<sup>137</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 260ff.

<sup>138</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 267-270; 40 Kapitel “Das absolute Veto” (“The Absolute Veto”), 437–441.

<sup>139</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 402.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 403.

<sup>141</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 253.

the urgent need to feed her first takes precedence. Another is whether a good is in my direct or indirect power to bring about.<sup>142</sup> Suppose I can only help one of two friends. One is about to be injured physically unless I intervene, and the other is about to commit a serious moral fault. Although moral goodness is the highest good, I can only try to convince him to not do wrong, but I can directly save the other friend from her injury. However, even in the sphere of actions the *ordo amoris* has a role. One must first determine which potential object has the highest morally relevant value before asking if other factors modify the situation.<sup>143</sup>

I think a careful reading of Hildebrand finds that even though he does not expressly say so, his philosophy does allow for a modified *ordo amoris* to serve as the basis of morality.<sup>144</sup> Unlike Scheler, Hildebrand allows one to intend to realize moral values, as seen above.<sup>145</sup> Thus, for Hildebrand, even when the other sources of morality are involved, e.g., in carrying out a trivial promise, the moral act overall is always a value-response not to the object *per se* but to the moral value of the act or attitude to-be-realized. Hildebrand states that among all values moral values are the highest.<sup>146</sup> Thus, insofar as doing whatever

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<sup>142</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 258–260.

<sup>143</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 412.

<sup>144</sup> This refers to an *ordo amoris* of values. In *Ethics* and *Moralia*, Hildebrand also develops an *ordo amoris* of objective goods for the person. First there is being endowed with values running up to holiness and the *similitudo Dei* (resemblance to God). Second are “gladdening goods” (*glückspende Güter*) whose possession makes us happy because of their value. In general, there is a moral requirement to prefer these goods according to their value; one ought not surrender one’s birthright for lentils. Third are elementary goods (*elementare Güter*) that are necessary for life, such as food and shelter, and useful goods that are means to the other goods, e.g., money and cars. Here because a person’s needs determine the importance of these goods, the moral preference does not track the objective height of these goods, e.g., food may be more necessary in the moment than education. Finally, there are legitimate subjectively satisfying, pleasant goods (*lustspende Güter*). As subjectively satisfying, there cannot be a hierarchy among them, since it is our purely subjective position that gives them their importance. But as objective goods, there is a hierarchy based on their value, e.g., opera over cookies. See Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 29 “The Role of the Objective Good for the Person,” 413–25; *Moralia*, 111–128.

<sup>145</sup> See [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–254.

<sup>146</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 1.

happens to be the all-things-considered morally superior option is a response to moral goodness as such, the morally superior choice in a situation always takes on a value higher than any other possible value, though choosing it may not be obligatory, e.g., in saving a person's life at risk of one's own. Thus, in a broader sense of the *ordo amoris* the choice of whatever is morally better once all morally relevant factors have been considered is always preferring a higher value over lower one. It may not be obligatory to choose this option, but it is always better to do so.

Scheler's central flaw is that he does not recognize that moral values can and indeed should enter into our intentions. For when we do a moral act, we are primarily responding to those moral values proper. It is this that allows Hildebrand to recognize that some moral acts are not directly responding to a value on the side of an object, but to an objective good, a trivial promise, someone's rights, etc. Yet even these acts are acts that respond to the very moral value of the act itself of respecting rights, fulfilling promises, etc. It is also this that allows Hildebrand to rehabilitate the notion of moral obligation and find a special moral freedom therein. For he is able to recognize the high moral value of moral obligations (saving a person at no risk to one's life, fulfilling a trivial promise), and the even higher moral value of supererogatory acts (saving a person at risk to one's life). One is always well served in willing the higher value over the lower value, but only if moral values are recognized as those higher values and if the whole moral situation is seen as contributing to what is the higher value in that situation.

#### **5.4: The General Will as Virtuous**

At this point, we have seen that a general will to be morally good includes willing what has the higher moral value, and it is what prevents moral value blindness. It remains to

investigate virtues and their relation to the general will to be morally good. This topic is not incidental but integral to the good will. For Hildebrand, both the general will and virtues are constituted by fundamental moral attitudes. This means that all of the virtues represent the very fulfillment of the general will to be morally good. Thus, I will first present Hildebrand's overall theory of virtue as involving fundamental moral attitudes that have overcome all affective obstacles placed by pride and concupiscence, comparing his account of virtue to Kant's, Scheler's, and Aristotle's accounts of virtue. Second, several of these fundamental moral attitudes, reverence, faithfulness, responsibility and veracity, and implicitly humility, will be explored as they are constitutive preconditions for having a general will to be morally good in the first place.

#### **5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, Scheler, and Aristotle on the Virtues**

Much like Scheler, Hildebrand sees himself as rehabilitating the notion of virtue from its post-Kantian neglect.<sup>147</sup> Yet they have a very one sided view of Kant that neglects the profound insights Kant does have into virtue. This, actually, should not be surprising, for all three philosophers have the same basic starting point: one must will what is good-in-itself. This starting point entails that the will to be good includes the will to become virtuous. But how Kant, Scheler, and Hildebrand understand virtue are different from each other.

In the "*Tugendlehre*," Kant defines virtue as "the strength of a human being's maxims in fulfilling his duty," and as "the will's conformity with every duty based on a firm disposition (*Gesinnung*)."<sup>148</sup> Mary Gregor's translation of *Gesinnung* as "disposition"

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<sup>147</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 21; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 365. Hildebrand goes so far as to say, "The sphere of virtue has also been fully ignored by Kant."

<sup>148</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:394, 28; *MM*, 524; *MS*, 6:395, 29; *MM*, 525.

is misleading here, suggesting a mere potential to perform certain actions. At least by the time of *Religion*, Kant maintains that *Gesinnung* is the subjective principle of maxims, which lies deeper in the person than particular maxims and characterizes the person as a moral agent.<sup>149</sup> It would not be a stretch to call this *Gesinnung* a “quality” of a person and not just a disposition to certain particular acts. But it is a quality that applies primarily to the will and the mind, not to affectivity.

For Kant striving to obtain virtue is inherent in the very notion of good will; indeed, this is the whole subject of the doctrine on virtue, “*Tugendlehre*.” This is often obscured because Kant does say in the *Groundwork* that a person who strives to be morally good, but, due to a “stepmotherly nature,” fails, still has undiminished moral worth.<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand cites this passage as evidence that Kant neglects virtue.<sup>151</sup> Yet, even here, Kant says the good will cannot exist “as a mere wish, but as the summoning of all means within our control.”<sup>152</sup> This “summoning” is in a certain sense the very essence if not the presence of actual virtue for Kant: summoning as much strength of will as the person has even if very little strength of will exists and the person is not virtuous.

Moreover, Kant gives a role to affectivity in virtue, though it is less direct than in Hildebrand’s account, as we will see below. In her chapter “Kant’s conception of Virtue,” Lara Denis points out that in several places in the *Tugendlehre* Kant makes the cultivation of feelings part of virtue.<sup>153</sup> First, Kant notes that we often feel a certain pleasure or

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<sup>149</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:21.12, 24; En. Tr. 21. For a fuller exposition of Kant’s notion of *Gesinnung*, see above at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), pp. 192–193.

<sup>150</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:394, 12; En Tr. 50.

<sup>151</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

<sup>152</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:394, 12, En. Tr. 50.

<sup>153</sup> Lara Denis, “Kant’s Conception of Virtue,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Paul Guyer, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 515–527. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL052182303X.016>.

displeasure in our moral acts that come from “moral” feelings such as reverence (*Achtung*). The moral feelings follow upon cognition of the moral law, as opposed to “pathological” feelings that precede cognition of the moral law.<sup>154</sup> While having these feelings cannot be a duty, as we need them in order to recognize duty in the first place, cultivating them is a duty.<sup>155</sup> Second, Kant expressly states that some naturally given “pathological” feelings like sympathy ought to be cultivated since they aid moral behavior.<sup>156</sup> Third, Kant argues that our sympathetic animal drives (predisposition to animality) and social drives (predispositions to humanity), as opposed to the predisposition to personality which is receptivity to the moral law, are associated with self-love and can lead us astray.<sup>157</sup> Yet even they ought to be harmonized with the moral law.<sup>158</sup> As Denis puts it, the agent must “not act on inclinations that would be wrong to act on, and [act] to turn what inclinations she can into means to moral ends.”<sup>159</sup>

Finally, at the end of the “*Tugendlehre*,” Kant holds that the virtuous person has a “a frame of mind that is valiant and cheerful” (“*wackeren und fröhlichen Gemüts*”) in fulfilling its duties.<sup>160</sup> In *Religion*, we find Kant claiming “the cheerful heart (*das fröhliche Herz*) in complying with one’s duty...is a sign of the genuineness of a virtuous attitude (*Gesinnung*).”<sup>161</sup> *Fröhlich* could also be translated “joyful” and it is the adjectival form of *Freude*, and *Gemüt* can also mean “heart.”<sup>162</sup> In these passages, Kant attributes this “joy”

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<sup>154</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:399, 33; *MM*, 528.

<sup>155</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:400, 34; *MM*, 529.

<sup>156</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:457, 103–104; *MM* 575.

<sup>157</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:26–28, 31–34; En. Tr. 28–30.

<sup>158</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:26–28, 31–34; En. Tr. 28–30.

<sup>159</sup> Denis, “Kant’s Conception of Virtue,” 516.

<sup>160</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:484, 135; *MM*, 597.

<sup>161</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:24n, 27ff; En. Tr. 25ff.

<sup>162</sup> Special thanks to my colleague Michaela Reißlandt and her husband Benny Reißlandt for pointing out this connection of *fröhlich* to *Freude*.



to the overcoming of affective moral obstacles to doing what is right. There is no reason to suppose Kant means anything less than a heart deeply joyful in doing good. There is an implicit logic here. To be good is to give oneself to what is good-in-itself. To give oneself fully, one must give not just with bare will but, if at all possible, with a genuinely joyful heart. Kant, for all his suspicion of affectivity, did not fail to draw this logical conclusion from the basis of his ethics in willing what is good-in-itself.

Alas, in the century following Kant, the term virtue fell in to decline. Scheler and Hildebrand took it upon themselves to revive the notion, and they view Kant as an opponent in this struggle. First, for Scheler and Hildebrand, virtue should be not be understood as a disposition to certain actions, which is what they inaccurately interpret Kant as saying.<sup>163</sup> Rather it should be viewed as a “quality” of the person.<sup>164</sup> In *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand interprets Kant as reducing ethics “to the mere formal presence of the good intention.”<sup>165</sup> In *Ethics*, Hildebrand, citing *Groundwork I*, states that Kant attributes moral significance “to the will only.”<sup>166</sup> Hildebrand recognizes that Kant does not restrict morality solely to actions, as the volitional response for Kant according to Hildebrand retains its moral significance even if it is impeded by a “stepmotherly nature.” Nonetheless, Hildebrand holds, “the good will for Kant is always concerned with action even if at times it does not lead to it.”<sup>167</sup> In particular, “affective responses have no moral significance for Kant.”<sup>168</sup> As we have seen above, these assessments of Kant are inaccurate.

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<sup>163</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 22; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

<sup>164</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 22; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

<sup>165</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 574ff.

<sup>166</sup> Kant, *G*, I, cited in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

<sup>167</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

<sup>168</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 364.

For Scheler, virtue is “an enduring, living, joyful consciousness of power...that flows from one’s very being.”<sup>169</sup> It is not a mere disposition to good actions, a position Scheler attributes to Kant, but a “quality of the person himself, not there for some determinate activities or tasks.”<sup>170</sup> Virtue should be joyful and attractive. For Scheler, this “quality” and “being” is primarily affective in nature. Virtue does not come from a pull by a motive but rather a push from one’s *Gefühlszustand*. Consistent with his depreciation of moral obligation, Scheler opposes virtue to duty. A virtuous person does not strive to do what is right and obligatory; rather, virtue is largely concerned with release of effort. If a virtue “obliges” us (scare quotes), it does so not as a disposition to duty but from its own nobility and beauty. Again this is connected to his assumption that for a person with a properly ordered *ordo amoris*, the proper acts will follow suit without further ado. Virtue “could never be measured in terms of all those acts of will and actions that burst forth from it with an inner necessity, in which it overflowed.”<sup>171</sup>

Hildebrand, as usual, implicitly views Scheler as overemphasizing affectivity in virtue to the detriment of freedom, volition, and the proper role of moral obligation. In attempting to correct Scheler, Hildebrand unwittingly forges a middle path between Scheler’s and Kant’s accounts of virtue. For Hildebrand, the “backbone” of the virtues is a free, superactual, fundamental moral attitude toward a general sphere of values, e.g. the dignity of being for reverence, the due-relation in justice.<sup>172</sup> Seifert records that Hildebrand came to agree with him in a private conversation that each more particular fundamental moral attitude at the basis of each virtue is volitional in nature, as well as the basic moral

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<sup>169</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 22.

<sup>170</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 21.

<sup>171</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 22–23.

<sup>172</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 376–381.

intention directed at moral goodness as such, which is at the root of all more particular fundamental moral attitudes.<sup>173</sup> Like Kant, virtue is a kind of strength and directedness of will toward the morally good.

Yet whereas for Kant virtue is primarily of the will and only derivatively concerned with affectivity, for Hildebrand, echoing Scheler, virtue is also irreducibly affective in nature. Virtue also represents the achievement of basic moral intention's sovereignty over the person, the very "moral being" (*sittlichen Sein*) of the person.<sup>174</sup> In virtue one does not have just a bare, purely volitional basic intention, but rather the full, affective, being of the person, the heart, is put into the responses of a virtuous person. A morally struggling person might have a bare will to do what is right, and yet nonetheless due a former dissolute life, all of his affections point in the wrong direction. In an illuminating passage in *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand compares a bare, unfulfilled basic intention is unfulfilled with one where the intention is fulfilled and coincides where the person actually *stands*, with the person's very *being*:

In the other case, the [virtuous] person has left their prideful, covetous basic stance and has entered the [moral] intention with his whole being (*mit ihrem ganzen Wesen in die Intention eingegangen*). Objectively, the person stands where his intention is, his value-responses have on the one hand a sanction-born (*sanktionsgeborenen*) character responding with the full expressiveness and consciousness of the intention, but also with the greatest fullness encompassing the whole being (*das*

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<sup>173</sup> Seifert, "Human Action and the Human Heart," 737–745. See also Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 73–80.

<sup>174</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 593.

*ganze Wesen*), with the actual attitude (*tatsächliche Haltung*) of the person included in it.<sup>175</sup>

The being (*Wesen*) here refers to the affective fullness, which is the very “flower” (*Blüte*) of virtue and the basic moral intention.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, as noted in the last chapter, sanctioned affective responses become free, unified responses of the whole person, both volitional and affective in nature.<sup>177</sup> The reason why virtues can only be the result of our indirect rather than direct freedom, is due to these affective responses which we cannot engender but only prepare the ground for. Thus, virtue is first and foremost a “quality” of the whole person.<sup>178</sup> Far from being reducible to a merely potential disposition to actions, a virtue is a “reality” that “colors” a person’s whole moral life, and it even manifests itself in expressions on a person’s face or gestures.<sup>179</sup> Compared to particular actions and responses, virtues are a “higher level of the realization of moral values,” and have a more intimate connection to the person.<sup>180</sup> Virtues always involve awareness of value and free, conscious surrender (*Hingabe*) to value.

Hildebrand agrees with Aristotle that virtue is present only when a person finds joy (*Freude*) in doing good, an insight that Hildebrand (incorrectly) holds Kant completely overlooked.<sup>181</sup> Hildebrand notes that “happiness” is often used equivocally. The self-centered happiness and pleasure merely subjectively satisfying goods bring is different in kind and in quality from the happiness brought by goods because of their value.<sup>182</sup> This is

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<sup>175</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 558. Translation my own.

<sup>176</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 383–384.

<sup>177</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 350. See [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), p. 181.

<sup>178</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 377.

<sup>179</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 299, 380.

<sup>180</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 300.

<sup>181</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, II.3 1104b5-10, 25-26; Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 389.

<sup>182</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 100; *Ethics*, 36–40.

because of the distinct intentionality of these two forms of happiness. The happiness of the subjectively satisfying does not possess an intrinsic meaningfulness but only refers back to the self. “The constant enjoyment of the subjectively satisfying finally throws us back upon our limitedness, imprisoning us in ourselves.”<sup>183</sup> The result is a life centered on the subjectively satisfying “could never grant one moment of that blissful happiness engendered by those objects possessing a value.”<sup>184</sup>

There are three ways this value-based happiness comes about: 1) the centrifugal response of joy over (*Freude über*) a gladdening states of affairs, 2) the centrifugal response of joy in (*Freude an*) a delightful intentional object, and 3) the centripetal “being-gladdened” by the value of an object or state of affairs.<sup>185</sup> The fact that my country has been liberated, is objectively gladdening in itself, it calls for joy over this fact.<sup>186</sup> For states of affairs and most events, this is as far as joy goes. Yet with regard to persons, works of art, or places, one can also take joy *in* the intentional object. This joy-in grows as contact with the object grows (e.g., as I come to know a good person as a friend).<sup>187</sup> In the value-response of joy-over or joy-in, the value is thematic and one’s own happiness is not thematic. In being-gladdened, a form of being-affected, a value engenders happiness in us “superabundantly,” where, “happiness is indeed thematic but in a definitely secondary way. The main theme is the value of the good.”<sup>188</sup> In all three cases, happiness can in no way be made the primary theme, which would separate it from the founding value. In particular, in moral actions, the theme is the value-to-be-realized and “joy or being made happy is in

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<sup>183</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>184</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>185</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 100–114.

<sup>186</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 109.

<sup>187</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 111.

<sup>188</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 108.

no way the theme. Joy is indeed called for; it is better and more appropriate if joy is there, but it is not indispensable.”<sup>189</sup>

Hildebrand takes Kant to identify happiness, which for Kant in the *Groundwork* is the sum of the inclinations, with a self-interested happiness.<sup>190</sup> Hildebrand regards Kant as claiming that “any concern with happiness in the moral life diminishes moral value.”<sup>191</sup> According to Hildebrand, Kant holds that everything affective is motivated in an ultimately hedonistic way. In *The Critique of Practical Reason*, pleasure is defined as the representation of the fulfilment of desire by a material object.<sup>192</sup> For Kant “all material practical principles as such are, without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle or self-love or one’s own happiness.”<sup>193</sup> Yet ultimately, Hildebrand takes an one sided and inaccurate view of Kant on happiness. As we saw above, there are moral feelings, notably respect (*Achtung*) that follow upon cognition of the moral law and give one pleasure from being moral.<sup>194</sup> Though Hildebrand fears that Kantian pleasure in fulfilling the moral law could become a kind of pharisaical conceit, it is nonetheless a pleasure, a source of happiness, that is engendered by doing what is morally good for its own sake.<sup>195</sup> In addition, precisely because morality requires one to forgo many joys, it is necessary to cultivate a joyful heart in doing one’s duty.<sup>196</sup> Thus, while Kant is certainly more severe than Hildebrand (to say nothing of Scheler) with regard to happiness,

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<sup>189</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 107.

<sup>190</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:399, 18; En. Tr. 54; Hildebrand, *NL*, 106ff.

<sup>191</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 101.

<sup>192</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 155.

<sup>193</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 155.

<sup>194</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:399, 33; *MM*, 528.

<sup>195</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474. I discuss this critique of Kant below at

<sup>196</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:484, 135; *MM*, 597; Kant, *R*, 6:24n, 27ff; En. Tr. 25ff.

he does recognize sources of happiness that are not self-centered but are components of virtue.

Where Hildebrand and Kant do differ is how good will relates to affectivity. For Kant, the virtuous person's control over his or her affectivity seems to be "from without," as he does not recognize some affective states as value0responses that can be sanctioned or disavowed "from within." In other words, Kant only recognizes Hildebrand's indirect freedom, not cooperative freedom.<sup>197</sup> The merging with the free spiritual center into a single response of the person is a position that is unique to Hildebrand's philosophy and a significant advancement vis-à-vis Kant. For Kant a virtue is based on a volitional *Gesinnung* and only indirectly, but necessarily, pertains to affectivity whereas for Hildebrand the core of a virtue is volitional fundamental moral attitude (*Haltung*) that has also become affective (via cooperative freedom) and thereby encompass the whole being of the person. We can see here an artful, if unconscious on Hildebrand's own part, combination of Scheler's concern for affectivity in virtue and Kant's concern for volition in Hildebrand's theory of virtue.

Indeed, Kant and Hildebrand's theories of virtue, based as they are on willing what is good-in-itself, run so parallel to each other that they share many critiques of Aristotle's conception of virtue. Both reject Aristotle's eudaimonism, where actions and virtues are seen as a means to happiness in addition to their intrinsic goodness.<sup>198</sup> For both, *only* the good-in-itself can function as a motive in virtuous acts. Both reject Aristotle's *mesotis*

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<sup>197</sup> See above at [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), p. 180 and [4.6.4: Indirect Freedom](#), pp. 230–233.

<sup>198</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, I.12, 1101b30–1102a2, 19; Kant, *G*, 4:395–4:397, 13–16; En. Tr., 50–52; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 60n.

theory that virtue consists of a mean between two vicious extremes.<sup>199</sup> Instead, virtue involves adhering to what is good-in-itself whereas vice involves deviation into what is, for both authors, merely subjectively satisfying, to use Hildebrand's term. Both regard virtue as a *habitus* but fear Aristotle's prescription to cultivate virtue by repetition of virtuous acts since a kind of exercise would render Aristotle's virtues into habits in the sense of a "custom" (Hildebrand's term) that makes an action thoughtless and merely voluntary.<sup>200</sup> Finally, Hildebrand claims Aristotle "interprets them [the virtues] more as potential predispositions to good and right actions..<sup>201</sup> As he claims with Kant, Hildebrand holds that Aristotle neglects the fact that virtues are qualities of the person.

I would argue that Kant and Hildebrand are right to reject Aristotle's claim that all motivation involves the pursuit of *eudaimonia*. There are some purely other-directed moral acts. But, in the next chapter, I will argue that Hildebrand's own theory of love poses a significant challenge his own and Kant's strident claim that pursuit of one's *eudaimonia* can *never* function a motive of moral actions.<sup>202</sup> For now, I merely note that I do not think the other critiques of Aristotle's position listed above do full justice to Aristotle's position. First, Aristotle's term for virtue, *arête* or "excellence" of an activity, naturally slants his discussion of the virtues toward description of their respective actions and activities.<sup>203</sup> Yet this in no way implies that they are not regarded by Aristotle as qualities of the person or that they are reducible to dispositions for actions. Rather they characterize the whole person, not just actions or activities, as "excellent" in a certain regard. Second, Aristotle's

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<sup>199</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, II.6 1104a10-25, 25; Kant, *MS*, 6:432, 71; *MM*, 555; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 396–397.

<sup>200</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, II.1, 1103b1, 23; Kant, *MS*, 6:383, 15–16; *MM*, 515–516; *MS* 6:407, 42; *MM* 535; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 378–395.

<sup>201</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 299. See [3.2.3: Mere Voluntariness and the Will](#) pp. 131

<sup>202</sup> See [6.3.2: Eudaimonia and Motivation Reconsidered](#), pp. 325–332.

<sup>203</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, II.6 1107a1, 31.



recommendation to repeat virtuous acts in no way means that he considers them habits of custom in Hildebrand's sense that would reduce free acts to merely voluntary ones. Insofar as for Aristotle every virtuous act involves *prohairesis*, which could be either translated as "choice" or "rational desire," as well as deliberation, he clearly intends that every virtuous act is a free act.<sup>204</sup> Third, his *mesotis* theory is logically consistent with Kant's and Hildebrand's point that the fundamental question is whether one pursues what is good-in-itself over what is subjectively satisfying. It serves as a heuristic for determining *what* the proper morally good end is once one has already made a fundamental moral decision in favor of the good. The vices of excess and deficiency, e.g. prodigality and miserliness, can also be seen as just various forms of fundamental moral attitude of rejecting value in favor of the subjectively satisfying. In this way, the Kantian and Hildebrandian focus on the good-in-itself can be partially harmonized with Aristotle's account of virtue.

#### **5.4.2: The Constitutive Fundamental Moral Attitudes**

We saw above that a fundamental moral attitude toward a class of moral goods is essential to virtue. Virtue is the triumph of this attitude in encompassing the whole being of the person. However, the presence of some fundamental moral attitudes is necessary to have a proper value-response to the morally good in the first place. They are necessary not only for all virtues, but they are also constitutive of the general will to be morally good itself. In a series of eponymous essays in *The Art of Living*, Hildebrand lists four such constitutive attitudes: reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, and veracity. To this fairly comprehensive list of attitudes, I argue, an implicit fifth must be added: humility. Each attitude is

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<sup>204</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, III.2-3, 41–45.

necessarily contained in the general will to be morally good, and, indeed, they are necessary constitutive components of every moral value-response.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Reverence is the attitude of openness to being “formed by the law” of being that stems from a respect for the “autonomy” of beings and their essences.<sup>205</sup> It is both volitional and affective in nature, though because it is a free attitude the will takes a certain primacy here. It is a willingness to be affected by and respond to the demands of values. This fundamental moral attitude is, as seen above and in Chapter Two, required in order to be open to grasping values in the first place and to avoid value-blindness.<sup>206</sup> Hildebrand calls reverence the “mother of all virtues” because this basic openness to values and their demands is at the core of all value-responses and especially moral value-responses.<sup>207</sup>

Faithfulness or fidelity (Hildebrand uses the terms interchangeably in English) is the fundamental moral attitude that enables a person to retain superactual attitudes towards values. It establishes a continuity beyond the fluctuations of one’s actual consciousness.<sup>208</sup> An unfaithful person is subject to the constantly changing stream of actual consciousness and is at the mercy of whatever momentary impression catches one’s attention. Indeed, those subject to such a radical inconstancy “are inwardly dead; their personality lacks a lasting center.”<sup>209</sup> By “center” here, Hildebrand means that from which a person stands firmly in himself.<sup>210</sup> The person without faithfulness fails to do justice to the substantiality inherent in the nature of personality; he or she fails to stand firmly in him- or herself. Such

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<sup>205</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 1-8. See [2.4.1: What is Reverence?](#), pp. 95–99.

<sup>206</sup> See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>207</sup> Hildebrand, “The Role of Reverence in Education,” 635.

<sup>208</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 10.

<sup>209</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 15.

<sup>210</sup> See his notion of a person as having a value-essence and being a substance above at [3.2.1: The Will and the Metaphysics of the Free Person](#), pp. 122–124.

a person lacks the strength to “‘nourish’ his soul upon a value once discovered,” and therefore will not withstand moral trials.<sup>211</sup> Self-donation is impossible, for to say, “I love you now, but how long it will last, I cannot tell,” is no real giving of oneself, and the same applies analogously for other value-responses.<sup>212</sup> By contrast, the faithful person “lives and masters every moment from the depth,” and “dominates his own impressions.”<sup>213</sup> This person possesses an inner freedom that only faithfulness can give. Based on their objective significance, superactual experiences and attitudes are imprinted on the person at a deeper level, so that even when the person is not conscious of them, they color the person’s life. Only with fidelity does one do justice to the unchanging “*eidē*” of moral values:

[Only this person] readily grasps the demands of the world of values...is capable of the response to value that is due objective values...[for] a proper response to values is lasting, independent of the charm of novelty and of the attractive force represented by the presence of a thing.<sup>214</sup>

Responsibility characterizes the morally conscious person in contrast to the morally unconscious person.<sup>215</sup> Even the good hearted, morally unconscious person does not know that “he cannot act freely according to his arbitrary pleasure.”<sup>216</sup> Further, “he does not seek a really clear and unequivocal decision on the question of value...it suffices to him to have an approximate impression of what is good or evil.”<sup>217</sup> By contrast, the responsible person, “grasps not only the splendor, the inner beauty and majesty of the world of values, but also

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<sup>211</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 16.

<sup>212</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 16.

<sup>213</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 13.

<sup>214</sup> Hildebrand, “Faithfulness,” in *AL*, 13.

<sup>215</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 19.

<sup>216</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 20.

<sup>217</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 21.

the sovereignty they possess over us...the implacable earnestness of their demands.”<sup>218</sup> The responsible person also “grasps the entire seriousness and irrevocable character of reality inherent in every decision.”<sup>219</sup> This person “takes a position only when the question of value is unequivocally clear to him.”<sup>220</sup> This person carefully considers his or her decisions, in contrast to the reckless spontaneity of the morally unconscious person. There is a deep reason for Hildebrand’s identification of responsibility with moral consciousness. Only the person who is ready to respond to values in a proper manner can in fact fully receive values according to their essence in the first place. This is why reverence and faithfulness are prerequisites for moral consciousness.

Veracity is the attitude that characterizes both the person and his or her responses as genuine. It refers both to appreciation for truth and genuineness of character. It is a superactual truthful acceptance of the call of values rather than a sham desire to only appear to have that proper responsiveness.<sup>221</sup> Hildebrand opens the essay by noting that “an untruthful or mendacious person...is crippled in his whole personality; the whole of his moral life.”<sup>222</sup> This person “assumes a lordly position over being” but he is therefore self-enclosed and “unable to achieve a real and genuine contact with the world.”<sup>223</sup> This, of course, is fatal for freedom as taking-cognizance of the real values is necessary for the will to be properly supported. Veracity ensures not only that the person is truthful to herself and others about the real call of values, but also that she is genuine *as a person*, that she possesses one’s own “ontological truth.”<sup>224</sup> She is a person who refuses to be stuck in the

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<sup>218</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 14.

<sup>219</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 24.

<sup>220</sup> Hildebrand, “Responsibility,” in *AL*, 24.

<sup>221</sup> Hildebrand, “Veracity,” in *AL*, 27–34.

<sup>222</sup> Hildebrand, “Veracity,” in *AL*, 27.

<sup>223</sup> Hildebrand, “Veracity,” in *AL*, 27–30.

<sup>224</sup> Hildebrand, “Veracity,” in *AL*, 32.

subjectively satisfying, but is faithful to the true nature of the person as open to values and destined to respond to them. She is authentic as a person.

A fifth attitude, which Hildebrand does not list but I hold is just as essential to any value-response as the preceding four, is humility (*Demut*). This virtue is described in his 1940 work, written under the pseudonym Peter Ott, *Die Umgestaltung in Christus* (*Transformation in Christ*).<sup>225</sup> For Hildebrand, humility (*Demut*, lit., lowliness in contrast to the “highness” of *Hochmut*, pride) has to do with one’s stance toward and consciousness of one’s own qualitative values and especially one’s moral values. As noted above, for Hildebrand, we can be conscious of our own moral values in the sense that we recognize morality as such demands that we become just, truthful, reverent, etc. However, we should not be conscious of our own present moral values, humility prohibits one from looking “on the back” of the act and being conscious of one’s own moral values.<sup>226</sup> Humility “places a veil” over them.<sup>227</sup> Further “humility implies blissful *assent* to this our creatureliness and non-being (*Die Demut schließt auch die selige Bejahung dieser unserer Geschöpflichkeit und Nichtigkeit ein*).”<sup>228</sup> For Hildebrand, the height of humility is found in submission to God as one’s Creator, without whom one and all other things are nothing. “He wills to receive everything from God alone.”<sup>229</sup> By contrast, without the consciousness of God, we would regard ourselves, at a minimum, as “equal partners” of values.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Die Umgestaltung in Christus*. Vol 10 of 10 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1971); English Version: *Transformation in Christ: On the Christian Attitude*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001). Henceforth, *TC*.

<sup>226</sup> C.f. Scheler, *Formalism*, 27. See above at [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–254.

<sup>227</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 177.

<sup>228</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 159; *Die Umgestaltung in Christus*, 117.

<sup>229</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 159.

<sup>230</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 157.

I wish to argue that there is a natural analogue to consciousness of creatureliness that does not directly refer to God, which Hildebrand perhaps overlooks. Since *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum* holds true, all knowledge comes from taking-cognizance, where the subject is purely void (*leer*). It follows, I argue, that one's own experiential content (*Gehalt*) depends on receiving the objective content (*Inhalt*) from importance and especially from values to respond to.<sup>231</sup> Without them, we would perhaps exist but have no content, no being. Thus, while we are ontologically equal to most values (or, in some cases, superior to them, e.g., a person possesses an ontological dignity that a beautiful stone lacks), in another sense we are ontologically dependent on the world of values and, in Hildebrand's ultimate analysis, on God at the head of this world of values. Just as for Levinas the Face of the Other who makes my own subjectivity possible is the trace of God and a reminder of my own creatureliness, so for Hildebrand in the call of values there is a mysterious givenness of God and a recognition of our own dependence, even for one who does not believe in God.<sup>232</sup> This does not deny that humility takes on a very different aspect when it is consciously referred to God but that a natural version of it is inherent to Hildebrand's very philosophy. It is contained in every value-response.

It should be clear, I hold, that these fundamental moral attitudes interpenetrate and presuppose each other. You cannot have faithfulness without reverent openness to values or truthful acceptance of them, for example. Together they form a unity of the virtues. They constitute the general will to be morally good as a necessarily virtuous will in two ways. First, the general will to be morally good itself is constituted by fundamental moral

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<sup>231</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 134–42; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>232</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 163–174; Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Ethics of the Infinite," in *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 74–78. Henceforth *EOI*.

attitudes that, in themselves if not in a particular person, are virtues. A morally struggling person can have sufficient humility, reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, and veracity to have a general will to be morally good without yet being fully virtuous. Second, the general will aims at the realization of all virtues, indeed this is precisely what those virtues themselves in their essences demand.

### **5.5: Conclusion: Freedom as Sanctioned Good Will**

At this point, the general structure of the superactual general will to be morally good is clear for Hildebrand, as well as how it advances beyond both Kant and Scheler. It is the sanctioned good will, i.e., basic moral intention of the person. One wills what is good in itself and rejects the merely subjectively good. This is where Hildebrand converges with Kant. Only in doing this does one free oneself from Scheler's moral value blindness. Yet this good will is "heteronomous" in Kant's sense rather than purely autonomous, as one submits to the demands of moral values apprehended in experience, one is "formed by their law."<sup>233</sup> One submits all decisions to the modified *ordo amoris* described above. Hildebrand's *ordo amoris* rehabilitates moral obligations. At a minimum, the priority moral obligations have, provided no other factor nullifies those obligations, is obeyed. For to violate one's moral obligation subverts freedom into arbitrariness and deprives the *fiat* of the will, and the sanction, of its proper foundation. Affective responses can be allowed if morally harmless (e.g., joy over winning a game), sanctioned if morally good (e.g., joy for a neighbor's recovery from illness) and disavowed when morally bad (e.g., *Schadenfreude*).<sup>234</sup> This submission to moral values is brought about, engendered, not by the mere adoption of a maxim of pure practical reason nor by affective insights, but directly

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<sup>233</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in AL, 3.

<sup>234</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345–346.

by the will giving its *fiat* to values. This centrality of the will (the free personal center) marks Hildebrand's account of morality as distinct from Scheler, and, as we will see below, the centrality of submission marks it as distinct from Kant.<sup>235</sup>

The general will to be morally good cannot be identified with virtue, but it necessarily aims at becoming virtuous and is fulfilled in being virtuous. The presence of the general will is the beginning of virtue. It reaches its culmination in the affective fullness of the treasure of goodness, the very height of virtue. Kant's strength of will and Scheler's affective "quality" and "being" of the person merge in Hildebrand's account of virtue. It is based on the constitutive fundamental moral attitudes of humility, faithfulness, responsibility, veracity, and reverence.

Yet I deliberately omitted one fundamental moral attitude, what Hildebrand calls *Güte* and translated by Crosby as "goodness and kindness," and which I tend to render as "loving goodness."<sup>236</sup> As opposed to moral goodness in general, this is the attitude of people we see as especially morally good, who have a flowing moral love for all things.<sup>237</sup> This fundamental moral attitude is not a *constitutive* feature of the general will to be morally good but a *consequence* of it. It represents the very height and peak of moral virtue and goodness. I omitted it because, as the epitome of virtue, this virtue will be our phenomenological window into how virtue and any moral goodness enhances freedom. To this topic the next chapter turns.

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<sup>235</sup> See below at [7.7: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy](#), pp. 389–390.

<sup>236</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35–41. Crosby in his translation of *The Nature of Love* tends to render *Güte* as "goodness and kindness," and the German term does have the connotation of kindness. However, I have opted for Alice von Hildebrand's translation of *Güte* as simply "goodness" or "loving goodness" to emphasize its character as the particular moral attitude and virtue that represents moral goodness as a whole. See Hildebrand, *NL*, 238ff, Translator's Footnote.

<sup>237</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 36.



## CHAPTER 6: THE ENHANCEMENT OF FREEDOM IN OVERFLOWING, LOVING GOODNESS (*GÜTE*)

### 6.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined Hildebrand's account of the structure of the general will to be morally good. In this chapter, we will investigate the enhancement of freedom by looking at the fullest realization of the general will: the person who has what Hildebrand calls the particular fundamental moral attitude of "goodness" (*Güte*).<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand describes this fundamental moral attitude and virtue of goodness as one characterized by overflowing love.

I argue that we cannot understand the freedom experienced in the self-donation to the morally good, which is contained in every moral act, without understanding the value-response and self-donation par excellence: love. The epitome of moral goodness, which all morally good acts in some way indicate, is found in love. First, as Josef Seifert notes, a Hildebranian can accept Karol Wojtyła's reinterpretation of Kant's humanity formulation of the Categorical Imperative as the "Personalist Norm" that "the person is a kind of good to which love constitutes the proper and fully mature response."<sup>2</sup> Love is demanded by the value of each person. Second, every value-response contains a "breakthrough" (*Durchbruch*) to the world of values that contains an at least implicit reference to universal

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35–41.

<sup>2</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (Pauline Books and Media, 2019), 46. Henceforth, *LR*; Josef Seifert, *True Love*, 1st edition (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2015), 50.

love.<sup>3</sup> Every moral act and attitude can be seen as pointing toward this love, and, for Hildebrand, to infused love of God in all things, *caritas*.<sup>4</sup>

In the third section, I will argue that if we investigate a morality that is set on willing what is good-in-itself apart from an investigation of love, we will almost inevitably depersonalize morality, obscure the connection of good will to happiness and affectivity, and render being moral somewhat burdensome and unfree. For love reveals the importance of what Hildebrand calls “*Eigenleben*,” literally “own life” or “proper own life,” and which Crosby, imperfectly by his own admission, though I would add insightfully, translates as “subjectivity.”<sup>5</sup> For Hildebrand, *Eigenleben* can refer to our total conscious life, but it more particularly means a subjectivity intimately related to happiness. “I have a subjectivity

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<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 312–317.

<sup>4</sup> For Hildebrand, this universal moral love, extending even to those who are evil, can only be fully actualized in *caritas*, infused love of all things in Christ, which is a controversial claim in a multicultural society. Hildebrand’s claim is motivated by a desire to do justice to the transformation of morality in Christ. It also stems from the fact that one ought not have community with those who are evil. Only the Christian can, Hildebrand holds, recognize in the evil person one called to redemption by Christ. Finally, Christian neighbor love is based not on a response to the neighbor but on an overflowing love for Christ. See Hildebrand, *NL*, 266–278; *Ethics*, 484–489. The point about love of enemies is found in his 1970 *Zölibat und Glaubenskris*e. See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Zölibat und Glaubenskris*e (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1970); English Version: *Celibacy and the Crisis of Faith* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), xxxiii.

Hildebrand’s claim faces a particular challenge from Levinas, who, in his last works and interviews, indicated that he was coming to see ethical responsibility, which extends to all others and even to one’s enemies (e.g., Nazis), as an analogous form of love. Confucianism also attempts to base the entirety of its ethics on love extending from one’s immediate family to “all under Heaven.” I plan to eventually compare Hildebrand’s account of specifically Christian universal love and these other accounts of moral universal love in a future theological work. I should note that both Crosby and Seifert have privately indicated to me that there is room for a Hildebrandian conception of natural neighbor love and this seem to me the place to make a connection between Hildebrand’s Christian account and non-Christian accounts of universal moral love. This would be the place where a connection can be made with Levinas. See Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, *EOI*, 63–84.

However, Hildebrand’s controversial restriction of universal moral love is not directly germane to the present dissertation. It will only be necessary to recognize that every moral value-response refers to love, not how this love comes about in a person or whether and to what extent grace is necessary to fully realize this love. I am interested here in doing a phenomenological investigation of how a person who has this universal love would experience freedom. It seems to me evident that such people exist, and we experience them as the paragons of moral personality and of moral freedom, and that not all are Christians (e.g., Gandhi, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Edna Adana), even if one holds the theological position that only with grace is this love fully and totally actualized. Yet how this love comes about is not the primary concern of the present dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 200ff. Translator’s footnote. Crosby notes that Hildebrand could have used the term *Subjektivität* in many places where *Eigenleben* is used in the text.

(*Eigenleben*) in the sense that there are certain things which have to do with me and my concerns and that refer in particular to my happiness.”<sup>6</sup> *Eigenleben* is a critical feature of love. If I say to my spouse that I have no care for my own happiness and only want what is good for her, she can conclude I have insulted her.<sup>7</sup> To this, I would personally add, she would seriously worry if I experience my love as an onerous, unfree burden. My love for her has been depersonalized by an obscene objectivism, for I have failed to give myself, my *Eigenleben*, to her. Hildebrand coins a new term, “super value-response” (*Überwertantwort*) for love, in that I not only give a response to the value but I also give myself, my very *Eigenleben* to the value.<sup>8</sup> Seifert notes that Hildebrand, ironically, misses that his own adoption of the Kantian position that moral acts must be motivated solely by giving ourselves to what is good-in-itself, and never be motivated by one’s objective good and happiness, is also depersonalizing.<sup>9</sup> Again, I would add that this depersonalization renders being moral as something inevitably experienced as burden on my freedom.

Thus, in the next section, I will present Hildebrand’s account of love and *Güte*. This section will introduce the first of four relations to value that enhances freedom: recollection (*Sammlung*, lit., “gathering,” “concentration”). Being morally good brings us to our *Eigenleben* while doing what is evil tends to disperse us into our desires. This section will contain the main argument that an ethics based on the good-in-itself must be a love ethics.

In the third section, I will develop from the works of Levinas and Alice von Hildebrand a new, Hildebrandian account of the way that positive importance, especially

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<sup>6</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 201.

<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 211–212, 220.

<sup>8</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 77.

<sup>9</sup> Josef Seifert, *Was ist und was motiviert eine sittliche Handlung?*, (München: Anton Pustet, 1976). English Translation: *The Moral Action: What Is It and How Is It Motivated?*, 1st edition. Trans. Fritz Wenisch (International Academy of Philosophy Press, 2017), Chapter 6 “The Motivating Role of One’s Own Happiness in Moral Action.” Kindle book.

value, can give energy and strength to the will.<sup>10</sup> This I call “nourishment” (*Nahrung*), a word that appears in a few scattered places in Hildebrand’s English works but is not thematized by him. One becomes freer in that one has greater energy and strength of will when the object of willing bears a value. The nourishment that value provides is qualitatively superior to any nourishment provided by the subjectively satisfying. Then, I will argue that happiness can function as a legitimate motive in moral acts and that, when it is so, it enhances one’s sense of one’s own freedom. Indeed, while Hildebrand holds that neighbor love tends to involve a setting to the side of one’s *Eigenleben*, since the neighbor is not personally close to one, I will argue that there can be a kind of enthronement of the beloved neighbor in one’s *Eigenleben* in even the simplest moral acts.

Third, taking a page from Aristotle, I will argue that the happiness being moral brings can “intensify” a virtuous activity.<sup>11</sup> It makes one more attentive to that activity and more likely to repeat it in the future. This leads to the engenderment of virtues. It renders one increasingly free from moral obstacles.

Finally, I will argue in the penultimate section that the support of the will comes in degrees. The higher the value one wills, the stronger the support of the will. This makes one freer in that one experiences a greater meaningfulness in what one does. Together these four relations: Finally, I will argue in the penultimate section that the support of the will comes in degrees. The higher the value one wills, the stronger the support of the will. This makes one freer in that one experiences a greater meaningfulness in what one does. Together these four relations—recollection, nourishment, intensification, and support—explain how the more morally good one is, the greater the sense of one’s freedom one has.

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<sup>10</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 61–77; Levinas, *TI*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.5, 1175a30, 190.

## 6.2: Moral Goodness and Love

To make the case that love and morality are intrinsically tied, I first present Hildebrand's account of the nature of *Güte* and of love more generally. The second subsection will introduce Hildebrand's notion of *Eigenleben* and recollection. Then, in the third and longest subsection, I argue three points. First, once the uniqueness of the person is recognized, the very logic of an ethics based on the good-in-itself will find that the height and culmination of morality is found in love, for here self-donation to the good reaches its height. Second, I will argue, along with Scheler, that Kant somewhat missed this uniqueness of the person due to his formalism. Third, every moral act contains an implicit reference to love, it opens us up to love. Just as in loving I am brought to myself in the call to respond to the beloved, so I am brought to myself by the call to respond to a moral value. The tie between morality and love is crucial because it reveals the tie between morality and happiness, which will be the subject of the next section.

### 6.3.1: *Güte* and the Nature of Love

In the last essay of *Sittliche Grundhaltungen*, Hildebrand notes that the term *Güte* does not only denote "moral value as such" but also "the specific moral quality of goodness."<sup>12</sup> This is the moral quality found in the most moral persons, especially the saints. It is distinct from reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, veracity, and humility in that this attitude is not the precondition for but rather the "most sublime fruit" of a proper value-responsive attitude.<sup>13</sup> Whereas reverence is, according to Hildebrand, the "mother of all virtues," goodness stands as "that which culminates all of morality in a specific way; it is the queen

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<sup>12</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35.

of all the virtues.”<sup>14</sup> “Mother” refers to the fact that reverence, i.e., openness to values, is the very basis for a good will and any value-response, whereas “queen” refers to the fact that *Güte* is highest achievement of the good will, and, as we will see below, the attitude implicitly hinted at in all morally good acts and attitudes. This particular quality of goodness stands at “the very heart of the whole reign of moral values...in the center of all morality.”<sup>15</sup> One who has it possesses the “treasure of goodness” (*Schatz der Güte*), by which Hildebrand means that, like with Scheler’s *Gefühlszustand*, one’s moral acts come more out from one’s love and fullness rather than being pulled out of one by the motive on the object side.<sup>16</sup> He is careful to note, though, that this overflowing love is not opposed to moral obligation but rather the person who has this virtue will fulfill all of his or her obligations from this overflowing love. Hildebrand then asks, “What do we mean when we say a man irradiates goodness?”<sup>17</sup> He lists the fundamental features of this goodness:

Luminous harmony, inner freedom and serenity, the victorious superiority of love—which is the secret of eager and ready service—openness to the life of other men, warmth, ardor, meekness and mildness, all-embracing breadth, awakedness, and the capacity to grasp values.”<sup>18</sup>

Elsewhere in the essay, Hildebrand notes “all of these qualities are specific forms and manifestations of love...love is, as it were, flowing goodness, and goodness is the breath of love.”<sup>19</sup> In *Moralia*, forgiveness (*Verzeihen*) and compassion (*Mitleid*) are also associated with the treasure of goodness because they are not reducible to value-responses

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<sup>14</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 35.

<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 3. Kapitel “Die zweite Quelle der Sittlichkeit: der Schatz der Güte,” 91–98.

<sup>17</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, “Goodness,” in *AL*, 36.

but rather engender them from one's own already present treasure of goodness.<sup>20</sup> In forgiveness, I do not respond to a person as he or she deserves but forgive him or her from my core of goodness. Similarly, the goodness that engenders my attitude of compassion to a suffering person exists prior to my encounter with that suffering person.

Love is the response to the overall value of an individual person in his or her beauty ("the total beauty of the individuality", *die Gesamtschönheit der Individualität*).<sup>21</sup> The qualitative values of the person (e.g., charm, intellectual talent) can be the "antiphon" of this love, what initially attracts one to the beloved person. Vital values attract José to Carmen in the eponymous opera; whereas Florestan's moral values attract Leonore in *Fidelio*.<sup>22</sup> Following Max Scheler, Hildebrand holds that love is ultimately a response to the unique, ideal, and unrepeatable personal value-essence (*Wertwesen*) of the beloved.<sup>23</sup> As Crosby and Metropolitan John Zizioulas note, if love referred to the qualities of the beloved, then if I found another person with those same qualities in greater abundance, I would abandon the first beloved and go to "love" the new person.<sup>24</sup> But my original beloved could well wonder if it was ever love in the first place. Because love refers to the person's ideal essence, it is possible for a mother to love a son who has become a criminal, considering his crimes to be a betrayal of his true self.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 90.

<sup>21</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 302. These are Hildebrand's own examples of antiphons.

<sup>23</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 489; Hildebrand, *NL*, 14–27, 304.

<sup>24</sup> John Zizioulas, "An Ontology of Love: A Patristic Reading of Dietrich von Hildebrand's 'The Nature of Love,'" *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 14–27; John F. Crosby, "Is Love a Value-Response? Dietrich von Hildebrand in Dialogue with John Zizioulas," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55:4, no. 220 (December 1, 2015): 457–470.

<sup>25</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 69–72.

Love contains an *intentio benevolentiae*, the intention to give what is objectively good for the beloved person to him or her, including giving the lover him- or herself.<sup>26</sup> It also consists in the *intentio unionis*, the desire for union with the beloved.<sup>27</sup> Of these two, Hildebrand holds that the *intentio benevolentiae* must always take precedence. I must first intend what is good for the beloved before my own union with the beloved and the happiness found therein, or else the love could devolve into a self-serving pursuit of happiness. If I seek union with the beloved even to the point of giving the beloved what is bad for him or her because he or she likes it, then this is deformation of love. Yet these two intentions are inseparable in every love. Love is the value-response par excellence. For in this value-response there is not the only self-donation (*Hingabe*) proper to all value-responses of transcending one's subjective preferences to give to the value as one ought. There is also a radical giving of *oneself* to the beloved. In love, the self-donation proper to any value-response finds its peak. For this reason, any genuine love always contains a certain affective breath of *Güte* directed toward the beloved and felt by him or her.<sup>28</sup>

For Hildebrand in *The Nature of Love*, love's reference to the beloved as a person entails that the love cannot be a volitional response, as when he wrote it he held that the will only responds to states of affairs under our control and not to persons.<sup>29</sup> As seen in Chapter Four, following a conversation with Seifert, Hildebrand abandoned this narrow limitation of the will in *Moralia*.<sup>30</sup> Yet even in *Moralia*, Hildebrand still holds love is essentially an affective rather than volitional value-response, but a greater role is given to

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<sup>26</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, Chapter 7 “*Intentio Benevolentiae*, Value-Response and Super Value-Response,” 147–179.

<sup>27</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, Chapter 6 “*Intentio Unionis*,” 123–146.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 238.

<sup>29</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 41–42. See [4.4.1: Extending the Range of the Fiat](#), pp. 204–207.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 74–79; Josef Seifert, “Human Action and the Human Heart,” 744.



the will.<sup>31</sup> By the time of *Moralia*, Hildebrand claims that a mere will for love of God and love of neighbor, which are morally obligatory, is already a “skeleton” and “core” of true affective love of God and neighbor.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, a mere will to love another romantically is a poor substitute for true affective romantic love; which can only come as a pure gift.<sup>33</sup> But in all cases, it is not fully love, a giving of oneself, without a giving of one’s heart that one cannot engender.<sup>34</sup> As noted above, I hold, in contrast to Hildebrand but in line with Seifert and Schwartz that love is a response of both the will and the heart, though it is paradigmatically affective in character.<sup>35</sup>

### 6.2.2: *Eigenleben* and Recollection in Love and Morality

In the course of explaining the nature of love, Hildebrand discovered a key notion, *Eigenleben* (“subjectivity”), that has crucial implications for understanding moral freedom.<sup>36</sup> It is closely related to the *intentio unionis* and *intentio benevolentiae*. It is key to what I call the personalization of morality. This is a unique notion, without antecedent among his phenomenological contemporaries and, in my view a major advance in the

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<sup>31</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 76–80.

<sup>32</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 76–78. See [4.3.2: The Freedom of Mere Willing](#), pp. 224–227.

<sup>33</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 78–80.

<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand mentions the famous distinction between *agape* and *eros* in *The Nature of Love*, without mentioning who he is arguing against. He holds that this distinction between *agape* and *eros* does not rely on the fact that *eros* involves desire and that *agape* does not (cf. Nygren’s *Agape and Eros*). All forms of love, even neighbor-love, include the desiderative element of the *intentio unionis*. For Hildebrand the *eros/agape* distinction refers to whether one’s love is a purely natural love or has been “baptized” by *caritas*, set free from its own inner limitations. See Hildebrand, *NL*, 236.

Responding directly to Nygren, Josef Seifert notes that the Hildebrandian conception of love undermines Nygren’s distinction between *eros* and *agape*. Whereas Nygren understands only *eros* as involving values and *agape* as a solely and disinterestedly flowing from the goodness of the person regardless of the value or defects of the beloved (esp. in the case of God’s love for humans), the Hildebrandian conception of love affirms that an *intentio unionis* is proper to all forms of love and that love is based on a value-response even if at times it exceeds a strictly proportionate value response (as in the mother loving her criminal son). See Josef Seifert, *True Love*, 43–51; Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953)

<sup>35</sup> See [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), pp. 204–207.

<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, Chapter 9 “*Eigenleben* and Transcendence,” 200–220. The term *Eigenleben* also makes a few scattered appearances in his *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft* but is not thematized until *The Nature of Love*. It thus is a late development in Hildebrand’s own thought.

phenomenology of personhood. Hildebrand notes that the broader sense of the term *Eigenleben* (lit., own life) is “equivalent to the [total] conscious experience of the person.”<sup>37</sup> But in the narrower and more important sense, “I have a subjectivity (*Eigenleben*) in the sense that there are certain things which have to do with me and my concerns and that refer in particular to my happiness.”<sup>38</sup> One’s *Eigenleben* in this sense refers “only to those things that concern him as [an] individual person in a special way, to those things of which it can be said ‘*tua res agitur*’ (‘Your personal concern is at stake’).”<sup>39</sup> It is therefore directed at objective goods for oneself, though the highest objective goods always involve values and value-responses.<sup>40</sup>

*Eigenleben* is a subjectivity that involves being and recognizing oneself as “this unrepeatable individual.”<sup>41</sup> This *Eigenleben* is a concern for one’s own happiness that is deeply interior. Although true happiness does instantiate a value, in my *Eigenleben* I do not view my happiness as a value. I would not say, “Wow, what a wonderful contribution to the goodness of the world that I am happy.” Instead, I perceive my happiness as a great objective good for me.

As a counterpoint to the ideal of love as radically disinterested, Hildebrand notes that lacking *Eigenleben* represents a depersonalization of the subject and his or her love. To lack *Eigenleben* is in a sense to lack the very substantiality, standing in oneself (*sub-stare*), of personal subjectivity. As Hildebrand puts it, the misguided ideal of a radical altruism in love (e.g., in Fenélon), which demands that one takes no interest in one’s own

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<sup>37</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 201.

<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 201.

<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 201.

<sup>40</sup> I discuss this in a footnote above in [5.3.4: The Hildebrandian, Modified \*Ordo Amoris\*](#), p. 265ff.

<sup>41</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 203. See [3.2.1: The Will and the Metaphysics of the Free Person](#), pp. 122–124.

*Eigenleben* but only in the interests of others, “robs him [the lover] of his character as a full subject and destroys the personal in him by exaggerating the objective to the point of dissolving that which makes him a subject.”<sup>42</sup> It depersonalizes the lover. I want to add to Hildebrand’s analysis here two points of my own. Such a conception of love also burdens the lover and lessens his or her sense of freedom. One might expect the lover to feel his love as somewhat of a burden, since he is concerned with the beloved to the neglect of his own happiness in the love. Second, he is in effect so focused on the object that he becomes dispersed into his intention for the other.<sup>43</sup>

At this point, I must introduce the notion of recollection (*Sammlung*, lit. “collection,” “gathering” but which Hildebrand’s school tends to translate, in an Augustinian mode, as “recollection”). Back in Chapter Two, we saw how there is a kind of “lateral” non-positional self-consciousness which Hildebrand investigates in his *Aesthetics*.<sup>44</sup> Lateral consciousness receives little further treatment in Hildebrand’s works, but it has been developed by Crosby in his *Selfhood of the Human Person*.<sup>45</sup> Crosby connects Hildebrand’s lateral consciousness to Sartre’s famous argument at the beginning of *Being and Nothingness* that self-consciousness must be primarily non-positional consciousness (of) oneself. Sartre notes that if our self-consciousness was a positional

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<sup>42</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 206.

<sup>43</sup> One could derive from this notion of *Eigenleben* a critique of Levinas’ ethics and his suspicion of affectivity, which I partly present below but which I have done much more thoroughly in a recently published article. See below at [6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom](#), pp. 319–324. See also Alexander Montes, “Toward the Name of the Other: A Hildebrandian Approach to Levinasian Alterity,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10, no. 1 (2019): 82–109.

<sup>44</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 20–22; See 2.

<sup>45</sup> John F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 96–106. Cf. Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 307–309. Here Hildebrand notes that one cannot know a virtue in lateral consciousness, for to recognize oneself as virtuous, e.g., humble, is already to vitiate that virtue. Our knowledge of the virtues comes from frontal consciousness of the virtues of other people, never our own. This point was referred to above at [2.4.2: Reverence as the Unification of the Cognitive and Axiological Attitudes](#), pp. 101–102 and [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–254.

consciousness-of oneself, then that consciousness would itself require another consciousness of it and so on *ad infinitum*.<sup>46</sup> So there must be a non-positional presence of consciousness to itself.

Drawing on Hildebrand's conception of recollection in his *The Transformation in Christ*, Crosby notes that our non-positional presence to ourselves comes in degrees.<sup>47</sup> I can be more or less recollected in my very subjectivity and selfhood. Hildebrand opposes recollection to distraction and dispersion. When one is distracted in prayer one is "controlled by the automatism of our associations...unable to control our attention at will."<sup>48</sup> Crosby broadens this notion. Crosby notes, "there is a state of consciousness in which our subjectivity gets so weakened that we tend to lose ourselves in the things around us...as when persons are watching television in a very passive way."<sup>49</sup> These persons "cannot really originate any life and activity on their own; they rather tend to be borne along by what happens to them."<sup>50</sup> In another form of unrecollected subjectivity, one is so future-oriented towards a goal that one never experiences the present fully.<sup>51</sup> There is a

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<sup>46</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 9–14. Henceforth *BN*.

Sartre, of course, famously develops a kind of value-subjectivist position from this realization that self-consciousness is non-positional. Hildebrand rejects this value-subjectivism. However, I will argue in Chapter Seven that Hildebrand's conception of consciousness would collapse into something much like Sartre's conception of consciousness if one were to remove the possibility of value consciousness coming before any position-taking of the subject. From Hildebrand's perspective one who is dominated by pride in one's own freedom would experience the world much as Sartre describes, which is not to say that Sartre himself was dominated by this pride. I discuss this below at [7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom](#), pp. 365–369.

I have noted in another work that Hildebrand's and Crosby's own recognition of recollection in non-positional self-consciousness serves to undermine Sartre's conclusions, though I will not bring those considerations to bear here. See Alexander Montes, "Toward a Thicker Notion of the Self: Sartre and Von Hildebrand on Individuality, Personhood, and Freedom," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 9, no. 2 (2019): 65–88.

<sup>47</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 96–106.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 105–106.

<sup>49</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 100.

<sup>51</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 101.

lack of inner unity, an inability to stand in oneself and go out toward the world from one's center.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast, in recollection we return to ourselves in our non-positional, "lateral" self-presence. Hildebrand notes that we can consciously strive to recollect ourselves, but recollection reaches its fullness when it is passively brought about by the recollecting power of a value, especially by the beloved human or Divine person(s) in love.<sup>53</sup> This recollection, Hildebrand claims, "is not merely a formal integration of our mind (as implied by concentrating our attention upon an object)."<sup>54</sup> Instead, "it means an integration of the entire person; a realization of its true self out of the depths of its being (*sie ist vielmehr das Einheitlichwerden der ganzen Person durch ein Erwachen zu ihrem eigentlichen Selbst, durch einen Durchbruch in die Tiefe*)."<sup>55</sup> Recollection gives us the proper "distance" to be free from "submersion" in a task and its logic.<sup>56</sup> It is clear that recollection is closely linked to the fundamental moral attitudes of humility, reverence, responsibility, and, above all, faithfulness insofar as it gives one's life a center.<sup>57</sup> Finally, recollection unifies the person, freeing him or her from the dissolution of distractions.

Hildebrand's main focus in these passages is contemplative prayer with God. It suffices to recall that the contemplative attitude is opposed to a future-oriented, practical attitude.<sup>58</sup> Recollection would seem to be separate from the *praxis* of morality, but in fact it is what nourishes our moral life. For Hildebrand, there is a kind of recollection necessary

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<sup>52</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 100–102.

<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 109.

<sup>54</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 107.

<sup>55</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 107; *Die Umgestaltung der Christus*, 81.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 108.

<sup>57</sup> Hildebrand, *AL*, 1–34.

<sup>58</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 113–14; *WP*, 176–184. See [2.4.3: The Role of Reverence in Phenomenology](#), pp. 106–107.

for any deep task.<sup>59</sup> Even in more peripheral tasks we can remain recollected by “a superactual connection to God and with the real center of our being.”<sup>60</sup> It brings us to recognize our unique individuality, our unique value-essences (our “center”). There is an analogue to this contemplative recollection even in natural human love (e.g., spousal love) which “lends wings to our whole existence; [and] is likely to resound with its melody throughout our external occupations.”<sup>61</sup> Only by focusing oneself on a value on the object side in frontal consciousness is one recollected in oneself in lateral consciousness.

Here we can connect recollection to *Eigenleben*. The more intimate forms of love, especially spousal love, have a distinct relation to *Eigenleben* where one gives one’s very subjectivity (*Eigenleben*) to the beloved. Hildebrand notes that if I say to my spouse that I have no concern about being made happy by our union but instead I only want in a purely disinterested way what is good for my spouse, she can conclude I have insulted her.<sup>62</sup> For Hildebrand, proper spousal love involves responding to the beloved because of her intrinsic value, and then making the spouse the condition of one’s own happiness. This and other more intimate forms of love (e.g., sibling love, friendship love) involve “enthroning” the beloved in the lover’s subjectivity (*Eigenleben*).<sup>63</sup> “Giving my heart away to another, my mysterious individual self, is a dimension of self-giving that precisely presupposes and includes a full actualization of my subjectivity (*Eigenleben*).”<sup>64</sup> Yet the response to the beloved is always the main and primary motive, concern for my own happiness is always a secondary and subservient one. For this reason, Hildebrand considers love to be a “super

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<sup>59</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 134.

<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 112.

<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 211–212, 220.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 211–212, 220.

<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 212.

value-response” (*Überwertantwort*), a term that he coins in this work. It is a super value-response that one’s response is not diminished but rather enhanced by the fact that one gives oneself in the very making the beloved the condition of one’s own happiness.<sup>65</sup> It derives its “word” not just from the response to the value of the beloved but also from the personality that the lover “invests” in the self-donation of love.<sup>66</sup>

The value-response of obeying a moral obligation involves both a recollection, a coming to one’s *Eigenleben*, and a transcendence (*Transzendenz*) of it. It involves a kind of recollection to one’s subjectivity. First, “there is the exclusively object directed movement of pure self-gift” to the moral and morally relevant values at issue in the moral obligation for their own sake.<sup>67</sup> This is the moment of transcendence; I go out of myself and respond in the way demanded by the moral obligation. Second, there is a “complimentary movement issuing from the morally relevant good...that enters into me and calls me.”<sup>68</sup> This call to respond is “my most intimate and personal concern; in which I experience the uniqueness of myself. Supreme objectivity and supreme subjectivity (*Eigenleben*) interpenetrate here.”<sup>69</sup> For “it is not just the objective issue which is at stake; I and my salvation are just as much at stake.”<sup>70</sup> The moral obligation that calls me is eminently my *personal* concern (*tua res agitur*). Hildebrand cites Socrates’ famous dictum that it is better *for one* to suffer injustice than commit it.<sup>71</sup> In moral obligation, the objective good that being moral represents for me (esp. in regards to eternal salvation) does not serve as the “main motive of my action,” but rather it “is only the radiation of the majesty and

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<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 78.

<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 77–79, 308.

<sup>67</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 207.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 207.

<sup>69</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 206.

<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 207.

<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 207.

weight of morality...[it] reveals the ultimate seriousness and entirely personal call of moral obligation.”<sup>72</sup>

It should be noted that Hildebrand holds that Christian neighbor-love has a distinct structure and relation to *Eigenleben* compared to other forms of love, in that it is dependent on love of Christ, according to Hildebrand, and refers to a neighbor who is not personally connected to me.<sup>73</sup> While the other loves are engendered directly by the value of the human or divine beloved, neighbor love, although it consists of a value-response to the neighbor as an *imago Dei*, precedes and “anticipates” the neighbor. This is because of its source in holy “substantial” goodness (*Güte*) stemming from love of God and Christ:

With Christian love of neighbor, the *intentio benevolentiae* is not a result of affirming my neighbor in a value-responding way; it is rather an actualization of the goodness dwelling in the soul of the one who loves. Although this goodness can only be actualized in the value-response to my neighbor, it does not arise on the basis of taking delight in him or her. The one who loves another with love of neighbor is good to the other on the basis of the goodness and fundamental attitude of love that reigns in him... This is why the one who loves is never good just to this one person but is ready to be good to any and every neighbor. From this it follows that he cannot love one person and at the same time hate another.<sup>74</sup>

As a result of its basis in holy goodness and not in taking delight in one’s neighbor, neighbor-love has its own distinct relation of “stepping out of” one’s *Eigenleben*. Hildebrand holds that in neighbor-love, in contrast to the other forms of love one’s own

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<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209.

<sup>73</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 266–271.

<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 239.



happiness is not thematic for “my neighbor as my neighbor is not a source of happiness...his well-being, his happiness, his fate do not as such reach into my subjectivity (*Eigenleben*).”<sup>75</sup> In giving bread to this beggar, my own happiness is in no way thematic, unlike in spousal love. “I enter into the subjectivity of the other, yet without that subjectivity becoming a part of what makes up my own world,” for the neighbor is not personally close to me.<sup>76</sup> “I step out of my subjectivity (*Eigenleben*).”<sup>77</sup> For Hildebrand, “this means I turn away from my own concerns and toward the subjectivity (*Eigenleben*) of the other, toward his salvation, his life...without any attention to myself.”<sup>78</sup> I do not dissolve my *Eigenleben*, but I put those concerns to the side. “The type of transcendence here is something unique, it goes in a different direction than in the case of other moral obligations...because of the fact that my own happiness is in no way thematic.”<sup>79</sup> A relation to happiness and salvation does enter into neighbor-love for Hildebrand in a secondary way insofar as for Hildebrand, neighbor-love can only exist at one with *caritas*, divinely infused love of God. Below, when discussing the relation of happiness to morality, I argue that Hildebrand is wrong to not see the possibility of a kind of “enthroning” the neighbor in my subjectivity.

Yet for our purposes in this section, the main point is that both being loving and being morally good recollect me, they bring me back to my subjectivity. This means that there is a special sense of freedom in being morally good. In receiving the call of a moral

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<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209.

<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209.

<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209.

<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209.

<sup>79</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 209–210.

value, especially an obligation, I come to myself and experience the uniqueness of myself. I am freer than if I were dispersed and distracted. I have a greater sense of my freedom.

The recollection, and the freedom that recollection brings, can be thrown into relief when we compare it to dispersion in the subjectively satisfying. The subjectively satisfying refers only to our subjective desires and lacks a true depth of meaning, even when morally legitimate. The subjectively satisfying lures us out of our depths, our *Eigenleben*, and into trivial matters. Such trivial matters, even when in themselves innocuous, can leave us with a “hollow feeling” and feeling “washed out.”<sup>80</sup> It cannot provide a meaningful happiness that pertains to our *Eigenleben*. Further, particularly in concupiscence, we become enslaved to our desires, moved from one pleasure to the other.<sup>81</sup> The subjectively satisfying tends not to bring us to our free spiritual center but rather to dethrone it.<sup>82</sup> The call of value demands a free response but the invitation of the subjectively satisfying invites only satisfaction, it bypasses the will, as I have argued above.<sup>83</sup>

### **6.2.3: Moral Goodness: What’s Love Got To Do With It**

The reader may be wondering at this point why in a dissertation on moral freedom I have made such a long excursus into the subject of love. The reason for this is that loving goodness is actually the theme and culmination of morality. All moral acts and attitudes implicitly refer to love and have a tendency to a “breakthrough” (*Durchbruch*) to love. Without understanding this connection of love and morality, we risk a depersonalizing account of morality, especially with regard to how morality and happiness are connected to each other, which is the subject of the next section.

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<sup>80</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 456.

<sup>82</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> See above at [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 218–219.

In his “‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics” Philip Blosser notes that Scheler, unlike Hildebrand, fails to distinguish between moral and non-moral agency.<sup>84</sup> Recall that for Scheler, a moral value is realized only “on the back” of an act that realizes a higher non-moral value over a lower value.<sup>85</sup> Hildebrand, as noted in Chapter Five, revises this view and accounts for properly moral agency; one ought to respond to the moral value of the act itself, which appears on the side of the object. Now, Blosser notes, once we claim the theme of morality pertains only to certain forms of agency and not to others, e.g., helping a sick person versus balancing a checkbook, the question arises what the unifying theme of morality is. Blosser, taking a page from Robert Sokolowski, holds it is a transactional taking another agent’s good as one’s own.<sup>86</sup> Sokolowski’s formula for a moral act is: “An agent taking the good or bad of another agent as such as his own good in some way.”<sup>87</sup> Blosser suggests that this even applies to moral obligations to oneself, where in the dyadic structure of self-love the “target” of my agency of loving is distinct from the subjective act of self-love.<sup>88</sup> Blosser even holds that this dyadic, transactional structure may apply to obligations to non-personal nature.<sup>89</sup> Sokolowski’s formula seems derived from Kant’s famous Humanity Formulation of the Categorical Imperative: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” 138. I have referred to this critique above at [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), p. 253ff.

<sup>85</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 27.

<sup>86</sup> Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” 138–139; Robert Sokolowski, *Moral Action: A Phenomenological Study* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 152.

<sup>87</sup> Sokolowski, *Moral Action*, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” 139.

<sup>89</sup> Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” 139.

<sup>90</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:429, 54–55; En. Tr., 80.

Wojtyła interprets Kant’s Humanity Formulation of the Categorical Imperative as the negative formulation of a deeper, positive “Personalist Norm”: “the person is a kind of good to which love constitutes the proper and fully mature response.”<sup>91</sup> In his book *True Love*, Seifert notes that it is not hard for a Hildebrandian to appropriate Wojtyła’s logic in terms of the value-response.<sup>92</sup> Love is the only position-taking toward the person that affirms the person as this particular, unique individual.<sup>93</sup> Insofar as every person is in fact a unique precious person, love is the only full and complete response to the very value of the person. A minimum of love, which would be found in neighbor love, is therefore morally required by the very value of each and every person. We find that any ethics based on what is good-in-itself, insofar as it properly recognizes the dignity of the person as unique in every case, must ultimately be an ethics of love.

In so doing, I should note that a Hildebrandian can redeem Kant’s much maligned notion of practical love. Kant famously claimed that since affective “pathological love” cannot be freely engendered by the person, and, therefore, be commanded of him or her, the Biblical commandments to love must refer to a “practical” love which is “beneficence from duty...which lies in the will and not in the propensity of feeling.”<sup>94</sup> Scheler points out a deficiency in Kant’s system insofar as “humanity” refers not to each particular unique person but to our shared reason that gives the moral law.<sup>95</sup> Under this law, Scheler notes, we would be qualitatively identical to each other as moral agents, rather than standing as unique persons. Kant admits as much when he says, “Any respect (*Achtung*) for a person

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<sup>91</sup> Wojtyła, *LR*, 46.

<sup>92</sup> Seifert, *True Love*, 50.

<sup>93</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 78–81.

<sup>94</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:399, 17–18; En. Tr., 55.

<sup>95</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 370–373.

is properly only respect for the law...of which he gives us an example.”<sup>96</sup> The other person as experienced cannot be, for Kant, the source of any unconditional, a priori moral norms. I find the dignity of the human person not by experiencing it as a value on the side of the object but rather as an end that is necessarily given to me as the condition of all ends by pure practical reason. This is the sole end remaining when I have removed all ends given by the inclinations.<sup>97</sup> To reprint Kant’s logic here:

The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way [i.e., as an unconditional end]; so far as it is a subjective principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way consequent on the same rational ground that also holds for me; thus it is at the same time an objective principle from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws of the will.<sup>98</sup>

For Kant it seems that I recognize myself as an unconditional formal end and then I realize that the same logic applies to others. I recognize that the way I am given to myself in pure practical reason and the way others are given to themselves and to me are identical. We all serve as identical examples of the same moral law, for any difference between us could not be given as such in pure practical reason.

For Scheler, this leads to a lack of freedom. Scheler notes that position leads to “heteronomy of the person though a pure logonomy and indeed, the tendency to a complete depersonalization.”<sup>99</sup> One follows pure practical reason rather than responding to this particular unique person, here and now before me. For all the exaggerations of the role of

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<sup>96</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:401n., 20ff; En. Tr., 56ff.

<sup>97</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:429, 54; En. Tr., 79.

<sup>98</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:429, 54–55; En. Tr. 79–80.

<sup>99</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 373.

the heart in Scheler's ethics, it seems to me that he has hit the mark on identifying love as the absolute center point of morality.

Aware of the fickleness of affectivity, both Wojtyła and Kant consider love to be solely (Kant) or primarily (Wojtyła) volitional good will. "Love of persons is properly speaking per se a work of free will."<sup>100</sup> Wojtyła allows that affective fondness for the beloved can count as a sense of love (esp. in sexual love), but at its core love is a volitional affirmation of the beloved person.<sup>101</sup> This is because any morally obligatory love must be freely taken up by the person if it is to be commanded. However, Hildebrand regards love as an affective gift; it can only well up in one's soul outside of one's control.<sup>102</sup> Schwarz argues that there is a way these two divergent conceptions of love can both be correct while still giving a priority to affectivity. "Love is both a matter of feelings and of the will. It is not a question of which of the two it is but rather of the ways in which both play a role."<sup>103</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Four, the will sanctions initially affective love and works to maintain this love through periods of affective dryness during which the love is primarily volitional in character.<sup>104</sup> Both the volitional love and affective love are elements of the same *self-donation* of the person to another. Purely volitional love can be love, but it is experienced as deficient because affective self-gift is a fuller self-gift. Affectivity belongs to the very essence of love as self-gift.

I wish to supplement Schwarz's point by noting that love as self-donation can also start with the "skeleton" will and eventually grow to have affective fullness. Whereas

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<sup>100</sup> Wojtyła, *LR*, 56.

<sup>101</sup> Wojtyła, *LR*, 56.

<sup>102</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 42.

<sup>103</sup> Schwarz, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love," 139.

<sup>104</sup> Schwarz, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love," 140–142.

Hildebrand considers this will to be only a skeleton and not yet love, insofar as this initially volitional love is a will to give oneself *as fully as possible* to the beloved person, I would argue it too is a genuine if affectively deficient love.<sup>105</sup> With this, we see how a “practical” love can be morally obligatory, far beyond mere actions or duties, but it pertains to a real demand to give oneself to all other persons. In this way, a Hildebrandian can redeem Kant’s notion of practical love. Insofar as it is really love, even if a very bare and dry volitional love, it aims at the affective fullness and plenitude that is essential to love as such. It can be concluded from this that love is the ultimate “theme” or center of all morality.

For Hildebrand, every moral act and attitude, such as a bare respect (*Achtung*) for a person, still carries with in it a kind of directionality toward love and, eventually *Güte*. There is an orientation toward this love in every moral value-response. We see this when we consider that any value response involves an actualization of the value-responding center that, in turn, opens up one to love of all things.

Further, any love (and indeed every value-response) has an effect of a “breakthrough” (*Durchbruch*) to the world of values on the lover, though whether this breakthrough reaches moral values depends on the personality and capacity of the lover to be open to those values.<sup>106</sup> For example, in coming to love for the first time a morally mediocre person, who is neither a great moral personality nor in great moral danger, “becomes generally more conscious of values.”<sup>107</sup> For “in loving, I grow in humility because love is a gift and because I experience myself being ‘seized’ by something greater than myself.”<sup>108</sup> I take off “the armor of self-assertion and latent rivalry” that stems from

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<sup>105</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 76–80.

<sup>106</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 312–17.

<sup>107</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 314.

<sup>108</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 313.

pride and concupiscence.<sup>109</sup> Love, and indeed any value-response, has a “liberating” effect in opening one up to the world of moral values and their call, and ultimately to moral freedom.<sup>110</sup>

Hildebrand speaks more of this breakthrough in his *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*. Hildebrand introduces the *virtus unitiva* of values.<sup>111</sup> In the execution of a value-response, say to the moral goodness of Socrates, there is a breakthrough (*Durchbruch*) where the value-responding center is actualized. One becomes aware of the whole world of values.<sup>112</sup> One is more open to the call of values. Simultaneously, egotism falls away. In other words, the moral center of the person is actualized, while pride and concupiscence are, for the moment, silenced. Hildebrand’s position here follows logically from the very nature of an ethics based on what is good-in-itself.

For Hildebrand, in opening myself to a material value I experience a connection of that value to all other values. In this breakthrough to value there is a co-given unification with all others to whom this value addresses its call. There is a “lived, experiential connection with other people (*erlebnismässiges Verbundenwerden mit anderen Personen*),” a recognition of “all other persons at their objective metaphysical location,” i.e., as ordered to the world of values.<sup>113</sup> Values have their own *virtus unitiva*, which is a force (*Kraft*) that serves to unite people in communities.<sup>114</sup> In a moving passage Hildebrand writes:

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<sup>109</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 313.

<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 313.

<sup>111</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 99–107.

<sup>112</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 99.

<sup>113</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 100–101.

<sup>114</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 99.



The person who [experiences the *virtus unitiva*] is really embraced by the “touch” of values and is thereby “opened up” in a loving basic attitude (*in einer liebenden Grundhaltung*), valid, resolved, not only open to others, but rather including them all in his love.<sup>115</sup>

Yet it would be absurd to say that when I execute one moral value-response, I become a universal lover. Every value response is oriented toward that love, but may not itself be love and fall short of love. The *virtus unitiva* and the *Durchbruch* may lead not to full blown love, where the other person as this unique person is thematic, but to looser “love-like position-takings” (*liebeartige Stellungnahmen*), “which contain at least a core (*einen Kern von Liebe*) of love, such as adoration (*Verehrung*), respect (*Achtung*), enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*).”<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand cites Reinach’s *The Apriori Foundations of the Civil Law*, where Reinach introduces the notion of social acts, such as promising, that require a hearer in order to fully be the kind of act that they are.<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand contrasts these social acts with “announced position-takings” (*verlautbarte Stellungnahmen*) such as when I tell someone either by words or a glance that I love or hate him or her.<sup>118</sup> Whereas a promise to return money has an object (returning money) that is distinct from the addressee and the addresser, here I am actively situated *in* my accounted position-taking. These position-takings have an inherent tendency to be felt by the other, a breath that goes out to the other. Yet unlike social acts such as promising, they can exist without being heard by the other, e.g., in a buried love or hatred.<sup>119</sup> When an announced position-taking

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<sup>115</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 101.

<sup>116</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 31–32.

<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 23; Reinach, *AFCL*, 182–188.

<sup>118</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 24–28.

<sup>119</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 25.

is reciprocated in kind, we have an *Ich-du-Berührung* (I-You “touch” or “contact”).<sup>120</sup> Respect is a “love-like” announced position-taking insofar as it affirms the addressee, rather than rejects the addressee as hatred does. Only mutual love-like position-takings achieve a union, whereas mutual hatred stops at the I-you touch.<sup>121</sup>

The difference between affirming, love-like position takings such as *Achtung* and genuine love is that only in love is the addressee given as this unique, precious person, e.g., in contrast to a mere representative of a moral obligation.<sup>122</sup> Yet even in *Achtung*, as in all value-responses, there is a breakthrough to the world of values that, at least implicitly, opens one up to moral love. The breakthrough to the world of values is a felt phenomenological characteristic of any value-response.

This Hildebrandian claim that all moral acts and attitudes involve at least a core of love and implicitly point to that love seems stark. Yet I hold this claim is directly entailed by the very nature of any ethics based on what is good-in-itself. Kant, in fact, follows a similar logic of openness to the good-in-itself. For Kant, to be moral is to affirm what is good in itself and to do that involves rejecting what is only subjectively good and self-love.<sup>123</sup> For Kant a kind of practical love is morally required.<sup>124</sup> I cannot respect one person and hate another. I cannot lie to one person and in so doing still treat humanity as an end and not a mere means, even to save another person.<sup>125</sup> For Kant, I would argue, to do a moral act is to insert oneself in the realm of the good-in-itself. To paraphrase Levinas, the

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<sup>120</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 28.

<sup>121</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 31.

<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand, *MG*, 78–81.

<sup>123</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:74, 200.

<sup>124</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:399, 55.

<sup>125</sup> Immanuel Kant, “On a Supposed Right to Lie,” in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8:425–8:430, 611–615.

Face of the Other opens me to responsibility for *all* Others.<sup>126</sup> This is simply entailed in the logic of any response to the good-in-itself; accepting one is implicitly accepting all.

To put this in Hildebrand's terms, in any moral act or attitude, I actualize, in that moment, a reverent openness to the location of values in general. Hildebrand, who is much less suspicious of affectivity than Levinas and Kant, takes this logic to its stark, affectively potent conclusion. If I help a beggar out of a mere, weak affective respect (*Achtung*) for him, and do not fully recognize him as a unique person, then I do not have full affective love for him. Nonetheless, I affirm him as his value demands, as a person. Were I to fully conform to the *eidos* of this demand, then, as "the person is a kind of good to which love constitutes the proper and fully mature response," I would have full, affective love for him.<sup>127</sup> In affirming this beggar, I am implicitly open to the demand to love him, even if I do not recognize its full implications. An implicit openness to all that is good-in-itself, to all people as beloved, is actually vaguely experienced in the "breakthrough" any moral act or attitude. I am inserted in the realm of the good in itself and directed toward it.

However, there is, of course, a break with Kant in this Hildebrandian logic. For Kant, to respect what is good-in-itself is to respect a formal moral law given by pure practical reason. This is why the Categorical Imperative is restricted to persons, who all share with us pure practical reason. For Hildebrand, by contrast, it is the value of beings given in experience that gives us the moral law. This actually leads Hildebrand to radicalize the Categorical Imperative even further than Wojtyła does. For Hildebrand, all being, because of its autonomy, i.e., its existence in itself and independence from our mind, "is

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<sup>126</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 213.

<sup>127</sup> Wojtyła, *LR*, 46.

never a mere means” for a reverent person.<sup>128</sup> It follows that a kind of love for all people, and in an analogous sense of the term “love” (i.e., desiring for its own sake) for all values, seems to be entailed by Hildebrand’s ethics. One could imagine the paragon of such an ethics being St. Francis, with his unbounded love for all creatures.<sup>129</sup>

Any ethics based on the good-in-itself is bound to be an absolute ethics. But in scaling this up all the way to affective (and with Schwartz’s, Seifert’s, and my amendments, volitional) love, has Hildebrand gone too far? Does not love lead to many immoral acts? Hildebrand fully admits this. It is possible to have natural romantic love for another and for that very reason be jealous of the person who has taken the heart of one’s beloved.<sup>130</sup> There are moral dangers inherent in love, such as egoism for the beloved person and jealousy.<sup>131</sup> The reason for this, according to Hildebrand, is that most of our loves for other persons have as their center the unique beloved person, and do not share the same center as the fundamental moral attitudes or genuine universal neighbor-love and love of God.<sup>132</sup> Only in a love that comes from the same center as reverence, that springs from the moral center of the person, cannot be actualized in tandem with a morally evil or negative act or attitude. For Hildebrand, this love is *caritas*; it is ultimately love all things in God that enables and actualizes the full breakthrough to the world of values.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Hildebrand even follows Kant in absolutely prohibiting a direct lie, not simply because this lie violates the dignity of humanity in general, but also because it violates the very autonomy of being. It treats being as if it were a mere means to our end (though Hildebrand does allow for deliberate misleading another when a person has no right to the truth so long as one does not tell a direct lie). See Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 5–6; “Veracity,” in *AL*, 33.

<sup>129</sup> I see in Hildebrand’s philosophy the seeds for an environmental value ethics based on this radicalization of the Categorical Imperative and his concept of morally relevant values, which would allow for ethical attitudes toward non-personal nature without ascribing to them implausible characteristics such as autonomy in the Kantian sense of the term. I discuss this potential below in [8.1: Avenues for Further Research](#), pp. 406–406.

<sup>130</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 238–239.

<sup>131</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 261–265.

<sup>132</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 236.

<sup>133</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 236.

This is, as mentioned in a footnote in the introduction to this chapter, is quite controversial. Yet even if one were to disagree with Hildebrand on this claim, and claim that there are other ways love can be based in the moral center of the person, the logic of why morality necessarily implies and leads to love as explained above remains valid. A “general direction” toward this breakthrough to universal moral love is present in all forms of love and even every value-response, including all moral acts and attitudes.<sup>134</sup> Insofar as one loves or does a moral act, one has at least some vague intimation of the fundamental moral attitude of goodness. In particular, Hildebrand claims “a faint and distant image of *caritas* is to be found in every natural love.”<sup>135</sup> Even a person who, out of a very shallow reading of Kant, is purely set on duty and respects others out of duty but never loves, in so doing he or she is pointed at least in the direction of universal love, though there is a great distance to be crossed. Necessarily, since the value of the person calls for love, the general moral will implicitly aims at the virtue of *Güte*.

### **6.3: Morality, Happiness, and the Nourishment of Freedom**

The importance of recognizing the connection of love and morality is that without this recognition, an ethics based on the good-in-itself would easily be led to depreciate the connection between self-donation to the morally good and happiness. A depersonalized morality would result, one that might appear as burdensome on freedom. For just as in love we are made happy and ought to will this happiness, so too in morality. So when we recognize the connection of love and morality, we can better appreciate how affectivity enriches personal moral freedom. To do this, I will argue that the happiness of any positive

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<sup>134</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 314.

<sup>135</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 307.

importance can supply energy and strength to the will.<sup>136</sup> This is an account I develop from Alice von Hildebrand, who speaks of how pleasure serves as a “fuel” for seeking further pleasures.<sup>137</sup> Second, I will argue that Hildebrand’s own conception of *Eigenleben* undermines his position that one ought never be motivated by this happiness in moral actions.<sup>138</sup> So long as happiness is a strictly secondary motive vis-à-vis the value-response, it is permissible. Finally, I conclude how both the motivating and nourishing effect of happiness can “intensify” one’s practice of a good (or bad) activity.

### 6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom

Throughout this dissertation, we have seen how Hildebrand continually speaks of “nourishment.” (*Nahrung*) This nourishment can be morally bad, e.g., when he says the idolater has an “impure zeal (*telus amaritudinis*) nourished by pride and concupiscence.”<sup>139</sup> Yet it is also integral to cooperative freedom and to experience of the enhancement of freedom found therein:

The true sanction and disavowal are inner gestures that are possible only as participations in the objective intrinsic rhythm of values. Only in being supported and *nourished* (*genährt*) by the very logos of the values are we able to actualize this deepest word of our freedom.<sup>140</sup>

However, Hildebrand never thematizes this nourishment. So to develop an account of it, I turn to a similar, but unique concept found in an essay on “Hope” by Alice von Hildebrand in *The Art of Living* where she speaks of pleasure and the anticipation of

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<sup>136</sup> I have discussed how value grants one happiness in joy in, joy over, and being gladdened by value above at [5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, Scheler, and Aristotle on the Virtues](#), p. 274. See also, Hildebrand, *NL*, 101–107.

<sup>137</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 61–77.

<sup>138</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>139</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 446.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 345. Italics added.

pleasures as the “fuel” of the person’s search for pleasures.<sup>141</sup> Here she presents a concept definitely influenced by Hildebrand, but this term “fuel” is, to my knowledge, of her own coinage. Alice notes that many are subject to a kind unconscious despair that stems from a life lived for pleasure. Such pleasure “is time-bound,” because “it begins in time, reaches its climax, and declines.”<sup>142</sup> She notes, “It is in principle possible to imagine an eternal succession of pleasures, one rapidly succeeding another; but is inconceivable that one pleasure should be eternal.”<sup>143</sup> As a result, a life centered on pleasure “is a life menaced by despair, for, to quote Kierkegaard again: ‘if the moment is everything, the moment is nothing.’”<sup>144</sup> In the next sentence she introduces the notion of pleasure as a kind of “fuel”: “Every pleasure, small as its duration may be, gives one just enough ‘fuel’ to long for the next pleasure.”<sup>145</sup> She describes in detail what she means by pleasure being a metaphorical fuel: “We long for a particular pleasure; it takes hold of our attention to such an extent that we seem to care for nothing else.”<sup>146</sup> This fuel is linked to enjoyment; “we eagerly anticipate its enjoyment, which, in this moment, seems to become an ‘all.’”<sup>147</sup> This fuel “keeps pushing one forward in a state of restlessness and tension.”<sup>148</sup>

She gives the example of small children who make great sacrifices to get a new toy. But, upon receiving it, they lose interest in the toy within a few days. Nevertheless, they immediately go on to the next pleasure. “There is a deep-set wish within man to trust the power of pleasures, to believe that in the long run they will be capable of yielding to us a

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<sup>141</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 61–77.

<sup>142</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 62.

<sup>143</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 62.

<sup>144</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 62. I cannot locate the quote from Kierkegaard, and Alice does not cite a source in her essay.

<sup>145</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 62–63.

<sup>146</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 63.

<sup>147</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 63.

<sup>148</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 63.

state of delight that can be had for the asking and retained at will.”<sup>149</sup> It seems here anticipated pleasures, i.e., what is subjectively satisfying, functions a “fuel” in that they refer to a desire for happiness. They not only motivate but invigorate, literally give life or “fuel” to, a strenuous effort to obtain this happiness. Alas, the happiness sought turns out to be a transitory, egoist, self-centered happiness deprived of any real meaning.

Egoism is also found in Levinas’ conception of enjoyment as nourishment, but for him it is also integral to the very individuality and subjectivity of the I. Here we will find in Levinas profound insights that I plan to graft onto a Hildebrandian account of the nourishment of positive importance. For Levinas, enjoyment represents a mode of being intrinsic to our very subjectivity and indeed formative of subjectivity. Levinas notes that the individual person is not unique in the way that the Mona Lisa is unique as being the only sample of its type.<sup>150</sup> Leonardo could have made two copies simultaneously. Rather, the “personal life” of the ego, its very subjectivity and individuality, is constituted in and through a “sojourn” of going out into the world and enjoying what is there.<sup>151</sup> In becoming the object of my enjoyment, this sunrise, which is other than me becomes “my energy, my strength.”<sup>152</sup> I am “nourished” by it, and quite literally “invigorated,” i.e., given life, by it.<sup>153</sup> I *live from* (*vivre de*) it, it becomes the very “content” from which I live, the plentitude of my life.<sup>154</sup>

Enjoyment is, for Levinas, an insertion into being and the establishment of my very being as a subject. Without comprehension of objects and enjoyment of them, I would be

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<sup>149</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 63.

<sup>150</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 117.

<sup>151</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>152</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>153</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>154</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 110–111.



menaced by the formless elements, by the “there-is” (*il y a*).<sup>155</sup> For Levinas, if we prescind from all form and objectivity, we find a nothingness which still has a content, the there-is.<sup>156</sup> One remains conscious, but this consciousness becomes impersonal, for one is conscious of nothing. There is no consciousness of otherness or of oneself as an I; there is only an impersonal participation in the there-is. Enjoyment enacts a separation; it enacts my subjectivity in relation to the object that I enjoy.<sup>157</sup> Enjoyment allows me to stand in myself, and for Levinas this is “an independence higher than substantiality.”<sup>158</sup> Like the Scheler of *Formalism*, Levinas seems to hold that substances, qua substance, “only are what they are,” relatively inert objects.<sup>159</sup> Substances are dynamic on the plane of action, as they move from potentiality to actuality, but in enjoyment I can enjoy my very action (i.e., the movement from potentiality) and not just the fulfillment of my being in action.<sup>160</sup> The very *satisfying* of need, and not just its satisfaction, can be an object for enjoyment: “it is the act that remembers its potency.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, it is a dynamic independence higher than substantiality. This, it seems to me, is a novel insight, but it is one that can be incorporated into an account of substantiality for my own purposes here. Insofar as I enjoy myself in my actions, I stand in myself (*sub-stare*) and enact my very substantiality and subjectivity. It is from this independence of enjoyment that the I can go out to the Other.<sup>162</sup>

Yet for Levinas, enjoyment and happiness are inevitably tied to needs; therefore, enjoyment has an inherently egoist structure.<sup>163</sup> In reducing what is other than me to “my

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<sup>155</sup> Levinas, *EE*, 56–64.

<sup>156</sup> Levinas, *EE*, 56–64.

<sup>157</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 130–134.

<sup>158</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 113.

<sup>159</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 113.

<sup>160</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 112–113.

<sup>161</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 113.

<sup>162</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 58–59.

<sup>163</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 110–111.

energy, my strength” I reduce what is other than me to “the same” as me and leave out its otherness.<sup>164</sup> Thus, for Levinas, the investiture of freedom by the Other is a kind of interruption “from without” of my enjoyment. In his writings, Levinas therefore tends to oppose happiness and enjoyment to the investiture of freedom by the Other which gives my freedom its meaning and purpose and which was discussed above in Chapter Three.<sup>165</sup> As I am on my pleasant walk, I notice a beggar. I am called to give up my enjoyment to help him. I can of course ignore this responsibility but doing so testifies to the fact that I am already bound by it.<sup>166</sup> It is the Other who makes any enjoyment possible, since without the Other I would not recognize otherness or objects for enjoyment. But the Other also demands that I give from my enjoyment and even to a certain degree give up my enjoyment. I am called to take the bread I am eating, enjoying, and give it to the Other.<sup>167</sup>

My colleague Sarah Horton, in an insightful article “The Joy of Desire: Understanding Levinas’ Desire of the Other as Gift,” argues that a joy for the Other, which is distinct from egoist, need-based happiness and enjoyment, is consistent with Levinas’ philosophy; although Levinas himself does not discuss this joy.<sup>168</sup> The Other makes it possible for me to be good in an ethical sense, and this is good not just for the Other but also for myself.<sup>169</sup> She notes that for Levinas an interest in goodness is an interest of the

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<sup>164</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>165</sup> See the discussion of investiture above at [3.4.2: Kant’s Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 159–165.

<sup>166</sup> See [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 111–114.

<sup>167</sup> Levinas, *OBBE*, 88.

<sup>168</sup> Sarah Horton, “The Joy of Desire: Understanding Levinas’ Desire of the Other as Gift,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 51, no. 2 (2018): 193–210. Special thanks to Sarah Horton for reviewing another version of this paragraph. Thanks also to Xengwei Xu and others who commented on a modified version of this part of the chapter when I presented it as “Enjoyment and the Investiture of Freedom in Levinas and Hildebrand,” at the Boston College Graduate Philosophy Conference in March 2021.

<sup>169</sup> Horton, “The Joy of Desire,” 199.

self that is not egoist. Further, it is the Other who makes the free subjectivity of enjoyment possible in the first place. As Horton puts it:

Without the Other it would not be meaningful to say that I am individual, for in the complete absence of radical alterity, everything would reduce to my sameness, and there would be no point of comparison that would allow me to consider myself apart from the universal.<sup>170</sup>

In this way, I receive both myself and the world from the Other. As a result, I ought to invite the Other into celebration at this liberation and reception of the world. Such a celebration is inherently communal since it is not possible without the Other.<sup>171</sup> Finally, to accept one's responsibility to the Other without joy, but rather as a burden that one reluctantly takes on, is, Horton notes, a failure to respond properly to the Other. "My reluctance indicates I have not truly given myself to the Other."<sup>172</sup> This joy, in contrast to need-based enjoyment and happiness, is not egoist because it does not reduce the Other to the same. It instead presupposes an a prior ethical relation to the Other, which I joyfully accept rather than spurn.

At this point, we must readdress the serious reservations Levinas has with affectivity, for they form a unique contrast with Hildebrand. We have already touched upon these in Chapter Two, but let us recall them here.<sup>173</sup> For Levinas, an affective *Wertfühlen* "keeps something of the character of comprehension."<sup>174</sup> It implies that I actively constitute the object of my enjoyment. But to say I constitute the Other as Other is precisely to the

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<sup>170</sup> Horton, "The Joy of Desire," 202.

<sup>171</sup> Horton, "The Joy of Desire," 203.

<sup>172</sup> Horton, "The Joy of Desire," 200.

<sup>173</sup> See [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 109–114.

<sup>174</sup> Levinas, *EE*, 88.

lose the Otherness of the Other. This is the basis of Levinas' whole critique of not just affectivity but intentionality in general. Second, strong affective states have a tendency to overwhelm the subject. Again, "[They] put into question not the existence, but the subjectivity of the subject, it prevents the subject from gathering itself up, reacting, being someone."<sup>175</sup> All of these can be summed up in a single concern: affectivity is an activity. And for Levinas, all activity must be prior to passivity to the Other, in a "passivity more passive than any passivity."<sup>176</sup> Thus, an affective joy for the Other is either a contradiction in terms or, at best, a happy happenstance. One could not count on such joy always being present, yet responsibility for the Other is permanent.

I am less optimistic than Horton is that Levinas himself would accept such an affective joy as factoring into the ethical relation. But they are insights that ought to be accepted, nonetheless, and they can be accepted on Hildebrand's premises. Recall that, for Hildebrand, *Wertfühlen*, feeling of value, contains and includes taking-cognizance. For Hildebrand in *Die Idee*, this taking-cognizance excludes all activity; it is, we could say, a "passivity more passive than any passivity."<sup>177</sup> Even later in *What is Philosophy?* where Hildebrand introduces the spiritual going-with as an activity contained within taking-cognizance, this activity is solely in the service of enacting receptivity.<sup>178</sup> For Hildebrand, affectivity cannot, ideally, block the reception of the Other as Other, and recognizes that the Other is always beyond any comprehension. For, even though *Wertfühlen*, has an active, affective experiential content (*Gehalt*), this content is experienced with a reversed, centripetal rather than centrifugal intentionality; it comes to me from the Other.

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<sup>175</sup> Levinas, *EE*, 88.

<sup>176</sup> Levinas, *OBBE*, 37.

<sup>177</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 137.

<sup>178</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 22–24.

Conversely, any affective response of joy for the Other, with its centrifugal intentionality, always comes after and as a response to taking-cognizance of the Other and being moved by the Other. The Other always comes before the response. Thus, for Hildebrand, affectivity in no way impedes the ethical relation, nor is it a mere happy happenstance. It is something that is organically linked with the ethical relation, leading all the way up, in the final analysis, to affective love for each and any Other.

We can now see that, for Hildebrand, there is no need for him to make a distinction between something like Horton's non-need based "joy" and Levinas' need based "enjoyment" and "happiness." These words can be taken as roughly synonymous: enjoyment is the process of coming to take joy in or over something and happiness is constituted in part by that response of joy.<sup>179</sup> Rather, Hildebrand's distinction is between a self-centered happiness, joy, or enjoyment based on the subjectively satisfying and a true joy, happiness, and enjoyment based on value.<sup>180</sup> It is this later happiness that is found in love. Both forms of happiness can grant one energy and strength. In doing a tedious task because one will receive a cookie afterwards or because one is doing it out of love for one's spouse, one will receive a certain energy from either goal. Thus, I define nourishment as the ability of any kind of positive importance to give energy and strength of the will.

Yet the character of this energy and strength is different in kind depending on what kind of happiness it is based on. The avidity of enjoying a good out of concupiscence is qualitatively very distinct from luminous joy in receiving the same good from my beloved. The happiness granted by value is freeing in that it breaks one out of one's narrow

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<sup>179</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 102–114.

<sup>180</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 38–39.

limitations.<sup>181</sup> This is because value has its own inherent meaning, it is a sustenance that is substantial. One conforms with one's heart to the demand of what is other than oneself. One is invigorated, given life and strength of will by the value-laden task at hand. Thus, one becomes freer than one would have been had the value not presented itself to one and had not given one joy. I have more strength and energy and life for the tasks at hand. Not only this, but I experience myself more as a person in relation to the value. I am recollected, brought to myself as the one who *hic et nunc* is called to serve this Other with joy. This joy is a sustenance that substantializes me, I stand more fully in myself. For Hildebrand, I am not just to take this bread out of my mouth and give it to the Other; I am called to give *myself*, my *Eigenleben*, my happiness to the Other. She becomes the condition of my joy (and perhaps I become hers if the love is mutual). I am fed in feeding myself to my beloved. For the Hildebrandian to do what love and morality demands, ultimately to do the Will of God the Father, is a food we do not suspect (NAB: John 4:32).

By contrast, with the subjectively satisfying, even a legitimate happiness is self-centered. It is based on fulfillment of my own subjective desires. To recall Hildebrand's own words "the constant enjoyment of the subjectively satisfying finally throws us back upon our own limitedness, imprisoning us in ourselves."<sup>182</sup> Thus, while the subjectively satisfying can grant one energy and strength of will, "fuel" to use Alice's term, it ultimately leads to boredom.<sup>183</sup> Eventually, one's will will be sapped of its energy and strength.<sup>184</sup> I am de-substantialized, depersonalized for I am not in relation to what is intrinsically important but only to my own desires. Unfortunately, the unsubstantiality of the

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<sup>181</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>182</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>183</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>184</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

nourishment of the subjectively satisfying often leaves one all the more unable to resist the subjectively satisfying. Very much like a piece of chocolate, often our desires for what is subjectively satisfying lend more strength and energy to the will in the short term but deprive us of nourishment later on. And the felt quality of this nourishment is quite distinct. We feel it to be hollow and insubstantial, like a thin, watery, sweet two-hour energy drink that I have instead of a meal.<sup>185</sup> For it lacks the meaningfulness and affective plentitude that only the blissful happiness endowed by value can bring.<sup>186</sup> None of this is to suggest that it is always wrong to have the nourishment of the legitimately subjectively satisfying. An occasional dessert is fine and can even provide a kind of needed rest to sustain a moral effort. But it should not become our sole or even primary nourishment. We require a much more substantial bread of life.

Finally, value has a certain advantage over the subjectively satisfying in that it can nourish the person even apart from happiness. I would not have any energy or motivation to do an act that gives me no satisfaction from the perspective of the subjectively satisfying, since the whole point of such an act is to receive my own subjective satisfaction. A value however can invigorate one, give one energy and strength, even in the absence of value-based happiness. Suppose Aiko finds herself in a position where she is under an obligation to save a drowning rival. Because of a deep-seated fear of water and a strong involuntary and disavowed dislike of her rival, she finds no joy, no enjoyment, no happiness in doing so. Nevertheless, the recognition that the action is good-in-itself gives her the energy and the strength to do the task.

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<sup>185</sup> Hildebrand, *TC*, 141; *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>186</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 38.

### 6.3.2: *Eudaimonia* and Motivation Reconsidered

With these considerations, the question arises whether happiness can function as a motive in a moral act. Hildebrand, like Kant, holds that the good-in-itself is the *sole* motive of the moral act even as late as *Moralia*.<sup>187</sup> Seifert and Crosby have cast some doubt on this restriction, turning Hildebrand's argument against altruism with respect to love to counter Hildebrand's own position of forbidding any motivation from the perspective of one's own objective good in morality.<sup>188</sup> In his *Moral Action*, which focuses on the motives for doing a morally obligatory action (*Handlung*), Seifert asks if happiness can function 1) as a motive for the action or 2) if it is only a superabundant consequence of being moral (Hildebrand's position). Contained in the latter are three relations of morality to happiness: 1) the self-forgetful happiness that comes from having happiness *not* be the primary motive but by being directed to the morally good state of affairs to be realized, 2) the happiness bestowed on the moral person by a moral authority as a reward for being morally good (e.g., God's salvation), and 3) the happiness intrinsic to being morally good itself, the deep inner peace it brings. This third happiness radiates from the good person's inner harmony (e.g., one who has *Güte*), and can it be enhanced by the loves he or she has partly as a result of being morally good. Seifert notes that the happiness that comes from value and morality need not factor as a motive for a particular act, e.g., I jump to save a person without any consciousness that this will contribute to my happiness.<sup>189</sup>

However, Seifert notes that if someone says "I am motivated only by moral goodness, there is no striving present directed toward my own happiness," this answer is

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<sup>187</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 183.

<sup>188</sup> John F. Crosby, "Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand's Personalism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (September 1, 2017): 687–702; Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6, Kindle book.

<sup>189</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.



artificial.<sup>190</sup> Further, it is actually immoral insofar as we have a genuine moral duty to strive for our own objective happiness, i.e., our highest objective good for ourselves, out of a proper moral self-love.<sup>191</sup> Hildebrand speaks of a duty to promote our own well-being, but even here it is the value of doing so and not the well-being as an objective good that serves as the sole allowable motive.<sup>192</sup> For Seifert, Hildebrand is mistaken and in fact his own argument about how love is depersonalized if one does not care for one's *Eigenleben* can be turned to show Hildebrand and Kant as holding a rather depersonalized view of morality. When I take no consideration of my own happiness, I in fact fail to give myself to what is morally good. Just as the longing for the happiness of union with the beloved in no way contradicts the value-response of love for the beloved, a longing for union with moral goodness and the happiness intrinsic to that union need not detract from the value-response to moral goodness. Indeed, this secondary motivation of happiness grows out of and is even required by the very desire to be united with moral goodness. A kind of *intentio unionis* would be lacking in the very surrender of the person if this motivation is lacking. Seifert notes that in a way happiness is even more thematic in morality than it is in human love, prescinding from Christian *agape*.<sup>193</sup> For while love can be frustrated and unreciprocated, there is an essential link to happiness and moral goodness in even the most tragic circumstances. As Seifert puts it, “there is no tragic or unhappy moral goodness” as there is tragic love.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

<sup>191</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

<sup>192</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 111–116.

<sup>193</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

<sup>194</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

Hildebrand, in *Moralia* partly admits this point.<sup>195</sup> A longing for our own happiness is necessary but it should never function as a motive of our concrete actions. We are depersonalized if we do not have this striving for happiness, but Hildebrand holds there is no moral value in having it. “This longing for happiness is the bearer of a value; even if it is not a moral one. If a person completely lacked this longing he would no longer be a person.”<sup>196</sup> He is again quite severely Kantian on this mark. In *Moral Action*, Seifert implicitly counters this claim by noting that it is not impermissible to have this motive for happiness be a strictly *secondary* motive; so long as happiness does not become the *primary* motive.<sup>197</sup> It would be both wrong and futile to make happiness the primary motive rather than the value responded to. Doing so would subvert the value basis for that happiness. It would turn the moral act into a mere means for happiness. But at the very least a general longing for this happiness is morally required, and it can, but need not always, function as a motive in particular moral actions. Without it, Seifert holds, and I concur, there would be a depersonalization of morality just as with love. One fails to fully recognize oneself as a person and give oneself as a person in acting morally. Moral goodness would likely appear as burdensome in this regard.

Following Seifert, Crosby notes there is a one-sided tendency in Hildebrand’s works to describe self-love as a kind of natural, instinctual, non-moral solidarity with the self.<sup>198</sup> Hildebrand planned to develop an account of proper self-love but did not carry out this resolve in his works.<sup>199</sup> As a result, very rarely does Hildebrand discuss what Crosby

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<sup>195</sup> Hildebrand cites Seifert’s work in a few places in *Moralia*, however, given that Seifert’s work came out only a few months prior to Hildebrand’s death, it is possible he missed the objection Seifert had raised to his own position.

<sup>196</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 114. Translation my own.

<sup>197</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

<sup>198</sup> Crosby, “Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Personalism,” 702.

<sup>199</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 205ff.

terms the “eudaimonistic” (but not eudaemonist) virtues, such as temperance, which aim at one’s own objective good.<sup>200</sup> Crosby attempts to draw an outline of this virtue of proper self-love based on the concept of *Eigenleben*. Crosby notes Hildebrand is aware that it would be a mistake to consider self-love as identical to love for others, as a pure value-response to my own value.<sup>201</sup> This would be a wrongly objectivistic view because *Eigenleben* represents an independent concern for one’s own objective good as experienced from a first person point of view.<sup>202</sup> Crosby notes that Hildebrand, in his view, unnecessarily restricts cooperative freedom to only value-responses, just as he holds that the value-response is the only motive of a moral act.<sup>203</sup> In contrast, Crosby holds there can be a kind of sanction to one’s concern for what is objectively good for oneself.

Consider a person, James, who is intemperate and reads Plato’s terrifying description of a disordered soul in *Republic* Book IX.<sup>204</sup> He may become aware that there is a need to have “care for his soul” as Socrates admonishes. So he sanctions whatever temperate tendencies he has and works to develop the virtue. There is a response to a virtue, but this virtue consists primarily in care for one’s own objective good. Here, the motive of one’s own good is less “secondary” than it is in Seifert’s morally obligatory acts. I wish to add that this analysis can be extended to a eudaimonistic aspect present in all virtues, including those that are not what Crosby calls eudaimonistic virtues. Suppose I become aware not only of the great value of *Güte* but also its supreme goodness *for me*. It is not

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<sup>200</sup> Crosby, “Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Personalism,” 692.

<sup>201</sup> Crosby, “Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Personalism,” 692.

<sup>202</sup> This might function as an objection to Sokolowski’s and Blosser’s position that self-love has a dyadic structure insofar as I relate to myself as the target of my self-love. See Blosser, “The ‘Cape Horn’ of Scheler’s Ethics,” 138–139; Robert Sokolowski, *Moral Action*, 152. discuss their position above at [6.2.3: Moral Goodness: What’s Love Got To Do With It](#), pp. 304–305.

<sup>203</sup> Crosby, “Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Personalism,” 693.

<sup>204</sup> Crosby, “Developing Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Personalism,” 700.

wrong to seek this virtue as a good for me, even though it is primarily concerned with love for others. Here, the aspect of good for me is secondary as it can only be obtained by having the value of the other be the primary motive. To seek the other as a means to my own *Güte* would subvert that very virtue. Yet all virtues can be at least secondarily (equi-primordially in the case of the eudaimonistic virtues) sought as objective goods for one.

I think Crosby's and Seifert's corrections to Hildebrand should also prompt a re-evaluation of Hildebrand's conception of neighbor love as well as self-love.<sup>205</sup> Hildebrand is right to see that this happiness is not typically thematic in morality and in neighbor love, the moral significance of the moral objective or neighbor is the primary theme. Yet I suspect he goes too far in claiming that the neighbor as neighbor does not enter my subjectivity and cannot be a source of happiness for me.<sup>206</sup> A certain kind of "enthronement" of morality and the particular other person I am responding to can, but need not, take place.<sup>207</sup> This can enhance the moral act, making it something of a super-value-response of its own. To give a personal example, I have noticed many cashiers at Boston College who were unfailingly polite, even cheerful when I went to their counters. Yet there was one in particular, whose name I do not have permission to give, who seemed genuinely happy to see and serve each person. There was a certain "breath of goodness" in every service she provided. You got that the sense even in that brief interaction that she viewed each person as a unique, irreducible person. For a moment, you were the condition of her happiness, enthroned as it were in the simple moral action of being served. This

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<sup>205</sup> See above at [6.2.2: Eigenleben and Recollection in Love and Morality](#) pp. 301–303.

<sup>206</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 208–210.

<sup>207</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 208–210.

suggests that neighbor love can be a great source of radiating happiness, which is proper to the virtue of *Güte*.<sup>208</sup>

In essence, Seifert and Crosby shift the focus of Hildebrand's and Kant's critique of Aristotle's *eudaimonism*.<sup>209</sup> For Aristotle, everything a person does is done for the sake of happiness, *eudaimonia*. Kant tends to interpret this *eudaimonia* as a feeling of the agreeableness of life, and Hildebrand interprets it as the greatest objective good for the person.<sup>210</sup> Now for Aristotle, this *eudaimonia* is in part constituted by virtuous acts that are done because they are noble (*kalon*), e.g., a courageous hoplite who sacrifices his life for his city acts for the sake of the noble.<sup>211</sup> This gives an ambiguous character to Aristotle's ethics. On one hand, *kalon* could be interpreted as meaning "good-in-itself." Aristotle does affirm that virtues are good in themselves as well as for *eudaimonia*.<sup>212</sup> This might allow for a motivation by what is primarily good in itself and only secondarily for *eudaimonia*. Yet such a reading of Aristotle is hard to square with his claim that all acts are done for *eudaimonia*, which is equivalent to the human good as such.<sup>213</sup> At the very least, Aristotle seems to make *eudaimonia* the primary motive of all acts. Further, it may be that noble acts and virtues are noble only because they contribute to *eudaimonia*. Sacrificing one's life contributes to the *eudaimonia* of a city and thus to one's own *eudaimonia*. Even on the interpretation where virtuous acts are done because they are good-in-themselves and not

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<sup>208</sup> Special thanks to the other participants in the Hildebrand Project Reading Group on *The Nature of Love* running from February 18-March 11, led by Professor Derek Jeffreys. In this group we had many discussions on whether Hildebrand unnecessarily restricts the role of *Eigenleben* in neighbor love.

<sup>209</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, I.7, 1097b20, 11.

<sup>210</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 156; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 56–64.

<sup>211</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, III.7, 1115b13, 50.

<sup>212</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, I.12, 1101b30, 19.

<sup>213</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, I.7, 1097b20, 11.

solely for *eudaimonia*, Aristotle still comes down to the eudaimonist position that *eudaimonia* is the primary or at least co-equal motive of all acts.

This is unacceptable for Kant and Hildebrand, for whom the moral act's being good-in-itself ought to be the *sole* motive. Seifert and Crosby agree that *eudaimonia* can never be the *primary* motive nor a co-equal motive (except for the specifically eudaimonistic virtues and acts). This is in part because for them and for Hildebrand value being the primary motive is constitutive of *eudaimonia*. However, Seifert and Crosby allow for *eudaimonia* to function as a secondary motive in some cases. This enables a proper concern for *eudaimonia* as a motive of ethical action without one being forced into a eudaimonism that renders it the sole or primary motive.

This is all important for freedom because when happiness is a conscious motive, it can increase one's willingness and readiness to do a task. Many of us find duty burdensome, but love, in part due to the happiness we expect to derive from it, fills us with anticipation. In essence, having it be a conscious motive increases the nourishing power of value. It frees one in giving one a readiness of will. Kant recognizes something of this when he recognizes that happiness makes morality easier, and, thus, it is a duty to promote our own happiness in line with morality and to cultivate a joyful heart.<sup>214</sup> When we do what is morally good, anticipating a joyful heart, and when we are even motivated in part by this, we find a freedom and personalization of morality that might otherwise be lacking. However, one must be cautious. At times the desire for happiness can glide into the primary motive and the morally good becomes a mere means to happiness, cutting us off not only from being morally good but from that very happiness that comes from being moral.

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<sup>214</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:399, 18; *En. Tr.*, 54; *MS*, 6:484, 135; *MM*, 597.

Further, it is not necessary in all moral acts that happiness function as a motive. Upon seeing a man drowning, I have no time to think of how happy I might be from saving him. I am totally directed just to the value of saving him with no thought to my own happiness. Yet these do not detract from the salutary power of anticipating happiness.

### 6.3.3: Happiness as an Intensifier of Activities

At this point, a Hildebrandian account of freedom can incorporate a key insight of Aristotle: the pleasure (*hedonē*) in an activity intensifies that activity.<sup>215</sup> For Aristotle, pleasure is an activity (*energeia*) that supervenes on and completes another activity. “The best activity is that of the best conditioned organ in relation to the finest of its objects. And this activity will be the most complete and pleasant.”<sup>216</sup> In terms of motivation, pleasure is an end in itself that is indissolubly united with the activity it supervenes on. “Pleasure completes the activity...as an end which supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age.”<sup>217</sup> Pleasure serves to intensify the activity it supervenes on. “For an activity is intensified by its proper pleasure, since each class of things is better judged of and brought to precision by those who engage in the activity with pleasure.”<sup>218</sup> If one finds geometry pleasant, one will be better able to discern difficult theorems. Further “activities are hindered by pleasures arising from other sources,” e.g., those that love flute playing won’t be able to listen to philosophical arguments when they hear flute playing.<sup>219</sup> Finally, the more one takes pleasure in a certain activity, the more likely one is to repeat it. It is for this

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<sup>215</sup> Much of what I write here has been inspired by reading Professor Gary Gurtler, S.J.’s article “The Activity of Happiness in Aristotle’s Ethics.” In that article, Gurtler makes the case that happiness, *eudaimonia*, is paradigmatically an activity that accompanies the activity of contemplation, just as pleasure accompanies the activity of an organ with regard to its best object. See Gary Gurtler, “The Activity of Happiness in Aristotle’s Ethics,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 56, no. 4 (2003): 801–834.

<sup>216</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.4, 1174b19–20, 188.

<sup>217</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.4, 1174b33, 189.

<sup>218</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.5, 1175a30, 190.

<sup>219</sup> Aristotle, *NE*, X.5, 1175b5, 190.

reason that cultivating one's affectivity is so important, so that one takes pleasure in the right activities and repeats them and avoids the wrong activities and avoids repeating them unto vice.

Hildebrand would contend that "pleasure" is the wrong word here. The happiness that a value engenders is a spiritual (*geistig*), intentional, meaningful happiness completely distinct not in matter of degree but in kind from a bodily pleasure, so it is unhelpful to clump them together by the word *hedonē*.<sup>220</sup> It would be more appropriate to say that happiness or, even better, joy supervenes on and is the superabundant consequence of virtue and contemplation. This indeed does seem to be Aristotle's intention even though he uses the term "pleasure." Once this is acknowledged, the fact that joy in an activity intensifies the activity can be appropriated by a Hildebrandian. First, as Hildebrand himself notes, the one who takes delight in the metaphysical beauty of a moral value or a person has the value given with greater prominence than would otherwise be the case.<sup>221</sup> "The metaphysical beauty which is their irradiation does not interfere with the themacity of these values; on the contrary, it gives them particular prominence."<sup>222</sup> This is parallel to how, for Aristotle, the one who takes pleasure in an activity grasps more what is relevant to that activity; it has a greater prominence for one. Second, happiness increases one's likelihood to repeat the activity. For good or ill it is a "fuel," to borrow Alice von Hildebrand's term, that fuels further pursuit of the activity. Finally, as a fuel it gives one "energy and strength" to do that activity. It is quite literally a nourishment that invigorates one's efforts.

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<sup>220</sup> Hildebrand, *HE*, 22–25.

<sup>221</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 85.

<sup>222</sup> Hildebrand, *Aesthetics I*, 86.



#### 6.4: The Enhancement of Freedom in the Morally Good

At last, we are in a position to articulate how being morally good makes one to be freer, in both the strongest case one who has the moral virtue and attitude of flowing *Güte*, as well as more broadly in any case of doing any morally good act or having any moral virtue. We have seen several relations of value to the free self that explain this enhancement of freedom: 1) the support of the will by importance, which was discussed in Chapters Three and Four; 2) the recollection to one's subjectivity; 3) the nourishment of the will; and 4) the intensification of the activity in this chapter.<sup>223</sup> To review the first relation, the support of moral value "liberates freedom from the arbitrary." Recall that in the case of Augustine's theft, the arbitrary character of being subjectively satisfying is, as it were, painted by the teenage Augustine on the theft from nothing but his own will.<sup>224</sup> This attempt of the will to found itself is necessarily empty and self-subversive. I argued above in Chapters Three and Four that the morally evil will, in a certain sense, lacks support. Only when there is an implicit tie to value, supplied by reverence, is the will saved from arbitrariness.

Yet beyond this preventive role, the support of value also has a positive role. It comes in degrees corresponding to the seriousness (*Ernst*) and demand (*Forderung*) of the call (*fordert*) of the moral value. Crosby notes that there is in fact a great moral freedom precisely in and through having my will founded by the *Ernst* and *Forderung* of the moral obligation, in direct contrast to Scheler's depreciation of moral obligation.<sup>225</sup> There is a recollecting power in moral obligation, where I, in Hildebrand's terms, "experience the

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<sup>223</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 305. See [3.4.1: Freedom and/vs Arbitrariness](#), pp. 155–159 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 210–220.

<sup>224</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II.vi(9)–II.x(18), 28–34.

<sup>225</sup> Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 108–114. See above at [5.3.2: Scheler vs. Hildebrand on Ought and Obligation](#), pp. 254–258.

uniqueness of myself” as the person called *hic et nunc* to do this moral task.<sup>226</sup> Rather than being determined by the clear insight into the value, a position Scheler falls into, one determines oneself to follow the moral call.<sup>227</sup> This is enabled by the “distance” that reverence and veracity demand we take, ensuring that we have suitably grasped the moral call at hand rather than just be borne along by it without a deep actualization of our free spiritual center.<sup>228</sup>

An important relation can be found here that applies to any *fiat* of the will. Recall from Chapter Four that in *Sittlichkeit* Hildebrand distinguishes between a mere assent (*Zustimmung*) and a sanction, which must be founded in the seriousness (*Ernst*) and demand (*Forderung*) that a value makes on the will.<sup>229</sup> I would argue, again in a more Augustinian mode, that a will founded on a moral obligation has, all other things being equal, a greater volitional character than one not founded on an obligation; there is a greater seriousness and a more insistent demand. There is a greater sense of the will having a meaningful object, and this grants us a certain felt enhancement of freedom. I stand at the opposite end from an arbitrary will that fails to be supported and loses its own volitional character as a position taking. In having the full insight that one not only ideally ought to help this wounded person but that one is morally obligated to do so, there is a much greater sense of what founds and supports one’s freedom.<sup>230</sup>

This freedom increases as the moral value of the obligation increases, e.g., in saving a man versus fulfilling a rather insignificant promise to return a borrowed book. The

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<sup>226</sup> Crosby, *Selfhood*, 102–6.

<sup>227</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192; Crosby, “Person and Obligation,” 110.

<sup>228</sup> Hildebrand, “Reverence,” in *AL*, 1–8; “Veracity,” in *AL*, 27–34.

<sup>229</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509, 553. See [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), p. 199 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 210–220.

<sup>230</sup> See the discussion of Hildebrand and Scheler on ideal and normative oughts, [5.3.2: Scheler vs. Hildebrand on Ought and Obligation](#), pp. 254–258.

difference between fulfilling an insignificant promise to keep an appointment and an obligatory saving another's life could be compared to joining in the whistling of a tune versus joining in a great orchestra. The concerting with the world of values is greater here. However, at times the *Ernst* can overtake the specifically obligatory character of the act so that greater moral freedom is experienced in doing a meritorious act over its obligatory counterpart. A heroic but non-obligatory risking of one's life to save a drowning person brings a greater sense of freedom than the obligatory saving of a drowning person at no risk to one's life.

What we see here is a unique sense of freedom: freedom as the freedom to do something substantial, something meaningful. It is closely connected to the previous relations of recollection, nourishment, and intensification. Support already forms something of a nourishment of freedom insofar the support of the motive gives freedom its ability to be, its *raison d'être*. Even in the absence of any happiness, even if I dread having to fulfill a moral command, realizing that this is what is good-in-itself and demanded of me can lend strength and energy to my will. Kant himself mentions how the sense of dignity and purpose that we get from doing what is morally right can lend a certain incentive to do what duty demands, even against strong contrary inclinations.<sup>231</sup> Yet when happiness is present, whether consciously intended as a motive or even if as a mere superabundant effect of being moral, it serves to highlight the value being responded to. But it does this more so if it is a conscious motive. It gives one energy and strength to carry out the task. Again, this corresponds largely in accord with how high the value is on the modified *ordo amoris*.<sup>232</sup> A trivial promise nourishes the will far less than rescuing a drowning person.

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<sup>231</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:422, 46; En. Tr. 74.

<sup>232</sup> See [5.3.4: The Hildebrandian, Modified Ordo Amoris](#), p. 265.

The virtue of Aristotle's account relative to Hildebrand's account of virtue is that he shows how happiness can function as a motive. It functions as an intensifier which makes the person more alert, more ready, and more willing to do the activity.

Further, as Aristotle noted, pleasure, or, better, joy and happiness in doing a virtuous activity makes one more likely to do it in the future. Hildebrand and Kant both fear that this might lead to a kind of habituation that renders an initially free conscious action merely voluntary.<sup>233</sup> Yet this cannot be so, at least ideally, with value-responses that constitute the virtues. For values always call for (*fordert*) a response from the free spiritual center of the person, in a "sovereign but non-intrusive, sober manner."<sup>234</sup> As Denise gives generously and begins to find a joyful heart in so doing, this joy increases her desire to give the value-response.<sup>235</sup> She can only have this joy if the action is done so freely and thus really has moral value. Were this generous giving to sink into a merely customary habitual "generosity" that is more voluntary rather than fully free or conscious, she would fail to properly respond to the value of generosity and, as a result, experience a diminution of joy. Rather, values themselves call for one to develop a *habitus* of joyful response to them, i.e., to develop the virtues.<sup>236</sup>

To close, it should be noted that this intensifying, nourishing effect of happiness can occur regardless of whether happiness is consciously willed as a motive or not. I argued above that a degree of enthronement can be found in neighbor-love and morality, but here it is far less thematic than in the more intimate forms of love. As far as the subjective

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<sup>233</sup> Kant, *MM*, 6:383; 515–516; 6:407, 535; Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 378–395.

<sup>234</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>235</sup> Kant, *R*, 6:24n, 27ff; En. Tr. 25ff. See [5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, Scheler, and Aristotle on the Virtues](#), pp. 269, 273–275.

<sup>236</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 378–396.

motivation of the lover goes, the beloved's good can be the sole conscious motive, though it is not untoward to make one's own happiness a strictly secondary motive. When it is the sole theme, and the lover is wholly focused on the beloved and at this time the lover has no concern for his or her own happiness and *Eigenleben*, there can still be an unconscious enthronement of the beloved as the condition of one's happiness. Without realizing it, I smile, I take delight in the neighbor being fed, or being well served. The beloved may realize before even I do that he has become, for the moment, the condition of my happiness, enthroned in my *Eigenleben*. When one's own happiness is a conscious motive, this can further heighten its ability to intensify an activity.

### **6.5: Conclusion: Freedom as Goodness**

Stepping back, we can see how only in and through an investigation of love is moral freedom fully revealed, and how a Hildebrandian account of freedom can do justice to this moral freedom. This account in essence, combines what is best in both Kant and Scheler. Kant rightly emphasizes the role of the will. Only when my will is based on what is good-in-itself is it formally free from the arbitrariness of willing what is only subjectively good for me—the inclinations for Kant, the subjectively satisfying for Hildebrand. Yet Kant and even to a degree Hildebrand depersonalize morality when they hold that the motive of a moral act must be only what is good-in-itself. Hildebrand's own analysis of the self-donation of love shows that this is faulty understanding of self-donation, for I give myself more to what is good-in-itself when it is the very condition of my happiness. Scheler shows a deep insight when he sees a great moral freedom in an overflowing *Gefühlszustand* of loving happiness and goodness, which Hildebrand captures in his notion of *Güte*. But Scheler overreacts to Kant when he opposes this to obligation and bases it on a

subordination of the will to affectivity. It is instead in the self-donation of will and heart, sanctioned by cooperative freedom, that we find the very height of freedom.

To summarize the findings of this chapter, in any moral act, one becomes more free in that one does what is meaningful, there is a support to one's will, it is not insubstantial or trivial. One becomes more free in that value brings us back to our subjectivity as person, our *Eigenleben*. One becomes more free in that one is nourished, the will is given energy and strength from the heart. To will what morality either obliges or proposes as meritorious, i.e., what stands at the top of the modified *ordo amoris*, is the basis for true freedom.<sup>237</sup> It is a food for our very freedom we often do not suspect, to conform our will to what is morally good, and, ultimately for Hildebrand, do the will of God (NAB: John 4:23).

And as one progresses to virtue, one's freedom is enhanced by the intensification of one's attention to what morality demands and the intensification of one's readiness to do it. I hold that we find here a powerful account of moral freedom. This freedom is not just a bare formal autonomy of the will resisting the inclinations but rather an affectively rich freedom nourished by the heart. It is the freedom promised in the breakthrough to the world of values where one is, at least implicitly, oriented toward the realization of loving all things, *Güte*. However, our task is not yet complete. If there is a felt enhancement of freedom in being morally good, there are times when the same seems to be true of being morally evil. To consciously actualize my will and put myself into my *Schadenfreude* can seem even more freeing and nourishing than the hard work of disavowing that *Schadenfreude*. In the ideal case of a person who has fully actualized *Güte*, this temptation does not appear, but then does this mean that this person is in fact ignorant of the

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<sup>237</sup> See [5.3.4: The Hildebrandian, Modified Ordo Amoris](#), pp. 264–266.

enhancement of freedom in wrongdoing? Thus, to fully understand how freedom is in fact liberated only by the morally good and lessened by moral evil, we must turn in the next chapter to examine the relationship of freedom to moral evil.

## **CHAPTER 7: THE SUBVERSION OF FREEDOM AND ITS BIAS FOR THE MORALLY GOOD**

### **7.1: Introduction**

In the previous chapter, we looked at the enhancement of freedom in the ideal case of the one who possesses the fundamental moral attitude of goodness, which is the very culmination of the general will to be morally good. Now it must be shown that moral wrongdoing subverts freedom. With these established, it will be shown that personal freedom has a bias toward the morally good, in that being moral makes one freer and being immoral lessens freedom.

Here, there are two pitfalls to be avoided. Freedom involves a positive freedom-for self-determination, to be one's own master, and do what is "good," i.e., positively important. Yet it also involves a negative freedom from restraint and to do what one wants.<sup>1</sup> One way of reconciling freedom and morality, which Crosby calls intellectualism, overemphasizes the positive aspect of freedom to the detriment of the negative aspect.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, it ends up reducing freedom to following the clear insight of the mind or reason. Intellectualism claims that if one had a perfectly clear insight into the morally good, one would be determined to will it. Yet here the intellectualist does not find the bias of freedom in favor of morality but rather that morality would render freedom determined by the good. In the next section of this chapter, I will show that Hildebrand avoids this by what Crosby calls our fundamental freedom to knowingly choose between either good or evil.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this chapter, and indeed the whole dissertation, was inspired by Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction between the positive freedom of self-mastery and the negative freedom of freedom from restraint. However, I use the term "positive freedom" in a somewhat different sense than Berlin does. See Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty." See also the discussion of Berlin in the [INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING FREEDOM AND MORALITY](#), p. 10ff.

<sup>2</sup> Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 98.

<sup>3</sup> Crosby, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Fundamental Freedom of Persons," 194–220.



However, the other extreme is to define freedom solely in a negative way as freedom from restraint. Doing so is perhaps even more perilous to freedom than intellectualism. In a short chapter titled “Freedom and Arbitrariness” in his *Trojan Horse in the City of God* (first published in English in 1967) Hildebrand sees that if this negative conception of freedom were the full story of freedom, freedom would be arbitrariness, and it would be opposed to any genuine value and to the truth.<sup>4</sup> Pride and concupiscence have only to gain from such a conception of freedom.

To make the case for the bias of freedom, I show how doing what is morally wrong subverts freedom in both Hildebrand’s own analysis and my own, more Augustinian but still Hildebrandian analysis. Thus, in the third and fourth section of this chapter, I will turn to examine the relationship of concupiscence and pride to freedom. I will show that pride and concupiscence do actualize freedom and can even grant a partial enhancement of certain aspects of freedom. Yet both, I would argue, but paradigmatically concupiscence, annul freedom in that the person is enslaved to his or her desires, and is able only to will whatever he or she happens to find subjectively satisfying. Both, but paradigmatically pride, vitiate the “volitional character” (*willensmäßige Charakter*) of the *fiat*.<sup>5</sup> In the fifth section, I will argue along with Hildebrand that freedom can function as a compromise or idol. When the promotion of freedom becomes the sole or primary denominator of morality, it in effect serves as a false substitute for morality. In functioning as a substitute for morality, freedom itself becomes falsified, to say nothing of morality. For Hildebrand and myself, freedom is only found in free submission to the truth.

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<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106–109.

<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 552.

The penultimate section will focus on the bias of freedom in the morally unconscious person, the morally discontinuous person, and, finally, the morally struggling person.<sup>6</sup> Only the last type, along with the virtuous person, has the moral consciousness necessary to experience fully the bias of freedom. But the other two can indirectly grasp it by means of the nourishing effect value has on one's moral life. Only in freely giving one's *fiat* to do good does one not only avoid the subversion of freedom in pride and concupiscence, but also find freedom enhanced, recollected, nourished by the morally good.

Finally, the last section argues that the proper combination of positive and negative freedom can be found only by recognizing the bias of freedom. While Kant attempts to reconcile morality and freedom by practically identifying them in autonomy, Hildebrand does better justice to what I call the "heteronomous" character of not just morality, but also of freedom. When Kant identifies personal and moral freedom with self-legislation, he necessarily elides the "distance" between the will that submits to the moral law, the reason that gives the moral law, and the moral law itself. He therefore neglects the true role of the will, which is to submit and donate the person to the truth.

## **7.2: Fundamental Freedom**

Any account of freedom that privileges freedom for the good, as my Hildebrandian account does, can be liable to fall into a kind of determinism by the mind and by the good. We have seen in previous chapters that freedom and the will are inherently oriented toward what is good, i.e., positively important. It is very easy to conclude from this that if one fully knows what is best to do, one will inevitably will to do it. Socrates, for instance, saw no reason

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<sup>6</sup> These five types of people were introduced above at [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), pp. 244–247.

why a person would choose against what he or she knows to be best. He thus concluded that all wrongdoing is the result of ignorance. Crosby has argued that Scheler falls into a similar position.<sup>7</sup> Recall that Scheler claims that whenever an insight into a value is “totally adequate and ideally perfect, it determines willing unequivocally, without any factor or compulsion or necessitation that might come between insight and willing.”<sup>8</sup> For Scheler, the fact that a value is to be willed depends on it being given as higher than alternatives in the affective *ordo amoris* of the person. “Hence, whenever we choose an end founded in a lower value, there must exist a deception of preferring.”<sup>9</sup>

There are several problems with such an intellectualist position. First, it contradicts the plain experience we have of choosing what we know to be wrong both knowingly and willingly. Cajthaml and Vorhánka adapt an example Hildebrand gives in his *Ethics*.<sup>10</sup> Suppose Edmund is tempted to go to a party where a lot of cake will be served instead of following an obligation to visit his sick mother-in-law. He chooses the former over the latter, knowing full well that doing so is wrong. Second, Crosby points out that Scheler makes the strong claim that insight does not just necessitate willing but actually engenders it outright in the quotes provided in the previous paragraph.<sup>11</sup> If Scheler is correct, then a perfect insight into a value does not enhance but actually annuls freedom. The freedom of

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<sup>7</sup> Crosby, “Person and Obligation,” 98.

<sup>8</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192. Scheler’s position that values can directly engender the will was mentioned above in several places. See esp. [3.3.2: Scheler and vs Hildebrand on the Will](#), pp. 135–142 and [5.3.2: Scheler vs. Hildebrand on Ought and Obligation](#), p. 255.

<sup>9</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192. The only exception Scheler gives is where one with a reformed *ordo amoris* is conscious that a value she used to prefer is a lower value but nevertheless out of habit and passion she continues to choose that lower value. This exception however does ultimately detract from Scheler’s fundamentally intellectualist position that, all other things being equal, insight into value is both necessary and sufficient to engender willing that value. See Spader, *Scheler’s Ethical Personalism*, 260; Max Scheler, “Repentance and Rebirth,” in *OEM*, 35–65.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Cajthaml and Vlastimil Vohánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 94–96. This example of a person who deliberately chooses what is wrong was already presented above at [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), 74–76.

<sup>11</sup> Crosby, “Person and Obligation,” 98ff.

the person, the will of the person, and the person him- or herself are as it were bypassed. Crosby notes that for Scheler the actions of the person who has perfect insight into a value:

Are necessarily engendered by the felt values; the motivating power of the values passes through him and terminates in the action; it does not pause and challenge him to determine himself by preforming those actions.<sup>12</sup>

There is a deep truth in such an intellectualist position. For Hildebrand, one who is fully virtuous will upon having a deep *Wertfühlen* of the value at hand, inevitably will do what is morally good. To recall our example from Chapter Three, Sally, upon seeing a beggar, is so moved by the sight that she cannot but will to help and feed him the pastry.<sup>13</sup> However, this is because her love for the beggar already contains a free commitment to the morally good. Her will and her heart are so set on the morally good, so that she could not dream of doing otherwise. The value does not engender her act, rather *she* does so immediately upon feeling the value of doing so.

Crosby notes how Hildebrand avoids Scheler's thesis by means of our "fundamental freedom" to choose the perspective of value or that of the subjectively satisfying.<sup>14</sup> We can choose either the moral good, i.e., value, or something that is objectively evil, e.g., *Schadenfreude*, because it is "good" in a solely subjective way, is subjectively satisfying. In *Ethics*, Hildebrand notes humans are free to choose their ends in

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<sup>12</sup> Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 110. Crosby notes that Wojtyła makes similar critiques of Scheler. See Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Will in the Analysis of the Ethical Act," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, *Catholic Thought from Lublin*, Vol. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 9; Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from Act in Ethics," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, *Catholic Thought from Lublin*, Vol. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 39.

<sup>13</sup> See above at [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 149–150.

<sup>14</sup> Crosby, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Fundamental Freedom of Persons," 194–220. Fundamental freedom is discussed briefly above at [4.6.3: Freedom of Choice, Decision, and Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 227–230.

that they can decide under which aspect to view the good, either as subjectively satisfying, objectively good for me, and value.<sup>15</sup> What is crucial here is Hildebrand's recognition of different types of importance and his notion of engenderment. The recognition of different types of importance allows Hildebrand to maintain that it is not possible to choose something one knows to be lesser good over a higher good, but only provided one is considering both goods along the same dimension. If I am focused on value, and in the middle of creating a great and valuable work of art, I am faced with a moral call, I will inevitably choose the higher value of following that moral call over the lower aesthetic value of the artwork. For if I were to continue with the artwork, I would in fact abandon the perspective of value for the subjectively satisfying. Yet along the different dimensions of subjective satisfaction and value, an objectively lower value or even a disvalue can be more subjectively satisfying than a higher value. Further, in opposition to Scheler, Hildebrand maintains that the will is engendered only by the person in an act distinct from the feeling of value, even if this will immediately follows upon the feeling, as with Sally above. It is not necessarily engendered by even a univocal insight of the mind. The good, no matter how great it may be, cannot engender the will of its own accord; the person must make his or her decision and contribution, his or her free *fiat*.

Crosby recognizes that this is how Hildebrand is able to explain the problem of *akrasia* without having an explanatory recourse to ignorance.<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand can claim that we can willingly and knowingly choose what is wrong because we can view the wrong as "good" in a different sense from how it is wrong. Edmund can choose to not help his mother-in-law despite being fully aware of his call to do so, because he has chosen to view

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<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 317–324.

<sup>16</sup> Crosby, "Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Fundamental Freedom of Persons," 194–220.

the situation not from the perspective of value but rather from the perspective of the subjectively satisfying. Cajthaml and Vorhánka note that, for Hildebrand, *akrasia* is possible only in the conflict of two different levels of freedom: the freedom to take a basic attitude toward the world of values and the freedom to engender a particular action.<sup>17</sup> To translate this to Crosby's terms, fundamental freedom is actualized on the level of basic stances and attitudes, whether I adopt and sanction pride, concupiscence, or reverence. It is also actualized on the level of willing particular actions, sometimes in contrast to our general attitude; though willing a particular morally good or bad action always, at the same time, represents an actualization of the moral center that corresponds to that action. Turning to Hildebrand's five types of coexistence of moral good and evil, Cajthaml and Vorhánka note that one who is either morally unconscious, discontinuous, dominated by pride or concupiscence, or subject to a compromise or idol is unable to experience the clash of viewpoints implicit in *akrasia*.<sup>18</sup> Such people do not fall out of weakness but of a much more basic lack in their basic attitude. Only the morally struggling person who, on the whole, has a general will to be morally good can experience this clash and fall out of weakness.

The existence of these two levels allows Hildebrand to say that some people do necessarily will whatever appears to them morally good, i.e., in the case of a virtuous person or a good angel.<sup>19</sup> Upon seeing the beggar, Sally cannot but will to help him. She may not even be tempted not to do so. Or suppose the archangel Gabriel is commanded by God to announce to Mary that she is to bear the Christ and, having a perfectly holy will, he

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<sup>17</sup> Cajthaml and Vorhánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Cajthaml and Vorhánka, *The Moral Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand*, 107–112.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 325–326. For these five types of people in whom the moral and immoral centers coexist, see above at [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), pp. 244–247.

unhesitatingly does so. But this is because Gabriel's and Sally's fundamental moral attitude of reverence has been consciously and freely sanctioned by their wills. In the particular situation, each makes a new decision in favor of the good action that flows necessarily from the first, more basic decision embodied in the superactual attitude. For the Hildebrandian, freedom can never be determined other than by its own free commitment to good or evil, as seen just above with Sally and Gabriel. No matter how clear, how adequate, how ideally perfect the insight into the value is, its motivating power stops at the will to receive the free *fiat*. In essence, intellectualism fails by missing the true function of the will, to give what only it can give, the person's *fiat*.

### **7.3: Concupiscence and the Annulment of Freedom**

If a virtuous person can freely but univocally will value, is the same not true of a vicious person univocally willing the subjectively satisfying? Does vice offer freedom like virtue? Hildebrand's answer is negative. Yet to understand this, we must recognize that vice does make a false promise of such freedom. Here, it serves to recall the four different ways in which the morally good enhances freedom, as pseudo-parallels of all four can be found in the pursuit of the subjectively satisfying. They are 1) the "support" of the will by importance, 2) the recollection to one's own subjectivity, 3) the "nourishment" of being given energy and strength by the motivating importance, and 4) the "intensification" of virtuous or vicious activities as a result of the "fuel" of pleasure or joy that positive importance gives one.<sup>20</sup> There is, further, the cognitive and affective element of whether the person can see and feel moral values or is made blind to them by pride and concupiscence.<sup>21</sup> In the first subsection, I explore Hildebrand's detailed analysis of

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<sup>20</sup> See [6.4: The Enhancement of Freedom in the Morally Good](#), pp. 334–339.

<sup>21</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–473

concupiscence in his *Ethics* and my reasons for agreeing with it. In the second subsection, I explore the relationship of concupiscence to freedom. Concupiscence itself prompts a person to define freedom as the absence of all restraints and the ability to do what one wants (i.e., negative freedom). However, it actually leads to what I term the “annulment” of freedom. It leads to a kind of determinism of the will by one’s desires.

### 7.3.1: Essential Features of Concupiscence

Recall that the two immoral centers are the two basic evil stances, pride and concupiscence. Pride refers to *being* in a superior position, which is subjectively satisfying. Concupiscence refers to *having* subjectively satisfying goods.<sup>22</sup> Since all evil acts come from willing what is subjectively satisfying, it follows that all evil acts come from one or the other moral center. However, in a moment we will see that pride is in fact embodied in every act that comes from concupiscence.

Hildebrand opens the chapter on concupiscence in *Ethics* by examining persons who are completely dominated by the value-blind and value-indifferent attitude of concupiscence. They are those whose “approach to the world and to life is dominated exclusively by the interest in drawing lust out of every situation.”<sup>23</sup> Echoing the discussion of total value blindness in *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand states, “the way in which they superactually look at being, and in which they approach every concrete situation, is dominated by how much pleasure it can give them.”<sup>24</sup> These people are “indifferent to the important in itself...and they treat them [values] as we would treat superstitions.”<sup>25</sup> This indifference is not a mere absence of the reverent, value-responsive attitude but a “positive

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<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>23</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 455.

<sup>24</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 455.

<sup>25</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 518–520; *Ethics*, 455.



indifference” toward values.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, values are always already indirectly given to one’s basic attitude or stance, and this indirect givenness makes the person of concupiscence, though he is blind to values, uneasy.<sup>27</sup>

Yet pride is contained within concupiscence. Ordination to values is part of the nature of being a person. As a result, the person always has some position vis-à-vis the world of value and its “location” (*Ort*), being either open or closed.<sup>28</sup> I would argue that we see here that even the indifference of concupiscence toward values involves a subconscious hostility to them. “An immanent position toward the world of values must in one way or another be taken,” and thus, “in the man who seems to be unaware of the existence of moral good and evil, there is to be found an immanent gesture of pushing this world aside.”<sup>29</sup> In this way we can see that “concupiscence can never exclusively dominate man; it must always be supported by an element of pride.”<sup>30</sup> This connection of concupiscence to pride makes sense, as when I want to *have* an illegitimate subjectively satisfying good, I also, at the same time, want to *be* in a subjectively satisfying position. Namely, I want to be the one who has this good even though I should not have it. Thus, for Hildebrand, citing Augustine, pride is the root of all moral evil.<sup>31</sup>

Kant, I argue, recognizes this connection between what Hildebrand calls pride and concupiscence. For Kant, all evil stems from the inclinations and the pleasure we feel in fulfilling them, which corresponds to Hildebrand’s concupiscence.<sup>32</sup> And yet in violating the moral law in favor of pleasure, we fall to self-love, which Kant defines as “the

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<sup>26</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 456.

<sup>27</sup> See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522.

<sup>29</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 457.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 457.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 465 qtd. in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>32</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:74, 200

propensity to make oneself as having the subjective determining grounds of *Willkür* into the objective determining ground of the will.”<sup>33</sup> This self-love corresponds to Hildebrand’s pride. I act, in a certain way, as if I were the sole author of what I can and cannot do, as if I were God.

Hildebrand distinguishes different dimensions of concupiscence. Concupiscence can lead to many evil attitudes that are typical of it: impurity, greed, drunkenness, larceny, covetousness, or, more innocently, a sensationalist curiosity (*Neugier*) or seeking of thrills.<sup>34</sup> These are dynamic attitudes. However, laziness, (*Trägheit*, usually translated as “inertia”) is also tied to concupiscence, from mere bodily laziness, to shunning all work, to “the deeper spiritual laziness of the man who avoids any spiritual *elan*, all recollection, and shuns any gaze into the depth of his soul.”<sup>35</sup> These attitudes have a more passive character. Both, however, appear freeing to the concupiscent person. “Finally, a most typical and much meaner manifestation of concupiscence is when we relish letting ourselves go, when we oppose all self-control, when we flout all demands of dignity.”<sup>36</sup> In the German translation of *Ethics*, this manifestation of concupiscence is evocatively given the term “*Sichgehenlassen*,” literally letting oneself go or self-indulgence.<sup>37</sup>

Hildebrand also distinguishes three different types of concupiscent persons. First, there is a hard, passionate, and ruthless concupiscence such as found in father Karamazov.<sup>38</sup> Second, “the vegetative, phlegmatic type in whom concupiscence has the character of a heavy enslavement to the agreeable.”<sup>39</sup> Finally, the soft type where

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<sup>33</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:74, 200.

<sup>34</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 458.

<sup>35</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 458.

<sup>36</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 461.

<sup>37</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethik*, 449.

<sup>38</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 462.

<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 462.

concupiscence manifests itself not in a passionate craving nor laziness but rather in a hypersensitivity to one's own personal concern.<sup>40</sup> All three are not only egocentric but focused specifically on the agreeable.

The existence of these types of concupiscence, apart from their apparentness when we consider real or fictional cases of concupiscent people, makes logical sense. In concupiscence, I desire subjectively satisfying goods, and this lends a kind of dynamism to my will to seek those goods. We see here what I called in Chapter Six the nourishment of the subjectively satisfying.<sup>41</sup> Yet we also find refraining from effort, particularly moral effort, a subjectively satisfying good or attitude. It gives us more time to enjoy what we desire. In either case, there is the indirect givenness of the world of values and their demands, which haunts concupiscence. In particular, the demands of self-control are eminently opposed to concupiscence. Hence there is a desire to shirk all these demands and let ourselves go, glide into our concupiscence. This, of course, has important ramifications for how such a person experiences freedom.

### **7.3.2: The Annulment of Freedom**

Hildebrand points out that concupiscence brings with it a particular conception of freedom that organically grows out of it. The concupiscent person opposes freedom to the superstition of the morally good. To quote Hildebrand:

His concupiscent craving for the 'emancipated' subjectively satisfying entails an immanent direction of his will to ignore the world of morality...A typical manifestation of concupiscence is the attitude that refuses the yoke of law and

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<sup>40</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 462.

<sup>41</sup> See [6.3.1: Enjoyment and the Nourishment of Freedom](#), pp. 323–324.

order, as well as the desire to be able to continually yield to our likings and moods, the pseudo-freedom of the Bohemian.<sup>42</sup>

I interpret this “pseudo-freedom” to be what I called above negative freedom: freedom from all restrictions and freedom to do whatever one wants. Rules and restrictions that limit our pursuit of the subjectively satisfying come to be seen as infringements on our wants and desires and, therefore, on our freedom. To investigate the relationship of concupiscence to freedom, we will consider again the case of Kathy who willingly gives into her *Schadenfreude* at the suffering of a rival who fell into the mud out of concupiscence.<sup>43</sup> In addition to the pseudo sanction of her *Schadenfreude*, suppose there is an additional actualization of her freedom of action and activity. She pushes her rival back in the mud as he gets up so she can continue to laugh at his misfortune.

It would be easy to say that she gives into her passions and desires, surrendering away her will, and thereby she subverts her freedom, and leave it at that. Such an analysis is not wrong, but it covers over the fact that there is even here a kind of actualization and even a felt enhancement of freedom.<sup>44</sup> She willingly sanctions, gives her *fiat* to, the *Schadenfreude*, and she experiences herself doing so. Her will to sanction is not arbitrary in the sense of being unmotivated, but rather is motivated by a quite intelligible feeling of pleasure. There is something like recollection here, she comes to herself, and she recognizes her ability to sanction her *Schadenfreude* and to will to act. The pleasure she experiences and further pleasure she anticipates serve as “fuel” and “nourishment” for her

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<sup>42</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 458.

<sup>43</sup> See [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), p. 186–187 and [4.6.4: Indirect Freedom](#), p. 232.

<sup>44</sup> Special thanks to Professor John Crosby for pointing out to me the importance of doing justice to the genuine actualization of freedom even in wrongdoing. Philosophers are often so eager to show that wrongdoing enslaves that they skip over this aspect of our freedom and therefore miss many features of the very enslavement they are investigating.

freedom and they intensify the activity of enjoying the rival's misfortune. They give her energy and strength. Moreover, this is not solely due to the passion, rather the fact that she *wills* it can be an additional source of satisfaction and enjoyment for concupiscence. In giving in to desire, she may lose consciousness of her own will. Yet she may, alternatively, also become more conscious of her own will in distinction to her desires precisely in continuing to sanction her envious joy and taking pleasure in not only doing it but in doing it out of her own free will.

However, the pseudo-freedom and happiness of concupiscence mask the poverty of its egoism. The cooperative moment of freedom is missing, both in the case of cooperative freedom proper (sanctioning her *Schadenfreude*) and in her freedom to do action (pushing the rival into the mud).<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand notes that the sanction of a concupiscent person to *Schadenfreude* "is in no way an overcoming of moral unconsciousness...but on the contrary has the character of an obstinate spasm...a voluntary self-imprisonment."<sup>46</sup> Such an identification of oneself with *Schadenfreude* is "far from being a manifestation of sovereign independence from our nature, [it] is in reality a complete yielding to the trends of our nature."<sup>47</sup> This person is like Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, who "expressly and freely flings himself away."<sup>48</sup> Nor does her conscious *fiat* to her concupiscence transcend the accidental character of giving in to her nature. Were the rival her friend, she would fail to have *Schadenfreude*, or at least not as much of it. This is because concupiscence imposes a blunt value-blindness. Recall that value-blindness is

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<sup>45</sup> See [4.6.1: Freedom of Action and Activity](#), pp. 221–224 for the main discussion of freedom of action.

<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 342.

caused by a subconscious being-given-over (*Hingegebensein*) to pride or concupiscence.<sup>49</sup> This is a deeper being given over to concupiscence, rather than a voluntary surrender (*Hingabe*) to it out of weakness in a particular action.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Hildebrand states:

In the very depths of their soul, they have delivered themselves to concupiscence.

This must not be understood in the sense of a decision that issues from a full use of their freedom but in the sense of a failure to make use of freedom. This decision is, rather, a gliding into concupiscence, a yielding to it, but they had the freedom to avoid this surrender. These persons have become slaves to concupiscence.<sup>51</sup>

We find here a particularly clear case of what I term the “annulment” of freedom. This annulment is proper to any pursuit of the subjectively satisfying not regulated by a general will to be morally good. Hildebrand claims that a value “speaks to us from above, and at a sober distance.”<sup>52</sup> By contrast, “the attraction of the subjectively satisfying...tends to dethrone our free spiritual center.”<sup>53</sup> The person subject to concupiscence is no longer in charge of him or herself by his or her own free allowance. To quote Oscar Wilde, “I was no longer lord of myself. I was no longer captain of my soul, and I did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me.”<sup>54</sup> In concupiscence, the subjectively satisfying typically calls not for a free response of the will or a sanctioned response of the heart, but rather appeals to our desires (*Begehren*), from which the German term Hildebrand uses for concupiscence (*Begehrlichkeit*) gets its name. Concupiscence defines our freedom as

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<sup>49</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509. See [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), p. 244.

<sup>50</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 509.

<sup>51</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 456.

<sup>52</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41. See [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 166–174, and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 218–219.

<sup>53</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40–41.

<sup>54</sup> Oscar Wilde, “*De Profundis*,” oscarwilde.com Accessed Aug 25, 2021. <https://oscarwilde.com/de-profundis/>.

freedom to do whatever one wants, but what one wants is inevitably determined by one's nature and desires. Even the satisfaction that Kathy takes in using her will to sanction her *Schadenfreude* comes from her desires. Without desire, she would have nothing to will.<sup>55</sup> The appeal of the subjectively satisfying, then, bypasses our will to appeal directly to our passions, desires, instincts, and urges. Therefore, it has a sub-personal character; it tends to dethrone our personal freedom.

Nor does the nourishment of pleasure live up to its advertisement. While a certain enjoyment is possible, this cannot be a value-responsive joy, nor can one be affected by values. "The constant enjoyment of the merely subjectively satisfying finally throws us back upon our own limitedness, imprisoning us with ourselves."<sup>56</sup> The result is boredom. Hildebrand cites the prologue to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, where the eponymous protagonist, tired of the orgies of Venusberg, is "longing to break the circle of a life that affords one pleasure after another. He would prefer a noble suffering to this imprisonment."<sup>57</sup> This is because the subjectively satisfying leads to no real transcendence but only back to the self. It has in itself no objective validity or meaningfulness. The happiness of the merely subjectively satisfying lacks sustenance because it lacks substance.

Before closing this section, I wish to note that concupiscence necessarily "annuls" freedom in such a way as to lead to a de facto determinist or compatibilist mentality. In Chapter Three, I carefully distinguished between willing proper, which is always

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<sup>55</sup> C.S. Lewis makes this same point forcefully in his *The Abolition of Man* "Everything except the *sic volo, sic jubeo* has been explained away. But what never claimed objectivity can never be destroyed by subjectivism...When all that says 'it is good' [i.e., 'it has value'] has been debunked, what says 'I want' remains. It cannot be exploded or 'seen through' because it never had any pretensions." See Clive Staples Lewis "The Abolition of Man" in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 723.

<sup>56</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

engendered *by* the person, and desires which are engendered *in* the person outside that person's direct control.<sup>58</sup> A person who has a sanctioned concupiscent attitude need not lose this distinction between willing and desire. This person can still recognize that he or she remains the one who *wills* to give him- or herself over to the promptings of one's urges or desires. However, for concupiscence, while the distinction between will and desire can be operative, it ends up having little practical import. The concupiscent person who consciously and freely gives into her *Schadenfreude* and says, "I *want* to see my enemy suffer," lacks a sense of "distance" between his or her willings and his or her desires. Such a person sees no reason for desires to not immediately transfer over into conscious willings. This person can consider no other motive for acting. As Kant recognized, for such a person the will is essentially considered to be totally heteronomous with regard to the agreeable quality of potential motives.<sup>59</sup> Such a conception of the will inevitably leads to a kind of hedonistic determinism, the strongest tug of pleasure or of pain will inevitably move the will to give its *fiat*. Indeed, a certain compatibilism could be established where the person would freely but deterministically choose to pursue what is considered to be the greatest pleasures and avoid the greatest pains. For we have here a reverse of the error of the intellectualists: whereas the intellectualists see the will as determined by a hierarchy of values and the insight of the mind, the person dominated by concupiscence sees the will as determined by desire for the subjectively satisfying.

This is decidedly *not* to say persons who have concupiscence are in fact helplessly enslaved to their desires. Insofar as their acts are free, they have moral responsibility for them. Nor is it to claim that the position of free will determinism or compatibilism is always

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<sup>58</sup> See [3.3.4: The Ambiguity of "Want": Hildebrand in Dialogue with Harry Frankfurt](#), pp. 151–154.

<sup>59</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:441, 69; En. Tr. 59.



the result of concupiscence. But it is to say that anyone who is subject to concupiscence, no matter how much they may claim to be a free will libertarian, will, in their concrete living, act on and believe in a false determinist compatibilist conception of freedom. They have fallen into this mistaken conception of freedom due to their concupiscence, which is their own free attitude, and perhaps not without a secret desire that it be true so as to remove them from guilt.

#### **7.4: Pride and the Vitiating of Freedom**

We saw above that even the value-indifference of concupiscence contains something of the value-hostility proper to pride. Yet they are distinct. The concupiscent person's life is ordered around the pursuit of pleasure whereas pride seeks self-glory. "Concupiscence refers to a having; pride to a being."<sup>60</sup> We saw the rationale for this above.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in the first subsection, I explore Hildebrand's analysis of different types and dimensions of pride. In the second subsection, I argue that pride leads to what I call the "vitiating" of freedom in that it subverts the very intentionality and ordination of freedom to the good. It inverts what I have called the "cooperative moment" of freedom. In so doing, pride leads to its own form of the annulment of freedom.

##### **7.4.1: Types and Dimensions of Pride**

In the chapter in *Ethics* on pride (*Hochmut*, also "arrogance," "highness"), Hildebrand describes four paradigmatic types of pride: satanic pride (*satanischer Hochmut*), the pride of self-glorification by values (*Selbstverherrlichung*, lit. "self lordship"), vanity (*Eitelkeit*,

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<sup>60</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

<sup>61</sup> See above at [7.3.1: Essential Features of Concupiscence](#), pp. 350–351.

“emptiness,” “conceit”), and haughtiness (*Stolz*, “conceit,” “being proud”).<sup>62</sup> I give the essential features and rationales for holding that each type of pride exists below.

Satanic pride, which contains all the dimensions of pride in general, is, according to Hildebrand, found in Lucifer, the Biblical Cain, Dostoevsky’s Rakitin, and Shakespeare’s Iago.<sup>63</sup> Its object is “metaphysical grandeur and metaphysical lordship.”<sup>64</sup> This person is able to perceive the metaphysical lordship and “throne” of values, but is blind to their true value nature.<sup>65</sup> For this person, “every evil action is done for the sake of evil,” because what is objectively evil has become “good” in the sense of subjectively satisfying for this person.<sup>66</sup> The archword of this pride says to God, “That I may be and Thou shalt not be.”<sup>67</sup> This person seeks to dethrone values, replacing kindness with cruelty, morality with *ressentiment*, etc. Further, this person has a rebellious conception of freedom: “He abhors all submission, all obedience. *Non serviam* (I will not serve) is the second archword of satanic pride.”<sup>68</sup>

The possibility of this pride can be derived from the very nature of Hildebrand’s value-ethics. It is inspired by Scheler’s account of *Ressentiment*. For Scheler, in preferring values are given as hierarchically ordered, and if I believe that some higher values are out of reach, I can be tempted to dethrone them, to deny their very value nature.<sup>69</sup> For Scheler, *Ressentiment* perverts the rules of preference “until what was ‘evil’ appears ‘good.’”<sup>70</sup> I

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<sup>62</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, Chapter 35 “Pride,” 465–76; *Ethik*, 35. Kapitel “Der Hochmut,” 455–466.

<sup>63</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 467.

<sup>64</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 467.

<sup>65</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 467.

<sup>66</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 467.

<sup>67</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 467.

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 468.

<sup>69</sup> Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 61. See the brief discussion of Scheler’s *Ressentiment* above at [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), pp. 242–243.

<sup>70</sup> Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 61.

want to pull down the world to my level and be on top of it. I hate the other because he is good and holy (and I am not). Of course, Hildebrand's notion is distinct, given his introduction of the subjectively satisfying. For Hildebrand, *Hochmut* is when I desire to dethrone values, and ultimately God, so that I can take their place. I do not grasp them as values, but rather as metaphysically powerful threats to my lordship. The fact that the possibility of this pride flows directly out of Hildebrand's value-ethics can be seen in the fact that the earliest mention of it is found in *Die Idee*, prior to his own conversion to Catholicism.<sup>71</sup>

The second type is the proud person, above all the Pharisee, "who draws his consciousness of grandeur from values and perfections that he either believes he possesses or aspires to possess."<sup>72</sup> Scheler tends to identify this as the only morally serious pride.<sup>73</sup> It is where one deliberately looks at one's own values on the back of one's acts. This person does not seek to dethrone values, but rather "adorn" him- or herself with them.<sup>74</sup> Still, "He is incapable of any response to value since he considers values only as means for his own grandeur."<sup>75</sup> This person too is still blind to the true nature of values, only grasping their metaphysical power without grasping their value-nature. This pride has a static dimension of glorification in values already thought to be possessed and a dynamic dimension of craving the acquisition of new values.<sup>76</sup> There are three stages to this self-glorification. The first is unconsciousness of a value "on the back" of one's acts, which is inherently fatal for the possession of moral and religious values and risky even for lower values such as

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<sup>71</sup> Hildebrand, *DI*, 167.

<sup>72</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 468.

<sup>73</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 25.

<sup>74</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 468.

<sup>75</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 469.

<sup>76</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 469.

intellectual or artistic values.<sup>77</sup> The second is taking delight in one's own possession of this value.<sup>78</sup> The third is "the specific self-glorification, the incense that he offers his own grandeur."<sup>79</sup>

The vain person is distinguished from the typical proud person in that vanity is essentially static rather than dynamic. Scheler views vanity as not a form of pride, but rather a ridiculous and mostly harmless flaw of focusing on one's low-ranking physical features, compared to the Pharisee's focus on his own goodness.<sup>80</sup> However, for Hildebrand, and I would concur, the basic structure of all pride is here: I want to be in a subjectively satisfying position. It is characterized by "the pseudo-harmony of self-satisfaction...by his naïve and ridiculous self-centeredness."<sup>81</sup> Though this person can recognize values and execute (tainted) responses to values "they never play an important role in his life, since he is absorbed by his own perfection."<sup>82</sup> This perfection (e.g., physical beauty), to the extent that it actually exists, is an objective good for the person and perhaps even a value, but in this case the person apprehends the perfection primarily as subjectively satisfying.

Vanity has an affinity with concupiscence in that it leads more to value-indifference than to value-hostility. Hildebrand claims that vanity "is, so to speak, the representative of concupiscence in the realm of pride. It results from a certain combination of pride and concupiscence."<sup>83</sup> Related to vanity is one who is directed not at values but exterior power

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<sup>77</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 470. For the discussion of Scheler and Hildebrand notion of values being on the back of one's own acts and why humility prevents us from being conscious of them, see [5.3.1: Can We Intend Moral Values?](#), pp. 251–254 and [5.4.2: The Constitutive Fundamental Moral Attitudes](#) pp. 281–283.

<sup>78</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 470.

<sup>79</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 470.

<sup>80</sup> Scheler, *RV*, 26.

<sup>81</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 471.

<sup>82</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 471.

<sup>83</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 471.

and influence over people. This person bluntly overlooks values and their metaphysical power, regarding them, much as the concupiscent person does, as a superstition.<sup>84</sup> Only when moral ideas become a threat to temporal lordship does he oppose them. Unlike vanity proper, this pride has a dynamic rather than static character. Like vanity, it has an affinity with concupiscence, and it imposes a similar value blindness caused by indifference to values.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, we have haughtiness, which is a dimension present in all pride, especially satanic pride. Considered by itself, “it displays itself in the refusal to serve any other human person.”<sup>86</sup> This person need not aim at either an exterior or metaphysical lordship. Rather “he idolizes his own individual position of mastery or his independence; he shuns the admission of any weakness or any dependence.”<sup>87</sup> This should not be confused with the virtue of self-reliance, where one is oriented to an objectively good measure of independence. This person is oriented to self-reliance to the point of rejecting any dependence on others, in effect renouncing his or her creaturehood, because doing so is subjectively satisfying. This person “wants to be undisturbed in the consciousness of his autonomy and autarchy.”<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, Hildebrand holds that “obeying the moral law to a certain extent does not seem to him a weakness or a diminution of his autarchy and virile independence.”<sup>89</sup> Such a person can understand the importance-in-itself of duty, insofar as it has a legal character.<sup>90</sup> To follow one’s duty implies a minimal submission that does not

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<sup>84</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 472.

<sup>85</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 473.

<sup>86</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 473.

<sup>87</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 473.

<sup>88</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474.

<sup>89</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474.

<sup>90</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474.

wound this haughty pride. Indeed, it can serve as fuel for it. This haughtiness doesn't impose complete value-blindness, but it does frustrate the complete understanding of values. It frustrates especially "the understanding of the intrinsic beauty and goodness of moral values...Every value that seems to the haughty man incompatible with his virile strength and self-affirmation."<sup>91</sup> Any admission of a fault is incompatible with this haughtiness. Shakespeare's Coriolanus, regards being moved by his mother's pleas "an unpardonable moral defect."<sup>92</sup> For, "this is the pride of the Stoic who speaks, in the words that Horace puts into his mouth, "*Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae* (If the world should collapse in ruins about him, struck by its fragments he would remain fearless)."<sup>93</sup>

Hildebrand is making a not-so-subtle implicit reference to Kant here, which we will cover in the last section.<sup>94</sup> For now, we should note that, while Kant does see the connection between what Hildebrand calls pride and concupiscence, as seen above, in so doing he misses the unique character of pride.<sup>95</sup> For Kant all moral evil is the result of sensibility, the inclinations, and the pleasure of satisfying them. Remove the inclinations from the will and you would have an untempted, holy will that would necessarily conform to the moral law. For Hildebrand, by contrast, pride without sensibility is eminently conceivable. Hildebrand quotes Augustine to this effect in *Ethics*: "the head and origin of all evil is pride which reigns without flesh in the devil."<sup>96</sup> For Hildebrand, and especially for my own, more Augustinian account of freedom, the essence of pride is a certain willfulness. It is willing,

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<sup>91</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474.

<sup>92</sup> Horace, *Odes*, III, 3–7 qtd. in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474. Translation of the Latin is Hildebrand's own in the text. I was not able to determine the exact citation for the Horace quote.

<sup>93</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 475.

<sup>94</sup> See [7.7: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy](#), pp. 389–398.

<sup>95</sup> See above at [7.3.1: Essential Features of Concupiscence](#), p. 351.

<sup>96</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XVI, 3 qtd. in Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 465.

not pleasure, but being superior to the call of what is good-in-itself, to be lord of the world, that is the essence of pride. Though Hildebrand does not go so far, I would argue that the locus of pride is to be found in the will when it isolates itself from value. This, as we will see in the last section, has profound implications for understanding Kant and Hildebrand's divergent views on whether moral freedom can be understood as autonomy.

#### **7.4.2: The Vitiating of Freedom**

In my view, Hildebrand's analysis of pride makes eminent sense. Hildebrand's analysis shows that the self-glorification and *non serviam* of pride are words found at the root of all moral evil, culminating in the satanic attempt to be lord of the world. To supplement Hildebrand, I would argue that there is an inherent structure in our personal existence that makes this temptation to be lord of the world if not intelligible, at least understandable. We cannot literally remake the world, the objects and persons in it remain in themselves unchanged by our will's position to them. Yet our will, for the most part, can determine our stance (*Grundstellung*) toward them. When one views something as subjectively satisfying, one constitutes and determines its importance, gives it its significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Oftentimes, this significance appears on the object due to desires outside of one's control, particularly bodily desires, e.g., the deliciousness of this cake. Yet one can grant this significance by sheer *fiat* of pride of the will.<sup>97</sup> Augustine did not steal the pears for their deliciousness; it was rather the very prideful assertion of his arbitrary will in the theft that was their piquant sauce.<sup>98</sup> Regardless of the ultimate origin of the

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<sup>97</sup> See [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), p. 170 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) p. 215.

<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II.vi(12), 31. Which is not to deny that concupiscence was involved as well. After all, *having* the pleasure of stealing is the motivation behind many a teenage theft, and it is not surprising that theft becomes more common at this age when one is more susceptible to the temptations of various pleasures and passions.

subjectively satisfying character of an object, to give the *fiat* of one's will to it in contradiction to the demand of the world of values is to set oneself up as the arbiter of importance.

Few saw the importance of this ability to determine one's position toward the world with greater clarity than Jean Paul Sartre. Like Hildebrand, Sartre recognized the need for a non-positional self-consciousness.<sup>99</sup> Sartre gives a famous argument at the beginning of *Being and Nothingness* that self-consciousness must be primarily non-positional consciousness (of) oneself.<sup>100</sup> Sartre notes that if we could only be conscious of ourselves in a positional, frontal manner, then the self who is conscious of the self would require a third self to be conscious of it and so on in an infinite regress. Consciousness for Sartre involves *nihilation*, a feature of consciousness revealed in three different forms in questioning. If I go into a park curious if there is a bench there, I 1) declare the bench to not be the sky, ground, grass, etc., 2) open myself to the possibility there is no bench and, most importantly, 3) implicitly recognize that I am not the bench.<sup>101</sup> Second, Sartre concludes that consciousness is never passive and never motivated by what is external to it. Consciousness can judge but never be judged; for if it were judged than it would be before itself as a kind of object-like self in front of itself.<sup>102</sup> This, Sartre says, would be “the death of consciousness.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See above at [6.2.2: \*Eigenleben\* and Recollection in Love and Morality](#) p. 296–297.

<sup>100</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Original ed. edition (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), 7–14. Henceforth *BN*. Putting the “of” in parenthesis is meant to mark that the self is not an intentional object of itself in this non-positional consciousness.

<sup>101</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 36–44, 58–60.

<sup>102</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams (New York: Vintage, 1957), 40. Henceforth *TE*.



Sartre is led by this investigation of consciousness to two radical conclusions. First, values, which are, for Sartre, “demands that lay claim to a foundation,” must have that foundation in consciousness rather than in beings.<sup>104</sup> This is, of course, the reverse of Hildebrand’s position.<sup>105</sup> Sartre assumes that if values were founded in beings, then consciousness would be judged as if it were an object. So as soon as I am conscious of myself being a “good waiter” I nihilate this thing-like self. To use Sartre’s term, I can be a waiter only “in the mode of being what I am not.”<sup>106</sup> For I can cease to be a waiter and quit at this very moment. Or if I am helping Peter, Peter stands before me in an object-like fashion as one-to-be-helped. However, as soon as I am reflectively conscious of this “to-be-helped,” I nihilate it. I am not one-who-must-help-Peter, and I can stop doing so at any moment. Thus, “it is impossible to assign to consciousness a motivation other than itself.”<sup>107</sup> For Sartre, we are condemned to this radical freedom. We are condemned to place all objects we are conscious of into our system of values, for even ignoring an object is placing a value on it. But there is no ultimate basis for these values beyond our freedom; our radical freedom is foundationless. What blinds us to this is what Sartre calls “bad faith,” acting as if the value has an objective foundation, when in fact it can have no foundation other than our own freedom.<sup>108</sup>

Second, as I have noted in another article, it is not appropriate to call Sartre’s being-for-itself a person or a self.<sup>109</sup> It is so radically individual, divided against all others, that it cannot have any content of its own.<sup>110</sup> For to be reflectively conscious of this content would

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<sup>104</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 76.

<sup>105</sup> See above at [2.2.2: The Objectivity of Importance and Value](#), pp. 76–81.

<sup>106</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 103.

<sup>107</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 15.

<sup>108</sup> Sartre, *BN*, 101.

<sup>109</sup> Montes, “Toward a Thicker Notion of the Self,” 79.

<sup>110</sup> Montes, “Toward a Thicker Notion of the Self,” 79.

be to immediately nihilate it. The notion of a substantial self is rather an illusion of our pre-reflective consciousness (e.g., I am one-who-must-help-Peter). “Everything happens, therefore, as if consciousness constituted the ego as a false representation of itself, as consciousness hypnotized by itself.”<sup>111</sup> The foundationless freedom of the being-for-itself is a null point, the source of nihilation.

Dietrich von Hildebrand and his wife Alice oppose Sartre in many works. Although Sartre is not mentioned by name in their *Situation Ethics*, he is clearly an implicit target in the book. On her own accord, Alice is particularly strident in her essay on hope: “The grievous mistake of identifying true freedom with independence in the sense of negation and rejection...finds its most perfect and most pathetic expression in the philosophy of John Paul Sartre.”<sup>112</sup> For the Hildebrands, values are cognized in a pre-reflective manner prior to any position-taking. Sartre in essence collapses Hildebrand’s distinction between taking-cognizance and taking-a-stance. Suppose I take cognizance that this pastry is delicious and that this beggar needs food. Before any activation of my will, I take cognizance that I ought to give the pastry. This is not the “death of consciousness” but its recollection. If I see a beggar, I am indeed free to not help the beggar, but only having been “void” in taking-cognizance of the beggar and hearing the call to help him. In this way, his critique of Sartre has many parallels with that of Levinas.<sup>113</sup>

However, while Sartre and Hildebrand diverge sharply on the question of value, Hildebrand no less than Sartre acknowledges the radical freedom of position-taking, albeit one that is always already in what one could call the horizon of value-consciousness. Yet,

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<sup>111</sup> Sartre, *TE*, 101.

<sup>112</sup> See Alice von Hildebrand, “Hope,” in *AL*, 68.

<sup>113</sup> See above at [2.5: Levinas and Hildebrand: Phenomenology as Ethics](#), pp. 109–114.

I would argue, Hildebrand's conception of consciousness would collapse into a position oddly parallel to Sartre's conception of consciousness if one removes the consciousness of values and pursues only what is subjectively satisfying. For the person consumed by pride, the distinction between taking-cognizance and taking-a-stance is reversed. Things are important because of me. This is not to claim that Sartre himself was subject to pride, though one cannot avoid the impression that the Hildebrands themselves thought he was. Rather it is to illustrate how the radical negative freedom that Sartre considers the essence of consciousness, is, for Hildebrand, its perversion.

Recall the example of the theft of the pears.<sup>114</sup> In previous chapters, especially Chapter Four, I have pointed out that in Augustine's theft, and all evil acts, there is an element of wilfulness. On the one hand, the subjectively satisfying provides a sufficient support to the will to actualize the act. The teenage Augustine, dominated by a will to do evil, steals a pear for the sake of stealing, he stole for the sake of asserting his will.<sup>115</sup> The pear has taken on a character as subjectively satisfying, it is there-to-be-stolen, which he takes-cognizance of. It is not a pure nothing. Phenomenologically there is a positive content here: it is subjectively satisfying. The will to steal is not arbitrary in the sense that a totally unmotivated action is arbitrary. Yet on the other hand, there is a certain moral arbitrariness. He stole the pears to assert his will; he willed because he wills it. This leads, I argue, *pace* Hildebrand, to return to Augustine's own view that this act lacks a certain support. The will tries to be the support of its own willing. The importance is, in this case, itself constituted

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<sup>114</sup> See above at See [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), p. 170 and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) p. 215.

<sup>115</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II.vi(12), 31.

by the self. There is, I would argue, no ultimate transcendence in a response to the subjectively satisfying but rather a return to the self, a self-assertion.

So long as the pursuit of the legitimately subjectively satisfying (e.g., a dessert after a healthy meal) is done in the context of a broader will to be morally good, this return to the self is not problematic. Yet if the subjectively satisfying becomes the primary, isolated motive, the result is that the *fiat* of the will responds to an importance that cannot fully support it because it is, ultimately, supported by its own *fiat*. Like an orouboros, the will tries to feed itself in vain. This does not mean there is not support in the sense that the person's act is not possible; alas it is. But it is to say that the act retains a certain moral arbitrariness, meaninglessness, and unintelligibility, which pervades this evil act.

Augustine, by his own admission, instantiated a certain satanic pride in this act: he did evil precisely because it was evil.<sup>116</sup> It also instantiates *Stolz* in that, in this wilfulness, there is an assertion of an autarchy. One is considered free because free from any dominion save that of one's own will. But the other forms of pride also fall to this willfulness. Consider the pride of one who glorifies in his or her own values or is subject to vanity. I would argue this self-glorification nihilates the very "values" it tries to have support, so that it can support itself. Here there is a reverse bad faith. Whereas for Sartre bad faith is refusing to admit that you and your own freedom are the foundationless foundation of your values, for the Hildebrandian it is the vain attempt to be this foundation that is problematic. In both cases, the issue is the foundationlessness of freedom. This will nihilates in that it spreads its nothingness, its lack of foundation, onto not only itself but also onto the object.

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<sup>116</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II.vi(12), 31.

Whereas concupiscence seeks only an anarchic negative freedom to do what one wants without restraints, pride recognizes that underlying this negative freedom is the positive autarchic freedom of being lord of one's world. From a purely formal view, pride is freer than concupiscence.<sup>117</sup> Recall the contrast between Kathy, who gives a sanction of *Schadenfreude* out of morally unconscious concupiscence, and Robert, who gives a sanction to *Schadenfreude* out of an express superactual will to do evil.<sup>118</sup> Both experience a formal actualization of freedom vis-à-vis the morally unconscious person who never expressly sanctions his or her *Schadenfreude*. Whereas Kathy's sanction has the character of consciously flinging herself into her malicious desire, Robert's sanction is in this respect freer in that it is engendered by him on principle. We see that there is a greater distance between desires engendered in one and the willings engendered by one. His identification of himself with his *Schadenfreude* "has not the character of an obstinate spasm," unlike Kathy's.<sup>119</sup>

Further, pride no less than concupiscence can supply nourishment to freedom; it gives one energy and strength. In the case of glorifying in one's own values, the misconceived values and their luster can serve in this way. The thought of displaying my intellectual talent in a way that gratifies my vanity gives a certain energy and strength to my will. Above all, however, is the element of self-glorification that is present in all forms of pride that serve as nourishment and fuel. In the haughty, proud, and satanic forms, the very assertion of the will can, in pride, become an eminent source of nourishment. Yet I develop a "habitual spasm" of such self-assertion.<sup>120</sup> The "intensifying" character of the

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<sup>117</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.

<sup>118</sup> See above at [4.2: Cooperative Freedom and Affective Responses](#), p. 187–188.

<sup>119</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.

<sup>120</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.

joy the subjectively satisfying brings habituates one to repeat prideful actions and further ingrains a prideful basic attitude.

Ultimately, freedom in pride, I argue, vitiates itself in a quixotic quest to be its own foundation. Consider what could possibly motivate a person in pride to choose to do an action or take up an attitude or affective response. There are only two possibilities for these willings: either they refer to the will itself as their end or they refer to what is other than the will as their end. In general, satanic pride refers most directly to the will, whereas the pride of self-glorification by values tries to appropriate a value. The Pharisee proud of his moral goodness, or the genius proud of his intellectual talent, recognizes and desires something of the grandeur of value in its intrinsic importance. But he or she vainly tries to refer it to him or herself. He or she tries to say, “this value is intrinsically important and is so because it is mine.” Yet in referring the value to oneself and trying to seize its content, one falsifies the value’s very content. It is an attempt to have one’s cake be beautiful while scarfing it down too. Whether one seeks to dethrone values or appropriate values to the self, the self in pride remains a null point. The will of the person in pride is locked in self-affirmation.

This surrendering away of the free rational center not only vitiates the intentionality of the *fiat*, but it also vitiates the very lower order intentionalities that, as potential motives, are the material for freedom to approve with its *fiat*.<sup>121</sup> One is going along with the lower order intentionalities not according to their own objectively correct place in the world of values, but rather merely as they present themselves in isolation under the aspect of the subjectively satisfying to pride or concupiscence. For value is the ultimately valid type of

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<sup>121</sup> See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), p. 147 for a discussion of motives as a kind of lower order intentionality.

importance. No subjectively satisfying good or objective good for one is ultimately good if it contradicts the call of a moral value. Taking a warm bath is fine in most cases. But if I need to save someone from drowning and instead, I take a bath, this is not a good act. In the case of any illegitimately subjectively satisfying “good,” this validation is missing. The person whose essential nature is revealed by those intentionalities as a responsive being is now self-enclosed, viewing things only from the view of the subjectively satisfying, e.g., being closed off to the true importance of an enemy’s suffering. It is for this reason that pursuit of even the legitimately subjectively satisfying must be referred to and legitimated by value. For value is what validates the other types of importance, as mentioned in Chapter Two.<sup>122</sup> Whenever a motive is divorced from the general will to be morally good, the vitiation of freedom results. There is no “sober distance” between the object of the will and the will itself.<sup>123</sup>

Nor does pride escape what I have called the annulment of freedom found in concupiscence, although here it takes a different and, paradoxically, even more constrictive character. For again the subjectively satisfying is the only motive. Even in pride the subjectively satisfying does not address our free will except only accidentally. No less than in concupiscence, the invitation of the subjectively satisfying in pride “tries to silence our conscience, it takes hold of us in an obtrusive manner.”<sup>124</sup> Even in an attempt to pridefully assert my will, e.g., by stealing pears, my freedom is invited by but also becomes secondary to my own satisfaction. For the subjectively satisfying, even in pride, is only concerned with obtaining satisfaction, not a value-response that can and must be free. The subjectively

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<sup>122</sup> See above at [2.2.1: The Three Types of Importance](#), pp. 72–73.

<sup>123</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41. The notion of this sober distance is introduced above at [3.4.3: Hingabe and Motivation](#), pp. 166–168, and [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#) pp. 219.

<sup>124</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

satisfying, even in pride, does not treat the person seriously but only as a means. One becomes a slave to one's own satisfaction. This is most clearly seen in the fact that pride can develop into a habitual spasm. Further, pride annuls freedom because it deprives it of nourishment. For in giving its *fiat* to pride, the will gives its *fiat* only to the empty self. The subjective satisfaction of pride, no less than that of concupiscence, results in boredom, only partially covered by the frantic dynamism of pride to assert the self and (in some forms) acquire new values. For the object of one's pride has no more ground than that of concupiscence.

Indeed, in itself, pride cannot provide the means to make a choice between two potential objects without the inclusion of some external factor. Should I show my genius in painting or in music? Between the dear self projected onto one object and the dear self projected onto another, there is no way to decide. I could only decide if I have a talent for a certain one over another, becoming, in effect, determined by that predisposition. Indeed, I must hope that there is some factor external to the will, or I will be either like Buridan's ass, torn in two or, more likely, find both options equally pointless. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, when the call of value has been rejected, what says "I want" remains.<sup>125</sup> For satanic pride, this want is supplied by the desire to destroy and supplant values, values become the antithetical anchor for one's freedom. But the person, in doing what satanic pride calls for, is enslaved to doing *only* what is morally evil. Robert is forced by his pride to mock the beggar; he has *freely determined* himself to the "habitual spasm" of pride.<sup>126</sup> As Hildebrand states "his pseudo-sanction is...possible only with regard to morally negative attitudes, and

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<sup>125</sup> Lewis, "The Abolition of Man," in *The Complete C. S. Lewis*, 273.

<sup>126</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.



not even to morally indifferent ones, as was the case with the morally unconscious man.”<sup>127</sup>

For the proud person, one’s own values become one’s obsession, often coupled with a desire to avoid anyone else from having one’s own values. The Pharisee will scorn all but his own moral goodness and hate it in others.<sup>128</sup> Pride can also lead to a concupiscent attitude precisely as an escape from its own boredom. Giving into desires engendered in one becomes very tempting, for at least that gives one something to will beyond the bare nothingness of the will by itself. If the demons lust, it is most likely in part because they are bored. Needless to say, such attempts to escape boredom are fruitless.

None of this is to deny that pride is free and culpable. The prideful person, even more than the concupiscent person, is responsible for his or her actions. Wilfullness, for all its arbitrariness, is will-fullness; it requires that the person have free will and utilizes that freedom in a morally arbitrary way. If freedom is lessened in pride, it is because of the prideful person’s own free choice. One has freely chosen what seems to promise total freedom from all restraint, freedom from all dominion save from oneself, but in so doing, one becomes a slave to oneself.

### **7.5: The Idol of Negative Freedom**

Thus far, our focus has been on pride and concupiscence in themselves and those persons dominated by one form or another of them. However, as was mentioned in Chapter Five, there are five types of people in whom the morally good and evil centers coexist, which I mentioned and endorsed above in Chapter Five: 1) the morally struggling type, 2) the morally unconscious type, 3) the compromise type, 4) the idolater, and 5) the discontinuous

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<sup>127</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 344.

<sup>128</sup> Hildebrand and Hildebrand, *MSE*, 15.

type.<sup>129</sup> The compromiser and idolater have managed a pseudo-reconciliation of their pride and concupiscence with the value-responding center by submitting, either implicitly or expressly, to an extramoral ideal or value that takes the place of morality. In the first subsection, I examine first what Hildebrand means by an “idol” or “compromise.” In the second subsection, I explore how negative freedom can itself serve as such an idol. It will be shown that isolating freedom as either a replacement for morality or a substitute for it in fact falsifies not just the nature of morality, but also of freedom.

### **7.5.1: The Nature of Idols**

The idol can take several forms according to Hildebrand. First, there are expressly anti-moral ideals, such as Nazi and Communist ideology that in themselves seek to dethrone morality and replace it with the ideals of racial or class struggle that are inimical to morality.<sup>130</sup> Second, the extramoral value, e.g. honor, takes the place of morality as a substitute for morality. This substitute proper is equated with the whole sphere of moral goodness and evil.<sup>131</sup> Finally, there is a weaker form of substitute where the extramoral value is not identified with the whole of morality, but nevertheless functions as “the core of morality, the part of morality that is taken with full seriousness and that overshadows all else.”<sup>132</sup>

Even a non-moral aspect of a moral value may function as the material for a substitute. For instance, having a certain felt wideness of spirit found in generosity as

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<sup>129</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 439–450. The idolator and compromise type is introduced above at [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), pp. 244–247.

<sup>130</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 2–5. A person who follows an anti-moral idol may themselves subjectively be convinced and duped into thinking what they are doing is moral, and, in some cases, they are not morally culpable for this. For instance, a Soviet citizen might genuinely think that supporting Communism and Stalin is moral and good, having been raised that way. Other followers, however, will see the real character of the anti-moral idol and that it implies a rejection of morality *tout court*.

<sup>131</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 31.

<sup>132</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 31.

opposed to the cramped moralism of a Pharisee might, as a reaction to that Pharisaical morality, be isolated as the core of morality.<sup>133</sup> However, when this is done the very content of the aspect is falsified. A person subject to this idol would see both a libertine and a saint as having this same wideness of spirit; even though in fact the wideness of spirit of a libertine is qualitatively very distinct from the moral wideness of spirit of a generous saint. I argue this is because the wideness is defined, in large part, in opposition to the Pharisee, and, implicitly, as a concession to pride and concupiscence. The wideness of true generosity is falsified. I admire the generous person, but not for the generosity but for the wideness, which I covet because it gives me a license for libertinism. I want even to claim that the saint and libertine, when you look at the really important thing, wideness of spirit, are basically the same. So why not be a libertine...I mean, one with a wide spirit?

Compromises and idols are constituted by a wrong “denominator of morality” and “wrong general denominator of the will.”<sup>134</sup> Particularly when the compromise is an express idol, there is a “spurious general will to be morally good.”<sup>135</sup> The follower of a substitute for morality has what Hildebrand calls a moral “conscious-unconsciousness” or semi-consciousness that is not liberated from moral value-blindness. This person follows a norm and has a critical attitude toward his or her own actions.<sup>136</sup> To use Hildebrand’s example, a certain kind of Prussian officer refers every action to the question of whether it serves his honor and may even be willing to sacrifice his life for his honor.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, this substitute is “nourished by pride and concupiscence.”<sup>138</sup> It is still based ultimately on

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<sup>133</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 90.

<sup>134</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 23.

<sup>136</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 27.

<sup>137</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 41.

<sup>138</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 446.

the perspective of the subjectively satisfying and not value. The substitute follower does not confront the true moral sphere, and remains imprisoned in him- or herself. As a result, when one is called to sanction attitudes and affective responses in cooperative freedom, only a pseudo-sanction and disavowal are possible.<sup>139</sup>

### **7.5.2: Freedom as an Idol**

In Hildebrand's works, certain ideals of freedom are singled out as idols. In a footnote in *Sittlichkeit*, Hildebrand says that an ideal of anarchic freedom to live fully and the ideal of autarchy are anti-moral idols.<sup>140</sup> This is an idol of negative freedom from restraints; often including morality as such a restraint. This anti-moral tendency is in fact inevitable as soon as freedom is isolated in itself, transforming it into arbitrariness. In his *Ethics* and *Situation Ethics* (first published as *True Morality and Its Counterfeits* in 1955), Hildebrand also talks of how freedom functions in a substitute for morality in situation ethics.<sup>141</sup> In situation ethics, one rejects all general moral commandments and rules in favor of following whatever one's own conscience dictates in a particular situation. This seems to promise a freedom of spirit over the letter of the moral law. In fact, this situation ethics opens the door for declarations of "conscience" that are in contradiction to universal moral rules.

Perhaps his clearest exposition of freedom as an idol comes in a short four-page chapter in *The Trojan Horse* titled "Freedom and Arbitrariness."<sup>142</sup> He opens, "There is a perverse conception of freedom prevailing today that experiences the universality of truth—and the fact that it is withdrawn from our arbitrariness—as a demeaning

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<sup>139</sup> Hildebrand, *GI*, 25.

<sup>140</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 565ff.

<sup>141</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 458; Hildebrand and Hildebrand, *MSE*, Chapter 5 "Freedom of Spirit," 59–76.

<sup>142</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106–109.

infringement on our freedom.”<sup>143</sup> Because of the “inherent exclusivity of truth and the elimination of other possibilities,” ethical and metaphysical truth is viewed as “an unwelcome obligation to a commitment.”<sup>144</sup> This is linked to seeing such commitments as a threat to “what by many is this country [the USA] is considered the only absolute value—namely democracy.”<sup>145</sup> It leads to regarding “the most legitimate form of influence—the exposure of the young to genuine values” in education to be an infringement on their freedom.<sup>146</sup> This necessarily develops into to a societal and individual habit of ignorance of or even “willful hostility to the most important truths.”<sup>147</sup> Hildebrand graphically compares people holding this view of freedom to the condition of soldiers in WWI who, after inhaling poison gas, experience fresh air as unbearably stifling.<sup>148</sup>

Noting that Christ claimed the Truth, especially the revealed Truth about God, sets one free, Hildebrand argues “every fundamental metaphysical and ethical truth has an analogously liberating effect.”<sup>149</sup> This is because “there is a profound relationship between genuine personal freedom and the obligatory commitment truth imposes.”<sup>150</sup> This is inscribed in the very being and nature of the person: “man’s essential transcendence consists in the twofold conformation of mind and will to objective reality.”<sup>151</sup> From all that has been said in this dissertation, Hildebrand’s assertions logically follow. When a moral truth, say that I have a moral obligation, imposes itself on me in taking-cognizance, I

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<sup>143</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106.

<sup>144</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106.

<sup>145</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 109.

<sup>146</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 109.

<sup>147</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 109.

<sup>148</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106.

<sup>149</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106.

<sup>150</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 106–107. This was seen above with regard to the need for reverence for the freedom of philosophy. See [2.6: Conclusion: The Freedom of Philosophy](#), pp. 114–117.

<sup>151</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 107.

receive a demand. I am free to assent, give my *fiat* to this demand or not. But if I reject it, I follow what is subjectively satisfying over value. I necessarily subvert the very transcendence of freedom. Instead of going out and conforming to the value, I remain self-enclosed. But if I do respond appropriately, I then execute a free value-response. I freely give myself to the value. Thus, as we have seen above, to oppose freedom to commitment is absurd because at its very core freedom *is* commitment, it is the *fiat* and the sanction. In all cases the will must to be free give its *fiat* to the truth and let it be done according to the word of importance the mind has received in taking-cognizance. Without this, we would fail even to see the value of freedom: “the sublime value of being free from external coercion is revealed only when seen against the background of the true nature of man’s interior freedom.”<sup>152</sup>

Moreover, “truth defines freedom.”<sup>153</sup> For it is truth that gives freedom its value and meaning. Again, *nihil volitum nisi cogitum*, nothing is willed if it is not known, known as being in some way good. When I will what is evil, I violate the spirit if not the letter of *nihil volitum nisi cogitum*, for I will what I know to be only subjectively good and objectively evil. I necessarily become self-enclosed in the subjectively satisfying. Therefore, it is truth that defines the realm where freedom beyond the illegitimately subjectively satisfying is possible. The freedom to do what is meaningful and what breaks me out of my own self-centeredness, is defined by the truth about what is truly good, what is truly valuable. It is the truth that sets us free from arbitrariness.

Hildebrand notes that the rejection of coercion in matters of conscience does not entail that one should not hope for the conversion of others to the truth. It is fully

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<sup>152</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 107.

<sup>153</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 108.

compatible with an ardent desire to bring the truth to others. The terrible evil of coercing others in matters of conscience (including those who are deliberately immoral) in no way implies that moral truths are undue constrictions on freedom. Rather, it means that only the person him- or herself can make the ultimate decision in favor of morality. Only he or she can give the *fiat*. This is the truth of the freedom of the human person. If one views the truth as an unjust imposition on the freedom of the human person, then one implicitly and in a self-contradictory way undoes the very rationale for respecting freedom in the first place as belonging to the true nature of the human person. If freedom is opposed to truth, then it is deprived of meaning. Why then should we respect the freedom of others, or even ourselves, when so doing is inconvenient? Freedom would not deserve respect, because “deserving” has been eliminated as inimical to freedom.

I argue that Hildebrand here hints at what I see as the tragic character of this notion of freedom and what it gets correct about the human person. Freedom by itself is an ontological value, and the promotion of human freedom, even one’s own, is often a morally relevant value. We are, Hildebrand notes, rightly outraged when institutions and governments prevent a person from following his conscience precisely because “man’s dignity consists in being endowed with the power of self-determination.”<sup>154</sup> Yet very often the sin of the undue restriction of freedom is transmuted into a conception of freedom defined *primarily or exclusively* in terms of freedom from restrictions. This idol is easily nourished by pride and concupiscence. Whatever restrains freedom, rules out choices, and countermands our desires is easily suggested to us by our pride and concupiscence as something that contravenes our very freedom. Morality, however, must impose just that

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<sup>154</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 107.

restraint. As a result, an idol of freedom and of the promotion of freedom, even when it functions as a substitute for morality, is eminently posed to degenerate into an anti-moral idol. For however noble the intentions of promoters of a de facto solely negative conception of freedom may be, freedom isolated by itself and defined in opposition to all restrictions is, in itself, an anti-moral ideal. For to quote Levinas again, freedom, “by itself, it is only freedom, that is, arbitrary and unjustified.”<sup>155</sup> The logical end result is both the vitiation and annulment of freedom in pride and concupiscence.

Consider a fictional undergraduate, Carrie, whose story unfortunately mirrors so many real undergraduates. Rightly opposing her overly restrictive religious, even cultish upbringing, she comes to see the very notion of absolute truth and value to be the cause of the moral failings she has witnessed in her youth. Quite understandably viewing freedom primarily in its aspect of freedom from external and undue restraints, she neglects the positive dimension of freedom as freedom for the good. A morally relevant value, the promotion of freedom, has for her become the “core” (if not the whole) of morality, and any moral truth that could be seen as threatening that core is cast as immoral. She may endorse relativism theoretically, but in fact her organic, implicit guiding idol is not so much relativism as a rejection of restrictions precisely as immoral (even if she would not use the term “immoral”) limitations on personal freedom. Though her determination to defend human freedom is a real conformation to value, in having freedom become the core of morality, not only has morality but freedom itself inevitably been falsified. Besides its own value and its objective goodness for the person, which she can ever only partly grasp, a

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<sup>155</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 88. See [3.4.2: Kant’s Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 151–165.



freedom freed from all “restrictions” and “laws” is severed from value. But it can be motivated by the subjectively satisfying.

When negative freedom has become an idol, the annulment of freedom is transformed into a pernicious logic where values are constituted as threats to freedom. I noted above that in concupiscence and pride, the subjectively satisfying is the sole perspective. One dominated by it simply cannot grasp another perspective, another motive for acting. Those who do not pursue what they themselves admit to be pleasant seem utterly irrational, subject to a prejudice, e.g., by their religion. Carrie could not help but see her Muslim friend Jamal’s refusal to drink, even though she knows he is tempted, as a superstition. Nor can she understand why her friend Claire could possibly be considering religious poverty as a nun despite her business acumen. She could not but hope that she could somehow enlighten this baffling minority on its own true interest. Yet in so doing, the very promotion of freedom can glide into a logic of enlightened coercion.<sup>156</sup> There is a hermeneutic of suspicion applied to value claims, particularly if they can be linked to genuine historical cases where value claims were used to justify unjust coercion (e.g., the Inquisition). I think this is why Hildebrand sees the idol of freedom as leading to an attitude of exposing the young to values is frowned upon and society itself develops an indifference to and suspicion of values themselves. For to the person dominated by this idol, the sober, free, and yet sovereign call of values and truth cannot but be constituted, wrongly, as an assault on freedom, as noxious air. Such a person cannot grasp the essential difference

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<sup>156</sup> This is in essence a mirror image of Isaiah Berlin’s concern that the promoters of positive freedom have glided into a logic of enlightened coercion. See my comment on Berlin in [INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING FREEDOM AND MORALITY](#), p. 10ff.

between the subjectively satisfying, which bypasses the will, and values which can only operate by calling the will in a free and sovereign manner.<sup>157</sup>

### **7.6: The Bias of Freedom in Favor of the Morally Good**

It is precisely that sovereign call that is the foundation of the bias of freedom for the morally good. To illustrate this bias, it is helpful to examine the three states where the morally good and evil centers of the person do not mix, as in the compromiser or idolater, but remain, from an outside perspective, distinct. These are the morally unconscious type, the discontinuous type, and finally the morally struggling type.<sup>158</sup> Of these three, it is the last, along with the virtuous person, who has a general will to be morally good. This general will is itself a precondition for the moral consciousness to recognize the inherent of bias of freedom in favor of the morally good. The other two types are both subject to a kind of unconsciousness or denial of moral freedom.

#### **7.6.1: Unconsciousness of Freedom in Moral Unconsciousness**

The morally unconscious person is, of the three types, perhaps the most obviously unfree due to his or her ignorance. If blessed with a good nature, this person recognizes morally relevant values but fails to grasp their specific moral relevance. Suppose a good natured, morally unconscious person, Fred, would jump to save a drowning child. He would not recognize this act as obligatory but do it rather for the insufficient reason that “I dislike being bad.”<sup>159</sup> In particular, the morally unconscious person lacks a general will to be morally good and does not recognize cooperative freedom.<sup>160</sup> He merely unconsciously goes along with his attitudes and affective responses. Just after saving the child, Fred

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<sup>157</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>158</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 440–450.

<sup>159</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 278.

<sup>160</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 341.

laughs with *Schadenfreude* upon seeing his rival emerge out of the water completely soaked because the rival did not realize that Fred had already saved the child. Because both flow uninhibited from his nature “his value-responses will be stained with accidentality; but the same holds true of his yielding to pride and concupiscence.”<sup>161</sup>

Thus, in terms of the support of his will, he is motivated both by value and by pride and concupiscence, but not to a full extent. I would expect that his use of freedom is likely somewhat slanted toward the morally evil center. He responds the way he does because *his own* nature impels him to. Here, there is an implicit (but only ever implicit) egoist principle at work here. If a Goethe-like person were to consciously say to himself “I will do whatever my nature tells me,” he would make a de facto decision against the moral.<sup>162</sup> He sets himself a purely subjective standard that cuts him off from true conforming to values and comes close to the moral blindness proper to concupiscence. If this decision is not consciously made, the person may be a very decent fellow if blessed with a good nature, but he or she still fails to see the real weight of moral values.

Interestingly, the nourishment of freedom has a reverse slant in favor of value. Fred would experience the joy that pride, concupiscence, and values can give him. Semiconsciously, he may begin to recognize the qualitative difference between the shallow joy that the legitimately subjectively satisfying can bring and the much deeper joy that value grants to one. The joy of laughing at a rival from *Schadenfreude* and the joy of saving a child are quite distinct. This is because the happiness the subjectively satisfying can provide lacks meaning and significance. Its nourishment is insubstantial, like a watery

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<sup>161</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 440.

<sup>162</sup> See above at [4.3: Cooperative Freedom and Basic Stances](#), 189–204.

drink. It results in being “thrown back on our limitedness” and boredom.<sup>163</sup> Again, the pleasure “derived from the merely subjectively satisfying could never grant us one moment of that blissful happiness engendered by those objects possessing a value”<sup>164</sup> This happiness is blissful, because it has the objective meaning and significance the subjectively satisfying lacks. It is a substantial, full happiness.

This very qualitative difference may eventually bring him out of moral unconsciousness. He may come to recognize the true character of the moral. But while the nourishing power of importance has an inherent slant in itself toward value, in each individual person the character of this nourishment is determined by the subjective temperament. A morally unconscious person who, even if not yet expressly vicious, has a bad nature, already finds vicious actions easier, more pleasant, and overall more “intense” for him than objectively virtuous ones. He or she will be nourished more by those evil actions and will experience this potentially addictive nourishment more.

#### **7.6.2: The Denial of Freedom in the Discontinuous Moral Life**

Such a morally unconscious person, if he or she becomes morally conscious, may slip into the discontinuous existence between the domination of the value-responding center and the evil centers “in an outspoken and complete manner.”<sup>165</sup> A formerly morally unconscious person, Samuel, who has wild mood swings reminiscent of Dimitri Karamozov, will find himself in this position after emerging to moral consciousness. The moral and immoral centers alternate in an irrational and erratic fashion. This person is able to experience both worlds, the support and nourishment of pride and concupiscence as well as that of value.

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<sup>163</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>164</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>165</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 447.

When the moral center is ascendant, he is aware of the lure of freedom that pride and concupiscence offered him and to which he succumbed earlier. However, he is also aware of their ultimate emptiness and the subversion of freedom. “But the rapidly alternating rhythm of his moral life thwarts a real fight against pride and concupiscence.”<sup>166</sup> Samuel’s contrition when the moral center is dominant has, nonetheless, “merely the character of deep awareness of his sinfulness, a deep sorrow over it, but it does not entail a sufficiently firm will to change.”<sup>167</sup> Even when the value-responding center is dominant, Samuel “experiences his pride and concupiscence more as terrible, deplorable fate than as a burden that he is able to and called upon to overcome by his free will.”<sup>168</sup>

It is precisely this lack of belief or awareness in his or her own moral freedom that is characteristic of the discontinuous type. As Hildebrand puts it “he lacks above all the full awareness of the role of freedom and also the full actualization of freedom.”<sup>169</sup> Even when the value responding center is dominant, this person is subject to a deeper attitude of letting himself be controlled by his or her mood. This letting himself go is not a compromise but rather a general insufficiency of his value-responding attitude. Samuel’s value-responding attitude has “not yet struck roots in the depth of his soul.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, even his value-responses are tinged with his discontinuity, he holds himself to be unable to give the superactual responses that value demands. He has not fully given himself; his *fiat* is not total.

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<sup>166</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 448.

<sup>167</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 448.

<sup>168</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 448.

<sup>169</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 449.

<sup>170</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 449.

### 7.6.3: The Bias of Freedom in Moral Struggle

Thus, we see that an awareness of moral freedom is intrinsic to the very general will to be morally good. This general will is present in the morally struggling person.<sup>171</sup> This person who, along with the virtuous, person fully experiences the bias of freedom. In the morally struggling person, the general will to be morally good has the upper hand but the person often falls out of weakness. Unlike the value-blind person who is unconsciously given over to evil, the morally struggling person is fully aware and consciously surrenders to the temptation to evil. The surrender is more or less fully conscious, and here the fundamental freedom of the person mentioned above becomes most pronounced.<sup>172</sup>

This person does not experience the enhancement of freedom by the morally good as much as does the virtuous person. While the virtuous person is not tempted, the morally struggling person does hear the siren song of pride and concupiscence promising freedom from restraint. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter Two, Hildebrand states in *Sittlichkeit* that a person who has a virtue, his example being purity, can feel the value of that virtue (*Wertfühlen*), whereas a morally struggling person can see and admire the value of the virtue, but is much less able to feel it.<sup>173</sup> Yet as long as the person repents of his or her falls, the morally struggling person occupies the least bad form of coexistence of moral good and evil. Each individual act of moral evil subverts the freedom of the person, but this freedom is soon recovered, and the person starts anew.

The contrary pulls of the subjectively satisfying and value are not experienced as equal. One experiences that the subjectively satisfying seeks to lull one's conscience and

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<sup>171</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 440.

<sup>172</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 51.

<sup>173</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 469–473. See above [2.3.1: The Intuitive Givenness of Values](#), pp. 82–90.

freedom and ultimately destroy one's general will to be morally good; the other calls to it in a sovereign yet free manner.<sup>174</sup> On the one hand, there is offered the support that only value can offer the will, a firm basis and meaningful content that it would otherwise lack. Even in the absence of any joy, moral value can nourish and give the will energy and strength to do what is right despite all inner obstacles. Further, in itself it promises, nay even demands joy in its moral beauty, even if the morally struggling person cannot yet have or even guess at this joy. On the other hand, the illegitimately subjectively satisfying may in the moment of temptation appear the more freeing option, but this only works as the deceptive lure of freedom from restraints. If the temptation is particularly strong, resisting it can feel unfree as it takes a greater effort than giving in to the temptation. Thus, it can subjectively feel less free to resist than to give in. Yet this does not change the essential fact that giving in results in the subversion of one's freedom, and resisting results in the de facto enhancement of one's freedom.

For the morally struggling person can recognize that evil will take with one hand what it offers in the other. For the *fiat* of the morally bad will is undersupported, given a universe where all lines of space issue from and yet converge back onto the dear self. It offers an easy joy, perhaps, and an intense quantity of such joy that is the piquant sauce of evil doing. But this sauce always has a bitter tang. The joy of both virtue and vice increase rather than lessen one's hunger for it. This joy thereby intensifies and give energy to the receptive activities of virtue and vice. But the joy of the morally good, however meager, unsure, or austere it may appear to the morally struggling person fills and frees one, while the joy of the subjectively satisfying ultimately fails to bring satisfaction.

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<sup>174</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 40.

### 7.7: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy

It cannot have escaped the reader that in these passages on freedom, Hildebrand has Kant in mind.<sup>175</sup> When Hildebrand criticizes the man of *Stolz* who takes pride in autonomy and autarchy, but who nevertheless finds his pride nourished by conforming to a legalistic moral code, one cannot help think that the man Hildebrand has in mind takes the form of the old man of *Königsberg*.<sup>176</sup> It is clear that Hildebrand sees a problem with Kant's understanding of moral freedom as autonomy, following no law save what one has imposed on oneself in pure practical reason.

Here it is necessary to be very careful, for Kant and Hildebrand share much in common. Both have a keen interest in showing how freedom can be reconciled with morality, and moral obligation more specifically. For both philosophers, personal freedom is ultimately moral freedom, a freedom set on willing what is good-in-itself. For Kant this is because freedom is autonomy; one is no longer subject to the inclinations, but follows pure practical reason. For Hildebrand, this is because freedom is saying *fiat* to a potential motive, a freedom that most realizes its own transcendent character when the motive is value. For both, moral enslavement is found in rejecting what is good in itself for what is only subjectively good, the pleasure of satisfying the inclinations for Kant, the subjectively satisfying for Hildebrand. Finally, for both Hildebrand and Kant, it is our responsibility that gives us our most eminent consciousness of our freedom. Responsibility implies freedom; since our conscience tells us we have this moral responsibility, we can conclude

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<sup>175</sup> This section serves as a continuation of the argument in [3.4.2: Kant's Autonomy vs. Levinas and Hildebrand on the Investiture of Freedom](#), pp. 159–165. There the focus was on the general structure of the will, whereas here the focus is on freedom more broadly and in particular its aspect of being intrinsically tied to morality. As mentioned above, Kant and Hildebrand are alike in that they both consider personal freedom to be essentially a moral freedom, but as we will see below they are very different in how they bring that identification about.

<sup>176</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 474.



we are free. Indeed, for Kant only practical reason could give us any assurance on which we can dare to believe, contrary to appearances, that we are free.<sup>177</sup>

Yet underlying this convergence is a deeper divergence. For Hildebrand moral freedom is giving one's *fiat* to what Kant would see as the "heteronomy" of values, whereas for Kant freedom is autonomy. This divergence comes to a head on a seemingly minor point: whether a holy, untempted will would experience a moral obligation.<sup>178</sup> Crosby notes that Scheler and Kant agree that a finite holy will does not experience morality as an obligation, something which both Crosby and Hildebrand would dispute.<sup>179</sup> For Scheler this is because when one has a clear insight into a value, the will to realize that is necessarily engendered directly by that insight.<sup>180</sup> We have seen above the problem with this thesis, as it means that freedom is bypassed and one falls into an intellectualist position.<sup>181</sup> Even a virtuous person who inevitably wills what is good when she sees it does so because she has committed herself to the good. For Kant, the rationale behind that position is more complex. In Kant's view, a holy will would experience an autonomy unimpeded by any

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<sup>177</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:461, 93; En. Tr., 106.

<sup>178</sup> For a Christian, such wills are thought to exist in the good angels and the souls of the holy dead. Yet even if one does not believe in angels or an afterlife, considering the possibility of a holy finite untempted will is a useful thought experiment that can reveal much about the essential structure of any finite freedom, tempted or not.

In essence the point I am about to make below is the same as the one Henri de Lubac, S.J. makes in an insightful article for Hildebrand's *Festschrift*: no finite will can, of its own essence, be morally good, it must choose to be morally good. Every finite will of a mature person (e.g., a human above the age of reason or an angel) is given a choice between sin and moral goodness, though presumably in the angels, this choice is made only once whereas humans must struggle continuously. The identification of moral freedom with personal freedom is found not in the pure identity of freedom and morality in autonomy, but rather in the fact that freedom has an inherent ordination to and bias toward the morally good. See Henri de Lubac, S.J., "Can a Will Be Essentially Good," in *The Human Person and the World of Values: A Tribute to Dietrich von Hildebrand by His Friends in Philosophy*, The Orestes Brownson Series on Contemporary Thought and Affairs. Edited by Balduin Schwarz. New York: Fordham University Press, 121–131.

An infinite freedom, i.e., that of God, could not be tempted because it would be, by definition, identical with goodness itself. His will alone is essentially good.

<sup>179</sup> Crosby, "Person and Obligation," 98ff.

<sup>180</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192

<sup>181</sup> See above [7.2: Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 343–348.

temptation to submit to the heteronomy of the inclinations. Indeed, for Kant, any supersensible being would by definition not be able to be tempted to evil. Here, Kant's position evolved and developed from the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason* to the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In the *Groundwork*, we find an identification of the will with pure practical reason: "the will is nothing other than practical reason."<sup>182</sup> In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant now distinguishes between *die Willkür* and *die Wille*:

The faculty of desire in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining it to action lies within itself and not in its object, is called a faculty to do or to refrain from doing as one pleases...it is called choice (*heißt es Willkür*)...The faculty of desire whose inner determining ground, hence even what pleases it, lies within the subject's reason is called the will (*heißt der Wille*). The will is therefore the faculty of desire considered not so much in relation to action (as *Willkür* is) but rather in relation to the ground determining choice to action. The will itself, strictly speaking, has no determining ground; insofar as it can determine choice, it is instead practical reason itself."<sup>183</sup>

The determining ground of the will, what provides the movement to action, is pure practical reason. The identification of will and reason must not be taken too strongly. Will and pure practical reason remain distinct from each other. It is rather that reason is a transcendent measure to which the will perfectly conforms, provided it is not subject to the inclinations. The second is that *Willkür* corresponds to a positive freedom-for making a decision or choice. Will, by contrast, corresponds to a negative freedom-from the inclinations. It represents the pure self-determination of the person, subject only to pure

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<sup>182</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:412, 34; En. Tr., 66.

<sup>183</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:213, 17; *MM*, 374–375. Translation modified to return "choice" to *Willkür*.

practical reason. Kant, unlike Scheler, cannot be charged with intellectualism. Kant fully recognizes that we can and do choose what is wrong with full knowledge that it is wrong, utilizing *Willkür*. Nor would the Hildebrandian have a problem with Kant's conception that a perfectly untempted will would univocally and inevitably do what is morally good. As seen before, Hildebrand allows that a virtuous person is no less free for not being tempted.<sup>184</sup> Where the difference lies is that for Kant freedom is not self-donation and subjection, it is instead *self-legislation*. We submit to a moral law, but it is at one with freedom itself. In a telling passage in the *Groundwork*, Kant finds our human dignity to be not the submission aspect of this equation, but rather the self-legislating aspect:

For indeed there is no sublimity in him in so far as he is subject to the moral law; but there is [this sublimity], in so far as with regard to it he is at the same time legislating and only because of that subordinated to it.<sup>185</sup>

This, then, is the fundamental reason why a holy will does not experience obligation for Kant. For both Hildebrand and Kant, a finite holy will that is not subject to any unruly inclinations necessarily wills what is good-in-itself, as this is the only possible motive for such a will. But for Kant, this holy will does not submit, it does not give a *fiat*. If we could but “come into possession of holiness of will by an accord of will with the pure moral law becoming, as it were, our nature,” then we would no longer experience morality as obligatory.<sup>186</sup> And this would be because it has become “our nature,” at one with our very selves. What Hildebrand calls the “sober distance” between the self and the moral law collapses.<sup>187</sup> From a Hildebrandian perspective, there has been an elision of the moral law,

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<sup>184</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 326.

<sup>185</sup> Kant, *G*, 4:440, 68; En. Tr., 88.

<sup>186</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:82, 206.

<sup>187</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 41.

pure practical reason, and the will. While Kant keeps practical reason and will distinct from each other, he nevertheless identifies them so closely as to elide the essential difference of their roles.

For Hildebrand, reason does not legislate the moral law but rather finds it given in moral experience, a position that is anathema for Kant.<sup>188</sup> Second, even if reason gives the moral law clearly and plainly and there is no tempting alternative motive for acting, it is still the proper function of the will to give the person's *fiat*. Ultimately, the Hildebrandian finds that Kant has misidentified the will. In fact, the proper notion is, if anywhere, found in Kant's *Willkür*. For the nature of the will is not an inevitable conformation to pure practical reason, hindered only by the inclinations. Conformation to reason and to the good-in-itself is not the nature of will; it is rather its essential and irreplaceable task. Even an unhindered good will has to make the *decision* for the good. One must give the *fiat*. For only in using one's will can one give oneself as a person. This *fiat*, this submission is the very task and dignity of the will and of freedom. In the Kantian Kingdom of Ends, we are all self-legislators of the moral law, but in the Kingdom of Values, we freely accept a law we cannot give to ourselves, and, in so doing, become its free subjects.

The significance of the subtle yet profound divide becomes clear with two further considerations. First, consider again Kant's practical love. For Kant when I give myself to another as precious, as good-in-him-or-herself, I respond only to that practical reason and will that is formally the same in both of us. This is how one must interpret Kant's claim that "all respect for a person is actually only respect for the law."<sup>189</sup> Here a personalist

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<sup>188</sup> See the discussion of reason and the mind in contrast to the heart and the will at [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), pp. 124–129.

<sup>189</sup> Kant, G, 4:401ff, 56ff.

critique can be made (indeed it is one Scheler has already made and which we have seen above in Chapter Four): Kantian ethics misses the personhood of the person, the uniqueness of myself and the Other.<sup>190</sup> One submits to a reason that, for all of Kant's care, remains universal and therefore impersonal. Were Kant correct, we would, as purely moral beings, be qualitatively identical to each other. For Scheler and Hildebrand, however, it is the function of the will to give the human person as this unique human person.

Yet Kant cannot abandon his formalism without his self-legislation falling into a subjectivism, and this is the second consideration. For Kant, the will either follows maxims given by pure practical reason or given by an empirical object. Empirical objects, for Kant, cannot provide universal or unconditional moral rules, e.g., a prohibition on murder. Further, the relation of the realization of such an empirical object to *the faculty of desire* "is called pleasure in the reality of the object."<sup>191</sup> Thus "all material practical principles as such are, without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle of self-love."<sup>192</sup> It is this that leads Kant to neglect receptivity to what is other than the will/practical reason. After all, if I let love for my neighbor, in his radical particularity, give me the moral law, what is to prevent me from doing injustice to another in his favor (and subtly, my own favor). My pathological love for the other would be the author of my maxims, and these maxims would be unfree. Given Kant's premises, his fear is justified. Any maxim I would give to myself in this way not only subjects me to heteronomy but also to self-love. For Kant the only way to preserve the identification of personal freedom and

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<sup>190</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 370–376. See the argument for this above at [6.2.3: Moral Goodness: What's Love Got To Do With It](#), pp. 306–307.

<sup>191</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:21, 155.

<sup>192</sup> Kant, *CPrR*, 5:22, 155.

moral freedom is for the will to say *non serviam* to everything other than itself as pure practical reason.

Drop Kant's formalism, and we have *Willkür* making "free" choices that are always submission to self-love and to empirical objects. One retains the Kantian conception of freedom as autonomy, as a law unto itself. Yet one drops what allowed Kant to connect that freedom, however imperfectly in my view, to the moral law. Freedom becomes identified with "a faculty to do or to refrain from doing as one pleases," i.e., with *Willkür*, arbitrariness. Kant himself would be the first to say that what I have termed above the "annulment" of freedom necessarily results. One is free to do as one pleases, but one is not in control of what one pleases. Nor can one "refrain" from doing what one pleases because there is no other possible motive for acting beyond what is subjectively satisfying to me, what I am inclined to do in Kant's terms. The self-determining ground of choice is no longer practical reason but rather the objects of the inclinations. The heteronomy that paradoxically only self-love can impose is the necessary result. Scheler saw the dilemma Kant had painted himself into. To give the key quote from him that I started the Introduction with:

Thus the *πρώτο ψευδος* leads to a false alternative: there is either heteronomy of the person through a pure logonomy and, indeed, the tendency to complete depersonalization, or the ethical individualism of living one's life without any inner limits on one's rights.<sup>193</sup>

We can see here the genesis of the idol of freedom as arbitrariness critiqued above. It is an idol that Kant would certainly have abhorred. Perhaps foreseeing its coming in his

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<sup>193</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 373.

own Enlightenment milieu, he strove to avoid it by attempting to identify freedom and morality in autonomy. Yet a very mitigated form of this idol of unrestrained freedom remains in his philosophy due to that very concept of autonomy. Freedom is defined as autonomy, with an implicit *non serviam* to anything other than the will/practical reason. Kant's freedom cannot be an anti-moral idol, since for him being moral and free are identical. Yet making this identification, Kant finds not the bias of freedom for the morally good, but rather its sameness (in the Levinasian sense of the term "sameness") with the moral law and with reason. This sameness ultimately fails to take into account the true sovereign and "sober distance" between the will, reason, and morality, their otherness and irreducibility to each other. Even in being conscious of legislating a moral law that is based on nothing other than the dignity that I share with all rational beings, is there not, contrary to Kant's own intention, a subtle temptation to pride, as Hildebrand suspects? For nothing has given me this law but only I myself. Kant's *non serviam* is the tragic result of his acceptance of an ultimately Humean conception of the empirical and especially of affectivity. Kant's project of reconciling freedom and morality is noble, but in doing so by conceiving of freedom as solely autonomy, he falsifies both freedom and morality.

While for both Kant and Hildebrand responsibility entails freedom, for Hildebrand we must also reverse the terms: freedom entails, and indeed is, a moral response-ability. It is giving one's *fiat* to the truth about value, a truth beyond reason, heart, and the will. *Pace* Kant, freedom is not found in self-legislation, but rather in submission to value. For this submission is in fact not just a bare submission but self-donation, in which the true meaning of reason and especially the will come into focus. Reason gives the law because it discovers

the law.<sup>194</sup> Reason takes-cognizance of the moral law as precisely other than reason itself and the person. It is not the same as this law. This is the case even when what I am taking-cognizance of is my own human dignity and moral obligations tied to my own dignity.

So we find here neither impersonal reason nor the annulled freedom of arbitrary choice (*Willkür*). We find, instead, Hildebrand's greatest contribution to the phenomenology of freedom: self-donation. Nor do we find bare reason or will, but a freedom nourished by the heart as well as by value. The height and pinnacle of freedom is not found in a Kantian subject who struggles mightily against the inclinations, nor in a holy will who experiences no obligation. It is found, rather, in the very obligations of the heart.

This leads us to Hildebrand's second greatest contribution to the phenomenology of freedom: cooperative freedom. The heart has so often been opposed to freedom because our affective responses, our emotions, cannot be engendered by us. The heart is therefore suspect for any philosophy that conceives of freedom as autonomy, for nowhere does the heteronomy of what is other than one invade one with such force than in the experience of a powerful affective feeling and response. And yet it is in recognizing our very freedom to sanction these responses that Hildebrand finds the very key to identifying moral freedom with personal freedom in the proper way. Hildebrand himself, I argue, did not see the full implications of cooperative freedom for freedom in general and the will in particular because throughout his corpus, even in *Moralia*, he tends to associate the will with action.<sup>195</sup> But once we recognize that on a deeper stratum the will "turns to things already

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<sup>194</sup> I make this point above at [3.2.2: Intellect, Heart, Will: The Three Spiritual Centers of the Person](#), pp. 125–126.

<sup>195</sup> See my critique above at [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), pp. 207–210.



existing in cooperative way,” namely the essences of values, we can see the full implications of Hildebrand’s revolutionary conception of freedom.<sup>196</sup>

This conception of freedom as a cooperative *fiat* has radical implications for social and political thought, which we cannot discuss here. Suffice to say that if liberal thought has looked to Kant’s autonomy for the source of human dignity, it has missed something of the grandeur and sublimity of the submission of self-donation. It has missed, in fact, the nature of the person as a relational being who finds him- or herself, his or her freedom, only in giving him- or herself as a unique person. For it is when we say “let it be done unto me according your will,” to value, its laws, and ultimately for Hildebrand, to God, that we are set free for freedom (NAB: Luke1:38; Gal 5:1).

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<sup>196</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 143.

## **CONCLUSION: THE RECONCILIATION OF FREEDOM AND MORALITY IN SELF-DONATION**

With due apologies to the tired reader, only now do I feel it is appropriate to reveal that the entirety of this dissertation can be summarized in a single four-letter word: *fiat*. In this small word, all of freedom is contained and the whole philosophy thereof. If Kant's ethics are guided by the question "what are the conditions of the possibility for laws of freedom," this phenomenological analysis has been guided by the question "what are the conditions of the possibility of free self-donation?" This question by no means entails a transcendental method, nor that the dissertation rely on a mere analysis of concepts. Rather, it inquires for freedom to give itself in the very experience of free self-donation, running all the way up to loving goodness. The central conclusion of the dissertation is that freedom must be recognized as self-donation to be properly reconciled with morality.

Self-donation supports Hildebrand's radical realism. For to give one's *fiat*, one must give oneself to something or to some person. This requires a priority of receptivity to activity that was the subject of Chapters One, Two, and Three. We take cognizance of what is other than ourselves in its value and are "as it were void," as the content is solely on the object side.<sup>1</sup> It is here where Hildebrand's philosophy finds a deep connection with that of Levinas in his quest to do justice to the otherness of the Other, despite their significant differences. It is in being receptive that we come to recognize transcendent moral values, justice, purity, loving goodness, in and through relationships with unique, singularly precious others.

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<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 206.

Only after this receptivity is the activity of freedom made possible. *Nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*, one cannot will, give one's *fiat*, to what is not first known.<sup>2</sup> Even the most basic responses of the person, the basic fundamental moral attitudes of pride, concupiscence, and reverence, themselves pertain to whether the person is open or closed to the location of values.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the marked parallel between Hildebrand's epistemology and his philosophy of freedom is no accident, and for this reason it was necessary to begin with his epistemology in Chapters One and Two. Reverence is necessary for philosophy; a willingness to follow the demands of values is required in order to be open to the world of values in the first place.<sup>4</sup> Just as taking-cognizance "concerts with" and contains a "going-with" the word it receives from the object, so too the will must be ready to concert and go-with the world of values.<sup>5</sup> Reverence is necessary not just for the freedom of philosophy, but for freedom as such.

Recognizing the dependence of the will on importance and receptivity is, ironically, what allows one to recognize the independence of the will and its activity. This was the main point of Chapter Three, but it becomes even clearer now following the subsequent chapters. For, ironically, the failure to give full account of receptivity of taking-cognizance leads to an inability to recognize the proper function and independence of the will: it alone can give the person's *fiat*. This error was present in different ways in Husserl, James, Scheler, and even Kant.<sup>6</sup> As shown in Chapter Three for James and Husserl, the mind determines the will; whereas Hildebrand recognizes that the will must give its own free

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<sup>2</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, *SW*, 522. See [2.3.2: The Indirect Givenness of Values in a Basic Stance \(\*Grundstellung\*\)](#), p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 188.

<sup>5</sup> Hildebrand, *WP*, 22–24.

<sup>6</sup> James, *Psychology*, 524–525. See Ferrarello, "On the Rationality of Will in James and Husserl;" Melle, "Husserl's Phenomenology of Willing," 175. See above at [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the \*Fiat\* of the Will](#), pp. 142–151.

*fiat*, determined by nothing other than the person as a whole, unified substance. As seen throughout the dissertation, but especially in Chapters Three, Five, and Seven, Scheler too fails to notice that the will must make a decision.<sup>7</sup> For Scheler the activity of affectivity, by determining a person's *ordo amoris*, in effect determines the will. A clear insight into a value can simply engender the will of its own accord.<sup>8</sup> Instead, as Crosby notes, the motivating power of values must stop at it, and the person must freely engender his or her *fiat*.<sup>9</sup> Finally, as noted in Chapter Seven, even Kant falls to this mistake in his identification of the will with pure practical reason.<sup>10</sup> Any conception of freedom as being fundamentally autonomy fails to recognize the essential other-directedness of our own freedom. That Kant finds a way to identify this autonomy with the moral law itself, reconciling freedom and morality, only ensures that he misses the other-directed character of freedom and morality alike. In so doing, he misses the essential task and role of freedom: to give the person in self-donation.

Even Hildebrand himself perhaps, did not see the full implications of his philosophy for the will because he overemphasized the link of the will to freedom of action and activity.<sup>11</sup> He misses that the will itself is the seat of cooperative freedom and “turns to something already existing a cooperative way.”<sup>12</sup> This is why it was necessary to show that the sanction of cooperative freedom pertains to the will. Then, conversely, there is an element of the concerting present in the *fiat* that is present in all forms of freedom, i.e., in

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<sup>7</sup> See [3.3.3: James, Husserl, and Hildebrand on the Fiat of the Will](#), pp. 142–151; [5.3.2: Scheler vs. Hildebrand on Ought and Obligation](#), pp. 254–258; and [7.2: Fundamental Freedom](#), pp. 341–348.

<sup>8</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 192.

<sup>9</sup> Crosby, “Person and Obligation,” 110.

<sup>10</sup> See [7.6: Conclusion: Why Moral Freedom Must Be Heteronomy](#), pp. 389–398.

<sup>11</sup> Hildebrand, *Moralia*, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Schwarz, “Dietrich von Hildebrand on the Role of the Heart and the Will in Love,” 139. See above at [4.4.2: Identifying the Free Personal Center with the Will](#), pp. 207–210.

every *fiat* of the will. For every morally good or evil *fiat* of the will either neglects, rejects, or entails a sanction of reverence and disavowal of pride and concupiscence. Since value is at what validates the other types of importance, any will that runs counter to value deprives itself of its own foundation. The *fiat* of the will ultimately fails at its own attempt at objectification, even when a perfectly intelligible subjectively satisfying good (e.g., delicious pears) are the motive.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the general will to be morally good is itself necessary for full personal freedom. The will represents the moral center of the person that opens the person both to the world of values and ultimately to his or her own relational self, ordered to the world of values. Pride and concupiscence, by contrast, close the person and, if left unchecked, lead to moral value-blindness.<sup>14</sup> It is a general will set on responding to an *ordo amoris* of values, given not on the side of the object as non-moral values as Scheler supposes but rather it is given as an order of moral values found on the side of the task given to the subject.<sup>15</sup> This general will includes in itself the most fundamental moral attitudes of reverence, faithfulness, responsibility and veracity.<sup>16</sup> Finally, this will contains the seeds of the virtues and intends the virtues.

We saw here that this conception of the general will to be morally good is closer to Kant's own conception of the good will than Hildebrand himself recognizes. While Kant has gained, not without some faults of his own, a reputation for neglecting affectivity, in the *Tugendlehre* he does make the cultivation of affectivity a part of virtue.<sup>17</sup> For both Kant

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<sup>13</sup> See [4.5: The Cooperative Moment of Freedom](#), pp. 210–220.

<sup>14</sup> See above at [5.2.2: The Good Will, Culpable Value-Blindness, and False Moralities](#), pp. 241–250.

<sup>15</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 272. See [5.3.4: The Hildebrandian, Modified Ordo Amoris](#), pp. 264–266.

<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand, "Reverence," in *AL*, 1–8; "Faithfulness," in *AL*, 9–17; "Responsibility," in *AL*, 19–26; "Veracity," in *AL*, 27–34. See [5.5: Conclusion: Freedom as Sanctioned Good Will](#), pp. 283–285.

<sup>17</sup> Kant, *MM*, 6:399, 32–33, *MM*, 528; *MS* 6:400, 34; *MM*, 529; *MS*, 6:457, 103; *MM*, 575.

and Hildebrand, a fundamental will to do what is good in itself is the very core of all the virtues.<sup>18</sup> Where they differ is that, for Kant, virtue is always a moral courage that requires a moral struggle; an untempted will would not experience virtue. For Hildebrand, by contrast, virtue moves a person to a higher stage of moral development beyond that of the morally struggling person though never, in this life, without the possibility of temptation. Second, Hildebrand recognizes a direct role for freedom to disavow or sanction, and thereby merge with, affective responses.<sup>19</sup> This is a role for freedom that escapes Kant. Hildebrand's approach to the virtues, therefore, provides a new way to bring virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and phenomenological ethics together. It is also able to show, with special clarity, how the virtues enhance freedom.

The height of moral goodness, therefore, is found in a unified giving of both the will and heart of the person, and this reaches its climax in the fundamental moral attitude of loving goodness (*Güte*).<sup>20</sup> The investigation of love is necessary for this investigation of freedom because love is at the heart of moral goodness. Loving goodness represents the paradigm of moral goodness. It reveals the importance of care for one's subjectivity (*Eigenleben*) in order to give a full self-donation.<sup>21</sup> A spouse would be insulted by the claim that no care for the lover's own happiness should enter into love, for then the lover has refused the gift of his or her very own subjectivity.<sup>22</sup> In a similar manner, Seifert correctly retorted to Hildebrand that concern for the happiness that comes from being moral can and should enter into one's self-donation in moral acts.<sup>23</sup> This revealed three additional ways

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<sup>18</sup> See [5.4.1: Hildebrand, Kant, Scheler, and Aristotle on the Virtues](#), pp. 267–278.

<sup>19</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 338.

<sup>20</sup> Hildebrand, "Goodness," in *AL*, 35–41.

<sup>21</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 206.

<sup>22</sup> Hildebrand, *NL*, 211–212, 220.

<sup>23</sup> Seifert, *The Moral Action*, Chapter 6.

being moral enhances freedom. It recollects one to one's deepest subjectivity. It nourishes, gives one "fuel," "energy," and "strength" to do moral tasks.<sup>24</sup> Finally, it intensifies the activity, making one more attentive to the activity and more likely to do it again in the future. Again, we find that the good will is naturally oriented toward the development of virtue.

While the sanction of cooperative freedom can only be actualized in line with the general will to be morally good, the *fiat* of the will more generally can be evil. Thus, the *fiat* and the sanction are distinct. We can and freely do chose what is merely subjectively satisfying over what has value, even to the extent of willing moral evil for its own sake. But to do so always subverts one's freedom. It deprives it of the support that only an ultimate reference to value can bring. It fails to recollect one to one's deepest subjectivity. It deprives one of the nourishment of true happiness and intensifies the wrong activities. It fails to conform to the *ordo amoris* of values.

Thus, the bias of freedom for the morally good is revealed, one that is given in the lived experience of becoming freer when one is moral and less free when one goes against what is moral. Ultimately, what Hildebrandian philosophy brings to the forefront is a conception of the human person as substantial and relational, active yet first receptive.<sup>25</sup> He highlights that we are and ought to be rational persons; open to the world of real values. We are ordained to giving oneself, to surrender and self-donation (*Hingabe*). We are able to refuse this ordination, turning to what is merely subjectively satisfying, but only at the expense of self-enclosure. For doing what is evil leads to a vitiation of our very nature as persons. In short, and again not without parallels to, though also divergances from Levinas'

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<sup>24</sup> See Alice von Hildebrand, "Hope," in *AL*, 62–63. Levinas, *TI*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> See above at [2.6: Conclusion: The Freedom of Philosophy](#), pp. 114–117.

thought, personal freedom is a creaturely freedom, for it is one that “can only arise only in a being that has an origin prior to its origin-that is created.”<sup>26</sup> The theological implications of this conception of freedom, will, alas, have to be reserved for a future work.

### **8.1: Avenues for Further Research**

I see several new paths of research opened by this dissertation. First, there are myriad applications of this conception of freedom as never contravening morality but instead enhanced by it. One is religious freedom. While most of the philosophical literature on justifying religious toleration does so by appeal to intellectual humility about one’s beliefs, the findings of this dissertation open an alternative and complementary person-based approach to justifying religious freedom and toleration that focuses on the dignity of the person who is ordered to free pursuit and free acceptance of the truth. This is one that Hildebrand himself has already noted was presented by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>27</sup> However, providing a clear philosophical presentation of this justification of religious freedom and tolerance, open to many religious traditions from within their own internal commitments is one that I think is a worthwhile project.

Another application is in environmental ethics. As noted in the Introduction, it is quite often found that claims of environmental justice are countermanded by claims that proposed environmental restrictions harm personal freedom. This problem must be approached carefully. In some cases, this can be true. To give an extreme example, a total instant ban on all fossil fuels (leading to global blackouts) would so lessen available energy that all people would suffer undue restrictions on their freedom. But in other cases, it must be recognized that a genuinely good environmental restriction does not contravene but

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<sup>26</sup> Levinas, *TI*, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Hildebrand, *TH*, 33–34.



indeed enhances one's personal freedom and the freedom of one's society. There is much work to be done in extending Hildebrand's value ethics to this domain of environmental ethics.

I wish to close with a limitation of the conclusions that points to another avenue of research. The Hildebrandian account of freedom I have provided, taken by itself, may lean too far to the side of emphasizing what I have called the heteronomous, submissive aspects of freedom over active, self-creating aspects of freedom. Language of self-creation can sometimes be used to oppose freedom to morality. Thus, it is crucial to articulate first the responsive relationship of freedom and morality. However, once elucidated, it can still seem as if freedom would be following a narrow pre-set path. For instance, if the moral choice is between stealing a medicine from other critically ill patients or to allow oneself to die, there can only be one choice. But perhaps in other scenarios where there are multiple morally available options, freedom has a role in conferring some measure of value on the choice. Suppose one could develop one's talents as a philosopher or as an artist, in both cases giving one's work a moral focus (e.g., artwork or publications to counteract injustice). One however, could not do both. It may be the case that one's free choice of one over the other grants to the chosen option a certain value by becoming integrated in one's personal story, one's *Eigenleben*. This suggests an aspect of creativity present in freedom that is not brought up by the conclusions of this dissertation but also not excluded by them. There is more to the cooperation of freedom with value than can be covered in this dissertation.

## APPENDIX 1: PHILOSOPHICAL BIOGRAPHY

- 1889: Born as the fifth child and only son of Adolf and Irene Hildebrand (the aristocratic “von” was added to the family later by Ludwig III, King of Bavaria, who was a friend of Adolf Hildebrand). Dietrich is raised in their Florence, Italy estate, San Francesco. Aloys Fischer is among his tutors. Adolf Hildebrand was already a well known sculptor and had written a work on aesthetics.
- 1906: Student under Theodor Lipps in LMU in Munich. He joined the *Akademischer Verein für Psychologie*. Took classes taught by Pfänder and Fischer. He meets Adolf Reinach and Max Scheler at this point. Scheler and Hildebrand go on to become close friends, though they have a falling out after the collapse of Scheler’s second marriage and Scheler’s subsequent abandonment of Catholicism and theism.
- 1909: Moves to Göttingen to study under Husserl. Meets Margarete “Gretchen” Denek.
- 1912. Completes dissertation in Vienna: *Die Träger der Sittlichen innerhalb der Handlung*. PhD Diss. University of Göttingen. Later published as (1916) *Die Idee der sittlichen Handlung*.  
Contains concept of *Kenntnisnahme* as a purely passive and receptive “taking-cognizance” where the subject is “void,”  
Contains distinction between importance “für mich” and “an sich,” roughly equivalent to his later distinction between the merely subjectively satisfying and value.
- 1912: Son Francis born, marries Margaret (Gretchen) Denek.
- 1914: Dietrich and Gretchen convert to Catholicism.
- 1918 Submits Habilitation *Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntnis*, published in 1922.  
Contains distinction between taking-cognizance of values (*Wertnehmen*, *Wertsehen*) and feeling of values (*Wertfühlen*).  
Introduces notion of cooperative freedom and moral centers (*moralische Zentren*) to explain moral value blindness.
- 1927: *Reinheit und Jungfräulichkeit*. Later translated as *In Defense of Purity*  
Contains Hildebrand’s early articulation of virtue as a superactual disposition/attitude to do good actions and responses.
- 1929. *Die Ehe*. Later Republished as *Marriage*.

- Defends notion that while reproduction is the end of marriage, mutual love is the meaning of marriage. This work is seen as having an influence on the Second Vatican Council.
- 1930. *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*.  
Argues that the human community must be built on the “virtus unitiva” of values, the ability of the whole world of values to unite humans.
  - 1933. *Liturgie und Persönlichkeit*. Later translated as *Liturgy and Personality*.  
Defines the notion of *Persönlichkeit* as one who embodies the perfections proper to being a person in an exceptional way.
  - 1933c. *Sittliche Grundhaltungen* Later translated as *Fundamental Moral Attitudes* and expanded into his *Art of Living* with his second wife, Alice.  
Argues that the four fundamental moral attitudes of reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, and veracity are essential to and constitutive of the moral value response and the development of personality. By contrast, the fifth fundamental moral attitude, loving goodness (*Güte*) is the crown and result of good value responses.
  - 1933-1938. Flees Germany following the Reichstag fire, spends brief exile in Switzerland and then settles in Vienna. Publishes the *Der Christliche Ständestaat* (*The Christian Corporative State*) in support of the Dollfuss regime in Austria. Many of his writings in this work reference his views on personal freedom as moral freedom and his opposition to collectivism and individualism.
  - 1938-1940: Is on the run from Nazis in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and France. Settles in New York City and is granted a position at Fordham University.
  - 1940. *Die Umgestaltung in Christus*. Translated as *Transformation in Christ*  
Major religious work. Outlines from what Dietrich views as a purely philosophical/phenomenological perspective the effect of grace in the transformation of the life of the Christian.
  - 1950. *Der Sinn philosophischen Fragens und Erkennnens*.  
First major work on epistemology, later expanded into *What is Philosophy?*
  - 1953 *Christian Ethics*.  
First major work in ethics, published originally in English, later republished as *Ethics*.
  - 1955 (With Alice). *True Morality and Its Counterfeits*.  
Later expanded into *Morality and Situation Ethics*. Argues against situation or existential ethics that deny universal moral obligations exist.
  - 1957. (With Alice) *Graven Images: Substitutes for True Morality*.

Investigates notion of a “substitute” for morality where an extra-moral value (e.g., honor, the state) is treated as if it were the denominator of morality.

- 1960. *What is Philosophy?*  
Major work in mature work in epistemology and outlines his own realist phenomenological method.
- 1965. *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*.  
Major work on affectivity. First half devoted to a philosophical and phenomenological description of intentional affectivity, second half is a devotional to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- 1971. *Das Wesen der Liebe*. Translated as *The Nature of Love*.  
Along with *Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, considered to be Hildebrand’s master work. Mature statement of his philosophy of love.  
Introduces the notion of *Eigenleben*.
- 1977-1984: *Aesthetics*. Vol 1 and 2 (2 is unfinished).  
Major work on Aesthetics. Distinguishes between the “metaphysical beauty” all values have (e.g., the beauty of this act of forgiveness) and the specific beauty of sight and sound (e.g., beauty of this scene I see with my eyes or melody that I hear with my ears).
- Dies 1977.
- 1980: *Moralia* posthumously published. This is his most extensive treatment of the nuances of moral life. It includes developments of his notion of cooperative freedom, the will, and introduces sources of moral intrinsic importance not reducible to value.

## APPENDIX 2: LEXICON

Term	Preferred Translation	Other Translations	Definitions
<i>Die Achtung</i>	Reverence (Kant) Respect (Hildebrand, proper)	Paying attention. Respect	For Kant: Reverence for the moral law/humanity. For Hildebrand: Respect for others. Implicitly weaker than <i>Ehrfurcht</i> and does not refer to the person as a unique person.
<i>Das Affiziertwerden</i>	Being-affected (Hildebrand)		Being affected by a value.
<i>aktuell</i>	Actual (consciousness)		The present, actual, ever changing consciousness of the person
<i>Antwort</i>	Response	(lit.) Answer	Type of position-taking that responds to an object or state of affairs.
<i>Die Bedeutsamkeit</i>	Importance (Hildebrand)	Significance	Basic property of an object or state of affairs that allows it to motivate the will or the affective heart.
<i>Die sittliche/moralische Bedeutsamkeit</i>	Moral relevance/significance		Importance that marks an object, attitude, act, or state of affairs as related to morality

<i>Das Begehren</i>	Desire (not consciously engendered)	Wish, Want	Desires engendered in the person but not by the person
<i>Die Begehrlichkeit</i>	Concupiscence	Covetousness Desire Longing Lustfulness	Fundamental moral stance that aims at having subjectively satisfying goods and ignores values. Along with pride it is one of the two centers of immorality.
<i>Die Behauptung</i>	Assertion (Reinach, Hildebrand).		An act which generates a statement. Requires linguistic expression
<i>bestand</i>	Obtaining (of a state of affairs) (Reinach, Hildebrand).		The existing or obtaining of a state of affairs.
<i>Das Bewußtsein</i>	Consciousness	Intentional, Purposeful, Awareness	Consciousness.
<i>moralisch unbewußt/bewußt</i>	Morally unconscious/morally conscious		Awareness of the specific moral significance of moral demands or lack of that awareness.
<i>Bewußtsein-von</i>	Consciousness-of (Hildebrand)		Frontal consciousness-of an intentional object.

<i>Die Beziehung des Gebührens</i>	Due-relation (Hildebrand)		The relationship of a value to its response that marks the response as being either proper or improper.
<i>kommandieren</i>	comanding (an act)		The dimension of the will where the will commands an act take place and initiates a new causal chain in the world to realize the act.
<i>Der Kompromiss</i>	Compromise		A norm that takes the place of morality as an unconscious “compromise” between the value-responding center and pride and concupiscence.
<i>Die Daseinserfahrung</i>	Experience of Existence		Experience of the existence of a thing as opposed to the experience of the such-being of a thing.
<i>doxa</i>	Opinion (Hildebrand, Plato) Thesis (Husserl) Belief (Husserl, Hildebrand, Plato)		For Hildebrand: an unsubstantiated philosophical position. For Husserl: the basic modality of belief that an object or the world exists.

<i>desavouieren</i>	To disavow		Free position-taking that both rejects another morally relevant position-taking and seeks to dissolve it, part of cooperative freedom.
<i>Die Dringlichkeit</i>	Urgency		State of a situation that may make responding to it an obligatory act even if it has a lower value than another act.
<i>Der Durchbruch</i>	Breakthrough		A breakthrough to awareness of the world of values. Opens one at least implicitly to an attitude of universal love.
<i>eidos</i>	Essence (Husserl), Highly intelligible essence (Hildebrand)	Idea, Form (Plato)	Highly intelligible essences, which are the main subject of phenomenology.
<i>Das Eigenleben</i>	“Subjectivity” (Hildebrand)	(lit.) own life, proper own life.	Concern for those things to which it is said <i>tua res agitur</i> , your concern as a unique person is at stake. Notably this includes the highest objective goods for the person.



<i>Die Eigenliebe</i>	Self-love (Kant, Scheler, Hildebrand).		Propensity to make the inclinations the determining ground of free acts (Kant)
<i>Die Einstellung</i>	Attitude (Husserl) Stance (Hildebrand)	Focusing	General attitude of a person toward the world, e.g., the natural or phenomenological attitudes
<i>Die Ehrfurcht</i>	Reverence (Hildebrand, Scheler, Kant)	(lit.) holy fear and awe	Fundamental moral attitude and virtue of openness to receiving values and willingness to give the proper response to their demands.
<i>Epochē</i>	Reduction, Suspension (Husserl, Stein)		Suspension of a positing that neither goes or does not go with that positing.
<i>Die Erkenntnis</i>	Knowledge-in-general (Hildebrand)		General term for knowledge encompassing <i>Kennen</i> , <i>Wissen</i> , <i>Kenntnisnahmen</i> and <i>Erkennen</i>
<i>erkennen</i>	To recognize		Apprehension that a state of affairs obtains without necessarily having acquaintance with the object.

<i>Der Ernst</i>	Seriousness (Hildebrand)		The seriousness of morality and the call of morally relevant values, especially those that impose moral obligations but sometimes extending to supererogatory act.
<i>fiat</i> (Latin)	“Let it be” <i>Es Werde</i> (German)		Volitional affirmation that a state of affairs or object should be. (Husserl, Hildebrand) Consent that an act should take place (James)
<i>Die mitwirkende Freiheit</i>	Cooperative freedom		Freedom to sanction or disavow another experience already present in one.
<i>freunda</i> (Latin)	Objectively gladdening goods		Goods whose presence makes us happy due to their value, e.g., a beautiful scene, but are considered as objective goods for the person.
<i>Die Forderung</i>	Demand (Hildebrand)		The demand that values make on one for a specific response.
<i>fordert</i>	To call (Hildebrand), To demand		A value “calls for” or “demands” a proper response.

<i>Das Gefühl</i>	Feeling (Kant, Scheler, Hildebrand) Heart (Scheler)		Heart: Center of affectivity. Feeling: Affective state, typically those that have an intentional structure.
<i>Der Gefühlszustand</i>	Feeling-State (Scheler)		Feeling-state out of which a person acts, rather than being motivated by some object.
<i>Das Gehalt</i>	Experiential Content		Experiential content of an experienced position-taking, e.g., joy, as opposed to objective content, e.g., the arrival of my friend.
<i>Die Gesinnung</i>	Attitude, Conviction (Kant, Hildebrand) Basic Moral Tenor (Scheler)	Disposition (Improper)	For Kant: Most basic maxim of actions. For Scheler: Basic directionality of the will toward higher or lower values, set by the affective <i>ordo amoris</i> . For Hildebrand: General conviction of whether values are to be respected or the subjectively satisfying pursued.

<i>Die sittliche Grundhaltung</i>	Basic attitude, fundamental attitude		Sanctioned, consciously willed attitude directed to the world of values, as opposed to an unsanctioned basic stance
<i>Der sittliche Grundintention</i>	Basic moral intention, fundamental moral intention.		Basic moral intention to respond properly to the world of moral values.
<i>Die sittliche Grundstellung/Grund-einstellung</i>	Basic stance, fundamental stance		Unsanctioned basic direction/stance toward the world of values.
<i>Der Grundwert</i>	Basic value		Most fundamental value common to all more particular values in a value-family (e.g., moral goodness among all moral values like justice, humility, etc.)
<i>Die Haltung</i>	Attitude (Hildebrand)		Sanctioned position-taking in contrast to a <i>Stellung</i> (stance) that can be unsanctioned.
<i>Die Handlung</i>	Action (in the proper sense)		Transitive action that aims at realizing a state of affairs distinct from the action itself, e.g., saving a child.

<i>Der Herrschaft</i>	Sovereignty	(lit.) Lordship	The level of dominance achieved by the basic moral intention over the person.
<i>Die Hingabe</i>	Giving-to (Literal meaning) Self-donation Devotion Commitment Surrender (Hildebrand)	Abandon Dedication	Characteristic of all value responses in which one transcends one's subjective preferences to give to the value the response it calls for.
<i>Das Hingegebensein</i>	Being-given-over-to (Hildebrand)		A being given over to a basic evil stance that is the basis of value-blindness. This is deeper than the conscious surrender to an evil stance and is usually unrecognized by the person.
<i>Der Hochmut</i>	Pride (Scheler, Hildebrand)	Arrogance, haughtiness, (lit.) "Highness"	For Scheler: A pride in one's own goodness. For Hildebrand: Root of all moral evil and with concupiscence one of the two centers of moral evil in the person.

<i>Das aktuelle Ich</i>	Actual “I” (Hildebrand)		The “I” of one’s present, ever changing consciousness. This I is arbitrarily free. Contrasted with deeper, superactual layers of the Person.
ideo-motor action (James)			Willed action that results from the mere presence of an idea and the lack of a countervailing idea. Does not involve a <i>fiat</i> .
Idol, Graven Image (Hildebrand)			A conscious compromise, e.g., a norm that functions as a replacement for true morality.
<i>Der Inhalt</i>	Objective content		Content of an object or a state of affairs.
<i>Die Inangriffnahme</i>	“Switching on” the realization of an action (Hildebrand)		Last stage of willing that initiates the actual, physical realization of the action.
<i>intentio benevolentiae</i>			Intention to give what is objectively good to the beloved. Crucial to all forms of love.
<i>intentio unionis</i>			Intention for union with the beloved. Found in all forms of love.

Investiture (Levinas)			Freedom's being invested with purpose and meaning by the call of the Other, liberating freedom from arbitrariness.
<i>kennen</i>	"Having Knowledge" ( <i>What is Philosophy?</i> ), to know by acquaintance.		Knowledge as having the object present to one with or without taking-cognizance.
<i>konspirieren</i>	Concerting (Hildebrand)		A value response "concerts with" the value it responds to. The Mitvollzug also concerts with the intentional object it is receiving.
<i>leer</i>	void	Empty	For Hildebrand, in all taking-cognizance the subject is void of experiential content ( <i>Gehalt</i> ) and the content of the experience is the objective content ( <i>Inhalt</i> ) of the intentional object
<i>Das Meinen</i>	The meant, meaning act (Husserl, Reinach, Hildebrand)		A meaning act that intends some state of affairs.

<i>Der Objektivierungsversuch</i>	Objectification, objectivation (Husserl, Hildebrand)		1) Having or making something to appear in an object-like manner. (Husserl) 2) Having an object that founds the will/sanction.
<i>Das objektive Gut für die Person</i>	Objective good for the person.	<i>Bonum</i> (Aristotleian-Thomistic philosophy) conception of Good).	Third category of importance, besides merely subjectively satisfying and important-in-itself. Refers to the true objective interest of the person.
<i>ordo amoris</i>	Order of loves, order of values (Augustine, Scheler, Hildebrand)		Hierarchical order of preference among higher and lower values or other type of goods.
<i>Der Ort</i>	Location, Place		The location of values which all basic moral stances intend
<i>Das Recht</i>	Right, Law (Kant, Reinach, Hildebrand)		
Responsibility (Fundamental Moral Attitude)			Awareness of the demands of morality, as opposed to moral unconsciousness ; willingness to wait until the value-situation is clear.



rigorism (Hildebrand)			Ethical position that choosing the morally more perfect attitude among other, less perfect attitudes is always obligatory.
<i>Die Sanktion</i>	The sanction (Hildebrand)		Free position-taking that both affirms and merges with another experience in cooperative freedom.
<i>Die Sachverhalt</i>	State of affairs (Reinach, Hildebrand)	Fact (improper)	Intentional correlate of a proposition or judgement.
<i>Der Schatz der Güte</i>	Treasure of Goodness		2nd source of morality. Moral acts come out of one's treasure of goodness rather than being called out by the object.
<i>Die metaphysische Schönheit</i>	Metaphysical beauty (Hildebrand)		The beauty proper to all values as their radiance and splendor, as opposed to the beauty of sights and sounds.
<i>Das Seinsollen</i>	Ought-to-be (Scheler, Hildebrand)	(lit.) ought-being	The "ought-to-be" of a value or some norm.
<i>Signum</i> (Latin)	Sign, Mark		Sign or mark of an act that signifies it comes from one of the three main spiritual centers.

<i>Der Sinn</i>	Sense, Meaning (Husserl, Hildebrand)		Refers to the meaning a being has, typically associated with essence
<i>Die Sinngebung</i>	Sense-giving (Husserl, Levinas)		Constitution or “making sense of” an intentional object.
<i>Die Sittlichkeit</i>	Morality		
<i>Das Sollen</i>	Ought (Kant, Scheler, Hildebrand, Husserl) “should”		The feature of experience where one experiences a “should” (not necessarily a moral obligation)
<i>Sosein</i>	Such-being, So-being (Husserl, Reinach, Hildebrand)	Essence (improper)	The such-being of a thing, as opposed to its existence, contains the essence of the object.
<i>Die Soseinserfahrung</i>	Experience of the such-being of a thing		Experience of a thing’s such-being, includes an intuition of its “such-being unity” and its essence.
<i>Die Stellungnahme</i>	Position-taking (Husserl, Stein, Reinach, Scheler, Hildebrand)	Opinion (improper) Position	An intentional conscious state that intends some other feature of the world
<i>Die Substanz</i>	Substance (Scheler, Hildebrand)		A thing which exists in itself (stands-in itself).

Substitute (Hildebrand)			An “idol” or norm where a non-moral value functions as the basis for a false form of morality. It is often a compromise with pride and concupiscence.
<i>Die Träger</i>	Bearer (of a value) (Husserl, Scheler, Hildebrand)		The object as bearer of a value or some other form of importance.
<i>Die Tiefe</i>	Depth		Depth of an experience, corresponds to different “layers” of the person deeper than actual consciousness.
<i>Überactuell</i>	Superactual (Hildebrand)		State of an experience being present even when one is not conscious of it, and which also “colors” one’s present experience.
<i>Die Überwertantwort</i>	Super value-response		A value response which also involves the value also being an objective good for one and which has greater self-donation than a typical value response.

<i>Die Überzeugung</i>	Cognitive Conviction (Reinach, Hildebrand)		Theoretical position-taking that refers to a state of affairs. Basis for a genuine assertion (as opposed to a lie).
<i>Das Verzeihen</i>	Forgiveness		The forgiving of another of a wrong they did toward you.
<i>vornehmen</i>	To undertake (the realization of an action)		Stage of willing where one puts forward and initiates the realization of an action
<i>Der Vorrang</i>	Priority (Hildebrand)		Priority not doing evil has over realizing a positive good. This priority is not reducible to a hierarchical preference.
<i>Der Vorsatz</i>	Resolution, Purpose (Hildebrand, Scheler, Husserl)	Intention (improper)	Resolution or intended plan to realize a state of affairs.
<i>Das Vorsetzen</i>	“Putting-forward” the realization of an action (Hildebrand).		Stage of willing where one puts forward and initiates the realization of an action
<i>Der Vorzug, Das Vorziehen</i>	Preference (Scheler, Hildebrand)		For Scheler: Cognitive and emotional act whereby a value is given as higher than a lower value or vice versa

			For Hildebrand: Conscious choice of a good as higher on a hierarchical scale.
<i>Die Welt der Werte</i>	The world of values		The world in its aspect as a unified cosmos of values.
<i>Der Wert</i>	Value		Property that characterizes an object or state of affairs as good- in-itself and having its own “metaphysical beauty”
<i>Die Wertantwort</i>	Value-response		Volitional or affective position-taking that responds to a value on the object side
<i>Der sittlich bedeutsame Wert</i>	Morally relevant value		A value that takes on moral significance, e.g., the dignity of a child who I must save from drowning.
<i>Die Wertblindheit</i>	Value-Blindness (Husserl, Stein, Scheler, Hildebrand)		Inability to intuit a value.
<i>Die partielle Wertblindheit</i>	Partial value-blindness		Ability to grasp the basic value of moral goodness but not some particular moral values, e.g., humility.

<i>Die Subsumptions-blindheit</i>	Subsumption [value] blindness		Inability to grasp that one's action in a particular value-situation violates a value one otherwise grasps, e.g., hating greed but not realizing I am being greedy in this situation
<i>Die totale konstitutive Wertblindheit</i>	Total constitutive value-blindness		Complete inability to grasp the basic-value of moral goodness. Present when person is completely dominated by concupiscence and/or pride.
<i>Das Werterfassen</i>	Value-grasping		Grasping of a value.
<i>Das Wertfühlen</i>	Feeling values, value-feeling (Scheler, Hildebrand)		Centipetal affective feeling of value. Basis of all value apprehension for Scheler but not for Hildebrand.
<i>Das Wertnahme</i>	Value perception	(lit.) value taking	Cognitive apprehension of values. First stage of all value consciousness
<i>Das Wertsehen</i>	Value perception	(lit.) seeing values	Cognitive intuitive "seeing" or apprehension of value. A "taking-cognizance" of value.

<i>Die Wertsituation</i>	Value situation		The total encompassing situation and its value. This is not understood by subsumption blindness
<i>Das Wesen</i>	Nature Being Essence		
<i>Das Wichtige an sich</i>	Important-in-itself		First category of importance. Refers to what is good- or bad-in-itself.
<i>Das Wichtig für mich</i>	Subjectively Satisfying	(lit.) Important for me	Second category of importance. Refers to one's purely subjective interest (e.g., an undeserved compliment).
<i>Das Wissen</i>	Vacuous knowing ( <i>Die Idee</i> ) Knowing (only SOA, <i>What is Philosophy?</i> ).	Knowing-that (improper)	Vacuous knowing. Can refer to objects in <i>Die Idee</i> , restricted to states of affairs in <i>What is Philosophy?</i> . It is the static knowing that corresponds to <i>Erkennen</i> .
<i>Das aktuelle Wissen</i>	Actual Knowing	Knowing-that	Knowing ( <i>Wissen</i> ) where the object is concretely before one's mind. This actual knowing can only refer to states of affairs.

<i>Das inaktuelle Wissen</i>	Inactual knowing		Knowing ( <i>Wissen</i> ) where the object is not concretely before one's mind. This can refer both to objects and states of affairs.
<i>Die Wille</i>	The will		The faculty of the person concerned with free decision.
<i>Der allgemeine Wille</i>	The general will (Husserl)		General teleological tendency toward the rational life that structures the whole conscious life and constitution of the person.
<i>Der überaktuelle allgemeine Wille, sittlich gut zu sein</i>	General will to be morally good (Hildebrand)		Superactual general will to respond to moral values properly and to become morally good.
<i>Die Willkür</i>	Augustine's <i>liberum arbitrium</i> ) [Kant]. Freedom of indifference Freedom of choice	Choice (improper)	For Kant: "The faculty to do or to refrain from doing as one pleases." (CPrR 6:213).
<i>willkürlich</i>	Arbitrary		Arbitrary, willful.
<i>wollen, Das Wollen</i>	To Will Willing Volition To Want "Wanting"	Desire (Improper)	An act of will engendered by the person.



<i>Das Wort</i>	Word		All objects metaphorically direct a “word” to the knowing person which is cognized.
<i>Der Wunsch</i>	Wish (as opposed to Wollen, willing).		
<i>Das geistige Zentrum</i>	Spiritual Center		The three main centers from which spiritual, intentional acts emerge: the mind, will and heart. Hildebrand occasionally refers to a free spiritual center that is not identical to the will.
<i>Das moralische Zentrum</i>	Moral center		The attitude from which qualitatively allied moral acts and position-takings issue.
<i>Die Zustimmung</i>	Assent		Assent contained in every willing that an object or state of affairs should be. It is the <i>fiat</i> .

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