Cheikh Mbacke Gueye (Ed.)
Ethical Personalism

Realistische Phänomenologie:

Philosophische Studien der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein und an der Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile en Santiago/

Realist Phenomenology:

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Introduction

From the purported *Constitution of the Mali Empire*(fourteenth century) to *The American Declaration of Independence* (1776), and *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)[1], the conviction of and agreement on the respect for human life, rights, and persons, individual freedom, equality and justice, are very widely shared. What is taken to represent the rights of the human person necessitates, however, a substantial, deeper, and even metaphysical account of the nature and essence of the human person. As a matter of fact, as persons, we have rights because we are beings endowed with freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and an inviolable and intrinsic value, i.e., our dignity. As Paul Ricoeur rightly summarises it: "for dignity it is enough to be human."[2] This unequivocal statement does not just point at the non-negotiability of the dignity of man, but also constitutes, when scrupulously respected and seriously translated in our daily acts, a guiding principle that provides solid foundations for a good life in community.

However much agreement there is on these principles, the ways we get to them as well as the conceptions we have of the human person remain controversial. The present volume, by seeking to collect thoughtful ideas about the person, is an attempt to identify crucial philosophical-anthropological questions and ultimately, if not formulate some answers to them, at least indicate further points of reflection. Given the broadness and complexity of

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[1]While *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *The American Declaration of Independence* met with an almost universal consensus, *The Constitution of the Mali Empire*, known also as the *Kurukan Fuga*, and purported to be a faithful reproduction of a charter created in the fourteenth century, has sparked some controversies. Nonetheless, all three "charters" convey a common message that relates to the respect for human life and the person, individual freedom, equality and justice. At the same time, they protect against abuses to the value of the human person.

[2]Paul Ricoeur, "Pour l'être humain du seul fait qu'il est humain," in: J-F. de Raymond ed., *Les enjeux des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Larousse, 1988), p. 23.

this topic, the contributors to this volume were asked to focus on the ethical aspects of personalism, though not ignoring its ontological and epistemological dimensions.

Although the focus on ethical personalism may seem a biased approach, it was rather meant to be a way not just to investigate the most basic datum of the human person, namely human dignity, but also help enlarge the perspectives under which the demands of the human person could be analysed. Whereas all contributors agree on the essential value of the human person, i.e., her or his dignity, the further specific touches and spurs emphasised here and there will show not just the richness of the human person, but also the complexities of its investigation. In this volume, it is less about the disagreements on some aspects than about how these disagreements can help us elaborate on a coherent, solid, and true philosophy about the person. The complexity of such a topic requires, indeed, not just an openness to other traditions and opinions, but also a humility with regards to our own engraved convictions.

Defining personalism is a very difficult undertaking, if not an impossible one. Many reasons can account for this. First, there are almost as many personalists theories and schools as there are philosophers who have insights on personalism. Secondly, whereas some philosophers emphasise one aspect of personalism—for example the ontology of the person—others dwell on the experience of the human being as person. Others, still, are rather concerned with the value—dignity—of the human person.

Hence, the analysis of the human person can be done at least on three levels: ontology, epistemology, and ethics. But an effective comprehension of the richness and various complexities of the human person would require a theory that proposes a full and coherent account of what it means to be a human person. Such a theory would have to spell out, among others, that the claim of individuality and uniqueness of the human person is not incompatible with the claim of the person as a social being; such a theory would have to clearly demonstrate why persons require specific treatment; finally, such a theory would have to give an account of the role of God—or supreme Being—in our conception of persons, of the Good, and the ultimate meaning of life.

Our present project aims at contributing to shedding light on some aspects of the human person by focusing mainly on the ethical dimensions. As matter of fact, ethical personalism is the view that human persons have an ontological and inalienable value, and as such they ought to be respected in all times and circumstances. It also says, following Kant,[3] that the human

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[3]With Immanuel Kant three components play a crucial role: the autonomy and freedom

person should never be used just as a means towards an end. Hence, it clearly departs from and strongly criticises utilitarian and relativistic views which find it hard—while remaining coherent with their principles—to protect and keep intact the dignity of the human person.

This project is a work in-progress that tries to identify and ultimately answer at least four questions: what should be the tenets of a theory of ethical personalism? Which conception(s) of the person should inform ethical personalism? What is its relevance in a modern, consumerist, inegalitarian, and highly technological world? How does a true ethical personalism defend itself from all virulent—and sometimes pertinent—criticisms that often point at some naivety and even utopian bias connected with personalism as a whole?

If not all questions, at least some of them will find answers in this volume. Drawing on many philosophical resources and traditions, the contributors reflect, with different prisms, on the concept of person and the theory of ethics that informs it the most suitably. Aiming at securing some of the cornerstones of ethical personalism, the present collection is divided into four parts. Part One, "On Love," is devoted to an analysis of one of the most essential phenomena related to the person and personal existence.[4] Part Two explores mainly "Two Religious Perspectives on Personalism," namely those from Islam and Confucianism. Part Three, entitled "Personalism Revisited," takes into account pertinent criticisms of and complementary thoughts on personalism in general, and ethical personalism in particular, in order to then spell out the tenets of a true and authentic personalism. Part Four, "Personalism and its Demands," addresses the topicality of this project by exploring the relevance of personalistic insights for life in community in general.

Exploring the essence of the human person and personhood requires a careful analysis of some key-phenomena of human existence. One of the most fundamental and expressive phenomena is love which, as Max Scheler rightly points it, is the most basic fact of human existence and makes certain demands on the human person that need to be fulfilled. As a matter of fact, writes Scheler, "before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, man is an *ens amans*."[5]

Hence, Part One starts with an investigation into the phenomenon of love. John Crosby reminds us first of all of his thesis of "personal individuality" and

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of the human person, as well as the value he/she represents and embodies. Kant's personalistic project culminates with the principles enounced in different forms in the categorical imperative.

[4]We specially focus here on the Christian philosophical conception of love with the examples from Dietrich von Hildebrand and Karol Wojtyła.

[5]Max Scheler, "Ordo Amoris," in: *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. David Lachterman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 110-111.

personhood[6] which takes human persons to be more than instances of the human kind, and more than instances of some excellence such as intelligence. Personal individuality transcends the individuality that is just sufficient to instantiate some type or kind. Crosby takes love here as an example of a self-transcending value-response through which the full thematicity of the human person can be shown. The sharp and focused comparison he makes between Dietrich von Hildebrand and Harry Frankfurt on love is to show that Frankfurt's value subjectivism and his refusal to conceive of personal unrepeatability disqualify him as a candidate for the project of ethical personalism. Such a project would indeed include as a first step showing that since every human being can be loved, every human being is a person with an unrepeatable identity and value. As a next step the project would have to ask what it takes to show respect to unsubstitutable persons, and what are the ways in which disrespect is shown to them.

The analysis on love is continued by Michael Healy who proposes to examine von Hildebrand's analysis of the different meanings of the word "mine," especially the difference between the mine of love and the mine of possession. Applying various phenomenological distinctions to love as expressed in the complete mutual self-donation of the sexual act in marriage, Healy goes on to show that Hildebrand's personalist approach to sexuality anticipates many of the significant themes of Karol Wojtyła's reflections in two of his seminal works, namely *Theology of the Body* and *Love and Responsibility*. But Healy's ultimate goal is first to dissipate some of the confusions of the modern world about love, communion, and sexuality, and then to point out some antidotes to the threat of dehumanisation and disrespect for the individual person so prevalent in our age.

Love has not just an interpersonal dimension. This is shown by Mátyás Szalay who dwells on von Hildebrand's understanding of what he calls "solidarity with myself". Against the background of Max Scheler's distinction between *Selbstliebe* (*amor sui* or self-love) and *Eigenliebe* (love of the self), Szalay argues that there are six stages of deepening love and consequently six forms of good self-love which are not inevitable but do require a high moral virtue and have to resist many temptations. The author's attempt to rehabilitate some forms of self-love through a phenomenological analysis is a way to help understand the phenomenon of love, both in its human and divine dimension.

To understand and grasp the ethical aspects of personalism both in its theoretical elaboration and practical implications requires also exploring other

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[6]John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

traditions in which important insights could be identified. Since Christianity, as a religious-philosophical tradition, has been very productive with respect to the issue of personalism, this volume devotes a special place to it. At the same time, in Part Two, other traditions, especially Islam and Confucianism, are taken into account.[7]

Ethics, as Alhagi Manta Drammeh emphasises, has been intrinsic and fundamental to Islamic thought. The unfortunate oversight of much modern scholarship in not paying sufficient attention to the crucial place of ethics in Islam has led to the tendency of concentrating more on purely legalistic view about what is lawful and unlawful rather than on their principled reasons and motivations. Hence, highlighting three complex terms, *insan*, *bashar*, and *nas*, that are all various renderings of the concept of "person," Drammeh goes on to emphasise the importance of personal freedom in the Islamic teachings. The person's acts have then to be assessed against the background of his or her personal freedom and responsibility. The respect for the individuals, their freedom and dignity will thus have far-reaching consequences for developing and creating a prosperous, cohesive and strong society.

On our conception of the person depends much of the kind of society we want to build. The Confucian classics, *The Great Learning*, constitutes an important inspirational source through which Chen Xunwu proposes to guide us. Confucian ethical personalism is profoundly grounded in a conception of the person as a concrete being of flesh and blood. In the pursuit of an ethical life, persons are bearers of moral values, possessors of thoughts, embodiments of social relations, makers of choices, and actors of actions in the social-ethical life. Ethical cultivation comprises eight steps and culminates in the cultivation of the person as a whole. To live, according to the Confucian teaching, is not merely to exist. Confucian ethical personalism does not entertain the view that an individual person is, and can be, an isolated island. It emphasises personhood, not egoism, individuality not individualism, and lays a crucial accent on social value, social responsibility, and obligation, all aspects that we need to stress today.

Ethical Personalism is not just an attempt to grasp the tenets of descriptive and normative aspects around the person, and in different traditions and philosophies; it aims also at addressing some critical, alternative, complementary insights and thoughts about our conception of person and ethics. It is in this respect that Part Three attempts to get at the core of a gen-

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[7]Our efforts to get a contribution on a Jewish perspective on the person have been unfruitful. The Christian tradition is largely represented throughout this volume, especially with contributions on Karol Wojtyła and Dietrich von Hildebrand's personalistic philosophy.

uine and true personalism theory by critically assessing and analysing some existing personalistic trends and theories.

Opening this section, Michał Bardel applies himself to clarifying the ancient notion of person by placing it in close relationship to the concept of community. Against certain classical and exclusive understandings of the person as individual substance (Boethius), or as fundamental primitive being (Strawson), Bardel proposes to consider the person just as one of the possible *descriptions* of human being. Drawing on a fictitious story about fake identity, the author emphasises his project that consists less in decreeing what the person should or must be than in describing what the person is in our universal experience of him or her. This existential category in which we analyse the nature of the person does not in any means ignore or trample on the exceptional status of the person. The point made here by Bardel is rather that the maintenance of moral demands of personalism does not require either the thesis about the substantialism of person or the belief about its primitivism or autonomy.

Another alternative is to think of personalism along non-theistic lines, as Dwayne A. Tunstall proposes. Trying to situate the best ideas and insights from ethical personalism, especially from Boston personalism,[8] in a non-Christian religious humanist context, Tunshall reconciles the theistic and non-theistic sympathisers of personalism by grounding ethical personalism on a non-transcendent ground, namely on the loving, ennobling, and caring interpersonal relationships we have with one another and with our environment. Boston personalism, although theistic in nature, does embody features that are conservable within a non-theistic ethical personalism. Those features include Edgar S. Brightman's moral philosophy, as articulated in his unduly neglected book, *Moral Laws*. They also include Muelder's social ethics and its conception of the person as being "born into community, nurtured by it, and influenced by it in numerous ways." The conception of person as an embedded being that both Bardel and Tunshall emphasise provides us with a plausible alternative when it is coupled with a permanent sense of personal responsibility, care, and respect, not just for oneself, but for the others, the community and the whole environment.

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[8]Founded by Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910), Boston personalism emphasises the value of the person, the existence of God and the soul, and the unity and interrelatedness of reality. Taking personalism to be primarily and essentially a metaphysics, Boston personalists consider the person to be the "ultimate fact" and the "master principle". For some bibliographical resources, see Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999); See also Paul Deats and Carol Robb, *The Boston Personalist Tradition* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986).

Searching beyond personalism leads us to Meister Eckhart who presents us with a radical criticism of the metaphysical concept of "person". A crucial aspect of Eckhart's philosophy, as Piotr Augustyniak emphasises, is Godhead whom the human person should strive to be unified with. Eckhart not only discards the category of human nature, but he also favours its replacement with a concept of "simple nature" with no attributes or specifications. Understanding this line of reasoning requires a grasp of the existential and ontological aspects of Eckhart's thought. However, Eckhart's deconstructionism—which persists in a dialectical thinking—of the personalist metaphysics does not make him insensible to the moral commitments of personalism. Overcoming the substantiality of the person as put forth by classical philosophy is a way to promote a certain authenticity in ethics. And if individuals are to embark on their spiritual self-improvement, a non-political and esoteric path, like that drawn by Eckhart, is, so Augustyniak argues, a viable alternative.

John White proposes to explore a holistic approach to personalism so that some important impersonal dimensions of the human being can be included. As a matter of fact, ethical personalism, as a philosophical approach that highlights certain realities such as the dignity of the person—both as an object of moral activities and attitudes and as a subject of moral virtue—, tends to obscure others. Drawing on Max Scheler's philosophical anthropology that emphasises the tripartite character (spirit-soul-body) of the human being, White points to the importance of the vital soul and its values in moral life. We live not just as persons, but also as vital animals. Both dimensions are to be understood in a certain dynamism that is proper to human life and existence. Along the lines of Max Scheler, White rejects also the idea that person "lies behind" acts. Rather acts are what express, realise and manifest the person: the person becomes itself in and through acts. Living fully as a person and complying with the ethical demands of the person and community life requires one, therefore, to "spiritualise" the vital soul and simultaneously to "vitalise" the spiritual and personal dimensions of who we are.

Closing Part Three, Josef Seifert attempts to report some false theories, philosophies, and understandings of personalism and to articulate what he calls a "true" personalism. Against some ethical positions such as the situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher, or the so-called "purely teleological ethics" (a new form of consequentialism in ethics) and other positions that falsely present themselves under the umbrella of personalism, Seifert opposes an adequate personalism whose tenets could be boiled down to the following aspects: an unbridgeable essential distinction between persons (rational subjects) and impersonal beings, the rationality of knowledge and the transcendence of the person in the knowledge of truth, free will of the person, the irreducibility of rationality to intellect and free will, the person as rational substance, the

unique value (dignity) of persons, etc. The commitment to true personalism
is not just to discover the unique essence, dignity, and values of persons; it
is also about choosing the path of our own philosophy.

The project of *Ethical Personalism* is deeply informed and motivated by a
commitment to investigating the existential, methodological, and systematic
aspects related to the issue of the human person. As social beings, human
persons constitute the cornerstone of life in community. On social and polit-
ical levels, the adoption of a personalistic stance results in claims of certain
rights, demands and obligations that have to do with how we take ourselves
to be. Personalism should not be a vain theory; it presents us rather with
an objective description of the human person and a clear project of society.
What concrete consequences would personalism entail, in our lives as indi-
viduals, and in our common lives as social beings, is discussed in Part Four
of this volume.

Paweł Kaźmierczak proposes to reflect on the issue as to how Dietrich von
Hildebrand's philosophical convictions deeply marked his life as an individual.
Indeed, confronted with the evils of National Socialism exemplified by Hitler's
regime and Stalinist system, von Hildebrand, deeply anchored in his Christian
personalistic convictions, showed a relentless courage and a rare coherence,
although, as Kaźmierczak notes it, his unconditional support for Dollfuss'
authoritarian regime and equally unconditional condemnation of Austrian
social democracy cannot be accepted without reservation. Not siding with
evils and avoiding unbearable moral compromises are direct consequences
of von Hildebrand's adherence to the irreducibility of truth and value, and
to the permanent call for the respect for the person. Lack of respect for
and commitment to truth, and relativism about value, contribute to the
destruction of morality and disintegration of communities. Von Hildebrand's
project is also directed to the issue of authority, spirituality, and political
systems.

Between what philosophy offers and what philosophers take as inspira-
tional and motivational ideas for their daily lives, there is no doubt a gap.
Faced with the ineluctable problems all human beings face with suffering,
Peter McCormick suggests an account of the person in terms of neither em-
bodied entities solely nor transcendental subjects solely but as "empty selves"
both acting efficiently yet ineluctably suffering. After investigating several
strong conceptual tensions between physicalistic and phenomenological per-
spectives on the person, McCormick proposes to shift the philosophical focus
to three anthropological, metaphysical, and epistemological aspects of hu-
man experience: pervasive human fragilities, elusive traces only of intrinsic
values, and strongly constrained possibilities for knowledge. What follows
from such a shift in focus, however, is not the establishment of any scep-

tical attitude but two modest philosophical suggestions only. First, after examining the offers of John Rawls theory of justice as fairness and Amartya Sen's capability approach to justice to our understandings of the sufferings of destitute street children, McCormick proposes that current debates about whether and to what extent certain institutions could help safeguard the personhood of suffering people in general, and of suffering street children in particular should be continued and refined. The second proposal is that a renewed philosophical investigation about identity, and mostly its relevance and significance with respect to suffering, needs to be freshly encouraged.

From the street children in Paris our journey leads us to the dark cells of Abu Ghraib and the turbulent events of the "Arab Spring". Khalia Haydara considers the substantial discussions opposing some forms of contextual ethics (utilitarianism and consequentialism) to ethical personalism. Against the background of the phenomenon of interrogational torture,[9] she analyses the various arguments provided by these philosophical theories. The utilitarian and consequentialist approaches Haydara believes, even in their most sophisticated and elaborated conceptions of "supreme emergency" and "torture warrant," fall short of expressing a coherent and adequate theory that would guarantee the protection of the dignity of the human person. For, besides the inevitable abuses of the human person these theories promote and somehow justify, they fail to provide arguments other than those outside the person. And yet, despite facing the tricky and thorny dilemma of "torturing one person to save the lives of many," Haydara remains intransigent by endorsing and assuming the absolutism of a genuine ethical personalism owing much to Kant and resting on the following pillars: the agency and autonomy of the human person, the human person as being an end in him/herself and not a means for any purpose, and finally his/her ontological, inherent, and inviolable value, i.e., his/her dignity.

The phenomenon of suffering has opened up new dimensions in our modern world, especially in connection with the breath-taking development of technology and communication. How to think about ourselves as persons in this context, and which place should the person hold in a world of machines, are two questions that Paweł Bernat addresses in his article "Maintaining Humanity in a Technology Oriented World of Today." The physical, social, moral, and spiritual changes brought about by the technological development and the growing importance of technological superstructure require an awareness and a deep sense of responsibility. Bernat sees the danger of tech-

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[9]Examples of such practices are to be found in our very recent history with the treatments of the prisoners in Abu Ghraib, and Guantanamo Bay prisons, as well as in recent turmoil and demonstrations in some Arab countries.

nology to lie also in its promotion of consequentialism at the expenses of deontology, and its favouring moral relativism over moral realism. Hence, besides the personal ethical challenge of how to deal with the technology as individuals, there is an "ideological" challenge for moral realists to first realise the danger of "heartless" technology and then address it properly in order to secure values and maintain our humanity.

In a world which is profoundly marked by consumerism, technology, and ultra-fast communication, the tendency to favour superficiality, relativism, and sophistication, over substance, realism, and the natural, is very high. The urgent challenge remains then as to how to work out a robust ethical theory with solid principles that would safeguard the most fundamental and most precious element of the human person: dignity. With the project *Ethical Personalism*, our aim was, to further develop a thorough, comprehensive, and adequate philosophy of the person and personalism. In this respect, the truth about the human person should never be left behind.

The stake is too high, the urgency too near. For if we do not get the nature of the person right and understand what it practically means in our everyday life, our project of society, economic plans, political settings, and environmental policies, will inevitably and profoundly be flawed. Hence our call, "back to the person!", far from being an empty slogan, must take roots from a deep conviction to bring into light the value of the person in each of our endeavours. One of the basic aims of philosophy is fundamental orientation. It is up to all of us, as human persons, and embedded social beings to keep a firm hold on the demands of the person.[10]

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Part I

On Love

Chapter 2

Personal Individuality: Dietrich von Hildebrand in Debate with Harry Frankfurt

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By "personal individuality" I refer to the thesis that human persons are more than instances of the human kind, and more than instances of some excellence such as intelligence, that they have an individuality more powerful than the individuality that is just sufficient to instantiate some type or kind. I want to show that Dietrich von Hildebrand, exploring the nature of love, made significant contributions to the understanding of personal individuality. These contributions are in fact superior to some recent work in analytic philosophy on love, as I will explain by setting von Hildebrand in debate with Harry Frankfurt.

By "ethical personalism" I understand an ethics that is informed by a deep understanding of personal individuality and that is centrally concerned with showing persons the respect that is due to them, that is due to each as being *this* person. I will not develop an ethical personalism in this paper, but try to secure one of the cornerstones of it.

Von Hildebrand is not the only phenomenologist to lay the foundations of an ethical personalism. Edith Stein contributes to this project with her significant concept of the *individuelles Wesen* of each human person, as developed in ch. 8 of her *Endliches und ewiges Sein.* In a future study I hope to show how she thereby captures a metaphysical dimension of the personal individuality that I will explore in the present paper. Max Scheler was another phenomenologist who should be mentioned in connection with ethical personalism; we have only to recall that his most important single work, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, bears the subtitle,

"Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus." But since
I have discussed Scheler's view of personal individuality and of its ethical
significance in another study.[1]

I. Dietrich von Hildebrand

We find von Hildebrand's deepest insights into personal individuality not in
his many writings in ethics but in his great treatise, *The Nature of Love.*[2]

When he explains what it is to love a person, and to love her for her
own sake, he has recourse to his value philosophy. He claims in ch. 1 that
love is a value-response, by which he means that when I love a person, I love
that person on the basis of the value, that is, the beauty, the splendour, the
worthiness that I apprehend in that person. I do not first love, and then
find beauty in the beloved person, but the sight of beauty comes first, and
it engenders my love. Von Hildebrand says emphatically that I do not love
the other primarily under the aspect of one who can make me happy. The
value-response of love is far more radically other-centered; I love the other in
virtue of the worth, the dignity, the preciousness, the nobility that is proper
to the other in his or her own right. Of course, I am happy in loving the
other, as von Hildebrand fully acknowledges, but he cannot stress enough
that my being happy is in no way the principle of the loveableness of the
beloved person; it is not because this person fulfils some need of mine that
he or she seems loveable to me. Love is a self-transcending value-response; I
de-centre myself towards the other when I seek out the beauty of the other
and love her in virtue of her beauty.

It might seem that we have already found the person as individual; we just
have to trace out the line of the value-responding love, and we arrive at the
other as individual person. But this underestimates how much it takes to find
another in all his or her personal individuality. Von Hildebrand in fact goes
on to bring to light a particular perfection of value-responding love, without
which love does not really reach the other as individual person. He says that
the person who is loved must be fully "thematic" for the person who loves
him or her. Let me explain this "full thematicity of the beloved person,"
as von Hildebrand calls it,[3] and let me explain it through its conspicuous
absence. Sometimes an excellence in a person interests me more than the

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[1] John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), ch. 7. I will here limit myself to Dietrich von Hildebrand.

[2] Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, trans. John F. Crosby (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2009).

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

person himself does. For example, if I am fascinated with the intelligence of a person, I am likely to be more interested in his intelligence than in himself. The proof of this is that, as soon as I meet up with an even more intelligent person, my interest will pass over to him. What had interested me in the first person is found even more abundantly in the second one, who is now the main focus of my fascination. My interest is not in the individual persons as such, but only in the intelligence that they manifest. The individual persons just serve to instantiate intelligence, and I am interested most of all in the best instantiation of it. It is not difficult to see what is meant in speaking here of a very limited thematicity of the person in whom I take an interest.

It is worth noting that the thematicity of the person is perhaps even more limited in the case of a person seen in relation to an office that he holds. A judgeship has to be filled, and we look for the candidates who best fulfil the criteria of a good judge. We move with our interest from one candidate who fulfils them well to another who fulfils them better. We do not look for a judge who will be constantly expressing his personal individuality in the exercise of his office; we would rather see him disappear into his office, and to be conspicuous mainly for doing what any good judge does. But while it is understandable that persons are not very thematic as individual persons in the exercise of an office, the fact that we were just describing is somewhat surprising, namely that they may not be very thematic even in certain qualities that they possess, such as intelligence.

Now it is clear that I do not *love* these persons who attract me by their intelligence. My interest bypasses them as persons and aims rather at their intelligence, and I do not love someone whom I bypass in this way. Note well: my interest may well be a value-responding interest in the sense of von Hildebrand, for I may be fascinated by the inner excellence of intelligence, in other words, I may be drawn to intelligence not just as something beneficial for me but as something splendid in itself. But such value-responding fascination is not the value-response of love, because the person whom I admire as intelligent is so little "thematic" in my admiration; he is obscured rather than revealed as person by the way in which his intelligence catches my interest. When I love a person I adhere to *this* individual person, and I am not diverted by each other person whose excellences surpass those of the person whom I love; these excellences of the others seem irrelevant to my love for this person. This is the way the "full thematicity" of a person shows itself in love: I love a person as *this* person and not as an *instance* of worthy qualities.

But a difficulty arises here: where do we find the value in which a person is fully thematic, fully present as person? It is not at once obvious where we should seek this value, for all the other excellences of a person that we

can name, such as wit, vital energy, resoluteness of will, courage also lend themselves to greater and lesser instantiations. One may at this point begin to wonder whether love really is a value-response. For it may seem that *any* value found in one person is such that more or less of the same value can be found in another person. This would mean that the very idea of having value interferes with the full thematicity of the person having value, and that it prevents me from adhering single-mindedly *to the beloved person*; it would mean that, if love presupposes this full thematicity of the beloved person, then love does not after all exist as a value-response, but has some other kind of basis, or simply lacks any basis, arising inscrutably in the heart of the one who loves.[4]

Von Hildebrand is quite aware of this difficulty, and he deals with it in the following way: he calls attention to what he calls the "entirely individual [and] unique value quality inhering in this individual [person]." He explains his idea like this: "The idea of [realising] some general value does not come into question here [with beloved persons]. The idea of participating in some value in general makes no sense here. The beauty of the individual person as a whole, or, as we could say, of the unique unrepeatable idea of God embodied in this person, is after all no general value type, but already as a quality it is something entirely individual and unique."[5] Perhaps we could explain his idea like this: each person is unrepeatably himself or herself; there is no such thing as two copies or two instantiations of the same person. Now each person has, by being this person, his or her own unrepeatable beauty. In other words, growing out of the being of each unrepeatable person is a certain radiance or splendour of each, which is the unrepeatable value of each. Here, then, is the value in which I as person am fully thematic. This value cannot exist with greater fullness in another person, for then there would be something common between me and the other, the other just having

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[4]The difficulty that I am calling attention to has been well formulated by John Davenport: "we need some way of grounding essentially particularistic love in the beloved's real value, but without reducing this value to a mere instantiation of some pattern or participation in some ersatz form. If objective value could consist only of repeatable properties that would require us to love equally anything exemplifying the same properties, then this subjectivist argument would succeed; the particularistic caring that exists in our life would have to be entirely ungrounded." *Will as Commitment and Resolve* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 515. Davenport is like von Hildebrand in wanting to defend the value-basis of love in the light of this difficulty. But his own positive proposal for dealing with the difficulty—following Joseph Raz he suggests (pp. 515-519) that if I share a history with someone I may thereby acquire a reason to love that person with a particular love—is very different from von Hildebrand's proposal, which I now proceed to explain in the text.

[5]*The Nature of Love*, p. 73.

more of the common element than I have; we would be two instances of
the same value, and the value would cease to be rooted in my identity as
this unrepeatable person. Whoever catches sight of this unrepeatable value
in me and is moved to love by what he sees, loves me, not my qualities,
not my excellences, but me myself. This is why his value-response of love
for me cannot be transferred to another, however beautiful and worthy the
other may be. It is also why I for my part am aware of being loved with an
eminently personal love.

Von Hildebrand develops this idea by showing that this individual value of
the individual person is ineffable; it is so radically individual that it escapes
the generality of our linguistic meanings, and so cannot be expressed through
these meanings. This is why you and I stammer and stutter when asked
why we love a certain person; nothing that we can say really answers the
question. Our speechlessness does not come from the fact that our love lacks
any value basis, but rather because the real value basis, rooted as it is in the
unrepeatability of the person whom we love, is ineffable, unutterable.[6]

It is remarkable that in his earlier work in ethics—the work for which he
is best known—von Hildebrand was not led to make a point of each human
person as unrepeatable, but that he was led to it precisely in his treatise on
love. As soon as he examined the kind of value-response that love is, and
just how the person is taken when he or she is loved, then he was confronted
with the mystery of personal individuality. In that earlier work in ethics
von Hildebrand had distinguished between value and the "bearer" of value
(der Werttraeger); in the treatise on love he acknowledges that the talk of
"bearing" value is inappropriate to that ineffable personal value that awakens
love. It is inappropriate on account of the way this value is embedded in the
person, being almost one with the person, because unable to be instantiated
again in any other person.

It may be objected that a person seems never so loveable as when the
person shows forth charm, kindness, a grateful spirit, even though these are
excellences that are not found only in that person but in many others as well.
Thus the principle of loveability in persons seems after all to be excellences
that are not unrepeatably their own but that they share with many others.
Von Hildebrand acknowledges these significant facts when he speaks of the
unique personal beauty of a person being *gespeist* or "nourished"[7] by the
worthy moral qualities of the person. I suppose he would add that this unique
personal beauty is "starved" by morally unworthy qualities. But he insists
that the unique personal beauty, however dependent on such moral qualities,

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[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

is nevertheless itself a value datum over and above such qualities. We cannot indeed detach this unique personal beauty from these qualities—that is the truth in the objection—but we cannot reduce it to them either—that is the truth in von Hildebrand's position.

This irreducibility is confirmed by von Hildebrand's idea, which he has from Scheler, about the way in which the lover stands towards the faults and disvalues of the person whom he loves.[8] Von Hildebrand says that while I acknowledge these faults with all realism, I interpret them as betrayals of the true self of the beloved person. I do not put his faults on a level with his strengths, but I take the former as betrayals of who he really is, and the latter as valid expressions of who he truly is. In this way I extend what von Hildebrand calls the "credit of love" to the person whom I love. Von Hildebrand means to say that there is no partiality or arbitrary favouritism in this way of interpreting the faults of the beloved person, for the interpretation is based on a great personal reality and truth, namely that the beauty of an unrepeatable person can only be obscured by his failings, but cannot be blotted out by them. This is why the lover has something of value to hold fast to even when the beloved person has made a mess of his life.

We are now in a position to clarify the "full thematicity" of the beloved person: it should not be taken simply as the full presence of the factual empirical state of the person. The one who loves commonly discounts some elements that are indeed factually present in the beloved person but are understood to be foreign to her unrepeatable personal identity; and the one who loves commonly discerns elements that are not yet real in the beloved person, and these too belong to the full thematicity of the beloved person. As I say, we can in this way explain how it is that we can love completely unlovable persons and still love them with a love that still qualifies as a value-response.

II. Harry Frankfurt

I made the claim above that the work of von Hildebrand (as of other early phenomenologists) on love and personal individuality surpasses the work of some contemporary analytic philosophers on the same subjects. Let me show this with reference to Harry Frankfurt's important little book, *The Reasons of Love*.[9] I want to show in particular that Frankfurt fails to find a path through love to the mystery of personal unrepeatability.

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-73.

[9] Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

In some important respects Frankfurt seems to concur with von Hildebrand and Scheler, as when he says, "Love is, most centrally, a *disinterested* concern for the existence of what is loved, and for what is good for it. The lover desires that his beloved flourish and not be harmed.... For the lover, the condition of his beloved is important in itself, apart from any bearing that it may have on other matters."[10] It may at first seem as if Frankfurt is recognising something like von Hildebrand's value-responding character of love, but in fact the concurrence with von Hildebrand concerns something we have not discussed in this paper, namely the aspect of love that von Hildebrand calls the *intentio benevolentiae* of love, that is, the concern of the lover for the well-being of the beloved. As a result of this concurrence Frankfurt seems to share the resolute antieudaemonism of von Hildebrand's account of love.

Frankfurt seems also to agree with von Hildebrand in a point that is central to the present paper. He says, "The significance to the lover of what he loves is not that his beloved is an instance or an exemplar. Its importance to him is not generic; it is ineluctably particular. For a person who wants simply to help the sick or the poor, it would make perfectly good sense to choose his beneficiaries randomly from among those who are sick or poor enough to qualify.... Since he does not really care about any of them as such, they are entirely acceptable substitutes for each other. The situation of a lover is very different. There can be no equivalent substitute for his beloved."[11] This seems to make for quite a remarkable concurrence of the two thinkers, but we will see that their concurrence is not as great as it seems.

Frankfurt sharply diverges from von Hildebrand when he denies that love is always a value-response. He says: "love is not necessarily a response grounded in awareness of the inherent value of its object. It may sometimes arise like that, but it need not do so. Love may be brought about—in ways that are poorly understood—by a disparate variety of natural causes. It is entirely possible for a person to be caused to love something without noticing its value, or without being at all impressed by its value, or despite recognising that there really is nothing especially valuable about it."[12] We need to see exactly why Frankfurt denies that love always exists as value-response. He does not deny it because he is a eudaemonist for whom value-response involves an unreal excess of self-transcendence; we just remarked in fact that he stands with von Hildebrand in the eudaemonism debate. He denies it because he thinks that love is not really motivated by some apprehended good

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

or beauty—indeed, he thinks that it is not motivated at all, and he replaces motivation with causation in his account of love, as he intimates in speaking of the "variety of natural causes" at work in love. Love is not based on any cognition of the beloved, or on any free choice of the lover. Love arises by a kind of natural necessity that Frankfurt distinguishes from rational necessity. In another work he says, "The fact that something is important to someone is a circumstance that naturally has its causes, but it may neither originate in, nor be at all supported by, reasons. It may be simply a brute fact, which is not derived from any assessment or appreciation whatever."[13]

Frankfurt does indeed speak of the value of the beloved, but not as a motive of love. He subjectivises this value in the following way in *The Reasons of Love*:

> Of course, I do perceive them [my children] to have value; so far as I am concerned, indeed, their value is beyond measure. That, however, is not the basis of my love. It is really the other way around. The particular value that I attribute to my children is not inherent in them but depends upon my love for them. The reason they are so precious to me is simply that I love them so much.[14]

If we protest that we would not love our children in the first place without some prior sense of their value, and that we cannot, therefore, make this value subsequent to our parental love, Frankfurt has a plausible rebuttal that is based on his rejection of love as a value-response. We love our own children, he says, with an intensity and devotion that is missing in our love for other people's children, and we love them with this special intensity even while acknowledging that other people's children may surpass our own in many value respects; it follows that our parental love must be grounded in something other than our children's value. Frankfurt thinks that it is in fact grounded in biological necessity and not in motivation by value. Thus it is, he thinks, entirely in order for him to let value appear in our children *after* our love for them and *on the basis* of our love for them.

If we proceed now to respond to Frankfurt on the basis of von Hildebrand, we must before all else insist against Frankfurt that love is indeed motivated and that it is not caused. It is based on first apprehending or understanding something about the beloved person. Apprehending what exactly? As we

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[13]Harry Frankfurt, "Reply to Watson," in: Sarah Buss and Lee Overton (eds.), *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 161.

[14]*The Reasons of Love*, p. 40.