

# The Human Person as an Integrated Whole

## Integrating Polarities in the Philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand

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### *Summary*

*One of the biggest threats to the dignity of the human person which characterizes today's thinking is the reduction of the human person to one constitutive aspect: the body, subjectivity, relationality, and the like. Based on the philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand, the paper demonstrates how six false dichotomies of a similar kind are resolved, namely: spirit and body, substance and relation, subjectivity and objectivity, Eigenleben and transcendence, affectivity and rationality, gift and freedom.*

Key words: *human person; anthropology; polarity; mind–body; personalism; absolutizing*

### *Introduction*

One of the biggest threats to the dignity of the human person which characterizes today's thinking is the reduction of the human person to one constitutive aspect. This reductionism is most apparent in naturalistic and materialistic theories. Reductionism is often accompanied by ideological thinking which absolutizes one dimension of reality and transforms it into a totality. This absolutization of what is relative and partial, together with the relativization of what is absolute and whole, becomes most dangerous when it is applied in reflections on the human person.

Personalistic philosophy from its inception strived to offer a remedy for this situation, as well as an adequate philosophical view of the human person.<sup>1</sup> One personalistic philosopher who achieved this to a high degree was Dietrich von Hildebrand.<sup>2</sup> For Hildebrand, one of the most important tasks of a philosopher

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1 For a longer discussion on the personalistic movement cf. Burgos, 2018.

2 To understand Hildebrand's personal and philosophical biography cf. Hildebrand, 2000.

is to shield man from narrow and abstractive systems of thought, which drain the reality of all mystery and of all transcendent values (Micelli, 1992, 253). His phenomenological commitments enable him to be faithful to the truth of what is given without trying to reduce the uniqueness of the phenomenon to something else; also, and not to absolutize one aspect of reality at the expense of the whole. This is also the case in his philosophy of the human person.<sup>3</sup> By drawing from the insights of his philosophy, we are able to provide a coherent account of the human person as an integrated whole. In this paper we will attempt to integrate different poles of the human person which are often placed in false opposition to one another, namely: spirit and body, substance and relation, subjectivity and objectivity, *Eigenleben* and transcendence, affectivity and rationality, freedom and gift.<sup>4</sup> The person and his acts can be reduced to neither of these poles exclusively, rather the person always integrates both poles into a complex unified whole.

### 1. *Spirit — Body*

While naturalistic and materialistic philosophies absolutize the bodily sphere of man, idealistic philosophies absolutize the spirit. Both reductivism and dualism are to be avoided, and there should be offered an account of the human person which would integrate his spiritual and bodily poles. The core of Hildebrand's philosophy can be expressed in the words, »man is a person« (Jourdain, 1960, 28). The »personal being stands incomparably higher than all impersonal being, and in doing justice to the distinctive character of a personal being, one penetrates much deeper into the realm of being and of metaphysics« (Hildebrand, 2009, 1). The metaphysical dignity of the human person makes it incommensurable to all other impersonal beings and gives it a central place in the whole of reality.<sup>5</sup>

Man's personhood and metaphysical dignity are inextricably connected to his spiritual nature. Man is a spirit in the sense of being unrepeatable and incommunicable and in the sense of existing with a more perfect substantiality than any non-personal being (cf. Crosby, 1992, 324). Thus, man is both concretely real (as opposed to abstract) and is also a spiritual being. The concreteness of the human

3 It is interesting that despite providing many valuable insights on the human person, Hildebrand never developed a systematic anthropology or philosophy of the human person, as he did with ethics, aesthetics or philosophical sociology. Some of his most systematic approaches to philosophical anthropology were delivered in the form of lectures in 1942–43 at Fordham University (Premoli de Marchi, 1998, 12–13).

4 The polarities we are discussing here can be understood as analogous to a kind of polarity among values, which Hildebrand discusses in Chapter 11 of his *Ethics*. This polarity is »a thoroughly complementary polarity, not only fertile but friendly and in no way antithetic. It could be compared to the polarity of male and female. This polarity is not only compatible with the inner unity of the values, but even implies it« (Hildebrand, 1972, Chapter 11).

5 In his political writings, Hildebrand insists on the essential and not merely quantitative difference between man and animal, which is also a fundamental insight upon which democratic society and human rights rest (Hildebrand, 2014, 264).

person is nowhere as visible as in love. One of the essential features of love is being delighted by the beloved person. This is delight in a deep givenness of the value of the concrete human person which unfolds itself before us (Hildebrand, 2009, 19). The values that engender delight elevate the other person and show themselves to be the expression of the person's general preciousness. The value here is both the representation of the overall beauty of the person, and the condition that it be given as something delightful so as to touch our heart. Love is an affective value response to the overall beauty of the *concrete* person who is given to me in his or her preciousness and beauty. Love, the highest of value-responses is a response to something (that is, someone) concrete and not merely abstract.

Man's spiritual nature is also displayed in the fact that he is primarily a conscious being. Still, one cannot engage in reflections on the person's consciousness merely by means of the methods of psychology, rather we need a real philosophical intuition into the essence of this being and the being's acts (Hildebrand, 2009, 1). For this reason, the *person* is equally a psychological and an ontological category (Zizioulas, 2013, 15–16). By being conscious, i.e. being a subject, man possesses a new dimension of being, an »awakened« being, in comparison to which all other beings are asleep (Hildebrand, 1955b, 17–21). The spiritual sphere in man should have primacy over the vital sphere (Hildebrand, 2014, 287).<sup>6</sup> The soul is ontologically on a higher level than the body, or in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: *anima forma corporis* (the soul is the form of the body). This means also that man's vital sphere is not decisive for his spirit, rather his spiritual nature, free will and his openness to the workings of grace play a decisive role in his development.<sup>7</sup>

Man, as a spiritual being, is endowed with intentionality or the capacity to understand reality. One of the grave errors of some modern theories is the failure to acknowledge this intentional and spiritual nature of man, which isolates the human person from the world of objective meaning, values, and ultimately from God (Hildebrand, 2014, 327).

In highlighting man's spirituality, Hildebrand in no way neglects or degrades his physical and vital nature. He puts a stronger emphasis on the spiritual element in man, precisely because he maintains that this pole is under greater threat today. In the preface of the 1991 English edition of his book *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love*, Hildebrand writes: »Our epoch is characterized by a terrible antipersonalism, a progressive blindness toward the nature and dignity of the spiritual person. This anti-personalism expresses itself mainly in the radical collectivism and in the different kinds of materialism. Of these, biological materialism is perhaps the most dangerous, for it considers man as a more highly devel-

6 Since the human soul (unlike the body) proceeds immediately from the hand of God and is not a product of physical generation, Hildebrand strongly opposes ideologies which reduce the human person to the mere function of the vital sphere. His most famous opposition was to National Socialism and Bolshevism (Hildebrand, 2014, 296).

7 Hildebrand would add that those who reduce spirit to the function of the vital sphere or the race, also show a »shocking ignorance of the true meaning, value, and mystery of life« (Hildebrand, 2014, 317).

oped animal, his whole personality determined by mere physiological elements« (Hildebrand, 1991, xxiii).

In such an ideological situation, it is important to stress again the spiritual nature of the human person. Hildebrand understood anti-personalism as a major threat to Western culture and traced its roots back to the age of the Enlightenment, which denied the concept of the spirit and of the spiritual person. Consequently, one of his main aims was to rehabilitate the spiritual person (cf. Kazmierczak, 2011, 192).

Nevertheless, he in no way degrades the bodily and vital sphere. The themes of a great number of his works are related to the body, themes such as marriage (Hildebrand, 1983), love (Hildebrand, 2009), purity (Hildebrand, 2017b), sexual ethics (Hildebrand, 2018), etc. He is explicit in condemning the »gnostic and puritanical suspicion« (Hildebrand, 2018, 12) with regards to spousal love and the body. He maintains that the union of love reaches its highest fulfillment in the marital act and that bodily union, or »becoming one flesh« in marriage is the highest possible form of loving union and of self-gift between human persons (Hildebrand, 2018, 75; 1983, 6). The highest affirmation of the bodily sphere by Hildebrand is evident precisely in his elaborations on sex. Sexual experiences are situated in the bodily sphere but are at the same time contrasted with other forms of bodily experiences by their essential depth: »The positive and negative values attaching to sex belong to a level far deeper than those which attach to the other bodily appetites. Indeed, these sexual experiences are characterized by a specific character of mystery... In their distinctive quality there is something which penetrates to the very root of man's physical being... They display a depth and a gravity which removes them altogether from the province of all other bodily experiences« (Hildebrand, 2017b, 3).

As we can see, precisely the sphere of sex shows in the best way that there is something deep, mysterious and noble related to the body. In the sexual sphere there occurs the most profound integration of the bodily, psychological and the spiritual sphere in man. In building on Hildebrand's philosophy, we are able to integrate the poles of the body and the spirit into one concrete whole, which is man.

## 2. *Substance — Relation*

One of the false dichotomies about the human person is the substance–relation dichotomy whereby one of these poles is absolutized.<sup>8</sup> Hildebrand's philosophy here again provides a pathway for integration.<sup>9</sup> For Hildebrand, the human person is among all created beings to the highest degree a »world for itself« (*Welt für sich*). To be a »being for itself« (*für sich Seiende*) is given to the human person already by its substance, and even more so, owing to the fact that he is the *whole*

8 For some examples cf. Smith, 2011, 230–33.

9 A similar path of synthesis and integration of the substance–relation polarity was taken recently in the article written by Mark Spencer (2015).

substance which in itself does not demonstrate the need to be complemented. The human person is a being for itself to a higher degree than any other created substance, be it a purely material thing or a living being (Hildebrand, 1955b, 17). Its substance–character involves the fact that the human person is a unified whole possessing inner harmony, and that there exists a connection between the different “parts” constituting a person. This unity is incomparably higher than the unity possessed by purely material beings or living organisms.

Although there already exists an inner harmony and unity between the constitutive parts of rock mass, which somehow separates it from the environment, we still cannot speak here of substance. An essential feature of every substance, and especially of a material substance, is that it possesses a definite, relatively stable form which is relatively independent from the environment. Water in a tank does not have a thing–character and is not a substance, since it does not possess its own form which would elevate and distinguish it from its surroundings. Its form is given from the outside by the tank and can change with a change of the tank. In the case of real material substances (e.g. a piece of wood or a rock), the elevation of the substance above its surroundings is relatively accidental. This is not so with living organisms. The animal or plant is much more unified in itself, and its form is much better arranged for building a certain wholeness. Every organism has its own mutually inter–connected processes which separate it from other organisms as something whole and undivided, as an individuum. Finally, the human being has an incomparably higher and more unified substance–character because of his being a person. The substance–character of the human person is even higher and more unified than that of a living organism. Man »is a conscious being, which has an ‘I’, unified in itself, a free being which possesses itself« (Hildebrand, 1955b, 20). This is a new and incomparably deeper sphere of being than the one we find among other substances. Man participates in the general dignity of personal substances because of which they represent the highest form of substantiality as such. In them, the individuality and the fact of being a »world for itself« are of the highest form, for the soul gives the human soul–body composite an incredibly high inner unity.<sup>10</sup>

Considering this, we see that pantheism is in error since it understands the individual human person as a mere »excerpt« taken from the continuum of »spirit«. It misunderstands the spiritual as spiritual, since it understands personhood according to the model of matter. In its substantiality, the person can never function as a real part of the bigger whole or as an element of a bigger continuum. The person is always a unified whole, that possesses a substance–character so full, that its “borders” cannot dissipate to the degree that the person would become fused with another substance. So, all pantheistic or collectivistic theories which understand the potential relations of persons to the bigger whole (e.g.

10 The idea of that the human person is the highest realisation of substantiality in the created world was developed extensively by Hildebrand’s disciple Josef Seifert, especially in his book *Essere e persona* (cf. Seifert, 1989).

community or the universe) — in such a way that the person would lose his substantiality — should be rejected, as well as theories which claim that the person can find fulfillment in giving himself to the big, all-encompassing community in order to overcome immanence and egoism (Hildebrand, 1955b, 9). One can overcome egoism only by giving oneself to God and one's neighbour, and not to the all-encompassing community.

Besides being the fullest substance among beings known through corporal knowledge, only in spiritual contact with other persons does the human person find fulfillment. Only in a community does man become fully himself (Hildebrand, 1955b, 21). The essence of the human person shows both the character of being a »world for itself« incapable of merging with other substances, and the ability to transcend oneself and, thereby to reach the other person. The same spiritual essence which gives the person his substance-character renders him capable of establishing relationships which are deeper and more unifying than any non-personal being could attain (Premoli de Marchi, 2013, 148). Man reaches his fulfillment both in the loving I-Thou relationship, as well as in the we-relationship of a community.<sup>11</sup>

In the sphere of the I-Thou relationship, there can be many different levels and kinds of relationships. The person is capable not just *intentionally* to relate to others (as in cognition or personal stances), but also to *really* participate in the being of the other (Hildebrand, 1955b, 22). The highest form of an I-Thou relationship is the interpenetration of the loving gazes of two persons, which provides a basis for forming an I-Thou community (such as marriage or friendship) based on the loving union between persons. Man is ordered towards forming I-Thou communities, but he is also capable and predisposed to act as a member of a we-community. Man as a spiritual person will never be understood unless we recognize his predisposition for community life to form a new totality (Hildebrand, 1933, 49). Community also cannot be properly understood »if the individual person is not grasped in the full depth of his being« and »every attempt to degrade the individual in his ontological dignity and value takes its toll on community« (Hildebrand, 2014, 328). The person can come in his full personality only as a member of a community; and the higher the rank of value of the community, the more he fulfills his ultimate meaning as a person (Hildebrand, 2014, 325).<sup>12</sup>

This insight is also strikingly relevant for today. The solitude increasingly present in the modern world has a detrimental effect on the human person, which testifies to the fact that man is made for communion (Jourdain, 1960, 27).<sup>13</sup>

11 »In the I-Thou relation the two persons face one another; for each the other is a Thou. In the we-relationship persons stand as it were next to one another, and hand in hand they face some good, the truth, some other person« (Hildebrand, 1973, 184).

12 Understanding this has profound consequences on Hildebrand's political positions. For him, the political errors of Bolshevism and National Socialism are a logical consequence of the failure, characteristic of liberalism, »to recognize the true essence and value of the person« (Hildebrand, 2014, 331).

13 Hildebrand provides another important integration connected to this one, and that is the integration of the individual and community. This integration builds on the substantial and relational

### 3. *Subjectivity — Objectivity*

Modernity starts with the turn towards subjectivity and in many cases ends up in the absolutization of subjectivity and consciousness which is called subjectivism (cf. Schmitz, 1993, 129–137). On the other hand, Wojtyła and others criticize the tendency of traditional Aristotelian–Thomistic philosophy to deal with objective being and disregard subjectivity as the lived experience of the human person (Wojtyła, 1993, 170 & 209–217). Wojtyła distinguished between understanding the human person in third person terms, or as objects of intentional cognitive acts, and understanding the person in first person terms through subjectivity, where subjectivity is understood as the lived experience of the person (cf. Wojtyła, 1993, 210–211).

Hildebrand takes lived experience to be the starting point of his philosophy and at the same time strongly rejects subjectivism. He affirms the capacity of the human person to reach objectivity.<sup>14</sup> Even more, man himself is an objective being who could be understood through intentional cognitive acts.<sup>15</sup> Man is both an objective being and a being who can attain objectivity. Philosophical reflection should start from the lived experience, and objective knowledge can be grounded in experience which is to be understood non–reductively, i.e. not reduced to mere sense perception or observation. Only on an experiential basis can we reach »a non–subjective a priori knowledge of objective necessary essences« (Seifert, 1991, 36).

Hildebrand follows this method in several writings. For example, in *Ethics*, we are invited to immerse ourselves in the »rich qualitative plenitude of a moral datum and bring ourselves to a full state of ‘wondering’ about it. We must seek to analyze the datum, delve into its nature, explore its relations with other fundamental data of experience, and, finally, inquire into the presuppositions which have to be fulfilled in order that a man may be endowed with moral goodness« (Hildebrand, 1972, 1). We should also be on guard against all constructions and explanations incompatible with moral data as presented in experience. Starting from the experience, which Hildebrand calls »the beginning«, requires that we suspend for a time all theories concerning the moral sphere and look at the experience without philosophical prejudice and also to avoid premature classifications and systematizations (Hildebrand, 1972, 3). This experience is connected to subjectivity and consciousness, but it is in no way enclosed in them. Already in the cognitive act man has the capacity to transcend his subjectivity and con-

nature of the human person but goes beyond it because the community is something more than a sum of relations. Nevertheless, since this paper deals primarily with the integration of different poles inside the human person, we will leave for future articles the analysis of his membership in the community. For a synthesis of Hildebrand’s views on this point (cf. Hildebrand, 2014, 327–332).

14 With regards to the man’s capacity to reach objectivity, some authors even called his approach to philosophy a »radical objectivist apriorism« (Seifert, 1991, 50).

15 Among many examples cf. Hildebrand, 1955a.

sciousness in order to reach out to the object: »Knowledge cannot be conceived without [...] an intentional structure and a capacity for transcending the limited sphere of the self« (Hildebrand, 1991, 70).

There are several different meanings of the term “subjective” which have a negative connotation, such as when someone’s judgement is determined by prejudice, or when some object is grasped as if it actually existed in reality, but it exists merely in our mind (as in a dream or hallucination).<sup>16</sup> Hildebrand does not affirm any of the “negative” meanings of the term “subjective” and proposes the term “subjectivity” as more appropriate for affirming the meaning of subjectivity which »refers to the ontological feature of being a ‘subject,’ a person, and not to the epistemological feature of being an appearance for a subject« (Hildebrand, 1991, 206). This meaning of subjectivity refers to something belonging to the personal subject of knowing, willing, loving, etc. In this sense the act of knowing or willing is subjective, while a house or a tree are objective. This »ontological« meaning implies nothing negative or pejorative. Here the term “subjective” can be used almost interchangeably with the term “personal”. These subjective acts of knowing, willing etc., are at the same time full objective realities. And for the reason of being personal, these subjective beings (or personal entities), such as knowing, loving, or willing, are superior in being to objective, non–personal beings, such as trees and houses.

Even though the act of knowing belongs to the type of subjectivity Hildebrand calls »ontological« as opposed to the »epistemological«, it clearly has a role in cognitively grasping the object (obviously, not in the sense of distorting or blurring it in any way). Since it is always a person who cognitively grasps the object, the subjectivity of the human person cannot be abandoned or negated in this process, but the process of knowing is always embedded in it. The object discloses itself in the person’s subjectivity. Knowledge in its broadest meaning »includes all those acts in which directly or indirectly an object is disclosed to us in its nature and its existence« (Hildebrand, 1991, 80). There is a dynamic at play in which both personal subjectivity and objectivity are affirmed and not one of these aspects is reduced to the other. The person does not remain enclosed within the boundaries of his subjectivity. The knowing subject can understand the objects as they exist outside of subjectivity. From the beginning of the (philosophical) taking cognizance of something, the prerequisite »is a full interest in the object as such and in the knowing contact with it« (Hildebrand, 1991, 97).

Once again, in the polarity of subjectivity and objectivity of the human person, Hildebrand’s philosophy provides a pathway for integration. For him, man is both an objective being and at the same time a conscious subject. On the level of knowledge, subjectivity as lived experience is the starting point of investigation which is capable of reaching a priori knowledge of the objective necessary essences. Knowing this helps us also to understand that different forms of idealism, relativism, subjectivism, reductive empiricism and positivism need to be rejected.

16 For different meanings of the term ‘subjective’ cf. Hildebrand, 1991, 205–210.

#### 4. *Eigenleben* — Transcendence

A further polarity to be integrated is that between man's transcendence and his legitimate subjective interests.<sup>17</sup> Man's capacity to transcend himself is one of his deepest characteristics which elevates him above all non-personal beings (Hildebrand, 1972, 218), and it is most visible in his response to values. A proper understanding of the human person requires understanding of his relationship to the world of values (Schwarz, 1960, x). A value is that which is intrinsically important and which does not draw its importance from its relation to us.<sup>18</sup> One essential trait of that which is important in itself is that it calls for an adequate response (Hildebrand, 1972, 38). When we encounter a beautiful work of art, we *should* admire it; there is a call addressed to us which we should respond to. The response is characterized by self-abandonment, our interest is completely motivated by the intrinsic importance of the object. It involves conforming and submitting ourselves to the logos of the value, which counters our egoism and self-centeredness. The value response has a transcendence consisting not only in motivation and intentionality, but a meaningful “concerting” with the intrinsic objectivity of value.

The following question still remains: does self-abandonment in the value response require abandoning interest in anything subjectively beneficial to ourselves? The term subjectivity here refers to the reality Hildebrand captured by the term *Eigenleben*<sup>19</sup> and which involves things that specifically »have to do with me and my concerns and that refer in particular to my happiness« (Hildebrand, 2009, 201). These things concern me as this unrepeatable individual and stand in relation to my happiness. They address me specifically and not another person. *Eigenleben* should in no way be equated with egocentricity, rather it is a positive trait of man as a spiritual person. The term itself applies to different things, from the dialogue between man and God in man's deepest sphere, to more “peripheral” phenomena, like cherishing my being, my life, my health, welfare, economic conditions, as well as everything which was traditionally captured by the term *appetitus*, such as bodily drives and spiritual strivings rooted in man's nature. Still, these phenomena are characterized by being enclosed in the person's immanence, while *Eigenleben* is not confined to this sphere, since higher kinds of happiness *which address me specifically* are acquired by transcending the self.

17 Some parts of this chapter reflect the thoughts I elaborated in more detail in the paper *Affirmation of Different Forms of Individual Subjectivity in Karol Wojtyła and Dietrich von Hildebrand* (cf. Vargić, 2019).

18 Importance is that which lifts the being out of neutrality and gives it a character of bonum or malum (Hildebrand, 1972, 24).

19 It is hard to find an appropriate translation for this term in the English language, even though a direct translation of the term would be “one's own life” or “the life proper to oneself”. John F. Crosby in his translation of Hildebrand's book *The Nature of Love* translated *Eigenleben* as *subjectivity*, although with some reservations (cf. Hildebrand, 2009, 200).

True happiness requires transcending the boundaries of one's self, and for this reason it cannot be reduced to the mere immanent strivings of human nature.

*Eigenleben* is essentially linked to the dignity of the human person and should not be suppressed or disregarded. The illegitimate neglect of *Eigenleben* can happen in different situations, such as: when a public official completely identifies himself with his role and stops having any real *Eigenleben*; when a loyal citizen of a totalitarian state completely abandons his *Eigenleben* to serve the interests of the collective, or when a so-called “background person” so closely connects his or her life to the lives of others and abandons all interest in personal happiness and well-being (Hildebrand, 2009, 204–205). Even though the last example is not as dehumanizing as the first two, it is often falsely presented as an ideal of love of one's neighbour. The self-transcendence we find in the love of neighbour has nothing to do with the loss of *Eigenleben* in these two distortions.

Finally, misunderstandings regarding *Eigenleben* are also found in the philosophical theories of eudaimonism and altruism (Hildebrand, 2009, 206). Eudaimonism is a negation of man's transcendence, since it limits his interest only to that which is beneficial to himself. Radical altruism errs by claiming that man can reach self-fulfillment only by fully abandoning interest in things which are beneficial to him. Man's capacity for self-transcendence is seriously misunderstood in radical altruism, since it fails to comprehend that there exists a legitimate directedness of a personal subject to things that are beneficial to him. Interest in my personal salvation is the clearest example. The altruistic error is also highly visible in love. If someone were to say to the beloved person: »I love you for what you are, for your own sake, but whether you love me in return I don't care, and I don't care if our love is mutual and is a source of happiness for me; I want nothing for myself, I just want your good and your happiness« (Crosby, 2009, xxvi), it is obvious that saying this would not make the addressee happy. For a proper love between a man and a woman, it is essential to involve my subjectivity and to expect to be loved in return. *Eigenleben* and transcendence are nowhere interpenetrated as much as in the moral sphere: »A moral call is addressed to a person to intervene in a certain situation; perhaps another is in danger [...] he is aware of the moral obligation, which appeals to his conscience. On the one hand, we have here a high-point of transcendence in the pure commitment to the morally relevant value. But on the other hand, [...] this call is my most intimate and personal concern, in which I experience the uniqueness of myself. Supreme objectivity and supreme subjectivity interpenetrate here [...] On the one hand, I commit myself to something [...] which appeals to me as valuable in itself; but on the other hand, since what is at stake is my moral obligation in its unique impact, which is ultimately the call of God, my decision to follow the call or not to follow it reaches eminently into my own subjectivity« (Hildebrand, 2009, 206–207).

In a value response I transcend my subjectivity, but in no way do I abandon it. Negating or abandoning the *Eigenleben* would undercut the very possibility for a genuine value response, since there should be a “substance” to personality that constitutes a sound *Eigenleben* and which is essential to the subject engendering

a value–response (Lu, 2013, 187). This interpenetration reaches a unique form in the case of love. All love involves a donation of self as a gift to the other person. In this self–donation I do not step out of my subjectivity, but I grant the beloved person a dominant place inside it. The other person, in a way, becomes the “lord” of my subjectivity, and my happiness becomes dependent on his or hers. This is characterized by giving my heart to the other, which is a dimension of self–giving that precisely presupposes and includes the full actualization of my subjectivity.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the most radical transcending of my *Eigenleben* happens in surrendering myself unconditionally to God. Here I indeed give away my *Eigenleben*, but this does not result in the final death of my *Eigenleben*. In giving it to God I receive it back »purified and transfigured and at the same time tremendously enhanced and enriched« (Hildebrand, 2009, 220).

### 5. *Affectivity — Rationality*

Hildebrand emphasizes a special kind of value response which he terms affective and distinguishes it from volitional and theoretical response (Hildebrand, 1972, 197). In a theoretical response such as conviction, doubt or expectation, we affirm or negate the such–being (*Sosein*) and existence of an object which reveals itself to our mind. Volitional responses are directed towards realizing a state of affairs which is not yet real but is realizable through me (Hildebrand, 1972, 200).<sup>21</sup> Affective responses, such as joy, love or hatred, are motivated by the importance of the object and involve the response which imparts a new “word” on the object, which is not just noetic, but affective. Affective responses are characterized by an affective plenitude which is not present in the will. They are voices of our heart and they involve our whole person. As such, they are meaningful, intentional and spiritual. An analysis of this affectedness and of affective value responses shows that there must be a third “center” in the human person besides intellect and will, which Hildebrand calls »the heart«.

Hildebrand criticizes the history of philosophy, claiming that it has to a large extent disregarded the affective sphere and the heart itself (Hildebrand, 1977, 25–46). Even though affectivity had a role in poetry, literature, personal prayer, Liturgy and the Bible, in philosophy it was not adequately treated, not just because it was insufficiently explored, but also because of the wrong interpretations given to it. Plato ranked the heart lower than the intellect, and Aristotle situated it in the irrational which man shares with animals, as opposed to the intellect and the will which he deemed rational. Most philosophical tradition subsumed the af-

20 This element is not found in the love of neighbour (Hildebrand, 2009, 212). Clearly, the happiness and salvation of the beloved person rank higher than the happiness of my union with him or her. Even though these things can be in deep harmony, transcendence takes priority over my *Eigenleben*.

21 We will demonstrate later how some of Hildebrand’s students offer a convincing critique of this understanding of the will and Hildebrand also corrects his view on this issue.

fective sphere under the heading of passions and attributed to it an irrational and non-spiritual character.<sup>22</sup> This error mainly arose from the fact that the whole affective sphere was identified with the lowest affective experiences, even though this sphere embraces experiences of very different levels: from the lowest level experiences, such as fatigue or pain to the highest spiritual experiences of love, bliss or deep contrition.<sup>23</sup>

The affective sphere was also discredited due to the danger that different types of ungenueness of the rhetorical, sentimental and hysterical type might arise (Hildebrand, 1977, 32–39). Nevertheless, one would be mistaken to equate all instances of being affectively moved with these ungenue responses. There can exist also noble affective experiences, such as being deeply moved by the love of Christ or a piece of music, or the profound tears of grief at of the loss of a dear one. There can be deformations of the affective sphere, but this fact should not discredit the sphere as a whole.

When investigating the affective data, we perceive that there exist experiences which can greatly differ in their structure, quality and rank.<sup>24</sup> Feelings such as a headache or physical fatigue show a clear relation to the body, but this relation is not restricted to a causal link to physiological processes, since they also involve a conscious relation to the body based on experience (Hildebrand, 1977, 50). These types of feelings are in a way the »voice of our body«. On the other hand, psychic feelings need not be caused by bodily processes (e.g. depression can be caused by life circumstances), and even if they are, they are not located in the body, nor are they states of the body, but rather they are much moreso »in the subject« (Hildebrand, 1977, 55). These psychic feelings such as tipsiness or depression differ incomparably from experiences such as joy, love, sorrow or compassion. The latter are true responses, while this is not the case with bodily and psychic feelings. They are also characterized by their intentionality and rationality. This rationality is not imposed on affectivity from without, but it has a rationality of its own (Crosby, 1992, 325). Affective responses imply a consciousness of the object which motivates them and an awareness that this object is the motive for a response, which displays a meaningful and intelligible relation to the object. The knowledge of the object which occurs here is not mere sense perception, but it implies the full actualization of our intellect (Hildebrand, 2017a, 96). On the other hand, in experiences such as tipsiness, we may or may not be aware that it is caused by an alcoholic beverage, but the drink clearly is not the motive for the “tipsy response”. Response to a motivating object is clearly a conscious

22 It would exceed the scope of this paper to resolve this question here, but it is worth mentioning that there were attempts to partially redeem the philosophical tradition from Hildebrand's criticism (cf. Wood, 2013, 115–116).

23 Hildebrand does admit that there were examples of philosophers who had a much higher regard for the affective sphere, such as St. Augustine in his Confessions. Augustine never locates the heart in man's irrational and biological sphere, but still he does not give the heart a standing analogous to that granted to reason and will (cf. Hildebrand, 1977, 28–29).

24 Scheler already recognized this before Hildebrand (cf. Scheler, 1973, 253–264)

and intelligible one, and this process goes through the spiritual realm of a person.<sup>25</sup>

The rational and spiritual nature of affective responses can also be determined by the fact that they too, just as the intellect and the will, sometimes need to be freed from irrational psychic feelings. When we overcome enslavement by these illegitimate psychic feelings, we are free to enjoy true affective responses; thus, we can love what deserves to be loved and admire what deserves to be admired. Passions should not be equated with the entire realm of psychic and spiritual feelings.<sup>26</sup> They are clearly different from affective responses motivated by goods endowed with values. Every value response and affectedness by values is radically different from the passions.

Value response is transcendent in the sense that it is free from merely subjective needs, appetites and entelechial movements. Only value, under its aspect of beauty, evokes and engenders that deeper affectivity in which our most intimate self dwells (Crosby, 1996, 202). In the affective value response our heart conforms to the value and forms a certain union with the object. This act of conforming is analogous to the adequation of the intellect to the being in knowledge (Hildebrand, 2017a, 97). The union of the value response is even stronger than in the case of knowledge. Spiritual affective responses always include the cooperation of intellect and the heart since we need to grasp the object by means of the cognitive act. Also, the free spiritual center of a person collaborates here and shows that affective responses are radically antithetic to the mere immanent unfolding of our nature, such as in desires and appetites. This response is characterized by transcendence and intelligibility. The inner, meaningful relation between aesthetic or moral value and the appropriate response can be immediately intuited as we focus on the value and the response.

Thus, true affectivity and rationality of the human person are not opposed to one another, but become integrated in affective value responses. Every value response rests upon an intellectual grasping of the object which engenders a response. This intellectual act is then accompanied by an affective response to the value of the comprehended object. No highest value response would be possible without both the intellect and the heart. Thus, both rationalism and romanticism which degrade the value either of affectivity or rationality, fail to grasp the human person in his fullness. Hildebrand's analysis shows us how the cooperation and integration of affectivity and rationality in certain acts leads to responses

25 This clearly does not imply that affective responses do not have repercussions on the body or the psyche, since this is clearly one of the traits of affective responses. Still, the opposite is not the case — bodily feelings cannot by themselves engender affective responses, since they need a motivating object which engenders them (Hildebrand, 1977, 55).

26 The term “passions” here designates the intense feelings, which tend to silence reason and overpower our free will to the extent that we do not know anymore what we are doing, as well as habitual enslavement of our reason and will by certain violent urges and feelings such as ambition, avarice, hatred or envy (Hildebrand, 1977, 59–66).

of a much higher kind, a kind which could not be engendered by either of these spheres alone.

## 6. Gift — Freedom

Finally, we will analyze the polarity between certain phenomena which show the character of the gift and the power of the human person to freely engender these phenomena. In the case of love, the question of in how far love is a gift, and in how far it is a free decision becomes most topical. It raises the issue: to what extent is love an affective phenomenon and in how far is it a matter of free choice?

Hildebrand argues that freedom is an essential feature of a person as the image of God, but also offers arguments as to why certain things are beyond freedom and can only be granted to us as a gift (Hildebrand, 1977, 111–112). This is most obvious in the supernatural sphere where grace is »an absolute unmerited gift inaccessible to our freedom.« Also, in the sphere of natural world there are many things which we cannot give to ourselves, such as great intellectual or artistic talent. No one can become Aristotle or Mozart simply by exercising free will. Happiness is also a pure gift. Even though we can prepare fertile ground for it, true happiness is granted to us as a gift, »dropping like a dew upon our heart.« The gift-character is also visible in many affective experiences, such as deep contrition or ardent love. Also, it is not up to our free will to move us when we are listening to a beautiful opera or to arouse deep contrition for something we have done.

Higher affective responses in certain respects rank higher than volitional acts. They are often superabundant gifts bestowed on us, and not states realized by means of the will: »These affections of the higher level are truly gifts — natural gifts of God which man cannot give himself by his own power« (Hildebrand, 1977, 113). They have the character of a »gift from above« and are the “voice” of our heart. Man is deeper and greater than the acts he can control through the will. There, in the realm of these higher and deeper affective responses, the heart and not the will is the center which plays the most important role.

Affective responses are not in the power of our fiat as are volitional responses: they are not free in the strict sense and are not in our capacity of command, but they are granted to us as a gift. Nevertheless, even if these affective responses are not free in the strict sense, we can freely influence them in a broader sense. Freedom in this expanded sense can be called »cooperative freedom« (Hildebrand, 1972, Chapter 25). It relates to free attitudes towards experiences which already exist in our soul. These experiences come into being without our free decision, but we do have the freedom to take a stance towards them, to sanction them through our free “yes” or “no” which also deeply modifies the experience itself. The affective responses become most truly our own only if we say “yes” to them and sanction them with our free spiritual center. I can fully love another person only if I freely accept the gift given to me. If I say “no” to it, I disavow it

and do not allow it to become truly mine. When a gift is offered to us, we also receive »the task of harvesting lasting fruits from it, of making proper use of the gift« (Hildebrand, 1972, 317). Some gifts invite us to radically change ourselves, or at least to adapt our behavior. By remaining unchanged after receiving a gift which deeply affects us is a sign of a completely wrong attitude. The correct use of gifts bestowed on us is an important area of our inner growth. Here, cooperative freedom has a threefold role. It has an indirect influence in preparing the ground in our soul for being affected by values. It freely cooperates with this experience when it is granted to us, and it has a role in harvesting the fruits of this experience. Apart from the cooperative acceptance of our being affected, there still exist a prologue and an epilogue to man’s freedom (Hildebrand, 1972, 318).<sup>27</sup>

Generally, there are at least six major ways in which the will plays a crucial role in love. (cf. Schwarz, 2013, 139–142). The first is the above-mentioned cooperative freedom. Secondly, there is a commitment of the will found in all true love.<sup>28</sup> Also, faithfulness and perseverance cannot be understood simply in terms of a gift and cooperative freedom, but the will is needed in a strict sense. In the case of the love of God in the dark night of the soul or the love of parents for a wayward teenager, the will plays a primary role. Finally, the role of the will is present in observing the Christian commandment of love and in the readiness to makes sacrifices for the one whom we love.

The will also has other functions or roles apart from the cooperative function and the function of being the master of our actions (cf. Schwarz, 2013, 143). One function of the will is indeed to respond to real objects outside myself, including other persons. I can say an inner “yes” or “no” to adoring God or loving my neighbour. Another function is »the power of commitment, remaining faithful, perseverance, resolving to do something and carrying it through« (Schwarz, 2013, 143). This is what provides the strength to love. Free will is also not limited only to realizing the unrealized states of affairs (cf. Seifert, 2017). Objects of the will can also be persons and other real beings, goods endowed with a value, virtues, objects that we cannot change and things which are objectively good for

27 Even though admitting this broader sense of freedom, Hildebrand mostly works with the notion of freedom in the narrower sense. In this sense, the will is directed towards realizing a state of affairs which is not yet real, but it is realizable through me. An important point which Hildebrand also makes is that willing cannot be directed towards persons but only towards states of affairs (Hildebrand, 2009, 41; 1972, 199–201). Now, it is clear the object of love is not the state of affairs nor realization of something not yet real. The object of love is another person. For this reason, Hildebrand believes that love itself cannot be an act of will. Love is the most perfect value response, which possesses fullness and warmth not present in the act of will. Love is free only in a broader sense of the term: to positively or negatively sanction the affective response which becomes engendered in us. The beauty of the overall being of the other produces in us the state of being affected, but we can still say a free “yes” or “no” to this experience. Still, the voice of the heart must happen first in order that free sanctioning can take place (Hildebrand, 2009, 55).

28 Schwarz does not mention that Hildebrand has recognized this element of love by counting the »extraordinary commitment to the beloved person« among essential traits of love (Hildebrand, 2009, 54). However, it seems that Hildebrand explained this characteristic of love in terms of a gift working together with cooperative freedom.

us. This is also the case with love. The objects of our free acts can also be persons who can be freely affirmed for their intrinsic value, even if there exist no feelings to sanction.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, love can be both an affective and a volitional response. It is both a gift and a task to be achieved through our free will. Here again the two poles of the gift and of freedom are integrated into one reality which is love. They still represent different dynamisms with their specific role in love, but there are no grounds for opposing them against each other or excluding one at the expense of the other.

### *Conclusion*

There is a great need today to put forward an understanding of the human person as an integrated whole. This is especially so because of the widespread tendency to reduce the human person to one of its constitutive aspects or to absolutize one aspect at the expense of the whole. This situation is further promulgated by the nurturing of false dichotomies between different poles in the human person. In this paper we have showed how six of these false dichotomies can be resolved: spirit and body, substance and relation, subjectivity and objectivity, *Eigenleben* and transcendence, affectivity and rationality, gift and freedom. On the basis of the philosophy of Dietrich von Hildebrand we are able to integrate these different polarities into an integrated whole which is the human person. This integration avoids the pitfalls of false dichotomies, and absolutizations of one aspect at the expense of the whole. This also allows us to conclude how different theories and schools of philosophy, such as naturalism and idealism, subjectivism and one-sided objectivism, pantheism and collectivism, altruism and eudaimonism, rationalism and romanticism, and all theories which negate either the gift-nature of love or our free cooperation, should be rejected as false.

Hopefully we have succeeded in providing a direction for further investigation and elaboration, rather than a complete account of the way in which these different poles become integrated. We have mapped out the realist phenomenological terrain for extensive elaboration on the way in which the different polarities in the human person should not be falsely dichotomized, but rather affirmed in their essential structure and integrated into the whole of the human person.

29 One of the great contributions of Seifert's critique is that he also shows how many of these considerations were already implicitly present in Hildebrand's earlier works, such as the capacity of volitional responses to respond to existing states of affairs and persons, even though he did not make them explicit. In some footnotes of his posthumously published work *Moralia* (Hildebrand, 1980), Hildebrand changed some of his initial positions even though he did not live long enough to develop full consequences of his retractions. Hildebrand also seems to use a broader meaning of free will in the Chapter 17 of his *Ethics* (Hildebrand, 1972, chapter 17).

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## *Ljudska osoba kao integrirana cjelina*

### *Integracija polarnosti u filozofiji Dietricha von Hildebranda*

*Hrvoje Vargić\**

#### *Sažetak*

*Jedna od najvećih ugroza ljudskoga dostojanstva danas sastoji se u svodenju ljudske osobe na jednu od njezinih ontoloških sastavnica: tijelo, subjektivnost, racionalnost, relacionalost i sl. Redukcionizam je često popraćen ideološkim razmišljanjem koje apsolutizira jednu dimenziju stvarnosti i pretvara ju u cjelinu. To apsolutiziranje relativnoga i djelomičnoga, zajedno s relativizacijom apsolutnoga i cjelovitoga, postaje najopasnije kada se primijeni u razmišljanju o ljudskoj osobi. Rad pokazuje kako se razrješava šest lažnih dihotomija te vrste, između duha i tijela, supstancije i relacionalnosti, subjektivnosti i objektivnosti, "vlastitog života" (Eigenleben) i transcendencije, afektivnosti i racionalnosti, dara i slobode. Filozofija Dietricha von Hildebranda omogućuje nam da integriramo te različite polaritete u jednu integriranu cjelinu koja je ljudska osoba. Ta integracija izbjegava zamke lažnih dihotomija i apsolutizacija određenoga aspekta stvarnosti na štetu cjeline. Ona nam također omogućuje zaključak kako različite teorije i filozofske struje, kao što su naturalizam i idealizam, subjektivizam i jednostrani objektivizam, panteizam i kolektivizam, altruizam i eudaimonizam, racionalizam i romantizam, i sve teorije koje negiraju bilo ljubav kao dar ili bilo slobodnu odluku, treba odbaciti kao pogrešne.*

*Ključne riječi: ljudska osoba; antropologija; polarnost; um–tijelo; personalizam; apsolutizacija*

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