HILDEBRAND PROJECT

The Heart | Seminar Reader

“THE HEART HAS ITS REASONS OF WHICH REASON KNOWS NOTHING.” – BLAISE PASCAL

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Newman on the Heart

John F. Crosby

"Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." Rom. viii. 15.

[Note] {313} WHEN Adam fell, his soul lost its true strength; he forfeited the inward light of God's presence, and became the wayward, fretful, excitable, and miserable being which his history has shown him to be ever since; with alternate strength and feebleness, nobleness and meanness, energy in the beginning and failure in the end. Such was the state of his soul in itself, not to speak of the Divine wrath upon it, which followed, or was involved in the Divine withdrawal. It lost its spiritual life and health, which was necessary to complete its nature, and to enable it to fulfil the ends for which it was created,—which was necessary both for its moral integrity and its happiness; and as if faint, hungry, or sick, it could no longer stand upright, but sank on the ground. Such is the state in which every one of us lies as born into the world; and Christ has {314} come to reverse this state, and restore us the great gift which Adam lost in the beginning. Adam fell from his Creator's favour to be a bond-servant; and Christ has come to set us free again, to impart to us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we become God's children, and again approach Him as our Father.

I say, by birth we are in a state of defect and want; we have not all that is necessary for the perfection of our nature. As the body is not complete in itself, but requires the soul to give it a meaning, so again the soul till God is present with it and manifested in it, has faculties and affections without a ruling principle, object, or purpose. Such it is by birth, and this Scripture signifies to us by many figures; sometimes calling human nature blind, sometimes hungry, sometimes unclothed, and calling the gift of the Spirit light, health, food, warmth, and raiment; all by way of teaching us what our first state is, and what our gratitude should be to Him who has brought us into a new state. For instance, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, ... and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Again, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Again, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Again, {315} "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And in the Book of Psalms, "They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house; and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures as out of the river. For with Thee is the well of life, and in Thy Light shall we see light." And in another Psalm, "My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips." And so again, in the Prophet Jeremiah, "I will satiate the souls of the priests with fatness; and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness ... I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." [Rev. iii. 17, 18. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Ephes. v. 14. John iv. 14. Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9; lxiii. 5. Jer. xxxi. 14, 25.]
Now the doctrine which these passages contain is often truly expressed thus: that the soul of man is made for the contemplation of its Maker; and that nothing short of that high contemplation is its happiness; that, whatever it may possess besides, it is unsatisfied till it is vouchsafed God's presence, and lives in the light of it. There are many aspects in which the same solemn truth may be viewed; there are many ways in which it may be signified. I will now dwell upon it as I have been stating it.

I say, then, that the happiness of the soul consists in the exercise of the affections; not in sensual pleasures, not in activity, not in excitement, not in self esteem, not in the consciousness of power, not in knowledge; in none of these things lies our happiness, but in our affections being elicited, employed, supplied. As hunger and thirst, as taste, sound, and smell, are the channels through which this bodily frame receives pleasure, so the affections are the instruments by which the soul has pleasure. When they are exercised duly, it is happy; when they are undeveloped, restrained, or thwarted, it is not happy. This is our real and true bliss, not to know, or to affect, or to pursue; but to love, to hope, to joy, to admire, to revere, to adore. Our real and true bliss lies in the possession of those objects on which our hearts may rest and be satisfied.

Now, if this be so, here is at once a reason for saying that the thought of God, and nothing short of it, is the happiness of man; for though there is much besides to serve as subject of knowledge, or motive for action, or means of excitement, yet the affections require a something more vast and more enduring than anything created. What is novel and sudden excites, but does not influence; what is pleasurable or useful raises no awe; self moves no reverence, and mere knowledge kindles no love. He alone is sufficient for the heart who made it. I do not say, of course, that nothing short of the Almighty Creator can awaken and answer to our love, reverence, and trust; man can do this for man. Man doubtless is an object to rouse his brother's love, and repays it in his measure. Nay, it is a great duty, one of the two chief duties of religion, thus to be minded towards our neighbour. But I am not speaking here of what we can do, or ought to do, but what is our happiness to do: and surely it may be said that though the love of the brethren, the love of all men, be one half of our obedience, yet exercised by itself, were that possible, which it is not, it would be no part of our reward. And for this reason, if for no other, that our hearts require something more permanent and uniform than man can be. We gain much for a time from fellowship with each other. It is a relief to us, as fresh air to the fainting, or meat and drink to the hungry, or a flood of tears to the heavy in mind. It is a soothing comfort to have those whom we may make our confidants; a comfort to have those to whom we may confess our faults; a comfort to have those to whom we may look for sympathy. Love of home and family in these and other ways is sufficient to make this life tolerable to the multitude of men, which otherwise it would not be; but still, after all, our affections exceed such exercise of them, and demand what is more stable. Do not all men die? are they not taken from us? are they not as uncertain as the grass of the field? We do not give our hearts to things irrational, because these have no permanence in them. We do not place our affections in sun, moon, and stars, or this rich and fair earth, because all things material come to nought, and vanish like day and night. Man, too, though he has an intelligence within him, yet in his best estate he is altogether vanity. If our happiness consists in our affections being employed and recompensed, "man that is born of a woman" cannot be our happiness; for how can he stay another, who "continueth not in one stay" himself?
But there is another reason why God alone is the {318} happiness of our souls, to which I wish rather to direct attention:—the contemplation of Him, and nothing but it, is able fully to open and relieve the mind, to unlock, occupy, and fix our affections. We may indeed love things created with great intenseness, but such affection, when disjoined from the love of the Creator, is like a stream running in a narrow channel, impetuous, vehement, turbid. The heart runs out, as it were, only at one door; it is not an expanding of the whole man. Created natures cannot open us, or elicit the ten thousand mental senses which belong to us, and through which we really live. None but the presence of our Maker can enter us; for to none besides can the whole heart in all its thoughts and feelings be unlocked and subjected. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." [Rev. iii. 20. John xiv. 23. Gal. iv. 6. 1 John iii. 20.] It is this feeling of simple and absolute confidence and communion, which soothes and satisfies those to whom it is vouchsafed. We know that even our nearest friends enter into us but partially, and hold intercourse with us only at times; whereas the consciousness of a perfect and enduring Presence, and it alone, keeps the heart open. Withdraw the Object on which it rests, and it will relapse again into its state of confinement and constraint; and in proportion as it is limited, either to certain seasons or to certain {319} affections, the heart is straitened and distressed. If it be not over bold to say it, He who is infinite can alone be its measure; He alone can answer to the mysterious assemblage of feelings and thoughts which it has within it. "There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." [Heb. iv. 12.]

This is what is meant by the peace of a good conscience; it is the habitual consciousness that our hearts are open to God, with a desire that they should be open. It is a confidence in God, from a feeling that there is nothing in us which we need be ashamed or afraid of. You will say that no man on earth is in such a state; for we are all sinners, and that daily. It is so; certainly we are quite unfitted to endure God's all-searching Eye, to come into direct contact (if I may so speak) with His glorious Presence, without any medium of intercourse between Him and us. But, first, there may be degrees of this confidence in different men, though the perfection of it be in none. And again, God in His great mercy, as we all well know, has revealed to us that there is a Mediator between the sinful soul and Himself. And as His merits most wonderfully intervene between our sins and God's judgment, so the thought of those merits, when present with the Christian, enables him, in spite of his sins, to lift up his heart to God; and believing, as he does, that he is (to use Scripture language) in Christ, or, in other words, that he addresses Almighty God, not simply face to face, but in and through Christ, he can bear to submit and open his heart {320} to God, and to wish it open. For while he is very conscious both of original and actual sin, yet still a feeling of his own sincerity and earnestness is possible; and in proportion as he gains as much as this, he will be able to walk unreservedly with Christ his God and Saviour, and desire His continual presence with him, though he be a sinner, and will wish to be allowed to make Him the one Object of his heart. Perhaps, under somewhat of this feeling, Hagar said, "Thou, God, seest me." It is under this feeling that holy David may be supposed to say, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart." "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well, if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting." [Ps. xxvi. 2; cxxix. 23, 24.] And especially is it instanced in St.
Paul, who seems to delight in the continual laying open of his heart to God, and submitting it to His scrutiny, and waiting for His Presence upon it; or, in other words, in the joy of a good conscience. For instance, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." [Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16. Rom. ix. 1. 2 Cor. i. 12.] It is, I say, {321} the characteristic of St. Paul, as manifested to us in his Epistles, to live in the sight of Him who "searcheth the reins and the heart," to love to place himself before Him, and, while contemplating God, to dwell on the thought of God's contemplating him.

And, it may be, this is something of the Apostle's meaning, when he speaks of the witness of the Spirit. Perhaps he is speaking of that satisfaction and rest which the soul experiences in proportion as it is able to surrender itself wholly to God, and to have no desire, no aim, but to please Him. When we are awake, we are conscious we are awake, in a sense in which we cannot fancy we are, when we are asleep. When we have discovered the solution of some difficult problem in science, we have a conviction about it which is distinct from that which accompanies fancied discoveries or guesses. When we realize a truth we have a feeling which they have not, who take words for things. And so, in like manner, if we are allowed to find that real and most sacred Object on which our heart may fix itself, a fulness of peace will follow, which nothing but it can give. In proportion as we have given up the love of the world, and are dead to the creature, and, on the other hand, are born of the Spirit unto love of our Maker and Lord, this love carries with it its own evidence whence it comes. Hence the Apostle says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Again, he speaks of Him "who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." [Rom. viii. 16. 2 Cor. i. 22.] {322}

I have been saying that our happiness consists in the contemplation of God;—(such a contemplation is alone capable of accompanying the mind always and everywhere, for God alone can be always and everywhere present;)—and that what is commonly said about the happiness of a good conscience, confirms this; for what is it to have a good conscience, when we examine the force of our words, but to be ever reminded of God by our own hearts, to have our hearts in such a state as to be led thereby to look up to Him, and to desire His eye to be upon us through the day? It is in the case of holy men the feeling attendant on the contemplation of Almighty God.

But, again, this sense of God's presence is not only the ground of the peace of a good conscience, but of the peace of repentance also. At first sight it might seem strange how repentance can have in it anything of comfort and peace. The Gospel, indeed, promises to turn all sorrow into joy. It makes us take pleasure in desolation, weakness, and contempt. "We glory in tribulations also," says the Apostle, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." It destroys anxiety: "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." It bids us take comfort under bereavement: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." [Rom. v. 3, 5. Matt. vi. 34. 1 Thess. iv. 13.] But if there be one sorrow, which might seem to be unmixed misery, if there be one misery left under the {323} Gospel, the awakened sense of having abused the Gospel might have been considered that one.
And, again, if there be a time when the presence of the Most High would at first sight seem to be intolerable, it would be then, when first the consciousness vividly bursts upon us that we have ungratefully rebelled against Him. Yet so it is that true repentance cannot be without the thought of God; it has the thought of God, for it seeks Him; and it seeks Him, because it is quickened with love; and even sorrow must have a sweetness, if love be in it. For what is to repent but to surrender ourselves to God for pardon or punishment; as loving His presence for its own sake, and accounting chastisement from Him better than rest and peace from the world? While the prodigal son remained among the swine, he had sorrow enough, but no repentance; remorse only; but repentance led him to rise and go to his Father, and to confess his sins. Thus he relieved his heart of its misery, which before was like some hard and fretful tumour weighing upon it. Or, again, consider St. Paul's account of the repentance of the Corinthians; there is sorrow in abundance, nay, anguish, but no gloom, no dryness of spirit, no sternness. The penitents afflict themselves, but it is from the fulness of their hearts, from love, gratitude, devotion, horror of the past, desire to escape from their present selves into some state holier and more heavenly. St. Paul speaks of their "earnest desire, their mourning, their fervent mind towards him." He rejoices, "not that they were made sorry, but that they sorrowed to repentance." "For ye were made sorry," he proceeds, "after a godly manner, {324} that ye might receive damage by us in nothing." And he describes this "sorrowing after a godly sort," to consist in "carefulness, which it wrought in them," "clearing of themselves,"—"indignation,"—"fear,"—"vehement desire,"—"zeal,"—"revenge," [2 Cor. vii. 7, 9, 11.]—feelings, all of them, which open the heart, yet, without relaxing it, in that they terminate in acts or works.

On the other hand, remorse, or what the Apostle calls "the sorrow of the world," worketh death. Instead of coming to the Fount of life, to the God of all consolation, remorseful men feed on their own thoughts, without any confidant of their sorrow. They disburden themselves to no one: to God they will not, to the world they cannot confess. The world will not attend to their confession; it is a good associate, but it cannot be an intimate. It cannot approach us or stand by us in trouble; it is no Paraclete; it leaves all our feelings buried within us, either tumultuous, or, at best, dead: it leaves us gloomy or obdurate. Such is our state, while we live to the world, whether we be in sorrow or in joy. We are pent up within ourselves, and are therefore miserable. Perhaps we may not be able to analyse our misery, or even to realize it, as persons oftentimes who are in bodily sicknesses. We do not know, perhaps, what or where our pain is; we are so used to it that we do not call it pain. Still so it is; we need a relief to our hearts, that they may be dark and sullen no longer, or that they may not go on feeding upon themselves; we need to escape from ourselves to something beyond; and {325} much as we may wish it otherwise, and may try to make idols to ourselves, nothing short of God's presence is our true refuge; everything else is either a mockery, or but an expedient useful for its season or in its measure.

How miserable then is he, who does not practically know this great truth! Year after year he will be a more unhappy man, or, at least, he will emerge into a maturity of misery at once, when he passes out of this world of shadows into that kingdom where all is real. He is at present attempting to satisfy his soul with that which is not bread; or he thinks the soul can thrive without nourishment. He fancies he can live without an object. He fancies that he is sufficient for himself; or he supposes that knowledge is sufficient for his happiness; or that exertion, or that the good opinion of others, or (what is called) fame, or that the comforts and luxuries of wealth, are sufficient for him. What a truly wretched state is that coldness and dryness of soul, in which so
many live and die, high and low, learned and unlearned. Many a great man, many a peasant, many a busy man, lives and dies with closed heart, with affections undeveloped, unexercised. You see the poor man, passing day after day, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, without a thought in his mind, to appearance almost like a stone. You see the educated man, full of thought, fall of intelligence, full of action, but still with a stone heart, as cold and dead as regards his affections, as if he were the poor ignorant countryman. You see others, with warm affections, perhaps, for their families, with benevolent feelings towards their fellow-men, yet stopping there; centring their hearts on what is sure to fail them, as being perishable. Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, the world changes, friends die. One alone is constant; One alone is true to us; One alone can be true; One alone can be all things to us; One alone can supply our needs; One alone can train us up to our full perfection; One alone can give a meaning to our complex and intricate nature; One alone can give us tune and harmony; One alone can form and possess us. Are we allowed to put ourselves under His guidance? this surely is the only question. Has He really made us His children, and taken possession of us by His Holy Spirit? Are we still in His kingdom of grace, in spite of our sins? The question is not whether we should go, but whether He will receive. And we trust, that, in spite of our sins, He will receive us still, every one of us, if we seek His face in love unfeigned, and holy fear. Let us then do our part, as He has done His, and much more. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." [Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.]
Hildebrand on the Heart

Panelists: Maria Wolter & Mark Spencer

CHAPTER TWO
Non-Spiritual and Spiritual Affectivity

In our analysis of the nature of the heart, we must realize from the very beginning that the term “heart” is often used to designate man’s interior life as such. In these cases, “heart” is more or less synonymous with “soul.”

The Lord says,

... out of the heart of men, come evil thoughts, adulteries, immorality, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, shamelessness ... 

Here the heart is not contrasted with the will and the intellect, but with the body, and especially with exterior bodily activities. It is, however, characteristic of the heart in its true and most specific sense that it is chosen as representative of man’s inner life, and that the heart, rather than the intellect or will, is identified with the soul as such.

The term “heart” has had different meanings in antiquity, as well as in the Islamic and Hindu cultures. However, we are not concerned here with these various meanings. Important and interesting as this topic is, our concern here is to explore the nature of the heart in focusing on a datum found in man’s life, and not to pursue a historical examination of the various meanings of the term. As in Ethics, we want to start from the “immediately given.”

1. This is especially true of the Old Testament. Yet the fact that the term “heart” is here almost equivalent to the entire soul also throws light on the character of the heart in the most specific sense. It is not by accident that the Old Testament chose the heart, and not the intellect or the will, as representative of the entire interiority of man.

2. For a study of the meanings of the term “heart” in antiquity, as well as in the Islamic and Hindu cultures, see the excellent work on this topic, “Le coeur,” published in the Etudes Carmélitaines by Desclée de Brouwer in 1950, especially pp. 41–102.
There can be no doubt about the fact that affectivity is a great reality in man’s life, a reality which cannot be subsumed under intellect or will. In literature and in ordinary language the term “heart” refers to the center of this affectivity. It is this center of affectivity that imperatively calls for exploration.

But even when “heart” is understood as representative of affectivity, it has two meanings which we must distinguish. First we may refer to the heart as the root of all affectivity. Thus just as the intellect is the root of all acts of knowledge, the heart is the organ of all affectivity. All wishing, all desiring, all “being affected,” all kinds of happiness and sorrow, are rooted in the heart in this broader sense. But in a more precise sense, we may use the term “heart” to refer only to the center of affectivity, the very core of this sphere. In this sense we say of a man: such and such an event really struck his heart. Thereby we contrast the heart not with the intellect and the will, but with less central strata of affectivity. In saying that something “struck a man’s heart,” we wish to indicate how deeply this event affected him. We want to express not only that a given incident irked or angered him, but that it wounded him in the very core of his affective being. It is this sense of “heart” which we find in the words of our Lord, “For where thy treasure is, there thy heart also will be” (Mt 6:21). In this context, “heart” means the focal point of the affective sphere, that which is most crucially affected with respect to all else in that sphere. Whereas the heart as the root of affectivity implies no special connotation of any specific depth, that is, no antithesis to more peripheral levels of affectivity, the heart in this typical sense has the connotation of being the very center of gravity of all affectivity.

We have already mentioned that the affective sphere embraces a variety of experiences differing greatly in their structure, quality, and

3. When we refer to intellect, will, and heart as three fundamental capacities or roots in man, each of them ruling over its own realm of experience, we do not claim that every experience, activity, or feature of man can be classified in one or the other of these realms. The mysterious wealth of the human being has so many aspects that the attempt to classify every human experience in one of these three realms would necessarily imply the danger of doing violence to reality. Far be it from us to yield to such a tendency which, instead of opening the mind to the specific nature of every experience, would already fix a priori the realm in which it is to be placed. Yet whatever may be the nature of many other experiences, these three realms play a predominant role, and we are fully justified in speaking of three fundamental centers in man.
rank, reaching from non-spiritual states to affective responses of a high spiritual order. We shall now briefly enumerate the main types of affective experiences or “feelings” in order to show how erroneous it is to deal with this sphere as if it were homogeneous. Such an enumeration will disclose in its heights and depths the tremendous role played by the affective sphere, and the place which the heart holds in man’s soul and life.

The first fundamental difference in the realm of affectivity is that between bodily and psychic feeling. Consider, for example, a headache, or our pleasure in taking a warm bath, or physical fatigue, or the agreeable experience of resting when tired, or the irritation in our eyes when exposed to too strong a light. In all these cases, the feeling is characterized by a clearly experienced relation to our body. All of these feelings are, of course, conscious experiences and are, as entities, separated by an unbridgeable gap from the physiological processes, although in the closest causal relationship with them.

It is, however, important to see that the relation of these feelings to the body is not restricted to their being causally linked to physiological processes, for they also involve a conscious, experienced relation to the body. While feeling these pains or pleasures, we experience them as taking place in our body. In some cases they are strictly located in a certain part of our body, for example a pain in one’s foot or tooth. In other cases, such as fatigue, they pervade the entire body. Sometimes, they are experienced as an effect of something on our body, as for instance when the doctor’s needle pricks us. Sometimes, they are experienced as “events” within the body itself.4

Even if we prescind from the knowledge derived from former experiences and from information given us by science, these feelings clearly exhibit the index proper to bodily experiences. If we compare a headache with sorrow over some tragic event we cannot but grasp the fundamental difference between these two “feelings.” One of the most conspicuous marks in this difference is precisely the bodily character of the pain which distinguishes it from sorrow. This bodily index

4. We do not need to mention instincts or bodily urges as a distinct group of bodily experiences. It is true that thirst, or any other bodily instinct, differs in many respects from typical bodily feelings, such as pains or pleasures. But they are nevertheless also felt and still belong, therefore, to the species of bodily “feelings.” The characteristic which matters in this context also applies to them. We can thus subsume them in this survey under the title “bodily feelings.”
is to be found in the quality of these feelings as much as in the structure and nature of their being experienced. This type of feeling and the bodily instincts are the only kinds of feeling which have this phenomenal relation to the body. They are in some way the “voice” of our body.\textsuperscript{5} They form the center of our body-experience, that which most pointedly affects us and is the most awakened and most conscious; they form, in fact, the most existential nucleus of our bodily experience.

It would be completely erroneous to believe that human bodily feelings are the same as those of animals. For the bodily pains, pleasures, and instincts that a person experiences display a radically different character from that of an animal. Bodily feelings and urges in man are certainly not spiritual experiences, but they are definitely personal experiences.

This fact implies an unbridgeable gap between human bodily feelings and animal bodily feelings. Granted that some physiological processes are homologous, nevertheless in the conscious life of a human being everything is radically different by being inserted into the mysteriously deep world of the person, and by being lived and experienced by this one identical self.

In an earlier work, \textit{In Defense of Purity}, we have dealt with the “depth” of bodily feelings in the sexual sphere, and how these are destined to be formed by conjugal love. To isolate these bodily feelings from the total reality of the human person means to misunderstand them, not only from the moral point of view, but also from the point of view of their very meaning and their intrinsic character. Only when seen in the light of the specific \textit{intentio unionis} of conjugal love and the sanction of God in marriage do they reveal their authentic character. They display their real meaning in this function only in relation to love.

Here, it is unnecessary to say to what extent the personal character of this bodily experience shines forth or to discuss the inexhaustible differentiation of its significance in every individual person.

\textsuperscript{5} There is, however, another type of bodily experience, besides bodily feelings: bodily activities such as walking, chewing, swimming, jumping, swallowing, innervating our muscles in clasping our hands, in lifting something heavy, or in pressing or squeezing something. All these activities are more or less accompanied by feelings, but the experience or movement of these activities as such differs from feeling in the real sense of the term. We therefore preclude them in this context.
ality. This differentiation stems from the all-important attitude of the person toward the bodily experience, from the way in which the person lives it, that is, from the difference in ethos as regards purity and spiritual integrity. But it also stems from the very fact that it is this person, this beloved individual personality who experiences it.

When we witness a man suffering from bodily pains which assault his body, this suffering throws into relief the dignity and nobility of the human body, a body which is mysteriously united with an immortal soul. Let us think for a moment of the terrible bodily pains endured by the martyrs! The fact that these pains were felt by persons who were ready to accept torment and death rather than deny God, and the fact that they were endured in their bodies, clearly reveals the personal character of these experiences.

And who would deny the mysterious depth of the bodily sufferings of our Lord, the physical sufferings experienced by the God-Man?

Let us now turn to psychic feelings. Here we are faced with an incomparably greater variety of types. As a matter of fact, it is in the realm of non-bodily feelings that the most disastrous equivocations centering around the term “feeling” are to be found. Many decisive differences are to be found in this realm.

An example of an ontologically low type of non-bodily feeling is the jolly mood so often experienced after taking alcoholic drinks. We are not thinking of drunkenness, but rather of a light tipsiness. This euphoria or its opposite state of depression (which may follow real drunkenness) is certainly not simply a bodily feeling, in distinction to bodily feelings connected with tipsiness, for instance, a certain heaviness. Clearly these experiences differ from bodily feelings such as physical pain or pleasure, fatigue, sleepiness, that we considered earlier. These states of “high spirits” and depression are moods which do not have the index of bodily experiences. For, to begin with, these psychic states need not be caused by bodily processes. This depression may also be caused by some psychic experience, for instance, a great tension, or undigested impression. Or again someone may be depressed or in poor humor without knowing the cause, which in fact may be traceable to a painful discussion on the previous day, or to the fact that he has been undergoing a great strain or disappointment.

But even if such moods are caused by our body, they do not present themselves as the “voice” of our body, for they are not located in
the body, nor are they states of the body. They are much more “sub-
jective,” that is, they are much more in the subject than the bodily
feelings. We are jolly, whereas we have pain; and this jolly mood dis-
plays itself in the realm of our psychic experiences: the world appears
in a rosy light, worries vanish, and a contentment pervades our being.

It goes without saying that we do not deny that there may be sev-
eral bodily feelings accompanying this psychic state of high spirits. But
the fact that psychic feelings are accompanied by bodily feelings and
that both coexist in us, does not diminish the difference between
them. The essential difference remains even if a link between a bodi-
ly feeling and a psychic state is experienced, as, for instance, when a
bodily feeling of health and vitality coexists with the psychic feeling of
high spirits or good humor. Here not only do the two things coexist and
interpenetrate each other, but the influence that our bodily vitality has
on our psychic mood of high spirits may be given to us in our very
experience. But this experienced link in no way effaces the basic dif-
ference between the bodily feeling and the psychical feeling or state.

But if states such as jolliness and depression are not bodily feelings,
they differ incomparably more from spiritual feelings—for example,
from the joy over the conversion of a sinner or a friend’s recovery from
illness, or compassion, or love. It is here that we fall prey to a disas-
trous equivocation in using the term “feeling” for both psychic states and
spiritual affective responses, as if they were two species of one and the
same genus.

A state of jolliness clearly differs from joy, sorrow, love or compas-
sion insofar as it lacks, in the first instance, the character of a response,
that is, a meaningful conscious relation to an object. It is not an “inten-
tional” experience in the sense given to this term in Ethics.6

Intentionality, in this sense, is precisely one essential mark of spiritu-
ality. The character of intentionality is to be found in every act of
knowledge, in every theoretical response (such as conviction or doubt),
in every volitional response, and in every affective response. It is also
present in the different forms of “being affected,” such as “being
moved,” “being filled with peace,” or “being edified.” Although
intentionality does not yet guarantee spirituality in its full sense, it
implies the presence of a rational element, of a structural rationality.
Non-intentional psychic feelings are thus definitely non-spiritual. The

6. Cf. Chapter 17 of our Ethics for a detailed analysis of the nature of “intention-
ality.”
lack of intentionality clearly separates them from the sphere of spirituality.

Secondly, psychic states are “caused” either by bodily processes or by psychic ones, whereas affective responses are “motivated.” Never can an authentic affective response come into existence by a mere causation, but only by motivation. Real joy necessarily implies not only the consciousness of an object about which we are rejoicing, but also an awareness that it is this object which is the reason for this joy. In rejoicing over the recovery of a friend, we know that it is this event which engenders and motivates our joy. The recovery of our friend is thus connected with our joy by a meaningful and intelligible relation. This experience differs essentially from the state of high spirits caused by alcoholic beverages, for example. Between drinking and conviviality there is a link of efficient causality only, a link which is not intelligible as such. We only know by experience that alcoholic beverages have this effect. In the case of joy over the recovery of a friend, the link between this event and our joy is so intelligible that the very nature of this event and its value calls for joy. And this means that our joy presupposes the knowledge of an object and its importance, and that the process by which the object in its importance engenders the response is itself a conscious one, a process which goes through the spiritual realm of the person. Later we shall come back to the character of intentionality and motivation.

In stressing the spiritual character of affective responses and their difference from mere psychic states, and still more from bodily feelings, we in no way overlook the fact that these affective responses have repercussions on the body. We are far from any tendency to deny the intimate union existing between body and soul. Our distinguishing clearly between bodily and spiritual experiences does not at all imply that we have fallen prey to a wrong spiritualism. It certainly belongs to the very nature of man that those spiritual affective responses have a repercussion on the body. But the close proximity of both types of experiences does not at all imply that we have fallen prey to a wrong spiritualism. It certainly belongs to the very nature of man that those spiritual affective responses have a repercussion on the body. But the close proximity of both types of experiences does not diminish their radical difference. Furthermore, we should see that even though the affective responses are able to engender these bodily repercussions, the situation is by no means reversible: the bodily processes as such can never engender those affective responses. A certain bodily state of health and vitality may be a necessary presupposition for those responses, but their coming into
existence is always due to a motive, namely, the knowledge of an event endowed with some importance.

In psychic states, the “unreliability,” the transitory and fleeting character which is often unjustly ascribed to “feelings” in general as opposed to acts of knowledge or acts of will, is really present: bad humor, jolliness, depression, irritation, “nervousness,” have a wavering irrational character. They are the price paid for man’s weakness, his vulnerability, his dependence upon his body even in his moods and his exposure to irrational influences.

It is an important task in our spiritual and religious life to free ourselves from the rhythm of these psychic feelings, not only in our actions and decisions, but also in our heart. We all know people who let themselves be dominated by these moods to an excessive degree. They are unpredictable. We leave them in the best of humor and a few hours later, without any objective reason or justification, they are either depressed or in an ugly mood. What before they had enjoyed doing, now bores or irritates them; the barometer of their soul is in constant fluctuation due to these irrational states. They refuse to do what they should do because of the change in their moods.

This does not apply, however, to all non-intentional psychic states. Later on, we shall deal with those legitimate psychic feelings and moods which are a resonance of great spiritual experiences. Far be it from us to say, for instance, that the high spirits which linger unconsciously in our soul as a resonance of our great joy over the recovery of a dear friend are illegitimate. What we mean here are the irrational moods which are not the legitimate resonance of a spiritual response and therefore are not “justified” and “meaningful,” but which are the effect either of bodily causes or of experiences which in no way justify these moods. The moods either are in no proportion to the foregoing experience or are in no way rationally linked to them. The drab light in which a man sees everything because he slept too little claims, as it were, to be an authentic aspect of the world, instead of presenting itself as it really is, just as a state of mere tiredness would do, namely, as simply an effect of insufficient sleep. It is precisely the immanent claiming of these moods to be rationally justified, this presenting themselves as much more than they objectively are, which makes them illegitimate and noxious burdens in our spiritual life. This illegitimate character applies above all to psychic moods with a negative
St. Thomas Aquinas and Hildebrand on the Heart

Panelists: Beth Rath, Maria Fedoryka, & Fr. James Brent, O.P.


**Further Recommended Reading:**

Steven J. Jensen: "The Emotions" in *The Human Person: A Beginner's Thomistic Psychology*, Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2018. (This chapter is an introduction to the basic Thomistic framework for the emotions)


between a statement and the real nature of the object is in itself a dis-
harmony.

Plainly enough the above-mentioned gradation of the oughtness
which is determined by the rank of the object plays a specific role in
the sphere of knowledge and theoretical responses. So long as the only
thing at stake is a mere contingent fact which lacks any deeper inter-
est, the disharmony of inadequate knowledge is reduced to a mini-
mum; but the disharmony involved assumes an undeniable gravity
when the error refers to a veritas aeterna or to an object endowed with
a high value. It assumes a still greater impact when the veritas aeterna
in question has a metaphysical content of decisive importance, such as
the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of will, the immortality of the
soul, and, above all, the existence of God. But the summit of this
oughtness in the sphere of theoretical responses is reached when re-
vealed truth is at stake and the due response is faith.

It is impossible in this context to insist further on the many differ-
entiations which should be made in the sphere of knowledge with re-
spect to this fundamental principle, viz., that an adequate response is
due to every being. We must content ourselves by simply stating that
being should be grasped such as it is, and that an adequate theoretical
response is due being.

Again, this principle refers to the sphere of evaluation or apprecia-
tion which embraces the knowledge of a being’s value as well as the
theoretical response to its possessing a value. At first sight this may
seem to be a mere subdivision of the sphere of knowledge. If being
ought to be grasped such as it is, the value of a being should also be
grasped. Thus it would appear that appreciation in its oughtness char-
acter, insofar as it is adequate knowledge of the value of a being, inso-
far as it is the theoretical response to a being’s value, has already been
covered by what we mentioned above.

But in fact we are here confronted with a new manifestation of the
general principle of this oughtness. As we saw in the preceding chap-
ter in the sphere of knowledge and theoretical responses, the theme is
truth. The immanent question about being is, “What is a thing’s na-
ture?” and the answer toward which everything points is, “Such is its
nature.” This answer is given by the object and is repeated as it were in
our theoretical act. Thus the theme of truth dominates the fact that our knowledge should be adequate.

Now when we are concerned with the adequate appreciation of a being, the theme is not exclusively truth and existence. An axiological element is present which refers to the nature of value, not only insofar as it is existent, but also insofar as it is important-in-itself. Thus we may say that the general principle calling for an adequate response displays itself in a new direction as soon as a value is at stake, as soon as the immanent question is not only, “What is a thing’s nature?” “Does it exist?” but, “Has it a value?” or, “What value does it have?” Despite the fact that values are disclosed to us in an authentic act of knowledge, and that we can speak of a value perception and of an intellectual intuition of values, the very nature of values is such that in perceiving them a specific object-communion already takes place which has no analogy in any other kind of knowledge. In understanding a value, we surpass the mere ontological and enter into the axiological rhythm. We cannot understand value if we try to grasp it from without, or try to see it neutrally as something merely existent. The very nature of value insures that in our grasp of value, we simultaneously surpass the theme of a mere knowledge of beings.

In adequately recognizing the true value of something, or in admitting its true value, we fulfill not only the call of being for an adequate noetic grasp, but also the call issuing from the value and its rank. Or, in other words, a twofold disharmony arises when a saint is misunderstood: when as the Book of Wisdom says, “We fools esteemed their life madness.” There is first the disharmony which results from inadequate knowledge, implied in error as such, and which includes here the gravity of error in proportion to the rank of the object; and there is secondly the disharmony which results from the absence of appreciation and from the denial of the object’s value.

There is a most important and third unfolding of this fundamental principle that an adequate response is due to every value; it refers to the sphere of being affected and of the affective as well as the volitional responses. It declares that we ought not remain indifferent to and untouched by the value of an object, and more evidently as the value ranks higher. If someone remains untouched in witnessing a noble

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5 The problems here touched upon will be treated in detail in a later work.
moral attitude, e.g., a heroic sacrifice, we clearly grasp the disharmony. Such a sight ought to affect the soul: that the soul should be touched is due the value. The liturgy is pervaded by the awareness that we ought to be affected by Christ’s infinite love and moved to tears by the divine sacrifice of the God-Man on the Cross, as, for instance, in the Popule meus quid feci tibi of Good Friday.\(^6\)

In our own life too we realize that certain things call for tears: sunt lacrimae rerum, and we experience an objective disharmony when someone remains indifferent to, or is even affected inadequately by, something tragic or something sublime. But the climax of this principle is obviously to be found in the realm of the value response.

Not only the text of the entire liturgy bat also the very meaning of the liturgy itself testifies to the existence of this principle. The words, te decet hymnus, te decet laus, clearly express the main Intention of the liturgical prayers of the breviary. Praise is due to God because He is God, because of His infinite goodness and sanctity.

The modern utilitarian and pragmatic mentality often fails to understand the very meaning of the divine praise; and one can hear, even among Catholics, voices claiming that contemplative monasteries are outdated, that the religious would be more pleasing to God in accomplishing some social or charitable work rather than in filling their day with Gregorian chant and the recital of the Divine Office.

Against the background of such a complete misjudgment the role of this fundamental principle in the liturgy is thrown into relief in a special way. The meaning and raison d’être of the liturgical praise of God is not primarily the moral and religious value which the act of praising embodies, but the fact that infinite praise is due God, quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus altissimus - “... for Thou alone art Holy. Thou alone art the most High.”

In every true value response an awareness of this ultimate due relation is implied. Whether it is an act of veneration, of love, of admira-\(^6\) Although the main stress is laid on the subsequent fruits of being affected, i.e., our transformation in Christ, yet when we pray in the liturgy that our hearts may be pierced and our entire being may be affected by Christ, there is implied nevertheless the fact as such that we ought to be touched to the very depths of our soul by Christ.
tion, of esteem, or of enthusiasm, it is always accomplished in the knowledge that the response does not derive from our arbitrary mood, or from the appeal which the object has for us, but that this response is due the object. From this consciousness stems the note of humility and of objectivity which is proper to every true value response.

We have stated that an adequate response is objectively important in proportion to the rank of the value involved. Now in addition we may say that a person becomes more explicitly aware of the response obligation in proportion to the value rank considered. Yet in saying that the awareness of what is objectively due the good is an essential part of every true value response, we do not thereby imply that there must always exist a consciousness of moral obligation to respond adequately to a value. We have already mentioned that a moral obligation to respond to a value is not in all cases implied by the general principle that to every value an adequate response is due.

We shall discuss the moral obligation later on. Here it may suffice to state that in order to constitute a moral obligation, there are several other presuppositions than those required for the “dueness.” Analogously there exists a definite difference between being aware that a response is objectively due and being aware of a moral obligation to give this response. It would be a complete error to believe that the awareness of a due relation would reduce all value responses to acts of obedience. In rejoicing about the conversion of a sinner we are aware that joy is due the event, and this awareness in no way makes of this joy a mere volitional response fulfilling a duty in the Kantian sense.

Enthusiasm about a great work of art (which certainly entails an attraction in delight and a spontaneous movement of our mind and heart) is necessarily pervaded by the consciousness that such a response is due. St. Peters contrition after his denial of Christ is a classical example of an affective plenitude and a spontaneous voice in man’s heart, although it cannot be separated from the consciousness that this contrition is due as a response to the sin committed.

Hence we have to stress emphatically that the awareness that a response is due entails no antithesis whatsoever to the spontaneous movement of our heart: “The enlarging of the heart is the delight we take in justice. This is the gift of God, that we are not straitened in His
commandments, through the fear of punishment, but enlarged through love, and the delight we have in justice.”

Finally we must state that although in every value response lives the consciousness that our response is due the object, the person is aware, nevertheless, that when he fails to give an adequate response, it is at his own cost and not at the cost of the object. Saying that an adequate response is due every object possessing a value clearly differs from saying that the object needs a response.

This becomes especially clear if we think of the supreme value response, the one directed to God: adoring love and adoring praise. They are due God, but it would be nonsensical to say that God needs them. The consciousness of owing this response in no way implies that the object needs it, as would be the case, for example, if a person in danger required our help.

Every value response is itself endowed with a value. Fulfilling the due relation; conforming to the objective demand; abandoning ourselves to the value; participating in the value in a unique way; this bestows on the act itself a value. But this value must be clearly distinguished from the one to which the response is given. It is obviously always a personal value, a value which by its very nature can be realized only in a person. In the next chapter we shall analyze the fundamental fact that the response itself embodies a qualitatively new type of value.

It is clear that an adequate response of enthusiasm over a great work of art has not an aesthetic value; but rather that this enthusiasm is endowed with an intellectual value (i.e., depth and sensitivity toward beauty) and in addition, with a spiritual élan. This double value is consequently distinct from the beauty value of the work of art. This fact is evident, too, in the value response to a great genius. Without any doubt such a response is not something neutral, like the tendency to speak quickly or slowly, but is endowed with a personal value. Our hearts are won over to the person who gives such an adequate value response.

But if we can state that every adequate value response is itself endowed with a personal value, this does not mean that every value re-

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7 St. Augustine, In Ps., CXVIII.
sponse is already endowed with a moral value. We do not praise a man as morally good because he gives an adequate response to the genius of Plato or Shakespeare. We may say he is intelligent or that his personality interests us because, having the understanding and enthusiasm for such great men of genius, he therein reveals a certain intellectual excellence as well as the general values of breadth and depth of mind. But we cannot say therefore that this enthusiasm is endowed with a moral value.\(^8\) It suffices merely to compare this enthusiasm with the joy over a sinner’s conversion in order to understand that enthusiasm about Plato or Beethoven, praiseworthy though it is and itself possessing a value, is not yet morally good.

We saw before that every morally good attitude is, or at least implies, a value response. But this relation is not reversible. We cannot say that every value response is as such morally good, in the sense that it embodies a specific moral value.

Thus we must inquire into the additional conditions fulfilled in the case of a morally good value response. Our inquiry will be concerned first with an analysis of those values on the object side which motivate the morally good response. We shall ask whether the presence of moral values in the response does not therefore require a specific type of value in the object-good to which our response is directed. This question will be answered in the next chapter. Furthermore, since there plainly exists a deep connection between morality and freedom, our inquiry will next be concerned with the problem of the freedom of the person. We have already seen\(^9\) that one of the chief distinguishing marks of moral values and disvalues is the factor of personal responsibility for their presence or absence. Responsibility clearly presupposes the freedom of the person. Although it is easy to see that the volitional value response is free, it is yet problematic in which sense an affective

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\(^8\) Certainly this enthusiasm may be a symptom of the presence of certain general moral attitudes, such as, for instance, reverence. Whether or not this is the case depends upon the specific nature and quality of the enthusiasm. But even when this enthusiasm manifests the presence of those general moral attitudes, it never conveys, as such, a moral value to the person, and clearly differs from those value responses which are endowed with a moral value.

\(^9\) Chapter 15, “The Nature of Moral Values.”
value response (such as a sublime joy, charity, contrition, or a deep veneration) can be called free. It would be necessary, were they really to be endowed with moral values, that they should be free.

The nature of the freedom of the person, its different dimensions, and the different zones accessible to our free influence will thus be examined in detail in section II which follows in this part of our work. Only after these analyses shall we be able to answer our main question. What are the sources of moral goodness in man?
19. Moral Consciousness

In ANALYZING a value response which is endowed with a moral value in the strict sense of the term, we can state that in addition to the response to the value an the object side, it implies a general response to moral goodness as such. The man who resists a pressure and endures sufferings rather than betray someone, responds, not only to the value of a human being and against this background to the objective good of this person, but also to the moral goodness of this attitude of loyalty or to the moral evil of a betrayal. The moral significance of responding to the value an the object side is present to his mind and plays a decisive role in the motivation of his act. We could say every morally good value response implies in some way the general will to be morally good, to act and behave in a morally right manner.

The will to be morally good is itself a pure value response. In no way must it be confused with the unconscious striving for self-perfection which, according to the traditional philosophy, is found in every being, and therefore also in man. This will to be good is not something which every man necessarily possesses independently of his free decision. This will to be morally good is absent not only in all those persons who in their basic attitude are immoral, being the prey either of concupiscence or pride; it is also absent in the morally unconscious type of man who may be good-natured and thus in many cases may respond in the right way, but in a somewhat accidental manner and without the sanction of his free personal center.¹ Hence the will to be morally good is in no way an immanent gesture of our nature as is our self-affirmation and our natural desire for happiness, but a pure, free value response.²

¹ This most decisive factor of sanctioning as the core of man’s freedom will be expounded in detail in Chapter 25, “Cooperative Freedom.”
² As we saw before in Chapter 17, “Value Response,” this does not mean that man is not destined to give this free response. He is, on the contrary, in his very nature ordered toward moral goodness. This direction is part of his being directed toward God, as St. Augustine expressed it in saying: Fecisti nos
It would however also be a radical misunderstanding to see in this will a mere response to our own objective good. 'To be morally good is indeed a fundamental objective good for the person, intimately connected with his ultimate good. But the objective good of moral perfection is such that we never can understand its character of a supreme objective good for us, if we have not grasped the importance in itself of the moral values. It is imperative to understand that any desire to possess this good which is not rooted in a pure value response, in a will to be good for the sake of goodness, is intrinsically impossible. There exist fully legitimate interests in our objective good which are not the fruit of a value response. Our natural interest in our life, not only the instinctive self-preservation but also the conscious will of self-defense, or the defense of our property, the attitude in defending a fundamental right of ours: they are all fully legitimate, typical responses to our own objective good. But they are not value responses; the motivating importance of these goods is their character of objective good for us, or, in other words, our own legitimate interest.

The general will to be morally good, which as we saw is to be found only in the morally good and morally conscious person, clearly differs from any such response to our own objective good: it is a pure value response to the world of moral values, in the last analysis, to God, and only as a secondary element does it also imply the consciousness that it is in our ultimate interest to tread the paths of the Lord. We do not require a preceding value perception to be aware that to live is an objective good for us, that it is in our interest that our rights should be respected. But in order to understand that moral goodness is in our ultimate interest, we have to grasp the intrinsic importance in itself of moral goodness; we must in a pure value-response attitude abandon ourselves to it. Then only can we understand that it is in our ultimate interest. In other words, this general will to be good, of which we are speaking here, is not a manifestation of self-love, of this natural inevitability.
The Rediscovery of the Heart

Rocco Buttiglione

Rocco Buttiglione: Introductory Text

Further Recommended Reading:

Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person.* (This text brings to synthesis the fundamental contributions of Scheler and von Hildebrand.)
The Rediscovery of the Heart. The achievement of Scheler/Hildebrand in recovering the Heart within the context of modern thought

In the beginning of modern thought we find Descartes.

Descartes (together with Fermat) discovers analytical geometry and with it the possibility of describing pure objects in movement through space. Modern science will be fundamentally a description of a world of pure objects. Pure objects are inanimate objects, that is objects without a soul (the objects of Aristotelian science had a soul, that is an inner principle of movement).

Descartes asked the question whether it is possible to explain the world of subjects with the same method that describes the world of objects. He died before answering this question.

The main current of modern philosophy (positivism) assumed the program of reducing the totality of being to pure objects moving in space. This is called reductionism, that is: the reduction of the totality of being to matter in movement in space; The reduction of all other forms of knowledge to modern physics.

Philosophy then does not begin with immediate human experience but with the results of modern science. The complex (human experience) must be reduced to the simple, that is must be understood as a composition of simple (material) parts. The spirit must be reduced to matter.

The last stage of the reductionist program was, towards the end of the XIX century, the foundation of a scientific psychology, that is the reduction of human psyche to biological processes. Husserl rebels against this project. He wants “to go back to things themselves”, that is to begin with the immediately given experience of man. This differentiates phenomenology from psychologism, that is from the attempt to reduce all human experience to psychological facts.

Husserl breaks with the epistemological program of reductionism on the attempt to reduce mathematical intuitions to psychological phenomena. There are apriorical that cannot be reduced to the psyche but belong to the spirit and are the object of an essential insight.

Scheler and von Hildebrand make a further step: there are essential evidences that pertain not to mathematics but rather to ethics and in general to the human heart. This shifts the attention of the phenomenologist towards the human world. The phenomenology wants to be the method for the description of the world of subjects (beings endowed with a heart) that corresponds to what analytical geometry and modern physics are for the world of objects.

Subjects can be understood only from the inside, that is through an analogy to our own human experience and through a participation in their experience.

Here Scheler and von Hildebrand encounter another philosophical tradition that goes back to Pascal.
Pascal was the great critic but also the great disciple and continuator of Descartes. He sees clearly since the beginning that the method for the knowledge of man is different from that for the knowledge of pure objects. He is, in one sense, a proto/phenomenologist. There is a line in modern philosophy that continues Pascal and goes through Malebranche, Vico, Rosmini.

The rediscovery of the heart has consequences not only for Ethics and Anthropology but also for Metaphysics. Aristotelian science makes use of four kinds of causality: material causality, efficient causality, formal causality and final causality. Modern science has obliterated formal causality and final causality. It works only with material and efficient causality. This is the reason why traditional Metaphysics after Descartes seems to be hopelessly obsolete: it is impossible to speak of the ultimate meaning of the Universe without making use of final causality and formal causality. If however we recognize the legitimacy of a different method in order to describe the world of subjects, a method that makes use of formal and final causalities, then traditional Metaphysics can be vindicated, albeit in a slightly modified form.

Let us cam to our conclusion with a caveat: we must learn to live in a complex world in which each object demands to be investigated with the corresponding method. We cannot reduce human experience to matter in movement but we must also not use the phenomenological method to pure objects that pertain to the natural sciences.
Affectivity and Love

Panlists: Maria Wolter & Rocco Buttiglione


Rocco Buttiglione: Introductory Text

Dante Alighieri: “My Lady Looks So Gentle and So Pure” (1265-1321)

Further Recommended Reading


Karol Wojtyla: “Metaphysics of Shame” in *Love and Responsibility*.

But it is not only the usefulness of a person which does not suffice to awaken love in us. Even if a person is a source of amusement for me, this kind of delightfulness is not sufficient to awaken love. Suppose that someone is funny without even intending it and makes us laugh simply by his manner. We can enjoy his company even though he is not at all attractive; he can be silly or even tasteless, but he can amuse us greatly by the way in which he is funny without intending it (this is what happens in the poems of Friedericke Kemptner). That which is comical can even be rooted in disvalue, in which case we have a delightfulness that is clearly not rooted in the values of this person. It is not difficult to see that this delightfulness of being funny and amusing is incapable of being the basis for love. The person is not as such thematic; we enjoy the comical quality in which the person, so to speak, functions as an object. The person is in fact no more thematic as person here than in the case where someone interests me only by being useful to me.

The value foundation of love: the full thematicity of the beloved person as person

But let us suppose that someone amuses us by being funny not unintentionally but quite deliberately, as the “fools” in the courts of princes in earlier times: even this is not as such a basis for loving the other. It is true that the delightfulness in this case is rooted in values and that the person is rather more thematic than in the two above-mentioned cases, but the value of the entertaining person and the delightfulness rooted in it has to be distinguished in principle from the value found in every love. In love the value and its delightfulness must be of such a kind that it is united with the full thematicity of the person as person. As long as someone just amuses us through his wittiness or his social graces, so that his company is pleasant and agreeable for us, we may find him to be likable, but we still do not love him. We merely like such a person under a certain point of view, but this attractiveness of the other does not suffice to make him fully thematic as person and to invest him as person with the radiance of value that is proper to the beloved person in all the forms of love. As long as the other simply serves to entertain me, he remains somehow a mere means and is not fully thematic as person. Thus in the case of love, the values in question and their delightfulness must be of such a kind that they form a unity with the person as person, and that the person is fully thematic in them.

Take someone whose being is full of poetical charm, whose rhythm of life has something enchanting: this value is clearly of such a kind as to make this

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3 This is not to say that this comical quality is not a value. But it is in no way a personal value, it is an aesthetic value all its own; it is constituted “outside” of the person who is comical and it does not enhance the person.

4 A special case is given with actors who excel in portraying comical figures. Here we have in addition to the value of the comical also the value of talented acting. This latter value is one degree closer to the person than in the case of the court fool.
person precious and beautiful as person, and in the delightfulness of these values the person remains fully thematic. This is all the more the case when the value belongs to a lofty spiritual world which the person radiates in such a way as to charm and attract me. Any and every attempt to think of a person as a mere means for enjoying this spiritual world is condemned to failure, for our delight in this world would thereby break up. This value datum is so united with the person that it ennobles the person as such, making him precious; it makes the person fully thematic and lets our delight be a delight in this person. This holds all the more with moral and religious values. When another attracts me by his generosity, purity, goodness, or by his deep piety, his love for Christ, these values are so centrally united with this person that in being attracted by them, my attention is concentrated in a particular way on the personhood of the other.

Love in all its forms always involves this consciousness of the preciousness of the beloved person, and of a value datum so closely united with the person that the person stands before me as valuable, beautiful in himself, deriving all his attractive power and delightfulness from his preciousness and beauty.

It is not enough to stress that love is a value-response and thus is essentially different from all responses motivated by the merely subjectively satisfying. It has also to be stressed that love is grounded in a value so closely united with the person that the person as such, that is, this individual and unique person taken as subject, stands before me as valuable, precious, lovable, and is fully thematic for me. The value basis of love is such that it elevates and ennobles the person as person and completely excludes any possibility of looking upon the beloved person as a means for my happiness and delight.

Indeed, as we will later show in detail, the beloved person is, for the one who loves him, not just a bearer of values, not just a fortunate instantiation of genuine values, but is fully thematic in his beauty and his preciousness, which he embodies in his own unique way.

So we have to say that while every love is a value-response, something more is required for love than is required for value-responses such as enthusiasm, admiration, or joy. First of all, for love a certain kind of value must be given, namely, a value which invests a human being as a whole with a certain splendor, and secondly, the values of a beloved person must belong to him in a particular way.\(^5\)

**Reasons for overlooking that love is a value-response**

1. *Confusing love with attitudes that are different from it or even opposed to it.* One often overlooks the fact that love is a value-response, because often in our

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\(^5\) In the next chapter, when we discuss the difference between love and other value-responses, we will bring up many other things that belong to love over and above the value of the beloved person. Here it is simply our task to show that love is a value-response.
CHAPTER FOUR

Love and Transcendence

The different dimensions of transcendence and of commitment

[Hingabe] within the sphere of value-response

If we are to understand in what sense love surpasses all other value-responses and takes on the character of a super value-response, we must first distinguish various dimensions of value-response in general. For the “more” that sets one kind of value-response above another can go in very different directions. As we have seen, veneration goes farther than admiration in appreciating a person; it represents a “more” in the sphere of value-response. But that is only one dimension of “more.” We prescind here from the augmentation of a value-response that comes from the rank of the value of some good. The more sublime work of art, assuming that it is understood for what it really is, awakens a greater enthusiasm than some lesser work of art. This greater enthusiasm is a higher degree of enthusiasm, and in addition the “word” spoken in it is a qualitatively “higher” word. We prescind from these forms of “more” in a value-response, whether it be within the response of enthusiasm, admiration, veneration, or something else. What interests us is only the way in which a type of value-response can be more than some other type; for this is the kind of “more” that distinguishes love and that we have in mind when we call love a super value-response.

We want now to list briefly these dimensions of “more” and the different perfections that one kind of value-response has over against another kind; we will then offer a brief discussion of each dimension.

There is first of all a degree of commitment [Hingabe] and transcendence that is possessed only by responses to morally relevant goods and to moral values. The way in which the value-responses belonging to the moral sphere surpass all other value-responses is one important dimension of “more.” It concerns the kind of transcendence and commitment. We will treat of this in a separate chapter. This is incumbent upon us since this “more” of commitment and transcendence that characterizes the moral value-responses is found only in love for God and in love of neighbor and not in the various natural categories of love.\(^1\) This is a completely different “more” than the one that lets us call love

\(^1\) We will see in chapter 11 that the transcendence of a moral value-response in the setting of love of neighbor is not quite the same as in the case of moral value-
a super value-response. So as to clear the way for understanding the nature of love and the way it surpasses other value-responses, we will have first to elaborate this quite different dimension of “more” of commitment and transcendence that only value-responses in the moral sphere possess and that is possessed in the highest form in the love for God.

A second and quite different dimension of “more” in value-response is given when it is not only the will but also the heart that responds to the value. This “more” goes in the direction of the totality of the response; it is the dimension of involvement of the whole person. When we say “whole person,” this should not be taken to mean that the value-response of the will is in some way only conditional and not a full value-response—this is by no means the case. It is precisely a special mark of the will that it can commit the whole person in a unique way. The fullness of commitment that comes with the involvement of the heart goes in quite a different direction. The “more” that is here at stake does not mean being more unconditional but rather being more complete. The opposite of this fullness is not a conditional commitment; rather, it is less fullness and warmth. This dimension of value-response is unfolded in love in a unique way, as we will see; love is the response of the heart par excellence. It contains an element of self-donation and in this way surpasses all other value-responses, even all other affective value-responses. We have already spoken of this in mentioning the “gift” of love. This dimension also belongs to the character of love as super value-response, but, as we are about to see, there are also many other dimensions of the “more” of love. We will come back to this dimension in a section of its own, even if only briefly, since we have already spoken about it more than once.

A third dimension of “more” in a value-response comes to light when the value, or rather the valuable good, confers some deep happiness on me. This dimension is related in various ways with the second one (the involvement of one’s heart), and yet it is a dimension all its own. It touches upon the central problem of the relation between value and happiness, a problem to which we devote all of the following chapter. When is happiness thematic in a value-response or in being affected by the value of some good? Does the fact that happiness is a theme in all love (except in the case of love of neighbor) imply that the value-response character of love has been compromised? In the history of philosophy, we find quite opposed theories about the relation of value and happiness (as far as one can speak of value in these theories, for they lack any clear conception of value). Though we will treat this dimension above all with respect to love, there are still some general questions to be treated in this connection, as for example the role of the various value data in the sphere of value-response and being affected by values, and the various kinds of role that happiness can play here.
We will deal with a new and fourth dimension of “more” in the value-response of love when we see how a good on the basis of its value becomes an objective good for me in the full sense of the word. Only then do we reach the point at which love discloses itself as a super value-response.

Finally, a fifth and highly significant dimension of the “more” of the value-response of love is the intentio unionis, or desire for union with the beloved person, which involves a still deeper commitment to the value. This dimension is profoundly characteristic for love and in fact is strictly speaking found only in love. In general it is possible only in relation to certain goods, and properly speaking only in relation to persons. It is something of special significance when our interest in the value of a good goes so far that we desire union with it. This union is a theme of its own; it has its own value, and the yearning for it is inseparable from the movement toward the beloved person that we discussed above. The most important thing about this dimension of commitment, that is, of the value-responding interest embodied in the intentio unionis, is that this union is sought for the sake of the beauty and preciousness of the beloved person and not just for the sake of the incomparable happiness that it grants. This union is a theme all its own. We will devote an entire chapter to this dimension, that is, to the intentio unionis, because the “more” of value-response proper to it has often not been acknowledged, and because the desire for union was thought to involve some selfish disfigurement of the value-responding commitment of love. In this misunderstanding of the intentio unionis, we touch upon the source of some grievous errors about the nature of love.

The incomparable transcendence of moral value-response

The specifically moral value-response occupies a position all its own within the sphere of value-responses. By a moral value-response we will mean above all the response of the will to morally relevant goods, especially the response that fulfils an obligation to deal with morally relevant goods and to conform to them. The commitment and transcendence of a moral response appears in a particular way whenever a moral obligation is present either to prevent some evil by actively intervening, or to eliminate some already existing evil, or deliberately to omit the act of realizing some morally relevant evil. Here the response of the will involves a definite submission, indeed an element of obedience. This element of submission is related in a particular way to the nature of the morally relevant values, that is, to the moral relevance of these goods and the obligation resulting from them. We about to see this more clearly.

The commitment and transcendence of the moral value-response is intimately connected with the special relation existing between moral values, indeed the whole moral sphere, and God. Only moral evil offends God; intellectual disvalues like stupidity or superficiality do not offend Him, nor do the aesthetic disvalues of the ugliness or triviality of a work of art. Only in this sphere are there commands in the full sense of the word. A human being
Affectivity and love.

Sex is one of the major forces that allow man to overcome the limits of egoism and to discover her/his vocation to be part of a community. This truth is well known since roman times. The phenomenon of sex however has often been considered on purely biological terms. We owe to Scheler and to von Hildebrand the first penetrating analysis of the peculiar characteristics of human sexuality. To be sure there is one great antecedent that we must mention, and this is the great dialogue on love of Plato, the Symposium, and especially the speech on the essence of love of the woman of Mantinea, Diotima. Love is a divine folly that draws us out of ourselves and leads us to put the affective centre of our being not in ourself but in somebody else or rather in the center of an ideal space that encompasses us both.

We call this phenomenon “falling in love”. Although it is apparently connected with the sexual drive it does not coincide with it. Scheler observes that the sexual drive, in its pure animal form, is directed towards the sexual organs of the other and the sexual organs are very much the same in all individuals. In this sense the sexual drive is indiscriminate. The falling in love, on the contrary, is highly selective. It is a state of mind that, until it lasts, makes its object something absolutely unique, incomparable with any other. It is directed not towards the sexual organs but rather towards the figure or the imagine of the beloved person, towards the totality of the way in which she presents herself us. Scheler observes also that we dress ourselves and cover our sexual organs because we do not want our sexual values to be perceived independently and out of connection with our personalistic values. We want to lead the eyes of the other to our own eyes because the eyes give us a certain access to the interiority of the person.

Sigmund Freud has written that falling in love is characterized by a certain overvaluation of the object of desire. On the contrary Karol Wojtyła (but also don Giussani) once has said that only in love you see and appreciate the true value of the person. In the beloved person you see this value. In relation to all other persons you know that they possess this value but you do not see it, or at least you do not see it with the same clarity.

Falling in love is an emotional/affective phenomenon and nevertheless it has a cognitive value: it gives us knowledge or provides us with invaluable experiential materials for our reflection. It may be compared to a magnifying glass. The concept is formulated in the intellect but this could not happen without the cooperation of the affectivity.

The affective experience of falling in love is not yet, however, love in itself. Affective state of affairs are not as such an effect of our initiative or of our will. They happen in us. The intellect and the will have the task of objectifying cognitively the experience that is taking place in us and to apply to it the measure of the objective good. Although phenomenologically distinct and autonomous from the sexual drive the falling in love is however intrinsically linked with it through the desire to possess the good that attracts us. But... is it objectively good for her to enter into a sexual relationship with me? And is it good for me to enter into a sexual relationship with her?

Falling in love is an emotional event that takes place without the conscious involvement of the intellect and of the will. To love is a personal act that engages both the intellect and the will. Love as a personal act implies the readiness to renounce to the fulfillment of the
desire if it does not correspond to the objective good of the persons involved. Exactly in this the specifically human aspect of love becomes apparent. We have pointed out the involuntary character of falling in love. Affective value responses are independent of the will. But is this really so? Affective value responses may arise quite independently of the will. We can however consciously and willingly foster and propitiate value response. The whole domain of culture, literature and art has the purpose of sharpening our capacity of giving appropriate value response. And when we have entered into a love relationship we have the responsibility of nurturing the affective value response to the beloved person so that we preserve and continue our being in love.

MY LADY LOOKS SO GENTLE AND SO PURE

by: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

MY lady looks so gentle and so pure
When yielding salutation by the way,
That the tongue trembles and has naught to say,
And the eyes, which fain would see, may not endure.
And still, amid the praise she hears secure
She walks with humbleness for her array;
Seeming a creature sent from Heaven to stay
On earth, and show a miracle made sure.
She is so pleasant in the eyes of men
That through the sight the inmost heart doth gain
A sweetness which needs proof to know it by:
And from between her lips there seems to move
A soothing essence that is full of love,
Saying for ever to the spirit, "Sigh!"
Feeling and Knowing

Panelists: James Matthew Wilson, Maria Fedoryka, & Fr. James Brent, O.P.


Further Recommended Reading:

Dana Gioia: “Poetry as Enchantment.” First published in 20th anniversary issue of The Dark Horse (Summer 2015).


The Heart in a Time of Pandemic

Panelists: Derek Jeffreys & Peter Colosi


**Further Recommended Reading:**


entirely different character. We stressed already the role of the delightfulfulness of value in love. Lacordaire says that the virtues can awaken love only when they have reached the perfection of showing forth their beauty. That holds in an analogous way for the throne on which the beloved person is set. The overall beauty of the other has to present itself to me if the response of love is to be awakened in me, and this beauty is not only a value datum but also a specifically delightful value datum, one that enchants me. The other emerges from the sphere of indifference not only into the sphere of the precious, the valuable, the estimable, but also into the sphere of the enchanting and of the delightful [Beglückenden]. Of course, this holds in a special way for spousal love or any great and deep love of some other kind, but there is something of this present whenever my heart is in any way conquered by another.

The value datum underlying love distinguishes itself, therefore, not only by the fact that it is the overall beauty of the individual rather than just individual valuable traits, as in the case of admiration and respect, but above all by the fact that it is always being a thing of beauty, a specifically delightful value datum, the value of the lovable [Liebenswertheit]. This distinction stands forth more clearly if we consider the act of declaring the other to be lovable, the subjective reenactment of this loveliness that already presents itself in knowledge and that we called enthronement. Here we really see that this enthronement is qualitatively very different from the one contained in veneration, which of course also refers to the other as a whole. The throne on which the other is set by the affirmation of love stands in quite another personal relation to me, affects me and my subjectivity in quite another way, makes an appeal to me in quite another way. It is the throne of delightfulfulness and of happiness, and the enthronement has quite a different warmth from the primarily appreciative gesture of veneration.

2. The “credit” of love. But we have now to distinguish between this enthronement and the credit given to the other by the one who loves; this latter represents a new moment of love. We are referring to the credit that one gives to a beloved person for those qualities in his being that one has not yet had the opportunity of getting to know. Love draws out the line of the beauty and preciousness of an individual being into all the individual traits of that being, including those which it has not yet been able to experience directly. Love believes the best about the beloved person; even when I hear something negative told about him, I will not at first believe that it is true or at least not believe that it has been adequately interpreted. I am referring to faith in the other, to the positive interpretation of the other and to assuming only good about the other as long as one has not unmistakably found some fault. Here we are not speaking of the step from some particular value of the other to the overall beauty of the other as individual, a step that precedes love, nor are we merely speaking about the subjective re-enactment of this step that we called enthronement. We are rather speaking about drawing out the line of the beauty of this individual
into all particular traits and situations. It is a credit which one gives the beloved person, going far beyond what one can observe in him.

And so there is in every love an element of faith; even that which has not yet been seen of the beauty of the other is believed on the basis of the beauty that one already knows. We are not here talking about trust in another person, the trust that normally goes hand in hand with love and is very characteristic for certain kinds of love, such as the love between friends, and the love of a child for its parents. The element of faith of which we here speak rather consists in drawing out the line from the overall beauty of the other into all the levels and areas of the beloved person that one does not yet know. We will return later to this element of faith and discuss it in detail. It is a distant reflection of what St. Paul says of charity: “Love believes all.” It is found in all kinds of love, even in their “unbaptized” forms.

Interpreting another “from above”—the opposite of self-indulgent idealization of the other. This credit of faith is also a kind of enthronement, as one could call it, but at a new level, for it is something new in relation to the already-mentioned affirmation of the other. It is something more than just entering into what is given in the other is and re-enacting it, but it is a “gift” of love. Together with giving this credit there is also the readiness to interpret everything in the beloved from above, to interpret everything positively as long as it has not unmistakably shown itself to be negative. There are, after all, so many things in a human being that can be interpreted very differently, so many deeds, utterances, modes of behavior that in themselves are not unambiguously morally good or bad, beautiful or ugly, intelligent or foolish, but which take on their full meaning and character only on the background of the particular individual person. Whereas it is typical for suspicion and hatred to be always on the alert for the weaknesses of another and to interpret all aspects of the other in a negative light and from below, it is a basic element of love to hope that the other is treading the path of what is just, good and beautiful and to have the readiness to interpret in the best possible light everything that admits of various interpretations. This readiness to interpret the other from above is of course closely related with the credit of faith in the other.

But giving this credit of faith should not be confused with the idealization of the other that one finds in certain emotionally overwrought persons [schwärmerische Menschen]. These people do not have the generosity of love, which after all presupposes a corresponding value datum in the other that makes the generosity meaningful and justified; they show instead the need to experience the joy of encountering wonderful and extraordinary people. One wants to have this pleasure and so gives in to an unjustified idealization. Indeed, one enjoys raving [Schwärmen] about another person, and this person is more of an opportunity to indulge in this raving than someone really taken seriously in his own right. One sees clearly the distinction between the above-mentioned credit of faith that characterizes love and this unfounded
assumption that everything must be splendid and grand in the other person, although one has not yet had the opportunity of knowing him well enough to experience this directly.

The credit of faith is contained in what we are calling the “gift” of love, which is itself a value-response. Even if it surpasses a pure value-response, it is nevertheless in no way a spontaneous need and it cannot be detached from the value-response character of love. But raving about another is a typical need and appetitus that strives to indulge itself and has nothing to do with a value-response. The credit of trust in love is closely connected with the self-donation of love; the one who loves is in no way seeking his own gratification by means of this credit; he is entirely directed to the other and this credit of faith has entirely the character of “for the sake of the other.” It contains no element of enjoying oneself. But the raving about another is relished as such and it is not lived for the sake of the other but for the sake of the one who indulges in the raving.

There is nothing overly spiritual about the credit of faith and in fact it goes together with the consciousness that human beings are frail and that even a noble person is exposed to all kinds of dangers. This credit reckons with the possibility that even where one interprets everything positively some weakness or fault could be present. But this does not change the love, which always interprets weaknesses and faults as something inauthentic and transitory. The credit of faith does not exist in a thin and unreal space, but rather in a fully real space, in an atmosphere of noble sobriety.

The radical difference between the credit of faith and an illusion born of self-indulgent idealization is not reduced by the fact that even in an authentic love I can be deceived and my credit of faith can at some point be disappointed. It is not the possibility of deception that characterizes the gesture of self-indulgent idealization, but rather the absence of authentic love, the gratification of an urge, the thin and unreal, indeed ungentle atmosphere. We could say it like this: the one who loves can be deceived, but the one who gives in to self-indulgent idealization deceives himself.

The way we approach the faults of a beloved person. Finally, it is an essential mark of all love that all the worthy traits of the other are seen as the authentic other, as that which makes up the real self of the other, whereas his faults are interpreted as a lack of faithfulness to his true being. It is typical of love to deal with the bad qualities of another by saying, “That is not the way he really is.” For one who does not love another, both the qualitative strengths and weaknesses of the other seem to belong to the other in the same way; but it is typical for love, which after all includes a response to the beauty of the whole person, that it sees everything negative in the beloved person as uncharacteristic, indeed as being unfaithful to his real being.

But the loving attitude toward the faults of the beloved person varies according to the kind of fault. There are many faults that are, as it were, the
back side of good qualities. We pointed out in our *Ethics* something about the
virtues that stand in a certain polar opposition to each other; only in the saints
can these virtues so interpenetrate as to be able to cohere in one and the same
person, for example, meekness and a great and ardent zeal for the good, or
humility and forcefulness in fighting for the good, or humility and the ability
to exercise authority with great energy. It follows that a strong personality
filled with burning zeal for the good can easily become violent. Such violence
is, as it were, a wart or a welt on a great and noble quality, and it can only be
avoided or overcome in Christ. The meek and humble person can under certain
circumstances be too compliant and in some situations act with too little of the
strength and energy that is morally required. Now as long as the one who loves
is dealing with qualities that are the “back sides” of great and noble excel-
lences, he will indeed regret these faults, but he will see them in the light of
those excellences of which they are the back sides and he will recognize in the
faults the lovable capacities that are being misused. He will wish that the
beloved person would overcome these faults, but he sees them as a kind of
derailment of lovable and noble traits of character. These traits, in their posi-
tive forms, are characteristic for the beloved person, whereas the derailment of
them is seen as something provisional and temporary.

Other faults, by contrast, are not simply the back sides of good qualities,
but are the sheer flowering of pride and concupiscence, for example, envy,
greed, or impurity. In loving another I see these traits of character as a betray-
al of the real being of the beloved person. These are the faults of which I say,
“That is not his true being”; I perceive these faults as an infidelity committed
against the authentic being of the one whom I love.

We have here an essential mark that distinguishes all kinds of love from a
neutral, so-called objective, attitude towards persons. A supposedly objective
observer or a judge will consider both the positive and the negative qualities
of the person as equally characteristic for him, as belonging equally to him.
The one who loves takes the good qualities as authentic, as that which belongs
in truth to the beloved person, and takes the bad qualities as infidelity, falling
away, betrayal, and denial of his true being. That is the unheard-of credit that
love and only love gives.

This credit presents itself to us quite unambiguously in love of neighbor.
Since this love responds to the ontological value of a human being and not to
his qualitative values, since it responds to the *imago Dei* in the other and sees
him in the light of the *similitudo Dei* that he is destined to achieve, this love
sees qualitative disvalues as a contradiction to the *imago Dei*, as a falling away
from it, as inauthentic.

This credit has nothing to do with the question how many faults I find in
a person, nor with the question how clearly I see these faults. The fact that I
consider the faults of a beloved friend as not belonging to him and as not char-
acteristic for him in the way in which his good qualities belong to him and are
characteristic for him, does not mean that I am inclined to overlook his faults or to explain them away, nor that I see them less clearly and distinctly. Love makes me more sensitive to the faults of a beloved person, because the beauty of the person as a whole has been revealed to me and because I am concerned that he remain faithful to his own most proper being and fully develop his true self. It is entirely false to think that love makes blind—on the contrary, love makes me see more clearly. But the pride that is often mixed in with love does indeed make blind. The mother who considers her child as an extension of her ego thinks that her child can have no faults at all. This is in no way a result of love, but rather of pride.

Of course, my stance toward the faults of a beloved person is different from my stance toward the faults of a person whom I do not love. The faults of one to whom I am more or less indifferent irritate me, they anger me and produce in me a reaction against the other person. They are not seen on the background of the beauty of the person as a whole, they are seen in isolation from the person and are taken to be just as characteristic of him as his good qualities. But with a beloved person the faults do not irritate me, I am not angry at him, but I am unhappy about them; I am unhappy for the beloved. Out of our deep solidarity with him I am sad about this infidelity committed against his true being. Conscious of my own weakness and fragility, and mindful how unfaithful I have been to my own God-given self, I trace lovingly the emergence of the faults of the other, I understand empathetically all of his dangers and weaknesses, and out of solidarity with him I reject the faults. The view I have of the faults of another is much more objective, in the true sense of that word, when I love the other than when I do not love him. I do more justice to reality by seeing the faults in the light of the person as a whole, by understanding them from within, and by being sad about them for the sake of the beloved person. I suffer under them for his sake and not because they are a burden for me, and so in loving I am much less inclined to overlook faults, because I am much more concerned with the growth of the other for his own sake and with his perfection than when I do not love him.

And so we see that love neither makes me overlook faults nor makes me see them less clearly. Only that pride that expresses itself in extended self-love makes me overlook faults or explain them away or trivialize them. The fact that in loving I do not consider the faults as really belonging to the true image of the other does not at all incline me to overlook those faults.

This credit given by love has a specific nobility. Here we encounter the particular generosity of love. This credit also contains an element of hope,

7 St. Augustine expressed this in speaking of the brotherly spirit of love and in referring to those “who approve of what they see good in me and disapprove of what they see bad in me, but whether they see good or ill still love me.” Confessions, X, 4.
which is a particular gift for the beloved person, as is the generosity contained in the “gift” of love. This element of hope also belongs to the “gift” of love.

Let us summarize as follows. First of all, love assumes the best as long as it has no basis for acknowledging a fault. In giving this credit, love interprets “from above” those things which are not unambiguous. Secondly, the faults that love clearly sees are taken by love as a betrayal of or an infidelity committed against the true being of the beloved person. And thirdly, love does not see faults as being just as characteristic for the beloved person as his good qualities are. That is the three-fold credit that love and only love gives to the beloved person.

This three-fold credit undoubtedly has a particular value, indeed a moral value. This value grows not out of the pure value-responding character of love but is rather rooted in the “gift” of love.

3. Love always refers to an individual and unique person as this individual being. It is a further essential trait of love that its word is always spoken to the individual person as a whole. The goodness and warmth of its breath surrounds the whole individual person, the “gift” of love refers to the person as a whole. Although it is the beauty of this individual that wounds my heart, in the act of love I am entirely directed to the person himself and in fact to the whole person. After all, I do not love the beauty of this person but the person himself.

We have to distinguish between that which motivates our love and that to which our love refers. Here we encounter a specific mark of love distinguishing it from the other value-responses. Of course, it holds for all value-responses that my response refers to the good and not the value; it refers to the good on the basis of the value. I take delight in Mozart’s opera Figaro, because of its beauty. The beauty motivates my delight, which however refers to the bearer of this beauty. I marvel at some heroic moral action. The moral value grounds my marveling, this is what motivates it, it affects my heart and engenders my marveling: but the word of marveling is spoken to the concrete real deed and refers to it. What I utter in the marveling refers to the deed; it is spoken to the deed on the basis of its moral value.

This distinction between that which motivates my value-response and that to which my response refers is a distinction valid in general for all value-responses, but it takes on a new character in the case of love. In the context of love for human persons, for instance, for a friend or bride, it is something entirely new to say that love refers to the whole person and not just to the values of the person. It means that we give our heart to this individual person, that we enter into solidarity with this real individual. And the way in which the beauty of this individual is united with the person is radically different from

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8 [Von Hildebrand inserts here a long footnote in which he discusses the distinction that he makes in his value philosophy between “value” and “good”; because of its length and its significance it has been placed as an appendix to this chapter.]
Emotions and the Moral Life

Panelists: Mark Spencer & Beth Rath


Article 1. Whether moral good and evil can be found in the passions of the soul?

Objection 1. It would seem that no passion of the soul is morally good or evil. For moral good and evil are proper to man: since "morals are properly predicated of man," as Ambrose says (Super Luc. Prolog.). But passions are not proper to man, for he has them in common with other animals. Therefore no passion of the soul is morally good or evil.

Objection 2. Further, the good or evil of man consists in "being in accord, or in disaccord with reason," as Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv). Now the passions of the soul are not in the reason, but in the sensitive appetite, as stated above (I-II:22:3). Therefore they have no connection with human, i.e. moral, good or evil.

Objection 3. Further, the Philosopher says (Ethic. ii, 5) that "we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions." But we are praised and blamed for moral good and evil. Therefore the passions are not morally good or evil.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 7) while speaking of the passions of the soul: "They are evil if our love is evil; good if our love is good."

I answer that, We may consider the passions of the soul in two ways: first, in themselves; secondly, as being subject to the command of the reason and will. If then the passions be considered in themselves, to wit, as movements of the irrational appetite, thus there is no moral good or evil in them, since this depends on the reason, as stated above (I-II:18:5). If, however, they be considered as subject to the command of the reason and will, then moral good and evil are in them. Because the sensitive appetite is nearer than the outward members to the reason and will; and yet the movements and actions of the outward members are morally good or evil, inasmuch as they are voluntary. Much more, therefore, may the passions, in so far as they are voluntary, be called morally good or evil. And they are said to be voluntary, either from being commanded by the will, or from not being checked by the will.

Reply to Objection 1. These passions, considered in themselves, are common to man and other animals: but, as commanded by the reason, they are proper to man.

Reply to Objection 2. Even the lower appetitive powers are called rational, in so far as "they partake of reason in some sort" (Ethic. i, 13).

Reply to Objection 3. The Philosopher says that we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions considered absolutely; but he does not exclude their becoming worthy of praise or blame, in so far as they are subordinate to reason. Hence he continues: "For the man who fears or is angry, is not praised . . . or blamed, but the man who is angry in a certain way, i.e. according to, or against reason."

Article 2. Whether every passion of the soul is evil morally?
Objection 1. It would seem that all the passions of the soul are morally evil. For Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 4) that "some call the soul's passions diseases or disturbances of the soul" [Those things which the Greeks call pathe, we prefer to call disturbances rather than diseases (Tusc. iv. 5)]. But every disease or disturbance of the soul is morally evil. Therefore every passion of the soul is evil morally.

Objection 2. Further, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. ii, 22) that "movement in accord with nature is an action, but movement contrary to nature is passion." But in movements of the soul, what is against nature is sinful and morally evil: hence he says elsewhere (De Fide Orth. ii, 4) that "the devil turned from that which is in accord with nature to that which is against nature." Therefore these passions are morally evil.

Objection 3. Further, whatever leads to sin, has an aspect of evil. But these passions lead to sin: wherefore they are called "the passions of sins" (Romans 7:5). Therefore it seems that they are morally evil.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 9) that "all these emotions are right in those whose love is rightly placed . . . For they fear to sin, they desire to persevere; they grieve for sin, they rejoice in good works."

I answer that, On this question the opinion of the Stoics differed from that of the Peripatetics: for the Stoics held that all passions are evil, while the Peripatetics maintained that moderate passions are good. This difference, although it appears great in words, is nevertheless, in reality, none at all, or but little, if we consider the intent of either school. For the Stoics did not discern between sense and intellect; and consequently neither between the intellectual and sensitive appetite. Hence they did not discriminate the passions of the soul from the movements of the will, in so far as the passions of the soul are in the sensitive appetite, while the simple movements of the will are in the intellectual appetite: but every rational movement of the appetitive part they call will, while they called passion, a movement that exceeds the limits of reason. Wherefore Cicero, following their opinion (De Tusc. Quaest. iii, 4) calls all passions "diseases of the soul": whence he argues that "those who are diseased are unsound; and those who are unsound are wanting in sense." Hence we speak of those who are wanting in sense of being "unsound."

On the other hand, the Peripatetics give the name of "passions" to all the movements of the sensitive appetite. Wherefore they esteem them good, when they are controlled by reason; and evil when they are not controlled by reason. Hence it is evident that Cicero was wrong in disapproving (De Tusc. Quaest. iii, 4) of the Peripatetic theory of a mean in the passions, when he says that "every evil, though moderate, should be shunned; for, just as a body, though it be moderately ailing, is not sound; so, this mean in the diseases or passions of the soul, is not sound." For passions are not called "diseases" or "disturbances" of the soul, save when they are not controlled by reason.

Hence the reply to the First Objection is evident.

Reply to Objection 2. In every passion there is an increase or decrease in the natural movement of the heart, according as the heart is moved more or less intensively by contraction and dilatation;
and hence it derives the character of passion. But there is no need for passion to deviate always from the order of natural reason.

Reply to Objection 3. The passions of the soul, in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin: but in so far as they are controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue.

**Article 3. Whether passion increases or decreases the goodness or malice of an act?**

Objection 1. It would seem that every passion decreases the goodness of a moral action. For anything that hinders the judgment of reason, on which depends the goodness of a moral act, consequently decreases the goodness of the moral act. But every passion hinders the judgment of reason: for Sallust says (Catilin.): "All those that take counsel about matters of doubt, should be free from hatred, anger, friendship and pity." Therefore passion decreases the goodness of a moral act.

Objection 2. Further, the more a man's action is like to God, the better it is: hence the Apostle says (Ephesians 5:1): "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children." But "God and the holy angels feel no anger when they punish . . . no fellow-feeling with misery when they relieve the unhappy," as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5). Therefore it is better to do such like deeds without than with a passion of the soul.

Objection 3. Further, just as moral evil depends on its relation to reason, so also does moral good. But moral evil is lessened by passion: for he sins less, who sins from passion, than he who sins deliberately. Therefore he does a better deed, who does well without passion, than he who does with passion.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5) that "the passion of pity is obedient to reason, when pity is bestowed without violating right, as when the poor are relieved, or the penitent forgiven." But nothing that is obedient to reason lessens the moral good. Therefore a passion of the soul does not lessen moral good.

I answer that, As the Stoics held that every passion of the soul is evil, they consequently held that every passion of the soul lessens the goodness of an act; since the admixture of evil either destroys good altogether, or makes it to be less good. And this is true indeed, if by passions we understand none but the inordinate movements of the sensitive appetite, considered as disturbances or ailments. But if we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man's good that his passions be moderated by reason. For since man's good is founded on reason as its root, that good will be all the more perfect, according as it extends to more things pertaining to man. Wherefore no one questions the fact that it belongs to the perfection of moral good, that the actions of the outward members be controlled by the law of reason. Hence, since the sensitive appetite can obey reason, as stated above (I-II:17:7), it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason.

Accordingly just as it is better that man should both will good and do it in his external act; so also does it belong to the perfection of moral good, that man should be moved unto good, not only in respect of his will, but also in respect of his sensitive appetite; according to Psalm 83:3:
"My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God": where by "heart" we are to understand the intellectual appetite, and by "flesh" the sensitive appetite.

Reply to Objection 1. The passions of the soul may stand in a twofold relation to the judgment of reason. First, antecedently: and thus, since they obscure the judgment of reason, on which the goodness of the moral act depends, they diminish the goodness of the act; for it is more praiseworthy to do a work of charity from the judgment of reason than from the mere passion of pity. In the second place, consequently: and this in two ways. First, by way of redundancy: because, to wit, when the higher part of the soul is intensely moved to anything, the lower part also follows that movement: and thus the passion that results in consequence, in the sensitive appetite, is a sign of the intensity of the will, and so indicates greater moral goodness. Secondly, by way of choice; when, to wit, a man, by the judgment of his reason, chooses to be affected by a passion in order to work more promptly with the co-operation of the sensitive appetite. And thus a passion of the soul increases the goodness of an action.

Reply to Objection 2. In God and the angels there is no sensitive appetite, nor again bodily members: and so in them good does not depend on the right ordering of passions or of bodily actions, as it does in us.

Reply to Objection 3. A passion that tends to evil, and precedes the judgment of reason, diminishes sin; but if it be consequent in either of the ways mentioned above (Reply to Objection 1), it aggravates the sin, or else it is a sign of its being more grievous.

Article 4. Whether any passion is good or evil in its species?

Objection 1. It would seem that no passion of the soul is good or evil morally according to its species. Because moral good and evil depend on reason. But the passions are in the sensitive appetite; so that accordance with reason is accidental to them. Since, therefore, nothing accidental belongs to a thing's species, it seems that no passion is good or evil according to its species.

Objection 2. Further, acts and passions take their species from their object. If, therefore, any passion were good or evil, according to its species, it would follow that those passions the object of which is good, are specifically good, such as love, desire and joy: and that those passions, the object of which is evil, are specifically evil, as hatred, fear and sadness. But this is clearly false. Therefore no passion is good or evil according to its species.

Objection 3. Further, there is no species of passion that is not to be found in other animals. But moral good is in man alone. Therefore no passion of the soul is good or evil according to its species.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5) that "pity is a kind of virtue." Moreover, the Philosopher says (Ethic. ii, 7) that modesty is a praiseworthy passion. Therefore some passions are good or evil according to their species.
I answer that, We ought, seemingly, to apply to passions what has been said in regard to acts (I-II:18:6; I-II:20:1)—viz. that the species of a passion, as the species of an act, can be considered from two points of view. First, according to its natural genus; and thus moral good and evil have no connection with the species of an act or passion. Secondly, according to its moral genus, inasmuch as it is voluntary and controlled by reason. In this way moral good and evil can belong to the species of a passion, in so far as the object to which a passion tends, is, of itself, in harmony or in discord with reason: as is clear in the case of "shame" which is base fear; and of "envy" which is sorrow for another's good: for thus passions belong to the same species as the external act.

Reply to Objection 1. This argument considers the passions in their natural species, in so far as the sensitive appetite is considered in itself. But in so far as the sensitive appetite obeys reason, good and evil of reason are no longer accidentally in the passions of the appetite, but essentially.

Reply to Objection 2. Passions having a tendency to good, are themselves good, if they tend to that which is truly good, and in like manner, if they turn away from that which is truly evil. On the other hand, those passions which consist in aversion from good, and a tendency to evil, are themselves evil.

Reply to Objection 3. In irrational animals the sensitive appetite does not obey reason. Nevertheless, in so far as they are led by a kind of estimative power, which is subject to a higher, i.e. the Divine reason, there is a certain likeness of moral good in them, in regard to the soul's passions.
Empathy and Human Compassion

Panelists: John F. Crosby & Josef Seifert


Recommended Reading:

Max Scheler: The Nature of Sympathy, Part I: Fellow Feeling, Chapters II-IV. (Much is available online here).

In this excerpt von Hildebrand brings more philosophical precision to the critique of collectivism. Drawing on his investigations in *The Metaphysics of Community* (1930) he charts a course between “liberal individualism,” which asserts the individual at the expense of deep bonds of community, and collectivism, which asserts the community at the expense of the individual person. He makes a particular point of saying—and this is very characteristic for his personalism—that liberal individualism fails really to understand the individual person, and that collectivism fails to understand community. One main target of this essay is the Austrian philosopher Othmar Spann (1878–1950), who said: “It is the fundamental truth of all social science . . . that not individuals are the truly real, but the social whole, and that the individuals have reality and existence only so far as they are members of the whole.” Von Hildebrand thought that this way of exaggerating community played right into the hands of Nazi collectivism.

In this essay, he summarizes the major themes of his social philosophy in sixteen theses.

1. The fundamental mistake of individualism is its failure to acknowledge that the human being is a spiritual person endowed with “intentionality” [the capacity to understand being]. This failure isolates the human person from the world of objective meaning, values, and ultimately from God, due to its anthropocentric deformation of the world. Paradoxical as it may seem, it disfigures the human person very severely and effaces his true dignity.
2. Community can never be understood if the individual person is not grasped in the full depth of his being, nor can the individual person ever be fully understood if his capacity for sustaining communities and his fundamental orientation to community are not grasped. Every attempt to degrade the individual in his ontological dignity and value takes its toll on community. And any degradation of community that views it merely as an association which is indispensable for the achievement of certain external purposes but completely lacks a being and value of its own also entails a trivialization and mutilation of the person.

3. The individual person is a substance; natural communities such as mankind, family, state, nation, class, and so on, are not substances. No natural community exists as substance. Accordingly, the individual is ontologically superior to all natural communities.

4. The individual person is not just one substance among others. As a person, he is much more authentically a substance than an inanimate object or an organism. As a person, he is incomparably superior to all that is non-personal, and therefore also to natural communities, which have no personal being.

5. The individual person is incomparably more than a mere member of a natural community. As an individual person, he is ontologically antecedent not only to his function as a member of a community, but also to the communities themselves. With respect to the ontological relationship between an individual and a totality, the comparison between the organism and its members is applicable to natural communities only in part. (The case is different, however, with the supernatural community.) This is because natural communities (such as mankind, nation, state, and class) are not the ontological foundation of the being of the individual person; individual persons “sustain” the being of communities. Thus, the form of a totality differs in principle from that of an organism.

6. Although non-artificial communities (such as mankind, the family, the state, the nation, and the class) are not “organisms” in the full sense of the term, they are organic “wholes” that encompass individual persons as members. They do not simply unite them as an aggregation of individuals.
7. Communities are ontologically antecedent to individual persons insofar as individual persons are members of a community—that is to say, insofar as they enter into a community as its members. It is true that individuals sustain the community (though not vice versa). However, the community sustains the function of membership which the individual person exercises. This is why the *bonum commune* in the community—for example, in the state—is superior to the *bonum* of the individual citizen, whereas it is greatly inferior to the *bonum* of the individual person, to his meaning as a spiritual person, and, above all, to his salvation.

8. The individual person is superior in value to all natural communities not only in an ontological sense, but also because only he can become the bearer of moral values and (more importantly) a vessel of grace, albeit only through a completely gratuitous gift of God. Natural communities other than mankind—the state, the nation, the class, etc.—have a longer lifespan than the individual, but they are, in the last analysis, merely mortal, whereas the individual person is immortal. God is glorified more by a single saint than by any state *qua* state, or any other natural community, no matter how perfect it may be. It follows that we must utterly reject every instrumentalization of the individual person which measures his value according to his usefulness to a natural community such as the state—such as we find, for example, in every form of Spartanism. This is also the basic mistake of every form of nationalism.

9. On the other hand, communities possess a value of their own. They are valuable not only because of their importance for the individual; they also glorify God directly by their own perfection. But their own unique value is less than the intrinsic value of the individual person.

10. In questions or situations in which the *bonum commune* and the *bonum* of the individual come into contact with each other on the same level—for example, the economic situation of the individual in relation to that of the state or class—the *bonum commune* has the higher status and takes priority over the *bonum* of the individual.

11. The individual is objectively placed by God in communities such as mankind, the state, and the nation, wherein he discovers already
existing obligations toward these communities; but such obligations do not bind him on the basis of his own decision to become a member of these communities, as is the case with one's obligations to a club.

12. Another basic mistake of liberal individualism is the idea that the more peripheral a good is, the more it is addressed only to communities and not to individuals. According to this view, the goods of civilization are addressed to communities, but the higher goods are reserved only for individuals. This is the source of the well-known slogan that religion is a private matter.

For liberal individualism, the human being becomes lonelier in proportion to the increasing sublimity of the realm of values to which he relates. In his depths, he is alone. From the Catholic point of view, however, the opposite is true. The higher the realm of values is, and the deeper the level in the person to which it appeals, the more does it address not only the individual, but the community as well. God is the most intimate concern of every individual person and at the same time the most widely shared concern addressed to humanity as a whole—in other words, each individual responds to God out of the “we.” Therefore, the more elevated the good that constitutes a community’s realm of meaning, the more closely knit and authentic that community will be.

13. The higher the good that constitutes a community’s realm of meaning, the greater will be the conformity between that community’s realm of meaning and the authentic meaning of the individual person. In the Church as corpus Christi mysticum, the meaning of the community totally coincides with the supernatural, ultimate meaning of the individual person. Similarly, the meaning of mankind and the natural meaning of the individual person largely coincide. Hence, every attempt to instrumentalize the individual person in his relation to the community collapses, for here being an individual person and being a member of a community overlap. The more perfect the individual person is as such, the more perfect will he be as a member of the community; conversely, the more perfect he is as member of the community, the more perfect will he be as an individual person. However, in communities whose realm of meaning is not identical with the meaning of the individual, and in which the given realm of meaning encompasses
only a fragment of the individual—for example, in the state, the nation, the class—there is a very great danger of instrumentalizing the person, once his function as a member is considered to be more important than his being as an individual person.

14. The central foundation for every living consciousness of community, and for a new awakening of life out of a “we” (such as we find in the Church’s liturgy), is a very profound respect for the individual person, his eternal worth, and his inalienable rights, together with a clear insight into the terrible sin that lies in every instrumentalization of the person and his being, which occurs when the person is seen primarily as a mere means for the production of non-personal goods.

15. Every form of anti-personalism (which is seen most clearly in Bolshevism and National Socialism) is a logical consequence of liberalism’s failure to recognize the true essence and value of the person. But such anti-personalism goes far beyond what existed in liberalism, since it intensifies the individualistic error and disvalue. Anti-personalism is the great and terrible danger of our times. Irrespective of the guise under which it presents itself, this poison must not be allowed a role in the construction of genuine community.

16. No less important than the revitalization of the consciousness of community is a renewed understanding of the objective hierarchy of communities: first the Church as *corpus Christi mysticum* (*Mystical Body of Christ*), then mankind, then the nation, then the state, and so on. The due consideration of this objective hierarchy is more important than all the autonomy of the individual natural communities. The idolization of a community, which permits its autonomy to run rampant and is typical of all forms of nationalism and all idolatry of the state, demolishes the real spirit of community—that is, of genuine and objective community. Such idolatry is every bit as egocentric as the individualism of a single person.

Today it seems more necessary than ever to keep these various elements clearly in mind as we undertake a fundamental clarification of the errors of individualism and collectivism. There can be no doubt that the hallmark of the present epoch is an “anti-personalism”—one of the most terrible aberrations of the human spirit—and that it is not only
DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND

non-Catholic, but (whether consciously or not) extremely anti-Catholic. This anti-personalism, which finds its dreadful and unambiguously consistent expression in Bolshevism and National Socialism, is also present in a hidden and implicit form in many other contemporary attitudes: in the cult of the unconscious, in the idol of the “new objectivity,” in nationalism’s deification of the nation, in the idolization of the state, and so on.

The more we grasp the whole greatness and depth of the human being as a spiritual person who is ordered to God and possesses an eternal destiny, and the more we overcome the great danger of our times—the objectification and effacing of personal being—the more we will be able to bring about the revitalization of the authentic spirit of community. The correct starting point for the victory of the true and Christian idea of corporative community lies here, in a reawakening to the entire fullness of personal being. But the path to this goal is also indicated by the perennial admonition in the words of the Gospel: “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”

Dietrich von Hildebrand went on to have a second life in America. He taught at Fordham University in New York until 1960, but even in retirement his philosophical energies never abandoned him. He continued to write voluminously until his death on January 26, 1977. There is a rich vision of human flourishing that informs his writing against Nazism; a vision that is waiting to be discovered by a new generation.
Affectivity and Aesthetic Experience

Panelists: James Matthew Wilson, Mark Spencer, & John Henry Crosby


Further Recommended Reading:

ure with them; nor do they need to remind us of anything else, in order to reveal themselves in their value or disvalue.

Someone might object that it surely cannot be denied that beauty makes us happy. It may not be linked by way of association to a pleasurable experience on our part, but the link does nevertheless exist. The answer to this objection is: But of course; it is a quality of all values, and especially of beauty, that they affect us in a specific and unique manner. We do not only perceive beauty and grasp the value of beauty: our heart is touched by it. The perception of beauty’s value and the perception of beauty itself are a typical “consciousness of.” But while being-affected doubtless presupposes a “consciousness of,” it goes beyond this, since it activates in our soul something that exists in a personal manner, something with a specifically affective nature.

**Being affected by beauty**

I have written in detail in Part I of my book *The Heart*, and in even greater detail in my book *The Nature of Love*, about what it means to be affected. Accordingly, I limit myself here to discussing the specific way

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Once, however, we have seen in a clear and fundamental manner this distinction between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic perspectives, my assertion is confirmed that associations play no role of any kind in one who unambiguously perceives the beauty of a work of art.

As I have said, this does not exclude the possibility that many people deceive themselves about the reason why they are affected by a melody. There are reasons unconnected with the aesthetic dimension which make people interested in objects and find pleasure in them, and such reasons block their access to aesthetic values. We will speak in greater detail in volume II of these extra-aesthetic elements. Here I wish only to underline that some people enjoy a melody because they are reminded by it of happy times in their lives. This melody can affect them, touch them, make them happy, etc., in a variety of ways. But it affects them not through its beauty, but merely through its ability to transpose them back into those times. It has then a purely instrumental function. What really affects them is the happy time. We can make this point more precise: their experience of being touched and made happy is a fruit of their recalling the happy time, and the melody helps them recall it. Even primitive persons who lack any marked aesthetic sensitivity seldom extol and praise such a melody as “beautiful.” Rather, they like to hear it, and it helps them have the experience of becoming moved. They take pleasure in it, but they scarcely come to the point where they speak explicitly of its beauty. Above all, someone who has a relationship to the piece of music, and is capable of perceiving its beauty or lack of beauty, will draw a clear distinction between this beauty or lack of beauty and the importance that a melody acquires through its ability to remind him of a particular period, an experience, or a person. He will be perfectly aware that this value of remembrance has nothing to do with the beauty of the melody.
in which one is affected by beauty and by its opposite. When we hear a beautiful melody, we not only perceive its beauty: it takes hold of our heart and makes us happy, it infuses something into our soul. It touches our heart and fills our soul with a particular happiness. Beauty can take hold of us and move us to tears; it can fill us with light and with confidence; it can enthral us, take us into the depths, and draw us in conspectu Dei (“before the face of God”).

This experience of being-affected is fundamentally different from every mere “effect.” There is no causal relationship, such as exists between a loud noise and my being startled, or between joviality and the state of being slightly drunk, the so-called being merry with wine. In the experience of being-affected, there exists an intentional, meaningful relationship. In its intentional character, it is comparable to motivation, but in another sense it is typically different from this.

Being affected not only presupposes a “consciousness of” the beauty of the object; it also shares with this “consciousness of” a receptive character that distinguishes it from all stances of the person, including all responses (and especially all value-responses). When I am affected, the object speaks to me and I receive the “word” of beauty. It penetrates my heart. It generates a particular affective experience in my soul, an experience full of joy. But this experience of being-affected is clearly distinct from the beauty of the object on the object side. It is ontologically and qualitatively very different from the beauty. The “emotion,” the happiness, being led into one’s depths, being raised up above oneself—all of which are conscious experiences, psychological–mental entities that are generated in my soul by the beauty which affects me and are gifts or fruits of being-affected (or, as we might also say, modes of being-affected)—these are clearly qualitatively different from the beauty. They are not a conscious enacting [bewusstes Vollziehen] of the beauty, since that is an impossibility. Their qualitative content is not beauty, but happiness, being profoundly moved, etc. They are personal entities belonging to the psyche and the spirit; they are not apersonal entities like beauty.

This is why it is completely impossible to appeal to the experience of
being-affected in order to make beauty a product of the happiness which beauty itself generates and nourishes. The specific character of being-affected shows us clearly the ontological and qualitative difference between beauty and its “effect” in our soul. It also shows that beauty is the *principium* (that which originates), and our being profoundly moved by beauty is the *principiatum* (that which is originated). It is precisely this most intimate touching of our soul by beauty, through the experience of being-affected, that shows us how impossible it is to make beauty a product or a projection of the experience that beauty awakens in us, and that can be awakened only by beauty.

The act of perceiving the beauty of an object, and the experience of being-affected by this, are also clearly different from all those processes in our soul that the beautiful object can set in motion in us *apart from* its beauty. When we hear the melody that draws us back into a happy period and therefore touches and moves us, we are completely aware that this does not make the melody beautiful: this effect is engendered by non-aesthetic qualities.

*Beauty essentially possesses the importance of value*

Let me once again insist as forcefully as possible: the importance that beauty possesses is eminently the importance of value in the true sense of this term. It is not merely an objective good for me; even less is it something that is only subjectively satisfying for me.

There can be no doubt that beauty is also a lofty objective good for us, but this is because of its value. When we say that beauty, or rather those things that are the bearers of beauty, are objective goods for the person, we mean that these belong to that category of objective goods for the person in which things of intrinsic importance, or value, superabundantly overflow into objective goods for us. But beauty does not derive its importance, that which raises it above the indifferent, from what it can achieve for me, for my existence, my happiness. Unlike something like health, or the minimum amount of money required to sustain our life, or safety from persecution, beauty is not in the first place an objective good.
for me. Unlike these, its importance is not an importance “for.” It is not constituted by this character of benevolence, of being a gift for me. I have discussed this in detail in my Ethics (especially in chapter 3).

It is a fundamental and decisive difference that we find between, on the one hand, all experiences of pleasure, all non-intentional states of a positive kind, and all immanent self-centered happiness, and on the other hand, the transcendent happiness that has its source in the existence of goods having objective values. Until this is recognized, the path to understanding values and their intrinsic importance remains blocked.

This means that any conclusion about the essence of beauty is unfounded, or built on sand, if it is derived from this fundamental misunderstanding of the essence of value. When Santayana says: “A beauty not perceived is a pleasure not felt, and a contradiction,” this merely begs the question. It is indeed true that psychological-mental entities do not exist if they are not conscious, or are experienced in some form: a joy that is not felt can indeed not exist! But when Santayana transposes this onto beauty, and indeed onto all values, this assertion is completely false. The moral value of an action remains fully real even when no one knows about it and even when the agent himself does not become explicitly aware of this value. Besides, a value can never exist as a consciously lived psychological reality. As we have seen, it can only adhere objectively to specific conscious acts as its bearers. Accordingly, the conclusion begs the question; or we could say that it is meaningful only if one’s starting point is the total misunderstanding of the essence of value whereby value is arbitrarily equated with the happiness that it can bestow on us.

_Uti (using) and frui (enjoying)_

At this point we must ask: What kind of contact takes place between the objective and the subjective when we enjoy the beauty of a landscape or of a piece of music? What do we mean by the verb “enjoy”? Is not enjoyment something explicitly subjective, a matter of pleasure?

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There is no doubt that enjoyment is an experience had by a person. Unlike non-enjoyment, it is a unique, conscious entering into the positive content whether of a feeling of a bodily or mental kind, or of some object. Enjoying something is the opposite of merely making use of it. It was Saint Augustine who discovered this central difference in our attitudes and elaborated it clearly in his *De doctrina christiana* by means of the two verbs *uti* (using) and *frui* (enjoying).\(^{32}\) He shows that *frui* means entering into something for its own sake, whereas *uti* means using it only as a means for attaining some other good. Eating food because it tastes good is an instance of *frui*, but eating it for the sake of nutrition is an instance of *uti*. Similarly, taking medicine is a pure *uti*. We could also say that in *frui*, the focus is on the positive content; in *uti*, the focus is on this content only to the extent that it is a means to attain something else.

The difference between these two basic attitudes is repeated at every level in the hierarchy of beings. We can enjoy a good wine or the company of another person or the rare beauty of a piece of music; or else—and this is *uti*—we can drink the wine only to warm ourselves up, or in order to get drunk so as to escape the thoughts that oppress us. We can seek the company of another person only because we hope to get information from him about something that interests us keenly. We can listen to beautiful music only because we must study it for an examination.

Here, however, we must distinguish between two different situations. In the one case, the question is whether an object is of such a kind as to appeal to *frui* or to *uti*. In the other case, the question concerns our behavior toward the object: do we enjoy it, or merely make use of it? A good wine appeals to *frui*, a knife appeals to *uti*. The company of someone we love appeals to *frui*, but the train or airplane that will bring me to him appeals to *uti*. We could make this point as follows. Our first question is posed from the standpoint of the nature of the object: What is its “theme,” what is its *raison d’être*? Does it exist for the sake of *uti* or *frui*? Our second question is: How does someone relate to it? For a child a rattle can be an object of *frui*. Some people enjoy traveling by train

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\(^{32}\) Saint Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, chaps. 3–5, 22, 27–33.
without any particular goal for their journey, and others enjoy flying for its own sake.

In the case of all those things that are bearers of a high value, frui is not their *raison d’être*; this, rather, lies in their value. But they are most definitively fruenda, “things to be enjoyed.” One *ought* to enjoy them. One ought to be interested in them for their own sake. One ought to make their value the theme, not merely make use of them as a means to attain something else.

*The completely conscious experiencing of beauty*

*presupposes the objectivity of beauty*

The antithesis between *uti* and *frui* is not the only relevant distinction here. For example, we can say, “Unfortunately, I could not enjoy the concert so much, because I had a headache,” or “because I was deeply worried by a number of things,” or “We were not able really to enjoy our meeting with this person; it was too short, too hectic, etc.” When we speak here of “enjoying,” we mean the ability to enter into something valuable, to become absorbed in it. We mean the conscious experiencing of the happiness that the beautiful piece of music, or the time spent with the person whom we love, awakens in our soul. Here the act of enjoying means that one allows oneself to be affected by the value. In this explicit, total absorption in that which is valuable, the focus is wholly on the value and its intrinsic importance; at the same time, however, its character as an objective good for me thanks to its value, and its character as a gift, are fully experienced and appreciated. The failure to enjoy, or the failure to enjoy sufficiently, means that one is not sufficiently absorbed in this value: one has not attained the contemplative attitude that is always required if a value is to become fully thematic for us. Without this contemplative attitude, it is impossible to be truly affected by a value and to experience fully in our soul the happiness that the value bestows.

When we say that this happiness, too, is experienced with full consciousness in the act of enjoyment, we do not in any way mean that we look at the happiness and that this becomes our genuine focus, for that would
Chapter Three

Wrong Attitudes to Art

Repeated contact with a work of art is often needed before we fully appreciate it in its essence and hence appreciate its beauty. This varies in accordance with the artistic understanding of a person, sometimes only in accordance with the understanding of the “language” in which the essence is given, and in accordance with the kind of work of art. Many works of art are easier to understand, others are more difficult. Mozart’s *Laudate Dominum* is objectively easier to understand than Beethoven’s *Great Fugue*, and the perception of their beauty is connected to this fact. This is why a clear distinction must be drawn between the first time we hear a piece of music and the moment in which it opens up for us. The same applies to a poem, a painting, a sculpture, or a landscape. The mere act of seeing these objects need not as yet be a full apprehension of their essence and thus of their beauty.

In the encounter with a work of art or with nature, however, many people are interested in something quite different from aesthetic value. The delight they take in the work of art or in nature is motivated by elements of a non-aesthetic kind. What they apprehend is not the beauty, not the thematic aesthetic value, but chance elements, often as a result of associations. In what follows, I shall attempt to discuss briefly these
non-aesthetic (and in the case of works of art, non-artistic) attitudes, since they are in fact highly important for many people. I shall clearly distinguish those factors that are substitutes for the true aesthetic value of a work and that distract people completely from this value, from those other factors that are only the preconditions that some people need in order to enter into the beauty of the object.

The two kinds of familiarity

First of all, there is the attraction of custom. For many people, the simple fact of being accustomed to something bestows a positive character on that object. A landscape that is itself not at all beautiful, but rather is boring and nondescript, can become attractive for some people because they are accustomed to it and see it again and again. They enjoy the familiarity as such. It is this that pleases them, not the aesthetic quality of the landscape. They substitute for the aesthetic value the satisfaction that the familiarity as such evokes.

We must distinguish here between two kinds of familiarity. The first is linked to one’s native place [Heimat] and originates in the fact that we have invested much of our life in this landscape. The second kind is sheer familiarity as such. It is clear that neither of these is an aesthetic value. They have intrinsically nothing to do with the beauty of the landscape. The attraction of both kinds is completely different from the attraction that the beauty of the landscape exercises upon us. Nevertheless, we must draw a distinction between the two, since the familiarity of what belongs to one’s native place is intrinsically much more legitimate than the attraction exercised by sheer familiarity. The first is much nobler, and as long as it does not usurp the place that belongs to the apprehending and enjoying of beauty, it certainly has a legitimate importance in our life.¹

The attraction of sheer familiarity is much more peripheral, and ought not to play any genuine role. Whereas the attraction of that which belongs to our native place is related principally to nature, and perhaps

¹. On this, see The Nature of Love (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), chap. 8.
also to architecture in combination with nature, sheer familiarity strongly influences our relationship to art as well.

It is clear that the joy that is expressed in the exclamation “Why, I know that!” has nothing to do with the beauty of the piece of music. It is a joy *sui generis*, the joy of recognition, the joy felt on encountering something that is known, as opposed to encountering something new, foreign, and inaccessible to us because we do not “know” it. In the act of recognizing and “finding a place” for this piece of music there is a kind of satisfaction, a kind of position of dominance that the “knowing” implies. Obviously, it is completely illegitimate for this satisfaction to interfere with the aesthetic experience, and even more illegitimate for this satisfaction to usurp the place of the aesthetic value.

Familiarity can, however, also be nothing more than a precondition for the apprehending of beauty. In that case, its function is not only legitimate, but to a certain extent also natural and human. In order to apprehend the beauty of a difficult piece of music, we must listen to it more often. The better we know it, the more its beauty discloses itself to us. The same applies to many poems, pictures, and sculptures. This may legitimately be more important to one person than to another, depending on the relationship persons have to the specific sphere of art. This familiarity has an ancillary function and is not in any way a substitute for experiencing the aesthetic value.

If, however, familiarity as such becomes thematic, so that the object becomes attractive independently of its aesthetic value or disvalue, this means that the joy caused by beauty is replaced by a satisfaction caused by familiarity. From the aesthetic standpoint this is a total perversion.

*The unartistic interest in what is portrayed in art*

In a second form of non-artistic attitude, one is interested only in what is represented. What counts is the quality of an event as historically important. Such an observer reads “The Death of Wallenstein” or “Victory over Attila” under a painting, and he is impressed by the illustration of this event; but the artistic value or disvalue of the picture is not allowed
to make itself felt. The observer enjoys two things. First, he enjoys the historical event and its dramatic character, to which many associations are linked, and the importance of a great historic moment. If he reads about this event in an historical work, he is rightly fascinated by a genuine aesthetic quality. However, this quality can have only a very secondary legitimate importance for the picture; it has this importance if the artist employs new means to reproduce in the artistic atmosphere of the picture something of this quality of the great moment. But the observer whom we have mentioned is interested above all in the title that stands under the picture. He substitutes for the beauty of the picture the aesthetic character of the historical moment that the title communicates to him.

Secondly, he enjoys the formal element of illustration. An event that he knows only from historical works, and about which he doubtless has some subjective mental images, is now accessible, given to him in a picture. His interest is satisfied not only by the title, but also by the fact that the event is intuitively presented and given to him, thus intensifying his contact with it. That is the point of illustrations.

In a book these are meant to intensify the contact with the literary content. In literature, however, illustrations with aesthetic value have a very modest decorative character. The objective character of the artistic beauty of the literary work of art remains unaffected. The beauty of an illustration is not in the least supported by the quality of the content that is represented; this beauty can be attained only with the means of visual art. The agreement of the illustration with the literary content is decisive, for it has only an ancillary function. But the unartistic attitude wrongly treats the picture as a mere illustration of the event.

In an illustration the intensification of the contact in the visual encounter with the object comes into its own; the intensification by means of the word is much more indirect. Many things in a novel (for example, in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*) are intolerable when they are depicted in a film. Compared with only hearing, reading, or knowing about an object, the act of seeing is a new dimension of encounter with the object. A

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2. See chap. 23 below.
non-artistic, simple-minded joy is generated when one sees an illustration of an event about which one knows: “Ah, look! That is the death of Wallenstein!” For simple-minded observers of this kind, this formal element of the illustration also replaces the real artistic content, namely, the beauty of the picture.

Something analogous, but very different, happens when religious reverence for that which is depicted replaces a sense for the beauty of the picture. For unartistic people it suffices that a picture portrays Christ, the Mother of God, or some passage from the Gospel, in order for them to find it beautiful. They see it above all else from the perspective of an illustration of something holy, and the only theme is reverence for that which is depicted. They are filled by the response due to Christ and to the Mother of God, and they rejoice at the illustration of the object. All this takes the place of apprehending the beauty or lack of beauty of the depiction. As I have said, this is not the same as enjoying an illustration, but there is an analogy. For here the objects make unique demands on the depiction, and the beauty of holiness can become very important for the artistic beauty of the picture, if the depiction is appropriate. The specifically non-aesthetic element is so much in the foreground for these people that they are not disturbed even by the most tasteless depiction, since they are sensitive only to the awe-inspiring holiness of that which is depicted. They are concerned with a completely different theme, and hence are so blind to the artistic value that the picture is nothing more to them than an occasion for thinking of the content.

Others enjoy only the aesthetic value of that which is depicted, not the aesthetic value of the picture. When one has a false attitude of this kind, one sees that a picture portrays a beautiful landscape, such as the Gulf of Naples or the Campagna, but one sees only this beauty, independently of the value of the depiction. One is indeed oriented to the aesthetic value of the beautiful landscape, but one bypasses the aesthetic value of the picture. The beauty of that which is depicted is certainly an important factor for the beauty of the picture, but it cannot salvage a

3. See also chap. 21 below.
bad picture. On the contrary, one who has an artistic attitude will regard an artistically poor picture as a particular disfigurement of the beauty of the landscape it depicts. The deficient depiction of a beautiful landscape makes the picture even more disastrous than the good depiction of a landscape that is inherently boring.

For those who look at the picture in the same way as they look at a photograph, it is not even a mere illustration, but a reminder, a visualization of the landscape and its beauty.

_Fame and fashion_

Another illegitimate element in the observation not only of works of art, but also of nature, is the fame of an object. The fact that a region, a city, or a building is universally admired surrounds it in some people’s eyes with a halo, and this halo, together with satisfaction at having seen the famous object with one’s own eyes, takes the place of joy at its genuine beauty. Very primitive elements commingle in this complicated phenomenon: being impressed by public opinion; the attractiveness that something acquires in virtue of its being “famous” and praised by many persons; the fact that one has heard so much about it, so that one’s imagination has already received rich nourishment; and finally, sharing in what the others have seen and praised, and joining up with public opinion. For one who enjoys nothing but the more intimate contact with the halo of celebrity, it is a matter of indifference whether he is looking at the Palace of the Doges in Venice or the Eiffel Tower in Paris, although from the perspective of beauty there is a gulf between the two.

The fame of a work of art can have a legitimate function if it is not a substitute for beauty but only awakens our interest in seeing it. In this case the fame of the object must become unimportant once we see the beautiful work. The only thing that is entitled to interest us is its beauty; or else we must turn our back on the unbeautiful object, since we recognize clearly that its fame is unfounded.

If we have seen works by great artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo, Rafael, Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Giorgione, or Piero della Fran-
cesca and have ourselves apprehended their greatness, it is legitimate and indeed imperative that we bring a “credit” to any other work of theirs when we see it for the first time. If a hitherto unknown work by Bach or Beethoven does not disclose itself to us in its beauty when we first hear it, we should assume that this is our fault. After we have heard it several times, perhaps we shall determine that this is a less important work by this great master. But when we encounter something new by him, we are completely justified in initially taking into account the greatness and importance of that master whom we know by personal experience. This must be kept quite distinct from the above-mentioned substitution of beauty by a fame derived only from public opinion.

It is a sign of especial superficiality and aesthetic perversion when what is involved is not a fame that has been established over a lengthy period, but the phenomenon of being fashionable. Just as certain ideas and ideologies take on a sociological-historical reality at one particular period, so that we can say that they fill the air, so too some artists are fashionable at one particular period. Because one person praises them, they are praised by others; people jump on the bandwagon. The attractiveness of the fashionable takes the place of the aesthetic quality of the object, surrounding it with a halo, which is the only thing people notice and enjoy. It prevents them from seeing the true character of the thing. Although this fashionableness is inherently illegitimate, it is of course possible for it to accompany a genuine greatness. In that case, the halo is justified and can help to open our eyes to the true value.

*The prejudice of nationalism*

Prejudices are completely erroneous, whether it be nationalism or the fact that something is modern or contemporary.

Nationalism leads many people to regard a work of art as much more important than it really is, especially in comparison to works of art from other countries. Although this utterly unobjective factor is brought to the object completely from the outside, it unfortunately often obfuscates the judgment of people who have a real affinity for beauty and are able to
apprehend the artistic value of a work. This factor is no substitute for the aesthetic value, but is a typical prejudice. Its effect is not so much to obliterate the difference between a good and a bad work, but rather to lead the observer to offend against the hierarchy within the genuine works of art. The fact that a work of art is by a Frenchman or a German is given extra weight. Thus there are Frenchmen who rank Racine above Shakespeare, without noticing that this judgment is colored by nationalism. But it is not only the judgment itself that can be influenced by nationalism: the same applies to immediately apprehending and enjoying the work.

A prejudice of this kind asserts itself very strongly with respect to the beauty of nature in a country. How often are Germans or Frenchmen incapable of recognizing how much more beautiful the landscape in Italy is than in their own country! It is of course true that precisely in Germany great minds such as Goethe, Winkelmann, and many others have apprehended in a special way this superiority of Italy; but we have in mind here average persons, and within this group, above all nationalists. Pride creates a prejudice against the beauty of the landscapes and the works of art of other countries.

One must distinguish from this nationalism yet another factor that restricts the apprehending of beauty, namely, the fact that the national characteristic of a work of art, which is as such a secondary element, makes it easier for the members of this nation to understand its true value. We encounter here a kind of analogy to language. Even for one who knows a foreign language well, poems in his or her mother tongue are more comprehensible than those in the foreign tongue; and for many persons, the cultural framework in which a work of art has “grown” is a precondition for understanding it deeply. This is related to the familiarity mentioned above. That which is marked by the nation to which one belongs speaks the language that one understands better. This language touches one’s heart more strongly and facilitates access to a work and to its beauty. Nevertheless, this is a definite restriction of one’s spiritual horizon, an encumbrance on the true understanding of art.

In exactly the same way, we understand the beauty of one type of landscape more easily if we are familiar with it and with all the elements
that belong to it: the inhabitants, the cultural tendency, and above all
the fact that it was here for the first time that the most universal bearers
of beauty, such as the sky, the light, morning, midday, and evening, and
the various seasons of the year disclosed themselves to us. On the oth-
er hand, the foreignness of other countries is an obstacle to doing full
justice to their landscapes. But this too is an illegitimate factor, a lack of
objectivity. From the perspective of an adequate apprehending of value,
it is a restriction and an encumbrance.

**Chronolatry**

There exists a temporalism, analogous to nationalism, that has been given
the appropriate name of chronolatry.

A special kind of arrogance leads one to regard the epoch in which
one lives as especially important and valuable. The fact that one belongs
to this epoch makes the idea that the achievements of this time are par-
ticularly great a source of satisfaction. This chronolatry also puts a halo
around the works of art of one’s own epoch, but it is nothing other than
a prejudice that blinds one to true artistic value.

Naturally, the opposite prejudice exists too. Many people regard a
work of art as the more precious, the older it is. They approach with
suspicion everything that does not belong to the past, and this too is un-
objective. We shall return to this subject below when we take up the ex-
tremely important difference between the beauty of the style of an entire
period and the genuine artistic importance of an individual work of art.

Apart from chronolatry, modernity plays a great role for many people.
In addition to the magical power of contemporary fashion, modernity
contains a flavor of the new, the progressive, of that which points into
the future. Many people think that the fact that something is modern at
the present moment bestows on it a value, completely independently of
its qualitative content. It is interesting that those who have this prejudice
imagine that they are especially free of prejudice. They want to be open,
free of all ties to what is customary. They want at all costs to avoid being
old-fashioned and backward, and thus they feel especially free and un-
The aesthete aims at skimming off the cream, so to say. He is never really moved and overcome, and so he necessarily shifts his gaze from the artistic to certain peripheral aesthetic qualities that one can be interested in without understanding anything of art. Above all this stance cuts off the whole depth dimension of art. But we can also understand how the aesthete comes to this false isolation of art, to this recognition of aesthetic values alone. The person with an artistic disposition is entirely free of this isolation, even though he recognizes clearly the unique language of art and the totally irreducible value of beauty and its ultimate seriousness.

Moral values should not be enjoyed in this sense. Someone who perceives the world egocentrically only as a possible stimulus for his pleasure, whether crude or more refined, and who is interested in the world only as a possible object of enjoyment cannot even begin to make sense of the world of moral values. Such a person cannot even misunderstand beauty. How could one, in the precise sense of the term, enjoy the kindness, the readiness to forgive out of love, the purity, and the humility of another person? With this we come to a further and highly important characteristic. The aesthete, due to his enjoyment-
oriented attitude, is specifically unobjective, that is, he does not look at what in a given situation is of central importance, at what is “thematic,” at what constitutes the meaning of a given situation. Let us say he is present at an accident. Rather than being filled with deep pity and thinking only of what alone is important, namely, to help the injured, he flees from such an “unaesthetic” sight. Or let us say he witnesses a catastrophic fire. Rather than being shaken by the terrible event, he enjoys the tremendous spectacle. In the event of a robbery, he enjoys the aesthetic allure of the thief’s cunning, his power and audacity, the elegance with which he carries out his deeds, rather than being indignant at his depravity, which in reality of course is also extremely ugly, and rather than having compassion for his unfortunate soul. The cold heartlessness and superficiality of the aesthete emerge clearly. He sees everything fundamentally from the outside and does not enter in to the values and disvalues that are decisive and thematic in a given situation. This separates him from reality in a profound way. The world for him is a façade. He clings to externals inasmuch as he adheres to what is inessential in a given sphere. It is this same unobjective stance that he also has toward art.
He remains attached to peripheral aesthetic aspects and fundamentally does not understand the central thematic meaning represented by this sphere, just as he does not understand it in the case of moral values and in life. All that counts for him are aesthetic values and art, not because he really grasps the actual profound value qualities of this sphere, but because here at least he can exercise his misunderstanding, his distorted interpretation, and reduce everything to certain peripheral aesthetic values, which he is able to enjoy, without becoming conscious of being at odds with what the situation requires.

Ultimately, a certain self-indulgence lurks in all aestheticism. One enjoys the feeling of being refined and exceptional, because in dealing with exceptional works of art one imagines oneself to be participating in their exceptional character. This is why the aesthete sets his sights precisely on these higher sources of enjoyment. He does not want just any pleasure; he wants refined pleasure in things that impart to him the consciousness of being cultivated and exceptional. Among aesthetes the vital sphere is usually not well developed. People with hearty appetites are seldom aesthetes. The particular accent on refinement and on this self-indulgence give the aesthete a
certain soft and weakly quality that prevents us from ultimately taking such types seriously. The aesthete, like any other type defined by enjoyment, is a miserable and unserious figure, not for his emphasis on aesthetic value but for his focus on enjoyment, his imprisonment in an unobjective Epicurean world, his clinging to what is secondary in all situations, and his looking at things merely from without.

None of this finds any place in the authentic stance toward art. Here a person does not look toward himself in any way, but in objective surrender to the work of art is raised beyond himself. It is finally time to abandon the completely false notion that art and its pursuit have the effect of softening us and crippling our will. On the contrary! The truly artistic stance, the capacity to grasp in its full seriousness and metaphysical significance the world of beauty, and of art in particular, the enthusiasm for this world, the ability to be deeply moved and made happy by a true work of art—all this flows from the same fundamental value-responding attitude from which the surrender to the moral good also originates. The artistically disposed person is oriented to what is central within art, to what is of decisive importance in this sphere, while ignoring all the
accidental things to which the aesthete remains attached. Being attuned to what is objectively important in the artistic sphere and having a genuine, reverent, value-responding fundamental attitude, the artistic person is much more disposed to grasping and devoting himself to what is essential and decisive in other (non-aesthetic) spheres. In every context he will orient himself toward objective value, and thus in the moral sphere he will recognize moral values as being normative; the only beauty that will captivate and concern him in the moral sphere will be that radiating from real virtue. When called actively to intervene, he will not cling to the aesthetic hue of a situation, which it possesses for someone who sees it from outside, but will decisively step in to help. He will also apprehend the much deeper aesthetic countenance of the situation, which is revealed only to the person who comprehends it from within. Naturally, the artistic disposition alone does not guarantee that someone will look at the world of moral values in this way; much else is needed. But the artistic disposition originates from the same fundamental attitude from which the moral derives and so, if pursued to its ultimate consequences, leads to the moral sphere rather than away from it. Rightly un-
derstood, this genuine and ultimate beauty purifies one’s heart as it elevates it to God. To be captivated by this beauty does not represent an unhealthy departure from the substantial core of the world, nor an unreal existence in a world of illusion. For this beauty is the countenance of all that is truly valuable in the various spheres of reality, opening our eyes to truth.

Although art is a world all its own, and although beauty represents a value in its own right that prohibits any artificial reduction of art to something else and any dissolution of beauty into other things, beauty does not somehow hang in the air but is incorporated organically into the overall realm of values. Just as God, the fullness of all goodness and truth, is also the epitome and wellspring of all beauty and addresses us through all that is truly beautiful, so also the artistic disposition is in no way a separation from morality and all other values. Rather, it is a stance that makes our hearts more receptive to the voice of God whenever it may speak to us. And so let us conclude with the words of a man who vividly embodies the power of beauty to lead us to God—with the words of Michelangelo:
“Beauty was given to me at my birth as the true model for my dual calling. It is both a light and a mirror for me in both artforms. Whoever thinks otherwise is mistaken. For beauty alone inspires me to envision the sublimity of the conceptions I undertake to paint and sculpt. While insolent and foolish people concoct a false notion of beauty, reducing it to the level of their senses, beauty comes from heaven and will lead any sane spirit to the place from which it came.”
Affectivity and Gender

Panelists: Beth Rath, Maria Fedoryka, & Christopher T. Haley


Further Recommended Reading:


Multiple Authors: Contemplating Edith Stein, edited by Joyce Avrech Berkman. South Bend: UND Press, 2004. (Particularly Part Two: "Every So-Called 'Masculine' Occupation May Be Exercised by Many Woman": Edith Stein's Feminism)
formative principle in a person’s professional life. We are able to speak of this ethos only when the professional life demonstrates objectively a definite uniform character. Indeed, this character emerges as a moral force from within; it is not imposed upon the professional life from without either by the authenticity of the work itself or other regulations. Loyalty and conscientiousness are among such abiding attitudes which can be decisive for professional life. A person’s attitude toward his or her profession clearly helps determine the results achieved in it. Whoever regards his work as a mere source of income or as a pastime will perform it differently from the person who feels that his profession is an authentic vocation. Strictly speaking, we can only accept the term “professional ethos” in this last instance.

Finally, we must recognize that every profession has an ethos peculiar to its own purpose. (This is somewhat like the helpfulness of the nurse, the circumspection and determination of the undertaker, etc.) The ethos can be displayed by the person’s nature (that is, he has a natural inclination for his profession); or, it can grow in him through constant practice of its required activities; and then it can become a standard of behavior independent of external control.

When this evening’s topic was suggested to me, it precluded two suppositions: first, that certain abiding attitudes are unique to the feminine soul and form woman’s professional life from within out; second, that the very nature of woman draws her to certain professions. Let us now discuss these two points.

Start Here. Taken from "The Ethos of Women's Professions"

1. WOMAN’S NATURAL VOCATION AND ITS CORRESPONDING ETHOS

Are we able to speak of vocations which are specifically feminine? In the beginning of the feminist movement, the radical leaders denied this, claiming that all professions were suitable for
woman. Their opponents were unwilling to admit to this concept, recognizing only one feminine vocation, woman's natural vocation. Our subject requires discussion of both points of view. To begin with, we must ask: Is there a natural feminine vocation of woman? What spiritual attitude does it demand?

Only the person blinded by the passion of controversy could deny that woman in soul and body is formed for a particular purpose. The clear and irrevocable word of Scripture declares what daily experience teaches from the beginning of the world: woman is destined to be wife and mother. Both physically and spiritually she is endowed for this purpose, as is seen clearly from practical experience. However, it follows also from the Thomistic principle of anima forma corporis that such a spiritual characteristic does exist. Of course, woman shares a basic human nature, but basically her faculties are different from men; therefore, a differing type of soul must exist as well. Since the fundamentals of the typically feminine spiritual attitude are quite familiar to us, we will trace it only very briefly.

Woman naturally seeks to embrace that which is living, personal, and whole. To cherish, guard, protect, nourish and advance growth is her natural, maternal yearning. Lifeless matter, the fact, can hold primary interest for her only insofar as it serves the living and the personal, not ordinarily for its own sake. Relevant to this is another matter: abstraction in every sense is alien to the feminine nature. The living and personal to which her care extends is a concrete whole and is protected and encouraged as a totality; this does not mean that one part is sacrificed to another, not the mind to the body or one spiritual faculty at the expense of the others. She aspires to this totality in herself and in others. Her theoretical and her practical views correspond; her natural line of thought is not so much conceptual and analytical as it is directed intuitively and emotionally to the concrete. This natural endowment enables woman to guard and teach her own children. But this basic attitude is not intended just for them; she should behave in this way also to her husband and to all those in contact with her.
This maternal gift is joined to that of companion. It is her gift and happiness to share the life of another human being and, indeed, to take part in all things which come his way, in the greatest and smallest things, in joy as well as in suffering, in work, and in problems. Man is consumed by “his enterprise,” and he expects others will be interested and helpful; generally, it is difficult for him to become involved in other beings and their concerns. On the contrary, it is natural for woman, and she has the faculty to interest herself empathetically in areas of knowledge far from her own concerns and to which she would not pay heed if it were not that a personal interest drew her into contact with them. This endowment is bound closely to her maternal gift. An active sympathy for those who fall within her ken awakens their powers and heightens their achievements. It is a concerned, formative, and truly maternal function, precisely one which even the adult needs. This function will come into play also with one’s own children, especially when they mature and the mother is released from their physical care.

Participation in her husband’s life requires subordination and obedience as directed by God’s word. It is in accordance with nature that man serve his concern directly. The wife serves his cause for his sake; thus, it is reasonable that this happen under his guidance. That the duty of obedience extends also to the wife’s immediate domain—the household and the upbringing of children—is probably derived less from the feminine individuality than from the natural vocation of man as guide and protector of his wife. The natural vocation corresponds also to woman’s natural tendency towards obedience and service: “Obedient I feel my soul, always most beautifully free.”

At the onset, this presentation of the natural feminine individuality did not include any value judgment. It is evident without further elaboration that the purely developed feminine nature does include a sublime vital value. It is essential for this vital value as well as for ethical value, which we will soon consider, that the feminine nature be developed purely, and in no way does this come about as a matter of course. One can even go so far as to say that it is the case only under particular circumstances.
disposition suffers from the joint flaw which human nature retains from original sin, which impedes her pure development, and which, if not opposed, leads to typical perversion. Usually, the personal outlook appears to be exaggerated unwholesomely; in the first place, her inclination to center both her activities and those of others about her own person is expressed by vanity, desire for praise and recognition, and an unchecked need for communication; on the other hand, it is seen in an excessive interest in others as in curiosity, gossip, and an indiscreet need to penetrate into the intimate life of others. Her view reaching toward the whole leads easily to the frittering away of her powers; her antipathy for the necessary objective disciplining of individual abilities results in her superficial nibbling in all areas. And in her relations to others, it is manifested in her complete absorption with them beyond the measure required by maternal functions; the sympathetic mate becomes the obtrusive mischief-maker who cannot endure quiet, reserved growth; and because of this, she does not foster development but rather hinders and paralyzes it. The dominating will replaces joyful service. How many unhappy marriages can be attributed to this abnormality! How much alienation between mothers and growing children and even mature offspring!

Were we to present in contrast the image of the purely developed character of spouse and mother as it should be according to her natural vocation, we must gaze upon the Virgin Mary. In the center of her life stands her son. She awaits His birth in blissful expectation; she watches over His childhood; near or far, indeed, wherever He wishes, she follows Him on His way; she holds the crucified body in her arms; she carries out the will of the departed. But not as her action does she do all this: she is in this the Handmaid of the Lord; she fulfills that to which God has called her. And that is why she does not consider the child as her own property; she has welcomed Him from God's hands; she lays Him back into God's hands by dedicating Him in the Temple and by being with Him at the crucifixion. Should we consider the Mother of God as spouse, we find a quiet, limitless trust which in turn depends on limitless trust, silent obedience, and an obviously faithful communion in
suffering. She does all this in surrender to the will of God who has bestowed her husband upon her as human protector and visible guide.

The image of the Mother of God demonstrates the basic spiritual attitude which corresponds to woman's natural vocation; her relation to her husband is one of obedience, trust, and participation in his life as she furthers his objective tasks and personality development; to the child she gives true care, encouragement, and formation of his God-given talents; she offers both selfless surrender and a quiet withdrawal when unneeded. All is based on the concept of marriage and motherhood as a vocation from God; it is carried out for God's sake and under His guidance.

How can woman attain this sublime ethos in thought and in deed when such powerful drives in her fallen nature oppose it and urge her to other ways? A good natural remedy against all typical feminine defects is solid objective work. This demands in itself the repression of an excessively personal attitude. It calls for an end to superficiality not only in her own work but in general. Because it requires submission to objective laws, it is a schooling in obedience. But it must lead neither to relinquishing of the good and pure personal attitude nor to a one-sided specializing and enslavement to a discipline which typifies the perversion of masculine nature. How extremely sufficient this natural remedy of objective work can be is seen in the maturity and harmony of many women who manifest a high intellectual formation or who were trained by the hardship of life in the discipline of strenuous professional work. Here we have the parallel to the image of the perfect gentleman which Newman sketches in *The Idea of a University*: a cultivation of personality which somewhat resembles true holiness. But in both cases it is simply a matter of similarity. The nature restrained only by the influence of education maintains its cultivated exterior only to a certain point; then it breaks through all bounds. Only the power of grace can uproot and form fallen nature anew; it happens from within, never from without. How this takes place in feminine nature we will consider later.
Now, after considering the relationship of soul and body, let us turn to the interrelationship of the spiritual faculties. We see that they are in a state of interdependence—one cannot exist without the other. Intellectual cognition of reality is the necessary point of departure for emotional response. The incitements of the emotions are the mainsprings of the will; on the other hand, the concern of the will is to regulate intellectual activity and emotional life. But the faculties are in no manner equally dispensed and developed. Man’s endeavor is exerted to be effective in cognitive and creative action. The strength of woman lies in the emotional life. This is in accord with her attitude toward personal being itself. For the soul perceives its own being in the stirrings of the emotions. Through the emotions, it comes to know what it is and how it is; it also grasps through them the relationship of another being to itself, and then, consequently, the significance of the inherent value of exterior things, of unfamiliar people and impersonal things. The emotions, the essential organ for comprehension of the existent in its totality and in its peculiarity, occupy the center of her being. They condition that struggle to develop herself to a wholeness and to help others to a corresponding development, which we have found earlier to be characteristic of woman’s soul. Therein, she is better protected by nature against a one-sided activation and development of her faculties than man is. On the other hand, she is less qualified for outstanding achievements in an objective field, achievements which are always purchased by a one-sided concentration of all spiritual faculties; and this characteristic struggle for development also exposes her more intensely to the danger of fragmentation. Then, too, the one-sidedness, to which by nature she inclines, is particularly dangerous: unilateral emotional development.

We have attributed much importance to emotion in the total “organismus” of spiritual being. It has an essential cognitive function: it is the central pivot by which reception of the existent is transmuted into personal opinion and action. But it cannot execute its function without the cooperation of intellect and will, nor can it attain cognitive performance without the preparation of the
intellect. Intellect is the light which illuminates its path, and without this light, emotion changes back and forth. In fact, if emotion prevails over the intellect, it is able to obscure the light and distort the picture of the entire world just as of individual things and events and drive the will into erroneous practice. Emotional stirrings need the control of reason and the direction of the will. The will does not reach any absolute power for invoking or suppressing emotional reactions, but it does adhere to its freedom to permit or to restrict the development of mounting agitations. Where discipline of mind and will are lacking, emotional life becomes a compulsion without secure direction. And because it always needs some stimulation for its activity, it becomes addicted to sensuality, lacking the guidance of the higher spiritual faculties. Thus given the intimate union of body and soul, it results in the decline of spiritual life to that of the sensual-animalistic one.

Consequently, only if its faculties are correspondingly trained will the feminine soul be able to mature to that state conformable to its true nature. The concrete feminine types which we have cited represent to us not only diverse natural predispositions but also diverse formative levels of the soul of woman. We have seen in Ingunn a woman’s soul which was nearly like unformed matter but which still permitted intuitions of its capacities. Another, Nora, through the influences of chance and social conventions, had found a certain formation but not that proper to her. And, finally, Iphigenia was like a perfect creation of the master hand of God. This presents us with the task of investigating what the formative powers are through which woman’s soul can be led to the nature for which it is intended and can be protected from the degeneration with which it is threatened.

II. WOMAN’S FORMATION

The particular spiritual disposition of which we have been speaking is the substance which must be formed: the basic faculties which exist originally are unique in degree and in kind to each
Emotional Brokenness and Healing

Panelists: Anthony Stadlen & Derek Jeffreys

Anthony Stadlen: Introductory Remarks

Further Recommended Reading:

Dietrich von Hildebrand: *The Nature of Love.*
The Desecration of Love

Anthony Stadlen

The word ‘Liebe’ (‘love’) is listed hundreds of times in the Concordance to The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. But is the psychoanalytic understanding of love superior to that of writers like Jane Austen or Leo Tolstoy; of thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger, Dietrich von Hildebrand, or Emmanuel Lévinas; of the Holiness Code at the heart of the Torah; or of ordinary people?

In Freud’s (1905) case study of ‘Dora’, her father allows his friend Herr K. to molest the pubescent Dora sexually in exchange for sexual favours from Herr K.’s wife. Freud diagnoses Dora as an ‘hysteric’ when she tells him that, when she was thirteen or fourteen, she was disgusted by, as he supposes, feeling Herr K.’s erect penis pressed against her in his shop.

Her disgust is thus, for Freud, a pathognomonic symptom of ‘hysteria’.

Generations of psychoanalysts have endorsed Freud’s diagnosis and ‘pathognomonic symptom’. The Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis explains:

‘The feeling of disgust she felt when Herr K.’s erect penis pressed against her body (at 14) probably meant that she resented the size of her own member.’

Freud’s biographer, the psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, praises the case as ‘a model for students of psychoanalysis’. He calls Dora ‘a disagreeable creature who preferred revenge to love.’

In a brief paper, ‘Transience’ (1916), Freud discusses love and mourning. The capacity for love he calls ‘libido’, which he conceives as like an electric charge. When the loved ‘object’ dies, the libido with which the ‘ego’ has ‘cathedect’ it can return to the ‘ego’. Why, he asks, does it not just straight away ‘cathect’ a replacement ‘object’? Mourning, he says, presents psychologists with a ‘riddle’.

In Civilisation and Its Discontents (1929), Freud ridicules the idea of loving one’s neighbour. He says his neighbour deserves his love only ‘if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him’. This is psychoanalytic narcissism. For psychoanalytic theory, ‘love’ is applied narcissism: an extension of ‘self-love’.

In 1942, the ‘existential’ psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswanger published what Heidegger called a ‘gigantic … treatise on love’. In 1944-5, Binswanger published ‘The Case of Ellen West’, as a ‘paradigm’ of ‘schizophrenia’, and of ‘love’: his ‘love’.

He wrote that ‘Love alone, and the imagination originating from it’ can rise above a ‘single point of view’ in order, by means of ‘historical science’, ‘to test and compare “personal” judgements…and to place them in a scientific perspective’.

This he set out to do, twenty-three years after Ellen West’s death. At thirty-three, in 1921, she poisoned herself with the help of her husband. This event was facilitated by Binswanger.

She was a ‘patient’ in his ‘sanatorium’, Bellevue, at Kreuzlingen in Switzerland. He set up a case conference with two other eminent psychiatrists: Eugen Bleuler and a third, unnamed, ‘foreign’ psychiatrist.
Binswanger and Bleuler agreed she was a case of ‘schizophrenia’, the new ‘illness’ that Bleuler had proposed in 1908. The third psychiatrist ‘would label it a psychopathic constitution progressively unfolding’. But, wrote Binswanger, ‘...all three of us agree that ... no definitely reliable therapy is possible.’ And: ‘Both gentlemen agree completely with my prognosis.’

All three agreed that Binswanger should put it to her husband that he must decide whether Binswanger should lock her up with no hope of a ‘cure’ or dismiss her as a hopeless case. All three agreed that her suicide was inevitable. It would be caused by, and be a ‘symptom’ of, whatever the ‘illness’ was she was supposedly suffering from.

But in 1944-5 Binswanger wrote that her suicide was ‘authentic’. In it, he claimed, she glimpsed for the first time the ‘dual mode’ of ‘being-in-the-world-beyond-the-world’ in ‘love’.

‘Only in the face of nonbeing does Ellen West actually stand in being, does she triumph over the finiteness of being, including her own. But this is possible only where the existence knows or senses itself as Gestalt of this being, as a passing expression of the eternal Gestalt-metamorphosis. This knowing or sensing is the knowing or sensing of love.’

We now know that the third psychiatrist at the case conference was Alfred Hoche, coauthor of a book published the previous year, The Allowing of the Annihilation of Life Unworthy of Life. This book was later used by the National Socialists as a textbook for the extermination of the ‘ballast existences’ of the ‘mentally handicapped’ and ‘mentally ill’.

Hoche mentions in his autobiography what must be this very case conference. He writes that their task was to decide whether this young woman’s life was ‘a life worthy of life’. And: ‘The answer had to be: No.’

In 1944-5, the extermination of the ‘ballast existences’ had become a reality, as had the extermination of Jews and other undesirable persons. But in The Case of Ellen West published then, as the ‘paradigm’ of his ‘love’, Binswanger expresses no remorse.

The English child psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott gives reasons why a mother must hate her baby. A ‘mentally healthy’ mother today is expected to experience ‘ambivalence’, meaning both ‘love’ and ‘hate’, towards her baby. Where there is ‘love’ it is assumed there must be ‘hate’. Not to feel such hate is to be in ‘unhealthy’ ‘denial’. This is assumed without question by almost all psychotherapists and many lay people.

Today, ‘neuropsychoanalysis’ is popular. ‘Love’ is said to ‘matter’ because it shapes the baby’s brain. ‘Love’, in other words, is useful. But psychiatrists claim that brain scans prove ‘love is blind’.

These and countless other examples show that psychotherapists have a debased notion of love. It has corrupted everyday discourse. It may be termed ‘psychological love’. It is a mere feeling produced by the instinctual dynamics of the ‘psyche’, as part of the pair ‘love-and-hate’. It is not the authentic love-as-action-and-feeling of the Torah’s Holiness Code, in which God says: ‘Ye shall become holy, because I the Lord your God am holy’. It is not based on awe before the holiness of the ineffable Other, the holiness of the neighbour or stranger whom we should love as
ourselves; the brother, sister, mother, father, son, daughter, husband, wife, lover, friend, made in the image of the ineffable God.

The alienated pseudo-sciences, such as psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and psychology, are devoted to the dethronement of truth as von Hildebrand has shown. They are also dedicated to the desecration of love.

This dethronement and this desecration are at one with the loss of reverence which von Hildebrand has lamented.

Most psychotherapists and workers in allied fields appear to be so seduced and corrupted by the dethronement of truth and the desecration of love that they are very far from questioning it.

However, everybody has an irrepressible, if often neglected, longing for love and truth. When we encounter exceptional individuals, and evidence of instances of love and truth, our curiosity and determination to rediscover them seems boundless.
Emotional Contagion in Mass Society

Panelists: Christopher T. Haley & Rocco Buttiglione

Rocco Buttiglione: Introductory Remarks


Further Recommended Reading:


Emotional contagion in Mass Society
Rocco Buttiglione

What is a Mass Society? It is a society composed of individuals.

We know that man is not just an individual but a person. A person is at the same time an individual and member of a community: the community of the family, the community of the nation, the community of the Church and many others, in the last instance the community of humanity. Man has a natural predisposition to friendship, that is to become a friend of another man. There is an infinite number of possible friendship relations. All of them have one thing in common: the relation to the other is not just merely an attribute of my individuality. The relation to the other enters into the definition of my identity, so much so that I cannot determine my own identity out of the relation to the broader community of which I am a member. It is a costitutive relation. And I cannot determine my good out of the relation to the common good of this community. This is the natural/philosophical basis of the supernatural/theological idea of the communion of the Church.

If this is the ontological structure of man, how can have a society made of individuals and not of persons?

The person is entrusted to each human being as a task. Ontologically we are persons, historically we develop our personality in culture and through culture. Culture is the cultivation of what is human in man. The personality is the flourishing of the person up to her full maturity. In the language of theology we could say that this fullness of humanity coincides with Sanctity: the Communion with Jesus and with all men. Men may happen not to be adequate to the difficult task of developing a communion personality. Here historical experience confirms the catholic dogma of the Original Sin. There are many different historical ways in which this inadequacy becomes apparent. Pope Francis has pointed out this state of affairs in his famous comparison of the Church to a Field Hospital in which damaged lives are taken care of.

The first level in which we learn the law of communion is the family. The child was born out of the mother and psychologically and emotionally the two continue in a symbiotic relation for a long time after birth. The father separates the child from the mother and introduces her/him in the real word in which the satisfaction of one's desires cannot be obtained just crying but must be gained through work. The mother is the principle of unconditional love. The father is the principle of authority. The balance of these principles constitutes a mature personality. In a community the unity does not imply a lack of distinction, the negation of the autonomous individuality of the members. As von Hildebrand correctly affirms against Othmar Spann the community is not a subject or a substance. It is only a quasi/subject and arises through an act of liberty of individuals binding themselves to one another. In the family there is a movement from the undistinguished unity of mother and child to the separation/distinction of the two to the critical reconstitution of the unity. The grown up interiorizes both the principle of unconditional love and the principle of authority.

The world we live in is a world of damaged families. In many families the father is absent. Even when the family remains united the general cultural atmosphere does not support the family in its educational role. The parents must both have a job to make a living and the time for the educational work of the family is limited. The delicate processes of the formation of the personality are disturbed. The role of the father in separating the child
from the mother is taken by the role models proposed by the mass media. The teenager rebels against the feeble and irresolute authority of the family to submit to the authority of a group of peers whose role models are dictated by the mass media. Real fathers in due time become old and weak. The son becomes stronger than the father and emancipates himself from his authority. On the other hand she/he interiorizes this authority and recreates, after the physiological conflicts of adolescence, a community with her/his parents. The role models of our mass media never become old or weak, the young man can never become emancipated. They, on the other hand, do not introduce the child into reality. Many things are possible in the fictional world of the Showbiz that are not possible in real life.

In this way we produce an individual who does not grow into a mature personality and does not have the capacity of binding her/himself to another human being to create a family. She/he responds however to emotional stimuli without submitting them to a critical examination at a unison with other people who have a similar inner structure.

This constitutes a mass. In this mass there is a fond of resentment for the inner familial conflicts not elaborated and brought to a mature conclusion. To this we may add the frustrations of a life charged with unrealistic expectations for the want of a proper introduction into reality. The result is the necessity to find an object of hatred that allows you to feel good and who carries all responsibility for the misgivings you are not able to react to in real life.

In his Critique of Dialectical Reason Sartre theorizes that unity (the unity of a Mass) is possible only against an enemy. A true Community, on the contrary, arises out of the recognition of the value of the person of the other.
One main focus of von Hildebrand’s philosophical research throughout the late 1920s was political and social philosophy. This research culminated in many publications, most notably his 1930 book, Die Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft (Metaphysics of Community). This philosophical work was the ideal preparation for the task that he undertook in Vienna by means of his journal. He often draws on this work whenever he analyzes the depersonalizing collectivism of Nazism and Bolshevism. In this essay he explains what it is to be absorbed in a mass, in contrast to living as a person in an authentic community.

It is a fact that people react very differently when they are alone and when they are in a mass gathering. How easy it is for harmless people, who would never be capable of brutality on their own, to get carried away to the point of violence in mass gatherings! Certain slogans that have no effect on single individuals can “trigger” enthusiasm, emotion, or rage in a mass gathering. How much more volatile and unstable is a mass of people than an individual!

It seems that the individual abandons himself to much more irresponsible and uncontrollable passions and instincts when he is part of a mass. This situation robs him of his perspective, suspends the rule of reason, and hands him over to irresponsibility. We need only think of threatening situations that involve some imminent danger. If a mass
of people is present, panic breaks out so easily; people who would behave much more reasonably if they faced the same danger alone or only in a small group lose their heads and become irrational. The war psychosis and the mass movements in the political upheavals of recent years offer sufficient examples of such irresponsible mass reactions, and show us clearly how low the individual’s behavior patterns sink when he acts as a mere part of a mass gathering.

We consider it necessary and timely, therefore, to ask how the effect of becoming part of a mass on an individual is related to the essentially different elevation and inspiration that he experiences by being sheltered in a genuine community. Many confuse mass and community, and think that they see a return to genuine community in the growing tendency to make the individual part of a mass.

A mass is quite distinct from the various forms of genuine community like the family, the state, the nation, and the Church. First of all, in a mass, individuals are accidentally and unorganically lined up next to each other; they are thrown together without any inner principle of unity. In every community, on the other hand, there is a definite principle of unity, based on the realm of meaning at its core in the context of which individuals encounter one another.

Each community has a definite theme that forms it interiorly and gives it its particular countenance. Individuals belong to communities in a variety of ways, depending upon its theme. The family appeals to one aspect and stratum of the person, the state appeals to another, and the nation to yet another. A mass, however, lacks the structure provided by such an element of meaning; it is an accidental, unformed conglomeration of people which does not constitute any definite spiritual space in which each person has an ordered function comparable to that of citizen or subject, father or mother, brother or sister, and so on.

Second, linked to this distinction is the fact that the individuals in a mass possess a uniform role. Each person is, so to speak, the same as everybody else. In contrast to this, each individual in the community possesses a different, definite, and clearly delineated function. The community does not impose uniformity upon the individual, but rather (all solidarity notwithstanding) preserves the individuality of each per-
son untouched. A mass, however, robs each person of his individuality, categorizing everyone as "average."

Third, a mass has a destructive effect on the human being as a spiritual person: it makes him irresponsible. The individual loses himself in a mass; he loses his head; he surrenders himself to something dark, intangible, and anonymous. In the community, he is dealing with something constant and tangible, something which appeals to him as a spiritual person, gives him a definite responsibility, and confers upon him rights and obligations. In communities structured with authority, the authority can relieve the individual of the responsibility for certain decisions. His position is one of conscious obedience, which he puts into practice as a free spiritual person—he does not simply "let himself go."

If we ask which aspects in the human person are awakened by being in a mass and how the individual is influenced as an element of a mass, the answer will always be: by sub-rational aspects and illegitimate forms of influence. The individual does not react with his own spirit when he is a part of a mass. He is not convinced by sound arguments or evident intuitions, but is instead swept along by suggestion and purely dynamic influences. A certain sensational atmosphere of the mass situation opens the floodgates to every illegitimate influence. Just as certain speakers can talk only when surrounded by this atmosphere and perform like a prima donna only in front of a mass, so too the listener is infected by his surroundings. There is an uncontrollable urge to imitate; the cheaper a slogan and the baser its appeal, the more receptive will the mass be to it.

Enthusiasm without an objective basis, unfounded indignation, and cheap emotion can all be found here. The same slogans, the same pseudo-pathos, the same dynamic effects which leave a person unaffected when he is alone in his accustomed surroundings, can "trigger" him if they are presented to him when he is in a mass gathering of people.

Genuine community is completely different. Here the individual retains his customary critical distance vis-à-vis all ideas and thoughts that are presented to him, and the community milieu makes him even more conscious and responsible. The principle of unity on which the
community is based appeals—and the higher the community, the stronger the appeal—to the human being as a spiritual person and orients him in a special way to certain issues and realms. Through his membership in a community, his spiritual eye takes particular note of everything which belongs to the theme of that community. But this does not make him more predisposed to illegitimate influences, to being captured by the power of suggestion, or to being dynamically "swept along." His consciousness as a member of a family, as a citizen, and so on makes him even more aware and more critical with regard to every question that touches on the theme of the respective community.

Communities are a beneficial spiritual help because they provide a spiritual space in which individuals can gain better insight and achieve greater clarity in matters that would have been more difficult to grasp on their own. This is not to be confused with the illegitimate, uncritical attitude that goes hand in hand with being taken over by a mass. A community unites human beings as spiritual persons in an ordered, meaningful way and is a great support and help for its individual members in forming resolutions, in developing a readiness to perform heroic deeds, and in holding fast to one's convictions. The support of the community does not make individuals immature, nor does it rob them of their responsibility, nor does it function as a substitute for legitimate conviction. Instead, it creates a spiritual space which facilitates insight into ideas, because this space is itself shaped and formed by these very ideas, helping one to draw the consequences that flow from them. Objectifying a certain spiritual content which lives, for example, in a family or religious order serves to strengthen the individual and gives him special support.

It would be entirely wrong to take the influence of a milieu which operates on an intuitive level (rather than on the level of intellectual cognition) and equate it with the illegitimate, sub-rational element of suggestion. The antithesis that concerns us here is not between intellectual insight and intuitive experiencing or between explicit insight and gradual, unconscious absorption, but between the legitimate understanding of something (in whatever fashion) and being illegitimately,
dynamically “swept along” by a sub-rational suggestion or “succumbing” to it when only a momentary, superficial influence has been exerted.

The higher a community’s realm of meaning is, the more will it be concerned with the ultimate meaning and authentic destiny of the individual. In the supernatural community of the corpus Christi mysticum, the ultimate meaning of the community coincides with that of the human being. In general, the person comes into his full personality only in a community; hence in this highest of all communities, he fulfills his ultimate meaning as an individual person to the degree that he is fully a member of it. This community constitutes the utmost antithesis to a mass. But as we have seen, even the communities which are based on lower realms of meaning are also entirely distinct from a mass.

As soon as a community attempts to be more than its realm of meaning objectively permits—as soon as totalitarian tendencies begin to take hold in a state or nation, or their significance is exaggerated by being deified—the danger of the individual being taken over by a mass inevitably arises. What a community, given its particular essence, cannot achieve is replaced by the individual sinking into a mass.

Today there is a special danger that the individual may be absorbed into a mass, since the longing to overcome individualism, the desire for something which we ourselves do not produce but discover, something that is greater than ourselves, leads to the view that being “caught up” in the exhilarating atmosphere of a mass or being “swept away” by something intangible is a great suprapersonal experience. Just as the sub-rational, vital sphere has been deified, likewise here the sub-personal has been confused with the suprapersonal.

These people know so little about genuine objectivity that they fail to grasp that real growth beyond one’s own subjective narrowness and arbitrariness is bestowed by every real insight into an objective truth and all behavior that conforms to it. They stretch out their hands, therefore, for a substitute that consists in some kind of power which comes to them from outside their own selves and is independent of their own arbitrariness and decision-making, whether it be mass movements or certain so-called “modern” currents in the air today. In reality, however,
they do not grow beyond their own person, but slide down to the subpersonal level. They think that they have been caught up by something great and superior; but their feeling rests on a delusion.

Similarly, our desire for the legitimate support and enhancement of our subjectivity which genuine community provides, and our need to be embedded in a unity that does not stem from our arbitrary choice, can go terribly astray when we seek these things by being dissolved into a mass. The fleeting, sensational intoxication of the exhilarating atmosphere of a mass, which is quickly followed by an awareness of coming to one’s senses—for every person of any depth has a guilty conscience over letting himself be “swept along” by illegitimate influences and yielding to his lower instincts—is worlds apart from the noble elevation that is granted to an individual living in a genuine community.

Here too, as with most contemporary aberrations, we encounter anti-personalism as a primary root of all the evil that has arisen in our times. We must once and for all stop elevating the community at the expense of the individual. We must grasp that the community cannot be pitted against the person. Individual and community are ordered to one another in such a way that we will never be able to understand genuine community if we do not clearly acknowledge the human being as a spiritual person made in the image of God. At the same time, we will never do justice to the essence of the person and the fullness of his being if we do not fully understand the nature of community.

As I have often affirmed in these pages, the modern anti-personalism which we encounter in Bolshevism and National Socialism represents, not a victory over liberal individualism, but its ultimate and most radical consequence. Only the rehabilitation of the human being as a spiritual person, as a being with an immortal soul destined to eternal community with God, can save us from being dissolved into a mass and lead us to genuine community.